Spatial Dynamics and Female Development in Victorian Art and Novels: Creating a Woman's Space

Liana F. Piehler

PETER LANG

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"Liana Piehler's scholarship is exemplary: she selected from the enormously rich fields of Victorian art and fiction the texts and images her book required; she consulted virtually all relevant secondary work on them; and she understands thoroughly the principles of inclusion and exclusion that governed her choices. Her analytic and interpretive work on both visual images and literary texts is graceful, sensitive, penetrating. She develops an idea about women's spaces that is not only original but illuminating. It enriches one's sense of both fields and carries forward much of the work done by feminist scholars of the last couple of decades. The writing throughout is a model of clarity and subtlety."

Janet Burstein, Professor of English, Drew University

"Liana Piehler takes a revealing cross-disciplinary ploy to open up meaning in selected Victorian novels. She is able to get at many matters of the novels that are unspoken—matters that have to do not only with place and space but with psychological spaces between things. As she says in the first sentences, 'Individuals claim and make spaces their own.' Her foundational chapter of analysis of artworks is in itself an original amplification of current art historical discourse. She moves beyond the discovery of Victorian female spatial/social delimitations to discover in the images and in the novels those possibilities and alternatives that are intimated as opening up for the female."

Sara Henry-Corrington, Professor of Art History,
N.E.H. Distinguished Professor of Humanities, Drew University

For my parents,
Claudia and James Piehler

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Preface

As I read, I visualize. As I see images, I read meaning. It has always been like that. And I'm sure I'm not unique. The two actions complement, even respond to, each other. For me—as person and as scholar—the links are strong. They both appear to me and I seek them. I see the world with the eyes of a writer/literary scholar and a painter. The two visions and creative impulses have always been present in me, at least for as long as I can remember. Never competing, rather complementing each other, oscillating in clarity and force.

I write this, not as a bit of incidental biographical background, but as a context for this study. The concept of symbolic spatial composition already had meaning for me from my experiences sketching spontaneously, more diligently planning paintings, and observing and learning from other artists' works. It would not be a difficult jump to begin to see that same dynamic, familiar to the artist's consciousness, considered and crafted verbally by writers. Then within a number of graduate courses, the idea of space and its ties to the feminine kept surfacing and capturing my attention, in particular through the works of Anita Brookner, Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, and theoretically, Alice Jardine. These connections appeared to me and I followed their lead, beginning to seek similar correlations in the Victorian period. I did not have to push or prod the art or novels of the period to find connections between visual/verbal spatial composition and depictions of the female. I simply asked questions and looked to the works to lead me in the right directions. This project offers those observations and answers, in hopes of regarding the consideration of spatial composition as meaningful, provocative, and full of possibility for the female imagination.

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INTRODUCTION

Creating a Woman's Space

"Through every human being, unique space, intimate space opens up to the world…"
—Rainer Maria Rilke (qtd. in Bachelard 202)

Spaces. Enclosed, personal, and intimate. Vast and open. Engaging and communicative. Generative and liberating. These and many other possibilities dwell in the concept of and the uttered word "space." In the visual arts, space is an essential creative and compositional element, negotiating sculptural forms, arranging painted forms, tones, and light. Spatial palpability goes beyond mere convention for the artist; it infuses the work with vitality. As that energy, that life-giving force, it gives rise to meaning, creating another layer of symbolism for artist and viewer.

The French writer and philosopher Gaston Bachelard explores the basic response people have to space in his book *The Poetics of Space*. For Bachelard, the actual spaces of our lives, our dwellings, are compartments of meaning that we retain in our dreams and our memories, and release in our response to the world. In turn, author Michael Pollan notes that Bachelard envisions space or shelter as a necessary requirement for reverie and creative thought. He quotes Bachelard as writing: "The house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace" (Pollan 7). Again, I would like to borrow a link that Pollan makes, that between Bachelard's thoughts and those of Virginia Woolf when she proclaims the need for every woman writer to have a room of her own (7–8). Woolf claims the connection between space and creativity in particular for the female writer. The carving out of a private space and the preservation of it empowers the female writer to pursue and capture her thoughts.

This 'room of one's own,' as Pollan notes, is a modern "invention," as suggested by modern writers like Woolf and Bachelard (8). This is partly due to emerging modern notions of the self as individual[1] and to modern, privatized arrangements of interior living spaces.[2] Despite this time specificity, the links between spaces and interiority seem strongly provocative so as they may have

intrigued artists and writers of a slightly earlier period, the nineteenth century. If the image of a woman writer's own room appeared so clearly and forcefully to Virginia Woolf in the early twentieth century, pieces of that image and explorations of that connection may have already been surfacing during the Victorian period.

These thoughts lead to the direction of this project. In a broad sense, through this study I plan to look at the differences and resemblances that occur among the visual and verbal aspects of Victorian art and Victorian women's novels. Though separated by medium, both forms communicate in visual and verbal/literal ways. More specifically, I want to look at the use of spatial composition as a means for developing the female figure or character. I will center the terms of what constitutes spatial composition through vivid representative paintings and sketches of the Victorian period that focus on the female figure by both male and female artists, such as Edward Burne-Jones, Elizabeth Siddall, Jessica Hayllar, Maria Spartali Stillman, Lord Frederick Leighton, Rebecca Solomon, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, and Augustus Egg. These artists of the mid to late 1800s represent the various artistic movements of the period: Pre-Raphaelite, Aesthetic/Victorian Renaissance, and Academic Social Paintings. These chosen works will visually place women in symbolic spatial compositions and dynamics that are recognizable and readable to the Victorian period and to us. My exploration and questions attempt to show how these dynamics carry over into and exist within three selected Victorian novels by women authors. Within the paintings and novels, I am regarding these spaces (locations, enclosures, etc.) as symbolic of social/cultural and internal/psychological conditions. While this study does examine both male and female artists' work, its scope only focuses on women's novels. Yet the potential for reading spaces, of alternate meaning, in both genders' work may certainly exist in the period.

It may be advantageous to view briefly two examples of paintings in which spatial composition corresponds to the presentation and development of the female figure. These examples represent two typologies: one as exclusively female space, the other gender interactive. As a first example, academic social painter Augustus Leopold Egg's *The Travelling Companions* (1862) depicts two young women—probably sisters or close friends as they are dressed identically—travelling together.[3] The young woman at the left side of the canvas is asleep within her own private realm as her drowsing head leans toward the window of the carriage with its view of the coast; the woman at the right sits engrossed in her book—also symbolic of her own world. Neither seems interested in, aware of, or affected by the passing scene outside her window. Rather, they each appear content and absorbed in their activities and private spaces. Even their Victorian dresses drape and curve, enclosing them in nearly sym-

metrical cloud-like cushions of satiny fabric. The compositional lines of the windows and shades draw the sleeping figure further into the painting with long, sweeping movements while the reading figure is tethered into a dark enclosure by the fragmented lines of her shade. Egg's choice of subject matter and view of the female figure emphasize the importance of female companionship. One sister may be sleeping and their communication at a pause, yet they seem comfortable in each others' presence. While this painting may point up the differences between the two companions—one dozing and more dishevelled, and the other prim and industriously reading—and the separateness of their activities, their sharing of this small space and accompanying one another seems to emphasize their need for one another and their sympathetic relationship. Also, we as viewers share their intimacy as we are able to see most of the carriage space at close range. The tiny carriage car becomes a concentrated, personal, feminine space—one that is sanctioned and accepted in the Victorian social world.

Aesthetic painter Lord Frederick Leighton provides another vivid example of significantly charged female space in his 1864 painting *Golden Hours*, a painting which presents a bold yet subtle use of space and placement of the female figure. Here, rather uncharacteristically, the female figure faces into the painting, showing the viewer only her back. She focuses on her poetic-looking male lover as he reflectively plays the piano. Her implied gaze and his downward glance converge in the center of the painting creating a charged, intimate space. Though the connection appears passionate, this center space is quiet, discreet, and personal, as only her sleeve overlaps his. The background subtly reflects this atmosphere with its change from dull to brighter gold across the canvas. This woman, though portrayed in a traditional devoted romantic relationship, creates her own private space, shutting out the painter and seeming voyeurs. At the same time, our intimate prespective propells us into her experience. This composition, emphasizing her reclamations of private and feminine space, reflects a determined choice and attitude. She assumes an active role in the relationship and the composition of the painting, projecting an equal, interlocking energy toward her male companion. Both Egg's and Leighton's paintings depict women in traditional Victorian roles and environments; yet, their choices of spatial composition develop a sense of the female figure and mind to the viewer that can be read as personal, as assertive, and as indicative of these women's inner lives and connections.

These two art historical/visual examples illustrate ways that spaces, spatial compositions, may be read for meaning. Already the language begins to mix the visual with the verbal—*reading spaces*. Michael Pollan draws the parallel between architecture and literature as he observes architects regarding their work as "a form of 'writing' rather than design" (Pollan 68–69). The textual and ar-

chitectural conflate as spaces of meaning on personal, social, and symbolic levels. Looking particularly at architectural spaces, Daphne Spain extends this connection when she asserts that buildings' spatial design takes into account the ways that individuals relate within society (Spain 7). While Spain specifically refers to architecturally constructed spaces, her concept of spatial structures as loci for social meanings and relationships seems easily extended to include other spaces and locations. Spaces themselves are inscribed with meaning, and in turn, artists and writers inscribe their chosen spaces with significance.

Out of this art historical framework or through this lens, I will look at the way spatial composition operates, again particularly in reference to the development of female characters, in a selection of novels by female Victorian novelists: Charlotte Brönte's *Villette* (1853), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* (1864–66), and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872). I have chosen these three novels because they emphasize the domestic nature of women's spaces, and I want to look directly at how these women writers use space to portray their own gender. Yet, the spatial dynamics present in these novels may then extend to others of the Victorian period, outside the scope of this exploration. In this study, I plan to ask the following specific questions of these texts:

1. How do these female Victorian novelists use a visually oriented language—that which constructs spatial composition and environment—to comment on their female characters?
2. How does spatial composition reflect or respond to the female characters' conditions and situations?
3. Is spatial composition a correlative for any aspect of female thought, imagination, creativity, etc.?
4. How does this mixture of visual and verbal/literary elements function in the narrative?

By asking these questions, I plan to explore the connections and patterns that occur among these novels, and their interconnection with the visual art works.

I argue that spatial dynamics as made visual through the art of the period, carry into and exist within these Victorian novels by women authors, as well as being an element to explore in the period as a whole. In *Villette*, narrator Lucy Snowe uses spatial descriptions and representations to construct her narrative and her 'self'. Molly Gibson, Gaskell's protagonist, chooses and creates spaces in her domestic environment and community, which develop her self identity and wider social connections. Metaphors of space ranging from texts, architecture, rooms to artworks and portraits represent the gradual innner growth of

Eliot's Dorothea Brooke from her initial inadequacies. The three authors allow their female protagonists to transgress boundaries usually delineated for the Victorian woman through a concrete and symbolic focus on spatial dynamics.

As an epilogue to this focused Victorian study, I wish to look at these same questions *briefly* in a work—*Hotel du Lac* (1984)—by Anita Brookner, a contemporary British novelist and art historian. It seems provocative and potentially fruitful to make this chronological leap in order to see whether these questions are relevant to a contemporary writer—especially to one often regarded as directly influenced by the Victorians—when developing her female characters and responding to our current world. By looking, even briefly, at the work of a contemporary author who also pays close attention to spatial composition, I may be able to assess my questions, to see whether they transcend the Victorian period and its concerns.

From these questions that I pose to the texts, the inquiry into the link between spatial representation and female imagination or thought seems at this project's center. The interaction between visual and verbal in these authors' novels does create vital women's spaces—ones that foster individual development, creative possibilities, and potential growth. The visual depictions of space around these female characters are particular to them, part of the authors' ways of developing and enlarging their primary female figures. Nancy Mairs acknowledges a profound connection among her gender, her personal spaces, and her use of language (Mairs 110–11). For her, space and femaleness come together in an intimate, familiar and productive relationship. It is this kind of relationship that I find in these depictions of Victorian women, particularly in these novels by Victorian women authors.

The nature of space itself—particularly as I am seeing it as a realm of possibilities—dovetails with recent studies of female development in the novel. Susan Fraiman writes that she imagines "the way to womanhood not as a single path to a clear destination but as the endless negotiation of a crossroads". Reflecting their individuality, women take differing paths, which are continuously reconfigured (Fraiman x). Fraiman's perspective for looking at women within the novel of development suggests an underlying regard for inherent possibilities and alternatives in women's narratives. Thus attention to the artistic and narrative use of spatial composition as a way of opening up such possibilities seems especially apt.

Considering this study's joint focus on art and literature, my research design initially makes use of art historical methodology. As delineated by Erwin Panofsky in *Meanings in the Visual Arts* (1955), I will first analyze my selected art works through an iconographical mode. Panofsky first breaks this method into pre-iconographical description, followed by an iconographical analysis. The final step, described by Panofsky as "iconology," then draws relations to trends,

cultural context, literary correlations, etc. This style of reading the iconography of the painting then relating it to a cultural context seems to be an appropriate method for investigating the symbolism and spatial dynamics of these Victorian works. I will sharpen this method through use of a structuralist approach as seen in Rosalind Krauss's 1977 *Passages in Modern Sculpture,* viewing the ways structure of form affects meaning.

I wish also to incorporate into my methodology a cultural or post-structuralist approach, as represented by art historian Griselda Pollock. This post-structuralist stretch into semiotics and signification will offer a consideration of gender and power that lies beneath the choices made in most artistic productions.

These methodologies for the paintings will also apply to my approach to the literature. In other words, I plan to give close readings of the novels (or the portions of the novels most directly related to the female protagonists) with a semiotic consideration of the significance of signs, coupled with a cultural/feminist approach that seeks a context within Victorian society for female positions, domestic life, and roles in the novel.

This parallel research design allows for valid connections between the art and literature to surface and to be discussed on a common plain—as artistic responses to Victorian society, representations of gender, and locations of resonating symbols.

This project promises to further sharpen our view of nineteenth-century women's perspectives on themselves, and it will also contribute to the ongoing work of decoding representations of women that are relevant to both the nineteenth and the twentieth century. Because it will take a visually-oriented approach to three Victorian women writers and their works, this project involves communication between two different discourses; by incorporating art historical approaches with literary criticism, it will recognize and use the connections that existed between paintings and novels. In previous studies, such intertextuality has been considered only within the realm of the novel. But I wish to look instead at ways in which novels and paintings seem to share a language; thus, I hope this project will add to the continuing re-evaluation of generic boundaries.

CHAPTER ONE

Windows to Women's Worlds, Portals to their Imaginations: Visual Female Spaces in Victorian Art

> Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination.
>
> —Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (xxxii)

As Bachelard suggests here, individuals claim and make spaces their own. After that initial contact, that period of dwelling in a space—regardless of length of time—the space no longer remains empty. Instead, it becomes the locus or posit for thought, imagination, and personal claim. One often imbues a place with a feeling of one's self, something of one's essence. The space ultimately becomes charged with an element of that personal presence. In life, this is a constant flow of energy and movement. Some places temporarily hold that charge; others that we longer inhabit become more saturated and personal.

This description may either seem rather philosophical and speculative, or it may seem so familiar that it need not be stated. One's perception is likely tied into one's general depth of observation and connection to one's surroundings. For many artists, though, perception of space and its particular dynamics are essential to the composition, life, and meaning of their work. Rosalind Krauss writes of the ways space is integral to the organic nature of three-dimensional modern art forms, by likening the emergence of energy from a central space to a tree trunk's concentric age rings (Krauss 253). Spatial composition also arranges pictorial shapes and lines, and blocks of color, light, and value. Depth and perspective are constantly moved and shifted, manipulating the sense of space a two-dimensional, pictorial surface can provide. Beyond those common organizational functions, space becomes an even more important and vitalizing

force as the shapes and forms become recognizable entities—the material, the natural, and the human. Space then becomes an element of definition, meaning, and importantly, possibility.

This description of space and its dynamics can, of course, apply to artistic work from any period. The ways it functions are universal; the meanings that arise are where the particulars lie. It thus follows that the art of the Victorian period, perhaps best known for its detailed three-dimensional or illusionistic imagery and symbolism, would employ spatial composition as a telling element of meaning. In this way, visual elements of Victorian paintings suggest literal ways of reading individual meanings into their compositions. In this section, as throughout this study as a whole, I wish to look at the ways spatial composition and dynamics suggest meaning in particular for the female figure. In addition to depicting certain Victorian living conditions and elements of the social and psychological milieu of the time, the spaces women occupy and inhabit in these paintings may hold, as Bachelard describes, elements of their energy and imaginations.

As a general background, Victorian art from the mid-1800s through the later decades of the century does not provide a unified style, objective, or movement. Rather, different movements existed simultaneously with varied artistic inspirations and social regard. The Pre-Raphaelites came into being at mid-century, existing in several waves as the group of artists varied and explored different strains of inspiration and influence. In essence, the artists of this movement are known for their close observations of nature, the deep influence of artistic and social critic John Ruskin, and the depiction of scenes and rendering of form inspired by Medieval, Arthurian, and Shakespearean legends and literature. As a whole, the group can be seen as artists of both the imagination and of observation. The Aesthetic/Victorian Renaissance artists focused often on classical themes, forms, moods, and styles, often depicting characters or events from Roman or Greek mythology. While several artists from this period were also members of the Academy, others' styles indicated a cautious movement into modernism. The Academic/Social painters depicted traditionally-rendered, familiar scenes of Victorian life, either within domestic settings or in society at large. Regardless of movement or style, each group responded to and commented upon their society and times. Often these very different painters exhibited together, co-mingling their approaches and artistic responses for their viewers.

For this study, I made selections from this vast and varied group of artists and artworks. I narrowed my selection first to those images that focused on women and presented them in some kind of close relationship either to their surroundings or to other individuals. While all paintings incorporate space into their compositional choices, I tried to select works in which space seemed a

predominant organizational or stylistic element. Keeping in mind that this visual survey is meant to eventually draw comparisons and connections to several women's novels of the period, I selected paintings that either emphasized typical domestic spaces or opened creative or imaginative possibilities for women within this format. Also, this selection attempts to represent both known female and male artists of the period. While the connections will be drawn only to female novelists, it would seem unbalanced and incomplete to disregard either gender when it came to the selection of artists. The male artists were predominant at the time and offer most of the familiar and studied images of the period. Professional Victorian female artists were just struggling to become noticed and accepted members of the artistic community, similar to attempts by female writers in the period; their works are important both to complete the overall perceptions of nineteenth-century women and to note any variance when women are depicted by their own gender. I hope for this selection of paintings both to be a representation in microcosm of the artwork of the period and to offer in particular the artistic acknowledgment that space may operate as a visual correlative for the female mind and imagination.

To impose some kind of order on these selected works, I have divided them into certain groups. These groups are by no means restrictive. In fact, as I made my placement decisions, I found many areas to overlap with common elements and shared possibilities for interpretation. Yet, to offer some direction through the analysis, these groupings consider a general and overarching theme that runs through the works. I will first look at paintings that emphasize women in domestic, often enclosed or interior, spaces. Then I will look at women placed in a few characteristic Victorian outdoor environs, for the most part extensions of the home. The next grouping will emphasize women engaged in some kind of creative activity in artistic spaces. Lastly, I will look at women in "symbolic" spaces and their implications. With this progression in mind, I find it interesting to note that all of the spaces take on symbolic significance, not just the "fantasy" or more non-conventional compositions of the last grouping.

Before addressing the specific images, I want also to draw attention to art critic and historian Griselda Pollock's essay "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity" as an overall consideration for the gendered choice of spaces. Pollock considers artists' choices of locations for scenes, and questions if male and female artists choose the same sites. She regards 'spaces' first as locations. Focusing on the impressionists, she notes that female artists tend to situate their subjects in private areas, domestic spheres.[1] When the female artists do venture into public domains, these spaces are areas of "bourgeois recreation," such as seasides or parks, or the scenes involve working-class women laboring for a bourgeois household (Pollock, *Vision* 56). Meanwhile, Pollock notes the male impressionists frequenting and representing public spaces, such as bars, cafes,

backstages, and streets. She terms these spaces "socially fluid" (56). Concurrently, Pollock considers the spatial order or structure within the painting—angles of vision, framing devices, boundaries, compression of space—when determining the position of the subject, artist and viewer (62–63). She goes on to suggest a phenomenology of space that lends meaning and value to the positioning; space is represented sensorily rather than abstractly (65). These sensory and visual cues allow for varied inflections of response and relations to social processes (65–66).

Although Pollock's investigation of space and her argument about the female artist's position in relation to spatial representation focuses on the Impressionists, the questions she asks about spatial significance and her general gender assignment of locational subjects holds true to the English Victorian period as well. Deborah Cherry notes Pollock's mapping of 'spaces of femininity' as encompassing the "psychic as much as social and economic formations" (Cherry 123). As Pollock notes, the spaces consist not only of what is represented, but also of social and psychic interactions (Pollock, *Vision* 66). In sum, Pollock's observations confirm the validity of space as a recognizable component of a painting's structured energy and meaning in a gendered sense and the correspondance of that to actual practice.

Domestic Spaces

I will begin with a grouping of paintings that are set in what may be considered domestic or interior spaces. Along with the dimensions of the physical space itself (i.e. enclosed interiors, recognizable rooms, etc.), these paintings may be considered "domestic" for the activity or interaction occuring within the space. Both male and female artists seem comfortable and accustomed to depicting women in such spaces. This is not unusual for the time especially considering the accepted relegation of the sexes into "separate spheres"—men employed and active in the public world, women remaining within the private, domestic realm. Joseph A. Kestner asserts that 'masculinism' accepted the dominant role of men and the separation of spheres (Kestner, *Masculinities* 5). This separation signified more than spatial division; women's roles as virtuous wives, mothers, and daughters included creating a peaceful domestic sphere, which protected men's morality and gave them strength to battle the outside public world.[2] If, as John Ruskin implied, women could do this within their own individual families, the nation of England as a whole could operate more peacefully and effectively. Lynda Nead reasserts this connection, especially with regard to representations of domesticity, by noting that the image of the respectable home upheld the perception of class and gender—one that would insure the future of England (Nead, "The Magdelen" 76, 81). Thus, the placement of

women in domestic spaces in art commented on their societal, familial, and often moral, roles and carried much weight.[3]

The first painting I will look at in this grouping does 'uphold' the separate spheres relegation: yet, like Egg's *The Travelling Companions* as mentioned in the Introduction, this work emphasizes and values women's relationships and their privatized space. Margaret Carpenter was one of the few long-standing professional Victorian women artists—her work hung frequently at the Royal Academy—and was consistently considered to be among the best of the female artists of the period.[4] Her 1839 painting *The Sisters* depicts two young women in an interior room, only distinguished by a heavily ornate wooden chair, a table with a book stand, and a corner portion of an open window that overlooks some tree branches. The two young women are seen in close proximity to the viewer from the waist up; it is as if the viewer were seated close within the same plane. One of the young women is standing with one hand curved around the book on the stand and the other hand possibly curved toward or around her sister.[5] The standing sister's gaze looks directly at her sister, at her face, at her eyes. The seated sister looks intently with a contemplative expression at the propped book, her right hand fingering the pages, her left quietly placed on the folds of her dress.

Compositionally, Carpenter places the two sisters in a close space, both to each other and to the viewer, creating an intimate relationship in both respects. Also, Carpenter arranges the two figures in a triangular pattern together with the large, open book. Each form overlaps the other, either with a sleeve, a hand, or a page. Their shapes form that connected triangular pattern but so do their gazes. The standing figure looks at her sister; the seated figure focuses on the book; and the open pages can be imagined to reflect back at each figure. This arrangement implies a connection between the sisters and with the knowledge assumed housed in this book.

The gaze of the standing figure looks so directly and sensitively at her sister that it seems to emphasize in some way her role as supporter, physically of the book and personally of her sister's endeavors. This exchange appears to reinforce the source women are to each other of support, strength, and encouragement. Carpenter does stay within the confines of an accepted women's sphere—a domestic space containing a quiet, private activity. Yet, she depicts a deceptively quiet, simultaneously intense connection—one that women could only provide for each other, even beginning at an early age. What makes the painting powerful is that Carpenter uses an accepted and usual setting for this advocation of female connection and continued learning. Her painting's subject and its use of space to connect the figures and to intensify the relationship with the viewer all focus in on this "other" female role—support within their gender—and the importance of women's mental activity. It implies an exten-

sion to the world beyond the small glimpse we receive through the open window. The open window—through its rectangular shape and hazy natural view—seems to operate as an extension of the book suggesting a link between these worlds.

Victorian Renaissance painter Frederick Leighton approaches two works with a similar closeness that draws the viewer into intimate range with the female figures: *Mother and Child* (*Cherries*)(1865) and *Music Lesson* (1877). *Mother and Child* feels especially intimate, as if the viewer were known to be there, welcomed and accepted, present at the same carpet level as the figures. The mother reclines on an ornately patterned carpet; her right hand props her head and her left creates a niche for her nestling daughter. The canvas crops the mother's feet, but the daughter's are shown casually sockless and shoeless. In tandem, the two figures form a large horizontal light shape against another complicated background of a golden screen decorated with birds and a lush bouquet of white lilies. The daughter delicately feeds her mother the luscious cherries, both their mouths stained red. This scene feels all the more intimate and casual considering Leighton's usual classical treatment of mythological subjects; in contrast, this scene captures an idyllic moment between mother and child. Again, the figures are seen in an interior space but here set against an aesthetically-composed arrangement of pattern, gilding, and design.

Christopher Newall notes that Leighton's work, and Victorian art in general, may appear sentimental in its depictions of domesticity, a charge with Leighton feared (Newell 52). There is no denying that Leighton's painting is pleasing to the eye, conscious of every aesthetic element, both in the modulated creamy tones of the figures and the attention to detail in the back and fore grounds. Yet, I would remark that this capturing of joyful domesticity is part of this painting's strength. Leighton's spatial choices link both the figures and the viewer closely; that, coupled with the casual manner of the figures' dress and poses, suggests a delight in the relationship and a freeness to celebrate this mother/daughter connection. Rather than focusing heavily and critically on the creation of a domestic sphere of morality, sanctity and efficiency, Leighton's mother and child have taken over this beautiful corner as a place where they can just be themselves free of social roles and codes.

Yet, the closeness of the viewer's perspective coupled with the lushness of the scene, the figures, and the red cherries suggests an added slight eroticism directed toward the female figures from the male creator/viewer. The busyness of the patterned carpet buoying the figures combined with the background patterns—especially the strong vertical lines and bird wing designs—serve to concentrate the image, projecting the nestled pair even closer to the viewer. This closeness counteracts, for the viewer, some of the feeling of casual privacy that the mother and child seem to be experiencing. Perhaps this repeated aspect of

Leighton's paintings derives from the knowledge of an implied male viewer/audience, despite the subject matter.

Leighton's *Music Lesson* reinforces this mood and meaning. Again, as in both previous paintings, the viewer is drawn into the action of the painting in close proximity to the woman and child. The two figures form a pyramidal shape that encompasses almost the entire canvas. Their decorative clothing drapes widely and casually across the ledge they sit on and across the canvas. As in Carpenter's painting, *Music Lesson* focuses on a creative and learning interchange between the two female figures. As in both Carpenter's and Leighton's paintings, the intricate spaces near the center of the canvas are created by the enclosing arms of the figures; here, the older female, perhaps a mother or older sister, reaches around to tune the instrument with one hand and tenderly holds the girl's fingers with her other, as if to instruct her how to pluck the strings. Again, the two figures have bare feet, and although dressed beautifully, are not laced up in usual tight Victorian decorum. Though definitely set in an interior, the ledge and background do not seem part of a usual bourgeois home. Yet, the close interaction between the two figures, their tenderness and familiarity, and their activity, the music lesson itself, are reminiscent of the home. Leighton's use of space here to link the figures, almost merge them, and bring them unselfconsciously close to the viewer, again creates a feeling of a particularly female space. Within this canvas, the females support each other, regardless of social roles and spheres, and encourage the pursuit of the mind and creativity.

Yet again, as in *Mother and Child*, despite the figures' assumed privacy, there exist some compromising elements. The viewer's close stance seems to be from a low position, looking up towards the figures, almost suggesting a privileged listener. The background space is comprised of columns—strong verticals that act as framing devices on either side of the figures. They almost project the figures even further forward as if upon the edge of the stage. While these elements do not alter the interaction between the two female figures or their domination of the canvas's composition, they do place the viewer, perhaps questionably, into their space.

At this point, it is important to take a look at two series of paintings that express the usual social expectations for women and the consequences for women when they transgress. Social painter George Elgar Hicks' 1863 *Women's Mission* series clearly depicts the familial roles that Victorian society expected women to fulfill. The three works present women as mother, *Women's Mission: Guide to Childhood*; as wife, *Women's Mission: Companion of Manhood*; and as daughter, *Women's Mission: Comfort of Old Age*. Even without examining each painting in great detail, it is clear to see that women in these paintings are depicted serving others unselfishly, accommodating others' needs, and fulfilling their roles to the utmost. Seen in a series with the emphatic title of *Women's*

Mission, there is no way of regarding even the first painting of mother and child in the same possibly unself-conscious, carefree, and private light of the previous paintings. Lynda Nead describes this triptych as depicting the roles of the feminine ideal, separate and collective roles that portray a 'unified' woman. Nead notes that it is the same woman defined in relation to three different men: son, husband, and father; the woman is seen at the same stage of life while the male is seen through his life cycle (Nead, *Myths* 12–14).

Looking at the central painting in slightly greater detail, it is possible to see how every element in this composition works to establish the virtues Victorian women are advocated to possess. There literally is no 'space' for other interpretation, for the female figure to claim space of her own. In *Companion to Manhood*, this ideal woman attempts to cling to her husband and comfort him in his grief, as indicated by the black rimmed letter and envelope grasped in his hand and cast on the floor. To her right stands the neatly arranged table with the ubiquitous family tea set and her husband's mail, all alluding to how well she daily attends to her domestic duties. Whatever her "mission", this woman's husband refuses to accept her comfort, lean into her, or garner any of her affection and strength. Her posture and figure are subordinate to her husband's as she clings to him, tries to support him, and gazes at him. His posture is self-contained and upright, choosing to lean more on the mantle—perhaps a material symbol of hearth, class, and his masculine social role—than on his wife.

The man as head of the family, the "model paterfamilias" as noted by Joseph Kestner (Kestner, *Masculinities* 141), constructed nineteenth century England's predominant notion of masculinity. Yet this Victorian woman must continue to offer her love and sympathy in this particular situation, reenforcing his masculine role, as she must do throughout their lives together. The viewer is close enough to be privy to this scene but does not seem included as in the previous paintings; rather, an appropriate distance is maintained in all three paintings of Hicks' series. In contrast to paintings in which the female figure seems to carve out a space of her own, the Hicks series shows the expected perimeters of her role and of her surroundings, whether it be a child's natural playground, the domestic hearth, or the sick bed. Also, in each canvas, the woman's gaze is completely fixated on the demanding object of her care. The depiction of space—between the individuals, the objects in the room, and with regard to the viewer—reflects the physical and psychological conditions all too familiar and upheld for the Victorian woman.

Augustus Egg's 1858 *Past and Present* series—*Misfortune*, *Prayer*, and *Despair*—provides yet another set of images for context and contrast. While this study chooses to look at images in which the female figures have in some way claimed personal spaces and possibilities, they show the price in terms of these quintessential images of the pervasive Victorian social codes and expectations.

Egg's series depicts a parable of the downward spiral that occurs when women stray from their virtues and follow their desires for sexual pleasure. *Misfortune* shows a once model wife and mother's decline as her husband discovers evidence of her affair. Prostrate on the floor, the woman pleads in agony; she lies across the floor diagonally with her pleading, clenched hands in the lower right corner closest to the viewer. It is as if her outpouring for mercy is as much for the viewer as it is for her shaken husband. Yet the downfall is already painted in detail—a wormy apple lies on the floor; her children's house of cards collapses; paintings on the wall include the Fall from Eden and an abandoned ship—all details a Victorian viewer was accustomed to searching for and reading in a canvas. Spatially, the father is confined in the corner of the painting, physically and symbolically trapped by the fallen body of his wife. Contrastingly, the two young children are left alone, exposed and vulnerable, with no physical or visual connection to either parent.

The other paintings in the series depict her children five years later mourning the loss of both parents and in prayer, gazing at a moon that is also above their mother in the last canvas. There the mother is seen, with the delicate trace of a small illegitimate child's feet showing from under her shawl, lying rejected under a tunnel by the water's edge. The woman, through her sexuality and fall, has become a victim, as are her punished abandoned children, all cast aside in despair.

Lynda Nead notes that the wife is referred to in impersonal terms in the painting's caption: "I hear *She* was seen on Friday last near the Strand, evidently without a place to lay her head. What a fall hers has been!"[6] Nead suggests that the impersonal pronouns indicate that the woman has given up her social and class rights through her infidelity (Nead, *Myths* 72). She also notes that the medical discourse of the period regarded unfaithfulness in women as an inheritable disease passed through the female line (74). Considering this background, it is interesting to see spatial composition in this series operating across canvases to link the figures and solidify the condemnation of the woman's actions, her violation of her roles and the domestic sanctity she should have protected. In other words, the events in *Prayer* and *Despair* are occurring simultaneously, the fates of the mother and her three children linked under a common domed sky and moon. The murky light of an industrial night sky is the only illumination. The curve of the tunnel and the square of the window emblemize a restricted vision of their futures, which now all of the females must share. There is no connection with the viewer as all the women look away or into their pain. Cast out of domestic security, these women seem to have no hope, either for survival or redemption. The use of space here joins the women in a common condemnation and fate. Neither the domestic space of the initial canvas nor the bleak promise of the outside world prove adequate. Once a

transgressor, the woman has no place. Again, this harsh imagery serves as a reminder of women's realities and how other artists' images may suggest something different.

While Hicks' and Egg's paintings depict certain realities of women's lives and the stricture of social roles, other paintings take those same social roles into question. Rebecca Solomon, professional female artist and sister to painter Simeon Solomon, stands out in many ways from the lists of other lesser known professional or amateur women artists. Rebecca and Simeon came from a well-off family, and as Deborah Cherry notes, Rebecca held a position as a woman artist of the 1850s-60s within London's Jewish community (Cherry 30). Unlike many other women artists who also shared familial artistic connections but felt hindered by them, Rebecca seemed to benefit from her brother's choice of career. It allowed her to leave the family home, live with Simeon, and pursue her own career (30–31). Rebecca Solomon's 1854 painting *The Governess* focuses on what Griselda Pollock would term a female space, that is the domestic/work space of the working woman. In a tight corner of a room, a loving, carefree, and somewhat flirtatious, bourgeois couple is flanked by their governess, dressed in mourning black, caring for a child. The governess sits close to open French doors, looking out onto a garden, filled with white lilies symbolizing feminine virtue, according to Susan Casteras (Casteras, *Images* 114). Casteras narratizes the contrast between the two females in regard to their moods, expressions, and dress. The lady of the house stands in the center of the canvas, assuming the tallest height in the work and a focus of attention. Casteras even suggests an element of romantic rivalry between the two females, perhaps inherent in their stances and the triangular arrangement of the figures.

Solomon's placement of the females in discrete, not overlapping, physical spaces emphasizes the social gap between these two women's identities. Yet, there may be need for a further gap as indicated by their demeanors. Cherry points out that despite the governess's condition of mourning and financial need, her pale skin, delicate hands and figure indicate that she is middle-class (Cherry 158). Cherry also notes that the *Art Journal* at the time of the painting's exhibit commented on the standing woman's flirtatious ways, in contrast to the governess' more modest behavior (158). The spatial choices made by this female artist first corroborate with Pollock's thoughts; women artists paint their familiar, socially-accepted areas. Also, Solomon's positioning of the two females within this space offers the dual female perspective of the subjects, plus her own added gender perspective. She illuminates the feminine virtues of both women—the pleasing wife alongside the modest, working governess. Her use of space to encircle and maintain two differing social classes and roles acknowledges the women's mutual dependence and their obligation to remain within these spheres. Yet, as a last more subversive point, Solomon's choice of a mid-

dle-class working woman set in a position of possible rivalry with the comfortable lady of the house also suggests some social commentary. Cherry notes that Solomon's and other women artists' depictions of governesses as middle-class preserved class status for these working women (159). Thus, Solomon dually and subtly represented two female figures in usual roles and expected domestic spaces, and suggested a shift with regard to those identities. In addition, the governess is seated by the open window, granting her access to the outside world. The implied exterior may only be the protected garden, but it is real in contrast to the flowers on her employer's carpet.

One of the most sensitive and dramatic uses of space to portray and respond to Victorian women's—and possibly women from other times as well—lives is Jessica Hayllar's[7] 1886 *A Coming Event*, which illustrates a woman's transition into married life. The foreground focuses on the symbols of her wedding—the dress, veil, shoes, flowers, etc.—that will come to life and transform the bride into her new identity. Beyond this room in a long passageway sits the bride possibly speaking to her fiance—she is not yet at the point of married life. Beyond her stands an unidentifiable figure at the end of the hall, possibly signifying her past life and family. Hayllar's depiction seems very astute, for it is a transformation to go from single to married woman, an exchange of one identity for another. Hayllar expresses this change through her spatial composition, the depth of the long hallway, and the largeness of the looming wedding accoutrements in contrast to the small figures. In contrast to the already mentioned paintings, Hayllar's does not focus on large, identifiable figures, expressions, or dynamics. It is the space itself—the rooms, the long passageway, the thresholds, the high ceilings—that command the viewer's attention, implying a focus on the journey and the identity of the woman who occupies these spaces. All of the openings to the outside world—the tall open shuttered windows casting light into the room and hallways—are located on the far left side of the painting, flanking but not obstructing the direct pathway. For the Victorian viewer, this painting may have had a direct meaning and implication—the transfer of identity from single woman to wife—as suggested in the straight hallway. For the current viewer, that same allusion to transitions and passages through life—that same relation to space and the openness Hayllar's rooms and expanses also provide—may allow for a more autonomous female role in her own life's passage. The window openings cast light on that transition and provide alternative passages—existing as sideline possibilities.

As a bridge to the next grouping—paintings that focus on outdoor spaces—these last two works show female figures within interiors but gazing out windows to spaces beyond. It is interesting to note the tension that occurs when interior and exterior spaces oscillate for dynamic control of the painting. In both Jane Bowkett's 1860s painting *Preparing Tea* and John Everett Millais'

1851 piece *Mariana*, the female figure remains enclosed in her space, yet gazes out a window toward a suggested open exterior.

Looking first at Jane Bowkett's piece, one sees a young women, presumably mother and wife, standing by a small table set for tea. She almost absent-mindedly spreads butter and jam on the toast as she more fixedly looks out the window toward faint suggestions of vegetation and buildings. A cat lies at her feet, and her two daughters are to her back—one on the floor stoking the implied hearth, and the other entering the doorway with a pair of slippers in her hand. These preparations may suggest several situations. The slippers may belong to the children's father who is expected for tea, and perhaps the woman is gazing out watching for his return from the outside world. This would imply an expected scene of the maintenance of the separate spheres and women's roles, roles which the young daughters are already rehearsing. The depiction of home is warm, safe, and protected, everything in order, except perhaps the few stray signs of the women's mending tasks left out on the side table. This one slightly casual, or haphazard, element probably suggests that the woman is not awaiting another visitor for tea, such as a female friend, for then everything in the room would be in its proper place. Nevertheless, even if the woman were expecting company she would still be observing her usual domestic role as host and homemaker.

In the midst of this rather 'acceptable' scene of Victorian domestic homelife, the woman's gaze out the window feels especially melancholy and compelling. Despite the abundance of shapes, figures, actions, and elements in the painting, the viewer is most drawn to her gaze. The light coming through the window illuminates the woman's face and the front of her dress. Tonally, the light values of the window scene, her skin, dress, and table top are equal and united in one corner of the painting. Spatially, the woman's figure seems set partially in the darkened, busy interior and partially in the small yet open space of the window, curtain, and flooding light. This choice of spatial composition suggests that the woman may be gazing out that window with a longing for the space beyond it, the alluded to outside world. In this painting, the references to that world are slight—the expectant slippers, the brushstrokes that stand for the landscape, partial portions of window panes, and an outside scene primarily comprised by an open sky. Yet these are enough to occasion this woman's pause, and longingly direct gaze. As in Rebecca Solomon's painting, this woman artist uses the element of space in particular to both place the female figure in her accustomed role while subtly suggesting other possibilities for her thoughts.

In *Mariana*, an early Pre-Raphaelite painting by John Everett Millais, inspired by Tennyson's poem by the same title, the female figure stands dramatically in the center of the canvas, hands placed on her lower back and her body

in an ache-releasing stretch. She stands dominantly in an unusual interior. To her right, in the darkest portion of the canvas, stands a small table set up as an altar or shrine with icons, metal chalices, and a hanging lit candle casting a mysterious illumination. She stands at another table covered with a white cloth and a portion of patterned embroidery set aside, while leaves are scattered on the table and at her feet. It looks as if she has risen from a sturdy wooden bench covered in rich red cloth, and nearby on the hard wood floor scurries a small brown mouse. Her gaze, much less direct than the woman's in Bowkett's painting, seems resigned as she looks out the partially clear, partially stained glass windows. Staring back at her are the close landscape of leaves and branches outside, and the stained glass Annunciation figures of the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary.[8]

Like the character in Tennyson's poem, this woman Mariana seems drained, her body and mind both racked with weariness. The objects in the room only serve to heighten that mood, that loss of energy and spirit. She has no attachment to them. Her only connection is to her despair, which in Tennyson's poem is explained in her repeated lament: "My life is dreary,/ He cometh not…/ I am aweary, aweary,/ I would that I were dead!".[9] Her enclosed space supports that weariness on all sides.

Lynne Pearce notes that attention to interior spaces is a pervasive feature in Pre-Raphaelite art, and that these spaces relate to the female figure's psychological or social condition (Pearce 63). In *Mariana* particularly, Pearce notes that the room becomes an overt symbol of her "enforced imprisonment;" yet, often interior space is associated with "comfort" (63). Considering these observations, it seems significant to see how the interior space in this painting reflects both the woman's psychological state (as suggested in her pose and the symbolic references in the details) and her physical conditions, and how her longing, however weakened, is toward the open clear portion of the window—to 'other' spaces, as in Bowkett's painting. Whether Millais himself had any insight or not into women's longings for more than these claustrophobic interiors, though questionable and provocative, is not my main issue here. The painting tells its own story, leaves its significant mark, as the woman even in her limited conditions looks out—and within.

Outdoor Spaces

As seen in the last two examples, a suggestion of outdoor, exterior spaces in a domestically-set painting creates a spatial tension, both in terms of composition and of vista or perspective for the central female figure. In the following group of paintings in which the female figure is set outdoors, she does not have to literally imagine a space other than her domestic enclosures. Sometimes this

openness and her position in it suggests a release, both physically and mentally. Yet with that in mind, I choose to begin here with a painting that sets up a contrast, an outdoor space that feels as restricted as, or more so than, any four walls could be.

In early Pre-Raphaelite Charles Allston Collins'[10] 1851 painting *Convent Thoughts*, the central female figure is a nun in white, flowing habit, standing enclosed in a cloistered garden lush with flowers. Already the social roles, expectations, and life conditions differ from those of the secular women in the previous paintings, so comparisons are not quite parallel. However, Collins' spatial choices in this painting—the overall atmosphere of enclosure—may color how one sees other outdoor spaces depicted. To this contemplative nun's back stands a solid, impassable brick wall, also lined with thick hedges. There is no indication of a gateway, and the glimpse of sky is minimal and flat. This convent inhabitant is surrounded by lush flowers—lilies representing her purity and roses symbolic of the Passion—but she stands as an austere, nearly-wan figure amidst them. Even the goldfish that swim in her reflection take on a blanched hue in contrast to the other reddish-golden ones. She holds her sacred prayer book open to an image of the crucifixion, but her expression mingles faithful reflection and troubled introspection. This placement of the female figure in a walled garden relates back to the medieval tradition of the *hortus conclusus*, a tradition that the Victorians adopted as a space to enclose their females.[11] The medieval walled garden was regarded "as an attribute of feminine purity, a sacred space where the modern madonna inhabited an insular sanctuary of artificially preserved maidenhood" (Casteras, *Images* 87). Walled gardens in Victorian times became a way of enclosing women and creating a contained, virtuous feminine sphere. In this sense *Convent Thoughts* does not differ greatly from other familiar depictions of bourgeois, model Victorian ladies also seen in gardens, beautiful but safely enclosed.[12] It is noted that Collins initially was to paint a more romantic garden image of a woman inspired by his love for Maria Rossetti, sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Yet when she refused him and chose to follow her religious vocation, Collins chose to represent womanhood as this cloistered nun (Marsh, *PR Women* 34). This choice of depiction and illustration of space expresses Collins' and his culture's suspicion of women who choose not to fulfill their roles as model wives and mothers. The space itself holds none of the possibilities that even the faintest of suggestions holds out for Jane Bowkett's woman, for instance.

Pre-Raphaelite Arthur Hughes also uses an outdoor space and the suggestions of a garden to depict his central female figure, and her psychological state in particular, in his 1855–56 painting *April Love*. In this work, two young lovers are figured stealthily hidden in a garden overhang. The female is the predominant standing figure, with the male seen only in shadows sitting by her side,

head downcast. The woman's eyes are also averted and tear laden. The viewer is within intimate range of the figures; yet, the overhang structure shows a lit opening or passage in the back, creating greater depth. Susan Casteras asserts that this painting, in its depiction of love and disappointment, offers a typical Victorian portrayal of a vulnerable female under the strain of her emotions (*Images* 95). The spatial representation supports this view of the woman and her love relationship. The wall is symbolic firstly because in Victorian art it often functioned to create a tangible, courting barrier. This wall, though, is not solid. It does have an opening, and seems to offer only temporary shelter and privacy. The painting suggests the fragility of love and of this relationship with the fallen rose petals at the woman's feet. This is 'April Love,' a spring freshness which will inevitably turn with the season's passing. Ironically, the clinging ivy also suggests the familiar value of 'constancy.' Outside of the relationship's outcome, the spatial closeness enhances the viewer's connection with the female figure. While the wall may give her strength to bear her burden, the physical openings suggest those symbolic aporias in which potential vulnerability may enter. In turn, this opening is not a solid link to the outside world, as it is blocked by the couple's despair. Hughes's depiction of the wall allows for alternate readings of both the female's emotional strength and the questionable longevity of this love.

The rest of the paintings selected for this grouping belong to the cottage/cottage garden genre of Victorian social paintings, realistic yet idyllic depictions of English country life done in the later decades of the 1800s. Charles James Lewis' painting *Mother and Child*[13] could in several ways be compared to the first canvas in Hicks' *Woman's Mission* series. A mother sits in an outdoor alcove near her cottage and holds her baby playfully and tenderly. The woman is seen absorbed in her motherly duties, and is still linked to her nearby domestic environs. Yet, as in Hughes' and Bowkett's paintings, *Mother and Child* is composed spatially to provide links to areas beyond the immediate surroundings. The viewer's eye may go equally to two places in this canvas—to the active figures and to the lit doorway just beyond them. This passage way suggests further building structures, natural landscapes, and light. Though this small opening probably only shows more of the land and property of this woman's dwelling, its presence literally opens up her space. She does not feel contained physically, despite cottage walls, fences, and a heavy overhang of branches. This physical opening then may suggest other possibilities for this woman; this is not to say a simple opening creates other roles for women, or suggests that she rejects her role as mother. Perhaps it is just a simple indication that her humanness does not stop at that role. At the most basic level, this woman does not feel physically contained or imprisoned. Similarly, the light focusing on her is repeated in the distant pathway, suggesting that connection between spaces.

There are passage ways and spaces for her to 'move' in and not just wish for in her mind.

Helen Allingham's watercolor *Cottage at Brook, near Witley*[14] shows the small, somewhat distant, figure of a woman before her country cottage, and the even smaller crouching figure of a child near her. Compositionally, the largest area of the canvas is devoted to the natural surroundings, in particular tall, expansive tree tops that tower above the cottage. In essence, Allingham's work depicts an idyllic country scene; the faint trace of smoke from the cottage implies a cozy and well-operating home; the vegetation and wild flowers appear lush and fresh. The cottage automatically 'breathes' domesticity, recapturing times gone by when life was simpler, more natural, and family-centered. Allingham was a productive, professional artist; Cherry notes that her cottage subjects reinforced an honored image of English life and tradition (Cherry 176). In the midst of these connotations, what seems interesting compositionally in this painting is the placement of this small female figure in the center of the foreground. She enters the painting from the 'domestic' background, her cottage. But Allingham sets her on a path, one that leads out of the painting and to the viewer, into a vast, natural area. The artist here seems captivated by expansive spaces and scale—the total height of the trees, the indication of open sky even above that, and meadow grasses that extend widely in either direction. After seeing the majority of paintings set in interior enclosures, with or without small openings, Allingham's painting offers abundant space, perhaps especially in the small, winding path that leads the female figure off the paper.[15]

Myles Birket Foster's watercolor *An Afternoon in the Garden*[16] continues to project that pastoral, domestic feeling. Its use of space differs, though, from either Lewis' or Allingham's pieces. In contrast to them, Foster's cottage garden is enclosed. While there are elements of sky, tree tops, and distant vegetation, there is no definitive opening or passage. The women are seen against a backdrop of the cottage walls, corners of the building, shadows of the overhanging roof, and the garden plot extending to the right. Much contains them. Yet, the figures in this painting—three adult female figures and one small child—are pictured tending the home and garden together. What struck me about this rather conventional garden scene was how these women are depicted at individual tasks in a communal atmosphere. These female figures seem quietly to reign over this space—and 'to reign' not just in the expected notion of separate spheres. This well-kept garden may be a part of their duties as women creating domestic life. Yet, in the painting they occupy this space in a more personal manner through their collective activity, and perhaps pride in their work. The space becomes theirs, as if they have staked a personal claim on it of their own designs.

Reinforcing that feeling of claimed, personal space, the last painting in this grouping suggests that feeling—and even brings us full circle as again interior and exterior spaces intermingle. In Walter Langley's 1879 watercolor painting *A Cottage Garden*, two women are seen conversing at a cottage door, one mostly within the home's threshold, the other standing at an outside wall in the garden. The figures are small in scale compared to the cottage walls and roof, and the lush, broad, green leaves of vegetation in the garden. Despite the difference in scale, the focus of energy in the painting occurs between the two figures—a face-to-face exchange; a complex network of lines and shapes depicting the doorway, the wall, window openings, and the figures themselves. This focus on a small space within a larger painting again emphasizes the dynamic at work when interiors and the more vastly depicted exteriors come together. In Langley's piece, it is not just one woman looking out from her enclosed, domestic existence. Rather, the two women conversing sets up a flow of space and interchange—the interiors and exteriors merging in a way that closed window panes cannot enable. And as in Foster's painting, the space alone does not make this occur; it is the women themselves as they come together, creating and enabling the spaces they inhabit.

Creative/Artistic Spaces

In the last section, women's presence in and gazes towards outdoor spaces led them toward contemplation or occupation of increased 'open' conditions. However, it is important to note that despite these representations, the appropriateness of open landscapes for women, and for women artists in particular, was much debated. Deborah Cherry acknowledges that many discussions arose over the suitability of the landscape as either a subject or a site for woman artists (Cherry 118). This consideration brings together the last section with the next—a focus on depictions of creative or artistic spaces for women. Notably they are all interiors, by both the male and female artists. Considering Griselda Pollock's delineation of male and female spaces in art, it would have been a doubly daring, or unacceptable, move to represent a working, female artist in an open, and public, sphere.

I begin with an image and an artist that are familiar and much discussed—*The Lady of Shalott* sketched in 1853 by Elizabeth Siddall. Siddall was directly tied into the emerging Pre-Raphaelite group in the 1850s as frequent model to the artists; inspiration and lover to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, one of the Brotherhood's original founders; and an artist and poet in her own right.[17] The image and story of 'The Lady of Shalott' as inspired by Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem was also familiar to the Victorian audience and frequently interpreted by artists.[18] Elizabeth Nelson asserts that the popular poem embodied the Victorian

ideal of womanhood, linking it to domestic life. The home itself became a type of sacred *hortus conclusus* with the woman at its center, a spiritual figure able to serve her husband and family—and by extension, Victorian England (*Ladies of Shalott* 6–7). Nelson's observations seem to tie together many strains of thought already mentioned—namely the social attitudes and women's roles of the time, and ways the Victorians represented them artistically. Tennyson's literary creation, as interpreted through the artists of the period, became the locus for views and beliefs about women and their creativity.

Siddall's interpretation of this story, the artistic weaver figure of 'The Lady of Shalott,' is notable for the interchange between interior and exterior spaces that is integral to the poem as well. Siddall's 'Lady' sits working at her loom, and is caught at the moment when she looks out the window at the outside world and her weaving flies wildly apart. Siddall's figure is drawn in a plain, flowing gown, and sitting in an equally simple room. Deborah Cherry notes this austerity and spaciousness in contrast to many other interpretations of this scene in which the woman and her surroundings are painted sumptuously (Cherry 190). This is a definite workspace for this female artist, not a richly decorated retreat where some weaving gets done. Elaine Shefer also remarks that Siddall's interior is "simply a room where a woman is working at her loom"; she adds that the room belongs to the woman rather than the period, and that it locates the woman in the present rather than in the past or in any other meaning (Shefer 98). The window to the outside, tempting world is the Lady's downfall in this tale and image. As she looks directly at the world instead of at the mirror image, she forfeits her work. Thus, the relationship here between interior and exterior space—public and private; masculine and feminine; external and artistic—is especially wraught. Open exteriors are forbidden; yet, the woman chooses to look. The crucifix is also problematically placed before the window, indicating the trouble in focusing on piety and purity when it is right before this tempting world vision. In sum, Siddall's piece is important here as a way of viewing the conflicted cultural attitudes toward space for women, and in particular for the woman artist.

While Siddall's drawing, and most of the works in this section, depict the woman as artist or creative figure, Frederick Leighton's 1864 work *The Painter's Honeymoon* [Figure 1] shows the woman as 'companion' to the process, along with being a companion piece to *Golden Hours*. Though in both of these canvases the woman shares her space with a male figure and is not the artist herself, she does claim her portion of the space and creative energy. This woman is not model or mere muse, though the title implies that she and the painter are newlyweds. In *The Painter's Honeymoon*, she sits close, almost merged with, the male figure. Her dress, in tones of rich golds, bronzes and greens, dominates the canvas with its voluminous folds and drapes. The fabric also absorbs and re-

flects the light source entering from the upper right of the painting. The light delicately illuminates her face—the features turned away from the viewer in *Golden Hours*. Yet, her pose and gaze seem just as private and directed, as she and her painter husband sit with their cheeks touching, each looking at his sketching. They are so absorbed in each other and in his work that there is no acknowledgement of the viewer, despite the close range. What seems key to making this a powerful and not just a sentimental or romantic piece is the joined hands of the couple. The light source emphasizes the tender clasp of hands near the center of the canvas. This lighting and placement focuses the viewer's eye on their hands and almost hallows their union. By holding her husband's hand as the other one actively sketches, this woman appears drawn into the creative energy and action. The subtle merging of the tones of their clothes makes it hard to distinguish where one figure ends and the other begins. The active and undulating folds of her dress as they catch the light seem the manifestation of the creative energy moving through them. These details seem to suggest one mind, one creative spirit, at work, formed from these two figures. This woman has asserted her place as partner and participant in life and in art in this painting—not a mere observer.

Many of the paintings in this section seem noteworthy at a basic level for choosing to show women at a creative or artistic activity and not just at their familiar and expected domestic duties. That choice of subject matter coupled with the fact that many of the artists making that decision were female artists compounds their significance. In Carpenter's *The Sisters*, the relationship between the two young women seems supportive and emblematic of female friendships. In Maud Hall Neale's 1880s painting *Two Women in an Aesthetic Interior*, the two female figures have even more so created an artistic space for themselves. Each woman is at her own creative endeavor—one plays the piano while the other reads and listens—yet their presence appears to support each other. Also, this interior does not appear to be a 'functional' room, such as a dining room, bedroom, or parlor. Rather, it seems devoted to artistic pursuits and is decorated for their inspirations with paintings on the wall, fresh flowers, and patterned cloths. Deborah Cherry notes that domestic life was not always defined around 'family life', but also included other partnerships between women. In this way, Cherry sees Neale's painting as creating a space for women's friendships and interactions (137). The communal and personal feel of these women's space is even more alive and charged than those depicted in the cottage garden paintings of Foster and Langley. The space in Neale's painting seems to belong thoroughly to these women; it sanctions their creativity, houses their personal connection, and is created initially by them, as seen in all their chosen aesthetic elements. Their space is accentuated by the objects that surround and support them: a gallery of hung paintings; live fresh flowers and

plants aesthetically arranged; pottery and draperies; and the obvious creative elements of the book and piano. The viewer is allowed to observe this scene but is at a respectful distance, noted by the scope of this painting. The space continues to belong to these women as *they* seem to have created it. These women have claimed this space and fully occupy it.

Neale's aesthetic interior is a personal one, appearing to be in a home, providing a place where these women can generally create and maintain an artistic atmosphere. Jessica Hayllar's 1887 piece *Finishing Touches* depicts a single female figure actively involved in painting in an elaborate yet home setting. Her palette is in hand, an imposing easel is set up before her, and a still life arrangement of scattered flower blossoms and plants sits on a heavy wooden table. Deborah Cherry notes that this is a portrait of Jessica Hayllar's younger sister Edith, also an exhibiting artist, at work in what was the family home, Castle Priory Wallingford, from 1875 to 1899.[19] Again, it seems initially significant to see a female artist at work in a painting, especially for a professional artist who exhibited at the Royal Academy, like Hayllar. It does show the woman at work at a more accepted genre of painting for female artists, the still life and flower study. Note that this artist is not painting out on the landscape, or anywhere else 'unseemly.' What does seem interesting is Jessica Hayllar's division and use of space to break up the usual feel of this domestic interior. The decorative screen flanking the female figure serves to create her own artistic space. It divides the room, sectioning off what is, at least temporarily, hers to work in as she paints. Unlike the myriad of decorations in Neale's work, this screen seems to be the token element that claims the woman's right to be present and involved in this endeavor. Also, the grand arched entry way to the room leads out to the hall where the viewer may see an open window. These entries, passages, and portals prevent the woman from seeming enclosed. The necessary natural light from outside can come in to facilitate her work, and opens up the general flow of space and energy that inhabits her work space.

Although it is important to see women arranging their domestic spaces to meet their creative needs, it is equally powerful to see a painting of women actually studying art in a school setting. Gertrude Offord's 1897 painting *Interior of the Old School of Art, Norwich* shows the location where she herself studied and went on to be an assistant pupil teacher (Cherry 62). Offord's experiences occurred near the end of the century when women artists were beginning to have the opportunity to teach and supplement their incomes (though their salaries and status were markedly lower than those of male teachers) (62). Yet, these opportunities only occurred after struggles throughout the 1800s to procure more professional instruction and exhibitors' rights; Cherry notes that most women who studied art prior to 1860 took classes at private art schools or studied under established artists, as opposed to formal Royal Academy training

that male students were granted (59). Cherry provides a comprehensive study of women's studies, struggles, and evolution in the arts during the nineteenth century. However, even this brief background suggests the novelty and significance of Offord's painting. The space itself is one prescribed for the sole purpose of women pursuing their artistic study. As in Neale's painting, there are two female figures at work, an indication of kinship and support at this shared, and even pioneering, activity. The space is cluttered with reliefs, statues, plants, flowers, vases—all the 'appropriate' subjects for female artists to study in lieu of a human model. In addition to the room's general setting, Offord arranges the spatial composition so that the viewer tours the room and focuses on the open door. The triangular expanse of open floor and the flowing arrangement of tables and easels lead to that open door. This spatial composition seems to invite the viewer into the room. Perhaps it is a way of inviting other women to follow their artistic urgings and pursue art professionally. It seems noteworthy that the focus of the painting's composition is on the path rather than any one individual. At this period, it is best an invitation made from one woman to another.

Again, I would like to end this grouping by coming full circle with the images and ending with another depiction of the initial Victorian female figure of The Lady of Shalott. This last image is Pre-Raphaelite William Holman Hunt's 1886–1905 *The Lady of Shalott*. Though part of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Hunt worked, and reworked, this painting near the end of his career. Again, this single painting has prompted much critical study, more than is needed for its inclusion here.[20] Yet, it is significant to see how this familiar image of Victorian woman, and woman artist, had evolved by the end of the century. This female figure is standing immensely in the middle of her weaving circle. Her most noticeable feature, her long reddish-brown hair, flies wildly above her head, as wildly as the broken threads of her weaving fly around the canvas. She is surrounded by religious and classical iconography, enclosing her in a passage of time and by allegories of others' downfalls. The viewer is close enough to observe this scene and probably feel the destructive energy ripping her weaving apart. Yet, this viewer is not within the circle; only the woman occupies it. This is not an easy task considering the plethora of images and judgments—a claustrophobic mixture of colors, images, and patterns—that surround her. But her immensity and strength dominate the space, defying the curse that limited her to a mirror image of the world.

Lynne Pearce also comments on the power of Hunt's image, her noticable physicality, wild hair, and look of defiance (Pearce 78). She notes the convergence of two viewpoints regarding this painting: the probable Victorian reading of this woman as 'out of control' and the twentieth century's applause for her defiance and boldness. She also notes that Nina Auerbach sees 'The Lady of

Shalott' as an example of an embodiment of both confinement and power claimed by feminism (72–73). Our reading a century later that inscribes this woman—this artist with so much energy that it is not containable—with power has much to do with the way she occupies her space. Her bower is far from the individualized, personal spaces of Neale, Hayllar, or Offord; she was put there with restrictions. Yet, her body and her energy physically and palpably fill this space despite the competition of images and assumptions. Even if she cannot claim her personal space there, she can occupy it to the fullest with her person and her energy.

Symbolic Spaces

In all of the paintings from the previous groupings—domestic interiors, outdoor environs, creative workplaces—space is used symbolically. Spatial composition appears to correspond to or draw attention to the female figure, her physical conditions/limitations, her psychological state, and often a direction for her thoughts and creative energies. This final grouping continues to explore that correspondence. I have termed them 'symbolic' spaces because the settings and locations are not typical representations of regular domestic life. Feminist post-modern geography, as best explored through the work of Lucy Sargisson, might regard these spaces as 'utopian,' ones created within a new, previously unimagined or formed, place (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 41). In many ways, the claim these female figures take of these non-conventional or imaginative spaces, and the suggested meanings derived from these compositions, seem to take on significance only after viewing the more 'realistic' ones. Sargisson would further assert that these symbolic, perhaps 'utopian,' spaces have transgressed the realistic ones (146). It is as if these compositions speak to their contrasting images—those that depict women's restrictions and offer no alternatives—and take that extra step. If imaginative space is difficult for Victorian women to come by, these canvases provide some outlets.

I begin with another work by a female artist of the period, Marie Spartali Stillman, who came from an Anglo-Greek family and is linked personally and professionally with the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Her 1885 piece *Love's Messenger* [Figure 2] can aptly begin an examination of symbolic spaces from the perspective of a professional female artist. This is not to suggest that her image is a more powerful or striking creation of a woman's space than those of Neale, Hayllar, and Offord. In fact, the realistic canvases that pictured women artists at work make a statement that is more bold and direct. Yet, viewing how a woman artist working from within an established male movement uses space to direct us to her female figure yields its own significance. Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn note that Pre-Raphaelitism provided women artists a space and

suuportive community in which to work (Marsh and Nunn 186). The inclusion of Marie Spartali Stillman's work confirms and affirms a woman's place to create within an usually exclusive male artistic movement.

In *Love's Messenger*, the female figure is seen in profile from within some kind of interior. Notably, to the left of the canvas is an open window pane looking out to a winding clear stream and groupings of tall slender trees. In the woman's right hand stands perched a white dove, and in her left a rolled note, presumably just delivered by the winged messenger. Immediately, this dove lends a sense of movement, flight, and freedom to the painting. This setting, the mysterious landscape, the woman's costumed apparel, and her enchanted visitor all create the elements of fantasy in this painting. One could weave any number of magical scenarios for this woman and the delivery of this communication. But aside from this painting conjuring up fantasy visions, Spartali Stillman designs a spatial composition, which I have noted before, that builds tension and energy between interior and exterior spaces. This female figure may be inside some enclosed room; still, the brilliant light tones of the landscape—in particular the meandering water—lead the viewer in and out of the woman's space. Our passage between interior and exterior spaces may lead us—as we the viewers experience the painting—to feel that the woman herself experiences that same passage, at least in thought. Compositionally, her head, in its reflective pose, is placed opposite the natural scene, creating a symmetry of light and dark values—her dark hair and the rounded treetops; the light sky and water and her luminous skin traced from her face, curving down her neck to her hand and wrist. Not only do the tones correspond but so do the shapes—the rounded shape of her hair and the trees, and the serpentine pattern of the water and her skin regions. This symmetry of tones and shapes liken the woman to the scene outdoors, alluding to a similar flow, passage, and energy that may exist within her.

Again in this section, I want to quickly insert a contrasting image so that it is not assumed that all 'fantasy' images of women use space to open the composition or the inherent possibilities signified for women. In general, my readings for many of these paintings should be understood as originating from my twentieth-century perspective accompanied by a healthy dose of nineteenth-century context. With that in mind, I would like to look at Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 1866 *Regina Cordium* as a representative, contrasting image of an artist's imagined space for his female subject.[21] This image is one of many of Rossetti's that enclose women in luxurious, yet boxed or cropped compositions. A wall or ledge covered with a lacey pattern encroaches on the female figure's space, allowing only a bust-length view. The gilded background adorned with an organic pattern and a medallion of a blindfolded cupid in the corner stands immediately to the woman's back, eliminating any sense of depth in the paint-

ing. The lack of space between fore and backgrounds creates a claustrophobic feeling. The tangible wall on which the woman's fingertips rest makes the woman feel confined or framed. Even the placement of the title tacked on the wall below the female figure makes her appear like a specimen on display, as perhaps a flower or pinned butterfly in a case, labeled and posted.

Ash notes that Alexa Wilding, a frequent model for the Pre-Raphaelites, sat for this painting (Ash, *Rossetti* Plate 20). Despite a specifically known model as source for this woman's face, she seems especially expressionless, possessing the characteristic Pre-Raphaelite physical attributes—full lips, pale skin, luxuriant red hair that sits low on the brow, and beautiful eyes that do not seem to look within her. Lynne Pearce and other feminist critics of the Pre-Raphaelites—Rossetti in particular—assert that these presentations of women with their lush features are testament to the male artists' visions of womanhood as objects of their desire rather than true portraits. Christina Rossetti, poet and sister to Dante Gabriel, did not refrain from suggesting similar thoughts, especially in reference to his many depictions of Elizabeth Siddall, as may be seen in her 1856 poem, "In an Artist's Studio". The physical feeling of confinement created in *Regina Cordium* leaves no sense of a correlation between space and the female figure's interior thoughts or imagination. There are no compositional elements that lead her away in any direction, not even further within herself. Andrew and Catherine Belsey also note the ways that this female figure is restricted and unable to relate to an external world (Belsey and Belsey 38). The context of the painting coupled with current critical view confirms that lack of possibility.

From Rossetti's "fantasy" image and its absence, or denial, of a woman's space, I move to a decidedly more realistic image that employs space symbolically. Edward Burne-Jones' 1883 portrait of his wife *Georgiana Burne-Jones* is one of the few more traditional seated portraits that this late Pre-Raphaelite/early Symbolist painter did. In this canvas Georgiana ("Georgie") is seen from the waist, painted in subdued yet rich tones of brown, sepia, and black. Although the viewer only sees part of the figure in this canvas, and there is the slight suggestion of a wooden railing or table top on which Georgiana's arms rest, she does not feel confined or framed as in Rossetti's composition. In her hands rests a book open to a page with a drawing of a pansy and an actual fresh pansy lies between the leaves. John Christian notes that the pansy signifies "undying love" in the language of flowers and was an appropriate symbol of Georgie's steadfast devotion to Edward and to sustaining their marriage (Wildman and Christian 260).[22] Again, while here an actual flower specimen is included as symbol in the painting, it does not serve to decorate or represent the female as ornament as in *Regina Cordium*.

Behind Georgie is an open doorway or passage to a room in which son Philip sits at his easel and daughter Margaret stands beside him. Suggested in back of them is another doorway, and perhaps even another opening hinted at with a streak of light. This 'telescopic' spatial composition and view is what appears symbolic and suggestive in this painting. The off-center placement of first the symbolic pansy, then Georgie's children, and then the undefined thresholds and portals suggests a chain of important aspects in this woman's life—marriage, commitment, children. However, those additional open doorways allude to a continuation—possibily infinitum—of elements held dear or important in Georgie's heart, mind, and life. Georgie herself seems cut off from the creativity; rather, it exists in line through her children. This pattern of spatial significance that Burne-Jones creates in this painting, coupled with its intimate context, may pay tribute to the complexities of mind, heart and imagination that he recognized in his wife.

Edward Burne-Jones' earlier 1876–79 painting of *The Annunciation* uses a similar spatial composition to depict this familiar scene of the Virgin Mary receiving God's message from the angel. The female figure stands strong yet apparently struck by the message as implied by her shift in standing position, her hand drawn near her heart, and her weighty, inward expression.[23] As in the later portrait of Georgiana Burne-Jones, the female figure stands off-center, toward the right edge of the canvas; to her side, and almost central to the painting, is another telescopic series of passageways, arches, and steps, again with a faint inference of light in the far background indicated with a single brushstroke. The subject of this painting is well-known—the announcement, contemplation, and subsequent acceptance by the Virgin of God's message that she will be the earthly Mother of the Son, Christ. It is an immediate moment accompanied by unfathomable contemplation and life-altering transformation for this woman. It appears that Burne-Jones' spatial design of the series of connecting passageways, which the female figure physically overlaps, creates a sense of depth and intricacy that parallels her imagined thought processes and spritual acceptance at that moment. Burne-Jones' figure is not boxed in an inescapable corner, even though it exists. She has 'room' to 'travel' in, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, if not physically as well. Perhaps Burne-Jones consciously used this similar composition—even the subdued, monochromatic sepia tones—when he depicted Georgie on canvas a few years later. This device—seemingly more than an ornamental division of painted planes to stimulate the viewer's eye—creates a palpable sense of depth closely and intricately linked to his female figures and their suggested interiority.

To further examine and emphasize Burne-Jones' use of this particular composition, it is interesting to look at his 1894 *Love Among the Ruins*.[24] Burne-Jones sets two rather melancholy and clinging lovers amidst the ruins of a ro-

mantic, intricately-styled stone building. Martin Harrison and Bill Waters suggest that the young lovers are newly aware of the fleeting nature of time and love (Harrison and Waters 107). With this general theme and mood in mind, it is interesting to note how this stone structure, which would represent strength and permanence in contrast to perhaps a typical seasonal garden, is represented in ruins. These stone walls do not suggest a space of strength and implacability. Rather, they seem to support the fragility of life and love that concerns these lovers. In a more positive sense, these stone walls are not devoid of life or romance. The filigree of flowers and cherubs around the main archway infuse the area with a sense of a nostalgic and romantic past. Flanking the figures are some green leafy vegetation and some thorny, yet blossoming rose vines. These vines may eventually take over the ruins and choke any other potential plant life. However, they are now in bloom, suggesting the slight presence of life. These angled walls also serve to privatize a little cove for the lovers. They are effectively separated from the outside world and its real pressures. Again in this canvas, Burne-Jones uses these intricate, curving walled spaces—the winding staircases, the series of doorways and portals opening into the background—as a visual correlative to the complex emotions and thoughts of the lovers. The viewer seems especially drawn to the female figure's emotions and contemplation as her eyes look out from the canvas. Burne-Jones has been criticized for creating 'expressionless' or similar faces in his female figures. Divorced from this complex spatial setting, these expressions may be read as blankness; however, these intricate passageways appear to work as reflections of the female figures' suggested interior life, offering possibilities beyond the immediate setting or any individual facial features.

There are two other Burne-Jones works that I wish to return to before closing this survey; yet, I would like to look first at two images by Frederick Leighton that treat symbolic space differently—his 1895 *Flaming June* and his 1889 *Invocation*. Leighton's works are representative of the Victorian Renaissance or Aesthetic depictions of women in the late decades of the 1800s. *Flaming June* is initially striking for the curved, nautilus-shaped, sleeping pose of the central female figure. Her legs in the foreground are large, immediate surfaces. She is perfectly entwined and self-enclosed. Leighton's characteristic drapery, perhaps Grecian in style, also works in this fashion: the tobacco-colored drape encloses her head in sleep and reverie; the brown drapes surround and cushion her body; and the luminous orange gown drapes her body, curving with her, and suggesting through its curves, the passages of her sleeping thoughts. The bright, glimmering area of the water lies right over her head, suggesting her dreaming activity. Bram Dijkstra would term *Flaming June* an "idol of perversity" or femme fatale, a perversion of Victorian male fantasies, because of her languid sleeping posture, suggestive of female auto-eroticism. Susan Casteras

would agree with the 'femme fatale' label, but would probably also regard this female as a locus of feminine power and otherworldly wisdom. While this is a sensual portrait of a female—the figure seems to breathe sexuality—the positioning of the intensely brilliant water over her head suggests a restful purity, and even more significant, a thoughtful enlightenment. This figure is enclosed by drapes, the square place where she is in repose, and by the horizon; yet, she seems content in this private, perhaps self-composed space. She is alone in a type of dream travel, apart from the social, familiar Victorian world as other artists have depicted it. This space feels purely personal, interior, and of the female imagination.

Leighton's 1889 *Invocation* also closely depicts the female figure, perhaps privately seeking creative or spiritual inspiration. The female figure is draped in a luminous white garment, which itself creates the striking use of space in the painting. The architectural lines of vertical columns, diagonal eaves, and the edges of the canvas itself create a clearly defined space around her. The figure appears close to the viewer and her expression intently fixed. These elements of composition are all peripheral to the central space of form and light that the female figure creates around herself. The light area around the figure's head is so bright and appears to radiate off the canvas, extending the range of this luminous personal space. The placement of the brightest tone of white is again over the head of the female as in *Flaming June*, perhaps suggesting a realm for her thoughts and inspirations—a realm that is both personally contained and radiating beyond her. This reading of the composition is reinforced by the title and subject, a creative woman seeking inspiration for her art both inside and outside of herself. Both of Leighton's female figures, consciously or not, create their own personal spaces, intimate and gendered as they create them with their own bodies—the curve of a sleeping figure, the arch of invoking arms. Regardless of the type or shape of physical space, these women claim it as their own by their presence.

The concluding images return to Edward Burne-Jones for a literal and physical use of space as a visual correlative. In the years 1875–78, Burne-Jones worked on his *Pygmalion and the Image* series: a sequence of four images that narratized the legend.[25] All four images—*The Heart Desires*, *The Hand Refrains*, *The Godhead Fires*, and *The Soul Attains*—are set in characteristic Burne-Jones style that uses archways, stairs, windows, and passages to divide the space. Focusing on the final painting of the series, *The Soul Attains*, we see Pygmalion kneeling at the newly alive female image's feet, looking up at her with adoration. The female now has translucent flesh rather than a stone surface; her eyes look out toward Pygmalion but are not quite connecting. The narrative itself seems to illustrate the often mentioned Victorian male creation of the female image, as demonstrated in Rossetti's lush 'stunners,' the 'idols of perversity,' and

more generally in the Victorian era's shaping of women's social, personal, and domestic roles. Yet, in seeing other instances of Burne-Jones' work and his often direct use of spatial dynamics to develop a complex portrait of his female figures, this particular image seems to take on greater possibilities for meaning. Within the same plane as the female figure, particularly her head region, lie the most intricate and convoluted of the spatial divisions: a curving staircase, an arched doorway, a domed glass window, and an open doorway that leads to more exterior passages and terraces. Not only are their presences significant for their suggestive complexities, but each is illuminated, either with a pervasive glow, a reflection, or an intense spot of light. In the previous Leighton paintings, brilliance of light appeared to correspond to the women's cerebral activities—dreams, thoughts, inspirations. The focus on light in Burne-Jones' passages and portals may suggest a similar correspondence for this otherwise male-created female figure (not insignificantly brought to life by a *female* goddess, Venus).

The final image of this grouping of symbolic spaces, and in this overall selection of Victorian visual images, is Burne-Jones' 1868–77 oil rendition of *Le Chant D'Amour* [Figure 3]. The painting initially seems to present the viewer with a familiar scene of legendary medieval love. A knight reclines and gazes at a woman playing an organ, assisted by an other-worldly winged figure at the bellows. Yet, further examination of this painting surfaces an inner concrete tension, that of the physical and the spiritual dimensions, both in regard to love and art, which infuse many elements of the painting. The figures, with regard to the viewer, exist in a very shallow and intimate space. The spatial depth that does exist is towards the background landscape. Each of the figures seems to occupy its own separate space within the landscape, despite slight overlap. Positioned in a pyramidal composition, each figure holds its own strong pole of interest and activity. The viewer's eye travels from one figure to another in a relational pattern, rather than focusing on a single point of interest. Within this pyramid, each figure has its own spatial level. The central female figure does hold the highest positioning, connecting both the compositional pattern and the network of gazes.

The connection between the female figure and the knight indicates some tension and complexity. Feelings of love and devotion seem apparent, at least from the knight's perspective. He reclines easefully in her presence, despite his confining, heavy armour. As a listener, he receives her song of love. The direction of his gaze, however, seems more ambiguous; it could either be towards the woman or at the winged figure of Love, an amalgam of the physical and the spiritual realms. The female figure's gaze is also indirect and focusless. She does not even look at her music; rather, her slender fingertips almost assume the role of sight as they trace across her music sheets. As the musician, she engages in a

transcendent, abstracted form of art and creativity, but uses her talent to play a love song. Allen Staley notes that the aesthetics of the 1860s and 1870s were greatly influences by Walter Pater's emphasis in *The Renaissance* on music as the art form to which all others aspired (*Victorian High Renaissance* 16). As in Pater, music embodied an 'abstract language' in which form and style were an end to themselves (17). For *Le Chant D'Amour*, this focus on music draws the viewer's attention away from the physical, the tangible, and into another realm of abstraction and transcendence. The organ's positioning on the canvas, its extension over the top edge, suggests this reaching beyond physical boundaries.

Burne-Jones' landscape and background elements are equally suggestive of this tension between the physical and the spiritual, and significantly use elements of his familiar spatial dynamics to further elucidate the central female figure. Framing the figures at the immediate foreground, the lower edge of the canvas, is a row of vividly colored flowers—tulips and wallflowers. Russell Ash ascribes conscious meaning to Burne-Jones' choice of flowers because of his interest in the Victorian language of flowers. Tulips signify "ardent love," while wallflowers suggest "bitterness." The combination implies a strong contradiction of emotions, as affirmed in the painting's subtitle from the Breton song ("Helas! je sais un chant d'amour/ Triste ou gai, tour a tour").[26] The flowers' beauty also operates as a familiar foil to the female figure's physical beauty and femininity. The buildings in the background, along with the sheep-scattered pastoral stretch, provide a tangible, physical foundation for this scene. Yet, the architecture resembles that of a medieval monastery or chapel—a locus for spiritual activity—with its long narrow windows and stone work.

The natural light seems to shift from the left to the right of the canvas. While the knight sits in a space flooded by daylight, the figure of Love is definitely in a dusky twilight. The light progressively dims as it moves past the figures. As the sky darkens, the inhabited lights inside the buildings become brighter. A shaft of light shines from one narrow rectangular window close to the central female figure. The ray seems to be at the same angle as her gaze. Perhaps although her gaze seems undirected, this shaft of light may suggest a brighter vision and some possible insightful guidance, as implied in other Burne-Jones and Leighton works. The connection causes the viewer to ponder the light's significance to the female figure in particular and if the artist is contrasting her vision to that of sightless Love. The directness of the light shaft may also suggest that not only does this female figure harbor such light and space inwardly, she as an artistic figure projects it outwardly as well. This compositional detail transforms what could be a typical Pre-Raphaelite image—a beautiful female subject as defined by a male artist; a medieval influence; heavy use of Victorian symbolism—into one in which the viewer, particularly the fe-

male viewer, can see alternatives and possibilities for meaning for the female figure.

Connections

I have analyzed these works with regard to their spatial dynamics, accompanied by an overall consideration for the ways they relate to the period as a whole. Each piece has more to yield about the individual artists, their movements and places in the art historical spectrum, and the Victorian period's construction of gender, class, and social roles than can be addressed in this study. Yet, with regard to their spatial dynamics and what they imply, these selected works have their particular strengths and thoughts to keep in mind when looking at the texts in the following chapters. Specifically, are similar spatial elements or treatments used by Victorian women writers when developing their central female character? Are similar readings and possibilities derived from the verbal construction of this visual correlative?

The illusionistic images discussed in this chapter, by both male and female artists, have used space as an element of discourse that delineated the basic physical conditions of many Victorian women's lives. Several images—*Women's Mission*, *Mother and Child* by Lewis *and* Leighton, *Preparing Tea*, *A Coming Event*, *The Governess*, *An Afternoon in the Garden*, etc.—present the domestic setting as the appropriate female realm, depicting what women's roles are or should be. One has a sense of the confinements of these settings and roles, women's psychological responses to their milieu, and sometimes their assertion of self within them. The actual spatial choices of settings, arrangements, depth, shallowness, and configurations describe not only a setting but the psychological responses of the female figures to them.

Several of the 'imaginative' depictions—most of Edward Burne-Jones' works, *Love's Messenger*, *Flaming June*, *Invocation*, 'The Lady of Shalott' images, etc.—acknowledge to varying degrees prevailing conditions and assumptions. Tension between interior and exterior space is acknowledged through choice of interiors to enclose the female figures in some way. Yet, indications of 'other' spaces to which they might have symbolic access—either simple exteriors or more suggestive 'realms'—accompany the figures in their interiors. Their symbolic presence becomes apparent and significant after seeing female figures in other paintings longing for or straining towards their outlets, however limited. In a period where the overarching metaphor that describes social roles and gender dynamics is the visual and geometric term 'separate spheres,' the use of artistic spatial arrangement takes on a weighted significance in all of its forms.

As a link to the following chapters that focus on exclusively female perspectives through women novelists, it also seems important to acknowledge the

ways these selected women artists have collectively used space in their paintings. Are there gender links? Are there signs that gender shapes one's sense of space? In the paintings I have chosen and discussed in this chapter, I propose that the women artists have employed space significantly, perhaps consciously, to not only represent their physical/psychological conditions but to suggest alternatives. Several of these female artists's paintings seem subtly powerful because these possibilities arise from within acceptable or appropriate settings for the time.

Rebecca Solomon depicts two women in a recognizable setting and relationship—the lady of the house and the working woman. Yet as discussed, Solomon provides an *opening* for the governess's role, for middle-class, socially acceptable women to be working women. Elizabeth Siddall, while steeped in the emerging male Pre-Raphaelite circle and their emblematic images, offers her version of a female artist, one who is *at work* and defines her space aside from the myriad of circulating interpretations. Jessica Hayllar lets her spatial compositions command her canvases, creating a linked relationship with her female figures; the spaces themselves create meaning. Margaret Carpenter sets two young females in an acceptable setting, in an even sentimental interaction; yet, out of that surface context and appearance she allows her female figures to connect in a supportive, gendered way. Helen Allingham, working within a genre that supports England's idealistic longings for a simpler, domestic past, suggests outward leading passages for her female figure. Jane Bowkett allows her viewers to see the longing on her central female figure's face as she looks out her window and keeps her back to her familiar interior domesticity and obligations. Marie Spartali Stillman makes a place for herself as a professional artist within a male movement; the corresponding shapes and spaces in her canvas lend a female perspective to the Pre-Raphaelite imagination. Gertrude Offord realistically shows female artists at work, forcing her viewers to be aware of, if not to accept, women's presence and drive to be taken seriously and educated comparably. And Maud Hall Neale depicts two women casually and unquestionably inhabiting their own creative space, one that they have boldly carved out themselves. These sometimes subversive, sometimes subtle, depictions suggest alternatives for women by women. They *use space* to *suggest spaces* for women to be creative, thoughtful, and open to possibility. When such suggestions occur *within* realistic settings, those acceptable to the Victorians, they seem even stronger because the envisionings begin to appear possible within those contexts.

At this point, then, it is important to question the ways contemporary feminists can read these images, those by both male and female artists. Many critics, particularly Lynn Pearce, have led this line of interrogation with regard to Pre-Raphaelite art and its depictions of women. I feel that the key lies in the

focus of this study, in a sense of possibilities and alternatives that spatial composition allows in these canvases. Considering the contrasting male-constructed images emphasizing shallowness, confinement, restriction—as in Rossetti's cropped, bust-length women; Collins' convent entrapment; Hicks' and Egg's defined and implied roles; Millais' Mariana's weariness and limitations—images that imply some kind of openness, physical or symbolic, offer similar opportunities for feminist readings. Regarding only the role of space in these images may not give the 'definitive' reading of these paintings. Yet, consideration of spatial composition as a posit for meaning opens up the perspective in both male and female artists' works of the possibility for alternatives in female identity or role, thought, and creative imagination, even within restrictions. These openings for alternate meaning undermine a thoroughly restrictive reading of a painting or of Victorian women's inner possibilities. The visual spaces in paintings operate in a way that allows the twentieth-century female viewer to inhabit the space herself and to allow the depicted female figure to do the same. The visual spaces of composition allow women of the present time to discover their own spaces in these images.

This projection of space from the figure in the canvas to the viewer beyond provides a link to the construction of and reading of spaces in Victorian women's novels. Similarly, novelists construct settings: verbal forms of composition that locate characters, provide a sense of the surroundings, and characters' responses to them. Similarly, it appears that use of descriptions of space allows authors to imply meanings for their characters, particularly here for the central female character. Even through words, authors construct visual, spatial dynamics. The Victorian women authors examined in this study use this element to allow for depth and development of their female characters. This interplay, this dynamic relationship between space and woman, again allows the reader to enter these spaces and to discover her own. Deborah Cherry acknowledges Teresa de Lauretis' comments that feminist studies are not resticted to a formal academy and instead inhabit other spaces in women's communities (Cherry 213). De Lauretis' envisioning is another suggested space, an alternate level and place for meaning particularly created, filled, and inhabited by women. Spaces carry over from the visual to the verbal, to meanings and alternatives.

CHAPTER TWO

Charlotte Brönte's *Villette*: Spatial Composition/Topography as Discovery and Narrative

> Not only our memories, but the things we have forgotten are 'housed.' Our soul is an abode. And by remembering 'houses' and 'rooms,' we learn to 'abide' within ourselves.
>
> —Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (xxxiii)

> For women have sat indoors all these millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force, which has, indeed, so overcharged the capacity of bricks and mortar that it must needs harness itself to pens and brushes and business and politics.
>
> —Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (91)

The Visual and the Verbal—Continued…

Visual artists are not alone in enabling us to see spaces, to feel the palpableness of their dimensions. Writers, with their words, descriptions, and cadence, allow us to see their envisionings and to experience actual spaces along with their characters. Again, the visual and the verbal mingle in the very language used to describe this process—to 'see spaces,' to 'envision,' to 'paint a picture with words.' Yet, of course, there are immediate differences in the two art forms and the ways they can represent physical spaces.

Several critics note Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's distinctions between the arts, namely that there is a division between the 'spatial arts,' like painting, sculpture and architecture, and the 'temporal arts,' of writing and music. As Joseph Kestner delineates the difference, the temporal arts depend on succession and cannot be reversed, while the spatial art are reversible and can be viewed at any point in time (Kestner, *Spatiality* 9). Kestner goes on to explain that the employment of these elements in the opposing art form cre-

ates an illusionary effect. For example, the use of succession in a spatial art form creates a temporal effect, just as the use of spatial elements, like volume or point, in a temporal art form creates a spatial illusion (9). Thus, an exchange of properties, an attention to spatial elements in the written form, lends an overall spatial quality to the text.

Kestner would also describe language (words, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, etc.), the structure of the novel itself, as having inherent spatial qualities that both suggest and solidify the similarities between the two art forms (21). At literal and metaphoric levels, the architectural arrangement and structure of spaces become a way of understanding and visualizing the inner workings of a text, its components, and construction. It appears more and more that, despite surface differences, the similarities between visual and verbal elements are definitely interactive, and perhaps, foundational. The initial division of the art forms is at times less distinct as more overlaps occur.

This sharing of properties, and seemingly of a language itself, between visual and verbal forms is further emphasized by Rhoda Flaxman in her description and investigation of "word paintings" in Victorian novels. She uses the term "word-paintings" to refer to long passages focusing on visual descriptions, often with their own framing devices and recurring motifs (Flaxman 1). These extended descriptions are, for Flaxman, a "system of signs"—a designation inspired by Erwin Panofsky's iconographic method for reading meaning in paintings—that in particular allow her to read meaning into the Victorian period (Flaxman 1). Like Kestner, Flaxman invokes Lessing's distinction; yet, she sees word-paintings as a prime example of the blurring of those temporal and spatial distinctions. Flaxman's study focuses mainly on the novels of Charles Dickens, the long poems of Tennyson, and isolated works by Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot. However, her understanding of the interweaving of visual and verbal elements in descriptive passages of Victorian novels is important, especially when focusing primarily on descriptions of domestic or other 'appropriate' locations for women in Victorian women's novels.

An Historical Blueprint

In discussing the ties and blendings of visual and verbal forms, the spatial art form of architecture was specially noted by scholars as corresponding to the design of language and the written form of the novel. This connection between architecture and literature is, therefore, even more apt when discussing spaces and interiors in novels. For this reason, before moving on to the specific text of *Villette*, it may be helpful to look briefly at the role of domes-

tic architecture in Victorian times as a background for all the novels that will be discussed.

As mentioned previously, Daphne Spain regards structures and spatial arrangements as posits for social and gendered meaning with extending implications. She notes that geographers argue that spatial and social processes cannot be separated; they are essential to each other (Spain 5), a point with which Lucy Sargisson would agree. Spain's overall focus is on the ways spatial arrangements—in particular divisions—effect gender development and interaction. She asserts that in many cultures and times, external spaces produce the norm for social relations, while they are repeated or reproduced within the home (7). This separation, thus, relegates women in the nineteenth century to the sphere or realm of 'reproduction' and not to the more masculine realm of 'production'—a restatement of the doctrine of 'separate spheres.' Spain states that men and women co-create this segregation; men favor a spatial arrangement that gives them access to knowledge and power while women see no other possibility (18). In this respect, Spain is not limiting her comments to the nineteenth century; she would argue that this is true of many cultures and many time periods, including—in some ways—the present.

Moving on to her discussion of nineteenth-century British homes, Spain notes that architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright, in *Moralism and the Model Home*, sees a relationship between domestic architecture and social roles and norms. While Wright asserts that architecture does not determine people's behavior, she does note that there are links between the perceived model home and model family of the time (109). In other words, she proposes that homes symbolically suggest social norms, values, and interactions (111). Homes in the Victorian period, as in any given time, vary according to a family unit's class, financial means, purpose, need, and location. Yet, as Wright mentions, it is the "model" home that emphasizes the assumptions, social roles and arrangements, and common desires of a society. In terms of nineteenth-century Britain, Daphne Spain looks at a model home—an estate—that was more of an ideal or an aspiration than the typical family home. In its grandness, though, the spatial layout of the British estate, and the fact that it was regarded as 'ideal,' does suggest the assumptions and roles that filtered through to the more modest classes and their living arrangements.

Spain further explains that the Victorian ideal reflected social hierarchy with distinct separations between genders, master and servants, and parents and children (112). The ideal or model home, then, advocated separation at all levels, enlarging the notion of separate spheres in one household to include gender, age, and class. Spain adds that with more excessive space, af-

fluent Victorian families could control social interactions within their homes (112). Servants were housed in separate quarters, often an inferiorly constructed wing of the house. They were strictly gender segregated: the female servants usually were housed in the wing's attic, the males in the basement, and each had separate stairways to prevent any possible intimate interactions. Women and men of the family estate each had their gender-designated rooms of the house, which dictated various degrees of accessibility. Women inhabited the "drawing room," her own personal boudoir, and a breakfast or morning room. Men often gathered socially in a smoking room, billards room, or a private room termed the "growlery," connoting a place where men's moods could be indulged privately. Men also had the library, the gentleman's room (reserved for business), a study, and a "gentleman's oddroom"; these rooms had their own bathrooms and cloakrooms, and could operate as a suite aside from the main house. Spain notes that men's rooms were less likely to be open to women than the reverse in an attempt to preserve a separate male sanctuary in the home, revered for its distance from outside pressures (112–13). Men's spaces were kept almost sacred to serve their interests and to protect women from the concerns of the outside world (115).

So, it seems that with the extra space an estate home provided, men gained even more exclusive realms. The home, the domestic environment, may have been all that was appropriate and permissable for women; yet, even in that environment, their access was not complete.

Spain's example is admittedly of one class of British Victorian society, the wealthiest class at that. Not all family units had complete servant wings, copious suites for men's social or business gatherings, or rooms reserved for women's privacy or activities. This layout was not a common reality. However, as Daphne Spain and Gwendolyn Wright assert, the estate home and its divisions of gendered and class spaces was an ideal and a model. In its grand form, the estate reflected the aspirations of a society—a living arrangement many would have sought if their means allowed. Its divided arrangements—separate rooms and activities assigned to men and women respectively—filtered down to the layout and use of more modest family dwellings. Perhaps more importantly, this ideal vision of a sucessfully operating home—on many levels, a self-sufficient *community*—both reflected and reinforced the assumptions that underlay gender roles and social interactions, affecting members of the bourgeois classes and their notions of domesticity. When looking at Victorian writers' depictions of domestic spaces, this 'ideal' architectural layout, and the assumptions that are its foundation and construction, will be helpful and interesting to keep in mind as an overarching Victorian model domestic blueprint.

Villette

Lucy Snowe's Journey through Spaces

Charlotte Brönte's 1853 novel *Villette*—her last novel—displays a significant use of spatial imagery, and in particular a geographic tracing of the travels of the central figure and narrator Lucy Snowe. Brönte gives detailed descriptions of certain spaces and locations that have personal meaning for Lucy, as well as the other characters. In doing this, Brönte, as a Victorian novelist, can be said to take part in the creation of word-paintings as Rhoda Flaxman describes. Interestingly, Paul Wotipka describes Lucy Snowe in terms complementary to Flaxman, acknowledging the visual quality of *Villette* and Snowe's written account. He sees Lucy Snowe, in her first person narrative, as a painter of visual images through language. Noting Lucy's attention to detail, Wotipka recognizes her intimate connection to her surroundings (Wotipka 100).

Lucy Snowe is the first-person narrator of *Villette*; thus, as Brönte's creation, she composes her text, her story. In this way, Lucy Snowe shares in the act of creating this written text—and its visual, spatial descriptions—for the reader with Charlotte Brönte. Wotipka acknowledges that Lucy's words are visual in nature; in them, her creative abilities come together as writer and 'painter.'

What I hope to explore and show in this chapter is not only that Lucy Snowe as narrator (and naturally Charlotte Brönte as writer) uses visual imagery and language when describing spaces, but that, more significantly, the composition of these spaces provides a way of developing Lucy Snowe's character. In *Villette*, spaces consistently loom vividly as recollections, memories, and dreams; as correlatives for inner personal spaces, thoughts, and creative yearnings that cannot always be tangibly represented; and as realizations of the self. Lucy's narrative becomes a creation and claiming of both space and self. Domestic spaces and particular locations—both individually and topographically—trace a journey for Lucy Snowe. I suggest that Lucy Snowe's attention to visual depictions of personally significant spaces becomes a 'map' of her self.

I want to look at these spaces in terms of their meanings and the ways they develop certain aspects of Lucy Snowe; in addition, it will be important to note a specific female nature to the spaces and their depictions. However, it seems significant to look initially at the overall spatial structuring of the novel. The novel begins at Lucy's godmother's home in Bretton; proceeds to the residence of Lucy's employer, Miss Marchmont; then travels to the town of Villette and Madame Beck's school. As Lucy settles longest there, the narration focuses on smaller, component spaces: the town itself with its

theater, museum, Roman Catholic Church, streets, ships, gardens; the spaces within the school building, such as Lucy's room, stairways, the school room, the attic, closets, kitchens, garden exteriors; even smaller, intimate spaces like boxes, cabinets, doors, locks, keys; and abstract spaces like Lucy's "inner room," and accompanying spaces of the mind, heart, intellect, and imagination. The novel literally travels in time through these spaces—a physical journey of Lucy from Bretton to Villette, and an interior journey that creates her written expression of self.

Brönte's novel opens with locations; the first chapter is already defined by place—the town of Bretton—which follows our only other information, the titled town of Villette. Place is immediately linked with identity as Bretton is both a town name and the family name of the narrator's godmother. The narrative opens with a description of the godmother's home; it seems a pleasing description that the narrator recollects from her youth:

> 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. (Brönte 61)

Even an introductory interior domestic description like this sweepingly takes in many aspects of the space, directs the reader over thresholds, and opens the interior to the outdoor scene from the balcony. At this point, the reader does not yet know the narrator's name. She chooses to introduce her story not with a description, admission, or any other comment about herself, but rather with geographic placement and spatial composition, both forms of definition and enclosure. Any sense of personal identity is carved from the description of spaces and her possible responses to them. This gives the reader an initial and immediate sense of how the narrator chooses to structure her narrative and perhaps depict herself.

One has a sense of the narrator at the opening as a guide through a tour of spaces—physical and interior—that may give clues to her developing sense of identity. Just as the defining of Bretton as an "ancient" town connotes a sense of history and layering, the narrator's introduction of herself through the lens of geographic placement suggests a complexity and palimpsest of personal elements that will emerge through her narrative over space and time. She may express her liking of Bretton and her godmother's home for its cleanliness, quiet peacefulness, and orderliness; yet, the concurrent allusions to history and layering indicate that an intricate, much less neat personal portrait is to evolve. This development and contradiction almost

immediately intrudes in the narrative; she remembers a time in Bretton when a new arrival to the home—Polly Home, a young, ironically named, distant relation to her godmother's late husband—is heralded by changes in her bedroom. Her furniture is rearranged and a small crib and rosewood chest are added to her space, all "signs and tokens" (62) of the familial changes to follow. What is significant about this displaced child's arrival and her integration into the Bretton household is that it finally forces the narrator to identify herself in her own narrative. This intrusion into the orderly space that the narrator thrives on seemingly decides the timing for the first mention of her name, a formal and assertive statement of "I, Lucy Snowe…". It is a declaration that she repeats in a short span of time and pages; in contrast to others' reactions as Polly is finally left by her father at the Bretton home, she asserts, "I, Lucy Snowe, was calm"(79). Subsequently, she is repeatedly referred to by others and herself by her full name, Lucy Snowe or Miss Snowe, maintaining both a formality and an undeniable presence. This overall introduction of the narrative and the narrator appears to link space, particularly interiors, with identity. Both the reader's recognition of Lucy Snowe and her own self-realization develop from spatial decriptions and dynamics.

In terms of Lucy's actual journey in her narrative, she leaves Bretton soon after Polly's arrival and goes home, the location of which she never reveals. Instead she instructs the reader to imagine her during an eight-year interlude, one she only describes through an extended metaphor of a ship, first safe at harbor and then caught in a tempestuous storm. Lucy often creates elaborate visual pictures that both allude to and elude reality. This type of enigmatic description is characteristic of Lucy's narrative, and possesses a particular spatial quality that I wish to discuss further in the chapter.

The changes that Lucy acknowledges did occur over these eight years included financial losses of the Brettons and her own need to become self-reliant. Circumstances forced her to seek employment and subsistence, an independence that at this point Lucy recognizes is not an innate part of her nature. She is able to secure employment and lodging as the maid and companion to Miss Marchmont, an elderly maiden lady. Again, Lucy writes of her life at Miss Marchmont's obliquely; she likens the experience to living in a "close room." Watching over the old woman in her decline, Lucy writes,

> 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. Tame and still by habit, disciplined by destiny. (97)

This impression of Lucy's time in Miss Marchmont's employment is steeped in restrictive, constricting language and imagery. Lucy's world as a whole—which for women in Victorian times is already limited—is reduced to the feeling of two encroaching rooms. In this sense, it seems striking that Lucy, a mid-nineteenth century woman of limited means, has a base of comparison for the world that opens up to vast natural spaces. In her very negation of their apparent existence for her at that time, she calls them into being.

The actual restriction of space, interaction, and activity also 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. Her existence and dimensions are mirrored in this description as small spaces collapsing into each other: "I, too, retired to my crib in a closet within her room" (101). This statement recalls the familiar image of Russian nesting dolls; just as you think you have reached the smallest one, another smaller doll lies within a tighter space. Lucy's life and existence is seen only in terms of constriction at this point, never with the possibility of reversing the confinement.

Yet, her narrative turns quickly after Miss Marchmont's death as Lucy is again compelled to search out a new existence and discover new places. The change and uncertainty hits the young Lucy with trepidation that in this circumstance seems logical and not solely based on her 'tame' nature. However, an inner voice speaks to her: "Leave this wilderness and go out hence" (104). The sudden awareness of a world beyond 'two rooms' is both overwhelming and freeing. It provides Lucy with a feeling that she "*could* go forward," even if times were "narrow and difficult" (107), and leads her to London.

These self-revelations and actions are seen against the backdrop of St. Paul's Cathedral, "THE DOME." This image and location seem especially significant for Lucy in her present condition and for her self-development. Lucy writes, "While I looked, my inner self moved; my spirit shook its always-fettering wings half loose; I had a sudden feeling as if I, who had never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life" (108). What is striking spatially is the choice of this majestic, domed, "orbed mass" (108) as the stimulation for and backdrop of Lucy's parallel widening of self and spirit. In contrast to her previous existence in "two close rooms," Lucy begins to feel (or *allows* herself to feel) open as the full, orbed shape and space of St. Paul's dome suggests. The word "orb" itself seems to connote entities beyond the architectural, perhaps even to cosmic proportions. Tony Tanner notes that St. Paul's dome is a recognized symbol for unity and harmonious space (Tanner 30). St. Paul's also allows her a full vision of London as she looks down at the city from the height of the dome. Being in this space gives Lucy

a command of the freedom, independence, and adventure she had been lacking. Again, she writes,

> 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: I got into the Strand; I went up Cornhill; I mixed with the life passing along; I dared the perils of crossings. To do this, and to do it utterly alone, gave me, perhaps an irrational, but a real pleasure. (Brönte 109)

Both the voluminous, full shape of St. Paul's dome and the expansiveness of London and its busy streets project a similar openness and completeness onto Lucy. The change in her conditions and environment enable an awakened change in herself at that moment. The spaces seem not only to echo her mood but spark a sense of independence, energy, and personal pleasure that Lucy did not possess before.

Inspired by the change and her daring outlook at the moment, Lucy embarks on the next and last leg of her journey that eventually leads her to Villette. She lets chance and a convincing inner voice lead her there after a conversation with Miss Ginevra Fanshawe, another young passenger. While Lucy is still on her ship, 'The Vivid,' she entrances the reader with another of her 'word-paintings.' She seems delighted with images of vast landscapes and natural beauty; the question, however, is whether her images are true observations or from her imagination. She invokes her reader to picture a glorious scene from the ship:

> divine the delight I drew from the heaving channel waves, from the sea-birds on their ridges, from the white sails on their dark distance, from the quiet, yet beclouded sky, overhanging it all. In my reverie, methought I saw the continent of Europe, like a wide dream-land, far away. Sunshine lay on it, making the long coast one line of gold; tiniest tracery of clustered town and snow-gleaming tower, of woods deep-massed, of heights serrated, of smooth pasturage and veiny stream, embossed the metal-bright prospect. (117)

Gradually the images shift from a possible scene to an image in her mind, one that she then abruptly commands the reader to "cancel." The images are apparently day-dreams caused by her sea-sickness. Real or imagined, this image of vast and detailed nature, light, and potential mirrors the elements Lucy craved when confined in Miss Marchmont's service. It is relayed with an energy and hope that she exuded in London. The prospect of these spaces draws something out of Lucy; they similarly expand her self, as she is attempting with this journey. Her recent penchant and forcing of her will to follow her inner voice and impulse in her travels gives the reader a sense of her developing identity. Her aptness to 'cancel' images, to negate the very openness or possibilities that she conjures, is an essential aspect of Lucy's

character that emerges in her writing. Yet, rather than limiting the depiction of herself that the reader receives, it suggests other openings—openings to the unseen, the undecided, and the unknown.

Unknowable Spaces of the Self

Critics of Charlotte Brönte's *Villette*, regardless of their particular slant or observations, feel obligated to confront the issue of Lucy Snowe and her role as narrator. For many, Lucy is enigmatic at best and unreliable, possibly deviant, at the other critical end of the spectrum. Keryn Carter sees Lucy Snowe as a narrator speaking with passion and boldness (Carter 1). Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz acknowledges Lucy's narrative deceptions, but suggests that Brönte used them to diverge from realistic conventions, and to allow Lucy to form her own voice (Rabinowitz 244–45). Beverly Forsyth states that she believes Lucy Snowe has a sadomasochistic personality and tends towards voyeurism (Forsyth 18). She asserts that Lucy Snowe's repression of information, details, and personal recognitions purposely and pleasurefully leave the reader in suspense in order to exert power (18). Compounding this view of Lucy as a deviant narrator, Forsyth also sees Lucy's voyeurism and acceptance of the male gaze in return as simultaneously socially-acceptable *and* perverse, creating a female narrator who is both repressed and easily identifiable to women (22–23).

These critical perceptions (and others), though varied, indicate that in Lucy Snowe's very deceptiveness, her inconsistancies and eccentricities—for whatever reason—exhibit a sense of narrative control, even if it is mingled with anxiety. For some, this narrative control reaches the state of expressive female empowerment. Lucy's first-person narrative, pocked with gaps, holes, and uncertainties, possesses its own spatial quality. The gaps in her narrative resonate as spatial *presences* as they are in the company of abundant spatial images and Lucy's own composition of her identity in those terms.

Grounding for these inconsistancies in Lucy's narration can be found in critical studies of autobiographical compositions. Though *Villette* is Charlotte Brönte's fictional novel, it also is Lucy Snowe's autobiographical text, thus allowing such critical connections to occur. Rabinowitz notes Mary Jacobus's challenge to *Villette* readers to try to interpret the inconsistencies in the narrative (Rabinowitz 244). Such spaces, gaps in occurrence, recognition, and reaction have a place and a significance in the narrative—one that is not just an explosive outpouring of feeling but a carefully crafted first-person composition. In leaving out, purposefully or not, details and aspects of the self, there has to be a fragmentation of narrative. Lucy Snowe appears conscious of this fragmentation and fluidity. Aware that there are parts of

her self that even she cannot explain, she attempts to portray that in her narrative.

Exploring this issue, Nancy K. Miller remarks that autobiography tends to omit parts of one's life or past that do not neatly fit into the whole, just as other narratives do (Miller 57). Miller aligns her view with Roy Pascal, who comments that autobiographers are compelled to recognize elements of the unknown within themselves (58). It seems that not only are uncertainty and gaps in narrative acceptable, they are to be expected. Some parts fall away by themselves, unknown and unseen. Others are removed in accordance with the writer's, the autobiographer's, craft. This often mysterious quality is true of Lucy Snowe's narrative as well. She does not neatly discard or smooth out bits of her story that are troublesome or uncertain. Rather, she replaces them with metaphoric renderings or unexplained gaps, leaving them as unknowable recesses within her narrative.

Instances such as these—possibly unreliable accounts, gaps in consistency, and mysterious happenings—pepper Lucy's narrative. She repeatedly addresses her readers and alters her narrative and perceptions. To look closely at even a few examples will convey their distinct idiosyncratic and spatial quality in her text as a whole. For example, Lucy includes Graham Bretton, her god-mother's son, in her narrative from those early chapters relating life in Bretton. However, she refrains from revealing his identity as Dr. John in Villette until long after his presence is introduced as part of the life at the school. She admits her culpabilty:

> For, reader, this tall young man—this darling son—host of mine—this Graham Bretton, *was* Dr John: he, and no other; and, what is more, I ascertained this identity scarcely with surprise. What is more, when I heard Graham's step on the stairs, I knew what manner of figure would enter, and for whose aspect to prepare my eyes. The discovery was not of to-day, its dawn had penetrated my perceptions long since….I first recognized him on that occasion, noted several chapters back, when my unguardedly-fixed attention had drawn on me the mortification of an implied rebuke. Subsequent observation confirmed, in every point, that early surmise. (Brönte 247–48)

Lucy's admission is calm and forth-right. Her prior recollections may have been cloaked in half-truths and ambiguity, but her present explanation is direct. It has the sureness of a narrator who has made choices—what to reveal and when—and thus concurrently shapes her readers' perception of her own identity.

Lucy continues with her explanation:

> To *say* anything on the subject, to *hint* at my discovery, had not suited my habits of thought, or assimilated with my system of feeling. On the contrary, I had preferred

> to keep the matter to myself. I liked entering his presence covered with a cloud he had not seen through, while he stood before me under a ray of special illumination, which shone all partial over his head, trembled about his feet, and cast light no farther. (248)

Lucy admits to a contentment infusing her wielding of control, both in her narrative and in reality. Leaving the gaps of recognition and confession in her narrative does leave her readers in suspense, and not only at that moment. Once it is known that Lucy indulges her creative and narrative whims, all future and past statements, descriptions, and recollections are somewhat suspect. Yet, this passage seems to indicate more than what Beverly Forsyth would deem 'sadistic' teasing of the reader. Lucy also withheld her recognition in life by failing to reveal her awareness to Dr. John. It gave her pleasure for a while to remain anonymous, to be in possession of knowledge, and to look on him as an unsuspected observer. This tendency in Lucy Snowe speaks to the role of the unknown and the unacknowledged in one's identity. Here, Lucy Snowe controls what is known and who her audience will be. Her "creative" forces are literally at work in her narrative and in her life. Again, Forsyth and others may call this behavior perversion or pure voyeurism, and it may share in those qualities; yet, Lucy's overarching assertion of how her actions either fit or jar with her 'habits,' feelings, or preferences seems to speak of a rootedness in one's identity, or, at least, of a determination to be so. As she later explains:

> 'Reader, if in the course of this work, you find that my opinion of Dr. John, undergoes modification, excuse the seeming inconsistency. I give the feeling as at the time I felt it; I describe the view of character as it appeared when discovered. (266)

In this statement, the inconsistencies, fluctuations, and gaps are part of Lucy's identity—not one fixed and already scripted, but fluid and under discovery. In keeping with these thoughts, other times Lucy is as unaware or unenlightened as her readers, suggesting, as Pascal does, that unknowable spaces are expected in autobiography and identity.

Later in the novel, Lucy more fully acknowledges the depths of her feelings for Dr. John/Graham Bretton, and thus sheds light on some of these comments. She powerfully fills the gap of uncertainty with a spatial image and metaphor for those emotions. Her admission ultimately results in the substitution of a 'space' for a 'space.' Specifically, Lucy uses architectural, spatial terms to evaluate the depth and placement of Graham's and her mutual feelings over the years. She constructs a blueprint and 'mansion' to explain her perspective of the relationship:

> Graham's thoughts of me were not entirely those of a frozen indifference, after all. I believe in that goodly mansion, his heart, he kept one little place under the sky-

> lights where Lucy might have entertainment, if she chooses to call. It was not so handsome as the chambers where he lodged his male friends; it was not like the hall where he accommodated his philanthropy, or the library where he treasured his science, still less did it resemble the pavilion where his marriage feast was spendidly spread; yet gradually, by long and equal kindness, he proved to me that he kept one little closet, over the door of which was written 'Lucy's Room.' I kept a place for him, too—a place of which I never took the measure, either by rule or compass: I think it was like the tent of Peri-Banon. All my lifelong I carried it folded in the hollow of my hand—yet, released from that hold and constriction, I know not but its innate capacity for expanse might have magnified it into a tabernacle for a host. (555)

I quote this passage at length for its remarkable array of spatial images and its detailed, painterly quality employed to describe the unseen, the intangible.

Lucy envisions Graham's heart as the vast, multi-roomed mansion with places for each compartmentalized activity and company. Her place is small but secure, notably under a skylight, an opening for light and air, an outlet for expanse. She personalizes her place in his heart as "Lucy's Room"—a space beyond the quotidian blueprint designs of library, chambers, or pavilion. No one else is privy to "Lucy's Room," offering as direct an assertion of her feelings for Graham as she can write. Equally significant is her description of her own spaces. The space that contains her feelings (dare I say 'love'?) for Graham is both expansive and enclosed. She first terms his place in her heart as beyond measure, likened to a malleable, high tent. Yet, all of that potential she carries enclosed in the "hollow" of her hand—a small and intimate place. Far from restricted, the space could not only expand but could become sacred, "a tabernacle for a host," the most revered of guests. This extended metaphor—a concentrated spatial journey from the domestic to the intimate to the sacred—brings us closer to understanding the depths of Lucy's heart and mind, yet adeptly keeps us at that symbolic distance. There is still room for the unknown.

One of the most vivid examples of the true unknown in Lucy's narrative is the presence (and I use that word with all of its slippery connotations) of the spectral nun. As Lucy often retreated to the garret in the school to read treasured letters from Dr. John in this private, remote space, she realizes that she is not alone:

> I saw in the middle of that ghostly chamber a figure all black or white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white. Say what you will, reader—tell me I was nervous or mad; affirm that I was unsettled by the excitement of that letter; declare that I dreamed: this I vow—I saw there—in that room—on that night—an image like—a NUN. (325)

The description itself is elusive: black *or* white; dream *or* reality; nervous *or*

mad, *or* excitedly conscious. Appearances of the nun—a reported legendary, haunting figure around Madame Beck's converted convent school—continue in the story, often reflecting Lucy's troubled emotions. The reader, and Lucy herself, seem to be left questioning the figure's reality and Lucy's emotional strength. A rather realistic plot-based explanation arises for the spectral nun much later in the story; it was actually the costumed figure of M. le Comte de Hamal as he secretively attempted to court Ginevra Fanshawe. Yet, until the conclusion, the nun's elusive identity remains an unknowable space in the narrative, and suggestively, a missing link to Lucy's emotional state.

Long before knowing the truth about the spectral nun, Lucy speculates its meaning and possible reality, simultaneously questioning her own mental health: "I was left secretly and sadly to wonder, in my own mind, whether that strange thing was of this world, or of a realm beyond the grave; or whether indeed it was only the child of malady, and I of that malady the prey" (333). Although ponderings about the nun and her own emotional state often leave Lucy more troubled, at one point she clears these thoughts away and lets happiness enter. The passage where she acknowledges this again seems significant for its metaphoric spatial composition. Here, again, Lucy seems to consciously assume the role of artist/writer of a descriptive "word-painting," to use Flaxman's term, and as always of her imaged identity:

> To wonder sadly, did I say? No: a new influence began to act upon my life, and sadness, for a certain space, was held at bay. Conceive a dell, deep-hollowed in forest secrecy; it lies in dimness and mist: its turf is dank, its herbage pale and humid. A storm or an axe makes a wide gap amongst the oak-trees; the breeze sweeps in; the sun looks down; the sad, cold dell, becomes a deep cup of lustre; high summer pours her blue glory and her golden light out of that beauteous sky, which till now the starved hollow never saw. A new creed became mine—a belief in happiness. (334)

As in previous decriptions—either real, metaphoric, or purely imaginary—Lucy invokes the natural world with a lushness and exactitude of detail that suggests a familiarity with the place. Whether she has experienced a similar location or not, Lucy feels comfortable representing the difficult or unexplainable within herself in terms of space. In this instance, it is a hollow, a deep open space, once dark, that fills with glorious light. She sees herself as that gap, that hidden place, that then absorbs the light, the happiness, that finds its way there. In this descriptive passage (as in others), Lucy calls upon her readers to experience and "conceive" the scene with her. In a way, she presents herself as the artist with the vision; yet, she acknowledges the need of an audience, a reader, to infuse that vision with life. It becomes a

cooperative act of creation. These may be elements of the unknown, but Lucy Snowe turns these spaces in her narrative into a colorful, palpable identity and a creative vision to be shared.

These examples, and many other descriptions and comments, may seem like mere eccentricities, the fodder some critics have used to prove Lucy's unreliability as a narrator. Yet, those same leanings powerfully assert her narrative authority. In keeping with Lucy's incorporation of mystery and alternative meanings in her narrative, she comes to describe herself as a "cypher." She writes that "in public, [she is] by nature a cypher," subject to the "most intractable, the most capricious, the most maddening of masters," "the Creative Impulse" (445). This term seems most appropriate for Lucy, as it suggests both meaning and absence of meaning—an acknowledgement of her evolving identity and the spaces within it. Karen Lawrence also describes Lucy as "the cypher," an amalgum of shifting meaning and identity (Lawrence 91). As Lucy rarely allows for a definitive description, it seems apt that when she does, her self-definition is also elusive and enigmatic. Acknowledging the spectrum of alternative meanings that Lucy consciously imbeds in this identification, one can see how her articulation of self is closely linked to narrative possibilities. Possible spaces and oscillating meanings are built into the definition. Lucy's narrative constantly evolves as both a guide to and a discovery of that identity, the 'dell' for her emotional and creative potential.

Transgressions: States and Spaces of Being

Tony Tanner frequently uses the word "oscillation" to describe the movements and meanings that occur in *Villette*. He sees Lucy Snowe negotiating her way through various social spaces and domestic settings, never feeling settled yet trying to adapt (Tanner 12). In particular, he comments on the use of domestic spatial and architectural imagery as a means for Lucy to write her personal narrative. These spatial images allow Lucy to reveal an interior, emotional, or psychological existence that goes expansively beyond traditional external boundaries (Tanner 15). Such oscillations, or transgressions, operate in a way similar to Lucy's other unknowable recesses in the text. These words suggest a suspension of tangible space, that is what can be represented by conventional domestic or locational spaces.

I regard Lucy Snowe's movement between states of consciousness and awareness as the most striking. When both her being and her descriptions evade realistic spaces, Lucy seems closest to exploring and representing those expanses to which Tanner refers. Caught between layers of consciousness, she enters realms—though often confusing—that open her world. As previ-

ously remarked, Lucy Snowe has a vivid capability, almost painterly, for observing and describing the spaces and scenes around her. When it comes to these 'oscillations' in space, Lucy must push herself even farther in her abilities to write about the experience and her responses to them. In closing, Tanner sees the possibility for freedom of expression and self-definition in Lucy Snowe's text. Faced with these extremes, these boundary crossings, Lucy is open to create her own personal narrative experience, that ultimately allows her to present herself as an individual and a woman (50). Continually, Lucy Snowe seems to discover and define herself through an identification with space.

Lucy's affinity for and description of the garden passageways behind the Rue Fossette school broach that state of shifting boundaries, though more realistically than some other instances. Here she describes an actual space, but it is one that modulates with almost paradoxical details. Its location behind the school, the relic convent, yet not far from the sights and sounds of city life, seems to suspend the garden between worlds and provide an unique, private space for Lucy. Following an account of the legend of the spectral nun, Lucy waxes on with this description of the garden:

> Independently of romantic rubbish, however, that old garden had its charms. On summer mornings I used to rise early, to enjoy them alone; on summer evenings, to linger solitary, to keep tryste with the rising moon, or to taste one kiss of the evening breeze, or fancy rather than feel the freshness of dew descending. The turf was verdant, the gravelled walks were white; sun-bright nasturtiums clustered beautiful about the roots of the doddered orchard giants. There was a large berceau, above which spread the shade of an acacia; there was a smaller, more sequestered bower, nestled in the vines which ran all along a high and gray wall, and gathered their tendrils in a knot of beauty, and hung their clusters in loving profusion about the favoured spot where jasmine and ivy met, and married them. (Brönte 173)

Lucy's description of the garden 'world' is crafted with observent painterly detail and a definite element of care. Many of her prior descriptions have been of imagined scenes; this one is pure experience. Her language is romantic, despite her beginning admonition. Her relationship is with the moon, the evening breeze, and the entwining vines. She sees signs of unity and procreation in these natural elements, and feels its infusion in herself.

Lucy describes the garden and her time there in even more detail. I continue to quote some of this passage at length because it adeptly conveys the feeling of this garden, and Lucy's experience of it, as a space between worlds:

> The windowless backs of houses built in this garden, and in particular the whole of one side was skirted by the rear of a long line of premises—being the boarding-houses of the neighboring college…But, though thus secure, an alley, which ran parallel with the very high wall on that side of the garden, was forbidden to be en-

> tered by the pupils. It was called indeed 'l'allée défendue,' and any girl setting foot there would have rendered herself liable to as severe a penalty as the mild rules of Madame Beck's establishment permitted. Teachers might indeed go there with impunity; but as the walk was narrow, and the neglected shrubs were grown very thick and close on each side, weaving overhead a roof of branch and leaf which the sun's rays penetrated but in rare chequers, this alley was seldom entered even during the day, and after dusk was carefully shunned. (174)

Not surprising knowing Lucy's character, the even more secluded, forbidden nature of this portion of the garden attracted her greatly. She says she "became a frequenter of this strait and narrow path," spending time gardening, tidying, and generally enjoying the solitariness (174). Lucy's description is striking in several ways. The garden flanks stone buildings, a definite contrast of elements and worlds. The buildings not surprisingly are linear, stone, and enclosing; their qualities contrast the natural unruliness of the garden, and the even more overgrown forbidden alley. Similarly, it seems unusual that Lucy emphasizes the straightness of the path in a space that is otherwise organically wild. The phrase itself, "strait and narrow," invokes the much used advocation of proper behavior and character. This melange of growth marked by these linear details parallels Lucy's own leanings. Frequently, she attempts to order her surroundings and self; yet, she is drawn to spaces, real and imagined, that are more wild in nature, thus echoing the central tension of her own psyche. The overhang of branches pierced by the sun's rays may have influenced her later description of happiness entering her life, as light enters the forest hollow.

This movement between spaces—even between states of consciousness as later examples will show more vividly—creates an independent space of its own. Lucy's descriptions repeatedly have a spatial quality that is linked to discovering and knowing herself—a discovery she makes through writing, the creative act. Lucy Snowe's identification with space appears emblematic of Alice Jardine's theories on the space of creative activity and discourse termed 'the feminine'. Jardine professes that the feminine is a space outside history and the conscious subject where the creative process takes place. These spaces are not voids; rather, they are both "active and passive, undulating, folded over upon itself, permeable: the self-contained space of eroticism" (Jardine 100). Jardine's language here seems applicable to Lucy's visual description of the wild, private garden with its entwined vines, branches, and shoots. I suggest that Lucy's spatial descriptions act as a visual correlative for her own creative process—her entry in and occupation of a highly individual and female gendered space of creativity outside of her domestic reality and time. Further descriptions of transgressed spaces—gaps in time

and in connection with 'reality' or consciousness—seem to transport Lucy further into realms like those Jardine suggests.

One extended episode in Lucy's life transports her literally and figuratively into other realms. Lucy begins actively; experiencing great loneliness during a school break, she finally forces herself to leave the school's confines for the city and beyond. These walks are a profound contrast from the school garden and pathways, let alone the emptiness and despair she felt while left there alone over break. It seems significant—and natural—that Lucy would crave ventures out into open spaces for a very different solitary experience. Not only does Lucy walk further each day, extending her boundaries, but her imagination wanders as she envisions what everyone else may be doing during the vacation. As in previous examples, Lucy's language is descriptive, visual, and lyrical. Her verb tenses alone assign her the role of artist: "I imagined"; "I pictured"; "I conceived" (Brönte 230). The openness accompanies and perhaps allows Lucy to have this descriptive sureness.

Yet, despite this grasp of courage and imagination, Lucy is overcome by solitude, depression, and its physical manifestations at the school. In short, it leads her to wander out again, this time at night and to the unlikely location of the Roman Catholic Church and its confessional. In need of some form of communion and contact, Lucy is drawn by the Catholic church bells, though she is Protestant; "Any solemn rite, any spectacle of sincere worship, any opening for appeal to God was as welcome to me then as bread to one in extremity of want" (232). This venture out in the cold night in an already weakened state combined with her emotional reactions in the church leaves Lucy lost, confused, and ultimately unconscious, entering one of those spaces or states, as Tanner describes. Lucy's description of her memories as she regains consciousness retains spatial dimensions; she imagines her soul in flight, a moment of independent existence, not unlike her own freeing moments of travel. As her 'Spirit' rejoins the 'Substance' of her body, she describes the body as the soul's "prison" (237), a curtailment of its boundlessness. Interestingly, as Lucy awakens in her disorientation, she continues to mix interior and exterior descriptions: "I lay on no portico-step; night and tempest were excluded by walls, windows, and ceiling" (237). Her body was her soul's imprisonment; the empty school walls were an unbearable confinement; yet, this unknown room's structures become protectors, suggestively not only from the night's storms but of Lucy's personal tempests.

Lucy's lengthy descriptions of her surroundings are characteristically vivid and painterly, especially as recollections of a blurry awakening. As she begins to realize that she is not in the Rue Fossette, it is significant to note the ways her awakening process is linked to spatial/environmental dimen-

sions. I quote this passage at some length in order to observe Lucy's detail and her process, both in awakening and in narration:

> And here my eye fell on an easy chair covered with blue damask. Other seats, cushioned to match, dawned on me by degrees; and at last I took in the complete fact of a pleasant parlour, with a wood-fire on a clear-shining hearth, a carpet where arabesques of bright blue relieved a ground of shaded fawn; pale walls over which a slight but endless garland of azure forget-me-nots ran mazed and bewildered amongst myriad gold leaves and tendrils. A gilded mirror filled up the space between two windows, curtained amply with blue damask. In this mirror I saw myself laid, not in bed, but on a sofa. I looked spectral; my eyes larger and more hollow, my hair darker than was natural, by contrast with my thin and ashen face. It was obvious, not only from the furniture, but from the position of windows, doors, and fireplace, that this was an unknown room in an unknown house. (238)

Lucy may eventually see her image in the mirror—an unfamiliar image at that—but her first awarenesses are of space and place. She attempts to discern what is known and what is unknown, filtering any sense of the familiar. The details themselves, though initially beautiful and pleasantly domestic, emerge as possibly ironic and disturbing. The floral patterns are forget-me-nots at a time when Lucy's memory is in question. The patterns of flowers and vines are "mazed," "bewildered," and endlessly entwined. Similarly, Lucy's own reflection in the mirror offers up a visage unfamiliar and haunting. Lucy's exploration of this room's space mirrors her attempts to regain a familiarity with her self. As she continues to observe the room, certain details, like pieces of furniture, arrangements, and objects, assume this familiarity: "Strange to say, old acquaintance were all about me, and 'auld lang syne' smiled out of every nook" (238). The past emerges as a piece of herself, both united and separate from her present self, as she notes what feels harmonious or not with her surroundings.

As Lucy continues in this state of disorientation and illness, recognition of space falters and shifts. Her imaginings transport her to other times, perhaps touched by magic, and her language turns to the theatrical: "in the interval between the two acts, I 'fell on sleep'" (240). Each time she emerges from sleep, elements of the room seem familiar yet space itself feels dislocated. The room becomes almost supernatural in its foreignness with furniture that cannot be real but "the ghosts of such articles" (241). In her confusion, Lucy tries to look outside; "I looked out to try and discover *where* I was" (242). Again, Lucy looks to exteriors when interiors confuse and fail. This time, however, these gazes do not solve the mystery.

Gradually, the pieces fall into place, both in Lucy's memory and in her caretakers' (the Brettons) recognition. Yet, as Lucy heals physically, she still experiences a flux of deep emotions and longs for a sense of tranquillity. In

the midst of her desire to temper her passions, Lucy enters another dream-like state, an extension of the dislocations she has been experiencing. In this passage, Lucy most vividly enters not only the suspension of reality caused by her slips in and out of consciousness but composes one of her most creative visions as a first-person narrator:

> My calm little room seemed somehow like a cave in the sea. There was no colour about it, except that white and pale green, suggestive of foam and deep water; the blanched cornice was adorned with shell-shaped ornaments, and there were white mouldings like dolphins in the ceiling-angles. Even that one touch of colour visible in the red satin pincushion bore affinity to coral; even that dark, shining glass might have mirrored a mermaid. When I closed my eyes, I heard a gale, subsiding at last, bearing upon the house-front like a settling swell upon a rock-base. I heard it drawn and withdrawn far, far off, like a tide retiring from a shore of the upper world—a world so high above that the rush of its largest waves, the dash of its fiercest breakers could sound down in this submarine home, only like murmurs and a lullaby. (255)

Again in this passage, interior and exterior elements mingle, but here to create a melange of fantasy and reality. As she transforms her surroundings into a magical, private underwater cave, Lucy seems expressively artistic. Her surroundings—this room—inspire her imagination, allow her to weave this image, and serve as a sanctuary or retreat for her prevailing thoughts. Lucy's spectral mirror image is replaced with the possibility of a mermaid, a creature of feminine mystery and allure. Her fantastic envisionings and the reality of the space become knit together, in both the immediate unconscious moment and her later conscious composition. Like the garden Lucy has such affinity for at the school, this 'cave in the sea' appears illustrative of Jardine's description of the 'feminine'—a site of creativity, self-contained yet open to the undulating waves, wild yet protective and personal.

Yet another significant example of these transgressions occurs later in the novel as Lucy, sedated with opium after a particularly emotional period and interactions with Madame Beck, is lured into witnessing a different vision of Villette. In this opiate spell, Lucy revels in her visions and their reverberating excitement. Interestingly, Lucy needs to find a way into her wanderings, an opening to this other world. She remembers the way to get through the usual prohibited park: "a gap in the paling—one stake broken down: I now saw this gap again in recollection—saw it very plainly—the narrow, irregular aperature visible between the stems of linden, planted orderly as a colonade" (547). Through this physical opening—one narrow yet allowing for movement, similar to Hughes' *April Love*—Lucy enters a surreal enchanted world. The trailing sounds of music, an illumination coming from the town, and a masquerade setting become open to her along a familiar

path—"a route well-known" (549). As in her prior illness, the familiar mingles with the fantastic and unknown. Her descriptions show the height of the opium's influence and the travels of her imagination, visions that she later skillfully crafts into a world for her readers:

> In a land of enchantment, a garden most gorgeous, a plain sprinkled with coloured meteors, a forest with sparks of purple and ruby and golden fire gemming the foliage; a region, not of trees and shadow, but of strangest architectural wealth—of altar and temple, of pyramid, obelisk, and sphynx; incredible to say, the wonders and the symbols of Egypt teemed throughout the park of Villette.(550)

This visionary experience is pure imagination and transports Lucy (and her readers) far beyond the familiar domestic world into a realm of vast, surreal nature and exotic history, reminiscent of Leighton's paintings in mythological settings. Although heightened and gleaming, this description shares similar qualities with her other envisionings that focus on the beauty and transportive quality of nature Lucy experiences. It shares some of the qualities of Sargisson's feminist utopias, creating a newly imagined space that is able to exist beyond the usual boundaries. Yet, this scene (as with others) is not totally removed from reality. As with the subterranean cave derived from her room in Bretton, this exotic land of delight has its root in the town of Villette; it emerges from the familiar, never fully letting go, and thus creating the sense of transgression.

Ursula Tempska, though not employing these terms, focuses on the spatial aspects of various novels by Jane Austen and the Brönte s. She affirms its prevalence by asserting Jurij Lotman's claim of space's role in the emergence in culture, and sees space particularly in art as it constructs fictional worlds (Tempska 198). With regard to Charlotte Brönte's *Villette* (and *Jane Eyre*), Tempska senses that the major tensions for the protagonists occur on a border territory between individualized experience and an unfamiliar external world (204). Her description of these two worlds equipt with border lines and an exchange of energy appears reminiscent of Lucy's transgressive states and spaces. Tempska also sees the border lines as etching another space in the novel, one particular to women's interior experience, caught between a powerful natural realm and a more limited but compelling social world (204). Tempska's remarks are intriguing in this overall discussion as they seem to affirm a particularly feminine energy that necessarily creates a private space. By its very nature, this feminine space shares the transgressive qualities observed in Lucy's descriptions and reaffirms Jardine's suggested definition. Travel in these spaces allows Lucy Snowe to discover herself, explore her imagination, and translate those findings in her narrative.

Framed Spaces: Symbolic Perimeters

Tony Tanner, corroborating with Susanne Langer, uses and defines the term "framed spaces" when discussing aspects of *Villette*; the term resonates with its allusions to both spatial dimensions and artistic conceptions, as it separates a space withing the painting from the audience, creating the posssibility for distanced yet extreme representations (Tanner 22). Though implying a structure—a frame, a prescribed boundary of choice or necessary limitation—these framed spaces seem to be an extension of the transgressive ones. A space is isolated, set off from its surroundings; the observer or audience's involvement becomes more speculative, set off from reality, perhaps relegated to the imagination. I mention this term, this type of space, because it appears to be a link between Lucy's less controlled states/spaces of consciousness and the more conscious artistic and personal decisions she makes later in her narrative.

Two specific places and descriptions in the novel allow Lucy Snowe to occupy this type of framed or contemplative space, one in which she could imagine other states of being, other definitions of self, woman, and artist. In these terms, I regard Lucy's visit to the art museum, where she contemplates images of Cleopatra and 'proper women,' and her night at the theater, where she contemplates the majestic actress "Vashti," as framed spaces. Both are experiences for Lucy that are outside of her normal routine, discontinuous with daily life, that transport her thoughts to a contemplative or imaginative realm. I suggest that this type of experience is distinctively important to Lucy because it allows her to explore these reaches of thoughts safely. While she is thrust into certain states by illness, extreme emotions, or opiates, these contemplative experiences are more voluntary; yet, they do not require Lucy to display thorough involvement. Though many of these experiences in Lucy's narrative are not linear or chronological—that is Lucy does not neatly move from unconscious driftings to these exploratory framed spaces and then onto controlled, conscious artistic self-expression—they do seem necessary for solidifying a certain sureness of identity and expression in Lucy through her narrative as a whole. Perhaps this movement allows Lucy the opportunity for free experimentation—the imagining of possibility—that then strengthens her later as she discovers and affirms both her self and her artistic decisions. In these transgressive acts and spaces, Lucy steps foot out of the accepted realms and into the forbidden, infusing her with courage to continue doing so.

In the first of these examples, Lucy finds herself at Villette's art museum. She explains how she prefers to undertake this experience solitarily:

> I never had a head for science, but an ignorant, blind, fond instinct inclined me to art. I liked to visit the picture-galleries, and I dearly liked to be left there alone. In company, a wretched idiosyncracy forbade me to see much or to feel anything…. Meantime, I was happy; happy, not always in admiring, but in examining, questioning, and forming conclusions. (Brönte 273–4)

Lucy sounds apologetic as she describes her liking for art, as if she is entering uncharted waters, definitely intrigued but somewhat unsure. As women's involvement in and appreciation for art were defined by "appropriate" social norms in the Victorian period, Lucy's hesitancy and wish for a solitary experience seems understandable. Alone, she can truly contemplate what she sees. As she acknowledges, her response to art is not just the admiration of 'pretty pictures'; it involves a more analytic, exploratory delving. Despite self-deprecating comments about her artistic instincts, Lucy displays an astuteness and appreciation about art that belies her insistance of ignorance. She is able to discern which paintings are well-executed but devoid of feeling from those exceptions that "reminded you that genius gave it birth" (275). It is in these solitary contemplations that Lucy has developed these keen perceptions and connection with the artistic spirit.

At one particular visit, Lucy describes an overly lush portrait of a reclining, corpulent female figure titled "Cleopatra." The painting itself seems to hold little interest for Lucy and she shortly grows tired of it. Yet, she is soon accosted by M. Paul Emmanuel, a professor from the school, and instructed that she should not be alone and gazing at that portrait. "'How dare you, a young person, sit coolly down, with the self-possession of a garçon and look at *that* picture?,'" M. Paul admonishes (277). Beyond examining the behaviour of 'young person,' he particularly has prescribed notions of what is acceptable for her as a young woman. Rather than gaze on this unacceptable canvas, he regards only four pictures depicting "La vie d'une femme" as proper for the female gaze and contemplation (not unlike the *Woman's Mission* series by Hicks). Lucy provocatively creates this visual narrative for her readers:

> They were painted rather in a remarkable style—flat, dead, pale and formal. The first represented a 'Jeune Fille,' coming out of a church-door, a missal in her hand, her dress very prim, her eyes cast down, her mouth pursed up—the image of a most villanous little precocious she-hypocrite. The second, a 'Mariée' with a long white veil, kneeling at a prie-dieu in her chamber, holding her hands plastered together, finger to finger, and showing the whites of her eyes in a most exasperating manner. The third, a 'Jeune Mère,' hanging disconsolate over a clayey and puffy baby with a face like an unwholesome full moon. The fourth, a 'Veuve,' being a black woman, holding by the hand a black little girl, and the twain studiously surveying an elegant French monument, set up in a corner of some Père la Chaise. All these four "Anges" were grim and gray as burglars, and cold and vapid as ghosts. What women

> to live with! insincere, ill-humoured, bloodless, brainless nonentities! As bad in their way as the indolent gipsy-giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers. (277–78)

What seems most significant about this incident and passage is not M. Paul's reaction, or even the notion of 'acceptable' artistic renderings for women's viewing. These responses on the part of M. Paul, of the museum's choices, or even from a general male or societal perspective do not seem surprising. These are but four more images meant as models for the respectable Victorian woman, and M. Paul's response is meant as guidance in the form of censorship; he steers Lucy away from the sensual and toward the virtuous and instructive.

What is significant are Lucy's reactions and interpretations. Her true artistic perceptions and analysis—along with astute interpretations of the perceived roles for women—emerge in this quoted passage. Lucy does not merely describe the composition or subject matter of these paintings. Rather, commentary and biting reactions infuse her descriptions of these projected and prescribed female images. Her words are full of disdain for both the women themselves that assume these roles and the artists or societal forces that assigned them. Lucy also displays the sensitivity to relegate the "Cleopatra" portrait to these same categories. In these remarks, Lucy demonstrates not only a keen and discerning artistic eye, but the intelligence and sureness to make such assessments on her own. What she most valued was her solitude and own 'space' for viewing the paintings, the privacy and room to view the images, contemplate them, and assess them for herself. M. Paul's scolding and recommendation that she "ought not to be here alone" (277) is what seems most damning and restrictive. For Lucy, this quiet, solitary contemplation carved out a place of thought, wonder, and intellectual evaluation, at a time when women were not entitled to such spaces. M. Paul's dismay and intrusion destroys that for Lucy; it emphasizes how this experience of a 'framed space' is discontinuous with the surrounding social life yet integral to Lucy as individual and woman.

It is doubly ironic that it is a painting, a framed image, that elicits this experience and discovery. Paul Wotipka draws attention to the relationship between framed pictures or scenes and ocularity in *Villette*; the paintings themselves allow for another level of discussion on the act on seeing (Wotipka 100). He goes to suggest that the framed pieces actually direct one's attention away from the painting and more towards the viewer (100). This general thrust to Wotipka's argument complements my suggested emphasis in the scene. Not only is the reader privy to Lucy Snowe's interpretation of the canvases, but one views her *viewing* the reactions of others, and her response to the larger scene of expectations and responses. In contrast to

M. Paul's and other male misinterpretations of the gallery works, Wotipka asserts that Lucy is fully aware of the artifice involved, and her only fault may be thinking that she has a complete view or understanding (105). Lucy may not see all, but even her initially private act of viewing draws others into the experience. Perhaps it is that inclusion and comparison that provides Lucy with the desire to further define her own imaginative and intellectual experiences, to undertake these activities usually forbidden to her gender.

Lucy enters a similar realm when she attends the theater, viewing the emotional tempest of a performance by a reknowned actress she refers to as the royal Vashti. The theater is crowded; yet, in the darkened hush directly before the performance Lucy seems to capture that sense of personal, private experience as at the museum:

> Deeply did I feel myself privileged in having a place before that stage; I longed to see a being of whose powers I had heard reports which made me conceive peculiar anticipations. I wondered if she would justify her renown: with strange curiousity, with feelings severe and austere, yet of riveted interest, I waited. (Brönte 338)

These reflections and ponderings seem reminiscent of Lucy's professed liking for questioning and contemplation. She is preparing herself for the experience of the performance, for its unknown dimensions, and for what it will elicit in her.

Even this preparation does not fully anticipate what Lucy will encounter in that dark theater. Lucy attempts to describe the experience and her perceptions of Vashti in several pages of narrative. To Lucy, Vashti assumes the role of a brilliant star:

> She rose at nine that December night: above the horizon I saw her come. She could shine yet with pale grandeur and steady might; but that star verged already on its judgment-day. Seen near, it was a chaos—hollow, half-consumed: an orb perished or perishing—half lava, half glow. (339)

These words, and subsequent descriptions, grasp at Vashti's identity—a violent, ever transforming entity, revolting yet powerfully attractive. She embodies for Lucy the powers of ultimate creation and destruction, writhing continually for ascendance in her being. In this being, Lucy sees a sincere life-spring, the absolute antithesis of the "Cleopatra" image; in contrast, Cleopatra is a feeble, and insincere, stab at what is life, what is potentially female.

Lucy calls upon "Cleopatra's" creator:

> 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 materialists draw nigh and look on… Her hair, flying loose in revel or war, is still an angel's hair, and glorious under a halo. Fallen, insurgent, banished, she remembers the heaven where she rebelled. Heaven's light, following her exile, pierces its confines, and discloses their forlorn remoteness. (340)

The embodiment of woman that M. Paul found so potentially dangerous for Lucy to gaze upon is pale compared to this live woman and her performance on the stage. Lucy compellingly does not cast Vashti in purely a role of destruction or rebellion. Instead, she acknowledges a powerful combination of glorious goodness, divine light, and her destructive agony. This portrait seems to share in the uncontainable strength embodied in William Holman Hunt's painting of The Lady of Shalott, an empowering combination of chaotic energy and artistry that extends through every wildly flying strand of hair and ruined thread of her weaving. Again, Lucy's analysis of this feminine force and her performance displays her own ability to receive and interpret this powerful creative experience and the potentially destructive transgressive energy that fuels it. While she is not involved in the same activity, the framed nature of viewing this performance allows Lucy to contemplate its meaning. As with M. Paul, Lucy also analyzes others' impressions of the same experience. She finds Dr. John's opinions of Vashti critical and "callous": "he judged her as a woman, not as an artist: it was a branding judgment" (342). Lucy sees others' limited perceptions clearly, which perhaps only adds to her desire to reflect on such powerful experiences privately.

W. J. T. Mitchell's discussion of space and literary representation serves as a supportive bridge to examining Lucy's more overt artistic demonstrations. While Mitchell asks several questions of literary space, his recognition of gendered influences supports and complements this study. He recognizes that women writers use space most effectively in novels and often through a female protagonist who is a painter or visually attuned to her environment (Mitchell 97). Mitchell's hypotheses embrace what I have asserted about *Villette* as novel and about Lucy Snowe as narrator. Lucy repeatedly sees and surveys. Yet she also records and transforms these visions into a personal narrative. Her capabilities as observer, "word-painter," and writer merge. Mitchell's argument supports her role, and the power that emerges from this female activity.

Mitchell goes on to make a more detailed assertion when he suggests that the paintbrush, even more than the pen, is an apt symbolic creative instrument for women. In turn, their novels tend to incorporate highly visual images of domestic architecture, which may extend to wider symbolic spaces and meanings (98). With Mitchell's assertions in mind, Lucy Snowe

emerges as possibly even more subversive and individualistic. While Mitchell's assessments seem apt in many respects, the placement of women comfortably in the painterly realm is also a feat. Hierarchies existed in the art world as well as the literary with regard to appropropriate subject matter, involvement, and exhibition of works by Victorian women (as acknowledged in the previous chapter). Nevertheless, with her keen-sight and observations, Lucy picks up that metaphorical paintbrush. She becomes a painter of description and engages in a 'subversive' female activity. Nevertheless, that act is metaphorical, too, for Lucy paints with her eye and words, yet reclaims the pen in her writings. In her creative endeavors, Lucy Snowe resists boundaries—of genre, and possibly certain restrictions of gender—and creates a self.

Artistic Transformations: Sites of Becoming

In addition to the self-reflexive act of Lucy Snowe's creation of a text—and simultaneously a written self for her readers—she temporarily engages in a life upon the stage. While Lucy may not obviously be a volcanic presence like Vashti, this moment that includes her preparation and performance transforms her into an creative figure for her theatrical audience and herself.

When a student at the school falls ill before the production of their play, Lucy steps into her role, insuring that the show will go on as planned. The most striking element of this situation is M. Paul's insistence that Lucy sequester herself in the locked attic to learn her lines, expand her imagination, and prepare. Lucy's description of the place is generally unpleasant: areas of the attic are darkened; creatures like bugs and rats call it their home; dust and clutter are commonplace; and the only outlet for air is a single sky-light. Yet, Lucy undertakes her creative task and soon begins to practice her lines, "perfectly secure from human audience" (Brönte 204). Soon she refers to her attic perch as her "throne" (205). This royal reference makes one see her initially confined and unpleasant space as her domain, a creative realm. She has ascended to the highest, most solitary place in the school. Other than the inhabitant creatures, which could serve as listening "subjects," Lucy is the sole human presence. The attic is distanced, as Lucy notes, from the kitchen, indicating a remoteness from the physical world, and possibly from those needs. Removal to this specific space appears significant, for there are many solitary places in the school environs. Yet, few combine the attic's qualities, most notably the architectural height, perhaps suggesting a closeness to the activities of the mind and the creative imagination. Also significant is the way Lucy does not dwell long on the unexpectedness of being locked in this possibly unsettling location. Rather, she focuses on her task,

allowing the transformation from school teacher to actress to take place. This is not to say that Lucy fully enjoys being locked in the attic. But her language and actions suggest that she claims the space and experience as her own for the moment.

Her comments at the end of her stay in the attic are especially vivid and dimensional with language that captures the spontaneous rush of the moment and the extremes of place and space that she goes through at the command of M. Paul. Lucy writes,

> In a moment my throne was abdicated, the attic evacuated; an inverse repetition of the impetus which had brought me up into the attic, instantly took me down—down—down to the very kitchen. I thought I should have gone to the cellar. (206)

The motion of the passage may reflect the rush of creative energies in Lucy at the moment. Along with speeding through the levels of the building, Lucy has spontaneously decided to act, to open herself to an audience, and to even open herself to the foreignness of speaking the French language on the stage. This setting and the movement implied in her description captures the transformative experience as it occurs within her. It is difficult when reading this scene not to have the image of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's "madwoman in the attic" in mind—an expression of passion and potentiality kept sequestered until it rushes out unchecked.

Lucy's preparations were swift and intense. While her time in the attic is but a prelude to acting upon the stage before an audience, it is a seminal period. If one were to liken this creative transformation to the metamorphosis process, Lucy's isolation in the attic would be like the preparative process within the chrysalis prior to full growth and splendor as a butterfly. I borrow this analogy from Virginia Woolf, who as author and as woman was aware of and captivated by the concept of space as an agent for the female artist. Nancy Walker writes about Woolf's periods of illness, that she herself metaphorically describes as chyrsalis-like, a solitary, productive, dormant state, until she gains strength and springs to life again (Walker 292–3).

Lucy's "chrysalis" (in this instance) is not illness, and is not even an extended period as Woolf's description of her experience implies. Yet, the solitude of the attic was enforced, by M. Paul, and it allowed Lucy to look inside herself and confront the creative energies and courage that stirred within her. The image of the chrysalis—both for Lucy Snowe and Virginia Woolf—suggests not just a period of time, but an actual enclosed space that nurtures and enables a transformation.

What began as almost an act of duty to the school becomes for Lucy a more personal and empowering transformative experience. Though so close to stage time, Lucy asserts the way she will play this role with a sense of con-

fidence and conviction. She must play a man's part, yet refuses to assume mannish apparel. Her words and thoughts are written with an unyielding tone:

> To be dressed like a man did not please, and would not suit me. I had consented to take a man's name and part; as to his dress—*halte là!* No. I would keep my own dress; come what might. M. Paul might storm, might rage: I would keep my own dress. I said so, with a voice as resolute in intent, as it was low, and perhaps unsteady, in utterance. (Brönte 208)

In the midst of an already rehearsed production, Lucy claims the right to be herself and make this part her own. She adds her own chosen accessories and a changed hairstyle to assume the male role. Following her solitary preparation for this play, Lucy feels that she knows how it must be played, and she will only do it on her terms. The determination and conciseness of Lucy's words leaves no doubt of her intention.

The final step in her transformation takes place of course on stage. M. Paul's last words of advice are for Lucy to imagine that she is performing again in her attic retreat, harkening back to its inspirations and security. Once Lucy overcomes the initial difficulties of speaking in French on the stage, she records the experience of finding her true voice:

> When my tongue once got free, and my voice took its true pitch, and found its natural tone, I thought of nothing but the personnage I represented….By and by, feeling the right power come—the spring demanded gush and rise inwardly—I became sufficiently composed to notice my fellow-actors. (209–210)

It is interesting to read Lucy's words here in light of the Woolf's descriptions of her chrysalis state; both note a 'spring,' a source and movement of creative energy. In Lucy's case, this description appears like a breaking forth from her secure chrysalis-like preparation into the change that occurs once she truly assumes her role as actress, as artist.

Lucy does not ultimately become an actress, or maintain this very public form of creativity beyond her obligation to this school play. Despite that reality, Lucy admits to herself and to her readers that a transformation did occur. That space and time from attic to stage awakened an energy within her, perhaps even an inherent yet previously unacknowledged part of herself. Her admission seems quite candid and even passionate:

> What I felt that night, and what I did, I no more expected to feel and do, than to be lifted in a trance to the seventh heaven. Cold, reluctant, apprehensive, I had accepted a part to please another: ere long, warming, becoming interested, taking courage, I acted to please myself. (211)

The stage—public and open—is the place where this transformation is witnessed and realized. However, it is the solitary, self-claimed space of the attic

that occasions the artistic process and enables Lucy—perhaps initially unaware herself—to reach a creative potential that lies within. The attic is the site of Lucy's becoming a woman aware of that potential, even if it does not remain fully active in her life in that same manner. Holistically, the scene functions metonymically as a representation of what Lucy tries to achieve in her autobiographical narrative. Writing her life, constructing a written persona—especially one that allows for fluid meanings—parallels this dramatic experience.

Self as Creation

In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong writes: "To identify a gap in the story is to produce a need in the woman for a new language of the self" (Armstrong 231). While this statement in Armstrong's text is part of a larger section dealing with Freud's 'reading' and analysis of his patient "Dora's" narrative, it seems an apt assertion of much of what Lucy Snowe does in her narrative. Not only are there apparent gaps highlighted in her story—either arising from Lucy wielding her narrative control, or moments of hazy consciousness, or the limitations of her nineteenth century context—but Lucy also discovers new ways of presenting her narrative. Her language itself, along with her narrative structure, is often imbued with distinctive spatial imagery. Armstrong here begins to suggest (and later in her argument is more pointed and direct about the connection) that this spatial quality is particularly related to women.

As a final look at *Villette*, it is important to examine the ending of the novel and the open, new plots it suggests. The structure and conclusion of the novel continue to maintain a sense of spatiality, in particular an openness, that is consistent with Lucy's more detailed images throughout the narrative. Any semblance to a linear plotline or conclusion for Lucy's narrative, and thus her written self, is rejected or sidelined. Earlier in the text, Lucy acknowledges that she cannot conform to Dr. John's logic, his scripted plot. For instance, at an anxious moment for Lucy after she has just seen the spectral nun, Dr. John suggests what he regards as a simple cure for her mental and emotional conflict: "Happiness is the cure—a cheerful mind the preventive: cultivate both" (Brönte 330). His advised prescription for happiness rings hollow for Lucy, offering no solace or practicality. She questions it and rejects it. Likewise, Lucy casts off conventional plotlines for herself. Contrasting her own story, she neatly ties up Polly and Dr. John's relationship, finalizing it traditionally in marriage and projected blessedness, not unlike a Shakespearean comedy (532–33).

In stark contrast, Lucy's own story and her future with M. Paul is neither neat nor conventional. In a powerful moment, Lucy tells him her story—one

for which she previously lacked words: "I spoke. All leapt from my lips. I lacked not words now; fast I narrated; fluent told my tale; it streamed on my tongue" (591). M. Paul acts as an inciting and encouraging listener. While they are pledged to each other, this moment of connection and understanding is followed by his departure at sea. Lucy ends her narrative in a state of suspension. M. Paul is away for three years, which she describes as "the three happiest years of my life" (593). She is left in an empowered state: she loves and is loved; she occupies her own physical living space; and like Mme. Beck, she has authority over her own school, one previously arranged by M. Paul.

Interestingly, most of the descriptions of Lucy's new space—one that will provide both home and career—focuses on the threshold area, the balcony, and the exteriors beyond. It is a description of absolute openness, yet one meant to represent the first domestic space Lucy can truly claim as her own. She describes this ideal evening on "the balcony out the French window under the screening vines" (588), open yet still private, reminiscent of the paintings of Victorian gardens inhabited by women, done by Allingham, Foster, and Langley. Lucy writes:

> This balcony was in the rear of the house, the gardens of the faubourg were round us, fields extended beyond. The air was still, mild, and fresh. Above the poplars, the laurels, the cypresses and the roses, looked up a moon so lovely and so halcyon, the heart trembled under her smile; a star shone subject beside her, with the unemulous ray of pure love. In a large garden near us, a jet rose from a well, and a pale statue leaned over the play of the waters. (588)

Lucy's description does not even touch on the interior of this house; the closest element of enclosure is the screen of vines with its protective tendrils. Finally, an actual domestic space belongs to her; she claims it and the inherent possibilities as her own. The openness and naturalness of her description seem to capture this sense of possibility and her spring of emotions. By including the moon, perhaps full rather than crescent shaped at this moment, Lucy alludes to her recurrent narrative images contrasting the slim "crescent" possibilities of her life with "orb-like" fullness. Her language—words like "round," "extended," "beyond"—adds to this almost final image of open space. Once again, these spatial images provide Lucy with a language to express herself.

This promise of perfect suspension appears ideal for Lucy; she is seemingly at her height of self-achievement. At the end of these three years, M. Paul's "return is fixed" (595). Ironically, the outcome of the story is not. Lucy tells her reader of a storm at sea that may have taken Paul's life. But ultimately, she leaves the readers to imagine their own ending:

> 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… (596)

As a final assertion of self and narrative, Lucy lets her tale unfold in possibilities—ones that both she and her readers may conceive. This open, amorphosed conclusion to Lucy's narrative completes, and becomes, the ultimate creation of self.

Rabinowitz writes that if M. Paul were to return, Brönte would have adhered to a convential plotline for women (Rabinowitz 252). Thus, Lucy's and Brönte's decision to leave this personal narrative open and suspended defies convention. As Carolyn Heilbrun suggests, "When the hope for closure is abandoned, when there is an end to fantasy, adventure for women will begin" (Heilbrun 130). The space that Lucy literally leaves open for herself at the end of her text expresses a wish to script and compose her life. Writing specifically about Lucy Snowe as writer, Helena Michie asserts that narrative control rests with her (Michie 118). These critics' affirmations, and celebrations, of these new plots for women signify the groundbreaking and contemporary impact of Lucy Snowe and Charlotte Brönte's achievement. Charlotte Brönte, through the voice and pen of Lucy Snowe, confronts the lack of narrative possibilities, and provides imagination and alternatives as sources for identity and narrative.

Spatial language becomes for Lucy Snowe—and her creator Charlotte Brönte—a means to speak for herself, particularly from a woman's position. In a time when not much freedom, mobility, or alternatives were granted, these women—character and author—utilize the element that physically and metaphorically is often lacking in their lives. Through these representatives, the intangible spaces of interiority and possibility become realized in text. Thus, the links between space and the female self appear clear, especially as a woman takes control of the creative process, whether it is of a text, of a role, or of the self. Both writer and narrator—Charlotte Brönte and Lucy Snowe—seem to come to their full creative awareness by locating and exploring these vital spaces with themselves that allow for growth and possibility.

CHAPTER THREE

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*: Micro/Macro-cosmic Visions

> Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its house a world; and beyond its world a heaven. Know then, that the world exists for you: build, therefore, your own world.
>
> —Ralph Waldo Emerson (55)

Connections in and through Spaces

As seen in the previous chapter, Charlotte Brönte's protagonist Lucy Snowe (along with many of the women represented in Victorian art) often stands poised at the edges of spaces. Lucy moves through unfrequented areas of the school, garden, and the town of Villette. She crosses boundaries by venturing into spaces often prohibited to Victorian women: the art museum, the theater, along with limitless areas of her own creative mind. Similarly, recall the female figure in Jane Bowkett's painting *Preparing Tea*. The woman may be physically rooted in her domestic setting and role; yet, her intense gaze—the focal point of the painting—looks towards a suggestively open window. Her look and private longing direct her out of her immediate physical space and into another abstract, as yet undeveloped but fully potential, one—if not manifest realistically, at least present in her thoughts.

These charged threshold spaces and certain Victorian women's intense impulse towards them recur in Elizabeth Gaskell's 1864–66 novel *Wives and Daughters*, the last work written before her death.[1] In general, critics like J. A. V. Chapple assert that for both Gaskell and Brönte, place and character are tightly joined in their novels (Chapple 325). Thus, as with Bronte's and various Victorian artists' depictions of spaces, Gaskell composes spaces in this novel that create tensions. Primarily, her descriptions and placements

offer a sense of extension. Nothing is set and hemmed in; rather, Gaskell seems to create spaces with an eye toward connections—literal connections of locations and, in turn, more personal ones. The physical representations of extended or connecting spaces become a way of alluding to other abstract spaces of the mind, of the imagination, of possibility. Gaskell's depictions—her "word-paintings," to continue using Rhoda Flaxman's term—particularly connect domestic settings to exterior, natural ones, creating a noticeable sense of extension.

This expanding sense of space vividly emerges in the beginning paragraphs of the novel. Unlike *Villette*, *Wives and Daughters* is written from the perspective of a third-person narrator. So, while the novel (and this chapter) focuses on the young female protagonist Molly Gibson, it does not present all events and observations from her personalized perspective, as was the case with Lucy Snowe. Nevertheless, the narrator introduces Molly Gibson rapidly within a passage that already establishes a spatial dynamic for Gaskell's created world:

> To begin with the old rigmarole of childhood. In a country there was a shire, and in that shire there was a town, and in that town there was a house, and in that house there was a room, and in that room there was a bed, and in that bed there lay a little girl;….It was a June morning, and early as it was the room was full of sunny warmth and light. (Gaskell 35)

The narrator acknowledges a certain fairy tale quality to this introduction: a lack of specific details; a leading of the reader into the tale; a sense of otherworldliness; and, most vividly, effortless boundary crossings. Over the course of one sentence, the narrator has led readers from their world, across time and space, and into the world of a young girl soon to be known as Molly Gibson. The flowing, yet sectioned, structure of the sentence makes readers feel as if they have travelled great distances in only a matter of words.

The narrator may have self-consciously devalued this sensation with the description, "the old rigmarole of childhood." Yet, I suggest that the feel of this introduction sets up the pervasive tension of the novel. In moving from country to shire to town to house to room to bed to girl, the narrator has made a telescopic connection between the macrocosmic, outer world and the microcosmic, domestic and inner world of Molly Gibson. These types of extensions, or social/inner world connections, continue through the novel and become a dominant way of establishing and knowing the main female character, Molly Gibson.

In particular, as seen in the last sentence of the introductory paragraph, descriptions of Molly are often accompanied by those of rooms/spaces infused with the outer, natural world. She seeks these threshold spaces—

openings like windows and doors—that allow her to be connected to the outdoors, even when within domestic interiors. The endpoint of that macro/micro-cosmic extension leaves the reader in a room full of warmth and light. In addition, Molly's first action involves her running to the window, forging her own connection with nature and the world outside:

> Then to the window, and after some tugging she opened the casement, and let in the sweet morning air. The dew was already off the flowers in the garden below, but still rising from the long hay-grass in the meadows directly beyond. At one side lay the little town of Hollingford, into a street of which Mr. Gibson's front door opened; and delicate columns, and little puffs of smoke were already beginning to rise from many a cottage chimney where some housewife was already up, and preparing breakfast for the bread-winner of the family. (35–6)

No sooner has the reader been brought directly into Molly's little room by the narrator than Molly herself directs the attention outward again. Similarly, once acquainted with the exterior, social world of Hollingford, the reader and the energy of the passage are swept back inside the Gibson house through the open door. This spatial movement creates a provocative tension, especially as it is initiated by the heroine—and by extension, the woman novelist. The linkage between this type of spatiality and its connection to knowing the female character through a further microcosmic leap into her personal inner world emerges as a vital and repeated descriptive technique in Gaskell's novel.

Major Social/Domestic Spaces

Though an inhabitant of the small, rural town of Hollingford, Molly Gibson as the heroine of *Wives and Daughters* becomes interwoven into the various levels and areas of the surrounding society—her own home; Hamley Hall; the Towers; domestic settings around Hollingford; and the open air of nature. Molly appears to move fairly effortlessly in these social spaces and be accepted by each group's members over time. As Molly throughout the novel creates *her own spaces*—those that she frequents or claims personally—it seems important to outline and explore the other dominant spaces of her life.[2]

The Gibson House

The primary setting of the novel and Molly's world is, of course, the Gibson household. Until her mid-teen years, Molly and her father Mr. Robert Gibson, a widower, lived together in their home, kept by three female servants. Molly was instructed in the home by a young governess, Miss Eyre (perhaps an ironic homage to Brönte's Jane Eyre?); in addition, Mr. Gibson occasion-

ally took on young male apprentices to his medical profession. Thus, within this respectable and often busy household, Molly and Mr. Gibson comprised a devoted pair.

This scene of the household also constitutes an important focus in recent critical study, particularly of women's novels. Nancy Armstrong especially asserts "how a notion of the household as a specificially feminine space established the preconditions for a modern institutional culture" (251). Though Armstrong does not illustrate or explain her theory through Gaskell's novels, she does draw our overall attention to the household as primarily a feminine locus and space illuminating change in the nineteenth century.

Gaskell focuses on the Gibson family as it undergoes expansion: Mr. Gibson decides to take a second wife, thinking both of his own happiness and the need for Molly to again have maternal influence and guidance. His choice, the widowed Hyacinth Clare Kirkpatrick, also has a daughter Cynthia, slightly older than Molly. Interestingly, and perhaps appropriately, the changes that ensue from Mr. Gibson's marriage can be observed through spatial descriptions and shifting dynamics. The home that for so long has comfortably and harmoniously served Molly and her father must now accommodate a larger nuclear family, and even changes in the staff as the new Mrs. Gibson asserts her reign. Hyacinth Clare Kirkpatrick Gibson means to be the lady of the house and quickly to shirk her previous roles of frugal widow and teacher. As a new wife, she assumes control over her domain, asserting what Armstrong might regard as sexual and political dominance.

In turn, part of Molly's adjustment to having a stepmother—aside from the significant loss of her treasured, exclusive relationship with her father—involves Mrs. Gibson's domestic redecorating decisions. These changes illuminate Molly's attachments to her familiar surroundings—the rooms themselves and, more importantly, the memories they hold. For instance, just prior to the marriage, Molly observes some of her future step-mother's changes downstairs in paint color and decor; "to her they were but dismal improvements" (Gaskell 185).

More significantly, Molly views her father's bedroom done afresh. To see the room once shared by her parents so changed both revives and drains it of memories for her:

> Molly could just remember, in faint clear lines of distinctness, the being taken into this very room to bid farewell to her dying mother. She could see the white linen, surrounding the pale, wan wistful face, with the large, longing eyes, yearning for one more touch of the little warm child, whom she was too feeble to clasp in her arms, already growing numb in death. Many a time when Molly had been in this room since that sad day, had she seen in vivid fancy that same wan wistful face ly-

> ing on the pillow, the outline of the form beneath the clothes; and the girl had not shrunk from such visions, but rather cherished them, as preserving to her the remembrance of her mother's outward semblance. Her eyes were full of tears, as she followed Miss Browning into this room to see it under its new aspect. Nearly everything was changed—the position of the bed and the colour of the furniture; there was a grand toilette-table now with a glass upon it, instead of the primitive substitute of the top of a chest of drawers, with mirror above upon the wall, sloping downwards; these latter things had served her mother during her short married life. (186)

Both her mother's simple, well-loved furnishings and Molly's memories have been housed in this room for her whole life, and now suffer a displacement.

Though at that moment, funds did not cover a redecoration of Molly's room, her private space does not remain unaltered by Mrs. Gibson over time. Compounded by her reaction to her parents' bedroom changes, Molly is initially relieved that her room was allowed to retain its rustic familiarity; she admits, "'Nearly everything in it was what mamma had when she lived with my great-uncle. I wouldn't have had it changed for the world; I am so fond of it'" (187). Yet, once the marriage has occurred, Mrs. Gibson asserts her new role and continues with her plans: to outfit a room for her daughter Cynthia's arrival and to refurnish Molly's similarly. Upon absorbing these thoughts, Molly pleads for her room to remain unchanged, to keep the furniture that was her own mother's. Primarily concerned with keeping up appearances—she thinks all of Hollingford would wrongly accuse her of materially favoring her own daughter over Molly—Mrs. Gibson will not adjust her plans. Trying to placate Molly, she says, "'You shall have yours done as well. A little French bed, and a new paper, and a pretty carpet, and a dressed-up toilet-table and glass, will make it look *quite a different place*'" [my italics] (219). These last words, even in their simplicity, ring with significance. Spaces command, over time, a sense of familiarity, if not seemingly outright ownership. Molly feels this way about her father's house, her room, and her mother's delicate furnishings—"the cherished relics of her mother's maiden-days"—now "consigned to the lumber-room" (220). Through these physical examples, one can sense both the general resonance of certain spaces for us all, and specifically Molly Gibson's awareness of her own connection to her loved ones and to her own identity through such spaces.

In discussing the use of spatial imagery in Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre*, Nancy Armstrong notes descriptions of rooms and the furnishings of daily life, and the way that Brönte reinstitutes these materials into the novel (both writing materials and antique furnishings). Armstrong writes that "these 'relics' constitute a kind of residue of daily life—and of the novel—that history renders obsolete, but for which women and novelists eventually

find new uses" (Armstrong 208). Gaskell seems to use similar descriptions to solidify connections: Molly's connections through memory with her mother, and a connection to her sense of self partially formed by the space itself.

Hamley Hall

As the doctor of Hollingford and its surrounding areas, Mr. Gibson knows many families and all strata of society. Michael Cohen notes that doctors, in Gaskell's novels, often have free mobility among the classes (Cohen 157).[3] The Hamley family are neighbors and patients of Dr. Gibson, along with being the oldest connected family in the county. Through the father Squire Hamley's lineage, the family has owned their estate for centuries: "Their mode of life was simple, and more like yeomans than squires…. There was a dignity in this quiet conservatism that gained him [Squire Hamley] an immense amount of respect both from high and low; and he might have visited at every house in the county had he so chosen" (Gaskell 72–3). Thus, the Hamleys exhibit an attachment to their land, to the tradition that upholds it, and to family connections that will continue that name and position into the future.

Prior to thoughts of remarriage, when Mr. Gibson observes that it is awkward for Molly to remain as an unattended young woman in their house—one of the male medical apprentices has chosen Molly for his devotions and there is no maternal figure for intervention and guidance—he arranges for her to spend some time at Hamley Hall. Mrs. Hamley, a refined woman of London background, is considered a "chronic invalid" (73) and, as the mother of two sons, appreciates the presence and companionship of a young girl. Over time, Molly grows to be "like a child of the house almost" (238), often ameliorating conditions and relationships within the family. The narrator even suggests that the root of Mrs. Hamley's health problems is deprivation of "all her strong interests" (74): the social, cultural life of London, and the early departure of her two boys, Osborne and Roger, to preparatory school. Molly becomes a welcome youthful presence to Mrs. Hamley for this reason, and increasingly fills that role for the other family members as well.

While Mrs. Hamely's condition may lack a name, it is pictured through descriptions of her daily patterns and habits. For instance, the narrator notes that "the greater part of her [Mrs. Hamley's] life was spent on a sofa, wheeled to the window in summer and to the fireside in winter" (75). Her room looks out through four large windows to the lawn, flower beds and a water-lily pond, allowing her a view outside even though she can no longer wander there. Beside her are a table with writing implements and poetry, along with a vase of flowers renewed every day regardless of the season. These arrange-

ments are intended to give Mrs. Hamley a sense of freedom and mobility that her physical condition otherwise limits. Similar descriptive passages vibrantly picture the goings-on at the household, providing a concrete sense of the inhabitants through their surroundings.

The vivid descriptions of Molly's times at Hamley Hall are conveyed particularly in spatial terms and designs. These descriptions not only depict qualities of members of the Hamley family, but begin to chart Molly's own development. Perhaps in being removed from her own familiar home environment, Molly's individualistic qualities emerge more distinctly as she must assert some independence of thought and action.

As observed through the initial references to Molly, she has a deep connection to nature and the outdoors. This preference and connection develop increasingly during her stay at Hamley Hall. Even her trip there—at first steeped in reluctance to leave her father—illustrates that bond:

> It was very pleasant driving quickly along in the luxurious carriage, through the pretty green lanes, with dog-roses and honeysuckles so plentiful and fresh in the hedges, that she once or twice was tempted to ask the coachman to stop till she had gathered a nosegay (94).

Though a seemingly simple account, this passage suggests that, despite hating the reason and consequences of leaving home, the freshness of nature can divert Molly's sadness. Also, though trying to keep real emotions in check, Molly displays keen observatory powers; she sees and appreciates nature in its details. In this case, the vision and connection provide her with solace.

Molly's impulse towards nature repeatedly surfaces. In fact, upon arriving at Hamley Hall, the focus is not initially on Molly's impressions of the Hamleys; rather, readers experience with Molly her first views of her new surroundings. The grounds and the rooms seem to be her main hosts, despite Mrs. Hamley's greeting from her sofa. In her designated bedroom, Molly

> first of all…went to the window to see what was to be seen. A flower-garden right below; a meadow of ripe grass just beyond, changing color in long sweeps, as the soft wind blew over it; great old forest-trees a little on one side; and beyond them again, to be seen only by standing very close to the side of the window-sill, or by putting her head out, if the window was open, the silver shimmer of a mere, about a quarter of a mile off…The deliciousness of the early summer silence was only broken by the song of the birds, and the nearer hum of bees. Listening to these sounds which enhanced the exquisite sense of stillness, and puzzling out objects obscured by distance or shadow, Molly forgot herself…(95)

Molly already begins to see and identify these natural elements relationally, to each other and to her perspective. The observations are specific and vital,

not a mere list of sights; they exhibit movement and character. Molly engages many of her senses in the experience, perhaps forgetting herself, but discovering a heightened sense of connection with a larger world.

Also, Molly's impulse is to observe first her natural environment and then her more enclosed domestic one. The details of her room, also keenly noted, reflect the Hamleys' understated, traditional wealth and style: furniture that is "old-fashioned" and "well-preserved;" "chintz curtains…[of] Indian calico of the last century;" fine-grained wood flooring; no "luxuries of modern days," such as a "writing table, or sofa, or pier-glass" (96). Yet, again, Molly senses a connection to the outdoors even in these domestic settings when she observes that "the climbing honeysuckle outside the open window scented the room more exquisitely that any toilette perfumes" (96). This detail emphasizes the interconnectedness of indoor and outdoor spaces in the Hamley house, similar to the effect of the large windows near Mrs. Hamley's sofa that extend her 'world' past her interior confinement. Molly seems to straddle both worlds—the domestic and the natural—in a way reminiscent of the honeysuckle's formless, wafting scents.

These impressions continue through her first day at the Hall as Molly attempts to acquaint herself with her surroundings, reinforcing the impact of these spatial references. In looking around the drawing-room, Molly hopes to "learn how to feel at home in her new quarters" (99). The same detailed observations take her around this room, focusing particularly on the "five high, long windows on one side of the room, all opening to the prettiest bit of flower-garden in the grounds" (99). Each room appears to offer access to these vistas through its design, and these elements continually capture Molly's attention and delight. These threshold spaces allow Gaskell to open up interiors, eliminate certain oppressive domestic restrictions, and suggest a dynamic that reflects Molly's nature.

Fittingly, Molly's first day at the Hall ends downstairs with the windows open, "and the sounds of the solitary corncrake, and the owl hooting in the trees, mingling with the words spoken" (102). Once upstairs in her own room, she looks

> out of her chamber window—leaning on the sill, and snuffing up the night odours of the honey-suckle. The soft velvet darkness hid everything that was at any distance from her; although she was as conscious of their presence as if she had seen them. (102)

Molly both extends herself physically between the spaces and forges an identification with the climbing vine outside. The repetition of these similar images and tensions assert their significance in the novel, especially as a visual way for readers to understand the intangible desires and energies of Molly's

character and thoughts. As Armstrong describes, and *Villette* similarly demonstrates, visual images of room and spaces come to represent territories that are otherwise intangible.

The Towers

Other "neighbors" of the Gibsons—a connection forged through Mr. Gibson's attendance as doctor and not through shared social class—are the members of the noble family that live at the "Towers": Lord and Lady Cumnor, the "earl" and "countess," and their various family members (Lady Harriet, Lady Agnes, Lord Hollingford, etc.). Mr. Gibson is regarded as "a favourite in all the Towers' household, as family doctors generally are; bringing hopes of relief at times of anxiety and distress" (57). This association increases after his marriage because Clare Kirkpatrick had been employed as a teacher by the noble family, and she much values her tie to the household as if the members were her own extended family. The Cumnors had also indirectly encouraged the marriage of the widow to Mr. Gibson, by furthering the idea in the potential couple's minds and enabling some meetings, in hopes of providing a stable life for Clare and her daughter. The Cumnor family members command a presence and respect from all in Hollingford for their aristocratic rank, although the Hamley family can claim a longer attachment to their land.

Molly, though the young daughter of a country doctor, has her own experiences at the Towers and with the Cumnor family members. The beginning of the novel sees her attending a special festival honoring the "industrial" school for training young ladies to be proper estate housemaids and cooks. Although accompanied by town friends, the Miss Brownings, Molly soon feels constricted by the tours of the greenhouses and the tight air. The grandness of the buildings and the cultivated garden overwhelm her. The narrator notes that, despite the luxuriousness, "Molly did not care for this half so much as for the flowers in the open air," and Molly herself admits "I can't breathe here!" (45).

These scenes constitute some of the reader's first impressions of the young Molly, and they quickly establish the vivid way that spaces are an apt correlative for her inner thoughts and preferences, a relationship that continues throughout the novel. Once free from the oppressively close atmosphere of the greenhouse—an artificial natural environment of highly cultivated and maintained plantlife—Molly feels markedly more herself:

> She felt better in the fresh air; and unobserved, and at liberty, went from one lovely spot to another, now in the open park, now in some shut-in flower-garden, where the song of the birds, and the drip of the central fountain, were the only sounds, and the tree-tops made an enclosing circle in the blue June sky; she went along

> without more thought as to her whereabouts than a butterfly has, as it skims from flower to flower…(46)

This passage suggests some of Molly's main traits: her preference for the outdoors; her need for freedom; and although she herself is an observer, her desire to go about unobserved by people. Again, she seems to 'lose' herself in the outdoors, (a space often visualized by Helen Allingham in her watercolors), only to find a deeper personal place that connects with nature. Interestingly, this description of the free outdoors employs language suggesting partitions and enclosures rather than vastness: the "shut-in" garden, and the "enclosing circle" of the tree-tops. Yet, they appear to be organic forms rather than partaking of the restrictiveness of buildings, interiors, and greenhouses. Though divided, enscribed spaces, they are still all found amidst the open air. They, perhaps, represent a mediated space for Molly—one between structured domestic environments and the more wild, open spaces that she will traverse later in the novel.

In this scene, Molly quickly tires from all the fresh air, wanderings, and new experiences. Though amidst the vastness, Molly finds a smaller space within the environment to be her own for a while:

> She saw a great wide-spreading cedar-tree upon a burst of lawn towards which she was advancing, and the black repose beneath its branches lured her thither. There was a rustic seat in the shadow, and weary Molly sat down there, and presently fell asleep. (46)

In this description, Molly domesticates the outdoors. The branches may "lure" Molly, but she is able to see a "seat," a welcoming place of repose, and claim the spot. Sleep can be seen as an act of vulnerability—a giving over of oneself, ones' activeness and alertness to passivity; Molly feels comforted to give herself over to sleep in the arms of a tree and the outdoor air. This incident marks one of the first times Molly actively and assertively claims or creates a space of her own, a tendency to be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

The Town of Hollingford

It is important not to overlook Hollingford itself as a major space in the life of Molly Gibson, for the dynamic of the town and its inhabitants have been her surroundings since birth. In fact, Susan Fraiman notes that Susan A. Zagarell includes Elizabeth Gaskell's novels in a genre that expressly focuses on community life (Fraiman 169). In many ways, the town plays a domestic role similar to that of a household. One may think of a small town as sharing in some of those ascribed nurturing and sheltering qualities. Additionally, Hollingford, in its small size and provinciality (compared to city life in Lon-

don, for instance), can also be restricting and confining. In either dimension, Hollingford does provide the general backdrop for most of Molly's growth and development.

Even though Molly was born and lives in Hollingford, the town does not define her as a person. The narrator does not portray Hollingford in an overly sentimental light either. Rather, readers receive perceptions of the town from surrounding neighbors, and those impressions are not always favorable. For instance, Lady Harriet from the Towers notes her perception of Hollingford, and particularly remarks that Molly differs from the town's usual inhabitants. Finding Molly endearing, Lady Harriet explains,

> Don't you see, little one, I talk after my kind, just as you talk after your kind. It's only on the surface with both of us. Why, I daresay some of your good Hollingford ladies talk of the poor people in a manner which they would consider as impertinent in their turn, if they could hear it.…but somehow I separate you from all these Hollingford people…most of them are so unnatural in their exaggerated respect and admiration when they come up to the Towers, and put on so much pretence by way of fine manners, that they only make themselves objects of ridicule. You at least are simple and truthful, and that's why I separate you in my own mind from them, and have talked unconsciously to you…. (Gaskell 197)

Molly sees herself as "one of them" (197) through physically living there and interacting in town circles. Yet, Lady Harriet clearly sees that both place and birthrank/class do not define all areas of personhood. Her words comment on the town's atmosphere, on Molly's distinctive character, and suggest Molly's need to carve out her own 'spaces' if she does not fully fit in with her society.

Molly herself objectively observes some of the same aspects of her town, even in well-liked family friends. After spending time at Hamley Hall, comparisons become more obvious for her. When visiting the Miss Brownings, Molly begins to see Hollingford tendencies in their manners:

> By her dear old friends the Miss Brownings she was petted and caressed so much that she became ashamed of noticing the coarser and louder tones in which they spoke, the provincialism of their pronunciation, the absence of interest in things, and their greediness of details about persons. They asked her questions which she was puzzled enough to answer about her future stepmother; her loyalty to her father forbidding her to reply fully and truthfully. (183)

Though a young girl, Molly notes the ways of Hollingford women. Never condescending herself, Molly does recognize class differences and attitudes; and true to Lady Harriet's description, she remains herself, not adhering to a location's or class's stereotypes. Yet, Molly is also ready at a later time equally to defend the Miss Brownings and insist that Lady Harriet treat

them respectfully, thus showing her allegiance to those who have treated her well.

The Miss Brownings, in particular, provide suitable examples of the caring nature of Hollingford. The two sisters always enjoy Molly's company and welcome her into their home. They frequently recall their initial friendship with Molly's late mother, Mary, and this early relationship firmly solidifies their commitment to her daughter as if it were a familial tie. Miss Phoebe Browning, upon first hearing of Mr. Gibson's plan to remarry, even had the flashing notion that she could be his choice, suggesting the ease she felt with the family even more than the possible romantic impulse. The two women have been affectionate and consistent maternal presences in Molly's life for years, and personify that element of small town life that often reaches out to inhabitants with protection and shelter.

One specific scene portrays that quality, and again does so by describing and emphasizing spaces. During the time prior to Mr. Gibson's wedding when much of the renovation was underway, Molly stayed briefly with the Miss Brownings; she had to leave Hamley Hall as both sons would be there, and the proximity might not be proper for a young lady (in the Squire's estimation). The description of the guest room and Molly's observations emphasize the heartfelt graciousness of the sisters, and the elements considered hospitable in their household:

> Molly went up to her little bedroom, clean and neat as a bedroom could be, with draperies of small delicate patchwork—bed-curtains, window-curtains, and counterpane; a japanned toilet-table, full of little boxes, with a small looking glass affixed to it, that distorted every face that was so unwise as to look in it. This room had been to the child one of the most dainty and luxurious places ever seen, in comparison with her own bare, white-dimity bedroom; and now she was sleeping in it, as a guest, and all the quaint adornments she had once peeped at as a great favour, as they were carefully wrapped up in cap-paper, were set out for her use. (Gaskell 185)

This room seems to draw on Molly's connection with the Browning sisters over a long time. Molly feels that they treat her like an honored guest, if not family, by allowing her trusted access to these beautiful things she has always admired. That granted freedom and trust exemplifies the Browning sisters' care and nurturing, and a parallel potential in Hollingford life.

Unfortunately, though perhaps expectedly, not all of Hollingford is like the Brownings, and small towns can be as constricting as they are embracing. Swings of attitude and behaviour are again described in visual, spatial terms, and suggest the type of environment Molly needs to break away from at times. Hollingford's openness and hospitality turn into a clawingly close atmosphere, not unlike the stifling greenhouse, and permit little room for

difference or forgiveness:

> Scandal sleeps in the summer, comparatively speaking. Its nature is the reverse of that of the dormouse. Warm ambient air, loiterings abroad, gardenings, flowers to talk about, and preserves to make, soothed the wicked imp to slumber in the parish of Hollingford in summer-time. But when evenings grew short, and people gathered round the fires, and put their feet in a circle—not on the fenders, that was not allowed—then was the time for confidential conversation! Or in the pauses allowed for the tea-trays to circulate amoung the card-tables…small crumbs and scraps of daily news came up to the surface.…(550)

The image itself is constricting—a circle of people, of feet, of trays, of heat, of gossip. Spatially, the image brings the reader concentrically into the heart of what fuels the town in the colder months.

This winter habit of inhabitants and homes later feeds on Molly as its "crumb" of news, when townsmembers believe she is conducting an improper liaison with Mr. Preston, meeting him in out-of-the-way locales and passing him notes in public places. She is quickly presumed guilty of *something*, without the benefit of explanation. Even the Miss Brownings seem swayed by others' misperceived accounts, and try to generously concede that they "'shall always love Molly for her mother's sake'" (566). Even that comment is a daring assertion in the midst of the town's powerful stream of gossip and judgment. Mr. Gibson truly defends her; "You ought to love her for her own,'" he answers back to Miss Browning (566).

Also, Lady Harriet—herself admittedly not adherent to expectations—openly aligns herself with Molly in order to sway the town's opinions, regardless of the source of the falsehoods. In this act, Lady Harriet, whom Laurie Buchanan regards as a maternal figure for Molly, demonstrates her faith in Molly and offers herself as a strong and positive role model (Buchanan 509). This type of support and guidance serves to counteract the effect of town gossip and strengthen Molly in her own development.

Hollingford seemingly presents itself with these contradictions: the ability to grant freedom and love, and the impulse to undermine it and restrict individuals for the sake of a cold day's entertainment. It appears easier sometimes to keep a tight rein on town life and standards than to regard individuals fully, or trust in the freedoms once granted. Against this backdrop—one that is not rare, or necessarily exclusive to Gaskell's time and place—Molly Gibson's choices and tendency towards open spaces are not surprising. Her preferences reflect an energy that needs to break away from those boundaries and obligations to develop into herself.

The Open Air

All of the preceding locations have in some way incorporated a sense of the

outdoors and, more specifically, an interaction between interiors and exteriors. Molly is repeatedly drawn to these borders and to natural settings. In addition to the already delineated areas, the "open air" itself should be considered one of Molly's major territories. When possible, or necessary, she retreats to secret natural spaces. Other times, she simply exhibits an unself-conscious ease and preference for being outside. For instance, often the narrator notes that a daily walk is a "necessity" for Molly (Gaskell 415). In fact, Helena Michie writes that walks, for women in novels, are seen as a means of social control that may ultimately lead to marriage (Michie 41). Keeping this perspective and others in mind, I am considering the open air as its own category because it connotes a public space and a natural vastness beyond those areas attached to domestic buildings, as depicted by both Victorian novelists and artists. Molly's entrance into these spaces and affinity for them also seems significant for her gender. It suggests a freedom and mobility not often permitted for women, but that Molly insists on for herself.[4]

Even more than suggested in previous examples, nature provides Molly with comfort and solace, a sense of care more often associated with human interaction. In many of the early parts of the novel, Molly is coming to terms with life changes as her father plans to remarry and with her anticipation of an altering of their relationship. All the while, she is naturally maturing from a girl into a young woman, becoming aware of her feelings, modes of expression, and her desire to be true to her inner core.

At a moment of emotional realization and crisis, Molly instinctively seeks a place in nature as her refuge. During her initial stay at Hamley Hall, Molly receives a visit from her father informing her of his intention to marry Mrs. Kirkpatrick, confirming the unwelcome suspicions she had heard recently. Although filled with anger and uncertainty, Molly remains silent rather than release her emotions and not be able to retract hasty words. Yet, these feelings are not insignificant and Molly feels her world is changing: "It was as if the piece of solid ground on which she stood had broken from the shore, and she was drifting out to the infinite sea" (Gaskell 145). Described spatially, Molly's response to the news indicates her distress and her fear of the ambiguity of life that lies ahead.

Molly's immediate response is to vacate Hamley Hall and find a place where she can be alone. In this case, she needs an open space to release her feelings and fears, and to go unobserved:

> She went through a side-door—it was the way by which the gardeners passed when they took the manure into the garden—and the walk to which it led was concealed from sight as much as possible by shrubs and evergreens and overarching trees. No one would know what became of her—and, with the ingratitude of misery, she added to herself, no one would care…. She went quickly on to the bourne which

> she had fixed for herself—a seat almost surrounded by the drooping leaves of a weeping ash—a seat on the long broad terrace walk on the other side of the wood, that overlooked the pleasant slope of the meadows beyond…. Molly almost thought that no one knew of the hidden seat under the ash-tree but herself…(147)

Although technically part of the Hamley property, this spot is remote and less cultivated than the formal gardens; it seems to elude ownership. In the isolation and privacy, Molly finally releases her tears and pent-up feelings. Again, she seems to domesticate the organic spot; the seat edged by branches resembles a window seat with draping curtains. Several times, the place is described as hidden and unknown by others. Molly arranges the space to suit herself and claims possession; able to give in to her vulnerablilties, she reaches into her grief and fear.

This scene also foreshadows the significance that Roger Hamley will have in Molly's life. Roger, a confirmed nature lover and student, happens to be walking on the grounds observing wild plants when he nears the ash-tree and discovers Molly in tears. The reader, now aware of Molly's affinity for nature and the outdoors, can easily see a common link and sensibility between the two young people, even if they are not fully aware of it themselves. Their appreciation for nature and observation bonds the two characters in a way reminiscent of no others in Hollingford, except perhaps Molly's paragon, her father. Though Molly does not wish to be observed or discovered in this state, she finds it easy to talk to Roger and admit her situation. He proves to be a good listener, is drawn to comfort her, and passes along the advice "to think more of others than of herself" (153)—a thought that she takes to heart and appreciates over time. Their meeting in this free and open space seems to facilitate this exchange; both Molly and Roger speak sincerely and let go of formalities—ones that perhaps may have been upheld had they met inside amidst a confined atmosphere.

This interaction also has long-lasting effects, as Molly begins to evaluate her reactions and wants. It is as if the pouring out of her emotions under the ash-tree opens up a flood of thoughts and questions. The reader recognizes that Molly is developing into an adult, reaching within, considering her thoughts, and forging relationships beyond those of the nuclear family. For instance, pondering Roger's advice, Molly contemplates: "Thinking more of others' happiness than of her own was very fine; but did it not mean giving up her very individuality, quench all the warm love, the true desires, that made her herself?" (169). Molly consciously sees through to her core, to her "individuality," and has dual strong desires: to be her own person and to maintain deep connections with those she loves. This statement presents Molly as a strong young woman—not ruled by either age or gender—cognizant of forming her own role or place in life. Susan Morgan would also

assert that Molly's impulses in this scene underlie the major tension of the novel: Mr. Gibson's centrality in his daughter's life, and her natural movement out of his dominion (Morgan 101).[5]

In another later instance in the novel, Molly again assumes her usual place outdoors—this time welcoming the chance to start out for a walk with her father—and stumbles into a situation that commands her participation. The initial walk itself reclaims time spent with her father: "She went up to the top of the hill; and there they sate still a minute or two, enjoying the view, without much speaking" (Gaskell 508). The narrator follows with a detailed description of the walk itself and the terrain. After parting with her father, Molly continues and discovers a secret meeting between Cynthia and Mr. Preston—Cynthia's attempt to disengage herself from an unfortunate alliance. Now aware of Cynthia's secrets and dilemma, Molly becomes involved in a rather heroic attempt to extricate her step-sister from Mr. Preston's demands and preserve her reputation.

Spatial imagery and dynamics seem to surround this interaction. To begin with, the meeting takes place along this country walk. Later, Molly contemplates the situation back at home, and the scene draws her into another threshold space:

> She sate in the seat in the bow window; the blind was not drawn down, for there was no danger of their being overlooked. She gazed into the soft outer darkness, and found herself striving to discern the outlines of objects—the cottage at the end of the garden—the great beech-tree with the seat round it—the wire arches, up which the summer roses had clambered; each came out faint and dim against the dusky velvet of the atmosphere. (514)

Although Molly may be sitting inside her home, her thoughts are directed outside into the openness. In this description, the dusky, twilight outlines outside the window mirror the haziness of her thoughts at this confusing moment. No words could better reflect Molly's indecision and ponderings over a way to help Cynthia than to draw on the language and natural images closest to her, as she remains at the 'border', sitting near the window, poised between two settings.

Molly's rescue mission also occurs in the open air, as she confronts Mr. Preston on Cynthia's behalf, along a country road away from inhabitants. The walk there bolsters Molly: "She walked quickly, instinctively wishing to get her blood up, and have not time for thought" (528). Holding the meeting along the road and out of doors, of course, intends to provide discretion for both parties. Yet, the setting seems fitting for Molly; it is her chosen environment and allows her to appear especially strong to Mr. Preston. She has come freely and speaks her mind despite the inherent risks: "He forgot him-

self for an instant in admiration of her. There she stood, frightened, yet brave, not letting go her hold on what she meant to do, even when things seemed most against her" (533). True, this effort took all of Molly's strength. Yet, in this act, Molly shows the extent of her maturity; she assists Cynthia out of sincere concern and loyalty, and also asserts her own strength and character. In a way, her earlier ponderings of Roger's advice have come full circle.

Molly's Spaces

These previous areas mark the spaces of Molly's world—her dwelling place; her 'temporary' homes; and the outdoors that always draws her attention and appreciation. In many of these instances, it appears significant that Molly either *chooses* to frequent the location, or that she *creates* some aspect of the setting to suit herself. To use artistic, visual terms, spaces—particularly those linked to exteriors—are her milieu and her medium. They appear to allow Molly either to discover or express some part of herself. Molly assumes an active role in her relationship to her spatial environment. This action, in turn, represents the interior development of her creativity, assertiveness, and maturity.

In seeking out nature and the outdoors, Molly Gibson subtly forges a more public identity for herself—one of freedom, mobility and strength. Thus, the outdoors for her signifies not only her love of natural elements but suggests an implied participation in the outer, public world—spaces beyond what Victorian society may deem appropriate to female domesticity. By insisting on these spaces, or mergers of interior and exterior space, Molly asserts her longing and need for a wider scope of connections and identity.

In a form familiar to the Victorian novel, Molly's attributes emerge and evolve in contrast to her foil sister character, Cynthia. Michael Cohen regards this doubling technique as a way of either eradicating difference, signifying displacement or interchangeability, or conveying a positive quality (Cohen 69). Furthermore, he sees the use of sisters in novels or paintings (i.e. as seen in the works of Carpenter, Egg, Leighton, etc.) as a means for representing the concerns of all nineteenth century women (101). In other words, the doubleness can signify a variety of possibilities of emphasis, from recognizing difference to attempting to domesticate it. In the case of stepsisters Molly and Cynthia, the two young women often have contrasting reactions and impulses, despite (or because of) their mutual affection and concern for the other.

Interestingly, the two differ in their affinity for the outdoors and daily walks. Molly's desires are clear. Contrastingly, for Cynthia,

> A daily walk was not a necessity to her as it was to Molly. On a lovely day or with an agreeable object, or when the fancy took her, she could go as far as any one; but these were exceptional cases; in general, she was not disposed to disturb herself from her indoor occupations. (Gaskell 415)

This differentiation appears more significant than a simple preference for indoors or out. Cynthia, portrayed as a beautiful, often coquettish young woman, fulfills a female stereotype by preferring to stay indoors and occupy herself with domestic activities. Rather, Molly—though a gentle, and virtuous young woman—leaves the security and acceptability of enclosed domesticity; she engages actively and regularly with the outside, public world. Molly, not unlike Lucy Snowe, transgresses acceptable or expected boundaries, though she does so quietly and subtly. By contrasting her actions with those of Cynthia, the reader becomes even more aware of Molly's assertiveness and the way her routines break 'normative' behavior for Victorian young women. Molly *chooses* to make the outdoors part of her personal territory.

Molly exhibits this behavior at an early age; her active impulse is not merely a result of gradual maturity. For instance, though her father has certain notions concerning what subjects his daughter may learn, Molly vocalizes her desires. According to Mr. Gibson, sewing, reading, writing, and "her sums" were tolerated for girls. Yet, "It was only by fighting and struggling hard, that bit by bit Molly persuaded her father to let her have French and drawing lessons" (65). Even in this choice, Molly demonstrates how she makes spaces her own. An avid reader, Molly takes her lessons outside of the domestic space; "Her summer place of study was that seat in the cherry tree, where she got the green stains on her frock…" (66). This choice of location seems especially vivid and nurturing. Molly is not idly reading for pleasure; she is studying. Again, she domesticates a tree branch for her seat, and is not afraid to get herself dirty, to involve herself with the elements. A twentieth-century reader might regard Molly at this stage as somewhat of a "tomboy," indicating behavior not as genteel and refined as that expected for girls. Aside from this current cultural image, Molly's choice of study space indicates that her learning takes place in the outer world, beyond the confines of the house walls, beyond conventions.

Molly continually claims spots for her reading and "education," creating personal spaces within larger ones, similar to Carpenter's and Egg's portrayals of sisters, and Burne-Jones' portrait of Georgiana. Molly consistently expresses an urgency for creating the environment around her. For instance, when at Hamley Hall, outside of her interactions with the family members, Molly occupies herself independently. The library is often her "favorite retreat" (121); "she had found her way into the library, and used to undo the

heavy bars of the shutters if the housemaid had forgotten this duty, and mount the ladder sitting on the steps for an hour at a time, deep in some book of the old English classics" (114). During another afternoon in the library, Molly settles in the same place: "She mounted on the ladder to get to a particular shelf high up in a dark corner of the room; and finding there some volume that looked interesting, she sat down on the step to read part of it" (246). Descriptions of Molly's study spaces often share a hidden, secretive quality. She does not simply read in the library; she seeks out a smaller, private space, that is delineated aside from its greater surroundings. Not only do these spaces grant Molly some privacy, they bestow an observer's perspective; she simultaneously absorbs knowledge and surveys life around her.

At another similar occasion at the Hall, Molly took to reading and copying favorite poems in her room. This time, she is

> sitting at the pleasant open window, and losing herself in dreamy outlooks into the gardens and woods, quivering in the noon-tide heat. The house was so still, in its silence it might have been the 'moated grange'; the bomming buzz of the blue in the great staircase window, seemed the loudest noise indoors. And there was scarcely a sound out-of-doors but the humming of bees, in the flower-beds below the window. Distant voices from the far-away fields where they were making hay—the scent of which came in sudden wafts distinct from that of the nearer roses and honeysuckles—these merry piping voices just made Molly feel the depth of the present silence. (116)

Quoting this passage at length, one can read and hear the sensory quality of the passage. The reader may wonder if Molly's education focuses more on poetry or natural, visual observations. The language itself recalls the 'moated grange' of the Tennyson inspired images, as in Millais' *Mariana*. Yet again, she sits at a threshold space—an open window between interiors and exteriors. Attuned to the sights and sounds around her, Molly equally engages with the world outside. Even the sounds float from one area to another, blurring distinctions and origins. Molly's reading perch appears not unlike the earlier seat in the cherry tree, allowing her to bridge the gap between worlds, perpetually crossing borders, like the sounds themselves.

She engages in a similar activity at her own house with Cynthia in the spring. Along with Mrs. Gibson, the three sit at their activities in the drawing-room, the two girls at the window. The window opens out to the spring air, and this time the intangibility of fragrance binds the two worlds, mingling their atmospheres:

> It was as yet early morning; a delicious, fresh June day, the air redolent with the scents of flower-growth and bloom; and half the time the girls had been ostensibly employed in the French reading they had been leaning out of the open window trying to reach a cluster of climbing roses. They had secured them at last, and the

> buds lay on Cynthia's lap, but many of the petals had fallen off; for though the perfume lingered about the window-set, the full beauty of the flowers had passed away. (357)

This time Molly draws Cynthia into her usual activity, leaning physically out of the open window, and figuratively from their domestic setting to the natural one, as in the garden images of Foster and Langley. Their playful, seemingly very feminine activity of gathering rose buds—through its linkage with many other strong instances of participation with the outer world—gains significance. For this one time, Molly has a partner as she is joined by Cynthia, the girl who normally prefers her 'indoor occupations' to those daily forays into nature.

Gaskell's narrator presents her readers with an abundance of these settings for Molly, each slightly different, but sharing fundamental qualities and impacts. Through their repetition, one sees the constant presence of certain spaces for Molly, and her consistent urge to occupy them. Another time at Hamley Hall, Molly chooses to read in the drawing room, "seated on the rug, reading by firelight, as she did not like to ring for candles merely for her own use" (241). Her proximity to the fireplace also suggests a kind of threshold space. Casting off the domestic elements—the candles as her reading light—Molly draws near the fire itself. In comparison to the delicate candles, the fire seems closer to its essence as a natural, often uncontainable, element. While the fire may not be a threshold like the usual window, it does provide a strong link with the outer world beyond her domestic confines.

While in most of these instances Molly chooses her spaces for quotidian or benign activities, she also seeks out comfortable spaces to deal with emotional upheaval. Just as she felt the need to be alone under the ash-tree to grieve the news of her father's impending marriage, Molly instinctively leaves her own home to deal with her feelings following the debacle between Cynthia and Mr. Preston. More specifically and deeply though, Molly's reactions reflect the feelings she has for Roger Hamley and the impact on him of Cynthia's disregard. When Cynthia cannot bear to share her distress with her sister, Molly too wishes to find retreat in her habitual way:

> Molly had her out-of-door things on, and she crept away as she was bidden. She lifted her heavy weight of heart and body along till she came to a field, not so very far off—where she had sought the comfort of loneliness ever since she was a child; and there, under the hedge-bank, she sate down, burying her face in her hands, and quivering all over as she thought of Cynthia's misery, which she could not touch or assuage. She never knew how long she sate there, but it was long past lunch-time when once again she stole up to her room. (599)

Distinctive on several levels, this passage highlights Molly's connection to this particular natural space over her life-time. Since childhood, Molly has sought private, natural locations to discover and express her thoughts and feelings. This situation also demonstrates vividly Molly's connection with her sister and the way she shares comparably in another's emotional distress. She reaches palpably and empathetically out of herself. The underlying significance of this episode is her own feelings for Roger Hamley, though not concretely acknowledged or explored at this point. However unformed, these true feelings inform and heighten her reactions and emphasize her growing scope of connections. As so many times before, Molly's choice of space allows her to express and free these feelings, enabling her to come closer to a fuller self-recognition.

An earlier image solidifies this reading and seems to incorporate several of the ties between Molly and her chosen environments: the threshold space between interior and exterior worlds; emotional connections to others; and tangible representations of her intangible feelings and senses. At one point, Molly is doubly struck by Roger's departure from England for his scientific expedition in Africa and by his devoted proposal to Cynthia, though a response to the former news is all she can acknowledge presently. Thinking that she has missed her chance to see him before his long absence, she escapes to her room:

> Then the room grew stifling, and instinctively she went to the open casement window, and leant out, gasping for breath. Gradually the consciousness of the soft peaceful landscape stole into her mind, and stilled the buzzing confusion. There, bathed in the almost level rays of the autumn sunlight, lay the landscape she had known and loved from childhood; as quiet, as full of low humming life as it had been at this hour for many generations. The autumn flowers blazed out in the garden below, the lazy cows were in the meadow adjoining, chewing their cud in the green after-math; the evening fires had just been made up in the cottages beyond, in preparation for the husband's home-coming, and were sending up soft curls of blue smoke into the still air; the children, let loose from school, were shouting merrily in the distance, and she—Just then she heard nearer sounds; and opened door, steps on the lower flight of stairs. He could not have gone without even seeing her. (418)

It seems important not to truncate this passage, for it has a flow and movement that again illustrates Gaskell's keen and vibrant depiction of space, especially its tensions. Molly "instinctively" goes to the window, needing to break out of her domestic confinement. Similar to other moments, she seems to lose herself, almost to blend with the natural scene she observes. Rather than a passive gaze, hers appears active, engaging and joining with the landscape through her senses. At this moment, Molly seems

more particularly distraught; not only does she observe her current surroundings, she retreats into a pastoral, halcyon image—one sustained by years of constancy—to escape the flux and pain she currently experiences. Even the sentence structure of the narrative reflects this space she has created—the picture of the outside landscape and the inner place of stabilizing calm. Mid-sentence of her descriptive observations, recognition of sounds of departure break through her protective reverie, and she realizes that Roger must have left.

Molly does wind up having her farewell moment with Roger, though it is conspicuously marked with comments of Cynthia's loveliness rather than of their own bond. Suddenly, her relationship to him is only seen in context of his feelings for her step-sister. As he eventually leaves, Molly's instantaneous reaction is to run upstairs, prolong the moment, and see him one last time:

> and then as quick as lightening Molly ran up to the front attic—the lumber room, whose window commanded the street down which he must pass. The window clasp was unused and stiff, Molly tugged at it—unless it was open, and her head put out, that last chance would be gone. (421)

When he does look up at the house, Molly has retreated from the window into the shadows, wishing not to be observed. Yet in this action (one that will resonate later in the novel), Molly again runs to a threshold, a border space, wanting one last look, one last moment of connection. At this time, she may not want to present herself or her eagerness to Roger; yet, ultimately, she controls her actions. She chooses her place of observation; she behaves actively; and she recognizes somewhere within herself the depth of personal connections—her own feelings, her feelings for Roger, and her love for Cynthia through discovering these latent emotions.

Molly's Connections

Throughout all of these scenes and situations, Molly frequently enacts changes both for others and herself. She crosses spatial boundaries by insisting on her mobility through her regular walks and retreats into nature. Often a guest or 'honorary' family member, she breaks boundaries of social rank by engaging with levels of society beyond her own household. Simultaneously, she breaks stereotypical, cultural boundaries by acting and making decisions sometimes regardless of gender and age conventions. These implications lend weight to her choices and actions. In turn, space—Molly's chosen or created environments—distinguishes itself as the medium for allowing these connections.

Even through the examples already explored, it becomes clear that Molly reaches out to and connects with virtually all other significant characters. In this way, through her impact on others, Molly becomes central to the reader's experience of the novel. For instance, Molly may have first gone to stay at Hamley Hall at her father's request; yet, over time, as Molly makes recurrent visits and involves herself with the family members, it becomes apparent that the Hamleys may be more in need of her presence than could have been expected. Roger, though regarding her initially in a sisterly way, discovers within her a thoughtful companion, even a curious pupil always eager to hear of and learn from his scientific studies. The intellectual stimulation is mutual, for he acknowledges that "Sometimes her remarks had probed into his mind and excited him to the deep thought in which he delighted" (182). Osborne also shares a special regard for young Molly, and their bond increases once she becomes privy to his secret—the knowledge of his French wife and subsequent child living abroad. The weight of this secret—only known by Roger and Molly—draws Osborne to her, not to discuss matters, but simply to feel her familiar, calming presence. Once when visiting the Gibson house, Osborne, though charmed by Cynthia, chooses to be near Molly: "he would leave her [Cynthia's] side, and come to sit near Molly, if anything reminded him of his mother, about which he could talk to her, and to her alone" (272–3). Molly's now long-term association with the Hamleys forges an almost familial connection, one that has evolved naturally and increasingly over time.

Squire Hamley also warms himself to Molly's presence. Though at times he may seem gruff and practical, more worried about her presence in the house with his two unmarried sons, he eventually grows to regard her as a daughter. When Molly leaves, Squire Hamley feels the loss:

> Yet, when she went away from the Hall he missed her constantly; it had been so pleasant to have her there fulfilling all the pretty offices of a daughter; cheering the meals, so often tête-à-tête betwixt him and Roger, with her innocent wise questions, her lively interest in their talk, her merry replies to his banter. (182)

It seems that the Squire has grown attached to Molly despite himself, as if she fills a void he could not have accurately described or realized prior to her presence. The connection is well-founded; when later in the novel, Squire Hamley must deal with the death of his first-born son, Osborne, Molly instinctively feels and knows that she should be with him as he grieves. Molly acts decisively, and exclaims to her protesting step-mother, "'I am going. I must go. I cannot bear to think of him alone. When papa comes back he is sure to go to Hamley, and if I am not wanted, I can come back with him'" (605). Molly tirelessly attends to the Squire, and later encourages him to

accept and form a relationship with Osborne's widow Aimee and their son—an action that allows the Squire, after suffering the loss of his wife and son, to extend his family once again.

The primary bond with the Hamleys, as earlier suggested, exists with Mrs. Hamley during the period of her decline. As mother to two independent sons, and a girl Fanny who died young, Mrs. Hamley longs for the presence of a caring and attentive daughter-substitute. After Molly's departure from her initial stay,

> Mrs. Hamley regretted her more and longer than did the other two [Roger and the Squire]. She had given her the place of a daughter in her heart; and now she missed the sweet feminine companion-ship, the playful caresses, the never-ceasing attentions; the very need of sympathy in her sorrows, that Molly had shown so openly from time to time; all these things had extremely endeared her to the tender-hearted Mrs. Hamley. (182)

Molly brings a freshness and vitality into Mrs. Hamley's restricted and diminished life. Reaching beyond enlivening Mrs. Hamley because of her physical limitations, Molly's presence fills a long-term need, her desire for a relationship with a daughter that had been taken away from her. When Mrs. Hamley falls into a more dire decline, Molly also demonstrates her care; "Of course she felt great pain at quitting the Hall, and at the mute farewell she had taken of her sleeping and unconscious friend" (249). Though surrounded by many maternal figures, Molly does lack a mother; for a while, Mrs. Hamley, though weakened, gives Molly exclusive and unconditional care. In a way, Mrs. Hamley's complete acceptance of Molly paves the way for other family members' caring regard, and foreshadows her eventual place in the family as Roger's chosen partner.[6]

All of these bonds with the Hamley family provide Molly with opportunities for growth and care, beyond that of her nuclear family. The relationships are earned through the ways that Molly interacts with each member. Through each bond, Molly continually gives of herself and learns in return: intellectually, compassionately, empathetically, and responsibly. Susan Morgan recognizes this type of interaction, particularly as she observes the emergence of feminine values and sensibilities into culture from an historical standpoint. She sees in the work of Gaskell as a whole (and other authors) that "mercy is not about great power but about great fluidity, an acute sensitivity to one's own potential for becoming different" (Morgan 17). Morgan recognizes an interwoven relationship between the power to influence others and the ability to be influenced, which she defines as feminine (17). Particularly, Morgan observes a shift in historical awareness—of feminine 'virtues', such as gentleness, friendship, love, etc., gradually accepted into a

predominantly fixed masculine world, characterized by rigid categories, justice, firmness, etc. (19). Not exclusive to her reading, these observations, as seen through Molly's relationships with the Hamley family, demonstrate her personal growth and awareness of her identity. Morgan's reading serves to bolster the personal significance of Molly's growth by extending it to a larger, social/historical context. Specifically, Morgan sees Gaskell's "answer" to social changes "was that the gentle virtues of the private realm must be transposed to the public" (94). In light of Molly's connections with spaces and her particular affinity for extending domestic space into exteriors, Morgan's reading aptly complements the role that space plays in *Wives and Daughters*.

Molly's growth and active nature can perhaps best be seen in her relationship with Cynthia. Molly has always had a loving father. Though having lost her mother at such a young age, Molly has experienced the loving attention of maternal figures throughout her life—women who care for her and look out for her best interest. Yet, Molly has never had a sister, and no mention is made of comparably-aged female friends. Therefore, upon gaining a step-sister, Molly faces an unprecedented relationship, one that she approaches with eagerness and apparent ease. Clearly, the two young women differ; they even recognize that fact themselves. Cynthia remarks soon in their acquaintance, "'I wish I could love people as you do, Molly'" (Gaskell 257). Cynthia attributes her own deficiencies to her mother's seeming disregard and their frequent separation during her childhood. Molly also comes to realize that despite the affection she shares with her new sister, Cynthia does not share all of her thoughts. Molly notes that "there were certain limits beyond which her [Cynthia's] confidence did not go; where her reserve began, and her real self was shrouded in mystery" (461). Despite this awareness, Molly does not lessen her dedication to the relationship; rather, she becomes more conscious of her own behavior: "Molly's was the interest of affection, not the coarser desire of knowing everything for a little excitement; and as soon as she saw that Cynthia did not wish to tell her anything about that period of her life, Molly left off referring to it" (461). In essence, Molly learns her limits in this relationship, but shapes her love and affection around them. As much Cynthia's sister, Molly often assumes the role of mother—the connection Cynthia seems to most lack—caressing her and protecting her in times of need.

The climactic moments of their relationship occur, as previously mentioned, as Molly attempts to intervene for Cynthia in her unwanted entanglement with Mr. Preston. What is significant in this situation is Molly's heroic attitude and approach to resolving the problem and protecting Cynthia. Mr. Preston's insinuations and demands compel Molly to take an active

role and responsibility for a problem not even of her own making. Her loving connection with Cynthia creates a sense of duty that Molly cannot ignore. One can sense the complex emotions that propel Molly into this act as she thinks to herself on the way to meeting with Mr. Preston on Cynthia's behalf:

> Loaded with many such messages, which she felt that she would never deliver, not really knowing what she should say, hating the errand, not satisfied with Cynthia's manner of speaking about her relations to Roger, oppressed with shame and complicity in conduct which appeared to her deceitful, yet willing to bear all and brave all, if she could once set Cynthia in a straight path—in a clear space, and almost more pitiful to her friend's great distress and possible disgrace, than able to give her that love which involves perfect sympathy, Molly set out on her walk towards the appointed place. (528)

It is as if we, as readers, are in Molly's head as she mulls over the thoughts and emotions that have bombarded her. She wishes Cynthia a "straight path," yet she is the one who takes action by setting out on that decisive walk. Intriguingly, Molly wishes for Cynthia a "clear space"—a metaphoric state that represents the solution to her problems, expressed in the language most meaningful to Molly.

Despite having to deal with misconstrued and spread rumors circulating around Hollingford, Molly keeps Cynthia's confidence, when an open explanation would have cleared herself of implied guilt. Thus, Molly's heroism and commitment to her relationship with Cynthia extends far beyond one meeting, or the physical act of passing notes to Mr. Preston. In response to these actions, Michael Cohen asserts that, in Gaskell's novels, helping one's sister brings benefit to both young women—the requested aid for the one, and self-discovery for the other (Cohen 160). Again, though using a different context and language than Susan Morgan, Cohen suggests that through connection and extension of one's self, one comes to a fuller self-realization. Outward connections result in positive inner strength and awareness.

To return to Susan Morgan's argument, Molly's actions on behalf of her sister Cynthia are beyond helpful or protective; they are heroic. Through exhibiting qualities of "mercy" and "flexibility"—as Molly appears to do by protecting Cynthia and setting her own well-being aside—Molly demonstrates female heroism (Morgan 20). Particularly, Morgan notes that there exists a "celebratory quality" pervading "the claims for a feminine heroic vision, the kind of empowerment it promises" (21). This sense of energy and empowerment is what reaches so beneficially and positively into the social/public world. In other words, Molly's heroism in this situation represents a personal empowerment for her as a individual, but also for the assertion of these basic feminine values into the public world. Morgan goes so far as to

see the women in Gaskell's novels, like Molly, to be the true heroes in contrast to the male explorers, or "men of action" (like Roger in his scientific expeditions), who never seem to bring that same sense of empowerment to fruition (108–9). The larger world does not obviously become a better place for their actions and adventures.

Morgan's argument appears complementary in many ways to the exploration of space's suggested role in Molly's development. Molly's sense of identity and connection develop in and from her association with certain spaces, and most particularly the tension existing between interiors and exteriors on several levels. Morgan's theory speaks to tensions and extension of spaces as well, those between private and public worlds. More so, her contribution affirms that a sense of empowerment which emerges from women's active participation and connections with others, as we see with regard to Molly Gibson, is important both on the personal and more expansive social level.

Molly's Developing Sense of Self

As illustrated in these relationships, particularly with the Hamleys and Cynthia, Molly matures through her connections with others and her active participation. She serves as a mediator in various situations: speaking on behalf of Cynthia to Mr. Gibson; acting as Cynthia's representative to Mr. Preston; encouraging unity in the Hamley house after Osborne's death; trying to keep peace in her own home at times with her new step-mother; and always looking out for Roger's best interests, especially when she fears Cynthia's feelings for him are compromised and shallow. Molly's increasing assertiveness and awareness of compassion couples with her already solid identity as an observer. She has a keen eye both for observing details of her surroundings and for reading people. This vision allows her to act with increasing wisdom, sympathy, and foresight. These qualities emerge and are recognized in Molly by others throughout the course of the novel; importantly, she begins to recognize them in herself, instilling the confidence to act boldly. All of these actions and relationships have been presented in some way within or through a distinct spatial composition or setting. Increasingly, the link between Molly's inner development and her choice of and responses to her environment appears significant. Her abilities to forge personal connections, to cross boundaries, and to consider possibilities in some part are represented through her relationship to the spaces that surround her.

Laurie Buchanan explores Molly's growth of assertiveness and personhood, and particularly sees her growing into the model of womanhood as represented by Mrs. Hamley, the Miss Brownings, and Lady Harriet: all sym-

bols of female empowerment (Buchanan 510). She explains that these women assist Molly in recognizing her valued, individual qualities and lead her to trust in forming relationships, other than with her father (510). Again, this perspective speaks to a simultaneous broadening of spheres—Molly's connections to others accompanied by inner development. Buchanan's theory emphasizes a definite female element to this process. Molly has not merely matured; she has grown into an independent woman.

Buchanan's observations fit neatly into this discussion because she surfaces Molly's qualities and, in her own fashion, suggests that Molly crosses boundaries. Through her identified spirit of independence, Molly moves beyond roles delineated for her by Victorian society with regard to age and gender. By both moving freely through public/ natural spaces and creating territories of her own, Molly identifies herself more as an individual than as purely a Victorian woman. This is not to suggest that Molly does not exhibit qualities deemed 'feminine' or 'proper' in society; her interactions verify her gentleness, compassion, and loyalty. Yet, she equally demonstrates intellectual inquisitiveness, bold decisiveness, courage, and a desire for mobility and freedom. As Buchanan also suggests, Molly asserts a sense of self and autonomy, breaking her out of the confines of prescribed Victorian womanhood (511). The strength of her qualities demonstrates the power of Molly's achievements, and thus elevates the significance of her spatial connections.

For Molly to be both an observer and a mediator requires her to maintain personally created space. In her position as an observer—either aimed toward the details of her surroundings or toward interpersonal relationships—Molly must stand as an individual on her own ground. She combines attentiveness, objectivity, intellect, and sensitivity in her visions and assessments. As a mediator for so many situations in the novel, Molly maintains a similar stance. Her affinity for seeking and creating her own spaces allows her to develop strength and self-understanding that she can employ when reaching out to others. It seems that Gaskell's insistence on the importance of specific spaces and surroundings for Molly is purposeful. The attention to these descriptive details of environment and placement reflects the importance for Molly, as a developing young woman, to recognize and seek her own space—even if (or especially if) it requires transgressing the usual domestic or gender boundaries of Victorian society. As Susan Morgan points out, Molly moves beyond her own domestic realm and into her larger community (Morgan 111). In turn, Morgan sees Gaskell using women—the marginal and often disregarded voices in Victorian society—as the real forces in society and culture (126). This observation further suggests the importance of Molly's actions and presence. Her spatial transgressions go be-

yond personal implications, thus linking her actions to the larger social need to widen boundaries for women.

Gaskell concludes *Wives and Daughters*, at least the final chapter before her sudden death, with an image that draws again on the role of threshold spaces and completes the novel with a sense of cyclical connections. Near to the close, the reader becomes aware, along with Molly and Roger, that they are the best-suited couple. Cynthia, after her problematic liaison with Mr. Preston, knows that she is not the best partner for Roger; in fact, constant accolades of his goodness make her feel especially unsuitable, and she wants to be rid of those pressures. Conveniently, Cynthia gains another suitor, Mr. Henderson, known from her London visits, and a proposal. So, after their extended but stagnant secret engagement, Cynthia and Roger easily part. Also upon his return, Roger begins to see Molly in a new light. When he first pays a visit to the Gibson household, he finds Molly,

> sitting in her pretty white invalid's dress, half reading, half dreaming, for the June air was so clear and ambient, the garden so full of bloom, the trees so full of leaf, that reading by the open window was only a pretense at such a time. (Gaskell 647)

Molly sits at her usual space—now recovering physically and emotionally from the strains of the recent town rumors—and seems to garner strength through exposure to the open air. This setting enhances Molly's appearance, as Roger begins to look at her differently, not merely as the equivalent of a younger sister. As he leaves, he thinks to himself, "'Poor Osborne was right!'…'She has grown into delicate fragrant beauty, just as he said she would: or is it the character which has formed her face?'" (648). Roger's latter assessment acknowledges Molly's growth and development, beyond the physical; rather, she exudes a beauty of strength and confidence in her individuality and womanhood, present even in her current delicate state.

These events and awarenesses in place, the path toward Molly and Roger's eventual union is set. Gaskell died before completing such scenes, but the concluding notes supplied by editor Frederick Greenwood indicate Gaskell's intentions. He suggests that little remained for Gaskell to complete, and that the union of Roger and Molly was assured (706). The Shakespearian happy ending of marriage and completion is reassuringly scripted for the reader. Greenwood's notes attempt to lift readers from any sense of suspension in which the nearly completed novel leaves them. This is the scenario that readers may actually crave and anticipate.

Gaskell may well have intended to complete the novel as Greenwood suggests, and the eventual union of Molly and Roger underlies their relationship and other happenings in the novel. Yet, one of the final images readers are left with seems to complete the story of Molly Gibson even more

richly. We know of Roger's true feelings for Molly as the narrator recounts, "He felt every day more and more certain that she, and she alone, could make him happy" (692). He even ponders if his love, once given so freely to Cynthia, is worthy of Molly, indicating the purity and value of her devotion. Aware of these thoughts—a pledge of love and commitment—the spun details of an official engagement and marriage seem superfluous, especially as the novel focuses on Molly's individual development.

The final chapter is marked by a quarantine between the Gibson and Hamley houses as little Roger, Osborne and Aimee's son, has scarlet fever; therefore, Roger cannot come to visit Molly before his departure for Africa to complete his expedition. Mr. Gibson also remains stalwartly paternal and refuses to deliver a personal message from Roger to her.

In lieu of these complications, Gaskell returns to an earlier scene and a familiar device: the window as the site of Molly's last glimpse of Roger and of their farewell. Mrs. Gibson first notices a figure "near the Park wall, under the beech-tree" (702) looking at the house for over a half hour, and suspicious, tells Molly, who recognizes him at once. The conversation of gestures between the two is strained at first with the presence of Mrs. Gibson also at the window. Yet, once she leaves,

> Molly quietly moved into her place to see his figure once more before the turn of the road hid it from her view. He, too, knew where the last glimpse of Mr. Gibson's house was to be obtained, and once more he turned, and his white handker-chief floated in the air. Molly waved hers high up, with eager longing that it should be seen. And then, he was gone! and Molly returned to her worsted-work, happy, glowing, sad, content, and thinking to herself how sweet is friendship! (702)

As when Roger initially left for Africa, Molly goes to the window to extend the moment of farewell, and in effect joins the two worlds—inner domesticity and the larger world beyond, as suggested by Roger's travels. While in the initial scene Molly purposefully observes Roger's departure in secret, retreating in the shadows when he turns to look at the house, here the two come together in the moment. Molly moves into position at the window, wanting to see and be seen by Roger, actively asserting her presence in this relationship. Her many actions throughout the novel have brought her to this place, and enable her to be an active, equal partner. The repetition of this scene before the window—both as an echo of an earlier departure and the recurrence of threshold spaces—gives the novel a cyclical quality and connects the many spatial references purposefully.

Fittingly, the novel closes with Molly poised on the edge of another threshold—that from young adulthood to mature womanhood. Not unlike *Villette*'s Lucy Snowe left for a period of time uncertain of M. Paul's state,

Molly exits the novel as a strong, developing individual, confident of Roger's love and commitment, but not in the traditional role as wife. For this indefinite stretch of time, Molly continues to be known as herself, not by the inscribed role of fiancée or wife, subverting the novel's usual sense of closure.

Interestingly, due to the place where Gaskell left off writing prior to her death, the last relationship on which the novel focuses is that of mother (or new wife) and daughter, as seen through Mrs. Gibson and Molly. Just lines before the end, Mr. Gibson exits the novel with the words, "'Come, come! Remember I belong to the last generation'" (705), leaving the rest of the scene to the women. The family has been discussing Mrs. Gibson's favorite topic of appearances—new clothes and service-ware, especially necessary if Cynthia and her new husband visit from fashionable London. Mr. Gibson eases out of the discussion with the above comment. The line seems especially telling if read through the eyes of critics like Susan Morgan or Laurie Buchanan, suggesting an introduction of feminine values, of women's voices into social considerations.

Molly, rather than Mrs. Gibson, is the better representative of feminine qualities taking hold in society. She repeatedly exhibits her desire and need to assert her place and claims spaces in the world around her. However, ending the novel in the presence of a maternal/female relationship—even if Mrs. Gibson is a flawed character—reinforces the importance of the relationship. Evidently, women are beginning to shape and form their worlds, both private and public, with an acknowledged sense of empowerment.

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CHAPTER FOUR

George Eliot's *Middlemarch*: Dorothea Brooke's Visionary Spaces

> A woman's house—whether cave or aviary—equals her. Her ways, her vision, her truth.
>
> —Martha K. Baker
>
> Writers' Homes that Speak Volumes
>
> (5 Sept. 1999, sec. 5: 17, *NYT*)

Spaces: Within and Without

Martha K. Baker, in a 1999 *New York Times* article, "Writers' Homes that Speak Volumes," seems to understand the connection between women and their homes, their personal spaces. Baker suggests that neither the dimensions of these spaces nor the grandeur of accomplishments that occur within them are as important as the primary relationship between women and place. The home, the space, contains and shelters women's thoughts and potential visions, some that come to fruition and others never fully realized. Baker's recognition of the qualities of these women's spaces—loci of potential and creative possibilities—creates a bond between herself and her subjects, and by extension, all women.

In George Eliot's 1872 novel *Middlemarch*, Dorothea Brooke emerges as both a central female character and an interlocking element of a community. As with the two previous female protagonists, Lucy Snowe and Molly Gibson, Dorothea Brooke evolves through striking connections to her spatial settings. Eliot's use of particular spatial images and language develops Dorothea as a complex woman—an individual with great potential and a vision for bettering her mind and her community, yet confronted with social and gender limitations. The spatial references and language surrounding her

express these longings for a full life and the encroaching restrictions that exist.

Ultimately, Dorothea Brooke may not represent the same kind of hopeful female empowerment that Molly Gibson freshly does at the end of Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*. Nor does Eliot's narrative leave Dorothea in a questionable suspended state of control as Brönte's Lucy Snowe. Yet, as Martha Baker suggests, a firm connection between women and their personal spaces confers a certain strength—all the longings, hopes, visions, and thoughts that form an individual. George Eliot uses spatial imagery to represent both the initial inadequacies of Dorothea and her eventual profound inward growth. Within Dorothea's nature, the moral and spiritual come together with the sensual, provoking her need for room in which to grow; in Eliot's prose, the metaphors of interior and exterior spaces—as seen through images of texts, furnishings, and works of visual art—represent that growth. Eliot presents these interior and artistic images in concrete and suggestive detail, evoking Victorian visual images, such as those of Edmund Burne-Jones, Jessica Hayllar, and others. Furthermore, Eliot's use of spatial composition and language forges a connection between Dorothea and her outer world. Regardless of fulfillment, Dorothea's visions and limitations may represent Eliot's challenge to her own society—the need for a wider scope and understanding of women's roles and contributions.

Perhaps more so than either Brönte or Gaskell, George Eliot had and nurtured a personal connection with the arts. References and allusions to the arts—visual and musical—abound in her works, as acknowledged by critics Hugh Witemeyer and Joseph Wiesenfarth. In particular, Eliot seems to have had an affinity and understanding of painting, its visual language and impact, and incorporated that spirit into her narratives.[1] Witemeyer acknowledges that Eliot "considered word-painting to be one of the two main branches of the novelist's art," the second being "dramatic presentation" (Witemeyer 2). Both Witemeyer and Wiesenfarth emphasize the importance of John Ruskin and his artistic (and later, social) ideas for Eliot. Inspired by Ruskin, Eliot, according to Wiesenfarth, came to see connections between art and a moral sensibility. Knowing the intimacies of art, as either an artist or a sensitive viewer, leads one closer to a profound and moral life (Wiesenfarth 365). It is a vital, not a static or distant, connection.

Hugh Witemeyer discusses more of the specifics of Eliot's aesthetic philosophies and influences, and the ways they concretely manifest themselves in her writing. According to him, Lessing regarded painting as capturing a specific moment in time through its colors and forms perceived in space, rather than through the more fluid medium of time (Witemeyer 40–1). Witemeyer suggests that, influenced by Lessing's artistic principles, Eliot

often begins her chapters with visual descriptions that then lead into more dramatic moments (dialogue, movement, psychological commentary, etc.) (42). In other words, Eliot's narratives move from a framed visual beginning description into a more theatrical scene, as characters (and readers) become involved in the story (42). Other aesthetic influences are represented in Eliot's creation of character portraits, that Witemeyer sees moving through chronological phases in her work. Early works (such as *Adam Bede*) incorporate more mirror-like personality portraits; mid-works (such as *Romola*) begin to complicate relations between appearance and reality; and later works (as in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*) create the most ambiguous and richest character portraits, mingling the spectrum of possible meanings (i.e. moral, psychological, historical, sociological, etc.) (45). These details, and copious other influences that Witemeyer and Wiesenfarth explore, provide a brief background of Eliot's knowledge of the arts, as well as her conscious contemplation and inclusion of visual principles in her narratives.

Creating Dorothea's Portrait

The potential for increasingly complex written character portraits finds its visual complement in portraiture. As seen in various ways through representative Victorian paintings, portraiture can reveal, and sometimes even conceal, layered attributes of its subject. Burne-Jones' *Georgiana* simply and identifiably presents an image of the artist's beloved wife, exploring her roles as woman, wife and mother. In contrast, Rossetti's *Regina Cordium* keeps its viewers at a distance from knowing much about his beautiful but artificial female subject. Eliot, as a writer, also employs portraiture at times in *Middlemarch* to present and explore her character of Dorothea. The portriat provides a metaphoric and multilayered reference for the character.

Eliot's Prelude begins *Middlemarch* with a rich, layered portrait, a description of St. Theresa of Avila, that when coupled with the actual introduction to Dorothea Brooke leads the reader to sense the ensuing complexity of her character. Through the description of St. Theresa, Eliot introduces us to an individual who is filled with passion and visions ultimately unfulfilled:

> Theresa's passionate, ideal nature demanded an epic life…Her flame quickly burned up that light fuel, and fed from within, soared after some illimitable satisfaction, some object which would never justify weariness, which would reconcile self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self. (Eliot vii)

Very clearly, Eliot suggests that Theresa is not alone in her life's pattern; rather, she exemplifies the lives of many who begin with such potential only to be constricted into a certain order or expectation, or by lack of an outlet:

> Many Theresas have been born who found for them-selves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the off-spring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity; perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet and sank unwept into oblivion. (vii)

Eliot describes an individual with vision and much to contribute to the world, but whose attempts never reach fruition or recognition. John Kucich, in particular, regards St. Theresa as a passionate figure seeking relationships with others and her world, but who needs to find a balance (Kucich 131). It is a description that prefigures the lives of many characters throughout the course of *Middlemarch* and, in turn, the loss society suffers.

For the sake of this study, Dorothea will be my representative as this description truly reverberates in her character. She embodies the longing for a fuller life and the growing awareness of her enclosures. Eliot ends her opening description, "Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heartbeats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are among hindrances instead of centring in some long-recognizable deed" (Eliot viii). It may be easy to conclude that this allusion signals failure, a life unfulfilled. Yet, in this final statement, I hear the passions and sense the visions. They may not culminate in a centralized, remembered goal; rather, they may be dispersed in a web of attempts and connections that require courage and a developed sensitivity. She is remembered descriptively as very much alive, with real emotions and pulses—the 'heartbeats,' the 'sobs,' the 'trembles'. Dorothea may eventually be regarded as one of the 'many Theresas', but she grows over the course of the novel, responding to her desires and visions, seeking fullness and connection.

Jeanie Thomas importantly states that *Middlemarch* recounts the narrative of a community rather than one woman's story; yet, this understanding need not exclude feminist interpretation because the overall theme speaks to the distance between hope and achievement (Thomas 48–49). In this context, Nancy Armstrong's assessment of the novel supports critical attention given to Dorothea Brooke as an essential link to readers' understanding of the novel and of George Eliot's perspective of her heroine. In a brief discussion of the novel's opening parallel to Saint Theresa, Armstrong writes that Eliot's attention to Dorothea emphasizes the many unacknowledged contributions by women in history. Armstrong suggests that Eliot directs her readers to see how society is shaped by forces outside of the conventionally accepted masculine/political realm (Armstrong 43). Her understanding of Eliot's novel highlights Dorothea's story as emblematic of women's hidden achievements and struggles, and recognizes its strong links with the presence of all individuals working outside of society's conventions.

Dorothea's actual first description—done in the painterly manner that Witemeyer outlined and beginning the first chapter—casts a sense of regalness about her. Through a description set off as a portrait, Dorothea is compared to Italian paintings of the Blessed Virgin, having an elegant simplicity that reveals her beauty, an image evoking Collins' *Convent Thoughts*.[2] She and her sister Celia are "ladies" with good connections, though they have been orphans since their youth (Eliot 9–10). Beyond Dorothea's physical beauty or social standing, she is known for her mind, which is

> theoretic and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. (10)

These qualities immediately set her apart from other young women of good breeding, as she seeks and radiates this passion, intellect, and affinity for action. As Celia seems to recognize, "Dorothea and principle" are "two associated facts which might show a mysterious electricity if you touched them incautiously" (13–14). Already, though not yet twenty, Dorothea projects her unconventionality as a woman and as a prospective wife.

Despite these convictions and seeming simplicity, Dorothea is not purely ascetic (though her attraction to principle obviously carries its own dynamic charge). Strikingly, Eliot describes Dorothea's intensity and inherent sensuality:

> Yet those who approached Dorothea, though prejudiced against her by this alarming hearsay, found that she had a charm unaccountably reconcilable with it. Most men thought her bewitching when she was on horseback. She loved the fresh air and the various aspects of the country, and when her eyes and cheeks glowed with mingled pleasure she looked very little like a devotee. Riding was an indulgence which she allowed herself in spite of conscientious qualms; she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan, sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it. (12)

Dorothea feels, and others perhaps surprisingly recognize, this pull in her dually ascetic and intense nature. John Kucich also acknowledges her conflicting desires: "one appetitive and sensuous, the other self-renouncing and ascetic" (Kucich 141). While aware of these conflicts, Dorothea does not rush to reconcile them; it is something she can put off thinking about for now, and instead be resigned to the flux.

This dual nature is perfectly illustrated when Celia suggests that they both examine and divide their late mother's jewels between them. Initially, Dorothea appears matter-of-fact about the task and renounces the thought of ornamentation. She regards the jewels as superfluous, rather unsuitable

property. Even the cross is "the last thing [she] would wear as a trinket" (Eliot 15). However, as gleaming emeralds and diamonds are discovered, Dorothea becomes enchanted, to her sister's surprise; "All the while her thought was trying to justify her delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy" (16). A sense of the spiritual and the sensual merge, and Dorothea is unable to deny either impulse. These sides of her nature—their differing levels and concurrent strivings—continue to develop, and become known through specific spatial references and language.

Reservoirs of Knowledge: Fullness of Life

Dorothea values the pursuit of higher goals—an understanding of the "higher inward life" and "spiritual communion" (24)—that can then be transferred to society for its betterment. These visions also determine her preferences for a husband, as she would choose a man who could serve as an intellectual guide and teacher. She sees these traits in Mr. Casaubon, an older and otherwise unlikely choice for a young woman. For instance, where Celia only sees his unattractive appearance, Dorothea views him as a "distinguished-looking" man in the manner of Locke (22).

Almost immediately, Dorothea's assessment of and feelings towards Casaubon emerge in spatial terms, thus communicating more about her desires than perhaps his true nature. Soon after their introductions—and a mutual, inner contemplation of marriage—Dorothea begins to feel a definite connection to him:

> Dorothea by this time had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr. Casaubon's mind, seeing reflected there in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought, had opened much of her own experience to him, and had understood from him the scope of his great work, also of attractively labyrinthine extent. (25)

The language that initially develops in this early passage resonates spatially and transfers Dorothea's wishes for herself onto Casaubon. His mind—"the ungauged reservoir"—represents the fullness of life, thought, and wisdom that Dorothea wishes for herself and perceives in him. The repetition of the word "labyrinthine" lends a sense of intellectual intrigue and mystery, creating an image of winding paths holding hidden knowledge and mythical secrets waiting to be discovered. The language of this passage is verbally reminiscent of Edward Burne-Jones' network of windows, doorways, and winding staircases provocatively surrounding the female figures in his paintings.

Upon hearing more of Casaubon's all-consuming academic project—an undertaking to show that "all the mythical systems or erratic mythical frag-

ments in the world were corruptions of a tradition originally revealed" (26)—Dorothea becomes more enraptured by the man's mind and his persistence at this task. Again expressed in spatial terms, "Dorothea was altogether captivated by the wide embrace of this conception. Here was something beyond the shallowness of ladies'-school literature" (26). The education offered for women seems narrow and unchallenging when compared with the scope of Casaubon's project, one available to and endorsed by the masculine realms of learning. Casaubon's mind, and by extension his voluminous project, comes to represent a vast realm that she wants to occupy. Continually, Dorothea compares her thinking and slim possibilities as a woman and individual to his seeming grandeur: 'He thinks with me,' said Dorothea to herself, 'or rather, he thinks a whole world of which my thought is but a poor twopenny mirror. And his feelings, too, his whole experience—what a lake compared with my little pool!'" (26–27). The contrasts continue to take shape in this visual, spatial language—the scope of the globe to a small, self-reflecting mirror; a wide lake to a restrictive pool. This repeated language, occurring both in the words of the narrator and Dorothea, cements the connection between space and Dorothea's self-perception.

Increasingly, Casaubon takes on the role, at least intellectually and spiritually, of a desired "abstract space" with regard to Dorothea and an outlet for widening her own scope. As she now pictures her future, Dorothea's very expression radiates her "intensity" rather than her asceticism (29). Interestingly, her intense, absorbed thoughts occur when out of doors, as if to seek the physical space necessary for her widening visions. The possibility of marriage to a man like Casaubon begins to activate her thoughts and fill her with a sense that she could fulfill her mental and spiritual convictions. In other words, she could not be content with the life so many women lead:

> The intensity of her religious disposition, the coercion it exercised over her life, was but one aspect of a nature altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent; and with such a nature, struggling in the bands of a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led no whither, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency. (30)

Again, certain spatial language dominates this passage: "bands of narrow teaching," "hemmed in," "labyrinth," "walled-in maze of small paths". Here, "labyrinth" connotes the tightness and constriction she perceives a normal path of life will hold for her as a woman in her conventional society, as contrasted with the many possibilities of Casaubon's "labyrinths".

As she walks through the wood, forging a path, contemplating these thoughts, Dorothea effectively foresees what her choice must be if she wishes to escape these boundaries and restrictions:

> Into this soul hunger as yet all her youthful passion was poured; the union which attracted her was one that would deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance and give her the freedom of voluntary submission to a guide who would take her along the grandest path. (30)

She seeks the wide path—a path that will lead her to knowledge and subsequent action—and sees Casaubon as the way to that full life. Again, vividly described, Casaubon comes to represent an accessible space, equal to those 'doors' of knowledge: "almost everything he had said seemed like a specimen from a mine or the inscription on the door of a museum which might open on the treasures of past ages" (34). He represents that exclusive access that she craves. Imagining him as her husband, Dorothea can transgress the boundaries of knowledge and mission through acceptable means. Society's impression of women and learning can even be seen in Dorothea's well-meaning uncle, Mr. Brooke, as he comments on her attraction for a "scholar" and "love of knowledge": "that sort of thing doesn't often run in the female line; or it runs underground like the rivers in Greece, you know—it comes out in the sons. Clever sons, clever mothers" (46). What Dorothea most wants is seen as an anomaly for her gender, consistently transferred—as if a genetic marker—through the male.

Casaubon does propose, in writing, expressing his surprise at finding a woman so young and yet marked by "an elevation of thought and a capability of devotedness" (44). His words occasion a "rush of solemn emotion" (45) in Dorothea and she is struck by the possibilities this proposal enables. Though her emotions may be floating formlessly, the descriptions of her thoughts again take shape spatially:

> Her whole soul was possessed by the fact that a fuller life was opening before her: she was a neophyte about to enter on a higher grade of initiation. She was going to have room for the energies which stirred uneasily under the dimness and pressure of her own ignorance and the petty peremptoriness of the world's habits. (45)

Casaubon's choice of her confirms her attraction with a sense of intellectual and spiritual admiration. The prospect of this union promises 'room' and 'fullness' *within* her and *for* her, in terms of education and higher goals. John Kucich notes that Dorothea sees marriage as a way to unite herself with others' knowledge and sagacity (132). Casaubon is the first and only man in her sight that held such promise for the fulfillment of her ideal aims.

This exchange is followed by a brief scene that suggests an interesting use of space and description, especially considering the recent flux and range of Dorothea's emotions and thoughts. Just as Dorothea is caught in contemplation, Celia begins to wonder about the depth of her sister's relationship with Casaubon:

> The day was damp, and they were not going to walk out, so they both went up to their sitting-room; and there Celia observed that Dorothea, instead of settling down with her usual diligent interest to some occupation, simply leaned her elbow on an open book and looked out of the window at the great cedar silvered with the damp. (48)

While in some respects a simple description, Dorothea's relation to the space resonates considering her recent decision. She may not be reading, but her body is physically grounded in her book, an allusion to her pursuit of knowledge, reminiscent of Carpenter's or Egg's "reading women". The object of her meditation, "the great cedar," seems analagous to Casaubon—the 'great' man/mind recent to her affection, 'silvered' perhaps with a reverent reference to his age and wisdom. (The dampness tinges the description with a presentiment of the future, that is Casaubon's apparent grandeur 'dampened' by futility and missed achievements.)[3] Dorothea remains caught in a moment of contemplation, and the presence of the cedar tree projects her literal vision and her inward thoughts outwards, creating a tension between the internal and external spaces. Perhaps, even more than a tension, as often demonstrated in *Wives and Daughters* with Molly Gibson, this description suggests a complementarity of spaces. Dorothea's inner thoughts are paralleled by a similar or complementing space/image in the outer, physical world.[4] For Dorothea, this particular use of space may suggest that she needs to look outside of herself more, to seek a fullness of scope that enables her to see the world clearly, realistically, and, as the narrator often alludes, less naively.

Her feelings for Casaubon, the man, are echoed in her reactions to his stately home, Lowick. She expresses a real contentment with the aura and surroundings of the place; she revels in the atmosphere of an almost sacred, mysterious antiquity:

> Dorothea…found the house and grounds all that she could wish: the dark bookshelves in the long library, the carpets and curtains with colours subdued by time, the curious old maps and bird's-eye views on the walls of the corridor, with here and there an old vase below, had no oppression for her and seemed more cheerful than the casts and pictures at the Grange, which her uncle had long ago brought home from his travels…Dorothea walked about the house with delightful emotions. Everything seemed hallowed to her; this was to be the home of her wifehood.…(74)

All the details convey a positive contrast to the Grange for Dorothea; the old curiousities of Lowick intrigue her, while the classical art studies collected by her uncle hold no meaning for her. Even more significant, Dorothea exhibits deference to Casaubon's tastes and choices, even though he extends the opportunity for her to make some alterations; "All appeals to

her taste she met gratefully, but saw nothing to alter" (74). She seems overly pleased to know that she will be surrounded by all of his physical belongings and preferences, as if they will magically transmit the aura of his knowledge as well.

In kind, Dorothea defers to Casaubon for the choice of her boudoir, though it will be her personal room:

> "It is very kind of you to think of that," said Dorothea, "but I assure you I would rather have all those matters decided for me. I shall be much happier to take everything as it is—just as you have been used to have it or as will yourself choose it to be. I have no motive for wishing anything else." (74–5)

Prefering that all wants be decided for her, Dorothea relinquishes her opportunity to incorporate her presence in this established, ponderous (in Celia's opinion) home. As the narrator suggests, these choices prior to marriage are meant to offset the "submissions" that will occur later in the role of 'wife' (73). If physical space is regarded as a correlative of interior space, Dorothea equally refuses to consider her inward, personal thoughts in this matter.

She makes this position quite clear in the selection of her room. It is as if her mind were so focused on the full life she hopes to gain through Casaubon's mind and vocation, that she deliberately stream-lines, or narrows, her choices along the way. Upon the selection of the bow-windowed room (previously occupied by Casaubon's mother) for her boudoir, Dorothea refuses to consider making her presence felt, although "it was a room where one might fancy the ghost of a tight-laced lady revisiting the scene of her embroidery" (75). To her uncle's appeal for some fresh decorations, Dorothea responds:

> "Pray do not speak of altering anything. There are so many other things in the world that want altering—I like to take these things as they are. And you like them as they are, don't you?" she added, looking at Mr. Casaubon. "Perhaps this was your mother's room when she was young." (75)

Repeatedly projecting her thoughts outward and onto Casaubon, Dorothea refuses to be introspective. While overlooking the estate and parish, she hopes to see "projects" or duties through which she may satisfy her social aims—something more beneficial than these domestic, decorative issues; yet, she soon is faced with that lack, forcing her to recommit herself to Casaubon's intellectual project. Dorothea's refusal to assert her presence distinctively in the house, even in the choice of her own room, seems emblematic of her skewed focus. She wants knowledge and opportunity in a grand sense, but seems short-sighted in terms of claiming a space of her own.[5] Beyond simply representing a physical location, these spatial images and de-

scriptions symbolize the true growth and inner vision that Dorothea needs to discover.

Perceptions of Openness

In the midst of Dorothea's consuming vision of and focus on Casaubon, she comes to know his young cousin, Will Ladislaw; their relationship, as may be argued, presents Dorothea with the opportunity to reevaluate some of her perceptions and sense other opportunities for openness. This is not to say that Will Ladislaw—despite all of his youth, passion, and energy—represents an ideal alternative to Casaubon as a mate for Dorothea. Throughout the novel and in the conclusion, he is not more capable of insuring the achievement of Dorothea's goals (or his own) than any of the other characters. In fact, several critics see Ladislaw as a flawed figure, including Jane Marie Luecke who asserts that Ladislaw had to be less than ideal because the novel is not meant to be a happy, fulfilling love story for Dorothea; rather, he is one character, like Dorothea and Lydgate, who have potential but ultimately fail in their acheivements (Thomas 26). Yet, the language that describes their meetings and ensuing relationship suggests more spatial connections. Eventually, Dorothea shows signs of becoming more aware of the narrowness of her vision and her idealization of her marriage to Casaubon, as well as beginning to seek a more vital 'openness'.

Interestingly, Dorothea's introduction to Will Ladislaw incorporates attitudes towards art and reveals the current narrowness of her aesthetic understanding. While observing Will's sketching, Dorothea overtly expresses her lack of artistic sensibility:

> "I am no judge of these things," said Dorothea, not coldly but with an eager deprecation of the appeal to her. "You know, Uncle, I never see the beauty of those pictures which you say are so much praised. They are a language I do not understand. I suppose there is some relation between pictures and nature which I am too ignorant to feel, just as you see what a Greek sentence stands for which means nothing to me." (Eliot 79)

Speaking now as the ascetic, Dorothea does not allow herself to feel the beauty or to recognize the passion that art may possess. To her, it is a different and inaccessible language, one that she does not seem eager to learn. This incident seems important to this discussion because at this point Dorothea, despite her wish for a full life with higher goals, admittedly has a limited vision. Her present statements mark her need for a deeper connection with the outer world and her inner self.

Will represents a different sense of "openness" than what Casaubon currently signifies for Dorothea. While Casaubon and his focused project may

promise to connect Dorothea with worlds of knowledge and spiritual truths, Will symbolizes broad possibilities through his unspecified goals. Casaubon understandably looks down on Will's unfocused nature and plans: "'And now he wants to go abroad again, without any special object save the vague purpose of what he calls culture, preparation for he knows not what. He declines to choose a profession'" (80). The direct contrast of these two men's goals is clear.

At this early moment, Will represents unbounded territory as he seeks pure creative space. As Casaubon expresses, however disdainfully, Will prefers that "there should be some unknown regions preserved as hunting-grounds for the poetic imagination" (81). Purposely unfocused, Will symbolizes potentiality, the openness needed for genius to flourish, marked by a receptivity to the universe (82–3). Eliot's metaphor of "helpless embryos" reflects both the inherent possibility and vulnerability in this kind of potential: "We know what a masquerade all development is and what effective shapes may be disguised in helpless embryos. In fact, the world is full of hopeful analogies and handsome, dubious eggs called possibilities" (83). Eliot, through the narrator, expresses no sentimentality about this kind of potential. Reality dictates that some 'embryos' of idea and spirit survive and some do not. Yet, a sense of hope overrides the negativity and doubt, perhaps suggesting a pointed message for her characters and their society. Within the smallest of entities lies the scope of possibility.

Still at this point, for Dorothea, Casaubon—not Will or her own inner strength—possesses that opportunity for growth. Clearly expressed in spatial terms, "For Dorothea, after that toy-box history of the world adapted to young ladies which had made the chief part of her education, Mr. Casaubon's talk about his great book was full of new vistas" (85). Her prior education, that offered to women, is seen as cramped, diminutive, and juvenile in contrast to the vastness available through Casaubon's project and studies; his "new vistas" suggest an expansive panoramic vision, geographic and real. Dorothea especially does not want knowledge divorced from her impulse towards action, sympathy, and duty.

Dorothea's Counterparts

Though this chapter focuses on Dorothea Brooke amidst the immense complexity of *Middlemarch*, it may be beneficial to view her briefly in relation to certain other characters in the novel. Already, Dorothea's views and impulses are seen in contrast to her younger sister Celia, who tends to see things more plainly and straight-forwardly. For instance, while Dorothea becomes intranced by Casaubon and his aura of intellect, Celia sees the sur-

face reality—flaws and all—and wonders about her sister's attraction. Celia does not approach life with the complexity and dual impulses that Dorothea possesses.

Dorothea is also seen in contrast to Rosamund Vincy, then wife to Middlemarch's young doctor Tertius Lydgate. For Lydgate, and many men, Rosamund represents the ideal wife: beautiful, graceful, and accomplished in feminine 'arts' and virtues. As he proclaims, a woman "ought to produce the effect of exquisite music" (94). "Plain" women—women with strong, inquisitive minds like Dorothea—do not provide the calming atmosphere at home, as part of her wifely duties, that a man can retreat to after working in the world. In sum, Dorothea "did not look at things from the proper feminine angle" (95), in his opinion. "Nymph-like" and fair in appearance, Rosamund exemplifies the learning of female charm schools of the time: "She was admitted to be the flower of Mrs. Lemon's school, the chief school in the county, where the teaching included all that was demanded in the accomplished female—even to extras, such as the getting in and out of the carriage" (96). This description of Rosamund—and society's prescription for an ideal woman/wife—illuminates Dorothea's intellectual aspirations and the confinement she regards in that role.

The narrator introduces Rosamund in a telling spatial description that neatly complements these background details. The family breakfast dishes are still upon the table awaiting clearing by a servant; other members of the Vincy family have moved onto their respective duties. Rosamund stays seated by the fire;

> and though the room was a little over-heated with the fire, which had sent the spaniel panting into a remote corner, Rosamund, for some reason, continued to sit at her embroidery longer than usual, now and then giving herself a little shake and laying her work on her knee to contemplate it with an air of hesitating weariness. (97)

In *Wives and Daughters*, Molly Gibson sits near a fire, suggesting a desire to be close to powerful, natural elements—a vivid source and symbol of the outer world. Contrastingly, the fire in the Vincy dining room connotes the warmth and security of the domestic hearth. Rosamund stays near it longer than any members of her family, even the pet dog. While Rosamund may not be seen reveling in her embroidery—her 'feminine accomplishments'—in this scene, she also does not exhibit an active response. She may be weary of her activity, but she makes no moves away from the increasingly stifling fire that even the spaniel knows to move away from that morning. Though a minor scene and detail of behaviour, it speaks to Rosamund's overall direction of spirit and ambition. She *can* be active, but when it insures the achievement of her domestically- minded/social goals.

Rosamund and Lydgate are drawn together, each thinking the other the ideal mate: Rosamund, the epitome of charm and refinement, and Lydgate, the aspiring young doctor new to her social world. Yet, as the narrator early notes, "Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing" (163). Though just starting a life together, the language divides the pair spatially, each unto a personal realm. Rosamund's aspirations are represented through her determined thoughts about a "handsome house in Lowick Gate" and she "imagined the drawing-room in her favourite house with various styles of furniture" (261). Homes and rooms—spaces to fill and create—objectify the life Rosamund wishes for herself and her new husband.

Lydgate's vision of the future and his career are also expressed in spatial terms, somewhat curiously paralleling his wife's; yet, the similarities end there. The passion he may feel for his vocation arises from an enlightening moment in which he first sees the study of medicine and anatomy in terms of spatial structure:

> The page he opened on was under the head of "Anatomy," and the first passage that drew his eyes was on the valves of the heart. He was not much acquainted with valves of any sort, but he knew that *valvae* were folding doors, and through this crevice came a sudden light startling him with his first vivid notion of finely adjusted mechanism in the human frame. (142)

Significantly, the valves or 'doors' that lead between the *chambers* of the heart jolt Lydgate from complacent study to a focused goal in his medical career. This physical, spatial image of doors and chambers relates to his new search for knowledge: "the world was made new to him by a presentiment of endless processes filling the vast spaces planked out of his sight by the wordy ignorance which he had supposed to be knowledge" (142–3). The spaces and openings within the heart begin to symbolize the new vast spaces of the unknown and previously unsought connections. This revelation leads to Lydgate's goal: to "demonstrate the more intimate relations of living structure and help to define men's thought more accurately after the true order" (147). From these first discoveries, Lydgate comes to desire—not unlike Dorothea—to achieve some good within Middlemarch society that can eventually have larger benefits. Describing this common thread among many of Eliot's characters, A. S. Byatt remarks that they wished to think and live life abundantly, and to feel that they were always contributing positively to the larger community (Byatt 64).

These are only brief sketches and references to Rosamund and Lydgate, and to their individual stories and interactions in the novel. Nevertheless, the references are important in seeing a more complete picture of Dorothea Brooke. On a foundational level, a contrast with a woman like Rosamund

points out society's view of conventional womanhood and the way Dorothea deviates from that role. Significantly, these three characters' motivations are all described in unmistakable spatial terms. This commonality demonstrates Eliot's pervasive use of this descriptive detail as a definite means of representing intangible qualities. Finally, in a grander scheme, the similar use of spatial images and language to illuminate and direct these important characters reveals their human interconnection—the underlying spirit of this social novel.

Eliot profoundly states that spaces inherently possess an organic quality—one that requires interconnection at the human level. She describes that human emotions and drives do not exist in isolation, in constricting spaces:

> Our passions do not live apart in locked chambers, but, dressed in their small wardrobe of notions, bring their provisions to a common table and mess together, feeding out of the common store according to their appetite. (164)

Her language in this passage suggests much that supports a reading of spatial images as a correlative for interiority, as seen through Dorothea. Our passions, though individualized, need common, shared space both to recognize their connection to the human community and to be assured of their distinctiveness. Personal growth and expansion require that we connect our individuality—the melange of passions, visions, and potential—with others.

Enclosure in Marriage: Beginning Awareness

Interconnection, shared experiences and passions bind individuals; in turn, their lack divides them. The driving motivation behind Dorothea's choice of Casaubon as her husband is the promise of a shared mission and access to shared knowledge. She hopes to grow *through* and *with* her husband in a partnership. These desires signify a vital existence and the openness of possibility for the future. Yet, no sooner is Dorothea married and on their honeymoon travels to Rome when she realizes the flaws in her vision. Though married, the couple displays no unity, especially as Casaubon has his own objectives for the trip. Consistently, Eliot uses spatial descriptions and references to chart Dorothea's developing awareness—the gradual shedding of her 'blindness' and the growth of a keener insight.

On the 'other side' of marriage, Dorothea again appears initially through an artistic comparison or rendering. She is spotted by two young men, ironically Will Ladislaw and a German companion, alone at the Vatican while standing near a statue of a reclining Ariadne (also called Cleopatra).[6] The young men, especially Will's companion, are struck by the symmetry of

Dorothea's unconscious pose with that of the statue and the "antithesis" of the contrast: "There lies antique beauty, not corpse-like even in death, but arrested in the complete contentment of its sensuous perfection; and here stands beauty in its breathing life, with the consciousness of Christian centuries in its bosom" (186). Not only does Will's companion draw this artistic comparison between Dorothea and Ariadne, but he senses the paradoxical presence of spiritual asceticism and sensuality in Dorothea, which he describes as "sensuous force controlled by spiritual passion" (187). While this surface observation does describe distinct elements of Dorothea's inner nature, it, of course, is not a full portrait; it does not sense her longing for knowledge and her desire to accomplish good in the world.

While Will Ladislaw may not yet be aware of these fuller dimensions in Dorothea's character, he does seem wary of comparing her to a perhaps static visual image. He deems that language may serve as a more satisfying or accurate medium for capturing images, particularly the complexities of women. He insists,

> "You must wait for movement and tone. There is a difference in their very breathing; they change from moment to moment. This woman whom you have just seen, for example: how would you paint her voice, pray? But her voice is much diviner than anything you have seen of her." (188)

In Will's impassioned assessment, one may hear the similar views of Eliot, according to Hugh Witemeyer's argument. He asserts that Eliot regarded pure visual representations as not fully able to capture movement, tone, or a full reality of the character, as witnessed in this scene and other proposed portraits of Dorothea (Witemeyer 62–3). She regarded portraiture as a starting point for representing human beings, a suggestion of potential, rather than just actually, being (72). Yet, he suggests that Eliot uses these visual portraits as an initial way of encountering characters, leading to fuller understanding. In this context, it seems appropriate to re-envision Dorothea, now newly married, and about to re-evaluate her own 'self-portrait' and visions.

While these are others' impressions of Dorothea, she confirms them shortly afterwards as she retreats alone to the "inner room, or boudoir, of a handsome apartment in the Via Sistina" (Eliot 189). In this 'inner room,' she is able to pour out her inner emotions. Most of her feelings are confused at this point, and she does not necessarily assign blame to Casaubon for attending to his studies without her. Rather, the thought of his intellectual projects (which seem so above her) and the surrounding rich history of Rome doubly overwhelm her.[7] Often, with the vast backdrop of Rome and its "ancestral images" (190), Dorothea chooses to end her days by driving "out to the Campagna where she could feel alone with the earth and sky,

away from the oppressive masquerade of ages, in which her own life too seemed to become a masque with enigmatical costumes" (190). The open naturalness of the country removes her from the often "alien world" (191) of the city—sometimes stimulating, often foreign and oppressive—that assaults her nature.

Following this description, the narrator steps back and notes that Dorothea's present feelings are neither "exceptional" nor "tragic" (191); rather, "Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual" (191). Realistically, part of human survival is in not truly knowing the scope and depth of others' pain and feelings: "If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence" (191). In a way, the narrator suggests that erecting walls and blinders to others becomes a necessary means of self-preservation. Yet, that same observation seems to contain a plea or a challenge for all to listen, to know both self and other, to create a fluid medium between private and shared space.[8]

Dorothea's feelings—feelings of enclosure in her marriage—are explored and presented spatially by the narrator. The language palpably shapes the dimensions Dorothea feels encircle her. The promise of married life is no longer a vast "sea" awaiting exploration but "an enclosed basin" (193). The narrator specifically asks,

> How was it that in the weeks since her marriage Dorothea had not distinctly observed but felt with a stifling depression that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither? (193)

It is as if a wide, natural expanse has been condensed and sequestered in an architectural model of Casaubon's mind. The once-mysterious labyrinthes are replaced by empty rooms and misleading curves; the anterooms and corridors are meant to lead the 'explorer' to important finds, but these have lost their purpose, and their promise for Dorothea. When she impulsively asks Casaubon if he will now move from collecting notes to composing the book he has discussed, and if she may now be of assistance to him, he sternly defends his authority on the matter. He now sees Dorothea in corresponding spatial terms: "Dorothea was not only his wife, she was a personification of that shallow world which surrounds the ill-appreciated or desponding author" (198). As their desires clash, both Dorothea and Casaubon's visions of their relationship narrow.

The narrator notes that Dorothea's tendency towards crying when alone in the apartment becomes a pattern, perhaps suggesting that her feelings

now extend past those understandable first moments of discontent in marriage (200). In one instance, Will Ladislaw calls upon the Casaubons in Rome while Mr. Casaubon was out; Dorothea appears open to the visit as "She was alive to anything that gave her an opportunity for active sympathy" (201). It is noted that Dorothea seats "herself unthinkingly between the fire and the light of the tall window," perhaps illuminating the latent sorrow in her expression (201). Considering Eliot's attention to description and her repeated use of spatial details, this composition takes on significance, not unlike Rosamund's close positioning to the dining-room fire. In this scene, similar to Bowkett's *Preparing Tea*, Dorothea instinctively positions herself intermediately between the hearth, a source of potentially stifling heat, and the tall window, a portal for overseeing those vast vistas she desires. Her physical stance between these polar symbols may signify her parallel interior awareness. She now can recognize some of the limitations of her original visions, but her contemplations remain obscured.

Their conversation affirms this reading, though Will and Dorothea discuss personal responses to art. Dorothea acknowledges that she does feel something intangible when she first looks at great art: "I feel a like of awe—like a child present at great ceremonies where there are grand robes and processions; I feel myself in the presence of some higher life than my own" (203). Despite these initial impressions, Dorothea loses understanding as she focuses on individual works, and blames the deflated view on her "own dulness" and inability to see (203). Will appears to comprehend the subtext of Dorothea's admissions, perhaps correlating her reaction to art with her spectrum of feelings for her husband. He tellingly responds that "there is a great deal in the feeling for art that must be acquired," similar to familiarizing oneself with a language (203). At different levels, this conversation speaks to Dorothea's response to art and those freer passions; her initial feelings of awe for Casaubon followed by incomprehension; and her need to acquire a clearer self- understanding.

Already, Dorothea begins to feel differently when Will is present: "it was a source of greater freedom to her that Will was there; his young equality was agreeable, and also perhaps his openness to conviction" (206). At one level, Will provides a direct contrast to Casaubon in age, vitality, and pursuit. Yet, Dorothea's feelings seem to go beyond a personal attraction. The qualities she welcomes in his presence are what she is beginning to wish for herself—freedom, interconnection, and "openness to conviction," which incorporates all of the elements. Just as Rome has given a new sense of imagination and history—an organic interconnection between people, time and ideas—to Will, Dorothea seems attuned to continue seeking her wants.

When Dorothea and Casaubon return from Rome to Lowick Manor against a backdrop of a mid-January snow, the changes in her perception about her choice of relationship manifest themselves in descriptions of her surroundings, particularly her boudoir. The room over which she so adamantly relinquished her control now takes on a different appearance and significance. The transformation is so comprehensive that it is worth quoting in full:

> when Dorothea passed from her dressing-room into the blue-green boudoir that we know of, she saw the long avenue of limes lifting their trunks from a white earth and spreading white branches against the dun and motionless sky. The distant flat shrank in uniform whiteness and low-hanging uniformity of cloud. The very furniture in the room seemed to have shrunk since she saw it before: the stag in the tapestry looked more like a ghost in his ghostly blue-green world; the volumes of polite literature in the bookcase looked more like immovable imitations of books. The bright fire of dry oak-boughs burning on the dogs seemed an incongruous renewal of life and glow—like the figure of Dorothea herself…(266–67)

The view of trees and landscape are arranged monotonously, and understandably bleak against this winter setting; moreover, the scene has 'shrunk' in scope. The same is true for the furniture and accessories inside the room. The very things that Dorothea wished not to be altered months ago now appear small and lifeless, imitations of what before were reverent curiosities of Casaubon's life.

The correlation of this descriptive setting and its shrunken spatial dimensions with Dorothea's view of her chosen life are not left to debate:

> The duties of her married life, contemplated as so great beforehand, seemed to be shrinking with the furniture and the white vapour-walled landscape. The clear heights where she expected to walk in full communion had become difficult to see even in her imagination; the delicious repose of the soul on a complete superior had been shaken into uneasy effort and alarmed with dim presentiment. When would the days begin of that active wifely devotion which was to strengthen her husband's life and exalt her own? Never perhaps, as she had preconceived them; but somehow—still somehow. (267)

These corresponding passages of description and self-questioning exemplify and validate the integral connection Eliot creates between the concept of physical and interior space. As Dorothea's vision of her surroundings and her wifely role diminish, she feels her imagination comparably narrowed and clouded. Yet, the passage ends with a distinct element of emerging personal strength and hope. Even if Dorothea cannot see a way to reach her visions, she is not prepared to stop trying.

As Will and Dorothea come to interact more, they begin to mean more to each other. Will now sees Dorothea as a "virgin sacrifice" offered up to

Casaubon and pledges to "watch over her" always (350–351). Dorothea welcomes the youthful companionship, and even more meaningfully, the chance to find "room" in someone else's mind for her cares, interests, and thoughts (351). Will's importance to her is significantly scripted in spatial terms: "Hence the mere chance of seeing Will occasionally was like a lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving her a glimpse of the sunny air" (351). As suggested previously, Will and Casaubon have exchanged symbolic spatial roles. Casaubon, and marriage to him, is a vacant, imprisoning space, while Will increasingly represents an outlet for Dorothea to more spacious realms. In this description, Will's limitations are also recognized; he is a "lunette," a small, crescent-shaped opening[9] that provides relief, touches of light, sun, warmth, and revival. He is not the destination, the ultimate space; rather, he opens Dorothea's vistas and allows her to remember the possibilities life and her own self may hold.

There is an immediacy now to their interchange. When they meet, the figures are described in reference to the space between them—a distance that is lessening with time. Now Will admits to wanting to find Dorothea alone when he comes for a visit, and she welcomes his presence:

> She seated herself on a dark ottoman with the brown books behind her, looking in her plain dress of some thin woollen-white material, without a single ornament on her besides her wedding-ring, as if she were under a vow to be different from all other women; and Will sat down opposite her at two yards' distance, the light falling on his bright curls and delicate but rather petulant profile, with its defiant curves of lip and chin. Each looked at the other as if they had been two flowers which had opened then and there. (353)

Physically, Dorothea and Will come closer together in this scene, and emotionally they display their mutual receptivity. Eliot's metaphor of the two unfurling flowers imagines them winding out of their individual, nascent encasements and opening to a fuller consciousness of life and personal connection. In the midst of this setting, Dorothea also reveals that her insight and understanding are evolving. As Will openly expresses his views and dislike for Casaubon, Dorothea responds more reflectively: "She was no longer struggling against the perception of facts, but adjusting herself to their clearest perceptions" (355). A keener awareness accompanies her movement towards openness.

As Casaubon's occupations exclude Dorothea more, her boudoir becomes a frequent retreat. It seems that the room acts as a measure for Dorothea's evolving feelings and self-awareness. The room itself becomes an active locus of her thoughts and increasingly corresponds to her interior nature:

> Any private hours in her day were usually spent in her blue-green boudoir, and she had come to be very fond of its pallid quaintness. Nothing had been outwardly altered there, but while the summer had gradually advanced over the western fields beyond the avenue of elms, the bare room had gathered within it those memories of an inward life which fill the air as with a cloud of good or bad angels, the invisible yet active forms of our spiritual triumphs or our spiritual falls. She had been so used to struggle for and to find resolve in looking along the avenue towards the arch of western light that the vision itself had gained a communicating power. Even the pale stage seemed to have reminding glances and to mean mutely, "Yes, we know." And the group of delicately touched miniatures had made an audience as of beings no longer disturbed about their earthly lot, but still humanly interested. (361)

The space seems to know her, as if it were an audience to her emotions and thoughts, providing a human connection despite its inanimate reality. As described, this room provides a fertile space for Dorothea's envisionings, beyond reflecting her current state of mind. It both contains her thoughts and memories, and responds. The description of Dorothea's room manifests those inner needs increasingly expressed through her connection/communion with Will. They emerge more tangibly and vitally when Dorothea is alone in her private space.

The pattern of her marriage, until Casaubon's death, continues to be seen in spatial terms. Dorothea and Casaubon each occupy their own spaces in the house; the more Dorothea is excluded physically and spiritually from Casaubon's library, the more time she stays in her own room. For instance, on a typical Sunday, "They usually spent apart the hours between luncheon and dinner…Mr. Casaubon in the library dozing chiefly, and Dorothea in her boudoir, where she was wont to occupy herself with some of her favorite books" (460). Yet, even the books lose their interest after a while, as what Dorothea wants is a deeper companionship than her marriage provides, despite her efforts. Their relationship diverges so completely, as seen in these spatial depictions, from Leighton's paintings of artistic couples. At the time of Casaubon's death, Dorothea feels particularly empty—with regard to their lack of connection and the absence of meaningful work. The self-awareness she has developed through time spent alone has not granted Dorothea the means for realizing her ideas and hopes.

When Dorothea later returns to Lowick after recuperative time spent at Freshitt Hall with Celia and Sir James, she sees Casaubon's library—the symbol of much that she longed for in marriage—more objectively:

> the morning gazed calmly into the library, shining on the rows of notebooks as it shines on the weary waste planted with huge stones, the mute memorial of a forgotten faith; and the evening laden with roses entered silently into the blue-green boudoir where Dorothea chose oftenest to sit. At first she walked into every room, questioning the eighteen months of her married life and carrying on her thoughts as

> if they were a speech to be heard by her husband. Then she lingered in the library and could not be at rest till she had carefully ranged all the notebooks as she imagined that he would wish to see them, in orderly sequence. The pity which had been the restraining, compelling motive in her life with him still clung about his image, even while she remonstrated with him in indignant thought and told him that he was unjust. (520–21)

Her relationship with Casaubon began as an envisioned labyrinth of mythical knowledge and access to greater worlds. Those cerebral corridors progressively lost their potential for vital achievement and transformed themselves to an inescapable prison, and then an empty sepulchre. In the end, Casaubon's books are "mute memorials," testament to his wearied attempts, fruitful neither to himself or Dorothea. From this downward spiral, Dorothea becomes aware of her need for a metamorphosis.

Attempts at Communion

After Casaubon's death, Dorothea recognizes that "her life was taking on a new form, that she was undergoing a metamorphosis" (476). This consciousness may not be fully liberating; rather, "her world was in a state of convulsive change" (476), that included a sudden awareness of the possibility of Will Ladislaw as a lover. She finds herself in a state that redefines her past, present, and future—a potential that seems overwhelming. In her period of dutiful mourning for her husband, Dorothea does not pursue much change. Some possibilities, namely her relationship with Ladislaw, also appear thwarted because of Casaubon's forbidding demands in his will—the codicil that bars Dorothea from ever marrying Will if she wishes to retain the wealth and security of the estate.

Again, Dorothea's boudoir at Lowick visually corresponds to her current demeanor and feelings. While beginning to sort through papers dealing with estate affairs, she distractedly

> was seated with her hands folded on her lap, looking out along the avenue of limes to the distant fields. Every leaf was at rest in the sunshine; the familiar scene was changeless and seemed to represent the prospect of her life, full of motiveless ease—motiveless, if her own energy could not seek out reasons for ardent action. (522–23)

Despite Casaubon's death, Dorothea's life has not changed much; she neither can yet fulfill her longing for purpose or for personal connection. In a tense yet long-awaited meeting with Will, Dorothea confides that she has "a great deal of space for memory at Lowick" (525). Despite the scope of her vision and wants, her life still feels restricted, surrounded by empty space. Only in her inward space—the "shadowed, silent chamber" (529) where happiness once resided—can Dorothea acknowledge her feelings and loss.

In the months following Casaubon's death, considering the codicil to his will, interaction between Dorothea and Ladislaw ranges from tensely monitored to non-existent. Also, talk of Will's increasing visits at the home of Rosamund Lydgate cast doubt on his honorability and intentions, creating even more reason for Dorothea to remain distant. When Will finally decides to leave Middlemarch, he and Dorothea meet awkwardly at Lowick. Expression of feelings are replaced with obscure comments: Dorothea's doubt of his feelings for her, and possibly for Rosamund; Will's terseness in reaction to what he deems as coldness. Yet, out of this conflicting conversation, Dorothea comes to an inner realization as Will leaves that his love is trustfully directed towards her, and no other woman. Her ensuing feelings of joy, sorrow, immobility come upon her successively described in spatial terms.

As she first acknowledges the confirmation of love, Dorothea has no room for sorrow:

> It was as if some hard, icy pressure had melted and her consciousness had room to expand; her past was come back to her with larger interpretation. The joy was not the less—perhaps it was the more complete just then—because of the irrevocable parting; for there was no reproach, no contemptuous wonder to imagine in any eye or from any lips. (616)

The possibility of Will caring exclusively for her—a corresponding acknowledgement of the affinity she feels for him—expands her inner consciousness. Her own self restrictions of mind and heart become loosened, and Dorothea can retrace the past with that expanded vision, revisiting conversations, impressions, and expressions with new knowledge.

Following this initial feeling, a portion of her wants to stop Will from departing, to not let the parting be final, and to extend the possibility that this moment may enable. Yet, moments after this acknowledged communion, Dorothea feels her widened consciousness begin to constrict: "what a world of reasons crowded upon her against any movement of her thought towards a future that might reverse the decision of this day!" (617). The awakening of potential dreams within her is met by the restrictions of the outer world. Dorothea may have feelings for Will and be convinced of his blameless conduct, but she realizes that outer influences—her family, the community, and the forbidding voice of Casaubon through the restrictions in the codicil—may view him differently.

The spatial references of this changing awareness vividly lend a sense of the palpable, pulsing tension within Dorothea. This movement—its inner dimensions and physical description—is echoed in Lygate's statement that the human mind "must be continually expanding and shrinking between the whole human horizon and the horizon of an object-glass" (620). Corre-

spondingly, (as in many of these passages), the descriptions serve to slow down the pace of the happenings in the narrative. Dually, these spatial descriptions allow both the character and the reader to pause and become aware of the subtle nuances of change. Both Dorothea and *Middlemarch*'s readers become conscious of inner development gradually occurring. In this sense, the visual descriptions (as noted throughout *Middlemarch*, *Wives and Daughters*, and *Villette*) operate both at the spatial and temporal level. Though Lessing made firm disctinctions between the elements of space and time for visual and written art forms, the way these descriptions function in these novels purposely addresses both levels of development.

Important as this awareness of an individual communion with Ladislaw is for Dorothea, her vision has always extended beyond the personal scope to a larger, communal one. As Lydgate's comment asserts, one must volley between these two visions and their responsibilities. Dorothea similarly exclaims, "What do we live for if it is not to make life less difficult to each other?" (712). Although she has not found the outlet for her dutiful mission on a larger scale, Dorothea maintains this perspective in all of her interactions, an impulse to accomplish good for the welfare of another, to create a vital connection. In the two years' gap of time since Ladislaw's departure, Dorothea comes to reach out to Lydgate, as he experiences problems at the hospital and evolving conflicts in his marriage to Rosamund.

On one occasion, as Dorothea waits to talk with Lydgate at Lowick, her inner need to assist others again assumes a spatial presence. As the narrator describes,

> In her luxurious home, wandering under the boughs of her own great trees, her thought was going out over the lot of others, and her emotions were imprisoned. The idea of some active good within her reach "haunted her like a passion," and another's need having once come to her as a distinct image preoccupied her desire with the yearning to give relief and made her own ease tasteless. (737–38)

Physically, Dorothea is surrounded by luxurious space, and the image of grand trees casting their organic pattern of far-reaching, interlocking branches against the sky. This natural background serves as a tangible correlative for the myriad of personal connections and need Dorothea imagines. In one sense, directing her emotions and thoughts toward others distracts Dorothea from pondering her own losses; it is an alternative to focus on personal dreams seemingly unfulfilled. Yet, to relegate these desires to the role of a 'substitute' for love, or Will's presence, would be to deny Dorothea's recognition of our common goal in life: to be aware of the other and of other's needs, and to act upon that awareness.

Lydgate finds this communion and solace in Dorothea. Though initially

she seemed a counter-image to his view of ideal womanhood and femininity, as she extends her help and sympathy, Dorothea exhibits her truly "noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity" (739). Her ability for intent listening and commitment to interaction enables Lydgate to realize that, for the first time, "he had found room for the full meaning of his grief" (741). In a mutual correspondence, Dorothea embodies a sense of space for another. As she becomes increasingly aware of her own interiority, she can also direct that fullness and insight towards others, becoming that spatial medium for interconnection. Lydgate realizes that Dorothea "has a heart large enough for the Virgin Mary" (746), now seeing in her capabilities and sensitivities beyond that of other women. He inwardly thinks, "She seems to have what I never saw in any woman before—a fountain of friendship towards men, a man can make a friend of her.…her love might help a man more than her money" (746). In her out-reaching passion and empathy, Dorothea transforms Lydgate's view of womanhood, and the possibility for human connection and aid.

Discoveries and Compromise

In the concluding portion of the novel, Dorothea makes some important discoveries that lead her to action and necessary inner contemplation. Occasioning many of her feelings is Will Ladislaw's return to Middlemarch, most notably her unexpected discovery of him at the Lydgate household in an apparent intimate moment with Rosamund. Finding Will and Rosamund together stirs a firey indignation and a "self-possessed energy" within Dorothea (752). This flood of emotions transforms itself into a greater need to achieve purposeful activity. Dorothea recognizes that "she had never felt anything like this triumphant power of indignation in the struggle of her married life, in which there had always been a quickly subduing pang; and she took it as a sign of new strength" (753). Her reaction combines the dual sides of her nature—the principled and the passionate—with a self-awareness not previously shown. Despite her anger and surprise, Dorothea appears more in control of her reaction than she has in the past, as during her youthful courtship and marriage.[10]

The discovery of Will with Rosamund leads to Dorothea's own acknowledgment of her love for Will, a feeling she had "kept alive from a very little seed since the days in Rome" (762). Not surprisingly, when alone again in her own room, she is able to voice that love. As she finally acknowledges her feelings and mourns the hope she believes she has lost, Dorothea surrounds herself with spatial references of the past. Will was a "bright creature," "a spirit of morning" that visited "the dim vault" of her previous life

(763). She wonders why he had to come into her life, one "that might have been whole enough without him" (763). As characteristic of her previous moments of awakening consciousness, Dorothea's range of emotions takes on an extreme of spatial dimensions; they quickly and successively expand and contract, as reminiscent of a beating heart.

Out of this personal insight, Dorothea becomes aware of larger connections as her mind jolts her to consider the others entangled in the scene she witnessed at the Lydgate house. As at other moments in the novel, Dorothea is faced with a visual correlative for her current feelings—the view out of her boudoir window—demonstrating the way in which the element of space assumes an active role in her development.[11] Contemplating her course of action, Dorothea

> opened her curtains and looked out towards the bit of road that lay in view with fields beyond, outside the entrance-gates. On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving, perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light, and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was part of that involuntary, palpitating life and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining. What she would resolve to do that day did not yet seem quite clear, but something that she could achieve stirred her as with an approaching murmur which would soon gather distinctness. (764–5)

In many ways, this passage recounting Dorothea's awareness is the climactic moment of the novel and of her personal development. From the context of studying spatial composition in the novel and its implications, this description places Dorothea at a pivotal place. She has gradually claimed her own personal physical space—the boudoir that once she accepted without thought—and within it, can reach her inner space. She can voice her emotional realizations to herself. At this moment, though, she is confronted by the physical representation of the outside world through the view from her window. The power of that scene allows her to see her life, emotions, and aims as parts of the larger whole—or as Susan Morgan puts it, Dorothea recognizes her commitment to participation in an expansive world beyond the self (Morgan 159). Importantly, the view stirs her to action. In this awareness, Dorothea also merges the two sides of her nature. Neither passion nor principle is excluded, bringing a sense of wholeness to Dorothea's development, regardless of the outcome of the novel's romantic subplot.

Dorothea's impulse to action does take form in her visit to Rosamund. The powerful moments of their meeting do not occur in the actual conversation, though Dorothea does try to ease the troubles between Rosamund and

Lydgate, and Rosamund allays any misconceptions about her relationship with Will. Despite their candour, the women's real interaction occurs through unspoken communication. When Dorothea enters, her expression—"her face full of sad yet sweet openness"—initially binds the two women, and in her hand shake, Dorothea conveys "gentle motherliness" (Eliot 768). The change of their demeanors and palpable yet unexpressed emotions lying shallowly beneath surface exteriors allows for the verbal exchange to happen so openly. Dorothea's extension of help, of recognition for other's possible pain, visibly affects Rosamund, and as the narrator notes, "Pride was broken down between these two" (772).

The key moment of their conversation follows Dorothea's admission that marriage is a difficult relationship. As she offers the trials of her own marriage, she acknowledges the pain in the Lydgates' relationship, and indirectly expresses her understanding of a woman's desire for other loving attachments, namely what she perceives between Rosamund and Will. As the two women inwardly admit to their own sorrows, they are also able to extend empathy to each other:

> Rosamund, taken hold of by an emotion stronger than her own—hurried along in a new movement which gave all things some new, awful, undefined aspect—could find no words, but involuntarily she put her lips to Dorothea's forehead, which was very near her, and then for a minute the two women clasped each other as if they had been in a shipwreck. (773)

In this close embrace—which Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar regard as the climax of the novel, and Susan Fraiman sees as Eliot's intended display of female connection (Fraiman 152)—both Dorothea and Rosamund claim the validity of their own emotions and become aware of the necessity for interconnection.

It may be argued, therefore, as several feminist critics have, that the above interaction marks the climax of *Middlemarch*. Powerfully, it does occur between the two main female characters, signifying the importance for the resolution of both of their storylines. Also, if Rosamund is considered a foil (or to use Michael Cohen's term again, a "sister" figure[12]) to Dorothea, this bonding experience creates an overall sense of balance. In the sense of the novel as a whole, Dorothea's extension of self and the visual 'emblem' of human connection as seen in her embrace with Rosamund exemplify the need for shared understanding and compassion within the 'community,' whatever its size.

Though perhaps not as powerful or ultimately significant a moment, Dorothea and Will do achieve their own communion. Many critics have commented on Will as a flawed and unsatisfying 'hero' character, as re-

flected at times in the novel's own narrator. Jeanie Thomas notes that Dorothea's and the narrator's perceptions of Will differ—and are meant to—suggesting that Will's motives are not often as pure as Dorothea may think (Thomas 28). In addition, Susan Morgan asserts that though Dorothea does have a second chance at marriage with Will, it is not necessarily fulfilling, instructing reader and characters of the ways our lives are limited (Morgan 154). Considering Thomas' and Morgan's perspectives, the final union of Dorothea and Will does not provide an ideal relationship and culmination for the novel. Rather, it is one additional human, and therefore limited, interconnection.

Yet, Dorothea's choice must not be overlooked. Her reconnection with Will follows a now established pattern of spatial description, linking it naturally to her individual development. Their relationship is described as seeming "a world apart" (Eliot 779), especially against the backdrop of their personal history at Lowick, and Will ponders if they will be able to rediscover that "world". Spatially, their relationship has not possessed a privileged place in the context of the community, or even in their own minds. It seems provocative to think of the relationship itself as occupying its own space—in thought, in one's heart, in a physical reality—that then may be sought.

When Will does come to see Dorothea, she wishes not to receive him in Casaubon's library—a place steeped in conflict and memory—and would rather see him outside on the grounds, again reflecting a sense of open unfetteredness (781–2). Yet, a stormy sky necessitates their meeting indoors. The power of the storm, as seen through the window, acts as a visual correlative of their felt passion: "They stood silent, not looking at each other, but looking at the evergreens which were being tossed and were showing the pale underside of their leaves against the blackening sky" (784). Just as certain interactions between Dorothea and Rosamund were more palpable when unspoken, this moment between Will and Dorothea appears to illuminate the intensity of their emotions and their vulnerabilities, as suggested by the underside of the leaves against the storm. As Jeanie Thomas asserts, the storm is not so much a symbol of harmony in their relationship, but a symbolic atmosphere for their heightened emotions, which will continue in their life together (Thomas 44).

A crack of lightning acts as the force that draws them physically together, in a tight clasp reminiscent of the one between Dorothea and Rosamund:

> While he was speaking there came a vivid flash of lightning which lit each of them up for the other, and the light seemed to be the terror of a hope-less love. Dorothea

> darted instantaneously from the window; Will followed her, seizing her hand with a spasmodic movement; and so they stood, with their hands clasped, like two children, looking out on the storm while the thunder gave a tremendous crack and roll above them and the rain began to pour down. Then they turned their faces towards each other, with the memory of his last words in them, and they did not loose each other's hands. (Eliot 785)

This movement, followed by a shared kiss, seems like a dance, a movement of hands, eyes, bodies, lips, and words alternately at a distance and then within intimate range. This physical movement of their two bodies mirrors the halting progression of Dorothea and Will towards each other throughout the novel. The interchange is followed by mutual difficulty at articulating their thoughts, as they realize that their passions may possibly be fulfilled. Significantly, Will lets Dorothea speak and it is her awareness that solidifies their chance to be together. Practically, she does not need Casaubon's estate as she has some monetary means of her own, thereby eradicating the looming impediment of the codicil. Yet, more significantly, this interaction appears ultimately controlled by Dorothea. She comes to terms with her sensual passions, chooses a new way of life, and has seen the importance of forging connections in bettering the lives of those around her.[13]

In the Finale as the narrator takes the reader through the future lives of all the characters, Dorothea remains a woman sure of her choice of Will as a partner in life. Yet, in choosing a life with him, she never achieves her initial hope to accomplish a larger good. As the narrator sums up,

> Many who knew her thought it was a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done—not even Sir James Chettam, who went further than the negative prescription that she ought not to have married Will Ladislaw. (809)

Significantly, the narrator implicates Dorothea's society as much or more so than Dorothea herself for this outcome. Despite her wishes and principles, neither Dorothea nor her society can envision what she could accomplish, despite recognizing her special qualities. The phrase—"what else that was in her power"—resonates as the key to Dorothea's situation. It should not be surprising that she could not envision a way to incorporate fully both desires—a life of emotion and a life of social accomplishment—if her society cannot imagine it either. Marriages for Dorothea—or for other Middlemarch characters—do not provide the solution.

As *Middlemarch*'s narrator concludes, in returning to her model of St. Theresa, "For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it" (811). *Middlemarch is* the

novel of a society, though this study focuses on Dorothea's narrative within it. Yet, focusing on her development solidifies the connection between self and world, and the scope of possibilities and limitations that lie within that relationship. Dorothea, and the many "hidden [lives]" like hers, exemplifies a compromise of spirit (811). Yet, in Dorothea's recognized limitations and failures, George Eliot creates a challenge and the ultimate spatial metaphor of the novel. Eliot suggests the direction toward which society, and thus womenhood, must go. As her consistent use of spatial imagery and language attests, there must be an increased connection and complementarity between inner and outer worlds, both for the sake of the individual and for the society in which we live. She sees the need for that 'world apart' from what currently existed around her. While Eliot may not construct the dimensions of this 'ideal world,' her aim is to draw attention to the need for such a collective envisioning.

CONCLUSION

Anita Brookner's *Hotel du Lac*: A Twentieth-Century Epilogue to a Nineteenth-Century Discussion

> One goes into the room—but the resources of the English language would put to the stretch, and whole flights of words would need to wing their way illegitimately into existence before a woman could say what happens when she goes into a room. The rooms differ so completely; they are calm or thunderous; open on to the sea, or, on the contrary, give on to a prison yard; are hung with washing; or alive with opals and silks; are hard as horsehair or soft as feathers—one has only to go into any room in any street for the whole of that extremely complex force of femininity to fly in one's face. How should it be otherwise?
>
> —Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (87)

Anita Brookner is a contemporary author, deeply conscious of the connections between the visual arts and writing. Discussing Brookner, Lynn Veach Sadler affirms that these connections between art and literature have always been present in her awarenesses (Sadler 4). Born July 16, 1928 in London, Anita was the only child of Newson and Maude Brookner (2–3).[1] Anita received an extensive education: James Allen's Girls' School; King's College of the University of London (focusing on French Literature); and the Courtauld Institute of Art, receiving a doctorate in Art History (specifically 18th/19th century French art) (2–3). Along with teaching and writing about art history, Brookner also took to writing novels, including the winner of the 1984 Booker Prize, *Hotel du Lac*. Sadler sees Brookner as part of a very literate tradition, as a descendant of Henry James and Edith Wharton, with overtones of Barbara Pym and Margaret Drabble (ix). Similar to novelists such as James, Brookner refrains from complicated plots, preferring to focus on more subtle interactions (x).

With this background and attention to visual and written artistic traditions, Brookner also presents herself, especially through her novel *Hotel du*

Lac, as a twentieth century connection to the Victorian period. In particular, in *Hotel du Lac*, Brookner develops her female protagonist, writer Edith Hope, through direct relationships to the spaces around and within her. Edith Hope can be seen as characteristic of many of Brookner's heroines: women often in need of personal spaces both creative and safe, yet dwelling in more stifled or isolated ones (figuratively and literally). These women are often very intelligent, possessing inner potential, yet with unfulfilled personal relationships.[2] Brookner's narrative suggests a similarity to Charlotte Brönte's, Elizabeth Gaskell's, and George Eliot's use of spatial composition as a vital means of exploring their heroines. Furthermore, it asserts the continued bond between women and the visual use of space to represent their interiority and range of possibilities.

Through her protagonist Edith Hope, Brookner creates a female figure poised at and connected to various rooms and domestic spaces. This conscious connection even provides the overarching structure of the story: Edith's movement from her home to the recuperative space of Hotel du Lac, and her choice to return. Along this journey, Edith is confronted by other spatial possibilities—potential moves through marriages—memories, and personal fantasies. Edith initially comes to Hotel du Lac to escape a string of happenings in her seemingly quiet life and to write. She has literally just abandoned her fiance, Geoffrey Long, at the altar, and cannot openly be with her real love, David Simmonds, a married man. She seeks 'a room of her own' at the Hotel for privacy and the chance to meet the deadlines of her current literary project. Yet, ultimately, the Hotel does not prove to be productive for her manuscript. Even her writer's instincts and powers of observation are called into question by others: "She could make up characters but she could not decipher those in real life" (Brookner, *Hotel* 72). While the Hotel does not stimulate creativity or provide complete healing, it does direct Edith back to the space she most values, her own home.

Edith, who even bears a certain physical resemblance to Virginia Woolf according to her friends (8), follows her friends' advice after her wedding debacle with Geoffrey Long and plans to spend a short time at Hotel du Lac. Though a symbolic retreat, the Hotel and her private room convey no vitality. The Hotel itself is "stolid and dignified," and "took perverse pride in its very absence of attractions" (13). The "toneless expanse" of her own room looks like "the colour of over-cooked veal," with furniture described as "austere," "narrow," and "correct" (9). Edith has good intentions of writing, during "this curious hiatus in her life," more of her book *Beneath the Visiting Moon* (9). Yet, throughout her stay, the most vivid examples of her writing come in the form of letters addressed to her lover David—one part of the life she should supposedly be leaving behind—about the people and sights she

encounters at the Hotel. The reader is left uncertain if these letters are even ever sent; while they provide detailed accounts of daily happenings and her feelings, they approximate an open intimacy that may not be possible with David at this time.

Despite their imposed physical distance, David does represent an important spatial connection for Edith: her realm of fantasy. Along with writing her romantic novels, which provides Edith with her "daily task of fantasy and obfuscation" (50), memories and fantasies open Edith's mind to another level of imagination and dwelling. Her first impressions of David are linked to rooms:

> 'I must be getting back to the Rooms,' were the first words she had consciously heard him say, and she was struck by their mystery. She turned the amazing sentence over in her mind, conjuring up vistas of courtyards with fountains trickling and silent servants in gauze trousers bringing sherbet. Or possibly large divans in whitewashed houses shuttered against the heat of the after-noon, a dreaming, glowing idleness, inspired by Delacroix. Or of grave merchants, with clicking amber beads, in coffee houses below pavement level. Opium dens. Turkish baths. A tiled hammam, its walls bright with coins of light reflected from the water. Peace. (56)

Interestingly, David's words inspire the fantasy—and, yet, they do not involve imaginings of *him*! Rather, his casual mention of the Rooms—a suggestion of his work as an auctioneer at, as conveyed in his utilitarian description, "a five-storey warehouse in Chiltern Street" (59)—triggers a series of spatial images in Edith's mind far beyond her quiet life as a writer in England. These exotic scenarios are the most vibrant and sensual descriptions in the novel, and create a space of possibility and fantasy exclusive to Edith Hope.

Even the romantic novels that Edith writes—although the reader is not privy to plots and character descriptions—transport the reader, through the titles alone, to fantasy realms: *Beneath the Visiting Moon*; *The Stone and the Star*; *The Sun at Midnight (Le Soleil de Minuit)*. The titles suggest places beyond the domestic, even beyond the earthbound. The lyric yet ambiguous celestial theme of her titles represents a place and time outside of the norm for herself and for her readers—those "tortoises," who need "consolation," and are not out "winning the world" like the fast-paced "hares" (27–8). Her novels symbolize both Edith's need and capability to imagine these other realms. Moreover, these novels suggest that Edith's life is *not* simply grounded in fantasy. Though they are romantic in subject, they establish Edith as an independent, working writer. Even Edith herself, when reflecting upon her frequent waits for David, admits that "yet, there were five novels, of some length, there to prove that she had not spent her time gazing out of

the window, like the Lady of Shalott" (30). She actively and consistently transforms thoughts and imaginings into creative products.

Throughout the novel, it seems that others, friends and new acquaintances, try to determine the path of Edith's present life, rather than leaving those choices in her hands. For instance, the initial decision to retreat to the Hotel after reconsidering marriage to Geoffrey is heavily influenced by others. Friends deem Edith's actions uncharacteristic, not prudent, and demanding of some time spent apart from her normal life and social circles during which she could regain her direction. Meanwhile, Edith expresses the feeling of

> not wanting to go anywhere, but having given my word that I would stay away for a month until everyone decides that I am myself again. For a moment I panicked, for I am myself now, and was then, although this fact was not recognized. Not drowning, but waving. (10)

Edith sees all of her actions as true to her nature, and ultimately is content with her decision to "escape" marriage to "sturdy" Geoffrey Long (122). It appears significant that although Edith willingly goes to the Hotel, takes the time to reconsider her life, as well as indulging in some fantasy, she asserts a certain sense of autonomy and sureness. While open to development and change, Edith appears essentially secure and moderately hopeful—a suggestion not lost in Brookner's naming of the character—about her life.

As Edith considers and reconsiders marriage to Geoffrey, a kind, sensible, and "mouse-like" man (129), many of her reflections revolve around thoughts of space and dwelling places. If she were to marry him, Edith would leave her home and take up residence at his place in Montagu Square, which Geoffrey formerly shared with his mother (122). She recalls the "marital bed" being "installed," and notes that "soon she would take her place within the confines of a handsome bedroom, the colours of which she secretly found a little too insistent" (122). Her descriptions make the room which she and Geoffrey would share seem hard-edged, stifling, and oppressive.

Though Edith makes some of the decorating choices, she "fatally, perhaps, invoked the aid of Penelope," her friend (122). To Edith, the dark green and marigold color selections

> were new and handsome, but it seemed to her that they absorbed the light and were stuffily authoritative. She could not see herself ever repairing to this bedroom after a day's writing, or taking a nap on the splendid cane-headed bed. And she had noticed precious few children in Montagu Square, and there was no garden, so that her day would have an entirely different pattern when writing time was over. But then she would not be writing. Perhaps she would never write again. (123)

Accounts of color and furniture choices suddenly lead to thoughts of total life style changes. Not only does it seem that Edith would have to leave behind her preferred domestic spaces, she would have to restructure and even renounce her current way of living and working. Brookner's resonant use of space and accompanying descriptive details suggest deeper considerations for women. In the case of Geoffrey Long's domestic offerings, Edith feels stifled; comparably, the advice and ways of her female friend Penelope are not well-suited to Edith's ways of thinking. These comparisons emphasize the need for Edith to have and choose the spaces, dwellings, occupations, and alliances that suit her personally.

Over time, Edith realizes more so that marriage to Geoffrey is not what she wants. Unfortunately, her definite realization takes place on the way to the church. As she later jokingly says to David, who joins her that same evening, the marriage acceptance was really "an accident of timing…Poor Geoffrey had been a stand-in; what she really needed was a holiday" (133). When she is on her "holiday" of sorts at Hotel du Lac, Edith meets Philip Neville, who offers yet another option. After many days of chance and deliberate meetings at the Hotel, Philip invites Edith to join him on a day's outing on the lake. Significantly, while on the steamer, Edith notes that "once again, [she] felt unsafe, distressed, *unhoused*" [my italics] (160). This description confirms a connection between Edith and space, personal domesticity in particular. The word "unhoused" becomes a way of speaking about her current vulnerabilities. This unsettling ride takes on symbolic meaning for Edith, especially after settled, banal days at the Hotel: "For this reason, she clung rather tightly to Mr. Neville's arm, for, although himself a curiously mythological personage, he nevertheless managed to represent a most tangible reality" (160). These reactions to Geoffrey Long and Philip Neville almost complement each other, as Edith is drawn to them, though in different situations, for a sense of momentary stability.

Just as with Geoffrey, Philip offers another domestic and life option for Edith. Though not based on love, another marriage proposal is issued. Philip sees it as a union of "shared interests… Of companionship" (167). This partnership would allow Edith to come out of "exile," as he regards her life pattern as a "lady" in society (165). Similarly, Philip, as suitor, offers a new home to Edith:

> 'I am not a romantic youth. I am in fact extremely discriminating. I have a small estate and a fine house, Regency Gothic, a really beautiful example. And I have a rather well-known collection of *famille rose* dishes. I am sure you love beautiful things.' (164)

Edith is not necessarily "sold" on the arrangement by Philip's pitch; ma-

terial things are not her concern. And although Philip advocates her continued writing career, he also scripts its future: "You may write, if you want to. In fact, you may begin to write rather better than you ever thought you could. Edith Neville is a fine name for an author" (165). In the midst of this scenario, Edith as individual, woman, and author seems to be eclipsed, despite the many social and personal "advantages" Philip assures she will gain through marriage to him.

At this point though, Edith appears poised to accept Philip's proposal. This union would make her a wife, a member of a certain society, no longer "invisible" (178); yet, it is to be on his terms, and love is not part of that arrangement. She even says to him, "'So,'…'I am to live in your house…I am to be air-lifted out of my present life, as if a wand had been waved'" (169). She writes a final letter to David, telling him of her plans, of her continued love for him and not for Philip, and of what the future will mean. Interestingly, as she contemplates this choice and comes to her decision, Edith also regards her hotel room, and it seems to play an animated role in her thoughts:

> It seemed to her that she had finished with this room, or perhaps that the room had finished with her. In any event, some sort of natural conclusion had been reached. Yet, just as it is in the nature of leave taking to feel regret, she knew that this room, in which she had been entirely alone, would always awaken in her some memory of warmth whenever she summoned it to mind. Its silent, faded dignity would perhaps come to symbolize the last shred of her own dignity, before that too crumbled in the face of panic, or bravado, or just cold common sense. (171)

Edith acknowledges a bond between herself and this room, despite its initial blandness. It provided a transition space for her, between the past as it was and what she must choose for her own future.

Although Edith was ready to accept Philip's proposal and his terms, an accidental and unaware glimpse of him leaving fellow vacationer Jennifer Pusey's hotel room that same night jolts Edith to consider her own happiness. She now does not want to be part of Philip Neville's "collection" or lose the life, however flawed, she has formed for herself. The one piece of correspondence the narrator more directly indicates that Edith sends is a final telegram to David, simply stating "Returning" (184). For her lover, this word suggests a return to life as it has been—no changes.

Yet, before she writes this message, Edith had written the line "Coming home" (184). While the revision speaks to David, these original words may better indicate Edith's own choice. The "home" is her own, not one she shares with David. So, that instinctive message more aptly describes her choice: love, albeit not complete or secure, and her chosen space over social stability or prestige.

Nothing seems to better capture the full significance of Edith's choice than her own meditations on her home and daily routine the night before her supposed marriage to Geoffrey. She imagines having to give up these cherished aspects of her life that she often took for granted:

> Like this little house, so long her private domain, a shell for writing in, for sleeping in, silent and sunny in the deserted afternoons, before the children came home from school, and turned in at other gateways. Those becalmed afternoons, when the strength and heat of the sun on the window at her back merely drove her relentless typing fingers onward as if they had a life of their own. (120)

She imagines her clean bathroom and cool bedroom where she would restore herself after writing, and her kitchen with its whistling kettle and the sounds of returning school children through the open door. At the time, Edith reminisces that "She would miss the garden most, she thought, although she was not really a gardener" (120). She conveys that "The garden was only truly hers in the very morning and in the evening, after her day's work, when she…watched the sun dip below the hedge and welcomed an increase in the sharpness of the scents," as she communed with the little neighbor child (121). Edith's affinity and affection for her private garden echo the hidden gardens in *Villette*, Jardine's descriptions of lush female creativity, and the envisioned gardens in much of Victorian art: places where women individually make a claim to open space or share it with other women. These loving depictions of her home and garden are what lead Edith Hope back to her life. It is one that is not perfect, sometimes lonely, but also involves her creative work on her own terms.

For Edith, her spaces are domestic, creative, and places of work: a powerful trilogy. This layering of significance and purpose charges them as personal spaces for her as a woman and writer. In her late twentieth-century world, Edith Hope has as strong an impulse towards her *claimed* spaces as the nineteenth-century protagonists Lucy Snowe, Molly Gibson, and Dorothea Brooke, as well as many of the female figures depicted in the art of the Victorian period. Although space, through the form of domestic dwellings and structures, can—and often does in nineteenth-century symbolism—represent confines, these same spaces are not constricted when truly possessed by women. When claimed and possessed fully by such women of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these personal spaces provide outlets to thoughts and memories; to self-affirmation; and even to creative possibilities. They become a correlative symbol in representing women's development, and may lead to women's personal choice and assertion of convictions.

In the Victorian paintings previously explored, domestic spaces often

possess openings for women's creative or imaginative possibilities. Domestic or interior settings may suggest enclosure, but many paintings—particularly by women artists—present alternative or suggested spaces: windows, doors, and thresholds to the outer world. Acceptable Victorian outdoor environs, although often extensions of the home, present women with spaces suggestive of realms beyond the domestic. Women are also seen as artists engaged in creative activity in artistic spaces of their own. Connected to all these depictions are the symbolic or "fantasy" compositions that overtly explore the alternative spaces and meanings suggested in the more realistic scenes. Assembled together, these images project alternatives to the more usual or expected nineteenth-century space of enclosure or restriction. Realistic confines, especially for women, may have existed, but creative minds were discovering ways of imagining their transgression.

These creative possibilities have not always been as overt as Edith Hope's writing and fantasy life. Yet, her imaginings of magical rooms, as well as of a life suited to her wants, are akin to the more surreal Pre-Raphaelite images, like those of Edward Burne-Jones: the exotic and suggestive portals, windows, and stairways as in *Love Among the Ruins* and *Pygmalion and the Image: The Soul Attains*. The image of the woman artist working at her art yet drawn to the outside world is as alive in Edith Hope as in Elizabeth Siddal's and William Holman Hunt's depictions of *The Lady of Shalott*, two of the most empowering envisionings of Tennyson's legendary and conflicted woman. Edith Hope stands at the threshold of rooms as spaces as she imagines and prepares for transitions, while still trying to create a life for herself. Similarly, Maria Spartali Stillman's painting *Love's Messenger*, Jane Bowkett's *Preparing Tea*, and Helen Allingham's *Cottage at Brook, near Witley* capture women poised at the edge of windows, doors, and pathways, configuring alternatives.

The female protagonists of *Villette*, *Wives and Daughters*, and *Middlemarch*—Lucy Snowe, Molly Gibson, and Dorothea Brooke—also find themselves faced with tensions between interior and exterior spaces. Each novel explores particular spatial designs and metaphors that chart each woman's development and self-realization. In her role as "autobiographer" and narrator, Lucy Snowe creates verbal pictures and spaces as a way of constructing a self. She operates fully in three creative roles: observer, word-painter, and writer. Her spaces range from the geographic ones of her travels to domestic dwellings to the intimate, often abstract or unknowable, spaces of mind, heart, intellect, and imagination. In these depictions, her actions, and her narration, Lucy Snowe trangresses spaces regularly defined in the nineteenth century for women.

Molly Gibson, also an avid observer, is often seen at the thresholds between interior and exterior spaces. Through spatial descriptions, the novel connects the microcosm of domestic/inner spaces with the macrocosm of the outer world, as seen through Molly's extended community. Often crossing prescribed boundaries—within domestic settings and the natural, physical world—Molly both occupies and creates her own spaces, forming a wider scope of connections to the people in her life and her own identity. Also seeking a distinct place in the larger community, Dorothea Brooke is initially faced with spatial limitations but longs for possibilities. She moves from a desire for openness through constriction to eventual inner growth. Metaphors of space—texts, domestic interiors, architecture, artworks, portraits—represent that growth and her longing for a fuller life. Just as Edith relishes her garden space the most, its openness and sensory lushness, Lucy, Molly, and Dorothea are all drawn to nature, the outdoors, or private gardens as contemplative retreats and symbolic transgressions of domestic settings.

These visual and symbolic connections, and countless others, present themselves in the art and novels of the Victorian period. The vital and personal use of spaces in Anita Brooker's contemporary novel *Hotel du Lac* affirms that this connection is still relevant and inwardly felt. Brookner creates a female character, though not totally fulfilled, who acknowledges the role and importance of her personally carved-out domestic space in her life and the continuation of her literary career. Virginia Woolf had earlier articulated this integral bond between women—if they wish to be creative, productive, and whole—and rooms of their own. Yet what Edith Hope asserts in the late twentieth century is seen with greater urgency in the previous century. Nineteenth-century women—whether it be the artists and authors themselves, or the vibrant, searching female figures they created—seem impulsively drawn to space as a means of self-expression and personal development. Those desires demand actively confronting one's roles and limitations, and then transgressing established social and gender boundaries. Spaces have continuously been made for women in art and society, but women can also make their own. By creating—through visual or literary means—these individualized experiences, women begin to live them.

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Illustrations

Figure 1. *Painter's Honeymoon*. Lord Frederick Leighton, 1864. Oil on canvas. 33 x 30 1/4 ins. Charles H. Bayley Picture and Painting Fund. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 2. *Love's Messenger*. Marie Spartali Stillman, 1885. Delaware Art Museum. Courtesy, Delaware Art Museum.

Figure 3. *Le Chant D'Amour*. Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones, 1868–77. Oil on canvas. 45 x 61 3/8 ins. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Courtesy, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Alfred N. Punnett Endowment Fund, 1947. (47.26)

Notes

Introduction: Creating a Woman's Space

1. According to Anne Carolyn Klein in *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhists, Feminists, and the Art of the Self* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1995), more modern Western notions of the self began to develop in the 16th century with the concept of persons as 'unique'; that is, social roles were no longer seen as the essence of the person. This 16th century definition of individuality contrasted with the 15th century definition of 'individual' as 'indivisible' (i.e. as in the Trinity, or a married couple). Since the 17th century, 'individual' shifted from an emphasis on connection to separation. In the 18th century, the idea of 'unique' qualities is amplified to include individual potential. Creativity begins to be seen as part of that potential, as especially witnessed through the Romantic period. In the18th century, the concepts of individuality and personality are distinct—an understanding which shifts in the 19th century. Klein notes that personality began to predominate narratives and creative works in then, a focus which only increased in the 20th century (28). Klein extends the discussion of this evolving Western sense of individuality to a connection with contemporary Western feminism.
2. Daphne Spain in *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992) looks particularly at the connections between spatial arrangements in dwellings, schools, and work places, and at women's access to knowledge and power. Within her study, Spain looks through design plans at some typical 19th and 20th century housing arrangements, and examines the divisions and conflations of individual spaces for men and women.
3. In *Sisters: Relation and Rescue in Nineteenth Century British Novels and Paintings* (Madison, NJ: FDU Press, 1995), Michael Cohen uses Egg's paintings as a primary visual example of his thesis that sisterhood in Victorian art and novels operates as a symbolic representation of women's relationships (9). For Cohen, Egg's painting depicts women's journey through life together and emphasizes women's equality despite differences.

Chapter One: Windows to Women's Worlds, Portals to their Imaginations: Visual Female Spaces in Victorian Art

1. Pollock focuses on the work of Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt as representatives of female impressionists.
2. John Ruskin is known for the statement of these thoughts in his 1865 publication *Sesame and Lilies*, in which he offers homage to woman and her redemptive influence on

husband and family. For further comment, see Susan Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art* (Madison, NJ: FDU Press, 1987) 50.

3. Kestner also notes John Ruskin's "Of Queen's Grandeur" (1864) as distinguishing maleness from femininity (9).
4. Pamela Gerrish Nunn notes these hallmarks of Carpenter's career in *Victorian Women Artists* (London: The Women's Press, 1987) 69, 95, 126.
5. Cherry notes that Carpenter used her two young daughters as subjects for this painting (137).
6. As quoted by Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982) 154.
7. Cherry records that Jessica Hayllar was also a member of an artistic family. Along with their father, all four daughters—Jessica, Edith, Mary, and Kate—painted. Jessica and Edith Hayllar were especially known for often contributing mostly 'domestic' scenes to Royal Academy exhibits (22, 138–39).
8. The Tate Galley, *Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Penguin Books, 1994) 29. In this museum catalog, many of these details are noted, along with elements from Millais' sources for the Mariana character and story, namely Tennyson and Shakespeare. The catalog also notes other details that deepen the mood of desperation and weariness, such as the snowdrop representing "consolation" in the stained glass, and the motto "In coleo quies," meaning "In Heaven there is rest."
9. Anthologized in Walter E. Houghton and G. Robert Stange, eds., *Victorian Poetry and Poetics* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968) 10–11.
10. Charles Allston Collins was brother to Victorian writer Wilkie Collins. Noted in Christopher Wood, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (New York: Crescent Books, 1981) 17.
11. See Casteras for more details on this history and background. The Tate catalog, under the description of Collins' painting, notes that he may have considered the 'hortus conclusus' (garden enclosed) imagery and its association with the Virgin Mary and purity (87).
12. One example of this type is J. Atkinson Grimshaw's *The Rector's Garden: Queen of the Lilies* (1877). See Casteras, 58.
13. A specific date is not recorded for this painting. Christopher Wood, in *Paradise Lost: Paintings of English Country Life and Landscape 1850–1914* (New York: Crescent Books, 1988), does provide the dates for Lewis' life as 1830–1892. Although an exact date cannot be given for this canvas, knowing the artist's life span does place the painting within the period considered in this study.
14. No specific date is recorded for this painting. Christopher Wood, in *Paradise Lost* (1988), gives Helen Allingham's dates as 1848–1926. This watercolor was probably done in the late 1800s.
15. Helen Allingham uses a similar composition, the winding path that connects figure and viewer, in several other paintings: *Cow Parsley and Bluebells, At the Cottage Gate,* and *Redlynch, Wiltshire*. Yet, in these paintings, the scale is not as expansive and the figures are all children rather than adult women.

16. Again, no specific date is recorded for this Foster work. Christopher Wood, in *Paradise Lost* (1988), records the artist's dates as 1825–1899, definitely placing this work within the 19th century.

17. See Roger C. Lewis' and Mark Samuels Lasner's edition of *Poems and Drawings of Elizabeth Siddall* (Wolfville, Nova Scotia: The Wombat Press, 1978) for a gathering of Siddall's works. Jan Marsh's *The Legend of Elizabeth Siddall* (London: Quartet Books, 1989) and *The Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985) provide thorough studies into Siddall's life and connections to the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

18. For more detailed discussions of individual interpretations 'The Lady of Shalott' images, see Brown University's 1985 exhibition catalog, *Ladies of Shalott: A Victorian Masterpiece and Its Contexts* (Providence, RI: Brown University, 1985).

19. Cherry, listed on Plate 7, included between pages 64–65.

20. See in particular Timothy R. Rodger's essay "The Development of William Holman Hunt's *The Lady of Shalott*", included in the Brown University catalog, *Ladies of Shalott*.

21. This selected image can serve as representative for several other paintings of Rossetti from the same period that similarly enclose woman in boxed, or cropped compositions. Others to consider are *Bocca Baciata* (1859), *Fair Rosamund* (1861), *Fazio's Mistress* (1863), *Venus Verticordia* (1864–68), *Il Ramoscello* (1865), *Blue Bower* (1865), *The Beloved* (1865–66), and *Monna Vanna* (1866).

22. Christian remarks that Burne-Jones was dissatisfied with this portrait, but that it captured Georgie's personality and virtues. Christian suggests that she was put to the test in the Burne-Jones' marriage, especially as she held the family together during Edward's tempestuous affair inthe late 1860s-early 1870s with his frequent model, Maria Zambaco. In general, Georgiana Burne-Jones seemed to be the center of the family allowing Edward to pursue his artistic career. She also had creative talents as a singer and pianist, and her music often served to inspire Edward in his art, in true Paterian fashion (260).

23. John Christian notes that the model for the head of the Virgin may have been Julia Jackson, mother of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell. He also suggests that the Virgin's look resembles Georgie (241).

24. Burne-Jones originally executed *Love Among the Ruins* in gouache over the years 1870–73, therefore earlier than either *The Annunciation* or his portrait of Georgie. However, the painting was damaged, and he painted a version of the same subject in oil in 1894.

25. Stephen Wildman and John Christian note a description of the tale, as taken from a preamble to a poem in William Morris' collection (217).

26. Russell Ash, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones* (London: Pavillion Books Limited, 1993) Plate 13. Translation of the subtitle: "Alas, I know a love song,/Sad or happy, each in turn."

Chapter Three: Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*: Micro/Macro-Cosmic Visions

1. Actually, Gaskell died just prior to finishing. She was still at work on the conclusion when she died suddenly in November 1865. The appended concluding chapter to the novel was written by Frederick Greenwood, editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* in which the novel was serialized between August 1864 and January 1866. The conclusion sketches what Gaskell had told her family she had planned for the work. See Laurence Lerner, in-

troduction, *Wives and Daughters*, by Elizabeth Gaskell (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986) 16, 29.

2. In addition to examining the abundance of spatial images in Gaskell's novel, the focus on the personal/domestic life of a developing young woman supports recent critical analysis of Victorian women's novel, as seen particularly in the work of Nancy Armstrong.

3. Cohen also notes that the doctors, however, are not the center of the novels; the women are, as they often form their own community, especially seen in Gaskell's novel *Cranford* (157). Also responding to this line of thought, Susan Morgan, in *Sisters in Time: Imagining Gender in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), notes that Gaskell's novels replace fathers with daughters. In other words, Morgan suggests that a female line of history is beginning to replace the dominant, fixed male form of history (100). Yet, even within that line of thought, Morgan acknowledges the respect Gaskell holds for doctor figures in her novels, not unlike Charles Dickens' similar admiration, and that Mr. Gibson in particular represents a modern, future-thinking doctor rather than an old-fashioned one (102).

4. Recall the example from Chapter One concerning female painters. Women artists were most often discouraged from painting outdoors—*en plein air*—and rather were restricted to certain "acceptable" subjects, such as still lifes and flowers.

5. Morgan would see this movement in personal terms—a young, dutiful daughter's movement away from the loving control of her father—and in political terms through the gradual strengthening of feminine values in the public sphere (100–01).

6. Laurie Buchanan adopts a similar perspective of the relationship between Molly and Mrs. Hamley; although, her argument on mother/daughter relationships also focuses on the ways Molly cares maternally for Mrs. Hamley (508).

Chapter Four: George Eliot's *Middlemarch*: Dorothea Brooke's Visionary Spaces

1. Hugh Witemeyer notes specifically that Eliot attended many art exhibitions in London, and that she saw the studios of Frederic Leighton, William Holman Hunt, G. F. Watts, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, and Helen Allingham, as well as collections of Turner (Witemeyer 10). Eliot also visited galleries on the "Continent," especially in her travels through Europe in 1854–55, 1858, 1860, 1864, and 1865 (11). She was also familiar with German, French, Italian, and Spanish art (12). Personally, Eliot was a close friend to Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, a landscape artist and feminist, and Witemeyer notes that they were supportive as friends and as women artists (15). Eliot and George Lewes were friends as couples with Edward and Georgiana Burne-Jones, confirming ties to the Pre-Raphaelite circle (16). Eliot read the 'literature' of the arts and John Ruskin was a mentor through his writings and theories (16–17).

2. Helena Michie comments on the use of metatrope in this opening description of Dorothea Brooke, that is, a frame which compares her to Italian paintings, quotations from the Bible, or elder poets. Michie asserts that Dorothea appears as a text, thereby raising the question of how society reads her (103–4). Seeing this as a fixed description, Michie sees Dorothea as denied the power to form herself. Rather, she is always a reproduction of another visual or textual work (105).

3. Later in the novel, after the Casaubons' return from their honeymoon trip to Rome,

Dorothea visits with Celia who regards Casaubon in a similar way: "'Only I was afraid you would be getting so learned,' said Celia, regarding Mr. Casaubon's learning as a kind of damp which might in due time saturate a neighboring body" (Eliot 271). The recurrence of the word 'damp' associated with Casaubon corroborates this reading and symbolism.

4. The narrator confirms this correlation between a physical image/location and inner thoughts later in the novel. The mood in the community at the time of Featherstone's funeral projects an occurrence of these feelings on Dorothea, though she is not directly involved; places and images, though, absorb the feelings: "Scenes which make vital changes in our neighbors' lot are but the background of our own, yet, like a particular aspect of the fields and trees, they become associated for us with the epochs of our own history and make a part of that unity which lies in the selection of our keenest consciousness. The dreamlike association of something alien and ill-understood with the deepest secrets of her experience seemed to mirror that sense of loneliness which was due to the very ardour of Dorothea's nature" (Eliot 316). The first observations give way to an association for Dorothea between her honeymoon trip to Rome and the beginning of loneliness (and many other emotions). In a similar way, this passage expresses a complementarity of outer and inner spaces—in this case, an association that lingers significantly over time.

5. Joseph Wisenfarth particularly notes Dorothea's 'vision' problems, and their correlating physical and symbolic connotations. He notes that near-sighted Dorothea keeps a large dog, a Saint Bernard, as a pet, rather than a small one. This dog, Monk, becomes a visual corollary for Dorothea's myopia. He links this evidence to her blind choice of Casaubon, whom Celia sees clearly for his physical and spiritual faults (364).

6. Wisenfarth explores the intricacies of this artistic comparison, linking the Ariadne mythology to Dorothea's personal story. He recognizes their similar pose, as reflected in the chapter's epigraph from Dante's *Purgatorio* (Wisenfarth 372). He explains the reason for Dorothea's pose is that she feels Casaubon has unjustly left her alone so early in their trip. To parallel the myth, Wisenfarth assigns these roles of Theseus to Casaubon and Bacchus to Ladislaw, to support Dorothea as Ariadne (372).

7. In a related, yet somewhat tangential, note concerning 'space,' Barbara Hardy's central thesis in her essay "Rome in *Middlemarch*: A Need for Foreignness" (1993) asserts that Eliot's use of Rome creates a spatial/locational opening for foreign, and by extension, imagined places/spaces (1).

8. A later description of Lydgate echoes this sentiment in similar terms, especially the need for a common 'medium' to facilitate connection—literally, *life*. Dorothea seeks Lydgate as a common soul—another person wanting to accomplish good in the world—and asks for his advice concerning her husband, his labors, and his anxious single-mindedness; "For years after Lydgate remembered the impression produced in him by this involuntary appeal—this cry from soul to soul, without other consciousness than their moving with kindred natures in the same embroiled medium, the same troublous, fitfully illuminated life" (Eliot 283). This communion assumes spatial dimensions on a grand scale.

9. The choice of the word "lunette" (meaning the crescent shape of the moon; a ceiling aperture of that shape meant to let in light; a crescent shape incorporated in the design of a dome or ceiling; spectacles; and other associated definitions) echoes *Villette*'s Lucy Snowe and her repeated references to her "crescent" life and possibilities. The image si-

multaneously gives shape to and limits scope. It also invokes the unifying image of the moon present in the multiple canvases of Egg's *Past and Present* series.

10. As Dorothea appears to be gaining more of a sense of self, even amidst unsettling happenings, Rosamund undergoes a parallel unravelling of self. Faced with the realization that Will's attentions were meaningless, and her charms only empty attempts at attention, Rosamund "was almost losing the sense of her identity and seemed to be waking into some new terrible existence" (Eliot 755). Her sense of her own womanhood and individual value diminishes in this moment.

11. Hugh Witemeyer includes that E. D. Johnson also notes that the series of views from Dorothea's window echoes her own self-growth (Witemeyer 152). In particular, Witemeyer points out that this last vision through her window enables a vital relationship between her individual thoughts and her external world (154), supporting a reading of an active connection between interior and exterior spaces.

12. Michael Cohen regards several of the female characters in *Middlemarch* as Dorothea's "sisters": Celia, Rosamund, images of Casaubon's mother and Will's grandmother, and Mrs. Bulstrode (through common loyalties to husbands) (Cohen 163). He also connects Will Ladislaw in this type of relationship, despite gender differences, because of his dependence (163). In a provocative correspondence, Cohen asserts that Dorothea is 'sistered' with other fictional heroines, including characters in *Wives and Daughters* (163). Cohen especially sees *Middlemarch* responding to Gaskell's novel on the issue of marriage reform, and notes the influence of Eliot's novel on the Married Women's Property Act (1882 was a significant year with the period of a series of discussions between 1870–93) (161–2).

13. John Kucich's reading of the novel supports this strength in Dorothea. In focusing on repression in Victorian fiction, Kucich notes that initially Dorothea has trouble reconciling her dual passions, suppressing one in favor of the other. He writes that by the end of the novel, Dorothea's passions for love and self-negation combine in a doubled force (143–44).

Conclusion: Anita Brookner's *Hotel du Lac*: A Twentieth-Century Epilogue to a Nineteenth-Century Discussion

1. Anita Brookner's mother, Maude Brookner, gave up a career as a concert singer when she married, and Lynn Veach Sadler records that this decision resulted in later melancholy (Sadler 2–3). It seems that Maude presented an immediate example in Anita's life of an artistic woman caught between the longings for and responsibilities toward career and family.

2. Sadler notes that Brookner develops her female protagonists through foil characters: the ideal person or couple; the controlling domestic; the 'good' wife or neighbor; and more demonstrative and manipulative women (Sadler viii). Brookner's protagonists tend to reject these roles (x), and to form alternatives, regardless of whether they are ultimately satisfying. For example, Harriet Lytton in *A Closed Eye* (1984) struggles between wanting personal autonomy and interconnected relationships. Throughout the novel, Harriet fosters an inner fantasy that revolves around the image of an empty room, which in its emptiness, privacy, and light comforts her. The imagined spatial image has its links to remembered and present rooms in her life, emphasizing her female roles of daughter, wife, and mother.

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