

GIRLHOOD GEOGRAPHIES:
MAPPING GENDERED SPACES IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN

A Dissertation

by

SONYA SAWYER FRITZ

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2010

Major Subject: English

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	Lynne Vallone
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ABSTRACT

Girlhood Geographies: Mapping Gendered Spaces in Victorian Literature for Children.

(December 2010)

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Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Lynne Vallone
Dr. Claudia Nelson

“Girlhood Geographies: Mapping Gendered Spaces in Victorian Literature for Children,” analyzes Victorian literature for girls and contemporary discourses on girlhood through the lens of cultural geography in order to examine the importance of place in the Victorian girl’s identity work and negotiation of social responsibilities, pressures, and anxieties. The premise of my project is that one of the pressing cultural concerns in Victorian England, which greatly valued the stability of gender and class identities, was to teach children to know their place—not simply their proper position in society but how their position in society dictated the physical spaces in which they belonged and those in which they did not. Girls’ virtue, in particular, was evinced in their ability to determine and engage in behavior appropriate to the spaces in which they lived. I argue that, by portraying girls’ negotiation of the spaces of the home, outdoors, school, and street, Victorian children’s literature sought to organize for the girl reader both the places in which she lived and her ability to define these places in relation to her own subjectivity. Each of my chapters considers a genre or body of children’s literature that centers on place, including domestic fiction such as Charlotte Yonge’s *The Daisy*

Chain and Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday House*, literature set in the garden and outdoors, including Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* and Kate Greenaway's *Under the Window*, and school stories by such writers as L.T. Meade, Geraldine Mockler, and Evelyn Sharp. In analyzing these texts, this dissertation illuminates the manner in which girl characters' relationships with nuanced physical spaces affect their negotiation of personal interests and social responsibilities, and their development into Victorian women.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who encouraged and supported me every step of the way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee co-chairs, Dr. Lynne Vallone and Dr. Claudia Nelson, for their guidance, patience, and encouragement throughout the course of my research. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Susan Egenolf and Dr. James Rosenheim, for their thoughtful encouragement and valuable feedback on my work.

Thanks also go to the faculty and staff of the Department of English, who offered intellectual and moral support during my years as a graduate student, not to mention the department's financial assistance in the form of assistantship stipends, a dissertation fellowship, and numerous travel grants. I also extend my gratitude to the Melburn G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research for its generous support. Its numerous funding opportunities and Graduate Colloquium program have enriched my graduate experience and provided me with vital opportunities to refine my work.

To my friends and family, I owe a huge debt of gratitude. I could not have succeeded without the in-the-trenches encouragement given by fellow graduate students Amanda Himes, Rochelle Bradley, Sarah Peters, and Sara Day, to name a few. I thank Kendra Beasley for her priceless friendship throughout my graduate career, and I am grateful for the love shown by my extended family, including John and Frances Sawyer, K and David Pipes, and Fred and Sondra Strietelmeier, who have always been enthusiastic about my work. Most of all, I thank my parents, Janet and C.W. Sawyer, my sister, Holly Sawyer, and my husband, Aaron Fritz, for their unfailing love and support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Girls are everywhere. You cannot go into society, you cannot go to church, you cannot visit the theatre, you cannot walk the streets, without meeting girls” (qtd. in Fraser, Green, and Johnston 24).

This provocative statement regarding the apparent ubiquity of the Victorian girl is found in the short-lived periodical *The Girl of the Period Miscellany* (1869), one of many publications spawned by Eliza Lynn Linton’s “The Girl of the Period,” published in the March 14, 1868 *Saturday Review*. Linton’s article, an early indictment of the New Woman’s influence on contemporary trends in middle-class girls’ appearance and behavior, laments what Linton thought to be the passing of the “fair young English girl” whose modesty and virtue ripened her for the domestic roles of “a tender mother, an industrious housekeeper, a judicious mistress” (2), and the advent of “a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face” and “lives to please herself” (2, 3).¹ The resemblance that Linton’s unfavorable description suggests between the middle-class girl and the common prostitute clearly reveals anxieties about potential breakdowns in class

This thesis follows the style of MLA.

¹ For more discussion of Linton’s article, see Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets, and William Veeder, *The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America, 1837-1883* (1983); Christina Boufis, “Of Home Birth and Breeding: Eliza Lynn Linton and the Girl of the Period” in *The Girl’s Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl*, ed. Claudia Nelson and Lynne Vallone (1994); Hilary Fraser, Judith Johnston, and Stephanie Green, *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* (2003); and Sarah Bilston, *The Awkward Age in Women’s Popular Fiction, 1850-1900* (2004).

distinctions that social developments such as the high school education system fostered; but the comparison also reflects concerns regarding the middle-class girl's emergence from the domestic sphere and her questionable interactions with the public.² Like its predecessor, *The Girl of the Period Miscellany* addresses shifts in Victorian girls' social roles and gender identities, which, as the assertion that "girls are everywhere" indicates, included their increasing mobility and visibility in various locations within English society. As Kristine Moruzi points out, publications such as "The Girl of the Period" and *The Girl of the Period Miscellany* as well as the large audiences they attracted, "indicat[e] the centrality of these concerns about the roles and responsibilities of girls and young women to the average Victorian" (9). Among these was a concern for determining where girls belonged and keeping them in these places. In a period when England greatly valued the stability of gender and class identities, nineteenth-century British culture was critically concerned with teaching girls to know their place—not simply their proper position in society but how this dictated which spaces they belonged in and which they did not. Girls' virtue, in particular, was evinced in their ability to determine and engage in behavior appropriate to the spaces in which they lived as well as to avoid the places that were considered unwholesome or dangerous for them.

The Victorian period brought with it increased opportunities for middle-class girls to leave the home and explore new social landscapes, as cultural norms expanded to

² See note 8 in Chapter Four regarding mid-century concerns about the high school system's impact on English social class distinctions. Expressions of this anxiety only increased through the turn of the century; see Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl*, p. 84. For a literary specimen, see L. T. Meade's *The New Mrs. Lascelles* (1901, republished in 1916 as *Mother Mary*), which attributes the disastrous connection formed between a wealthy doctor's daughters and two working-class shop-girls to the girls' mingling at a High School social event (68-69).

allow girls to attend school and, increasingly, to pursue careers after finishing their education. However, in the mind of the average Victorian, girls still were not supposed to be everywhere. The favorite slogan of Victorian memoirist M.V. Hughes's father, that "boys should go everywhere and know everything, and that a girl should stay at home and know nothing," was no doubt delivered tongue-in-cheek with an eye to teasing the girl in question, but it also references an attitude about girls' place that was an underpinning of Victorian society. Like their mothers, middle-class girls belonged primarily in the domestic sphere; as Isabel Reaney asserts in the aptly-named *English Girls: Their Place and Power* (1879), girls were "to occupy the place assigned to them at home" (8). For situations that called girls outside of the domestic sphere, a wealth of guidebooks and conduct manuals sought to orient the middle-class girl within particular places and define appropriate behaviors for her in each place. The titles of books such as Charles Peters's *The Girl's Own Indoor Book* (1888) and *The Girl's Own Outdoor Book* (1889) as well as Ellen Higginson's *The English School-Girl: Her Position and Duties* (1859) and John Todd's *The Daughter at School* (1853), reflect a compartmentalization of codes of conduct according to the settings in which girls find themselves and suggest that different places, from the garden to the schoolroom, call for particular attitudes and behaviors that girls must master in order to realize the feminine ideal. As I argue in this study, Victorian children's fiction—which itself is often categorized generically according to the spaces in which the stories take place, as is the case with domestic fiction or school stories—also reveals its period's cultural investment in prescribing

behaviors for girls according to their physical location, as literature for girls envisions ideal girlhood along the contours of the particular geography that it constructs.

This kind of analysis of children's fiction can be difficult to navigate because of the reality that scholars such as Jacqueline Rose and Karín Lesnik-Oberstein have pointed out: children's literature, as an adult's representation of the child, is always problematic to some degree because it is fraught with adult fears and desires concerning childhood; it is based on "the impossible relation between adult and child" (Rose 1).³ If children's literature is not concerned with representing real children but rather with doing cultural or psychological work for adults, and therefore reflects more about the adult's position than the child's, it becomes complicated to locate within children's fiction ideas that are directly related to real children, even when we acknowledge that these ideas can never completely or effectively represent real children. Susan Honeyman's work emphasizes that this is true regarding literary portrayals of childhood landscapes as well. Honeyman asserts the significance of these spaces as adult productions when she suggests that adult yearning "for the apparent control, order, and simplicity of cognitively mapping smaller spaces [...] explains the tendency toward constructing literary childhood spaces as limited, small, and mappable" (59). Honeyman's assessment of children's literature as part of an adult discourse that interprets how children experience place suggests that it is important to think about what literary representations of children's spaces reveal regarding what adults believe children

³ See Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984) and Karín Lesnik-Oberstein's *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child* (1994), in which both scholars address how children's literature deals more with adult constructions of childhood than it does with real children.

are capable of, and to consider the cultural expectations that are placed on children in terms of how they ought to view different spaces and behave in them. Ultimately, what this interpretive work offers is not insight into the position of actual children but rather a better understanding of the pressure that bears down on real children in their everyday lives.

In light of this understanding of what the study of children's literature has to offer, the goal of my dissertation is to investigate how representations of place and space in children's literature reflect the cultural anxieties and expectations that surrounded Victorian middle-class girls. To do so, my project intersects with multiple growing fields of critical inquiry: Victorian studies' interest in both girlhood and spatiality in Victorian culture, the interdisciplinary area of literary geography, and the theories of children's and feminist geographies. I turn now to a discussion of these fields in order to contextualize my work and establish the contributions it seeks to make to them.

Victorian Girlhood and Spaces

In the opening pages of her novel *A Houseful of Girls* (1889), Sarah Tytler reflects on "the thoughtlessness, fearlessness, and impracticability of girlhood," asserting that "girlhood, like many another natural condition, dies hard; and its sweet, bright illusions, its wisdom and its folly, survive tolerably severe pinches of adversity" (2). Tytler's characterization of Victorian girlhood here romanticizes it as a rosy, youthful stage in the female's psychological as well as physical development. However, as Terri Doughty points out, in the reality of Victorian society, particularly among writers who

published work for girl readers, the notion of the “‘girl’ [was] a contested signifier, creating a problem not only of definition, but, as many writers of the period would suggest, of identity” (7). Many scholars have noted, as Doughty does, that the use of the term *girl* in Victorian culture was complicated by the fact that it referred to females in a wide range in age, from toddlers to young women in their twenties who had not yet entered into matrimony and were still considered to be sheltered by—or otherwise socially and morally obligated to—their families.⁴ In this way, the position of Victorian girlhood embodied both the increasing sense of individual subjectivity that accompanies maturity and the emotional and psychological dependence upon one’s family that Victorian culture projected upon unmarried girls, which rendered girlhood a complex and even a somewhat contradictory situation, particularly once a “girl” had, in fact, become a grown woman. Though Victorian society seldom openly addressed the contradictions lurking within the construct of girlhood, it was not comfortable with them. Doughty asserts that “girlhood [was considered] a dangerous period...if a girl [was] not safely occupied or contained in either the parental or marital home, she represent[ed] a frightening potential for social disorder” (8). It is understandable, then,

⁴ Carol Dyhouse’s *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Early Edwardian England* (1981), Lynne Vallone’s *Disciplines of Virtue* (1995), and Sarah Bilston’s *The Awkward Age in Women’s Popular Fiction, 1850-1900* (2004) all acknowledge this in various ways. Dyhouse asserts that “For girls...maturity is likely to be defined in terms of accepting economic *dependence* on a husband’s pay-packet and the equation of her personal goals in life with maternity,” suggesting that Victorian’s viewed girls’ entrance into adulthood as dependent upon matrimony rather than related to a specific threshold of psychological, emotional, and physical development (117). In her discussion of Lewis Carroll’s “A Game of Fives” (1869), Vallone asserts that the Victorian girl is “suspended in time,” even as she ages, as long as she remains unmarried (2), while Bilston attributes the ambiguity surrounding girlhood as a developmental stage to the fact that the Victorian period constitutes “an era before theories of adolescence gave maturation a recognizable trajectory and a descriptive vocabulary” (3).

that the literature produced for girls might take a strong interest in defining and directing girlhood itself for its girl readers.

Much scholarly attention has been given to the study of Victorian girls and the literature written for and about them. Judith Rowbotham's seminal analysis of the guidance that Victorian literature offers middle-class girls examines how "girls' stories aimed to explain and justify the feminine position in society, both in gender and class terms as well as...convince [girls] of the need to conform to conventional expectations of [their] sphere" (8).⁵ Rowbotham's study considers how literature written for girls differs from and reacts to the Victorian boys' fiction that middle-class girls so often read by "deal[ing] with all aspects of adult life, in an attempt to provide models and standards for later behaviour...and to provide warnings against temptation in times of stress" (10). In this way, Rowbotham highlights the gender-specific didacticism in which girls' literature of the period engages and explores the cultural anxieties surrounding women that shaped the messages these texts offered their girl readers. Kimberley Reynolds further develops the investigation of the stakes of Victorian girls' literature by tracing how children's literature came to be separated by gender as a distinct body of fiction for girls was published and marketed in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶ Reynolds uses this phenomenon to "consider why the sub-genre, girls' fiction, developed, what it was intended to do, and in what ways it may both have catered for and failed to satisfy the demands of its readership" (xix). Like Rowbotham's work, Reynolds's discussion of

⁵ See Judith Rowbotham, *Good Girls Make Good Wives: Guidance for Girls in Victorian Fiction* (1989).

⁶ See Kimberley Reynolds, *Girls Only?: Gender and Popular Children's Fiction in Britain, 1880-1910* (1990).

how “literature specifically directed at the coming generation of women [sought] to contain and minimize change” underscores the role that girls’ literature played in iterating and shoring up conservative Victorian values regarding the feminine ideal (xix).

If the work of scholars such as Rowbotham and Reynolds has been useful in highlighting girls’ literature’s relationship with gender ideologies, Sally Mitchell’s study of the emergence of a distinctive girl culture near the end of the nineteenth century has been important for the ways in which it complicates the purposes and influences that girls’ literature had during this time.⁷ Mitchell’s argument that late-Victorian fiction contributed to the development of the New Girl culture focuses primarily on the girl consumer’s reception of fiction as the impetus for the New Girl rather than the fiction itself. However, in the process, Mitchell also explores how girls’ fiction “described a new life of schools, sports, [and] independence” that was integral in “nurturing girls’ inner selves” (4, 3), attending to the ways in which fiction for girls accounts for and fosters the girl’s sense of subjectivity. Bilston’s work also considers how Victorian literature’s portrayal of the growing girl acknowledges her sense of autonomy. Bilston’s study of the representation of female adolescence in Victorian literature argues that novels that portray young girls “map the period between childhood and womanhood as a phase of psychological change—a stage involving increased introspection, experimentation, and self-reappraisal” (6) and “represent *girls* yearning for self-actualization and self-determination” despite their authors’ support of traditional Victorian values (7). Bilston’s concern for how Victorian literature engages the notion of

⁷ See Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls’ Culture in England, 1880-1915* (1995).

girls' heightened sense of subjectivity while also maintaining conservative gender ideologies, like Mitchell's concern for the subversive elements of girls' fiction, creates a precedent for my study's interest in thinking about Victorian girls' literature's concern for both prescribing cultural norms for girls and acknowledging their agency as individuals.

What has not yet been explored in the studies of girls' literature, however, is how the Victorians' cultural investment in place is relevant to studies of girlhood. Critical interest in Victorian cultural productions of space has grown a great deal in recent years; as Simon Gunn points out, "One of the most recent developments in Victorian studies has been the 'spatial turn' . . . scholars have begun to think seriously about the uses of space in Victorian Britain and the ways that this made certain identities and means of behaviour possible" ("Public Spaces in the Victorian City" 149). This "spatial turn" has stemmed from the work of scholars within the discipline of geography as well as architecture, sociology, and history, and it is concerned with the significance of space and place in Victorian culture, from imperialistic mappings across the globe to the local space of a particular urban street. Helena Michie and Ronald R. Thomas's edited collection covers this range as it investigates shifts in the discipline of geography and the landscape of industrialized England as well as "the privatization of domestic space [and] the gendering and regendering of rooms, buildings, and the activities imagined to take place inside them" (11).

While Michie and Thomas speak of a general "place-centeredness" currently garnering attention across the disciplines, of particular interest in many studies of

Victorian productions of space is the “imaginary geography of private and public,” in which the domestic sphere was idealized as a sanctuary and the public sphere was valued as the bustling commercial work- and marketplace (Bryden and Floyd 2). Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd’s collection of essays on the domestic interior, for example, explores how the “home was imagined, in nineteenth-century domestic discourse, to provide a powerfully influential space for the development of character and identity” (2).⁸

Conversely, Gunn’s study of the culture surrounding the use of public space in the nineteenth century argues that “the public presentation of the Victorian middle class was, to an important degree, symbolic, designed both to conceal the inner persona and to project an idealized, moral self to others” (77).⁹ The distinctions between public and private that were so important to the Victorian cultural consciousness were also crucial to cultural constructions of middle-class girls’ identities, duties, responsibilities, and desires, as literature and other discourses on girlhood emphasized to girl readers that they would best fulfill their obligation to their family and society—and best fulfill their own desires—through rooting themselves in the domestic sphere as daughter or mother/wife. As this study shows, the values attached to the public/private dichotomy in Victorian culture pervade the fictional representations of place that girls encountered in the books written for them.

⁸ See Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd, *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior* (1999).

⁹ See Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (2008), in which Gunn analyzes the spatial organization of the industrial cities of Leeds, Birmingham, and Manchester and the ways in which members of the middle-class used these spaces.

Literary Geography

In investigating how Victorian literature processes cultural tensions between girls' personal desires and their social and familial obligations through representations of physical spaces and places, this project participates in a growing field of interdisciplinary studies often identified as *literary geography*. In the past, this term has referred to a variety of texts and modes of analysis that emphasize multiple kinds of intersections between literature and geography, from the simple to the complex. In one of the earliest and simplest specimens of a literary geography, *Types of Scenery and Their Influence on Literature* (1898), Sir Archibald Geikie explores how the varied topography of the United Kingdom delighted and inspired various British writers to incorporate charming or stirring descriptions of the landscape in their work. In the turn-of-the-century collection of essays entitled *Literary Geography* (1904), Scottish writer William Sharp coins the term to describe "papers on the distinctive features of the actual or delineated country of certain famous writers" ("Foreword"). Sharp's playful, meandering essays reflect on the geographical origins of literary figures such as Charles Dickens and Sir Walter Scott and how these origins illuminate writers' portrayals of natural landscapes in their works. As a form of literary geography, Geikie's and Sharp's work does not extend far beyond speculation on the locations that best capture the spirit of a particular writer's work and appreciation of the creative and distinctive ways that writers paint literary portraits of the English countryside. Both men's writing constitutes a simple, meditative celebration of the literature and landscape of England.

Recently, a more complex body of contemporary interdisciplinary scholarship has been developed by geographers and literary scholars alike. Many geographers have explored how creative writing that attends to geographical elements can create new ways for theorizing geography. Some geographers are interested in how literature can function as new source material that complements the study of a particular regional topography because it accurately and insightfully portrays the landscape. Jim Wayne Miller's work does this when it focuses on "evocative descriptions of geographical places by novelist and poets" which "enable the essences of sense of place to be felt strongly by the reader" (xi).¹⁰ Other geographers share this interest in writers' "word paintings" but complicate it by considering how literature represents humans' subjective interactions with physical landscapes. The contributors to Douglas C. D. Pocock's *Humanistic Geography and Literature* (1981) consider how writers portray physical landscapes metaphorically in literature for the purpose of working out various philosophical and social issues. These particular studies question whether the representations of place found in literature are accurate and investigate the motives that writers have in characterizing landscapes in certain ways.¹¹

¹⁰ See Jim Wayne Miller, "Anytime the Ground Is Uneven: The Outlook for Regional Studies—And What to Look Out For" in William E. Marry and Paul Simpson-Housley, *Geography and Literature: A Meeting of the Disciplines* (1989).

¹¹ See in particular the contributions of Denis Cosgrove and John E. Thornes and of Ian G. Cook in *Humanistic Geography and Literature: Essays on the Experience of Place* (1981), edited by Douglas C.D. Pocock. In "Of Truth of Clouds: John Ruskin and the Moral Order in Landscape," Cosgrove and Thornes analyze the meteorological accuracy of Ruskin's discussion of clouds in his writings on art and how Ruskin's concern with contemporary scientific debates informs his representation of nature. In "Consciousness in the Novel: Fact or Fiction in the Works of D.H. Lawrence," Cook argues that D.H. Lawrence uses his seemingly-accurate portrayals of English coalfields to advance his own socio-political views.

A growing field of literary study delves even deeper into the social and cultural dynamics at work in literary representations of place and space. In his literary geography, which focuses on nineteenth-century fiction set in the urban spaces of London, Simon Joyce notes the rise of this field: “literary studies has begun to speak of a critical engagement with work that has more traditionally been undertaken in departments of geography,” which has led to studies of how “representations of physical space are seen as actively involved in shaping textual meaning” (1).¹² In these literary geographies, critics attend to fictional representations of place and space as a useful means of unpacking the cultural anxieties and investments that literature addresses through examining how literature capitalizes on the significance that societies and cultures have attached to particular places. Joyce offers one such study as he explores how various nineteenth-century literary genres, such as the detective novel, and literary movements, such as Naturalism, are invested in particular representations of urban space; he argues, for example, that Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories locate their crimes primarily in London’s West End and wealthy suburbs in order to remove their entertaining plots of detection from the very real—and often unsolved—crimes that took place regularly in the impoverished East End. Work such as Joyce’s as well as that of Franco Moretti, upon whom Joyce builds, suggests that the portrayal of place in literature can be strategically employed to develop a work’s overarching themes.¹³

¹² See Simon Joyce, *Capital Offenses: Geographies of Class and Crime in Victorian London* (2003). The introduction of Joyce’s study is entitled “A Literary Geography.”

¹³ Moretti’s *Atlas of the European Novel* (1998) literally maps the events that take place in works of literature in order to probe for underlying themes in the texts. For example, his chapter on Jane Austen’s

Elizabeth Gargano's recent work in particular has helped to pave the way for my study of how girls' literature loads certain places with particular cultural meaning.¹⁴ Taking a "site-based approach," Gargano's research analyzes representations of school in nineteenth-century children's literature in order to argue that "fictive images of the schoolroom staked out ideological positions within the education debates, conjuring up instructional sites that were by turns utopian or coercive, inspiring or deadening" (7, 6). In considering how imaginary school spaces, such as classrooms and playgrounds, figured in real-life debates regarding the institutionalization of education, Gargano sets a precedent for considering how Victorian children's literature uses place and space in order to work out ideological issues. My dissertation follows in the footsteps of Gargano and other scholars who construct literary geographies by exploring how Victorian literature processes cultural tensions between girls' personal desires and their social and familial obligations through representations of the physical spaces and places that girls encountered on a regular basis. While I supplement my literary analysis with discussion of other discourses on Victorian girlhood, including conduct manuals, household guides, educational treatises, and memoirs, which offer additional insight into middle-class girls' experiences in various places, I am primarily concerned here with how the significance of fictional representations of place communicated conventional values regarding femininity to readers.

novels includes a map on which the opening and closing locations of each novel are plotted in order to analyze more deeply the limited physical delineations of the early-nineteenth-century marriage market.¹⁴ See Elizabeth Gargano, *Reading Victorian Schoolrooms: Childhood and Education in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2008).

Theories of Cultural Geography

As my project strives to further develop the interdisciplinarity of the literary geography, the theoretical lens of children's geographies, a subfield of cultural geography, becomes central to my discussion of representations of place in Victorian literature for girls.¹⁵ Children's geographies is a field of childhood studies in the social sciences that deals with the significance of concepts of place and space for children, the relationships that children have with different places at different times, and the effects that a child's behavior has on the meanings attached to a particular place. Children's geographies speaks to the issues of adults' literary constructions of children's space through its understandings of the nature of space and of the position of the child as a part of the culture in which she lives. Indeed, although geography as a social science works with the real rather than the fictional—actual people, actual places—children's geographies focuses primarily on social or cultural products that tend to be identified more with that which is artificial than that which is real. The way in which space is imagined by both adults and children, as well as the tensions between adult/child imaginings, is crucial. Like other branches of humanistic geography,¹⁶ the study of children's geographies employs a line of reasoning in which “the *representation* of a geographic being that societies and individuals craft for themselves is more important

¹⁵ It is difficult to pinpoint a definitive description of the field of cultural geography. In *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (2005), David Atkinson et al. assert that the “diversity of cultural geography defies easy definition” (vii), while, in *The Handbook of Cultural Geography* (2005), Kay Anderson et al. identify it merely as “a style of thought” (xiii). For the purposes of this study, cultural geography can be understood as the study of the interaction between human culture and landscapes, both built and natural, and the relationship between cultural norms and place.

¹⁶ Children's geographies fits within the category of humanistic geography as it is defined by Derek Gregory in the *Dictionary of Human Geography* (1988): “an approach in human geography distinguished by the central and active role it gives to human awareness and human agency, human consciousness and creativity” (361).

than the real thing itself; more exactly, this real object only exists through its representation” (Bonnemaison 41). In this way, children’s geographies can shed light on the cultural work of mapping space through imaginative representation in which children’s literature engages.

The notion that the meanings attached to various places and spaces can be determined by something as socially or culturally bound as literary representations is grounded in the late twentieth-century work of Marxist geographers such as Doreen Massey and Henri Lefebvre, who claim that space is a product of the people living in it as they are pressured by social forces to use and manage it in different ways. Rather than “an objective physical surface with specific fixed characteristics,” space is “always in a process of becoming [...] always being made” because its significance is constructed by those living in it and therefore subject to social and cultural change (Valentine, *Public Space* 8, Massey 283). Social and cultural pressures, of course, manifest themselves as the “active practices, material and embedded [that are] carried out” by individuals in the course of their everyday lives (Massey 283). This theoretical framework, then, establishes a particular definition of “to map”: mapping a space is not a matter of organizing and prescribing *a priori* spatial boundaries but is instead accomplished through the behaviors and practices in which one engages while in a particular place; attitudes and activities inscribe a place with a given meaning or identity.

It must be recognized, however, that behaviors and attitudes do not map space only when they are performed or put into practice in actual places; geographies are also constructed discursively when people talk about what they do in different places or the

behavior that is called for there. The significance of the mapping of space as a discursive process has been established in geographical studies that acquire data through interviews with individuals. Gill Valentine's *Public Space and the Culture of Childhood* (2004) analyzes parents' and other adults' as well as children's individual discussions of public space as a safe or dangerous place for children. This study focuses on listening to what twenty-first-century parents say about how and why they place limits on their children's movement about streets and parks rather than trying to observe how parents behave with their children in or about public spaces because, in this case, talk is the most common activity by which adults map this space with regard to children. As Valentine points out when she considers the degree to which mapping space becomes, for adults, a matter of meeting the standards of "good" parenting, this kind of geographical discourse reflects the social and cultural pressures that inform the way people map space, whether or not they are aware of them. This study also shows that, because the mapping of space can be a discursive as well as a performative activity, texts such as children's stories are capable of establishing geographies in the same way that parents' discussions or social studies schoolbooks are.

Within the context of children's geographies, this understanding of the production of space helps to explain not only how socially relative identities such as gender and class can affect the meaning that a particular place holds for particular children, but also how children themselves may be able to shape the identity of space. Indeed, children's geographies figures the child as a social actor who is capable of participating in the construction of the societies in which they live. This paradigm of the

child, a feature of what Sarah Holloway and Valentine call “the new social studies of childhood,” has been posited by sociologists such as Alan Prout and Allison James, who claim that “children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live” (8). This model asserts the agency of children but also considers “the ways in which their lives are shaped by forces beyond the control of individual children” (Holloway and Valentine 6). Having this kind of limited social agency means that children are also able to shape the identities of the spaces in which they live through the activities in which they engage and the decisions they make. Late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century studies offer examples of how contemporary children accomplish this: Tracey Skelton’s study on working-class Welsh girls’ appropriation of the street for their own social activities takes into consideration both how the girls map the public street as a private space for chatting, and how they assert this mapping in their society by aggressively resisting adults’ efforts to send them home. Skelton’s study, like many others, also bases its claims about children’s ability to determine particular meanings for spaces and place on children’s own explanations of their practices, which places additional emphasis on the social agency of children by acknowledging their voice as members of a community and their empowerment as individuals who are able to represent themselves. The agency of the child, however, has its own special limits within any socio-cultural context: as Prout and James assert, “there must be a theoretical space for both the construction of childhood as an institution and the activity of children within and upon the constraints and possibilities that the institutional level creates” (27).

Because this study is interested in the ways that not only age but also gender circumscribes the Victorian girl's experience of place as it is portrayed in literature, theories of feminist geography, also a subfield of cultural geography, are pertinent here as well. The position of the girl in the nineteenth century was surrounded by a myriad of social expectations, fears, and desires that set girlhood apart from both childhood and boyhood, and that sought to bind girlhood with prescriptions for girlish virtue, etiquette, and industriousness. The constraints placed on the Victorian girl's behavior by virtue of her girlhood manifested themselves in multiple forms—what she read and learned in school, what constituted her obligations to her family and society, and which sort of company she could keep. However, within the context of children's geographies, one of the most significant restrictions placed on children rose out of the way in which space was gendered in the Victorian period, both through the identification of places as masculine or feminine and through the prescription of what constitutes appropriate male or female behavior in a given space. That space can acquire or be assigned a gendered identity, and that this is the product of social and cultural dynamics rather than the result of a "natural" process, has been established through the work of feminist geography. Feminist geographers such as Linda McDowell argue not only that men and women have different experiences with place, but further that "these differences themselves are part of the social constitution of gender as well as that of place" (12). Feminist geography brings to light how tightly concepts of gender are bound to understandings of place, how effectively one's behavior in a particular space determines one's gender identity.

In addition to children's and feminist geographies, other branches of cultural and human geography are useful throughout this study's investigation of Victorian England's cultural and literary investment in organizing place and space for middle-class girls. The theories of moral geographies, in particular, have an overarching relevance to my analysis due to their interest in unpacking the values that cultures and societies attach to particular places and how they define places as proper or improper for certain people. Tim Cresswell explains that moral geographies interrogate "the taken-for-granted relationship between the geographical ordering of the world and ideas about what is good, right and true. They reveal [...] the role of geographical elements of human experience, such as place or mobility, in a higher-level construction of the moral" ("Moral Geographies" 132). In theorizing how the significance of place and space is shaped by hegemony, moral geographies can help to illuminate how representations of place can be codified in Victorian literature to reiterate traditional gender ideologies to girl readers.

Chapter Overviews

In the chapters that follow, I explore how Victorian literature uses representations of the physical spaces and places where girls lived, worked, learned, and played in order to prescribe appropriate behaviors for the Victorian middle-class girl. Victorian girls were characterized as subjects in development who needed to learn how to negotiate social responsibilities, pressures, and anxieties, and fiction for girls was meant to facilitate this learning experience. I argue here that it did so by organizing for

the girl reader both the places in which she lived and her ability to shape the world around her, from the private sphere to the public, as an agent of social change. These chapters focus on four locales that were pertinent to the middle-class girl: the natural world of the garden and countryside, the home, the school, and public spaces. In addition to literature, multiple discourses on girlhood, from conduct manuals and guide books to educational treatises and popular serials, reflect on the importance of these places to girls' healthy development; these texts underscore that the successful girl will learn to navigate the spaces in which she lives prudently, never forgetting that, through her self-possession and self-sacrifice, she not only avoids disgrace but also improves the spaces that she occupies by her very presence. These notions of the Victorian girl's place and power both assert and circumscribe her agency as a member of society.

The first chapter focuses on representations of the natural world as a place of physical freedom and play that is characterized as both wholesome and dangerous for girls in Victorian children's stories. The Romantic—particularly Wordsworthian—view of the child as “charged with the surging energies of natural processes” forged a special relationship between the outdoors and children that Victorians appreciated as well (Plotz 11). I examine here two divisions of the natural world, the countryside and the garden, in order to investigate how the girls were called to contain their own “surging energies” and desires. Nature guides and gardening manuals for children emphasize the outdoors as a site of godliness, where the appreciation of God's handiwork yields edification and the hard work of cultivation yields good fruits. However, stories and illustrations of the countryside and garden complicate these spaces by suggesting that they provide unique

opportunities for girls to negotiate propriety and personal desires as they experience the tension between untamed nature and civilized society that charged the garden and beyond. I find that images of the natural world into which girls occasionally venture, such as those found in Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* and Lucy Lane Clifford's "The New Mother," identify the countryside as a chaotic and threatening wilderness that indicates children's physical and moral lost-ness. On the other hand, the garden is linked both spatially and ideologically to the domestic sphere and is thus figured alternately as a free space that girls can claim as theirs for creative and imaginative play, and as an extension of the home that is controlled by the conventions of civilized society. I explore how the garden-based stories of Kate Greenaway and Juliana Horatia Ewing seek to establish moral and social precedents for girls' movements outdoors while celebrating their agency in playing with the boundaries of this space. In linking the garden to the adjacent, less civilized spaces of the countryside, I unpack the natural world's significance as a metaphor for the growing girl's own cultivation, which should lead her to her place in the domestic sphere but was also fraught with the various dangers that were perceived to attend girlhood.

The second chapter explores the characteristics of virtue and industry attributed to the Victorian girl as the "angel in the house" -in-training and how these expectations surrounding girls' training in the home shaped the boundaries placed on girls' behavior there. Domestic fiction portrays girls as having a degree of agency in negotiating cultural "rules" and expectations regarding their service to their families at home, illustrating how girls could determine in part the meaning of the home as a place of privacy and

peace even as fiction called them to follow codes of conduct that made home less private and peaceful for them. While the domestic sphere was conventionally glorified in Victorian culture, it is often complicated and even problematized in domestic fiction for girls as a site of familial duty and self-sacrifice that demands performance and productivity from girls where it typically offers privacy and leisure to its inhabitants. I examine various spaces within the middle-class home that were relevant to girls' daily lives, including the nursery, the bedroom, and the drawing room, in order to explore how domestic fiction called girls to practice various forms of self-control in each space for the sake of their families. In analyzing specimens of domestic fiction, from classics such as Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* to less-known works such as Evelyn Everett-Green's *Dorothy's Vocation*, I suggest that domestic fiction for girls of all ages sought to organize domestic space for its readers according to dominant Victorian gender ideologies. At the same time this fiction also accounted for how the nuanced physical spaces of the home provided girls with opportunities to perform their own variations on the feminine ideal as they "fill[ed] in the little spaces in home life as only a dear daughter can" (Peters, *Girl's Own Indoor Book* 19).

While the first two chapters focus on spaces rooted in or tangential to the domestic, my third chapter turns to girls' ventures outside of the home and into society by surveying literature's portrayal of girls at school. I examine how school is constructed in girls' school stories as the place where girls decide who they want to be and also learn who they are expected to be. In a period when education outside of the home for girls was beginning to grow in popularity, school life was thought by many to prepare girls

for adult life as wives, mothers, mainstays of community service, and even workers, by developing their abilities to reason, reflect, and analyze complicated situations on their own. School stories emphasize growing girls' need to independently negotiate the various pressures and expectations that are placed upon them as they learn how to become women so that they can best meet the needs of their families and society as adults. Discussing a range of early- to late-Victorian school stories by such authors as Anna Sewell and L.T. Meade, I examine how school stories privilege unsupervised and unregulated spaces, such as bedrooms, school grounds, hallways, and closets, over the regimented classroom as vital spots that give schoolgirls the freedom and the privacy they need to make important decisions and to help one another. Through giving weight to the friendships and choices schoolgirls make when they have space to themselves, school stories emphasize girls' ability to define and perform friendship, scholarship, religious piety, and rebellion for themselves, even as these texts endorse broader Victorian social and cultural conventions and norms.

The fourth chapter closes my study with an analysis of fictional girls' adventures in public spaces and the limits that girls' literature places on public space as an appropriate place for the unaccompanied girl. While Victorian society was deeply invested in keeping children in general and girls in particular safe within the home, shifts in girls' education and access to forms of paid employment increasingly legitimized their presence alone in public space as they traveled to and from school or took jobs as nurses, secretaries, and teachers. Through discussions of novelists from Mary Louisa Molesworth, whose work espouses more conventional domestic ideologies, to L.T.

Meade and Sarah Tytler, who embrace, to a degree, the New Girl's independence, I explore how girls' fiction through the end of the nineteenth century increasingly adopts a new moral geography regarding girls in public space while still privileging the girl's attachment to the domestic sphere and primary responsibility to her family. Dividing the chapter into the two primary activities that placed unaccompanied middle-class girls in public space, travel and work, I examine the portrayal of two figures in girls' fiction: the runaway girl and the working girl. Though one girl is cast as transgressive and the other as productive, I find that both figures' use of public space underscore their rightful place in the domestic sphere. While the fictional runaway girl's ability to navigate public spaces in the form of streets and various transit systems demonstrates her independence in public spaces, her mobility is excused only when she learns from it important lessons regarding familial and domestic authority. Similarly, novels that portray girls accruing confidence and competence in public through their careers ultimately link this work to girls' domestic duties and identify employment as a provisional measure that eventually leads to girls' reinstatement within the home, typically through marriage. In this way, the moral geography that this literature constructs, which seems to legitimize public space as an appropriate spatial context for middle-class girls, overlaps significantly with conservative Victorian domestic ideologies.

Ultimately, this dissertation seeks to offer insight into how children's literature of the nineteenth century contributed to the discursive production of a geography for the middle-class girl. My project argues that texts' conceptualization of the physical spaces in which girls lived play an important role in Victorian fiction's efforts to narrate,

mediate, and organize girls' daily lives. Through focusing on how Victorian children's literature interprets the relevance of place in girls' lives and identity formation, my project strives to fill a gap in children's studies by broadening our understanding of how the nature of childhood is informed by the places in which it occurs.

CHAPTER II

“ONE ALWAYS COMES TO A WOOD”: CULTIVATING IDEAL GIRLS IN THE
COUNTRYSIDE AND GARDEN

When seven-year-old Ida, the protagonist of Juliana Horatia Ewing’s 1869 *Mrs. Overtheway’s Remembrances*, discovers a gap in her garden hedge that leads to the forest beyond, she reads in the space outside the garden a potential for untold adventures: “‘It is like going into the world to seek one’s fortune,’ she thought; ‘thus Gerda went to look for little Kay, and so Joringel sought for the enchanted flower. One always comes to a wood’” (16). For Ida, as for many girl characters in Victorian children’s literature before the era of Mary Lennox and *The Secret Garden*, the garden provides a space for socially sanctioned work and play as well as a chance to cross the border to a wider—and wilder—outdoors.¹⁷ In the fairy tales that come to Ida’s mind, Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Snow Queen* (1845) and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s “Jorinde and Joringel” (1812), the forest is the place where quests prove successful and happy endings are made. For the shy and lonely Ida, who longs to pick wildflowers for her elderly neighbor but “had never thought of straying beyond [the garden’s] limits,” the “lovely” forest awakens in her “a strong new feeling” and provides Ida with the

¹⁷ Though it did not vary wildly from earlier Romantic and Victorian characterizations of the child’s special relationship with the natural world, *The Secret Garden*, Frances Hodgson Burnett’s 1911 novel, created a new point of reference for linking children to the garden in British and American children’s literature. Sidney Dobrin and Kenneth Kidd cogently refer to the novel as the “urtext” of what they call “the secret garden tradition in children’s literature,” a narrative model in which garden functions both as the child’s “ostensibly natural habitat” and “a literalization or emplotment of the child’s organic innocence” (6).

opportunity to boldly fulfill her own wish (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway's* 15). However, Ida's transgression of the garden's boundaries (and the dousing she suffers in the river that lies between her and the wildflowers) leads to disgrace in the form of a wet and tattered frock, a chiding from her nurse, and a long illness.

Ida's adventure in Ewing's novel highlights how the outdoors can function in Victorian children's literature as an important space beyond the confines of the home that makes available to girls a number of unique possibilities for behaviors and experiences. The outdoors was largely considered by Victorians a healthy and proper place for children in general and girls in particular to explore and even claim as their own, in part as a result of the association made throughout Romantic and Victorian literature between the state of childhood as pure and innocent and the natural world.¹⁸ Conduct books for girls throughout the Victorian period emphasize the benefits of exposure to the outdoors in the formation of girls' character, constructing the natural world as a place that is crucial to girls' development into physically healthy, well-rounded, high-minded individuals.¹⁹ Exploring the outdoors and its specimens of

¹⁸ For further discussion of the concept of the "child of nature" and the link between children and the natural world in Romantic and Victorian discourse, see Judith Plotz, *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (2001), pp.1-41 and U.C. Knoepfelmacher, *Nature and the Victorian Imagination* (1977), pp. 391-425.

¹⁹ Although this study focuses primarily on the lives and literature of the middle-class English girl, it is significant to note that conduct manuals and guidebooks for girls throughout the entirety of the Victorian period express this view on the benefits of the outdoors with increasing regard for girls along the entire social class continuum. The author of *The English Gentlewoman, or, Hints to Young Ladies on Their Entrance into Society* (1845), for example, writes specifically for the benefit of young members of the upper and middle classes when she states, "I confess I pity the young creature who has not been permitted, or induced, to employ her thoughts upon the works of nature: and it seems to be one of the best preventives against frivolity, and one of the surest incitements to humility, to occupy the leisure hours which might else be devoted to trifling, or discontent, in the gentle pursuits of natural science" (19). Over forty years later, Charles Peters's *The Girl's Own Outdoor Book* (1889) offers a more equal-opportunity—although still clearly class-conscious—view regarding girls' need to benefit from exposure to the natural world: "In this book we provide suggestions for outdoor pleasure and occupation for our mothers and

wildlife would improve girls by supplying them with a morally superior hobby, one that could foster a deeper appreciation of God's omnipotence through admiring his handiwork. In her *Papers for Thoughtful Girls* (1865), Sarah Tytler asserts this sentiment by contrasting the treasures of the natural world to more foolish or petty interests with which girls may concern themselves; instead of celebrating what she calls "primitive nature"—which includes "flower-gardens [and] kitchen-gardens" as well as "fields, woods, moors, [and] mountains"—Tytler complains that girls too often spend their time outdoors "off in a fit of the gapes" or "in fretful horror lest the sprays from the bushes tear [their] cumbrous crinoline[s]" (157, 158). For Tytler—and for many who advised girls on their daily practices—a girl's degree of comfort with and knowledge of the natural world bears directly upon the quality of her character. Charles Peters, writing nearer the close of the century, asserts in *The Girl's Own Outdoor Book* (1889) that "the habit of remaining too much indoors is a common fault among English women and girls" (5).²⁰ In all of these discourses, the outdoors is characterized as the source of a physical hardiness that comes from exposure to exercise and the elements and a spiritual elevation thought to result from proximity to God's creation, which together are understood to answer for the wellbeing of the Victorian girl.

Yet these discussions are laced with a word of warning as well. W. K. Tweedie extols play in the outdoors as vital to girls' development of a robust temperament in his

sisters, and also for our too reclusive domestics. How is it that our servants so seldom get out of doors, except on their particular 'day out'? How can they be healthy when shut up within four walls all and every day?" (5).

²⁰ Peters's book is a compilation of papers published in volumes of the *Girl's Own Annual* that were out of print at the time, assembled and published "to form one conveniently handy outdoor book for the furtherance of girl interests" (6).

Daily Duty: A Book for Girls (1855), a conduct manual for girls of an age that would be identified today as “tween.” Tweedie commends “play in the open air” as “the best of all,” and he admonishes readers that they should never “be too much afraid of a little sunshine or rain, or even of a gentle snow [because] [y]ou are to live in a rough world, and it will not do for you to become tender” (13).²¹ But he is also quick to remind his readers to “be gentle, modest, and fair, even when in sport,” implying that the outdoor environment can make it difficult for a girl to maintain her sense of feminine propriety as she romps in the garden or tramps through the forest (Tweedie 14). More than forty years later, as the era of the New Woman began to shift the boundaries of Victorian gender roles, Mary Whitley expresses a strikingly similar concern when she writes in her *Every Girl’s Book of Sport, Occupation, and Pastime* (1897) that “although I am an eager advocate for every kind of physical exercise for girls, I would have them carefully guard and cultivate the gentleness and ‘sweet reasonableness’ [of the] womanly character” (1). Whitley’s language here is particularly telling; her words imply that the most vital elements of the Victorian girl’s character are not innately dominant within her but rather the products of acculturation, and that girls’ immersion in nature threatens the development of these qualities. Both Tweedie and Whitley indicate that there is a careful balance that must be struck between the benefits of losing oneself—both literally and figuratively—in the freedom of the natural world, and the obligation of maintaining one’s sense of feminine virtue and propriety in encounters with nature. Like Tweedie

²¹ As an antidote to the “peevisish and miserable” attitude that Tweedie claims girls often develop during puberty, he also commands that his readers “[g]o out into the fields and woods. Strike out new paths. Learn the names and characters of all the forest trees. Make collections of plants and flowers”; the suggestion implies that nature itself can have a normalizing influence that combats the difficulties that accompany puberty (98).

and Whitley, stories and illustrated images of girls' encounters with the natural world in children's literature suggest that it is necessary in these spaces for girls to navigate tensions between the civilized and the uncivilized, personal desires and social responsibilities, as an important element of their identity construction as young women.

This chapter analyzes how Victorian literature figures the natural spaces of the countryside and garden as the site of girls' encounters with their own human nature—their natural instincts, urges, imperfections—in order to encourage girls to weed out inappropriate attitudes and behaviors. Taking my cue from Ida's adventures in *Mrs. Overthway's Remembrances*, I begin with a discussion of the countryside as a natural space that frames the garden and is portrayed in Victorian cautionary tales as a quasi-allegorical wilderness that represents for girl readers the dangers of giving in completely to one's transgressive desires. However, I turn the brunt of my focus to the garden as the Victorian middle-class girl's primary form of contact with the natural world, a natural landscape that functions as a threshold between the natural and the civilized because it is, to use Marah Gubar's words, "neither wholly organic nor wholly constructed" (56). As a part of nature situated between the relative wilderness of less cultivated spaces and the order of the domestic sphere, the garden is figured in Victorian literature alternately as a site of girls' acculturation into feminized domesticity and as a place for the autonomous fulfillment of personal desires. In analyzing each of these literary figurations of the garden and the ways in which they model the realization and sublimation of girls' desires, I explore how the understanding of the child in the Victorian discourse that James Kincaid refers to as "the child botanical," in which the

trope of plant cultivation is applied to child rearing, here becomes both literalized and gendered as the “girl botanical” cultivates and is cultivated in the garden.²² Scholars such as Zygmunt Bauman, W.J.T. Mitchell, and Martin Jay have explored how the landscape of the garden can be theorized as a space in which constant surveillance and the acts of weeding, pruning, and cutting required to make the garden beautiful constitute an aggressive form of discipline perpetrated against the natural landscape, “projected there by the gazing eye” that demands perfection of the space (Mitchell 29).²³ I trace here how this discipline distinguishes the garden from the countryside and how it is imposed upon the “girl botanical” as she works and plays in the fictional garden. If, as Bauman suggests, gardening is the act of “*separating and setting apart useful elements destined to live and thrive, from harmful and morbid ones, which ought to be*

²² See *Child Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (1992), in which James Kincaid traces the comparison of children to plants in Victorian discourse and the appropriation of the term “nursery” as the site of plant cultivation to refer to the domestic site of child-rearing. Kincaid finds within this discourse the “suggestion that the child/plant has a ‘nature,’ an inner being [adults] can only help perfect,” an idea that is implicit in Elizabeth Watts’s statement in *Flowers and the Flower Garden. With Instructions on the Culture of Ornamental Trees, Shrubs, &c., &c.* (1866) that work in the garden can help girls to develop those “qualities” of virtue and grace that lay dormant within them (90). The belief that work in the garden could shape the child has roots in the Rousseauian pedagogical theories of the eighteenth century; texts such as Rousseau’s *Émile* (1762) and Thomas Day’s *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1783-89) emphasize that gardening can be character-building for children as they learn about productivity and ownership.

²³ Bauman, Mitchell, and Jay each explore “the costs of the gardening impulse” (Jay 47) as a facet of cultural consciousness that manifests itself in various social and political contexts. However, it must be noted that each of these scholars applies the concept of the garden to more situations in which outright violence is at work. In *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), Bauman applies this concept to the mind frame of the Nazi regime as he theorizes how this same motivating desire to weed and cleanse informed the extermination of the Jews and other groups of people who were considered “undesirable” in Nazi Germany. In “Imperial Landscape,” Mitchell argues that “the representation of landscape is not only a matter of internal politics and national or class ideology but also an international, global phenomenon, intimately bound up with the discourses of imperialism” (9). Jay, in “No State of Grace: Violence in the Garden,” examines how representations of landscapes and gardening practices have reflected an attitude of violence against the natural throughout Western civilization. Clearly, there are limits to the application of Bauman’s, Mitchell’s, and Jay’s analyses to my discussion due to their relation of gardens and gardening to acts of violence that cannot be compared equally to the subtle forms of discipline girls undergo in fictional Victorian gardens. However, the concept of the “gardening impulse” as a force to which individuals can be subjected as well as plants is still relevant and useful to my study.

exterminated” (emphasis in original 70), I suggest in this chapter that, in Victorian children’s literature, girls in the garden learn to set apart the beautiful and useful and exterminate the harmful, not only in their plants, but in their own dispositions and behaviors, as well. Ultimately, the garden is most meaningful in fiction for girls as a space that channels the girl toward the domestic sphere, where it is believed that she can be most useful, instead of leading her, like Ida, toward the freedom and unchecked growth of the natural world beyond the garden.

The Countryside

In a period when nature writing and the study of natural history were growing ever more popular, the countryside of Victorian England was considered by many to be a rich and hearty landscape of discovery for children, boys and girls alike. Books such as William Houghton’s *Country Walks of a Naturalist with His Children* (1870) and Edward Step’s *By Sea-Shore, Wood, and Moorland: Peeps at Nature* (1891), whose goals were to indoctrinate young readers in the study of natural history, emphasize that these natural spaces can serve as a well-spring of fascination and edification for young people: Houghton asserts that “Country Walks may be full of interest and instruction to all who care to make good use of their eyes” (iii), while Step suggests at the close of his work that all children would be well-served if they developed “an interest in the wonders of Creation and . . . those habits of observation which will be found so valuable . . . in after life” (6). Naturalists such as Houghton and Step valued the countryside of England for the peaceful respite from civilization and the revelation of beauty that they

provided; embedded in books of this sort is what ecocritic Greg Garrard describes as “the idea of nature as a stable, enduring counterpoint to the disruptive energy and change of human societies” (56). This figuration of the countryside as a serene pastoral setting that could purify and rejuvenate visitors made these landscapes a wholesome and pleasurable location for girls to explore. Indeed, the chapter on botany in Peters’s *Girls’ Own Outdoor Book* suggests that girls who do not regularly venture into the countryside are living a poor sort of half-life. The chapter writer laments the state of “[t]own-bred, delicate girls, accustomed to the excitements of fashionable life” who prefer hothouse flowers and manicured garden lawns and declare that “they hat[e] the country, [have] not the slightest appreciation of the beauties of Nature, car[e] little for the flowers in the hedge-row, the trees in the woods, the grass in the fields, the heath on the moors, or the ferns in the lowlands” (Peters 342). Girls such as these, the writer contends, must be exposed to pastoral spaces in order to have a fuller appreciation of uncultivated beauty that nature has to offer and to counter the frivolity, superficiality, and artificiality of their city lives.

Proto-Victorian Emily Shore’s accounts of her use of the countryside around her home in the English countryside suggest that at least a few girls of nineteenth-century England experienced the countryside in much the way that these texts advocate. Shore records in her girlhood diary innumerable hours spent in the countryside around her home, where she explored and pursued her botanical and etymological interests.²⁴ In

²⁴ It is worth noting that Shore, a teenager at the beginning of Victoria’s reign, provides a very early specimen of Victorian girlhood and has been celebrated as a marvel by the critics who read the 1891 publication of her diary, which chronicles her girlhood from 1831 to 1839, as well as by those who discovered it after it was republished in 1991. Shore never experienced the benefits of a formal education

entry after entry, she describes walking through the forest, sometimes accompanied by family members and sometimes alone, completely absorbed in observing all manner of flora and fauna. So aligned with conduct books (which she does not report having read) were Shore's sensibilities regarding the value of immersing oneself in the study of nature and natural history that her conversation with a friend on this subject seems to echo one. Shore describes asking her friend Miss Caroline, a more cosmopolitan individual, "At balls and such places, what do people talk about? If they talk about neither sciences nor natural history, I shall set them down as thoroughly stupid" (75). Disappointed with Miss Caroline's answer in the negative, Shore replies that it is "a very great waste of your time, when you ought to be learning and improving your mind, to go to balls and talk nothing but nonsense!....if amusement is your object, why don't you study natural history?" (76). Shore's dedication to making the countryside her second home was not necessarily unexceptional, but it reveals the role that this space could play in a girl's daily life and development.

Yet this pleasant vision of the pastoral was not the only characterization of the forest and woods that existed in the Victorian imagination. In her memoirs, early nineteenth-century poet Mary Howitt recounts the joy she experienced when walking through the forest of Needwood Chase on her many "rambles" with her father, a land surveyor, and her sister, through which she claims she first became "acquainted with the

or knew much beyond the society of her family and the "close shade" of her parents' home, but her diary reveals a home-life that was extraordinary in its devotion to a voracious pursuit of knowledge. Shore records innumerable hours spent reading literature and studying the natural history of local birds, plants and insects, learning Greek and Latin, and completing projects ranging in interest and ambition: a cardboard replica of a steam-packet, several epic poems and three novels, and illustrated histories of the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans.

spirit of Nature” (qtd. in Sanders 90).²⁵ Howitt describes the forest in rich detail, as well as the joy that she and her sister took in experiencing a beautiful natural world that was “less circumscribed” by the bounds of civilization—but she also acknowledges that the untamed forest could be overwhelming without the guiding presence of her father when she recalls the afternoon that he left her under an oak tree to rest while he continued to work: “There was an undefined feeling half of pleasure, half of pain, in being left alone in so wild a spot” (qtd. in Sanders 90). Howitt’s recollection suggests that being alone in the thick of the forest is a different matter from rambling through the pastoral countryside. The “stout Forest lad” who “seemed amazed” to come across Howitt and her sister under the tree and was able to convince them that the chirping of a grasshopper is the sound of bloodthirsty dogs approaching speaks in part to the gullibility of young girls but suggests that, deep in the forest, one feels as if anything could happen (qtd. in Sanders 90). The image of the forest that Howitt presents here is a complex and not altogether welcoming landscape that is both beautiful and frightening, a space in which Howitt feels that she is fulfilled but also endangered. Howitt’s description reflects a characterization of the natural world that Garrard categorizes simply but astutely as “wilderness,” a cultural construction that “signif[ies] nature in a state uncontaminated by civilization” and accentuates “the sharp distinction between forces of nature and culture” (59-60). The concept of wilderness refers to more than just a landscape’s lack of civilization or cultivation; at its essence, wilderness stands in opposition to human law

²⁵ Howitt’s early nineteenth-century childhood (she was born in 1799) predates the beginning of the Victorian period by more than thirty years, but her account, published in 1845 for an early-Victorian audience, offers insight into childhood experiences that would not have been considered atypical in the 1830s and on.

and order and forms a natural law unto itself. As Garrard points out, this experience of nature as wilderness is “the most potent” of all in the human imagination (59); as Howitt suggests, encounters with wilderness can have a particularly profound impact on the psyche of the young girl.

Representations of the countryside in Victorian England as wilderness were not any more culturally pervasive than the characterization of this space as a peaceful pastoral, and certainly they provide a less accurate account of the actual status of the English countryside by the late nineteenth century. Yet the figuration of these natural landscapes as wilderness surfaces again and again in Victorian stories for girls, embodying a number of fears regarding girls’ moral wellbeing that permeated the cultural consciousness. Perhaps the best known of these stories is that of Little Red Riding Hood, a folk tale that had been circulating throughout Europe since the Middle Ages but that was made popular anew in late Victorian England by such retellings as Walter Crane’s 1875 illustrated picture book *Little Red Riding Hood* and Andrew Lang’s publication of Charles Marelle’s “The True History of Little Golden-Hood” in his 1890 *Red Fairy Book*. The story of Red Riding Hood’s missteps in being friendly with a wolf and putting her personal desires above prudence and duty characterizes the woods as a place of both physical and moral danger because it allows girls to forget social codes that are constructed to protect her; as Jack Zipes argues in one of several cogent analyses of the tale, “woods are the natural setting for the fulfillment of desire. The conventions of society are no longer present. The self can explore its possibilities and undergo symbolic exchanges with nature inside and outside the self” (361). The woods offer Red Riding

Hood momentary reprieve from the role of dutiful little girl on an errand, but her naïveté and forgetfulness in accepting this reprieve have dire consequences.

The mid-century poetry and stories of Christina Rossetti project anxieties on the space of the countryside that are just as explicitly concerned with girls' moral endangerment and the need to impose upon them discipline and social order. Rossetti's girl characters' experiences in the wilderness suggest that beyond the garden, where no civilizing or guiding influence can be found and one's actions are obscured from the surveillance of others, girls are placed at risk by their encounters with the dark side of human nature; here girls find danger in the form of impulses and urges that threaten to override their better judgment. Rossetti first incorporates this figuration of the uncultivated countryside as a dark and sinister place in contrast to the safety and containment of the garden in her poem "Goblin Market" (1862), in which Lizzie and Laura risk falling prey to the calls of the goblin men who sell their fruit every evening near the brook where the girls go to fill their water-pitchers. Though Lizzie warns her sister that she "[s]hould not loiter in the glen / [i]n the haunts of goblin men," Laura lingers one evening by the river, a misstep that eventually leads her to give in to the goblins' enticement and buy their fruit (Rossetti, *Goblin Market* 8). Lizzie, on the other hand, who wisely retreats to the sisters' garden gate before twilight, remains safe from the goblins, although she must later return to the glen to confront them and acquire the precious fruit that will revive her dying sister. For Laura, the glen provides the opportunity for wanton abandon, as she "suck[s] and suck[s] and suck[s]" the goblin fruit until she "kn[ows] not [is] it night or day" (Rossetti, *Goblin Market* 8). For Lizzie,

the glen, filled with menacing goblin men, presents an opportunity for a pure act of self-sacrifice that redeems her wayward sister. Lizzie's deed restores her sister's womanly virtue and preserves her own, enabling the girls to go on to lead fulfilling lives as wives and mothers.

The forest presents similar possibilities in Rossetti's story of Maggie, the last of the three tales published in Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* (1874). Sent by her grandmother to deliver a basketful of goods to a wealthy family on a snowy Christmas Eve, Maggie finds herself walking alone through the oak forest on the way to their home. After a bump on the head causes her to see stars, Maggie begins to encounter in the forest all manner of temptations that seem to be designed just for her. Entering what the text describes as a "green glade," the lonely Maggie, an only child at home, is bombarded by a group of bizarre children—whom the reader is expected to recognize from an earlier story and know to be terribly cruel—who entice her to play games (Rossetti, *Speaking Likenesses* 77). Sorely tempted but remembering her promise to hurry on her errand, Maggie continues on her way, but just as she is inclined to feed a bit of the chocolate she carries to a hungry bird, she is waylaid once more by a monstrous, gluttonous boy with no facial features but a hideously huge mouth, who demands to be fed the chocolate from Maggie's basket. Though terrified by the boy, Maggie adamantly refuses to give away the food that rightfully belongs to another and manages to escape. This is not the last of her encounters with temptation, however. Just as she begins to grow irresistibly drowsy on her journey, she comes upon a gypsy fire surrounded by people in nightcaps, sleeping blissfully, whom she only barely manages to pass without

joining. Each of these events clearly identifies the forest as a wild and extraordinary place full of enticements and threats, where the typical rules of society—indeed, reality—no longer apply. Yet the forest, tempting Maggie in its seclusion, where she is cut loose from the mores of civilization and the guiding influence of friends and family, gives her a unique chance to sacrifice personal desires for the sake of goodness and honesty, thereby molding her character and bringing her one step closer to maturity.

Arthur Hughes's illustrations of Maggie's adventures, which accompany Rossetti's text, render the forest even more menacing. Hughes's engravings fill the forest with thick black shadows, giving each scene a feeling of gloom that the narrative itself never actually suggests. While in the story, Maggie leaps about with the game-playing children until she recalls her promise and leaves virtually unnoticed, Hughes's illustrations portray the children swarming around a gnarled tree like wraiths and pulling at Maggie while she tries desperately to escape. In the image of Maggie's encounter with the Mouth, a twisted, sinister-looking tree—the only feature of the forest represented in the picture—reaches out with spiky limbs that resemble claws (see figure 1). These images suggest that the forest itself poses grave danger to the child as a space, rather than her own desire to give into the urges of the strange characters she meets. This portrayal of the forest brings home to the reader, if not to Maggie herself, the enormity of the risks involved in a young girl's traversal through a place where no one can guide her choices or protect her virtue.



Figure 1: from *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) by Christina Rossetti

Lucy Lane Clifford's "The New Mother," a fantastical domestic drama that has haunted readers since its publication in Clifford's *Anyhow Stories, Moral and Otherwise* (1882), also represents the forest as an untamed, lawless place in which the young girl can lose herself. However, Clifford figures the girl as a perpetrator of wildness, as well as a victim, through exploring how the space of the forest resonates with the transgressive behavior of the disobedient child.²⁶ The struggle between obedience and disobedience experienced by the two child protagonists, little girls nicknamed Turkey and Blue-Eyes, is figured geographically in the story as a contest between the domestic space of the home and the wild space of the forest, the civilized and the uncivilized. The girls live with their mother and baby sister "in a lonely cottage on the edge of the forest," which is "so near that the garden at the back seemed a part of it, and the tall fir-trees were so close that their big black arms stretched over the little thatched roof, and when the moon shone upon them their tangled shadows were all over the white-washed walls" (Clifford 8-9). The forest looms over the family's home in its desolate location and threatens to overtake it altogether; even the garden, which, as will be discussed further below, is often figured as the threshold of domestic space, has been swallowed up by it, leaving no buffer between the cottage and the forest. Dorothy Tennant's illustration,

²⁶ See also J. Harris's *The Adventures of the Little Girl in the Wood* (1808), which provides an earlier specimen of a similar portrayal of the woods. In Harris's story, little Maria Thornton describes running away from school after she is punished too severely by her teacher and finding the woods a desirable alternative to facing her mother. The secluded woods provide Maria with an escape from authority and a refuge from the consequences of her disobedience, but the isolation also proves dangerous for her; when the exhausted Maria falls asleep by a stream, thieves come upon her and silently steal all of her clothes and jewelry, leaving her in her underclothes. Maria must rely on the village children who find her and bring her to a hermit in the woods to get help, and her embarrassing state of undress before the hermit and all of the children serves as a warning to the dangers—both to one's person and to one's reputation—that can be encountered in the woods. Harris's and Clifford's—as well as Rossetti's—stories can be seen as bookends to nineteenth-century children's literature's figuration of girls as morally compromised when they enter the space of the forest.



THEN SHE KISSED THEM.—F. 19.

Figure 2: from “The New Mother” (1882) by Lucy Lane Clifford

which shows the girls' mother kissing them goodbye before she sends them out of the house on an errand, also offers a telling juxtaposition of the domestic interior and the natural world outdoors (see figure 2). In the foreground of the picture is the little cottage sitting room, presided over by the mother, who sits in the center with her daughters around her, and decorated with furniture and simple ornaments that characterize it as a civilized and orderly space. The coziness of this domestic scene, however, is broken by the expanse of countryside which can be seen immediately through the wide open door; the image suggests the proximity and availability of the outdoors to Turkey and Blue-Eyes, and the ease with which the girls can slip out of the open door into the forest.

In much the same way, the temptation to sin looms over Turkey and Blue-Eyes when they are sent out of the home on an errand by their mother, and the threshold between obedience and disobedience proves just as easy to cross as the threshold between home and outdoors. When the girls meet a "strange wild-looking" girl in the countryside on their way home from the village, they are seduced into agreeing to become naughty in order to receive a reward from the mysterious girl (Clifford 12). To accomplish this, Turkey and Blue-Eyes wreak havoc in their home, breaking dishes and ruining their food, despite their perplexed mother's threats "to go away and leave you, and to send home a new mother, with glass eyes and a wooden tail" (Clifford 23). When the girls persist in their naughtiness by breaking the clock and throwing the drawing-room mirror out the window, they prove themselves to be enemies of the domestic, and their destruction of the home is complete: their mother, the linchpin of the family, leaves for good, and the dreaded new mother arrives. Just as she breaks down the cottage door

with her wooden tail, the terrified girls escape their fate by fleeing to the forest, and the narrative offers a chilling conclusion to the story: “They are there still, my children. All through the long weeks and month have they been there, with only green rushes for their pillows and only the brown dead leaves to cover them, feeding on the wild strawberries in the summer, or on the nuts when they hang green” (Clifford 46). Though the girls sometimes “creep up near to the home in which they once were so happy, and with beating hearts... watch and listen” to the new mother, the result of their wild disobedience has obliged them to make the forest their home forever (Clifford 47). For Turkey and Blue-Eyes, the forest in which they wander is both a haven and a purgatory. It accommodates their wildness with its own wildness in a way that the girls’ real mother and real home would not, but it also, in conjunction with the new mother, serves as a punishment for disobedience that they cannot escape. The story places the forest in direct opposition to domestic space, implying that once a girl abandons her domestic and familial responsibilities, there is no turning back.

As a fantastical and allegorical rather than realistic and literal representation of the woods, “The New Mother,” like “Little Red Riding Hood” and Rossetti’s work, is concerned with demonstrating not so much girls’ actual experiences in the natural world but rather how their own desires can betray and consume them. It is significant to note that, in all of these texts, what girls find harbored in secluded and undomesticated spaces—wolves, goblins, mouthy boys and Gypsy girls—are variations on the Other that resonate with the girl protagonists themselves. In these stories, as in many fairy tales, the refracted image of the dark and dangerous natural landscape that we see is the product of

cultural anxieties about the girl's potential for complicity in her own downfall. It is this potential that, through surveillance and careful discipline, must be pruned from girls' natures—a process that finds its perfect metaphor in the work of the garden.

The Garden as Domestic Space

I have a little garden,
 A garden of my own,
 And every day I water there
 The seeds that I have sown.
 I love my little garden,
 And tend it with such care,
 You will not find a faded leaf
 Or blighted blossom there (Heaton 22).

In the nursery rhyme above, Mrs. Charles Heaton's "Margaret's Garden," published in *Happy Child Life* (1875), the child speaker describes her "little garden" to readers with a significant mixture of emotions: pride, joy, possessiveness, and not a little maternal devotion. Heaton's portrayal of a young girl tending her garden paints for readers a blissful, idyllic scene of "happy child life," but it also models a particular attitude that Victorian girls were encouraged to have regarding the garden at home. The poem suggests that it is appropriate, even charming and sweet, for a young girl like Margaret to bear a motherly love for her plants and to think of her garden—presumably a single flower bed located within the larger family garden—as her very own property,

sacred to her. The poem also validates the responsibility that Margaret has taken to produce a vision of beauty in her garden through hard work and copious attention, and the emphasis on the garden as a site of controlled and cultivated rather than wild and untamed growth is unmistakable: Margaret continues with a catalogue of the flowers that she has strategically planted in order to make her bed “the gayest little plot / In all the garden round,” and the poem concludes with Margaret expressing her desire to secure a Canterbury bell in order to round out her collection of flowers and complete the look of her garden (Heaton 23). In celebrating Margaret’s success, the poem privileges both beauty that can be engineered through hard work and the resulting pride in one’s achievement. In doing so, the poem highlights the stark contrast between the garden and the uncultivated and uncivilized spaces of the natural world beyond; it also implicitly calls into question the notion of the garden as a “natural” space, as well as what constitutes “play” for girls in the garden.

Although nineteenth-century discourses on girlhood and nature often link the garden and the countryside to one another as a general outdoors area to be played and worked in, explored and enjoyed, as “Margaret’s Garden” suggests, more specific characterizations of the garden in children’s literature and discourses on childhood often reflect an appreciation of it as a civilized space. Elizabeth Gargano claims that the garden in Victorian fiction “builds a bridge between cultivated and wild nature; it aims to domesticate nature and childhood simultaneously.... [and] becomes a quasi-domestic space,” which is borne out in much of the discourse on children’s gardening that

circulated throughout the Victorian period (89).²⁷ Victorian gardening books for children such as C. A. Johns's *Gardening for Children* (1849) and Jane Loudon's *My Own Garden; or The Young Gardener's Year Book* (1855) emphasize the garden as a place of order and industry where, by working to raise plants and vegetables, children both interact with the natural world and learn key lessons that aid in their socialization. Time and energy devoted to gardening will "promote health...teach habits of order and neatness...foster the love of Nature, which is instinctive in man...and, besides all this ...furnish [children] with an amusement which will become more delightful every year that [they] live" (Johns 5). Both Loudon and Johns point out the importance of assigning each child his or her own garden plot to work in, citing "that feeling of ownership so delightful... particularly to a child" that rises when a young gardener can produce for her family a vegetable or a posy that she has cultivated with her own hands (Loudon 3). The organization of children's gardening books themselves, which set forth schedules for planting and caring for one's garden as well as the correct uses of each gardening tool appropriate for a child, impose order upon the space of the garden and the child gardener's movements within it. The widespread belief in the garden's socializing influence was also evinced throughout the nineteenth century in the inclusion of a garden area on the grounds of schools for girls. Jane Frances Dove, in her section of *Work and Play in Girls' Schools* (1898) entitled "Cultivation of the Body," asserts that gardening is a crucial part of "the training requisite to make a girl really useful, *i.e.*, to make her industrious, prompt, intelligent, thoughtful, thorough, and accurate" and that "[e]very

²⁷ Gargano makes this claim specifically regarding the appearance of the garden in Victorian school narratives, but her statement offers a compelling commentary on the Victorian garden in general.

girl who wishes it, should have a small plot of garden to cultivate for herself” (Beale, Soulsby, and Dove 414, 415).²⁸ This characterization of the garden as a site of structured activity which, as Johns acknowledges, “is not playing,” distinguishes the garden from other spaces of nature for children as an extension of civilization that is bounded by its systems and rules (2).

More significantly for girls, in addition to teaching such civic virtues as industry, neatness, and order, the garden was viewed as a stage for important performances of coded Victorian femininity. In her *Letters from a Little Garden* (1884-85), a series of notes to children containing reflections and tips on gardening, Ewing demonstrates that gardening was still a significant pastime for children in the late nineteenth century and indicates that the gender roles assigned to Victorian males and females encompassed the space of the garden. Responding to the American Charles Dudley Warner’s comment that “Woman always did, from the first, make a muss in a garden,” Ewing writes, “Certainly, with us it is very common for the ladies of the family to be the practical gardeners, the master of the house... displaying less of that almost maternal solicitude which does bring flowers to perfection” (82-83).²⁹ Ewing goes on to assert that “it would be a good division of labour in a Little Garden, if where Joan coddles the roses and rears the seedlings, Darby would devote some of his leisure to the walks and

²⁸Dove’s thoughts on the educational benefits of gardening are by no means radical for the period or even new, but rather are grounded in a centuries-long pedagogical tradition. For a discussion of the history of the garden’s use as a site of education on the rules of personal property and social contracts, see Gargano’s discussion of *Émile* (1762) in *Reading Victorian Schoolrooms* (90-96), as well as Dorothy Gardiner’s *English Girlhood at School* (1929), in which Gardiner traces the use of gardens for educational purposes in girls’ schools throughout the eighteenth century (357-58).

²⁹The work of Warner’s that Ewing cites here is *My Summer in a Garden*, a collection of essays that was published in the United States in 1870. *Letters from a Little Garden*, unfinished when Ewing died, first appeared serially in *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* from 1884-1885 and was later published with Ewing’s *Mary’s Meadow*, which is discussed below.

grassplots” (82-83). Ewing’s suggestion that girls have innate nurturing instincts that would best serve the cultivation of flowers in the garden characterizes the child’s garden as a gendered space whose successful cultivation requires girls to engage in proto-motherly behaviors to which they should naturally be inclined.

Elizabeth Watts’s *Flowers and the Flower Garden. With Instructions on the Culture of Ornamental Trees, Shrubs, &c., &c.*³⁰ loads the garden with even more meaning as a feminine space by suggesting that the beauty that ideally characterizes the physical space of the garden serves as a manifestation of the culmination all the virtues that a female should embody. Watts asserts, “A well cared for garden displays—and displays to good advantage too—the love of home, domestic taste, a wish to please, industry, neatness, taste, and all the sweet household virtues that create home wherever good women rule, and that make Englishmen, when blessed with such wives or relatives, so fond of it and of them” (1). Embedded in Watts’s statement here is a valuation of the garden as a carefully tended space that reflects the grace and virtue of the ideal Englishwoman, a significant shift from the common Victorian characterization of the natural world in general as God’s creation and a manifestation of divine glory. Watts also emphasizes that the garden “may be the nursery of all the good qualities that I have named,” implying that the cultivation that takes place in the garden is reciprocal—by learning to grow flowers in the garden, the girl simultaneously grows herself into a model woman (2). Moreover, the garden shifts from its status as “a quasi-domestic

³⁰ Watts’s gardening guide was first published in 1866 and was reprinted in 1867, 1889, and 1890.

space” —to use Gargano’s phrase once more—to become a fully domestic space where girls learn crucial homemaking skills (89).

These conceptions of the garden as a civilized domestic space in which girls perform femininity are also borne out in what are perhaps the most popular and compelling images of pastoral childhood of the nineteenth century: the illustrations of Kate Greenaway. These popular images led Gleeson White to comment in his 1897 article “Children’s Books and Their Illustrators” that Greenaway’s characters “are the *beau-idéal* of nursery propriety” and that “in their wildest play the penalties that await torn knickerbockers or soiled frocks are not absent from their minds” (38). The pictures in Greenaway’s poetry collections seek to evoke the charms of childhood innocence and celebrate the element of serenity that Greenaway believed could be found in nature; they do so by constructing the garden as—to use Anne Lundin’s phrase—a “feminized setting,” borrowing the currency of the Victorian feminine ideal popularized by the icon of “the angel in the house” in order to valorize both nature and childhood as the pinnacles of peace and beauty (Lundin 155). As a result, though the illustrations in *Under the Window* (1879) and *Marigold Garden* (1885) are comprised almost entirely of outdoor scenes, they focus on the garden less as an opportunity for encounters with the natural than as a context for perfect behavior, particularly in the images that depict girls. In both books, Greenaway’s visual characterization of gardens and girls’ behavior in them constructs this space as a site of sophisticated and formal performances of highly stylized femininity.

Greenaway's illustrations of girls' garden tea parties, in particular, which can be found in both books—one for the poem “The Tea Party” in *Marigold Garden* and one for the poem “You see, merry Phyllis” in *Under the Window*—represent the garden as a decidedly cultured, *indoors* space and characterize girls' garden activities as sedentary in nature (see figure 3). The guests and hostesses are dressed in their best with lace, pearls, and gloves, and they sit down to their tea using delicate indoors furniture and a fine china service. Unlike Victorian photographs depicting similar gatherings in the garden, there is nothing makeshift or provisional about the party in either illustration; the girls at their tea tables look as though they have been transplanted neatly from the drawing-room to the garden without so much as a hair moved out of place.³¹ Nearly mirroring the event that takes place there, the garden itself portrayed in each illustration replicates a room in the home rather than embodying the natural world. The trees and bushes are fussily manicured and organized with perfect symmetry, while the expanse of neatly-trimmed grass imitates a carpet beneath the girls' slippered feet. In one picture, the surrounding shrubbery has been clipped and shaped to form walls that enclose the girls, strengthening the feeling of interiority. In both illustrations, the house to which the garden belongs fills the background, emphasizing through its proximity the garden's connectedness to the home space and its civilized status by association.

Other illustrations in Greenaway's books reproduce these same effects, with the civilizing influence that organizes the home overflowing into Greenaway's gardens to

³¹ For examples of Victorian photographs that feature members of the middle class in their gardens, see *The Victorian and Edwardian Home from Old Photographs* (1979) and *Victorian Life in Photographs* (1974).



Figure 3: from *Under the Window* (1879) by Kate Greenaway

contain and discipline the natural world. In an image in *Marigold Garden*, in which two little girls sit chatting together in an apple tree, the outdoors is portrayed as a more natural space, but still one that calls for polite and refined behavior (see figure 4). The slightly gnarled appearance of the tree, with its meandering limbs and tufts of grass and weeds growing at its base, is more organic than the carefully-shaped trees in other illustrations, but the girls perched on its branch are as delicate and sophisticated in their dress and demeanor as any of the tea-drinkers in the earlier pictures. They lean daintily toward one another to converse, and since their dresses, hats, gloves, sashes, and pearl necklaces are all in perfect order, one has difficulty imagining how these girls came to be in the tree in the first place—they seem too fresh and clean, too ladylike, to have climbed it on their own. Yet it is this discrepancy between the girls themselves and their location that gives this picture its whimsical charm; the pastoral setting for the girls' tête-à-tête draws attention to their incongruous refinement, but it also naturalizes their performance of delicate femininity. The scene, like Greenaway's other illustrations, implies that the girls' behavior is—or ought to be—so innate to them that it becomes appropriate in any location, indoors or out; the garden is as conducive to tea parties or polite conversation as the parlor.

Another picture in *Under the Window* shows a mother leaning out of a second-story window to drop a rose to her young daughter, who stands below on an immaculate lawn with well-pruned hedges and shrubs in the background. Like the opening lines of the book's titular poem, "Under the window is my garden, / Where sweet, sweet flowers grow," which map the garden through the lens of the home, this image figures the garden



Figure 4: from *Marigold Garden* (1885) by Kate Greenaway

in relation to the home as an extension of it rather than as a distinctly outdoor space (Greenaway, *Under the Window 2*). The mother in the picture, both indoors and outdoors at the same time, erases the boundary between inside and outside with her body by leaning over the window sill, her maternal presence all the while dominating the area of the garden shown in the picture. The rose that the mother drops also offers a subtle commentary on the fluidity between domestic and garden spaces: a flower cultivated in part to beautify the home, the rose references the garden's contributions to domesticity, and that it has been plucked by the woman from the climbing bush growing right outside the window momentarily implicates gardening as an indoor activity.

Through the activities of the girls pictured and through the presence of women in the garden, Greenaway's pictures consistently figure the garden as a site for distinctly *adult*-like—particularly womanly—behavior rather than childish play; where one might expect expanses of grass and trees to provide opportunities for physical activity, in the gardens here, the setting calls for dignified self-conduct. Perhaps the most telling evidence of this is offered by the only image found in *Under the Window* and *Marigold Garden* that portrays a young girl who clearly desires to play in the garden. This illustration, which accompanies the poem “Little Phyllis” in *Marigold Garden*, depicts the young, daintily dressed Phyllis on a garden path as she struggles to pull her hand free from the grip of a lady, presumably her mother. Phyllis, it is important to note, is almost still an infant; in the opening lines of the poem, she reckons, “I am a very little girl, / I think that I've turned two” (Greenaway, *Marigold Garden* 19). The poem charmingly references the unsophisticated pleasures of a playful toddler, and Phyllis's action in the

illustration is meant to offer a simple dramatization of her closing words in the poem—“Good-bye—I want to run now, / You walk along so slow” (Greenaway, *Marigold Garden* 19). However, the tension that is present in the interaction between Phyllis and the lady complicates her straightforward declaration. Whether Phyllis is given the freedom she desires to run and play in the garden remains doubtful; the lady, who retains a complete grasp on Phyllis’s hand and leans into Phyllis as the little girl pulls against her, seems to have no intention of letting go. It is unclear whether Phyllis is considered too small to run by herself without falling, or whether running itself is considered inappropriate—but what is clear is that Phyllis’s movements in the garden are restricted by the overpowering presence of the lady who accompanies her. As in other illustrations, Greenaway’s portrayal of the garden as a primarily domestic and maternal space ultimately suggests that it belongs to women more than it does to girls and that girls are obligated to some degree to behave like women when in the garden. In this way, the girls in Greenaway’s gardens can be viewed, to use the words of feminist critic Annette Kolodny, as “inhabitant[s] of a metaphorical landscape [they] had no part in creating—captive, as it were, in the garden of someone else’s imagination” (6).³² In this case, the imagination that confines them is Greenaway’s, whose artwork reflects intense nostalgia for her own bygone childhood and the idyllic garden spaces that she longed for as a

³² Kolodny’s statement, made in her study *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (1984), refers to the way in which the early American frontier was constructed in patriarchal rhetoric as an earthly paradise despite pioneering women’s experiences to the contrary. Though Kolodny’s work focuses on a different continent and time period than this project, her exploration of how place and space can be gendered in imagination and experience offers relevant insight to my discussion. She examines the wilderness of colonial America as a traditionally masculine space and analyzes women’s efforts to carve out spaces for themselves—especially in the form of gardens—in order to establish a sense of domesticity and home.

young girl living in London, as well as her preference for the perfect girls and boys she painted in her pictures over encounters with real children.³³ As a product of her own fantasies as a grown woman, Greenaway's pictures illustrate the garden as a space in which girls assume the roles of cultured ladies rather than a space in which they create their own world of play. Any wilder or more rambunctious desires that girls may have are sublimated here into civilized versions of play.

The Garden as Natural Space

Although the popularity of Greenaway's work indicates that her representations of girls in the garden resonated with Victorians' collective imagination, not all of Greenaway's contemporaries shared her vision of the Victorian girl's ideal experience of the garden. In both his photographic images of girls and his iconic portrayal of Victorian girlhood in the *Alice* books, Charles Dodgson comments on the projections of adult desires onto girls' interactions with outdoors spaces. Dodgson's 1858 photograph of Kathleen Tidy bears a striking resemblance to Greenaway's above-mentioned illustration of the girls in a tree, but Dodgson's photograph effects a different impression of girls'

³³ Many writers have commented on Greenaway's nostalgic and idealistic view of childhood and the pastoral. See, for example, Anne Parrish's "Flowers for a Birthday: Kate Greenaway, March 17, 1846" (1946), Selma G. Lanes's *Down the Rabbit Hole: Adventures and Misadventures in the Realm of Children's Literature* (1971), and Michael Patrick Hearn's "Mr. Ruskin and Miss Greenaway" (1980). Lanes states that "[a]s an adult, [Greenaway] often recalled her early years with a nostalgia that bordered on pain," while Hearn cites Greenaway's admitted distaste for messy or rambunctious girls and boys and notices that, in Greenaway's "'enchanted land,' children act as they should and not as they do" (35, 186). Greenaway's contemporary, Gleeson White, also comments indirectly on the lack of verisimilitude in Greenaway's artwork when he states in his "Children's Books and their Illustrators" that "Whether [the illustrations] really interested children as they delighted their elders is a moot point....they represented the ideal every properly educated child is supposed to cherish" (38). Even the Regency-period style of dress that the girls wear in the illustrations, which Greenaway's drawings made popular once again, is old-fashioned.

relationship with the natural world. Dodgson was fond of taking pictures of child acquaintances, and the humor and playfulness that characterizes many of his photographs is evident here. In the picture, Kathleen, seven years old at the time the portrait was taken, is seated daintily in a tree (see figure 5). Like the girls in Greenaway's illustration, she does not appear to have exerted herself or to be engaged in any romping or play. Her plaid skirt spreads smoothly around her in straight lines, as if it had been arranged carefully by Kathleen herself or by an adult who then, perhaps, handed her the hat with matching plaid band that she holds primly to her knee. Her entire demeanor exudes an air of formality that belies her position in the tree; like Greenaway's girls, she appears to have been transplanted by some unnatural action from a sitting-room chair to her spot among the branches. But unlike the other girls, absorbed in their artless chatter, Kathleen's solemn face regards the viewer with an expression of serious contemplation and cognizance. She is aware of her location, aware of its strangeness, and keenly aware of the photographer who documents the situation with his camera as she looks down upon him. While the charm of Greenaway's image allows the girls' dainty position in the tree to seem natural and fitting, Kathleen's gaze compels viewers to consider why she is in the tree and to acknowledge that there is no natural reason: girls do not climb into trees in order to sit quietly with their hats in hand and stare at observers—in short, to do nothing. By juxtaposing girlhood and nature in a manner that emphasizes the strangeness of the situation, Dodgson's photograph questions the naturalness of girls' performance of civilized femininity outdoors.



Figure 5: photograph of Kathleen Tidy (1858) by Charles Dodgson

While Greenaway's work implies that the garden can become an artificial version of a natural space through the civilizing influence of adult aesthetics, other Victorian constructions of the garden distinguish it as a girl's own place of play, a separate realm from the adjoining house where a different body of experiences is possible. In this construction of the garden, activities are not governed by standards for civility or productivity but rather guided by the girl's imagination. Annie Besant's recollections of her mid-century childhood playing in the garden of her family home offer a striking example of the way in which the garden could be appropriated for a girl's play as she describes her activities in the garden of her family home:

The drawing-room opened by an old-fashioned half-window, half-door—which proved a constant source of grief to me, for whenever I had on a new frock I always tore it on the bolt as I flew through—into a large garden which sloped down one side of the hill, and was filled with the most delightful old trees, fir and laurel, may, mulberry, hazel, apple, pear, and damson, not to mention currant and gooseberry bushes innumerable, and large strawberry beds spreading down the sunny slopes. There was not a tree there that I did not climb, and one, a widespreading Portugal laurel, was my private country house. I had there my bedroom and my sitting-rooms, my study, and my larder. The larder was supplied by the fruit-trees, from which I was free to pick as I would, and in the study I would sit for hours with some favourite book—Milton's "Paradise Lost" the chief favourite of all. The birds must often have felt startled, when from the small swinging form perching on a branch, came out in childish tones the "Thrones,

dominations, pryncedoms, virtues, powers” of Milton’s stately and sonorous verse (32-33).³⁴

Besant’s memories indicate that when she climbed in trees, she did so to play, not to humor adults by posing for photographs. Her description is both charming and nostalgic—she closes the passage with “Reader mine, if ever you go to Harrow, ask permission to enter the old garden” to commemorate its beauty (Besant 33)—but a closer reading of it also reveals an intriguing juxtaposition of the home and the garden for the girl. The striking image of a young Annie’s flight from the drawing room—a domestic space heavily inflected with Victorian codes of propriety and formality—into the garden itself implies a fluidity between the two spaces, as the half-window, half-door suggests the ease with which one can not only see the garden from inside the home but also enter it. Yet Besant’s passage into the garden also subtly emphasizes a key difference between these spaces, as Besant significantly becomes less civilized and tidy during the transition from one space to the other when she tears her new frocks on the bolt of the door. Most remarkable of all, however, is the way in which Besant uses the garden trees to create her own pretend-home. On the surface, her charming play suggests a fixation on domesticity similar to that displayed in Greenaway’s garden images, but, unlike Greenaway, Besant’s play also underscores the significant physical disparities between her “home” in the trees and her family’s actual domicile nearby, as well as the contrast between Besant’s wild and imaginative version of domesticity and the civilized, adult domestic scene taking place inside her family home, where she was less likely to be

³⁴ The experiences that Besant (b. 1847) recollects here date to the 1850s, when her family lived in a house at Harrow.

allowed the freedom to indulge in the same behavior (and where her torn frocks would be noticed and frowned upon). More than anything, Besant's make-believe housekeeping is an assertion of autonomy; she has designated each "room" of her "private" tree-house and its purpose, acquired her own stores of fruit which she keeps for herself. Indeed, the entire garden, in which there was "not a tree there that [she] did not climb," has been appropriated by Besant for her own imaginative play, and her account characterizes the space as her personal property or territory, where she can swing through the trees in a torn dress but also elevate her mind with great works of literature as she pleases. Besant's memoirs highlight the Victorian garden as a space that has potential to foster a rich interior life for the girl, offering her independence in the form of seclusion from her family and opportunities for a kind of play that is not work-oriented or inflected with conventional domesticity.

This kind of distinctive garden play can be found in Victorian literature for girls, as well. Ewing's *Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances* (1869), referenced at the opening of this chapter for its characterization of the space of the woods, also provides a representation of the domestic garden as a space in which girls can have freer rein to play. When Mrs. Overtheway tells Ida the story of the favorite residence of her own childhood, she describes the value that the children in her family placed on the garden during their parents' search for a new house to rent: "We had a shrewd suspicion that in the selection of a house our elders would be mainly influenced by questions of healthy situation, due drainage, good water supply, moderate rent, and so forth; to the neglect of more important considerations, such as odd corners for hide-and-seek, deep window-

seats, plenty of cupboards, and a garden adapted to the construction of bowers rather than to the cultivation of vegetables” (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway’s* 155-56). The emphasis that the children place on the garden as one of a number of key features that make a residence more conducive to play, as well as the distinction that they make between the garden as a useful agricultural site and the garden as a recreational area, reflect the prioritization of “play” over “profit” in their consideration of the garden.

But even more significant is the conversation that Mrs. Overtheway recalls having with her father (who calls her by her Christian name, Mary) when the two of them, on a real estate search without the rest of the family, discover a house with which they both fall in love. For her father, the house’s appeal lies in its distinctive name (Reka Dom, which is Russian for “River House”) and its well-appointed library, but for the young Mary, it is the house’s garden. Mrs. Overtheway’s description of Reka Dom’s garden emphasizes the charms that it held for her as a young girl longing for a place to play with her siblings:

To explore the garden was like a tour in fairy land. It was oddly laid out. Three grass-plots or lawns, one behind the other, were divided by hedges of honeysuckle and sweetbriar. The grass was long, the flower-borders were borders of desolation, where crimson peonies and some other hardy perennials made the best of it, but the odour of the honeysuckle was luxuriously sweet in the evening air. And what a place for bowers! But the second lawn had greater things in store....There, between two tall elm trees, hung a swing (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway’s* 173).

Mary appreciates the space for its potential as a huge playground, and the crowning delight of the Reka Dom garden in her eyes is the part of it that has clearly been carved out for the pleasure of children: a “little enclosed piece of ground devoted to those many-shaped, box-edged little flower-beds characteristic of ‘children’s gardens,’—it was not alone that the beds were shaped like letters, and that there was indisputably an M among them,—but there were six in number. Just one apiece for myself and my brothers and sisters!...It really seemed as if some kind old fairy had conjured up the whole place for our benefit” (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway’s* 174). Mary’s attention to the features of the garden designed for children and the pleasure that they bring her, as well as her lack of concern for its unkempt appearance, draw attention to the ways in which the garden can function as a child-centric landscape rather than a scene of beauty. Her feeling that “the whole place” had been “conjured up...for our benefit” carries, too, a significant air of possessiveness and a sense of entitlement to the garden along with an expression of delight.

This sense of ownership of the garden that Mary feels on behalf of herself and her siblings is reiterated in her response to her father’s concerns about renting the house. When her father points out to Mary that “your mother’s chief objection to our latest home was that the grounds were much too large for our means of keeping them in order; and this garden is the larger of the two,” Mary replies: “But father dear, you know you needn’t keep it in order, and then we can have it to play in” (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway’s* 172). In addition to indicating once more that play is at the foremost of Mary’s mind in her thoughts on the garden, her comment here implies two things. First, it indicates that,

in her opinion, the garden can be—and perhaps even *ought* to be—messy, wild, and uncivilized in order to accommodate the degree of exuberance and activity involved in the playing that she anticipates. The sculpted and immaculate gardens of Greenaway’s illustrations are not wanted here for the kind of games and adventures that Mary is imagining; instead, a garden that is kept *out* of order would provide the ideal landscape for play. Second, Mary’s remark suggests the need for a sort of abandonment of the garden on the part of the adults so that the children may take full possession of it for their own purposes. In order to reach its full potential as a playground, Reka Dom’s garden should not be dominated by the presence of adults or their civilizing influence, but rather be left in an unattended state—what might be called, ironically, its “natural” state. Like Besant’s assertion of territorial claim to the trees in her garden, Mary’s desire for her parents to take the house but leave the garden for the children to claim as their own domain underscores the independence from familial authority that the garden can offer girls when they want to play.

Mrs. Overtheway’s recollections continue to characterize the garden as a child-centric play space for the girl as she recalls how, once the family took residence, she and her siblings developed a fascination with the house’s original owners and their six children, to whom the letter-shaped flower-beds first belonged. The story of the family of six Russian children who used to live in the house, which Mary and her siblings beguile out of a servant, dominates their imaginations and, subsequently, their activities in the garden: “It was the romance of the walks we played in, the swing we sat in, the gardens we tended every day. To play at being the Little Russians superseded all other

games” (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway’s* 186). The children’s fascination with the garden as the special legacy of “the little Russians,” bequeathed to them by fate, makes it a source of endless delight for them and a place whose charm only they can truly appreciate; for Mary and her siblings, the garden’s value lies in the platform it provides for imaginative play rather than its capacity for horticultural wonders. Consequently, although the children demonstrate some desire to cultivate the garden for the sake of being productive and yielding something beautiful—Mary, for example, delights in giving bouquets of flowers from her own bed to members of her family and their community—for the most part, they just want to play: “Sometimes we pretended to be Scottish chieftains, or feudal barons of England, or chiefs of savage tribes. Our gardens were always the lands we had inherited, and we called ourselves by the names of the little Russians” (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway’s* 189). The children’s individual garden plots, the care of which Victorian gardening manuals so often claim will promote a sense of order and responsibility in children’s lives, are instead the stage for myriad flights of fancy.

Mrs. Overtheway’s story of her girlhood garden is dominated by memories of frolicking and play, but it also makes it clear that Mary also enjoys the garden as a secluded spot in which she can indulge her own creative and intellectual pursuits, much as Besant recounts doing above. Mrs. Overtheway describes what she calls her “garden studies”, time spent in the garden reading books borrowed from her father’s library: “Sometimes [a] precious volume was lent to me, and with it in my lap, and my arms round the ropes of the swing, I passed many a happy hour. What fancies I wove after studying those quaint, suggestive old prints!” (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway’s* 190, 189). In

the garden swing, Mary fills her mind with a variety of interests, from learning Russian to the study of angling. The garden functions literally as a study for her individually as well as a playground for the children collectively.

Yet the garden is a site of self-discipline and sociable acquiescence for Mary as well. Mary finds that, despite the coincidence of an M-shaped flower bed in the “children’s garden,” which she believes should only naturally become her own, the interest of fairness and the happiness of her siblings call for “a disappointment to [her]” when her mother notices that the other beds’ letters do not fit the other children’s names and dictates that the garden plots be assigned by drawing lots (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway’s* 186). The result is that Mary finds herself decidedly unhappy with her assigned plot, an I-shaped bed that is “little more than a fourth of the size of that which I had looked on as my own” and is “not favourable to flowers” because of its shadiness (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway’s* 187). Mary’s efforts to “make the best of [her] fate” and her eventual surrender of her dreams to make the uncooperative bed into one of “those effective arrangements which haunt one’s spring dreams for the coming summer” signal a relinquishment of selfish, petty desires and a step toward maturity (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheway’s* 187). Mary also shoulders the responsibility of generating games and fancies for her younger siblings, a task that requires much of her time and energy in the garden.³⁵ Her obligation as the eldest to devise amusements and soothe quarrels among her siblings often leads to commitments that become “rather burdensome,” such as writing letters to her siblings from the Little Russians every week in order to maintain

³⁵ As a girl, Ewing herself, nicknamed “Aunt Judy” by her younger siblings, nurtured her own creative life as well as theirs by leading them in the production of home theatricals and family magazines (Litster 136).

the children's pretend-correspondence with the objects of their fancy (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheday's* 194). That Mary's role of eldest sister and caregiver in the garden shapes her experience of the play-space and links it to the domestic is further suggested by the novel's use of the garden anecdotes as a segue to Mary's later marriage to the oldest of the Little Russians, whose garden plot she had inherited as a girl. In the organization of Mrs. Overtheday's recollection, Mary's garden fancies are inextricably related to her eventual domestic bliss.

Ewing reprises this characterization of the garden in her *Mary's Meadow*, which was first published serially in *Aunt Judy's Magazine* from 1883 to 1884 and later republished in a book collection that includes *Letters from a Little Garden*. In this story, the girl protagonist, also named Mary but no relation to the child in *Mrs. Overtheday*, plays a similar role of "director-in-chief of our amusements" for her siblings (Ewing, *Mrs. Overtheday* 193). When the children's interest turns to the outdoors, their garden games first center upon productivity in cultivating flowers: as Mary notes, "we did a great deal, for the weather was fine" (Ewing, *Mary's Meadow* 22). But when Mary discovers her father's copy of John Parkinson's 1620 horticultural treatise, *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris*, and falls in love with the quaint prose and engaging descriptions of the royal gardens that Parkinson cared for, she turns Parkinson's book into a fairy story and devises a queer garden game of imagination and role-play that captivates all of the children, including her.³⁶ Mary's game, which involves each of the children taking the part of a character from her story and acting it out, transforms the

³⁶ Parkinson was the Royal Botanist to Charles I.

space of the garden into the children's own version of Parkinson's "Earthly Paradise," a beautiful place in which the children cultivate flowers for imaginary kings and queens. Though the children still take part in conventional gardening activities in their "Earthly Paradise," they are driven by passion for a fantasy that few of the adults around them understand. When the children fail to gain the sympathies of their family gardener, Mary's game even inspires her brother Harry (who ironically plays the role of the "Honest Root Gatherer") to steal topsoil from the family's fields in order to ensure that they can grow all of the flowers for which their "Earthly Paradise" calls. The children's playfulness and imagination—fueled by Mary's—enables them to claim the garden as their own fantasy world.

Domestic responsibilities and the presence of the maternal still override play in this garden, however, particularly for Mary as the eldest daughter of the family. When the children's mother leaves for a warmer climate to improve her health, she enjoins Mary to act as the "Little Mother" to the other children: Mary explains that her mother "hoped we should all try to please Father, and to be unselfish with each other; but she expected me to try far harder than the others and never to think of myself at all, so that I might fill her place whilst she was away" (Ewing, *Mary's Meadow* 18). The role of Little Mother and Mary's sense of familial obligation, which shape her household duties and activities, also call her to exercise self-control and even self-sacrifice in the way that she participates in her own game. When Adela chooses the role of the Weeding Woman, which Mary herself secretly covets, Mary finds herself frustrated and disappointed; but, because she must act as the "Little Mother," Mary forces herself to obey the nursery

maxim “Others first, Little Mothers afterwards” in order to make her sister happy (Ewing, *Mary’s Meadow* 29). That this rule extends to circumscribe and constrain Mary’s participation in her garden game suggests that, although the garden can function as a whimsical outdoors play space, it still falls within the jurisdiction of domestic rules.

Yet Mary eventually finds an opportunity for self-fulfillment when, in reading a translation of Alphonse Karr’s *A Tour Round My Garden*, she has an epiphany about the role that she wants to play in the “Earthly Paradise” game: Traveller’s Joy, a wandering gardener who plants flowers along the highways and byways in order to delight passersby. Mary’s role as Traveller’s Joy gives her a place within the children’s game but also fills her with a private sense of fulfillment and provides her an alternative to the identity of “Little Mother”; as her brother Arthur writes in a letter to the children’s mother, “Mary will still be our Little Mother on all common occasions, as you wished, but in the Earthly Paradise we call her Traveller’s Joy” (Ewing, *Mary’s Meadow* 40). Even more significantly, Mary turns the role of Traveller’s Joy into an opportunity to satisfy personal desires and indulge in her own fantasies without collaborating or negotiating with her siblings. After a servant’s aunt gives Mary starts of a special flower, the rare and much coveted hose-in-hose, she decides to privilege her role as Traveller’s Joy over her duty as “Little Mother” and keep her plans for the hose-in-hose a secret so that she can plant it where she wants to without having to contend with her brother Arthur, who she fears “might want some of the plants” (Ewing, *Mary’s Meadow* 54). The role of Traveller’s Joy allows Mary to turn the garden game from collective

domestic play designed to please the siblings for whom she is responsible to a private act of self-fulfillment that revitalizes her personal relationship with the natural world.

Perhaps most significantly, Mary's game and her role as Traveller's Joy enable her to transcend the physical boundaries of both the home and the family garden—especially those boundaries set by Mary's father and their neighbor, the Old Squire, who are engaged in a long-standing dispute over the property rights to a nearby field called Mary's Meadow. Mary risks the censure of her parents and the wrath of the Old Squire to plant her hose-in-hose in the meadow for the birds—rather than people—to enjoy; though this results in a traumatic confrontation with the Old Squire, Mary's bold transgression is ultimately rewarded when he repents and deeds the meadow to her. As a rogue planter who shapes landscapes around her at will, Mary claims both the garden and the pastoral setting beyond as sites of play and cultivation and rebels against the restrictions set by the adults around her. Mary's game blurs the boundaries between garden and natural world beyond and upsets the guidelines of ownership that characterize the garden, the "neatness and order" that C.A. Johns claims are the most precious fruits of one's gardening labors (5).

Ewing's novels show that the garden is also conceived in Victorian literature for girls as a place for messiness, autonomy, and play that is not dangerous or transgressive, as the girl's presence in wilderness or pastoral spaces is often constructed to be. As Gubar notes, the gardening that takes place in Ewing's novels "provides a rich metaphor for creativity and the development of selfhood" in addition to opportunities for self-cultivation, discipline, and self-sacrifice (56). Like the girls in Greenaway's delicate

illustrations and the discourse on gardening that emphasizes civility and regulation, the “Little Mothers” in Ewing’s novels find the garden to be a site of significant negotiations of the domestic and quasi-maternal responsibilities that link the garden to the home duties girls would be expected to embrace as women. The gardening of the meadow that takes place in *Mary’s Meadow* suggests that girls’ experiences in the domestic garden can teach them to cultivate beauty and nurture life wherever they go.

While Victorian discourses celebrate all of the natural world as God’s creation, representations of the outdoors in children’s literature as two distinct areas, the garden and the countryside, also use these spaces to advocate the girl’s controlled cultivation and caution against her unchecked growth. Stories of girls in the wilder spaces of the countryside imply that, when girls are free from the surveillance and regulation of the domestic sphere and left to their own impulses, they enter dangerous territory in which temptation can get the best of them. Instead, like the flowers and shrubs that they tend in the garden, girls need to watch and prune themselves so that the undesirable elements of their human natures—selfish urges and unwholesome inclinations—are checked and excised, leaving girls to be lovely young specimens of the feminine ideal. In this way, the garden, in its proximity to the domestic sphere, offers a natural play space in which order can be imposed upon the girl’s nature and the beautiful, the civilized can be characterized as her natural state. Greenaway’s picture books participate in this desire for girls as they portray daintily-groomed little girls who mirror the loveliness of the daintily-groomed garden. Ewing’s novels acknowledge the ways in which the garden, distinct from the home, can function as an autonomous place of play for girls; yet these

stories, too, reflect the expectations placed on girls to cultivate their better selves even as they engage in the imaginative world-making of their play. In this way, the Victorian girl's relationship with the natural world of the garden and surrounding countryside reveals a facet of her complex participation in the cult of domesticity, an involvement that will be further discussed in the following chapter, which focuses on the spaces of the Victorian middle-class home.

CHAPTER III
 “OUR NICHE AT HOME”: LEISURE, PRIVACY, AND GIRLHOOD IN
 DOMESTIC SPACES

In *The Art of the House* (1897), nineteenth-century interior design maven Rosamund Marriott Watson celebrates the potential of the Victorian home to function as “a refuge that may be even as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, an oasis of infinite peace” for its inhabitants (3).³⁷ While these may be rather quixotic goals for an individual concerned with flower arrangements and Japanese screens, the imagery that Watson uses here to describe the home reflects an idealization of the spiritual benefits of domestic space that was culturally pandemic in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the first decades of the Victorian period in England, the separation between the spheres of work and home that had been growing since the end of the eighteenth century among the middle class had led to the definition of domestic space as a tranquil, pleasant foil to the aggressive, bustling world of commerce. As John Tosh notes, “The Victorian middle-class domestic unit represented the final and most decisive stage in the long process whereby the rationale of the Western family shifted from being primarily economic to become sentimental and emotional”—and the home, as the seat of familial love and devotion, was honored accordingly in Victorian culture (13). The ideal Victorian home provided stability and comfort for the family; yet, as Jenni Calder points

³⁷ Watson borrows imagery from the Bible here, echoing a passage from Isaiah 32:2: “And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.”

out, the home was also a place “of activity and responsibility,” particularly for the wife and mother charged with maintaining order and function within the household (9). For daughters in the home, too, the stakes were raised; as “angels in the house”-in-training, girls navigated special responsibilities to their mothers, fathers, and siblings, even as they, too, enjoyed the sanctuary and comfort of their homes.

This chapter examines how Victorian domestic fiction for children defines the spaces of the home for girls through the lens of their responsibilities and obligations to their family, as well as their own desires for the leisure and privacy that the Victorian home was construed to provide. In their analysis of the nineteenth-century domestic interior, Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd reject “a highly structured domestic geography” that would firmly align women’s actions in the home with the prescriptions of Victorian domestic discourse, instead arguing that “the meaning of a spatial text ... is to be found in the study of the way in which its users develop rules for operating within it.” In the same vein, I examine fiction for girls, firsthand accounts of Victorian girls’ home lives, and other domestic discourses in order to investigate the cultural “rules” and expectations that surrounded girls’ experience of the home, as well as the degree to which girls themselves were understood as playing a part in negotiating and determining the meaning of the “spatial text” of the home. While domestic novels for girls often seek to acculturate them to Victorian gender ideologies through their representations of the home and of girls’ movements and behaviors in it, this fiction also accounts for how the nuanced physical spaces of the home have an impact on girls’ negotiation of gender

roles by providing them with opportunities to create their own terms and contexts for leisure and work, family and privacy.

Unpacking the uses and meanings that were attached to four particular areas of the home with regard to girls—the nursery, the bedroom, the drawing room, and the open, flexible spaces of the home that could become sites of liminality—I examine how Victorian domestic spaces were gendered in their availability to girls as sites of leisure, family work, and privacy. I argue that this gendering of space caused Victorian girls at home to find themselves in the same situation that Gill Valentine notes of young people in the twenty-first century, who “often paradoxically experience the home as a public space” (213). The efforts of the Victorian middle class to live according to what Tosh calls “an exacting standard of home life” required an energetic performance from their daughters, who were expected to be more handy and effective than sons in achieving the domestic ideal articulated in charges such as W. J. Loftie’s in *A Plea for Art in the House* (1876): “To make home what it should be, a cheerful, happy habitation, to which the absent members of a family may look with love, and to which the wanderer will always return with joy, we must have it not only clean, for cleanliness is next to godliness, and wholesome, which is another way of saying holy, but also beautiful” (Tosh 27, Loftie 90). Because girls were expected to contribute to the happiness of the home by rendering their own persons clean, wholesome, and beautiful, their occupation of almost any room in the house involved a performance of their best self that made the home feel public for them. In my analysis of these four spaces, I explore how, in Lawrence J. Taylor’s words, a “room itself embodies structure and authority and brings

these forces to aid in the process of social reproduction” (223), and how domestic fiction for girls uses representations of these spaces, and all the authority and structure inscribed upon them, to address girls’ obligations to their families and adherence to the feminine ideal.

The Nursery

In a chapter of her housekeeping manual *Nooks and Corners* (1889) entitled “Shall We Do Away With the Nursery?”, J. E. Panton celebrates this space as “the very heart of the household,” arguing that “all the sentiment of the home is to be found in the nursery, where the children are without a care or a trouble, and where they are gaining strength and health for the battle of life” (107, 108-09). Largely an architectural invention of the nineteenth century, the nursery indeed provided a space dedicated to children, but its purpose in doing this was often less romantic than Panton often claimed: the nursery effectively separated the daily home life of children from that of their parents, a separation that was considered healthier for both children and adults.³⁸ In her architectural history of the Victorian home, Annemarie Adams reads the implementation of the nursery within the context of feminism as mothers’ effort to empower themselves by liberating their personal space from their children—an early, domestic-architectural stride toward the modern daycare center (139-40). Nursery rooms were specifically designed to keep children safe, with bars covering the windows and guards covering the fireplace to prevent accident and injury, but they were also usually located with an eye to

³⁸ In tracing the history of the Victorian nursery, both Judith Flanders and Annemarie Adams identify the mid-nineteenth century as the turning point in the inclusion of the nursery in the middle-class home.

getting children out of the way. When the home's and family's sizes permitted, the nursery was given its own corridor or floor; in the average house, it might be situated in the upper or nether regions, near—or even in—the rooms typically designated servants' quarters (see figure 6).³⁹ Charlotte Yonge remembers her own nursery (an early specimen during Yonge's childhood in the 1820s and 1830s) as a room that “would frighten a modern mother” because, in addition to providing sleeping quarters for Yonge and her nurse, “it also answered the purpose of work-room for the maids” (qtd. in Sanders 201).

More than simply enabling a parental philosophy of “out of sight, out of mind,” the spatial organization of the nursery in the Victorian home illuminates Chris Jenks's assertion that “the central issue in relation to childhood space is, of course, control” (419). In addition to distancing children from adult family members, the nursery provided a single, neatly defined space for all of the events and occupations of child life. In effect, the nursery functioned as a place in which all aspects of childhood could be both completely indulged and also tidily contained—objectives that were equally appealing to parents. It often housed accoutrements that permitted it to function as bedroom, dining room, and playroom for the pre-adolescent children of the house, including beds and clothing, dishes, and toys. For children who did not take their meals downstairs with their parents, the table at which they played and read was where they dined, as well.⁴⁰ The ideal outcome of this arrangement was that the rest of the house

³⁹ See Flanders 65-66 and Adams 140-41.

⁴⁰ Frances Power Cobbe recalls that she dined in the nursery until the age of five (in 1827), when she was allowed to eat with her parents at a later hour, while Yonge recounts that she “was one of the family breakfast party...and never ate in the nursery except my supper” (qtd. in Sanders 201).

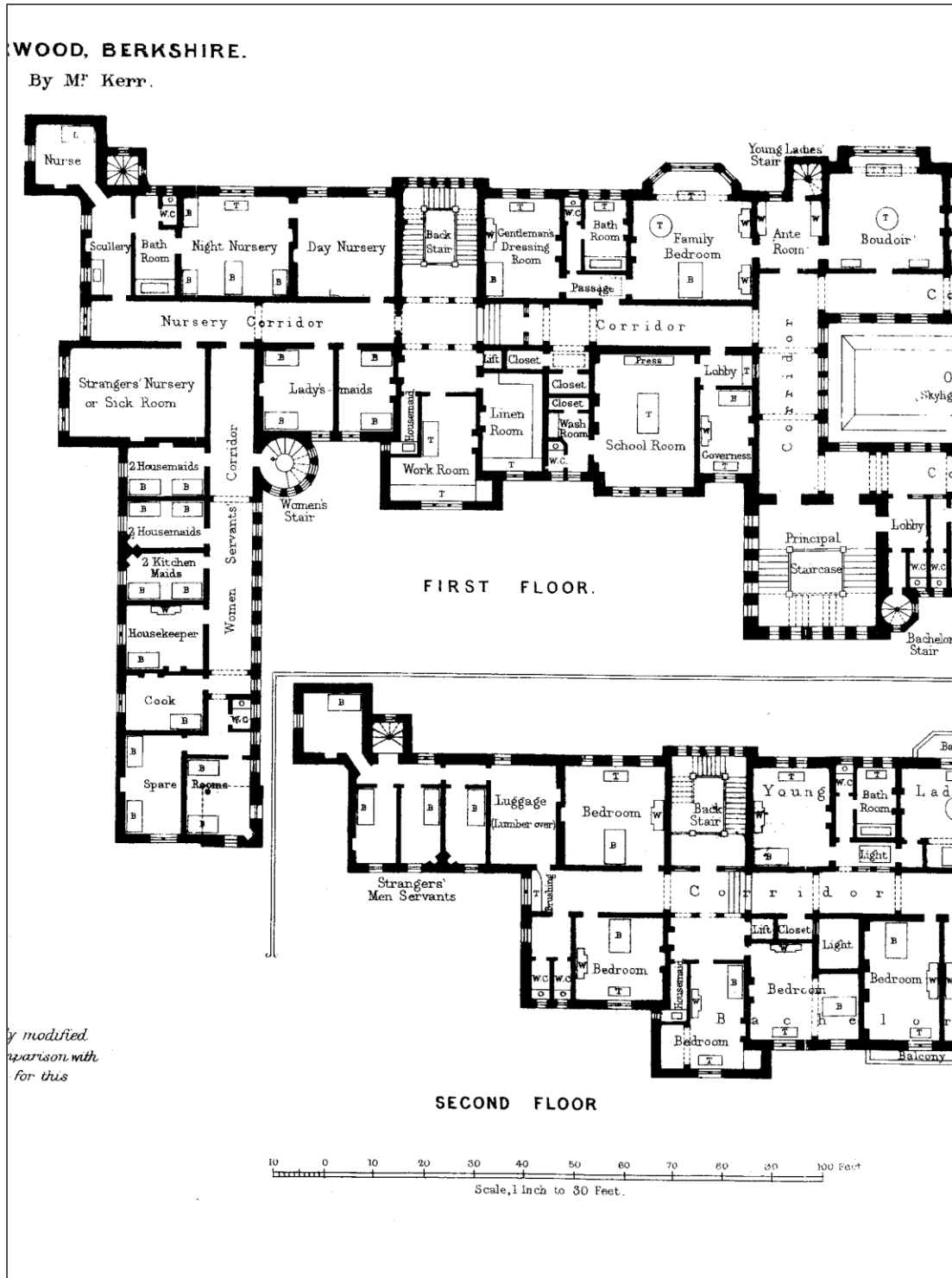


Figure 6: from *The Gentleman's House* (1864) by Robert Kerr

was spared the brunt of wear and tear caused by childhood, and order could easily be maintained in other areas of the home. Indeed, Adams's description of homes prior to mid-century, when the nursery became a staple, gives a telling suggestion of chaos: "Earlier in the nineteenth century, children had had the run of the entire middle-class home. They played in the parlour; some even slept in rooms that were seemingly intended for adult uses—for example, the dining room and drawing rooms" (136). The nursery limited the home's exposure to "childish" behavior and enabled parents to reclaim the rest of the house for adult use; yet the very existence of a nursery within the home indicated an understanding that children needed a space where they could be children and have their unique needs met. Pantón's assertion in her first housekeeping manual, *From Kitchen to Garret* (1887), that "the nursery stage should emphatically be a time for shabby clothes and dolls and noise, and for healthy natural play" points to the nursery's designation as responsive to the needs of childhood development, a space in which childhood should be privileged over adulthood and children provided with opportunities to be messy, silly, and rambunctious (207; see figure 7). Equally important was the schoolroom, which was often adjacent to the nursery and provided a more disciplined space to which boys and girls graduated when they were old enough to begin their education with structured lessons. The schoolroom provided a space in which tutors and governesses could teach and children could study without disturbing the rest of the family, and even mothers who gave their children lessons often used a dedicated schoolroom for this activity instead of the parlor or drawing room. Together, the

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FIG. 15.—An Empty Nursery.

Figure 7: from *Nooks and Corners* (1889) by J.E. Panton

schoolroom and nursery worked to contain all of the daily activities in the life of the child.

The nursery's provision of simultaneous freedom and containment was cast as particularly crucial in the rearing of young girls, who needed hearty activity and healthful play but whose romping in the presence of adults also had to be checked, more so than boys', for the sake of decorum. Victorian child-rearing philosophies figured the nursery as offering an opportunity for girls to be childish rather than ladylike. Panton bewails the instance of "a small lady of four or five dressed up to the eyes in a fantastic frock designed to attract attention to the tiny wearer, of which she is all too conscious, and carried from this luncheon to that tea" as folly that renders a girl unwholesomely precious (54). Likewise, the concept of the "parlour-child," a term used to refer to a child spoiled by over-exposure to adult company—typically through spending too much time in the parlor or drawing-room—also disparages the excessive refinement of girls that results from keeping them with adults instead of in the nursery. Jennie Chappell's account of a parlor-child known to her blames the girl's upbringing "in the parlour in a state of hush and repression" for her development into a "round-shouldered, short-sighted, anemic...martyr to 'nevers'" (qtd. Adams 138). In the company of other children—or at least not surrounded by adults—girls in the nursery could acquire the bearing and socialization comparable to that which most boys were expected to achieve when they went off to school. Victorian architect Robert Kerr also aptly acknowledges the greater relevance that the nursery—and, when children were past nursery-age, the schoolroom—had for girls than for boys when, in reviewing the life cycle of these

rooms' use, he notes that "after a few years, when the boys are sent to school, the girls remain" to use them (143).⁴¹

One of the most prominent tales of Victorian nursery life to advocate its benefits is Catherine Sinclair's 1839 *Holiday House*, a novel written before the nursery had become completely commonplace. Though it features a nursery in the home, Sinclair's novel seems to reject the containment of children and organization of domestic space that the nursery provides: her tales of Laura and Harry Graham portray their wild and erratic movements through their grandmother's house, which lead them everywhere *except* the nursery and belie the "nursery discipline" that comes in the form of their nanny (Sinclair 4). Sinclair's preface asserts that the purpose of these stories is to entertain children by "paint[ing] that species of noisy, frolicsome, mischievous children which is now almost extinct," and to portray for young readers a time "when young people were like wild horses on the prairies, rather than like well broken hacks on the road; and when amidst many faults and many eccentricities, there was still some individuality of character and feeling allowed to remain" (Sinclair vii). Yet while it celebrates the exploits of the wildest of children, Sinclair's novel throws into relief the importance of the nursery and implicitly emphasizes the need for a special space in the home in which children, particularly girls, can be regulated in their socialization and play.

Though the children, living in the home of their grandmother, Lady Harriet, and their Uncle David, have their own nursery and a strict nanny to boot (the aptly named

⁴¹ See also Carol Dyhouse 40-41.

Mrs. Crabtree), they refuse to be confined within it. Indeed, their chief mischief, though it leads to a wide variety of mishaps and catastrophes, consists simply in straying into every room in the house but the one in which they are supposed to be—a habit fostered by the fact that the children are left unattended in the house on a regular basis. Alone in the hallway one morning after their grandmother has departed on a journey to the countryside and their nurse has become distracted by other duties, Laura and Harry are counseled by their older brother Frank, “If you are wise, pray march straight up to the nursery yourselves....and...not behave like the mice when the cat is out” (Sinclair 20). However, while Laura and Harry are in the process of following through with this plan, they are drawn by curiosity to the open drawing-room door and cannot help but enter. The result of this misstep is bedlam:

Not ten minutes elapsed before they both commenced racing about as if they were mad, perfectly screaming with joy....They jumped upon the fine damask sofas in the drawing-room, stirred the fire till it was in a blaze....they tumbled many of the pretty Dresden china figures on the floor,—they wound up the little French clock till it was broken,—they made the musical work-box play its tunes, and set the Chinese mandarins nodding, till they very nearly nodded their heads off. (Sinclair 21)

At Laura’s and Harry’s hands, the drawing-room—one of the most formal spaces in the home, used to receive and entertain company—is reduced to complete disarray. The delicate and sophisticated objects that adorn the room, strategically collected and displayed to reflect the family’s taste and refinement and to civilize the space, become

vulgar playthings for the children to destroy as they do their own toys. Harry and Laura's rejection of the drawing-room's intended purpose and redefinition of it as a play-space demonstrates Ann C. Colley's assertion regarding the nature of the child's relationship with domestic space: "It is the child's being that shapes and illuminates the interiors of home. . . .Articles do not define interiors; bodies that move and feel their way among these objects do" (40). In the eyes of Mrs. Crabtree, the room and its contents are grossly misused; in Harry's and Laura's eyes, they are finally experienced to their fullest potential.

Throughout the novel, Harry and Laura show themselves to be equally wild, despite their gender difference; Laura is deemed by the narrator "quite as mischievous as Harry" from the very beginning (Sinclair 6). Yet this degree of disobedience, in Laura, amounts not only to naughtiness but also to a grievous lack of femininity, as evinced by the individual mischief she gets herself into without Harry's assistance. Her chopping off of all her ringlets when left unattended in the nursery is not an entirely unprovoked act of rebellion; Laura is thinking primarily of the pain and sleepless nights inflicted upon her when Mrs. Crabtree rolls her hair tightly into curl-papers, rather than the compliments she receives from Lady Harriet's visitors on her "forest of long glossy ringlets" (Sinclair 12). The result, however, is a dreadfully unfeminine appearance: Uncle David pronounces her "a little fright" and Lady Harriet asserts that "every looking-glass she sees for six months will make her feel ashamed of herself" (Sinclair 45, 47). Laura's appearance bears witness not only to her foolishness but to the ways in which it has made her a discredit to her sex.

Like Maggie Tulliver's shearing of her locks in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), which signals the beginning of Maggie's lifelong struggle against having to conform to the world's standards for feminine propriety, Laura's misdeed foreshadows further disgrace.⁴² When Laura visits the famed Holiday House with her grandmother, she abandons decorum and care of her person in her daily rambles over the grounds, only to find on the last day of her visit that she has ruined all but one of the frocks she has brought. The unhappy result of Laura's tomboyish ways is the confinement she must suffer while wearing her tattered clothes during playtime: though Lady Harriet "do[es] not wish to make a prisoner of [Laura] at home," she fears that other guests will be disgusted by Laura's unladylike appearance and orders her to "[r]emain within the garden walls, as none of the company will be walking there, but be sure to avoid the terrace and shrubberies till you are made tidy, for I shall be both angry and mortified if your papa's friends see you for the first time looking like rag-fair" (Sinclair 103-04). However, Laura's childish curiosity and lack of self-control get the better of her, and she is soon caught sneaking about the terrace by one of the guests, who is intrigued by the "ragged little girl" he finds behind a holly-bush (Sinclair 107). Though Laura is chastised and ordered to dress in her last clean frock and wait quietly in her grandmother's bedroom until it is time to come down to dinner, no amount of rebuke or shame can remind her of her responsibilities as the granddaughter of an important houseguest or induce her to respect the limits that have been set for her. Extraordinarily,

⁴² The similarities between the rogue hair-cutting incidents in Sinclair's and Eliot's novels have been noticed by other critics; Karín Lesnik-Oberstein goes so far as to speculate that Sinclair's novel, rather than Eliot's own childhood experiences, provided the inspiration for the scene in *The Mill on the Floss* (82-85).

she defies orders a *second* time and leaves the bedroom to run out into the park, where she is chased by a flock of geese and falls into the river. Discovered and rescued by Lady Harriet and the other guests, Laura earns the shameful reputation of “a tatterdemalion” (Sinclair 103).

This particular consequence, like Laura’s “frightful” haircut, figures as unladylike her refusal to remain in her assigned space and appropriately segregated from adult society. Laura’s adventures on her own at Holiday House render the transgressive mobility that characterizes both of the Graham children as especially problematic when perpetrated by a hoydenish girl. Furthermore, the connection between what is lacking in Laura’s environment—supervision in the nursery at home and a nursery altogether at Holiday House—and her apparent failings as a young lady-in-training suggest that more is at stake in the containment of a little girl than in that of a little boy. Boys’ mobility is understandable and acceptable, even necessary, as a prelude to their future life as men at large in the world, as the novel indicates with the eventual exits of Harry to school and Frank to adventures at sea in the navy. But Laura’s future responsibilities as her grandmother’s caregiver and companion, delineated in detail to Laura by Lady Harriet, will anchor her permanently to home and her grandmother’s side and will require of her both prudence and discipline. When Lady Harriet describes all that she will expect of Laura in the years to come, Laura herself acknowledges that it does not bode well for her current rambunctious habits: “Well, grandmamma! the moral of all this is, that I shall become busier than anybody ever was before, when we get home[....] I wonder if I shall ever be as merry and happy again!” (Sinclair 101). Laura’s wildness in the house is

destined to be short-lived because her violation of domestic space is at odds with the feminine ideal to which she is obligated to aspire; the discipline and restriction that she has heretofore lacked at home are necessary to prepare her for her imminent role as home (grand)daughter or wife.

In the decades following the publication of *Holiday House*, the nursery became a near-essential feature of the middle- and upper-class home. By 1864, Kerr had established that “in every house of the class we have in hand, however small, the special provision of appropriate Nursery accommodation is a vital point” (143). By the final third of the century, the nursery had become coded in children’s literature as the world of the middle-class child and the center for childhood domestic drama. Novels such as Juliana Horatia Ewing’s *A Great Emergency* (1874) and Mary Louisa Molesworth’s *The Palace in the Garden* (1887) use the nursery and adjoining schoolroom as the primary backdrop of their child protagonists’ home life as a matter of course, clearly defining other areas of the house as the territory of adults, which must be entered with a degree of caution.⁴³ One of the results of this presentation of domestic space is often the privileging of the child’s perception of the home, as texts promote the child’s-eye view of nursery space in relation to “other” domestic space as reality. Also embedded within this portrayal of the nursery, though, is a reinforcement of the division between adult- and child-oriented domestic space that, as Judith Neiswander notes, was “an essential

⁴³ Though two of the boy siblings in Ewing’s novel are old enough to attend school, at home they are relegated—not unhappily—to the nursery with their sister and baby brother, largely to spare their frail mother, who enjoins the children to “amuse [them]selves in the nursery” instead of disturbing her downstairs (43). Likewise, the Ansell children in Molesworth’s novel make their schoolroom and playroom their base of operations in the home of their stern grandfather, who allows them access to his library but generally dislikes having them underfoot.

expression of hierarchy in the Victorian home” (177). Constructing the nursery as the child’s true “home” within the home emphasizes that the child’s limited exposure to and preemptive removal from adult society is both natural and inevitable. Even more importantly, the use of the nursery is informed by an agenda for children’s—particularly girls’—socialization and acculturation; where *Holiday House* demonstrates the need for the girl’s consignment to the nursery in the interest of propriety, later texts show how nursery life can aid in shaping girls’ character development and maturation.

This representation of the nursery as the ideal place for children has even greater stakes in Mary Louisa Molesworth’s *Rosy* (1882), which traces the effects of transitions in home life on an eight-year-old girl’s social and moral development. Like other novels by Molesworth, *Rosy* privileges raising young girls in a domestic setting over sending them away to school for their education and upbringing; both of the girls portrayed in the novel—the difficult, troubled Rosy Vincent and her friend Beata Warwick—have been placed in the homes of friends or relatives while their parents are abroad, in order to ensure adequate nurturing and spare them the ordeal of adjusting to the rigors of school life.⁴⁴ In Rosy’s case, however, this plan has backfired: outrageously spoiled during the years she spent alone in her aunt Edith’s care, Rosy, “who had always been a fiery little person,” returns to her parents very much “unlike what they had hoped” (Molesworth, *Rosy* 10). Rosy’s situation is introduced as desperate at the opening of the novel, her

⁴⁴ See also *Hermie* (1881) and *The Carved Lions* (1895), partial school stories that are discussed more extensively in the fifth chapter of this study. Published at a point in the nineteenth century when schools were becoming more and more common a mode of education for middle-class girls in lieu of private tutors or governesses, *Hermie* and *The Carved Lions* advocate keeping daughters at home—even in the home of a friend or relative—rather than sending them to school, which is portrayed as too harsh and stressful an environment for young girls.

character so willful and selfish that “all her mother’s care and advice and gentle firmness seemed to have no effect,” and it is clear that remedial parenting cannot undo all of the damage caused by Rosy’s unfortunate upbringing in the constant company of her silly, doting aunt (Molesworth, *Rosy* 10). Rather, it is Rosy’s interaction with the other inhabitants of the Vincent family’s nursery and schoolroom that proves to be the crucial deciding factor in her redemption, and Beata Warwick, when she comes to live with the Vincents while her parents are traveling, has the greatest impact on Rosy’s arduous transition from bad girl to good. Initially viewing Beata as a competitor for the esteem and affection of the rest of the family, Rosy finds that she is able to identify with Beata as a girl her own age, and the gentle Beata soon wins Rosy’s confidence through her kindness. The private moments that the girls share in conversation serve as the catalyst for Rosy’s change: Rosy, in spite of her “cross-grained, suspicious little heart,” begins to confess her anguish over failing to be good and to seriously consider Beata’s earnest entreaties to work at changing her behavior, which Beata claims is “like skipping and learning to play the piano and lots of things. Every time we try it makes it a little easier for the next time” (Molesworth, *Rosy* 124, 68). Even as she struggles with the rest of her family, Rosy comes to respect and trust Beata, who sympathizes and reasons with Rosy’s difficulties in a way that Rosy’s brothers, Fixie and Colin, and Mrs. Vincent cannot. Beata becomes Rosy’s partner in her secret plan to “be good” because, unlike the others, she can encourage and support Rosy without making her feel pressured or guilty.

As Rosy’s behavior improves and regresses by turns, the nursery and schoolroom, as the children’s headquarters, become the principal stages for a daily battle

between the good and naughty impulses that surface within Rosy. Each of the children's activities, from meals to lessons to playtime, takes on new weight for Rosy and Beata as an opportunity for Rosy to gain or lose ground in her mastery over willfulness. Rosy's forbearance when Colin teases her or pulls her hair is not a nursery mundanity but a miracle of self-discipline, and Beata suffers with Rosy and exults for her when she admits that being good "does get a very little easier" every time she tries (Molesworth, *Rosy* 77). In contrast, when Rosy defies the girls' governess, Miss Pinkerton, by refusing to do arithmetic lessons day after day, Beata is horrified and can "hardly believe Rosy was the same little girl [...] who had made her so happy by talking about trying to be good" (Molesworth, *Rosy* 82). In setting the drama of Rosy's development within the microcosm of the children's quarters, the novel highlights the nursery and schoolroom's vital roles in supporting girls' socialization; only through practicing the performance of "goodness" during her daily routine in these rooms can Rosy internalize the appropriate behaviors and attitudes, and each little victory or misstep in the nursery alludes to Rosy's potential to model good behavior in the future as she grows older.

At the same time, Rosy's endeavors demonstrate the value of the nursery—and its effectiveness—in segregating "problem" girls from the household at large. The controlled environment of the nursery, with its regular schedule, familiar inhabitants, and gentle reproofs, helps Rosy to develop self-discipline, while days spent unregulated in the company of adults are clearly detrimental to her. When her aunt Edith arrives to visit her former charge, whisking Rosy out of the nursery to stay in her rooms and accompany her on drives, the result is not only Beata's heartache and loneliness at being

left behind, but Rosy's regression into the selfishness and petulance of "the Rosy of some months ago" (Molesworth, *Rosy* 143). Rosy's release from the nursery also gives her a sense of entitlement to wander about the house at will, which nearly leads to the greatest disaster of all when Rosy sneaks into her mother's dressing room without permission to try on a new frock and accidentally sets the dress on fire.⁴⁵ There is a moralistic irony in the idea that Rosy's "fiery" act of naughtiness should lead to literally fiery consequences. But the physical danger in which Rosy puts herself and others (specifically Beata, who comes to her rescue and is injured as a result) through her disobedience and lack of supervision also points to a theme that is central to this novel, as well as *Holiday House* and other domestic fiction for young girls: the volatility of the undisciplined girl's body and the threat that it poses to the order and security of the home.

In these texts, girls' bodies are positioned "as unruly, in need of control and/or intervention," and the nursery provides the appropriate space for staging this regulation (Colls and Hörschelmann 1). Like Laura Graham in *Holiday House*, whose naughtiness blights her physical appearance in the form of a grotesque haircut and tattered, filthy clothing, Rosy's willfulness renders her a body out of control—a problematic situation not only when she sets herself on fire but earlier in the novel, as well, when her bad

⁴⁵ Lighting oneself on fire is a classic consequence of disobedience in nineteenth-century evangelical and didactic fiction for children; two of the best-known examples can be found in Mary Martha Sherwood's *History of the Fairchild Family* (1818) and Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* (1845), which was translated into the English *Slovenly Peter* from German in 1848. Molesworth's use of the trope here, however, is approaching cultural obsolescence if not outright cliché; by the time *Rosy* was published in 1882, almost twenty years had passed since Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) made sport of such "nice little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they *would* not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them" (56, emphasis in original).

temper and changeability lead her to punch Colin in the eye, or to crush Fixie in a passionate embrace one moment and “flin[g] her little brother away from her” the next (Molesworth, *Rosy* 8, 4-5). Rosy’s body must be reined in because this degree of violence is unacceptable in any member of the middle-class Victorian household, and particularly unbecoming in a little girl. More importantly, however, this behavior must be checked because, in ignoring codes of conduct and refusing to control her body, Rosy is able to exercise a disproportionate amount of power over the household; her moods and actions have the ability to “throw a cloud over everybody” in the family and force others, including her mother, to walk on pins and needles around her (Molesworth, *Rosy* 45). Until Rosy herself is civilized and socialized through her experiences in the nursery, her family is helpless to manage her outbursts, admitting instead that “it is best to leave her alone” (Molesworth, *Rosy* 61).

The role that the nursery as a social alcove within the home plays in teaching the young girl modes of acceptable behavior is further developed through Beata’s experiences in the Vincent nursery with Rosy and her siblings. While the lesson in self-restraint that Rosy must learn may seem nothing more than reasonable, the demands placed on Beata to control herself imply an even higher standard for young girls in the house. Though Beata is virtuous, gentle and commendable in all she does, she is a sensitive child easily wounded by Rosy’s temper and Colin’s teasing—a weakness that the novel indicates she can overcome, however, as increased exposure to children her own age fosters emotional stability and hardiness in her. When Beata first arrives at the Vincent home and hears that Rosy will consent to like her “if only you don’t make a fuss

about how good you are, and set them all against me,” the shock of this frosty reception and the ordeal of separating from her mother reduce her to an outburst of tears (Molesworth, *Rosy* 36). Yet instead of receiving sympathy from Mrs. Vincent and her own uncle, who has escorted her to the house, Beata’s display causes only disappointment and irritation in the adults, who feel “vexed with [her] for beginning so dolefully” (Molesworth, *Rosy* 37.) Despite her tender age and the extenuating circumstances, Beata’s crying is viewed as an inappropriate and distasteful bodily expression of emotion that should be controlled, much like Rosy’s temper. Later, when Rosy’s aunt arrives for her visit and Beata’s time in the nursery is made miserable by loneliness and the fickle Rosy’s “cold looks and careless manner,” Beata’s pathetic response of despondence and retreat into self only exacerbates the situation instead of moving anyone to pity (Molesworth, *Rosy* 163). Rosy’s admission that she “do[es]n’t care for [Beata] when she looks so gloomy” (Molesworth, *Rosy* 169) and Mrs. Vincent’s reproof of Beata for “looking so unhappy” and “allowing foolish words to make [her] so unhappy” place the responsibility firmly on Beata’s shoulders not only to make the best of the situation but to regulate her body even to the point of altering nuances of her emotional demeanor (Molesworth, *Rosy* 170).

In short, as a child and, in particular, a guest in the house, Beata, like Rosy, must learn not to draw attention to herself or trouble others with unappealing demonstrations of feeling—and the crucible of the nursery proves most effective in teaching her this. Though Rosy’s treatment of Beata is the primary cause for Beata’s sadness, Rosy’s blunt honesty when the two are alone in the nursery and schoolroom ultimately has the bracing

effect that Beata needs. Through matter-of-factly responding to Beata's expressions of sadness and injury, Rosy awakens in Beata "a new and braver spirit" (Molesworth, *Rosy* 168) by helping her to see that her melancholy is not only useless in improving the situation but "tiresome" as well (Molesworth, *Rosy* 152). Beata soon finds that the more she reacts to Rosy's mood swings with resilience and good nature, the more Rosy's own attitude and powers of self control improve. In this way, the girls' time together in the nursery gives them the opportunity to hone one another's social skills and begin to master the art of polite self-restraint, so that, by the end of the story, they are well on their way to becoming the pleasant and civilized young ladies that Mrs. Vincent wants them to be. In portraying socialization and self control as lessons to be learned in the contained and regulated space of the nursery, *Rosy* demonstrates how the nursery itself, when occupied by girls, participates in the understanding of "the little girl's femininity as a body which must be moulded and smoothed, which probably demands training and suffering" (Talairach-Vielmas 5). Even—or perhaps especially—when it is taken for granted as the designated location for children in stories such as this, the nursery proves crucial in saving the home from the immature and undisciplined girl and saving the girl from herself.

The Bedroom

"What sumptuous room in after years ever affords the deep delight of the sense of ownership which attends the first awakening of a girl in a room of her very own?" (Barker 32). This question, posed by Lady Barker in her interior decorating guide, *The*

Bedroom and Boudoir (1878), may well echo the author's own girlhood memories of her first rapturous experience with the possession of a private bedroom in her family home. As Lady Barker suggests, obtaining a room of one's own was a momentous occasion in the life of the Victorian girl, particularly because it was generally an uncommon one. While young children of both sexes could often be expected to sleep, dress, and play in the same nursery quarters, boys and girls who had reached puberty were typically given separate rooms; but limited space and the large size of families often dictated that they share these rooms with siblings of the same sex.⁴⁶ An illustration in Lady Barker's chapter on beds and bedding, which depicts an older and younger sister conversing in bed together in the bedroom they share, provides an apt image of what most commonly took place in family homes (see figure 8). Girls typically were not given private bedrooms of their own until they had reached—or had passed—a marriageable age and were considered to be what J.E. Panton calls a “grown-up daughter” (*Nooks and Corners* 120). Indeed, so certain was Panton that this would be the case that her chapter on “The Girl's Room” in *Nooks and Corners* opens with a lengthy editorial about middle-class parents' responsibility to provide a space in their home for their of-age daughters so that they may be spared the fate of “marrying the first man who asks them because they see plainly how desperately they are grudged the room in the house which should have been theirs for ever” (119). Panton's charge, as well as her description of the ideal girl's room as a spacious, pretty boudoir with a sitting room where the occupant could entertain her own friends, suggest that older girls were thought both to need and to deserve a space

⁴⁶ See Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*. 110.

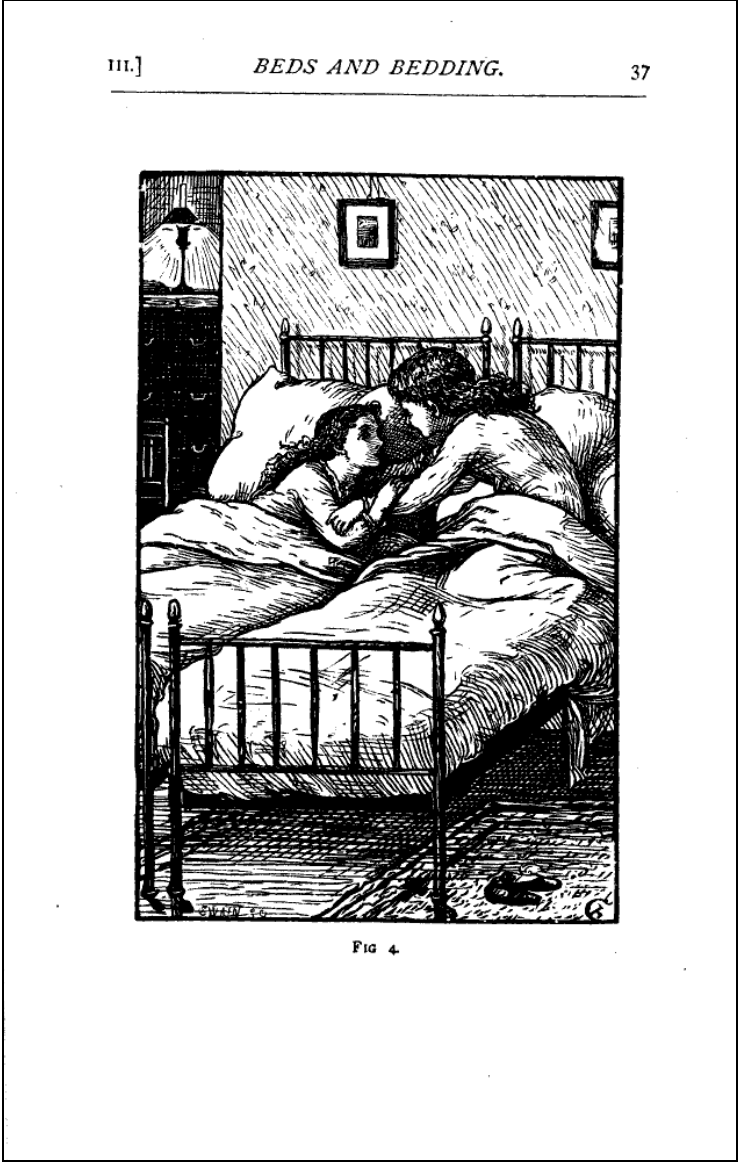
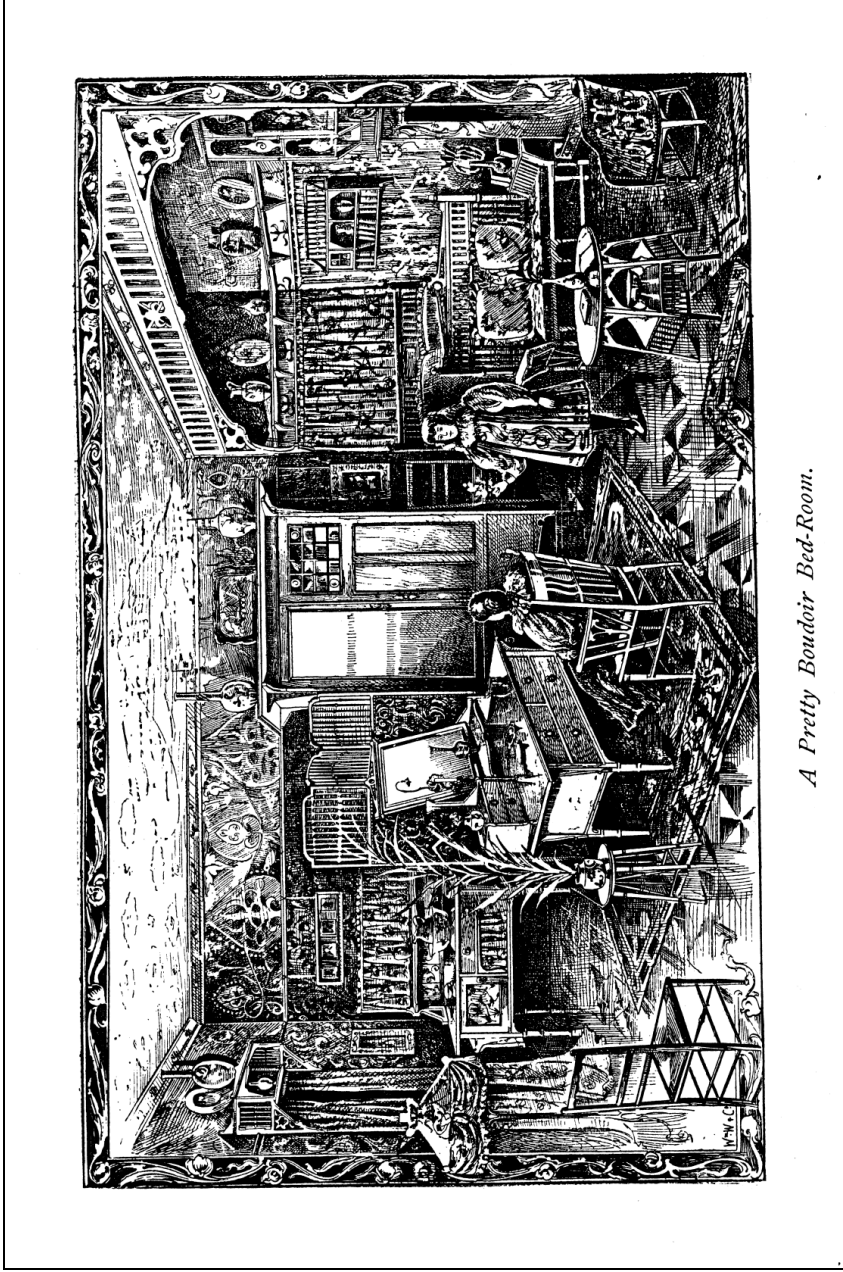


Figure 8: from *The Bedroom and Boudoir* (1878) by Lady Barker



A Pretty Boudoir Bed-Room.

Figure 9: from *Every Girl's Book of Sport, Occupation, and Pastime* (1897) by Mary Whitley

that belonged entirely to them and catered to their personal interests and activities (see figure 9).

Yet while the girl's bedroom could function as her private domain, it also provided space in which to practice the domestic arts that would require her attention when she married and took charge of her own household. Lady Barker suggests that girls might...be helped to make and collect tasteful little odds and ends of ornamental work for their own rooms, and shown the difference between what is and is not artistically and intrinsically valuable, either for form or colour. It is also an excellent rule to establish that girls should keep their rooms neat and clean, dust their little treasures themselves, and tidy up their rooms before leaving them of a morning, so that the servant need only do the rougher work.

(14)

Accounts of younger Victorian girls who did enjoy their own rooms indicate that it meant as much to them as Lady Barker suggests that it should. Fifteen-year-old Emily Shore, the daughter of a curate and the eldest of five children in an English country home, notes in a journal entry for February 28, 1835 that "I have had for some time past a room to myself, which is a great pleasure to me. It is one which used to be called the lark-room.... I like it better than any room in the house" (90). As other entries show, Shore's bedroom provided her with privacy not only for sleeping and dressing but also for indulging in her own hobbies and extensive studies of natural history; she describes rising early to sketch in solitude by her bedroom window, or spending hours on end in her room to observe a wasp building a nest in the lock of her dressing-table drawer (90,

110-11). In the midst of a daily schedule that included teaching younger siblings, reading to her invalid mother, and fulfilling “all the necessary duties of needlework, household affairs, etc.,” Shore’s bedroom provided her with extra opportunities to give herself over to unmitigated absorption in her personal interests (259).

M.V. Hughes’s possession of a room of her own, described in her memoirs of her later Victorian childhood, was complicated by her position in her family as the youngest of five children and the only daughter. Hughes recalls from the period of her childhood before school that “the afternoons were my own, and I generally spent them in my own room. Here I was complete monarch” (48). Yet even in her bedroom, where she was at liberty to spend her time focusing on personal projects, such as “drawing and painting [and] cutting patterns in perforated cardboard, sticking them on a piece of coloured ribbon, and inflicting them on some aunts as a Bible bookmark,” Hughes did not escape the demands of her four older brothers or her own sense of obligation to fulfill them (49). The “study”—a room given over to the children of the family that, according to Hughes, was “ours” although she didn’t appear to spend much time in it—was directly above Hughes’s room in the house, and her brothers devised a system of sending a basket down through the study window with messages from any of the boys “asking me to fetch him a pair of scissors or a particular book. I would find and place it in the basket to be hauled up” (48). The disconnect here between Hughes’s appreciation of her bedroom as a place where she could be alone and do just as she pleased and her willing compliance with her brothers’ efforts to infiltrate this space and draw her into their activities reveals how physical space itself can be the mediator of girls’ negotiations of

their gendered roles in the family. Hughes's mother's "rule" of "Boys first," ostensibly intended to prevent her daughter from becoming spoiled was also a manifestation of the contemporary cultural understanding of sisters' responsibility for their brothers' happiness at home. This understanding was borne out in the way Hughes thought of and used her own bedroom and the boundaries that are usually considered intrinsic to that space. Hughes's experience offers a distinctive example of how ideologies concerning gender and family life that circumscribed the idea of the Victorian family and home could be represented in girls' definition and use of a supposedly private space such as the bedroom.

In a similar way, late-Victorian girls' literature, with its growing interest in girls' independence and the distinctive girl culture that was emerging at the time, often romanticizes the bedroom as the space in which a girl can be, as Hughes says, "complete monarch."⁴⁷ L.T. Meade underscores the autonomy of her young heroines in such novels as *A Princess of the Gutter* (1895) and *Merry Girls of England* (1896) through their exclusion of other family members from their private bedroom space; the girls in these stories find satisfaction in locking their bedroom doors behind them and keeping the world at bay. Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Sara Crewe; or, What Happened at Miss Minchin's* (1887-88), the Victorian precursor to her Edwardian novel *A Little Princess* (1905), figures Sara's attic bedroom in Miss Minchin's home/school as both a dismal prison and a cherished refuge where she can reign as princess of her own imaginary kingdom. When the attic is mysteriously redecorated with luxurious furnishings in one

⁴⁷ As Sally Mitchell argues in *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915*, late Victorian literature for girls often emphasized girls' independence from adults, both at home and in school (3-4).

of the most momentous scenes in the novel, the magic of the transformation and the room's palatial qualities complete the romance of Sara's bedroom as a haven for wish-fulfillment and self-realization. These representations emphasize how the bedroom can aid in separating the girl from the rest of the household and provide a physical condition in which she can realize her difference from—or even superiority to—the other inhabitants of the house.

At the same time, girls' literature can employ similar representations of the bedroom to perpetuate conservative Victorian attitudes about girls' domestic responsibilities through portraying the imagined space of the girl's bedroom as a crucial site for learning lessons about feminine duty and sacrifice, even as this literature fetishizes the private space of the bedroom. Evelyn Everett Green's *Dorothy's Vocation* (1890), for example, uses detailed descriptions of its title character's bedroom at the opening of the novel in order to convey Dorothy Templeton's good taste, intelligence, and inner beauty in contrast to her selfish and overbearing older sisters, Claudia and Mabel. Dorothy, disliked by her older sisters for her piety and neglected by her widowed father, is stationed in a bedroom above the rest of the family on the third floor, where "the air of luxury and beauty that pervaded the lower rooms stopped short" (Everett-Green 10). Though something of an outcast in her own home, Dorothy cherishes her bedroom, where she is able freely to indulge her "passionate love of the beautiful" by "lavish[ing] endless care and taste, and a good deal of money, upon this little domain of hers, which she had gradually transformed into a miniature museum of art treasures" (Everett-Green 10). Each carefully purchased and arranged decoration, described in

detail by the narrative, reflects Dorothy's financial and aesthetic independence, while the loveliness of her possessions bespeaks her refined character and personal qualities of grace and charm. Dorothy's bedroom functions as a manifestation and celebration of her inner self not only in décor but also in the activities she pursues there. Dorothy organizes the space as a "boudoir" rather than "a mere bed-chamber," with a sitting area for herself and her guests, a bookcase for her personal library, a writing-desk where she can indulge her "dreams of authorship," and even her own piano, which allows her to lose herself in her own interests without interference by reducing her dependence on other rooms in the house for entertaining, study, and music, and enables her to control her own exposure to other family members (Everett-Green 11). This kind of boudoir is exactly what Panton envisions for older daughters in *Nooks and Corners*, as discussed above, but the fact that Dorothy has carved the space out of her family's home and designed it all herself renders it particularly special. Framed by encounters with her sisters that frustrate and belittle Dorothy, her time spent in her bedroom is refreshing and empowering because it provides a means of escape from the overbearing Claudia and Mabel and acts as an assertion of her right to her own niche within the family and its home. Dorothy's bedroom is a refuge in which she can "lea[n] back upon the soft cushions and se[e] nothing but beauty and harmony around her" (Everett-Green 14).

Yet while the novel touts Dorothy's bedroom as a crucial site of leisure and self realization for her—indeed, the place where "most of her time was spent"—the narrative seldom actually portrays her in this location. Instead, Dorothy can be found in the family nursery, caring for her motherless young half-siblings; out in her neighborhood, visiting

the poor and sick of her district; or, most importantly, at the residence of her mother's relations Mrs. Seymour and her son, Ralph, who have renewed their acquaintance with Dorothy's family and quickly become enamored with her goodness and charm. The brief amounts of time Dorothy does spend in her bedroom are passed not in entertaining herself but in reflecting on her shortcomings and resolving to perform acts of selflessness more cheerfully, a duty that she considers to be her "vocation" in life despite her father's indifference and her sisters' scorn. It is this dedication to her vocation that sparks Ralph's affection for Dorothy and, ultimately, his proposal of marriage, which she accepts. Dorothy's possession and use of her own bedroom have clearly been key in her cultivation of refined accomplishments and her disengagement from her sisters—both of which are crucial to the loveliness and independence that distinguish her throughout the novel—but her chosen vocation as a caregiver to her siblings and, eventually, a wife to Ralph eclipses this independence and her interest in the privacy she so enjoyed throughout her girlhood. Ralph's assertion that "[i]t will be your vocation, Dorothy, to make me and all around you happy" suggests that her days of lounging in her boudoir, pleasant though they may have been, are over (Everett-Green 253-54).

In Margaret Haycraft's *Like a Little Candle, or, Bertrande's Influence* (1891), the privacy of the bedroom is rendered as essential not only to the interior development of its girl protagonist, the eight-year-old Bertie, but also to her efforts to evangelize her selfish and worldly family. Haycraft's novel, a cloyingly sweet Evangelical story and thematic ancestor to Eleanor Porter's *Pollyanna* (1913), celebrates the positive influence that one loving and selfless little girl can exert over an entire household: Bertie, an

orphan living on the reluctant charity of her aunt and uncle and their children, slowly transforms the family into kinder, gentler people through her beatific example. Before she is able to accomplish this, however, Bertie must find her place in the family's hearts and home, and her struggle to do so is mitigated by the solace that she finds in the little bedroom that she has all to herself.

As in *Dorothy's Vocation*, Bertie's bedroom is presented as evidence of familial rejection in the form of geographical isolation and marginalization within the home: Bertie is stationed in "a tiny attic, next to Cook's, and up the staircase leading from the nursery-floor" rather than in the nursery with the toddler Ray, or in a bedroom with one of the family's older daughters (Haycraft 31). Despite its dinginess and Spartan accommodations, however, Bertie instantly recognizes and cherishes her ownership of the bedroom, pronouncing it "a dear little place [...] so quiet and alone, and all my own!" (Haycraft 31). Disregarding the fact that "the kitchen-maid used to sleep here," Bertie soon puts her mark on the room through cleaning and decorating it with the quaint, pious treasures she has brought with her—copies of illuminated Bible passages, portraits of her dead parents, and her bible and hymnal. That Bertie is able to take such pleasure in so pathetic a space indicates her humility and purity of heart. When invited to her aunt's bedroom for a lecture on her duties and responsibilities to the family as a poor relation, Bertie is fascinated by the beauty and luxury of the room, "tak[ing] in with delight [...] the carved scent-bottles, the pictures, and all the elegant belongings of the bedroom"; however, "she feels in her heart she would rather possess her very own little chamber under the roof, where the stars keep her company, and the clouds seem just

above” (Haycraft 33). Bertie’s preference of the celestial over the material is also motivated by her penchant for isolation and flights of fancy—the attic’s position as the highest point in the house appeals to her primitive sense of romance, and her attic window provides the perfect vantage point for people-watching and daydreaming. For the kind of diversions that Bertie likes best, her bedroom is the ideal location. Indeed, in her aunt and uncle’s demanding household, it is the only location for leisure afforded her; Bertie’s cousins as well as the servants make a daily habit of running her ragged with petty tasks and errands, so that even in the nursery where she plays and the schoolroom where she studies, she is herself at all times a servant. Though Bertie accepts these duties humbly and cheerfully, they exhaust her physically and emotionally, and her bedroom proves invaluable to her in providing a respite: “nobody guesses what Bertie’s attic means to her, when she climbs thereto at night, and sometimes amid the work and troubles of the day” (Haycraft 39).

If, as Max van Manen and Bas Levering claim in their analysis of childhood and privacy, the key to the hiding place is that it enables us to “make ourselves literally invisible to the glance of others,” then Bertie escapes the derisive gaze of other members of the household when she reaches her bedroom, but only to come under the full surveillance of God in Heaven, who “looks after [her], and [...] never, never forsakes [her]” (Haycraft 68).⁴⁸ The solitude of Bertie’s attic room gives her the chance to pray for strength in her struggles and to “steal away to Jesus” for spiritual comfort when the

⁴⁸ In *Childhood’s Secrets: Intimacy, Privacy, and the Self Reconsidered* (1996), van Manen and Levering explore privacy as a crucial component of childhood development that fosters personal dignity and morality.

grief of her bereavement and neglect overwhelm her (Haycraft 52). Yet the proximity to God of which Bertie's room reminds her (“it seems so close to heaven and to Jesus”) brings conviction as well as comfort; it is while she is in her bedroom contemplating a Bible passage that Bertie realizes it is sinful to attend a party to which she has been invited that is scheduled to take place on Sunday, the Lord's Day (Haycraft 40). Each time, too, that Bertie has been mistreated by her spiteful and selfish cousins and retreats to her room in passionate anger, she finds that once she is able to meditate in solitude, “gentle thoughts are whispered to the troubled little heart,” and “He who knows every sorrow, every heart-battle, gives rest to the little heart that cried to Him, and helps Bertie to conquer the bitterness and to dry her tears” (Haycraft 80-81). Each time Bertie enters her bedroom exhausted, frustrated, and sorrowful, she leaves it refreshed and restored—but, more importantly, morally strengthened and resolved to continue to be selfless and good. For the angelic Bertie, the satisfaction of performing and reflecting on her interior self coheres seamlessly with religious purification because her sense of self is conceived within a larger sense of duty to God, to her family, even to the world at large, which she demonstrates when she constructs a missionary collection box for the household in which she and her family can make donations.

Ultimately, the personal value that Bertie accrues while in her bedroom becomes currency that enriches her family both literally and figuratively. When Bertie's aunt and uncle experience a reversal of fortune and the family becomes impoverished, it is Bertie's influence that inspires the family to live cheerfully with their straitened circumstances and find alternative means of supporting themselves. Furthermore, the

selflessness and moral fortitude that Bertie has developed during the hours spent alone in her room steel her to volunteer to relocate to an orphanage to relieve her aunt and uncle of the expense of her care.⁴⁹ The fact that the solitude of her beloved attic bedroom has prepared Bertie to accept life in an institution with “hundreds and hundreds of strangers” underscores emphatically that privacy and leisure are not reasonable expectations—or sustainable options—for a girl at home (Haycraft 143). It also foreshadows what likely lies in store for Bertie in the future: if not the roles of wife and mother, then that of family or community caregiver in some other capacity.

Novels such as *Dorothy's Vocation* and *Like a Little Candle* undoubtedly reflect an awareness of girls' need for a space of privacy and leisure within the home and the role that this space plays in girls' personal identity formation. Yet even as these texts celebrate the personal fulfillment and satisfaction that a room of one's own provides, they construct the bedroom ultimately as a site of personal self-discipline that, when utilized appropriately, yields its relevance in girls' lives to spaces and pursuits that privilege the needs of family. These novels suggest that girls' bedrooms—even beautiful bedroom-boudoirs, with all their comforts and amenities—are made to be abandoned, and that the self-realization that girls are shown to crave can be indulged by domestic space only insofar as it can be made to comply with family interests.

⁴⁹ The novel, of course, does not allow Bertie to meet with such a dismal end. Instead, her parents, long believed to have died in a shipwreck, appear miraculously unharmed and prosperous, to reunite with Bertie and make a new home with her. It is not so much Bertie's actual sacrifice as her willingness to accept potential sacrifice that is meant to be meaningful to young readers.

The Drawing-Room

In her room-by-room study of the Victorian home, Judith Flanders notes that the house was the physical demarcation between home and work, and in turn each room was the physical demarcation of many further segregations, involving hierarchy (rooms used for visitors being of higher status than family-only rooms), function (display rating more highly than utility), and further divisions of public and private (so that rooms used for both public and private, such as the dining room, alternated in both use and importance). (8-9)

Expectations concerning girls' use of these spaces involved a similar hierarchy: the more public the area of the home, either to family or to guests, the more demands were placed on girls' behavior. G. Presbury's engraving "Evenings at Home," printed as the frontispiece of Sarah Stickney Ellis's 1842 conduct book, *The Daughters of England*, reflects the extensive claims made on girls by other members of their family in the spaces where they gathered together (see figure 10). Set in a home's drawing room or parlor, the engraving depicts two older parents and a son among the seven daughters of the family, six of whom are busy attending to the others—one older girl pours tea for everyone; two others lean and kneel respectively at their mother's chair as she looks upon them gratefully; two younger girls surround the father, caressing him gently and helping him with his slippers; and another daughter plays the piano, her face devotedly upturned toward the brother, who leans forward to listen. Only the youngest child, a little girl of two or three years, is absorbed in entertaining herself with a doll. The statement that this image makes is unyielding; the daughter must put all others' comfort first when



Figure 10: frontispiece of *The Daughters of England* (1842) by Sarah Stickney Ellis

in the familial spaces of the home. This was to be accomplished not only through her activities but other behaviors, as well—particularly, it seemed, on the behalf of her brothers. In a speech to her students on “Family Love,” Frances Buss, headmistress of the North London Collegiate School for Girls from its founding in 1850 to her death in 1894,⁵⁰ suggests that girls have a duty to their brothers when choosing their own conversation, dress, and pastimes, as well as in the way that they actually treat them. She implies the risk involved in her portrait of the girl who does not meet the standard: “Consider the sister whose indifference to her brother’s feelings causes him to find pleasures away from home. . . . She is perhaps vain, trifling, ignorant, idle, careless in her dress, because ‘only Tom is at home.’ He naturally concludes that all girls are like the one that he knows best, a conclusion which destroys his respect for all girls and women” (Buss 55).⁵¹ As a result, time spent in the family spaces of the home was not necessarily a girl’s own; in those rooms, she often, like the space itself, belonged to the family.

⁵⁰ Buss’s speech on family love was published in 1896 in the collection *Leaves from the Note-Book of Frances M. Buss*, edited by Grace Toplis, but it is not clear at what point or with what frequency she shared this message during her long career. See also Elizabeth Blackwell’s *Counsel to Parents on the Moral Education of Their Children* (1878), in which Blackwell, a physician, insists that “[t]he peculiar value of the influence of sisters can only be hinted at [. . .] It is a special mission of young women to make virtue lovely [. . .] In this aspect, small things become great, through their uses. The principles of dress become worthy of study; health, grace, ability, accomplishments, receive a new meaning, --a consecration to the welfare of the human race. To make brothers love virtue, to make all men love purity, through its incarnation in virtuous daughters, is a grand work to accomplish! The failure of young women in any country, to embody the beauty and strength of virtue, is one of the most serious evils that can befall a state” (75).

⁵¹ Much of the domestic fiction for girls from the 1850s through the 1880s echoed this opinion of the “home sister”—Charlotte Yonge’s “A Patchwork Fever” (1883) holds its adolescent protagonist, Frances Gale, accountable when her refusal to play with her brother at home leads to his pursuit of mischief with naughty boys in the village. Frances herself is moved to confess that “‘it was all my fault’” when her brother is punished (45). Sarah Tytler’s *Girl Neighbors* (1888), Yonge’s *The Daisy Chain*, and Juliana Horatia Ewing’s *Six to Sixteen*, all discussed here, also portray sisters who feel—to varying degrees—a special obligation to please their brothers, particularly when the boys are away at school.

In many ways, Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* (1856), one of the most popular domestic sagas of the first half of the Victorian age, indicates that this is appropriate. Yonge's novel, which portrays one of what Susan M. Kenney calls "those large intrepid families we have come to associate with that period," resonated with young audiences, going through nine editions in the first sixteen years that it was in print. Chronicling the history of the entire May family but focusing primarily on its three eldest daughters, Yonge's work emphasizes the theme of the girl's self-sacrifice and submission to duty in service of home and family.⁵² The May family's organization of domestic space—specifically spaces in which the family gathers, such as the drawing room—emphasizes the importance of daughters' service to their family at all times and the self-discipline and feminine ideal that they need to embody in the common spaces of the home in order to serve adequately.

When Mrs. May, mother to eleven children and mainstay of the home, is killed in a carriage accident, the family must learn "to begin afresh" without their matriarch to comfort and guide them, and Dr. May and the children quickly turn to the eldest daughter, Margaret, for comfort and domestic authority. Margaret, a gentle and loving girl who is approaching marriageable age, finds her own future as a wife and mother compromised by the serious injuries that she has sustained from the carriage accident; yet these very injuries, which have physically incapacitated her and bound her to the house, allow her—and the spaces that she occupies—to be surrendered all the more completely to her distraught and needy family. Too gravely injured at first to be placed

⁵² See Melissa Schaub (2007), Gavin Budge (2007), and Shirley Foster and Judy Simmons (1995) for further discussion of the novel's development of this theme.

in the room she has hitherto shared with her sisters, Margaret is instead installed in her late mother's bedroom, which still contains all of Mrs. May's "familiar objects, the chair by the fire, the sofa, the books, the work-basket, the letter-case, the dressing things," which "overcome" the children at times with recollections of how their mother ministered to them in "that very room" (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 32, 67).

Rather than troubling the family, though, Margaret's new physical surroundings have the effect of establishing her even more thoroughly as the maternal figure; Ethel admits to Margaret that "I am happy, sitting on her bed here with you. You are a little of her besides being my own dear Peg-top!" (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 86). As she takes her mother's place both figuratively and literally, the immobile Margaret and her mother's bedroom become the hub of the May household. Because she cannot move about the house to look after the children and oversee other domestic matters, everyone in the family simply comes to her: siblings vie for opportunities to bend her ear with their complaints or ask advice for their troubles, and Dr. May goes to Margaret instead of to the drawing room to rest and take his evening tea. Ethel, one of the older siblings, finds that getting Margaret alone for a sisterly tête-à-tête is "not so easy," as Margaret often has "little Daisy lying by her, and Tom sitting by the fire over his Latin," or "Aubrey trott[ing] in, expecting to be amused, [and] next Norman" (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 61, 85). Norman himself, the second eldest brother in the family, marvels at the unusual amount of hustle and bustle taking place in the bedroom: "the constant coming and going, all the petty cares of a large household transacted by Margaret—orders to the butcher and cook—Harry racing in to ask to take Tom to the river—Tom, who was to go

when his lesson was done, coming perpetually to try to repeat the same unhappy bits of *As in Præsenti*”(Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 113). As the space evolves over time into “Margaret’s room,” it also competes with the downstairs common rooms as a center of family life, in effect abandoning much of its original purpose as a private space to which its owner can retire—a situation that Margaret admits she finds “trying at times” (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 114). This repurposing of the space from mother’s room to daughter’s and from bedroom to family room not only contributes to the Mays’ perception of Margaret as a mother figure but also underscores the claim that they have on her personal space—and even her body—when she assumes the responsibility of being their mainstay.

Even when Margaret begins to cede the household and family management to the more able and energetic Flora and Ethel, the family’s situation of Margaret within the spaces of their home indicates that her role as their possession will—and ought to—continue nonetheless. When it is decided that Margaret should be carried downstairs every day and placed in the drawing room in order to be more involved in the family’s social life, she is anxious about forfeiting what little privacy she has: “she had been willing to put [the move] off as long as she could ... [because] in entering on the family room, without power of leaving it, she was losing all quiet and solitude” (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 162-63). She acquiesces, however, for the sake of the rest of the family, who find that the drawing room “was no longer dreary, now that there was a centre for care and attentions, and the party was no longer broken up—the sense of comfort, cheerfulness, and home-gathering had returned” (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 165). That

Margaret's mere presence in the drawing room—though it occurs at a cost to her—can accomplish all of this implies that her responsibility to her family transcends the tasks of household management and even motherly nurturing to include simply remaining perpetually available in the house—wherever family members want her, whenever they want her. Margaret's injury and resulting invalidism, like her mother's tragic death, are incidental, but her family's response to Margaret's resulting immobility draws attention to the sense of ownership and entitlement that her family feels with regard to her, as well as the ways in which these feelings compromise Margaret's experience of privacy in the home and her enjoyment of its common family areas.

Although Ethel is not physically handicapped as Margaret is, her increasing sense of responsibility to her family restricts her movements within the home as well. As Ethel grows older, she must help relieve the increasingly frail Margaret of domestic responsibilities while juggling her own philanthropic community activities. Inarguably the heroine of the novel, Ethel begins as a hoydenish bluestocking, nicknamed by her family "Ethelred the Unready" because of her absentminded ways, and her process of becoming "a useful, steady daughter and sister at home" involves correcting these unladylike habits: Ethel must give up most of the classical studies she shares with her brother Norman, learn to keep herself tidy, and focus more carefully on feminine accomplishments such as needlework and French in order to please her father (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 181). Even more importantly, Ethel must work to fit literally as well as figuratively into what Margaret calls her "niche at home" through occupying the appropriate spaces of the May home in the appropriate manner. Until she begins to curb

them, Ethel's unladylike habits extend to her use of the drawing room; rather than behaving with decorum and showing consideration for the rest of the family in this room, Ethel makes a mess of the space as she uses it for her own purposes, leaving textbooks for her charity school "heaped on the drawing-room sofa" and rifling the chiffonnière and cupboards in search of a newspaper or book, then leaving them in "such confusion" that the rest of the family is horrified by the sight (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 83, 154). Ethel's haphazard and self-absorbed behavior are further denoted as a violation of the drawing room space when, sitting there one day with her young brother Aubrey, she becomes so engrossed in reading a magazine article that she fails to notice that Aubrey has set his pinafore on fire with a scrap of burning newspaper. Her father's angry exclamation that her hobbies are making her "good for nothing" refer not simply to how they amplify her ineptitude and carelessness in attending to her brother, but also to how they encourage her tendencies to privilege the personal over the familial in a family space (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 136).

Ethel's road to becoming "more valuable in the house" is paved with lessons in how to be pleasing and useful in the drawing room, whether it be learning to make the family's tea when it arrives at tea-time—a task whose ubiquity in the Victorian drawing room is signaled by the fact that Ethel's *brother* Richard teaches her how to do it—or simply remaining silent when guests join the family for tea instead of dominating the conversation with her "wild and vehement" remarks (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 76,

141).⁵³ The significance of the drawing room as a site of personal sacrifice for girls is further demonstrated by the fact that Ethel's one act of open defiance in the novel comes in the form of rejection of the drawing room and the submission to familial authority that it requires. One evening after Dr. May has harshly punished Ethel's brother Harry for playing a silly prank, Ethel refuses to come down from her bedroom to the drawing room for tea, citing Harry's unjust sequestration in his own room. To Ethel, presenting herself in the drawing room to take her place with the rest of the family represents an acceptance of her father's authority and judgment that she does not feel at the moment; as she tells her brother Richard, who pleads with her to obey, "I cannot come down; I cannot behave as usual" (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 267). Eventually, however, the gravity of her proposed defiance and the fact that it "would be wrong of [her] to stay up" when her presence is expected in the drawing room become clear to Ethel and lead her to acquiesce and come to tea, a resolution that suggests that a daughter's obedience dictates not only her activities in the home but also her very location within it at a given time.

Sarah Tytler's *Girl Neighbors: The Old Fashion and the New*, published in 1888, indicates that this standard was still relevant to girls' home lives decades later in the Victorian period, even as the novel's title posits its datedness. Tytler's novel compares the "old-fashioned" Pie Stubbs to the "new-fashioned" Harriet Cotton using appropriate family service within the home as the ultimate yardstick to measure each girl's adherence to the feminine ideal. Chronicling a day in the life of Pie (which is short for

⁵³ The phrase "more valuable in the house" is actually Flora's description of herself in contrast to Ethel as she secretly disparages the family's efforts to "mak[e] a notable or elegant woman of Ethel" (Yonge, *The Daisy Chain* 76). Flora, who appears to embody the feminine ideal of the graceful, composed, and pleasing daughter, takes pride in her abilities to outserve and outshine Ethel in the home—exhibiting a competitive streak that demonstrates how far from the ideal she really is.

her unwieldy Christian name, Sapia), the novel follows her throughout the common areas of her family's cottage, illuminating all of the helpful things she finds to do in each space. Pie's early morning visits to the garden to weed and pick flowers or fruit for her parents to enjoy at the breakfast table, her daily task of pouring the breakfast tea and coffee in the dining room in order to spare her mother's arthritic hands, her role as her mother's assistant in the storeroom, her responsibility for supervising the housemaid's cleaning of the parlor, her office as her father's secretary in the study—each of these daily activities in the family spaces of the home codifies Pie's success as a good daughter, with each space itself enabling a particular deployment of her obligation—and desire—to serve her household. Outside of her bedroom (where Pie lingers only long enough to dress, read her Bible, and say her prayers), Pie's time, energy, and attention belong to her family.

On the other hand, Harriet, in her neighboring manor-house, touts her authority as the ostensible mistress of her widowed father's luxurious home but participates in the actual running of the household only "by fits and starts," blissfully "ignorant of the trouble she gave and the disorder she caused by her whims and fancies" (Tytler, *Girl Neighbors* 131, 137). Fortunately for the servants in the Cotton household, Harriet largely abandons any domestic responsibility for frivolity and self-indulgence, but, as a result, each location in the manor-house that she occupies becomes a den of ennui. Whereas Pie "read[s] novels pretty frequently" but "had been trained to put the best tale aside in order to do her duty, whatever it was, and return to the story with fresh zest and redoubled appreciation of its merits," Harriet wastes hours on end lying on a sofa in the

drawing room or in a hammock in the garden “gallop[ing] through novels by the cart-load, reading voraciously and at the same time skipping shamelessly, digesting nothing and remembering marvelously little,” yet “being indebted to them for the power of passing the time” (Tytler, *Girl Neighbors* 23, 133-35). Part of Harriet’s problem is that she has no family to care for; her idleness results largely from the fact that her father, often away on business, wants “little from his daughter except [...] that she should look well and happy,” which, due to her lethargy, “she was far from doing always” (Tytler, *Girl Neighbors* 141). But Harriet is also guilty of a stubborn rejection of what she caustically refers to as the “domestic felicity” in which she sees Pie participating when she spies on the other girl (Tytler, *Girl Neighbors* 106). This contrast between Pie’s and Harriet’s domestic experiences implies that, without duty and service to others to guide them, girls cannot have a truly happy or healthy home life; girls need familial obligations to imbue the family spaces of the home with meaning and purpose. This message is made all the more significant by the fact that Tytler’s novel, written at a time when girls’ higher education, financial independence, and work outside the home were becoming more and more common, later portrays Pie and Harriet eventually leaving their homes to attend college together.⁵⁴ Unlike Yonge, Tytler does not posit a life of domesticity—either as wife or as daughter—as the only future for middle-class girls, but she does portray family service as a crucial part of domestic life for girls. That more than thirty years after Yonge’s *Daisy Chain*, and more than forty years after Ellis’s *Daughters of*

⁵⁴ Tytler’s *A Houseful of Girls* (1889), which will be discussed further in the fifth chapter of this project, goes farther in engaging the prospect of girls’ independence from the domestic by portraying four sisters who must leave their middle-class home to help earn a living for the family after their father, a doctor, loses his life savings.

England, Tytler's domestic fiction still figures the model home daughter as perpetually available to her family indicates the enduring significance of this image to the Victorian domestic ideal.

Liminal Spaces

In her analysis of domestic interiors, Victoria Rosner points out that “the Victorian house was ordered above all by its room divisions,” a system of organization that defined each space in the home and limited the terms for its appropriate use (63). Rigidity, rather than openness or flexibility, characterized the floor plan of Victorian homes, and few spaces were left unnamed and undivided into drawing room or dining room, scullery, nursery, servants' quarters, bedroom, study. As the discussion in this chapter has shown, this organizing force at work in the Victorian home extended beyond the arrangement of domestic spaces themselves to inform domestic fiction's definitions of girls' appropriate positioning within these spaces; literature for girls endorses a Victorian domestic structure that imposed discipline on girls, from the containment that the protagonists experience as children in the nursery, to the self-denial they prepare for in privacy and the self-sacrifice and restraint they practice in the home's family spaces. With the performance of model behavior always a concern for girls, they can become objects of scrutiny by other family members and lose a sense of the home as a site of privacy and leisure.

Yet despite this ordering of the home—and the subsequent ordering of girls' lives within it—it was not completely impossible for girls to find spaces in the home that

they could redefine, reorganize, and call their own. Frances Power Cobbe's early Victorian girlhood testifies to this point; in her memoirs, Cobbe recounts how she took over the garret of her family's home as her own personal "play-house," even keeping the rooms locked up "lest anybody should pry into them" (qtd. in Sanders 189). Her description of her décor and activities in the garret illuminates how the room was, for her, a site of passionate creativity and self-realization:

Truly [the garret] must have been a remarkable sight! On the sloping roofs I pinned the eyes of my peacock's feathers in the relative positions of the stars of the chief constellations; one of my hobbies being Astronomy. On another wall I fastened a rack full of carpenter's tools, which I could use pretty deftly on the bench beneath. The principal wall was an armoury of old court-swords, and home-made pikes, decorated with green and white flags (I was an Irish patriot at that epoch), sundry javelins, bows and arrows, and a magnificently painted shield with the family arms. On the floor of one room was a collection of shells from the neighbouring shore, and lastly there was a table with pens, ink and paper; implements wherewith I perpetrated, *inter alia*, several poems of which I can just recall one. (qtd. in Sanders 189)

Cobbe's use of the garret in this way is extraordinary both because of the intellectual and creative activities that she chose—astronomy and carpentry were both considered decidedly masculine pursuits and atypical for a girl—and because of the freedom and aggression with which she claimed the room as her own. Her account provides a powerful example of the Victorian girl's ability to act as a social agent in the home,

capable of creating unique definitions for the space in which she lives. At the same time, however, it is the nature of the space itself that enables Cobbe to claim and remodel it; the garret, far removed from the main parts of the house and assigned no particular use or purpose in the standard Victorian floor-plan, is available to be annexed in a way that no other part of the house could be. An uncharted area that is simultaneously both part of the home and not, the garret functions as liminal space, that is, “spac[e] of uncertainty that resist[s] binary classification,” and is therefore ideal as a site of creative possibility for Cobbe (Atkinson et al. 153). Cobbe’s account demonstrates the vital role that liminal space can play in the girl’s home life; this space, by its nature open to multiple definitions, can provide the girl with a unique opportunity to explore her own multifaceted identity.

Juliana Horatia Ewing’s *Six to Sixteen* (1875) demonstrates how girls can not only use but also *create* liminal space within the home in order to distance themselves from family members and pursue their own interests and identities. Part domestic fiction and part school story, the novel itself is characterized by in-between-ness as it straddles two distinct genres of fiction for girls. The overarching theme of Ewing’s tale is the enduring friendship between two girls, Margery Vandaleur and Evelyn Awkright, whose close social bond as schoolmates enables them to create boundaries between themselves and the rest of their family when they return to a life as home daughters. The novel follows the orphaned Margery through various domestic and educational experiences to her meeting with Eleanor at a boarding school, where the two girls quickly become the best of friends, sympathetic to one another intellectually and spiritually. When their

school breaks up due to illness, Margery and Eleanor return for good to the vicarage where the Awkrights live, and Margery makes her home there as their ward. The girls fall easily and pleasantly into the rhythm of home life with the Awkright family, spending much time with Eleanor's parents and brothers, but they also remain the near-inseparable unit that they became while at school—and it is to enjoy this special friendship more fully that they isolate themselves in the house's old kitchen, where they find freedom from the rest of the family.

On the invitation of the cook, and finding that they “had some writing on hand which we did not wish to have discussed or overlooked by other members of the family,” Eleanor and Margery set themselves up one evening at the big kitchen table in front of the fire (Ewing, *Six to Sixteen* 16). The girls find the space “so cosy and independent” that they claim the room as their “new study,” bringing whatever projects they happen to be working on—particularly academic and creative endeavors such as translating Dante's *Divina Commedia* or writing their autobiographies, which Eleanor's brothers condemn as “fads” (Ewing, *Six to Sixteen* 16). Indeed, the boys deride the very presence of Eleanor and Margery in so undignified a space, to which Margery responds that “we have this large, airy, spotlessly clean room...all to ourselves, and we have an abundance of room, and may do anything we please, so I think it is no wonder that we like it, though it be, in point of fact, a kitchen” (Ewing, *Six to Sixteen* 17). Writing their memoirs, which “cannot be penned under the noses of the boys,” in the kitchen, Eleanor and Margery find the freedom to assume the poses most conducive to creative genius—Eleanor rocks in a rocking-chair, and Margery paces the floor until inspiration strikes. In

this way, the girls turn the kitchen, a discrete and clearly defined space, into a liminal zone by undermining the certainty of its purpose in the house and transforming it into an in-between space where they can indulge themselves in informal and insular behaviors on a scale no other space in the house can allow, even the bedroom that they share.

Elaborating on Victor Turner's foundational concept of liminal space as this "place that is not a place," Mary Ann Caws asserts, "Liminal perception chooses its framework, hallowing an otherwise mundane space and setting it apart, as in a game whose rules oppose what happens therein to the normal customs of day-to-day work. Its time, in which the clock plays no role, remains extraordinary, and anything might happen in it" (14). In the same way, by turning their "liminal perception" toward the kitchen, the girls, through their desire to reinvent the kitchen and their energetic creative and intellectual activity, transform it from a site of servant-class drudgery into an amazing place of potential and promise. Through Margery and Eleanor's actions, the kitchen becomes the site of the girls' own liminality in addition to the space's; this obscure yet pleasant spot in the house provides the girls with a respite from their roles as home sisters and even home daughters, presenting them instead with the opportunity to live in between the worlds of home and school by taking their own imaginations and intellects seriously in a social microcosm that resembles the "world of girls" in which they lived at school.⁵⁵

It is important to note that Margery and Eleanor's activities in this liminal space that they create, while imaginative and independent, are not necessarily rebellious; the

⁵⁵ The quoted phrase borrows the title of L.T. Meade's 1886 school story.

girls' use of the kitchen space to do their own creative and intellectual work is not condoned by their brothers, but neither is it an instance of gender-inappropriate productivity. Hobbies and interests like those that absorb Eleanor and Margery were considered by most to be a different class of study from Greek, Latin and advanced mathematics; by Ellis's definition in *Daughters of England*, the girls' activities would fall into a category of occupation acclaimed as "the exercise of the faculty of invention," which amounts to stretching one's creative abilities, and which Ellis recommends for every girl because it is "in after life, to render her still happier, by enabling her to turn to the best account every means of increasing the happiness of those around her, or rendering assistance in any social or domestic calamity that may occur, of supply in every time of household need, and of comfort in every season of distress" (Ewing, *Six to Sixteen* 74-75). This prediction ultimately comes true for Eleanor, who at the novel's close marries and finds that the hobbies she cultivated as a girl enrich her relationship with her husband: "I do often feel so thankful to my mother for having given us rational interests! I could really imagine even *our* quarrelling or getting tired of each other, if we had nothing but ourselves in common" (Ewing, *Six to Sixteen* 296). It is worth noting, however, that the girls' particular interest in choosing their own intellectual pursuits and even writing their autobiographies appears to contradict Ruskin's claim that the female intellect "is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision....Her great function is praise" (144). The final words of the novel—"intellectual pleasures have this in common with the consolations of religion, that they are such as the world can neither give nor take away" (Ewing, *Six to Sixteen* 296)—

reaffirm its implication that intellectual and creative pursuits are among the most satisfying for girls because of the personal fulfillment that they bring.⁵⁶ The place of intellectual interests in girls' lives, and the place in which they participated in them—the school—will be the subject of further discussion in my next chapter.

⁵⁶ This sentiment in the novel is corroborated by Ewing's own girlhood experiences of family life; her mother, Margaret Scott Gatty, much like Eleanor Awkright's mother, set an example for her daughter by her distinction as a natural scientist and her authorship of a number of works for children.

CHAPTER IV
LEARNING TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES: GIRLS' NEGOTIATION OF
INDEPENDENCE AT SCHOOL

Let us go into the school-house. To the right of the entrance is a large, light, and pretty room, known as the office.... Going straight through the corridor, and leaving on the right the library, already beginning to be well-stocked with the standard works of English and foreign authors, we ascend a small flight of steps and arrive at the examination-hall, the munificent gift of the Clothworkers' Company. In this grand hall, built of oak and red brick, and with its galleries capable of accommodating seven hundred people, prayers are read every morning at 9:15 by the head-mistress before the day's work begins.... There are three sets of class-rooms—the first, occupied by girls in the higher forms, opening on to the hall; the second, used by girls in the middle of the school, opening on to the gallery of the hall, and the third occupied by the younger children higher still. The classrooms are supplied with rows of separate desks, each provided with a foot-rest and with a movable chair, having an extra support for the back. (qtd. in Doughty 80)

This tour of the North London Collegiate School for Girls, given in an article of the same title by E.A.L.K. published in the 1881-82 issue of the *Girl's Own Paper*, goes on to detail for its readers the school's dining hall ("a cheerful, spacious room"),

gymnasium, lecture theatre, and workroom for sewing, emphasizing with each description the professionalism and productivity of every space in this institution. If we consider as social anthropologist Henrietta L. Moore does “the meanings encoded in the organization of space and how...they relate to social structure” (81), it is easy to see that embedded within the design of the spaces of the school described here are the values of regulation, order, and industry, qualities that were prized by Victorian society in general and so often imposed upon children to ensure their moral, physical, and intellectual wellbeing. To this end, each space in the North London Collegiate School for Girls is supervised by qualified professionals, from the headmistress Frances Buss who reads prayers every morning for the faculty and student body, to the seamstresses who help students with their sewing in the workroom. Victorian schools such as this one, the writer wants readers to know, are designed room by room to be the ideal location for girls to make the most of themselves physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually.

The efforts of writers such as E.A.L.K. to legitimize the Victorian girls’ school as a respectable and effective site of learning developed largely in response to the significant changes in society’s standards and norms for girls’ education that took place throughout the Victorian period. The Taunton Commission of 1868⁵⁷ and Endowed Schools Act of 1869, which acknowledged the need for a more stable school system for girls, both reacted and contributed to a shift in which the practice of educating daughters at home, where parents could continue to nurture and monitor their children, was gradually being replaced by the practice of sending girls to day-schools or boarding

⁵⁷ Officially entitled the Schools Inquiry Commission, it is now more commonly known by the name of its chairman, Lord Taunton.

schools. In 1853, when the education of daughters at school was starting to become commonplace, the Reverend John Todd's *The Daughter at School* gets to the heart of the debate over home versus school education for girls: "the substance of the argument for a strictly home education...has strength; and yet very few attempt to do the thing; and for this there must be some urgent reasons. What are they? Or rather, why is the young girl sent away among strangers, when so much is at stake, and perhaps so much is imperiled?" (20).⁵⁸ Todd's questions touch upon both the anxiety that Victorian parents felt over relinquishing the molding of their daughters' minds and souls to others and also the reality that this was most often the superior option. Ultimately, Todd suggests, the superiority of a school education to a home education comes down to matters of growth and maturation: "The home education, it is said, would make [girls] amiable children; and so it would, but the difficulty is, they would be children as long as they lived" (22). Distance from the sheltering influence of home and the social independence that school fosters, Todd suggests, provide the bracing effect that girls need in order to mature into responsible and useful women.

Indeed, throughout the Victorian period, one of the primary benefits of school was thought to be its function for the girl as a threshold into the adult world that exposed her to important social and cultural realities that would inform her position in adult society. Schooling for girls—particularly those of the middle class—was meant to prepare them for adult life as wives, mothers, mainstays of community service, and

⁵⁸ Todd was an American minister living and writing in Massachusetts, but *The Daughter at School* was published in both the United States and England in 1853, with subsequent editions printed in England in 1856 and 1859.

sometimes even workers, by honing their abilities to reason, reflect, and analyze complicated situations. As John Ruskin claims in his exhortations on girls' education in "Of Queen's Gardens" (1865), a girl's schooling was "calculated to add the qualities of patience and seriousness to her natural poignancy of thought and quickness of wit, and also to keep her in a lofty and pure element of thought" (155). Ruskin's romanticization of girls and their education aside, his lecture touches on the abstract qualities that Victorian society expected schools to instill in their female students. Thus, as Judith Rowbotham notes, the focus of education extended in scope beyond academic study to the equipment of girls with the wisdom and propriety needed to carry out "the performance of her social and domestic responsibilities" (100). Girls were confronted with these responsibilities in a variety of ways. For the girl of straitened circumstances (typified throughout school fiction as the "charity girl" because she often relies on scholarships), who would be obliged to work for a living in adulthood despite her affiliation with the upper classes, the school experience was attended by the pressure to excel in her studies in order to win necessary scholarships and eventually secure employment. For the girl whose foreseeable future included wife- and motherhood or life as a "home daughter" in her father's house, it behooved her to acquire the education that would make her a well-rounded and sensible homemaker and companion. For all girls, school was expected to refine one's character and instill the kindness, integrity, and Christian virtues that characterized the ideal Victorian English woman.

This delicate and complex educational process could go awry at any moment, however, through various missteps that girls could take: interest in the frivolities of dress

and ornamentation rather than serious matters, a lazy attitude that prized play and daydreaming above learning, deceitfulness and disobedience in breaking school rules, uncharitable behavior or cruelty to fellow students. It is just such of habits that Buss warned her pupils against in her weekly addresses, speaking with disgust of the girls who “manage to get through their lessons with as little trouble as possible, whose thoughts are centred on themselves, who waste their father’s money by carelessness or extravagance in dress” (44). Accordingly, in Victorian school fiction, the shift from home life to school life for the girl is often portrayed as a stressful and difficult transition, involving loneliness, homesickness, and confusion, and made more traumatic, in many stories, by the disintegration of the home that necessitates the daughter’s departure for school (typically in the form of the death of one or both parents). While in some ways replicating the wholesomeness and security of the home, school life is often represented in girls’ stories as an alien existence, with new customs, hierarchies, and codes of conduct that must be learned and obeyed. Furthermore, because it was typically impossible, both in fiction and in real life, for school administrators to implement a “system of perpetual espionage,” to use Elizabeth Wolstenholme’s words, the schoolgirls in Victorian fiction often find themselves negotiating the world of the school and their own personal development on their own, unattended by the authority figures whose job it is to mold and guide them (156).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Wolstenholme comments on the undesirability of such a system in her 1869 treatise “The Education of Girls, its Present and its Future” when she points out that “it can never be considered very desirable to bring together great numbers of young people and to throw them into the intimacy of an English boarding-school, without far more careful oversight than it is easy to secure” (156).

However, as I argue in this chapter, far from impeding or endangering the schoolgirl's progress, this lack of supervision in particular spaces of the school is figured in Victorian fiction as useful to the schoolgirl, whose relief from the regulated space of the classroom enables her to think critically about her future place in the world and respond to the pressures that she faces as a girl in the process of maturing into a woman. As scholars such as Sally Mitchell, Mary Cadogan, and Patricia Craig have noted, Victorian school stories for girls participated in a representation of girlhood that emphasizes girls' "shared experiences, exchanged ideas, and created fashions in language, feeling, and attitude," which in turn, through the turn of the century, "coalesced into a distinctive culture" whose existence suggested the independence of girls' identity from that of their families and other socio-cultural authorities (Mitchell, *The New Girl* 74). I posit that, increasingly throughout the nineteenth century, Victorian school stories assumed girls' growing independence through the representation of girls' autonomous use of school spaces.

In this chapter, I explore how Victorian fiction portrays the school as a site of girls' maturation and identity formation through demonstrating how the spaces of the school provide girls with opportunities to independently negotiate the various pressures and expectations that are placed upon them as young ladies learning how to be model Englishwomen. While specimens of English school fiction for girls date back to the mid-eighteenth century with Sarah Fielding's *The Governess; or, Little Female Academy* (1749), it was in the Victorian period that this genre took shape as a popular form of literature for girls, with writers such as L. T. Meade and Geraldine Mockler churning out

novel after novel. Through privileging the private, less-regulated spaces of the school as crucial to girls' identity work, these school stories emphasize girls' ability to define and perform scholarship, friendship, integrity, religious piety, and defiance for themselves, even as these texts underscore the importance of respecting and adhering to broader social and cultural norms. I examine here three locations in particular within the school that are figured in Victorian school stories as private—the dormitory or bedroom, the outer grounds, and the liminal spaces of hallways and other nooks and corners—in order to illuminate how these spaces function as meaningful sites of contact with the realities that Victorian girls could expect to face when they left the world of the school. Although the Victorian school clearly replicates the space of the home in its provision of these three particular areas for girls, in school fiction, the identity work that girls do in these spaces assists them in orienting themselves within a larger and more varied social world than the domestic sphere of their family homes.

Liminal Spaces: Hallways, Nooks, and Corners

Thirty years before the Endowed Schools Act signaled a general sense of acceptance of formal school education for girls, Sarah Stickney Ellis wrote in *The Mothers of England: Their Influence and Responsibility* (1839),

What has been said of public schools, with regard to the education of children in general, is most especially applicable to that of girls. More liable than boys to receive impressions from surrounding things, more easily diverted from a straightforward course, less fortified by moral courage...they are at once more

exposed to injury as less capable of withstanding it; while many of the reasons which operate powerfully in favor of sending boys to school, have no relation whatever to the formation of the female character. (192)

While Ellis's views certainly represent the more conservative element of Victorian society, her statements here reflect a concern for girls' emotional and moral wellbeing at school that pervaded mid-century England as the middle class struggled to come to terms with the shift from home to school education for both boys and girls. This sociocultural anxiety has been traced by Elizabeth Gargano, who maps throughout mid-century fiction the Victorians' fear of "the looming specter of educational standardization" as a reaction against the institutionalization of education for children, in which "harsh, excessively regimented classrooms" were contrasted to "a supposedly nurturing tradition of domestic instruction that dated back to Rousseau's *Emile* (1762)" (1).⁶⁰ But, as Ellis suggests, early Victorian angst over sending girls in particular to school extended beyond concerns regarding unsettling changes in architectural and pedagogical theories; there was also uncertainty regarding the benefits of daughters' association with strangers and the long-term effects of prolonged absences from the moral compass that the home was thought to provide. In the minds of solicitous parents, the outside influence of other, less well-trained girls could foster bad habits and undermine all of the morals and values that careful teaching and nurturing at home had inculcated in their daughters. Furthermore, because girls were expected to return to the home as either wives or daughters,

⁶⁰ Gargano's study is similar to this project in that she traces ideological undercurrents through nineteenth-century representations of spaces in boys' and girls' schools, including the garden/playground, the classroom, and the teacher's study. However, Gargano's discussion is much broader than the one here, covering texts published earlier in the century as well as Victorian fiction for adults.

attachments that competed with their domestic identity could be considered distracting and even pernicious, and girls' social assimilation at school could be viewed as creating a conflict of interest between home love and schoolgirl solidarity.

This concern for the ways in which school influences could be detrimental to girls manifests itself in early Victorian school stories' portrayal of the spaces of school as well.⁶¹ Elizabeth Missing Sewell's partial school story, *Laneton Parsonage* (1846-48), one of Sewell's vehicles for her devout Anglican beliefs, characterizes school as a moral limbo, a dangerously neutral space in which all of the religious instruction and character formation accomplished by parents at home may be just as likely undone as upheld.⁶² When twin sisters Ruth and Madeline Clifford express delight at the prospect of being sent to school by their parents, their father warns them that "school is a very different place from home. There are many more temptations and trials, and you will have more companions to lead you into mischief" (Sewell, *Laneton Parsonage* 67). On the other hand, Agnes Loudon's "The Moss Rose" from *Tales of School Life* (1850) portrays school as a space fraught with unhealthy class tensions that can be potentially

⁶¹ Harriet D'Oyley Howe's *Clara Eversham; or the Life of a School-Girl* (1851) offers an exception to this early Victorian characterization of school, but it does so through portraying the school as a provisional home in the absence of a real one: its titular character is a spoiled, uneducated, and unchurched orphan who is sent by relatives to a decidedly homelike school, where kind teachers and fellow students help her to learn "the all-importance of religion," which in turn assists her in improving her personal character as well as in her studies (99).

⁶² Partial school stories are so called because their settings are divided between home and school. Sewell completed *Laneton Parsonage* just four years before she and her sister decided to open their own school (comprised mostly of their nieces) in their home to supplement their income, seventeen years before the publication of Sewell's *Principles of Education: Drawn from Nature and Revelation and Applied to Female Education in the Upper Classes* (1865), and eighteen years before Sewell founded St. Boniface School, Ventnor, for middle-class girls. *Principles in Education*, in which Sewell asserts that "education is too important a matter for theory. The risks of mistake are too fatal" (iii), and that "the object of education is the carrying out of God's Will for the individual" (25), places a heavy emphasis on the incorporation of Christian values and doctrine in girls' learning. While Sewell clearly did not object to the teaching of daughters outside of the home, she sincerely believed that girls' very souls were at stake in their education.

damaging to girls. The story's protagonist, Grace Harding, who has been sent to a "decidedly aristocratic" school by her tradesman father, is made to suffer "the rude taunts and biting speeches" of her class-conscious schoolmates and finds that "her father had done neither a wise nor a kind thing to her, though he thought he had done both" (Loudon 108). As they figure schoolgirl society itself as problematic for their characters, both stories construct the classroom and other communal spaces of the school as hotbeds of unwholesome social interactions between schoolgirls, sites where peer pressure and bullying can manipulate girls, clouding their judgment and even leading to bad behavior. Thus, what becomes important for girls' moral and emotional wellbeing in this geography of the school are small, out-of-the-way spaces in which girls can catch a moment of privacy and escape the stress of the schoolroom in order to repossess themselves and overcome the various trials and temptations that school life presents. Peripheral spaces in the school, such as hallways, closets, and the nooks and corners of unused rooms, are made into liminal space by schoolgirls as they appropriate and redefine these locations for their own purposes of personal character development. As "spaces where identity can slip and reform," to use Jacob Bull's words (461), these liminal spaces momentarily liberate girl characters from the strictures of school's social conventions and routines, allowing them to reflect on and navigate their situation from a space outside the microcosm of the school.

In Sewell's *Laneton Parsonage*, the liminal space of the dressing room in Mrs. Carter's school proves to be no less than the salvation of young Madeline Clifford, a good-hearted and friendly but thoughtless girl. When a small, careless act of

disobedience gets Madeline in trouble with her devoutly Christian parents at home in the first part of the novel, Madeline apologizes and promises to remember to try harder, but she is brought up short by her father's somber reminder that "you are going to school, Madeline; you will have many things there to make you forget—lessons, play, new friends, new subjects to talk about. If you forget at home, how will you remember at school?" (Sewell, *Laneton Parsonage* 124). Mr. and Mrs. Clifford work to instill in Madeline a sober-minded focus on following the Christian principles that they value so highly, but, once at school and surrounded by new schoolmates and other distractions, Madeline finds herself struggling again to concentrate on being a model student and a positive example to the other girls. The classroom where the pupils sit together—unattended—to do their lessons each day proves an exceedingly difficult place for Madeline to be good, as she is easily enticed by friends to talk, laugh at inappropriate stories, or help other students with their work instead of completing her own. After suffering chastisement from her teacher for being "inattentive and thoughtless" in her lessons and behavior, Madeline realizes the importance of finding a private space in which to reflect on her conduct; she "long[s] to be alone! but for ten minutes—that she might only, as Mrs Carter had said, make good resolutions, and pray to God to assist her in keeping them" (Sewell, *Laneton Parsonage* 188). However, since the school has a "strict law forbidding [Madeline] to go up-stairs, except at particular hours" (Sewell, *Laneton Parsonage* 188), Madeline finds that she must improvise if she is going to escape the school-room for a moment of reflection and prayer:

There was a small room, generally known by the name of the dressing-room, on the ground floor, very near the school-room. Here were kept boxes and baskets, garden cloaks, old bonnets, &c., and here she might be alone. She stopped for a few moments, that it might not seem as if she was angry, and then went out of the room. The dressing-room was empty, but she could not close the door or fasten it; and she did not like to kneel, lest she might be discovered.... She stood and covered her face with her hands, and asked, in few and simple words, that God would forgive her all she had done wrong, and teach her to do better, and help her to be useful, for her Saviour's sake. (Sewell, *Laneton Parsonage* 188-89)

Though it is ostensibly categorized as a storage room and dressing room—the schoolgirls actually use this space to don their coats and bonnets for outdoor activities—the space that Madeline takes advantage of here is sufficiently peripheral to the school's daily activities that it can be easily appropriated and redefined by her needs. Furthermore, while it is not completely secure in the privacy that it offers, the dressing room gives Madeline the distance from the classroom and the other schoolgirls that she requires in order to feel that she is alone with God and pray. The result of Madeline's activities in the dressing room is that, for her, the space acquires sacredness as her special place of religious meditation, and the ability to slip into this quiet spot to pray on a daily basis strengthens her character and enables her to resist the temptations that snare other schoolgirls.⁶³

⁶³ Mary Ann Caws's description of the construction of liminal space as the act of "hallowing an otherwise mundane space and setting it apart" (14), cited in the discussion of liminality in Ewing's *Six to Sixteen* found in Chapter Three, is also applicable here to Madeline Clifford's act of transforming a dusty and cluttered storage room into her personal chapel, a site of spiritual edification and moral perfection.

Madeline's ability to find solitude within the busy community of the school and her redefinition of the dressing room are at once personally empowering and culturally normative; these moves signal her ability to create meaning for the spaces in which she lives but also her conformity to hegemonic Christian values. In this way, Madeline's private time in the dressing room actually helps her make important strides toward embodying the Victorian feminine ideal as she grows more pure and holy with every visit. Yet the novel also emphasizes that every girl in the school has the ability to appropriate the neutral space of the dressing room for her own purposes—its significance varies from girl to girl, depending upon her activities in the room. While Madeline makes it into a house of prayer, Clara Manners and her friends use the dressing room to support their disobedience and deceitfulness as a secret spot for exchanging and reading the forbidden novels. Likewise, Madeline's use of the dressing room to strengthen her religious discipline is contrasted with the actions of her seemingly perfect sister, Ruth, who does not seek solitude in which to pray or examine her conscience but, instead, grows complacent and proud in her position as one of the most-respected girls in the school, lapping up the praises of her teachers and fellow students. Thus, Ruth is caught off-guard by temptation when, angered by the unpleasant Clara and her friends, who are hiding forbidden French novels at school, Ruth sets out to find one of the illicit books and ends up reading it herself while concealed in an upstairs closet. Because Ruth does not focus on disciplining herself, her encounter with solitude enables her to sin, and the liminal space of the closet becomes, for her, a den of iniquity. Her efforts to conceal what she has done eventually lead to her nervous breakdown and confession. Through

portraying girls' use of liminal space for multiple ends, both good and bad, the novel reminds readers that the school itself is a place where girls' characters can be both made and unmade and implies that girls need to be prepared to wield the moral agency that they find in their possession at school.

Loudon's short story "The Moss Rose" does not attach such high spiritual stakes to girls' education as Sewell does, but the story does represent schoolgirl society—particularly the communal space of the school-room—as equally fraught, though here with the "cruel thoughtlessness" of schoolgirls instead of the temptation to sin (109). It is in the schoolroom that Grace Harding is teased by her classmates for being the daughter of a tradesman, and it is also here that the aggressive Augusta Colville, "who [is] very fond of managing and being at the head of everything" (Loudon 100), domineers over students when she takes charge of collecting the funds to buy a birthday present for the headmistress, Mrs. Vance. Instead of simply calling for donations from all interested parties, Augusta insists on making a list of each student in the school and then traveling about the schoolroom to request each girl's donation individually. In this way, Augusta dominates the schoolroom by intruding upon each girl's studies in order to invade and judge her personal finances, deeming girls' contributions "capital" or "stingy" depending on the amount they pledge (Loudon 103, 107). In contrast to the schoolroom—which is made even more unpleasant through its description as full of "noise and heat"—stands the hallway right outside, which proves perfect for seclusion due to its almost-complete darkness and extremely narrow passages with its "sharp turns, and every now and then a step up or down" (Loudon 105). The hallway is a liminal space because it stands

between and mediates passage to all other spaces of the school, and for this very reason it gives Grace peace and relief. A sufferer from migraines that the bustle of the schoolroom aggravates, Grace takes comfort in escaping her schoolmates and traversing up and down the cool, dark, quiet passageway. But the hallway provides an opportunity for even more significant relief when Grace comes across the young and mistreated May Gerald, who is hiding in the darkness to cry because she is too poor to donate to the collection and has been ridiculed by Augusta for being “very stingy” (Loudon 107). Able to talk openly with May in the secluded passageway about the cruelty of other students and the respectability of poverty, Grace is free to reveal her own background as a member of the *parvenu* to May and to share with her “how deeply [Grace] had suffered from that same false shame” when mocked by other students because of her family’s station in life (Loudon 107). Moreover, in the privacy of the hallway, Grace is able to offer the young girl a practical solution by giving her the needed money and counseling her to keep it a secret from the others.

Like Madeline’s prayers to God in the dressing room in *Laneton Parsonage*, Grace’s and May’s exchange can take place only in a private, out-of-the-way setting, where the nature of their conversation and Grace’s donation can remain a secret between the two girls. The hallway provides a unique opportunity for each girl’s personal character development, as May learns better than to feel the “false shame” of poverty, and Grace, who deeply desires “to avenge [May] by scolding Augusta,” realizes instead “that God always gave punishment where it was due, and that in avenging May, she would sin herself” (Loudon 109, 110). Furthermore, this meeting in the passageway

changes the lives of both girls by enabling them to become lifelong friends and helpmeets to one another: “not only was May entirely devoted to Grace while they remained at school, but in after years, when Grace was visited by a painful and lingering illness, May was her constant attendant” (Loudon 112). Like the dressing room for Madeline in *Laneton Parsonage*, this humble passageway serves as the catalyst for significant changes in the lives of both girls.

There are, admittedly, ulterior motives in the crafting of Loudon’s story, as the author engages in a moment of didacticism when she pauses in the narrative to emphasize that these girls are equals and that shame over trade wealth or poverty is a travesty—a sharp contrast to the work of contemporaries such as Sewell and Charlotte Yonge, who advocated the separation of classes in schools.⁶⁴ However, in addition to this class-conscious agenda, the geography of the school in Loudon’s and Sewell’s stories imply that the conventional, organized spaces of the school are not sufficient for the complete and healthy development of the Victorian girl, particularly with regard to her moral deportment. The pointed interest of both of these early Victorian school stories in the liminal spaces of the school and the retreat into privacy that they provide for girls reflects an understanding of girls’ maturation as a personal, interior process rather than a product of their socialization with other girls. This understanding shifted and evolved in school fiction throughout the course of the Victorian period, as education outside of the

⁶⁴ In their stories and other writings, Sewell and Yonge both opposed the institution of high schools, which mixed the social classes. Sewell’s educational treatise, discussed in an earlier footnote, specifies that it pertains to girls from the “upper classes”; Sewell founded St. Boniface School because she was concerned about the quality of education available to “middle class” girls. Gillian Avery notes that “Yonge was even able to convey, by her description of the cut of a girl’s dress, that she was ‘trade,’ and the reader instinctively knew, therefore, that she was not to be trusted” (167).

home became more acceptable to parents, and the prospect of one's daughter mingling with other girls grew less anxiety-producing and more appealing.

The Dormitory Room

In *School Architecture* (1874), architect Edward Robert Robson includes an illustration of one of the sleeping apartments for students at Milton Mount College, Gravesend, a school built in 1871 primarily for the daughters of Congregational ministers (see figure 11). Modeled after “ancient monastic dormitories” (240) and clearly designed to be as efficient with space as possible, the tiny bedroom pictured here includes just enough room to fit a small cot, wooden chair, narrow dresser, and squat wash-stand. The bedroom depicted in the illustration offers only a small modicum of privacy: instead of floor-to-ceiling walls that completely separate each space, low partitions divide each cubicle, allowing sound to carry from room to room and offering inhabitants seclusion from the eyes but not the ears of others. Private study, for example, would be difficult in such a cramped space and with frequent noise from other cubicles.⁶⁵

The economy of space here also clearly prescribes an economy of time in the Milton Mount student's daily use of her bedroom: the lack of physical accommodation for the girl's private time suggests that she was not thought to have a great need for such a luxury. Private activities in such a cramped and austere space would likely be limited

⁶⁵ L.T. Meade's *Girls New and Old* (1895), which is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, portrays this kind of dormitory as a less-expensive option for girls at Redgarth who cannot afford private rooms. The girls in Meade's story who sleep in these spaces jokingly refer to themselves as “the Dwellers in the Cubicles,” and they complain about how difficult it is to obtain privacy to study or talk with one's friends in the cubicles.

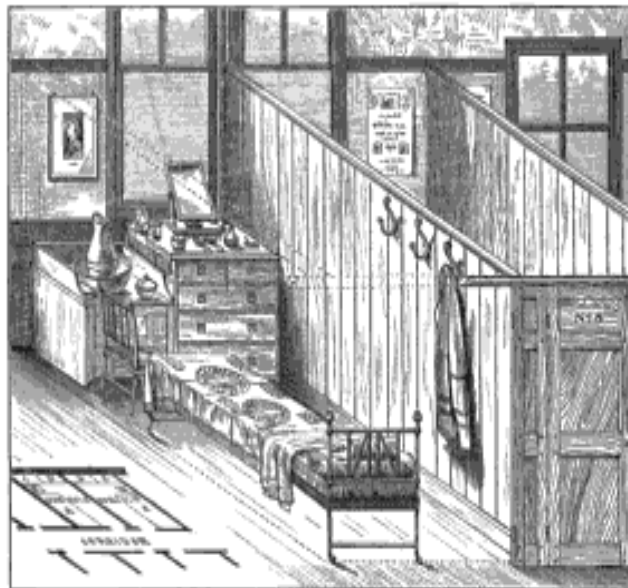


Figure 11: from *School Architecture* (1874) by Edward Robert Robson

to brief periods of religious devotional time, including daily prayer and Bible reading.

Yet, while the Milton Mount bedrooms portrayed in this illustration can barely be called bedrooms in the same style as those found in the typical Victorian middle-class house, they still reflect an awareness of the schoolgirl's need for a degree of privacy in her daily life; Robson himself refers to the separation of the "little cells" in Milton Mount College as a special concession for girls, claiming that schoolboys, on the other hand, can make do with "[l]arge sleeping rooms" (237-38).

While the bedrooms described by Robson function primarily as sleeping quarters and changing rooms for schoolgirls, spaces to be used and vacated as quickly as possible, bedrooms found in other Victorian schools, particularly those for older students, provide opportunities for a significant amount of privacy and time to oneself. In "An Interior View of Girton College, Cambridge" (1876), E.T.M. remarks that "Another feature of Girton life, while it is a condition of first-class work, appears to me also a great safeguard to the nervous, and therefore to the general health of students—I mean the opportunity which each Student possesses of perfect privacy in her own apartments. A bedroom and a study, or one large room combining the two uses, is set apart for each student" (280-81).⁶⁶ The writer goes on to describe this space as a "cheerful airy room, enlivened with photographs and engravings, flowerpots in the windows, Turkish rugs, bookshelves, etc." (281). Given that Girton was established by

⁶⁶ E.T.M. was an American who studied at Girton and wrote this essay for an American journal for the purpose of sharing her experiences there and comparing England's provision of university education for women with that of the United States. Regarding students' bedrooms at Girton, she points out that "This arrangement forms a marked contrast to the provision at Vassar, for instance—where five students have only three bedrooms and one study together" (281). J.A. Owens's article "Girton College," published in an 1880 volume of *The Girl's Own Paper*, cites E.T.M.'s essay as an authoritative account of daily life at Girton.

two women who understood the spiritual and intellectual advantages of seclusion—feminists and educationalists Emily Davies and Barbara Bodichon—and that the girls living there were older and generally considered to be entitled to more privacy, it is perhaps unsurprising that Girton would provide quarters like this for its students, which give them sufficient space to create a world of their own.⁶⁷ Regardless, the organization of school bedrooms here indicates a significant respect for the schoolgirl’s private life and her right to exercise creative license in the space in which she lives. The room E.T.M. describes is a comfortable, beautiful retreat from the busy-ness and regulation of classrooms and lecture halls. In addition to providing space for personal activities and relaxation, the bedrooms at Girton enabled students to create their own social spheres, as well; E.T.M. recounts the students’ daily practice of making evening tea or cocoa in their rooms or having it brought to them by servants, noting, “This is the moment when hospitality is most practised. One student invites several to her room, and these gatherings take the place of the men’s ‘wines’” (qtd. in Spender 282). The students’ habit of entertaining one another in their bedrooms indicates both the extent to which their rooms functioned as living space and the strength of their sense of ownership of the space. In this way, girls’ control of their school bedrooms as personal and social space anticipated their future roles as married women acting as mistress of the house or independent working women living on their own.

⁶⁷ Girton, founded in 1869, clearly set a precedent for future institutions: Christina Sinclair Bremner’s *Education of Girls and Women in Great Britain* (1897) makes note of several colleges for women, including Bedford College and Royal Holloway College, which were established later in the century and “provid[e] each student comfortably with sitting and bed-room” (144).

Victorian school stories for girls echo this understanding of the bedroom as an important niche for girls at school, representing the bedroom as a significant factor in girls' character development while at school. Not unlike the bedrooms of the home discussed in the previous chapter of this study, boarding-school bedrooms are figured in many stories as vital sites for girls' inner growth, especially in spiritual matters; schoolgirl protagonists such as Hester Thornton in L.T. Meade's *A World of Girls* (1886) and Molly Lavender in Meade's *Girls New and Old* (1895) take to their bedrooms to work out moral dilemmas or to pray earnestly over a troubling situation. But, in many stories, bedrooms are also portrayed as especially useful in girls' social development, be it in the form of strengthening the bonds of intimacy with a bosom friend or in nurturing one's personal identity as distinct from the schoolgirl community.

Meade's *Betty, a Schoolgirl* (1894) demonstrates this link between personal space and social development through its protagonist's experience of her bedroom as a retreat from the bewildering and stressful experience of school. The novel presents Miss St. Leger's school for girls, lodged in her own home and comprised of only seven students, where Betty Falkoner, the titular character, is sent by her father to be educated after her mother dies. Though the setting for Miss St. Leger's small establishment is strikingly homelike in appearance, and Betty finds the rooms "picturesque" (Meade, *Betty* 33) and "pleasant" (Meade, *Betty* 37) instead of cold and institutional, the defining characteristic of both Miss St. Leger and her school is a strict dedication to industry that casts a severe sense of discipline on the place: Betty observes after a fortnight in Miss St. Leger's school that this is "a house where no one had her own way for a single minute;

where there was not a second of time left unemployed; where from morning to night there was... a rush to get things done” (Meade, *Betty* 71). Miss St. Leger’s economy of time rules the girls’ movements and behaviors in the house down to the very minute; even in the girls’ bedrooms, “there was never time for talk. Even at night there was no time. Bed was meant to be slept in” (Meade, *Betty* 71). Like the arrangement of the bedroom in Robson’s *School Architecture*, Miss St. Leger’s rules do as much as possible to preempt the pupils’ experiences of private leisure time in their bedrooms.

Yet, in spite of all this regulation, Betty finds that the privacy that her bedroom affords also gives her an opportunity for a crucial respite from the whirlwind and strain of school life—not through solitude, but through friendship with her roommate, Lotty Raynham. From Betty’s very first evening at Miss St. Leger’s, the girls’ room becomes a refuge where they can confide in and support one another. When Betty meets her classmates in the school’s preparation room and they begin to tease her, Lotty constructs their shared bedroom as a sanctuary from the communal space and the girls’ harassment as she urges Betty to “escape them” by following her upstairs (Meade, *Betty* 41). Upon arriving at the room, which like the rest of the house is “pretty” (Meade, *Betty* 41) and “neat” (Meade, *Betty* 42), the girls further enjoy the space as a place of peace by ignoring Miss St. Leger’s orders to quickly unpack Betty’s things and go to bed, instead belying the alleged lack of time to talk by sitting on their beds and doing just that. The girls’ private conversation cements their friendship immediately as Betty vents her sorrow over her mother’s death, and Lotty comforts and nurtures Betty like an older sister. Their confidence, begun here, eventually inspires Lotty to reveal her own secrets:

her mother's illness, of which none of the other girls know, and her ambitious plan to make the most of her studies so that she can take the classical tripos and pursue a career to help support her widowed mother and three brothers.

When Miss St. Leger is called away from the school by a family emergency, the novel further emphasizes the girls' bedroom as the locus of their friendship and a refuge from the communal spaces of the school, where the other girls so often make Betty uncomfortable. Temporarily released from Miss St. Leger's strict attention and indulged by the lazy and corrupt French governess, Mlle. Henri, all of the girls except Betty and Lotty quickly run amok in the schoolroom, throwing down their books and refusing to do their lessons. Like the preparation room where Betty is first bombarded by the other girls, the classroom is a space in which the majority rules, and Betty must sit in silent turmoil, wishing that Lotty as the eldest would "look up....and compel the rest of the girls to be at least outwardly respectful" (Meade, *Betty* 92). But, whereas in their bedroom Lotty attends lovingly to Betty, she remains oblivious in the classroom: "as usual, her fingers were pressed to her ears—her shoulders hitched up high. She was bending over a difficult Latin exercise with knitted brows, absorbed in thought" (Meade, *Betty* 92). As Miss St. Leger's absence progresses, Lotty's single-minded devotion to study, which absorbs all of her attention in the preparation room and classroom, continues to keep her from standing up for Betty and for what is right among the other girls; indeed, the novel implies that, were it not for the girls' shared bedroom, Lotty's studies may well have prevented her from taking an interest in Betty at all.

Yet their bedroom continues to provide a space for their friendship to flourish, in spite of all the tensions and misunderstandings that take place in the schoolrooms. It is here that “Lotty’s dreamy eyes seemed to awake; her face became active, interested, and alert,” and she finds time to focus on Betty and confide in her (Meade, *Betty* 170). It is here that the homely Lotty admits to her despair of winning a school prize that considers physical appearance as a criterion, which would give her the money she needs to care for her mother, and the girls scrutinize her appearance and discuss strategies for making her seem more attractive. As the day for the prize-giving draws near, the girls’ bedroom becomes the headquarters for their private plan of refining and beautifying Lotty; each night Betty “brushe[s] Lotty’s long black hair until it shone and glowed” and “drill[s] Lotty, who pace[s] up and down her bedroom with measured and martial strides...and enter[s] a room as if she were a soldier in a cavalry regiment, and not a gentle, young girl in her early teens” (Meade, *Betty* 221). When Lotty feels crushed by the certainty that their beautiful classmate Henny will receive the prize instead, Betty’s evening pep-talks in their bedroom “hearten [Lotty] up once more” and move Lotty to admit the “fierce” love she feels for Betty but typically “can’t talk about” (Meade, *Betty* 224). Intimate moments such as these, which are possible only in the privacy of the girls’ bedroom, strengthen the bond between Betty and Lotty, which helps Betty to forget her own misery and recover from the death of her mother.

Ultimately, this bond, in its turn, strengthens Betty’s character in significant ways. As Miss St. Leger points out, Betty struggles throughout the novel with “fear, weakness, [and] uncertainty” in her new life at school; according to Miss St. Leger,

“[her] character is absolutely unformed” (Meade, *Betty* 176). Betty demonstrates this cowardice and lack of character most significantly when Miss St. Leger requests that Betty write her a report of the schoolgirls’ activities during her absence, and Betty is too afraid to tell Miss St. Leger the truth about the girls’ and Mlle. Henri’s behavior. Yet, when Lotty’s prize-winning essay is stolen by the deceitful Mlle. Henri and given to another student, Betty’s love for Lotty and her knowledge of the prize’s importance to her friend motivate her to overcome the impulse of timidity which has plagued her throughout the novel and to stand up for her friend when Lotty is unable to speak for herself. The openness and emotional honesty that are fostered within Betty during the time spent in her bedroom move her to grasp for once “the courage of [her] convictions,” making her into the “good, brave child” that Miss St. Leger has hoped she would become (Meade, *Betty* 296). Though the climax of the novel takes place on the school’s front lawn when the truth about the prize-winning essay is revealed, Betty’s most significant moments of personal—and, subsequently, social—development at school take place in her bedroom.

Meade’s *A Sweet Girl Graduate* (1891) emphasizes even more the importance of the schoolgirl’s bedroom in her development of friendships as well as personal identity while at school. The bedrooms portrayed in *A Sweet Girl Graduate* are nearly identical in arrangement and design as those at Girton College described above, and, like the Girton bedrooms, they constitute one of the most important areas in the school for the girls who inhabit them, functioning both as personal space and as vital spots of social interaction and relaxation from the grind of study and lectures. Each girl prides herself

on decorating her room according to her tastes and unique personality and transforming the “cold, dreary, uninhabited” spaces into ones “crowded with knick-knacks and rendered gay and sweet” (Meade, *Sweet Girl* 13, 17). Like the real-life students at Girton, the girls of St. Benet’s also make a practice of removing their evening tea from the dining room where it is served in order to drink it with friends in the cozy sitting areas they create in their rooms (Meade, *Sweet Girl* 11-12). In the midst of the regulation and uniformity of the school, the girls’ rooms give them a space to own and use for self expression and self realization, as a well as a venue for fostering dynamic social lives.

For Priscilla Peel, the novel’s impoverished protagonist, the possession of a room of her own provides a refreshing change from the bedroom she shares with her sisters at home but is also complicated by the schoolgirls’ social hierarchy at St. Benet’s and Priscilla’s own financial constraints. Priscilla’s first lesson at St. Benet’s is an education in the inferiority of “freshers” like herself after she enters the dining hall through the dons’ door and sits at a table reserved for upperclassmen during her first meal in the school, and she finds herself contending with the same pecking order as she struggles to make herself at home in her new bedroom. Assigned to the former room of a deceased student, the beloved Annabel Lee, Priscilla at first finds it difficult to be viewed by her classmates as the room’s rightful owner. When Maggie Oliphant, the lively and charming favorite of the school, discovers that the late Miss Lee’s space is newly occupied, she declares, “That room is a shrine to me....I shall hate the person who lives in it” (Meade, *Sweet Girl* 6-7). As the other girls come to visit Priscilla in her room on the first night as they do all the “freshers,” they exhibit similar prejudice as they virtually

ignore her presence in the room and instead reminisce about how the room used to shine under Annabel Lee's ownership, claiming, "How bare the walls look without her pictures.... How the room is altered! I don't think I care for it a bit now" (Meade, *Sweet Girl* 14). Priscilla's struggle with "a sense of usurping some one else's place, of turning somebody else out into the cold" as she tries to fall asleep in her new bed reflects the profound sense of abjection and powerlessness she feels as an outsider and a lowly "fresher" (Meade, *Sweet Girl* 19).

However, while Priscilla's bedroom initially provides the other girls an opportunity to disregard and belittle her, it ultimately gives her a space in which to rebel against the silly whims and exclusive cliques that she believes define the girls at St. Benet's. Fed up with her fellow schoolgirls, Priscilla decides for herself that, instead of decorating her room as the others do, the space "shall remain bare and unadorned. In this state it will at least look unique" (Meade, *Sweet Girl* 28). Priscilla's choice soon leads to a battle of wills between herself and the other girls on her corridor, who take offense at her homely room as a sign of hostility toward them and who counsel "Puritan Prissy" to "do as others do in the long run" (Meade, *Sweet Girl* 32, 30). However, when Lucy Marsh grows irate at Priscilla's rejection of yet another invitation to shop for interior décor and heatedly informs Priscilla that the girls at St. Benet's "not only appreciate cleverness and studious ways, but also obliging and sociable and friendly manners; and— and— pretty rooms— rooms with easy-chairs, and comfortable lounges" (Meade, *Sweet Girl* 30), Priscilla effectively shames them all by revealing her poverty and subsequent inability to purchase luxuries for her room:

“I am not going away because I am poor, and I am not going to mind what any one thinks of me as long as I do right. My room must stay empty and bare, because I have no money to make it full and beautiful. And do you think that I would ask those— those who sent me here— to add one feather's weight to their cares and expenses, to give me money to buy beautiful things because I am afraid of you? No, I should be *awfully* afraid to do that; but I am not afraid of you.”

(Meade, *Sweet Girl* 31, emphasis in original)

Priscilla is well aware that her education is viewed as a careful investment by her aunt Raby and their clergyman, Mr. Hayes, and she seeks to make a good return on that investment—in her words, “to pay back worthily—to give back a thousandfold”—by focusing entirely on spending as little as possible and learning as much as possible (Meade, *Sweet Girl* 44). Yet at the heart of the identity work that Priscilla struggles to accomplish in the environment of St. Benet's lies her need to navigate both her accrue-ment of individual value as an educated and respected woman and her incorporation into the school's girl community as a trusted and valued member. Because Priscilla's bedroom is claimed both by her and by the social conventions to which the other girls adhere at St. Benet's, it becomes the site of tension between these two objectives and provides the space in which Priscilla's identity as a St. Benet's student is formed. With her defiant assertion of moral justification in leaving her room undecorated, Priscilla asserts her autonomy within the space of her bedroom, and, in the process, establishes her autonomy within the social sphere of the school as well: Priscilla's confrontation with the other girls over bedroom décor eventually earns her the

admiration of the entire school for her courage, honesty, and integrity, and she finds herself accepted and valued as one of the girls' peers. By the end of the novel, Priscilla's sense of autonomy becomes even more pronounced when a wealthy friend offers to support Priscilla and her family so that she can study her beloved classics at university instead of working to support herself. Instead of accepting charity, Priscilla once again disregards peer pressure and her own personal desires and demonstrates the same courage and nobility by sticking to a course of study by which she herself can support her family.

Though the identity work that Betty accomplishes in her bedroom involves connecting with a schoolmate rather than confronting a group of them, both *Betty, A Schoolgirl* and *A Sweet Girl Graduate* reflect on the role that the private spaces of the bedroom play in the schoolgirl's navigation of a larger social sphere. The bedrooms portrayed in both novels, and the sense of autonomy which these spaces enable their owners to feel, allow each of the girl protagonists to determine her own meanings and motives for courage and integrity, as well as friendship, suggesting that this sense of autonomy is key to developing healthy interpersonal relationships.

The School Grounds

In his treatise *Health at School* (1886), Clement Dukes argues that "The provision of schools, and in respect of both sexes, of plenty of **space for play**, is as important as the allotment of sufficient cubic area in which to live, work, and sleep....There can be no excuse for the absence of a playground at every school" (358,

emphasis in original). Dukes's statement implies a focus on schools for younger children, but Victorian institutions for female students of all ages, from colleges to elementary schools, typically included outer grounds that were considered crucial for outdoor exercise and activities such as gardening, walking, and playing games like lawn tennis, croquet, and cricket. The widespread belief that "fresh air" was imperative for maintaining a robust constitution made daily outdoor activities for students a high priority in schools for girls.⁶⁸

School stories of the period also represent the grounds as a vital part of girls' daily activities at school; nearly every Victorian novel that treats school life for girls, including each of the texts discussed in this chapter, makes reference to schoolgirls' outdoor exercise and/or play, indicating that these are both wholesome and pleasurable pursuits. However, school stories often imply an additional benefit to schoolgirls' ventures out of doors for fresh air and exercise: the opportunity that the open and unregulated spaces of the school grounds give girls to socialize freely with one another. Both in fiction and in firsthand accounts, the communal spaces inside the Victorian school, such as classrooms and dining rooms, are depicted as governed by strict rules regarding whether students can talk to one another, what they can talk about, and even the language in which they can speak. In the schools portrayed in Juliana Horatia Ewing's *Six to Sixteen* (1875) and the previously-discussed *Betty, A Schoolgirl*, to name two novels, students must speak in French if they want to say anything to one another

⁶⁸ The author of the chapter on health in *The Girl's Own Indoor Book* (1888) comments to his readers that "Most of you know the value of *fresh air* as a means for keeping the body healthy and vigorous" (290), while Mary Whitley exhorts girl readers to "lead healthy, out-door, open air lives" (2) in her *Every Girl's Book of Sport, Occupation, and Pastime* (1897).

while in the schoolroom or dining room. M.V. Hughes's memoir remembers of the regulation-obsessed North London Collegiate School that "As for speaking, it would have been easier to enumerate the few places where we were permitted to speak than those where talking was forbidden" (21). In contrast, girls' recreational time on the grounds of the school provides them with a vital opportunity to foster independent social lives as they divulge secrets and discuss interesting or important matters with one another, away from the school buildings and the watchful eyes of their schoolmistresses.

In Geraldine Mockler's *The Girls of St. Bedes* (1898), for example, the daily outdoor walks that the schoolgirls take function as the most important social activity of their day. The girls' beginning-of-term ritual of scheduling walking partners for each day highlights the cliques and hierarchies that characterize their social microcosm. A girl's popularity among her schoolmates can be gauged easily by the number of students interested in her company during their daily walks, as evinced by every girl's desire to secure Ida, the "queen" of the school, for Saturday, the special day when "chums to walk together" (Mockler 127). Consequently, the difficulties faced by the novel's protagonist, new girl Margaret Ashdeane, in finding her social niche at school are signified by her difficulties in finding walking partners, while her eventual rise in popularity is catalyzed by Ida's decision to invite Margaret to join her during Saturday walks so that Margaret can "come into [Ida's] set" (Mockler 134). The ways in which the girls of St. Bede's conceive of the outdoors as their own social space rather than regulated educational space demonstrates how the grounds can give students a degree of distance from the school, both physical and metaphorical.

Meade's *Girls New and Old* (1895) places even more significance on the role that the school's grounds play in the making and breaking of friendships. At Redgarth, the school in the novel, the "extensive recreation grounds" provide space for playing cricket and tennis, but their spaciousness also fosters a moment of seclusion for new friends Kate O'Connor and Molly Lavender as they return from a long walk and search for a cool and quiet place to rest. The school's summerhouse, set at a distance from the rest of the school, provides them not only with shade but with sufficient ostensible privacy for Kate to be "drawn out to speak of her early home," telling Molly the secret of her humble Irish origins which no other girl in the school knows (Mockler 135).⁶⁹ The girls' intimate conversation and time alone together signal the cementing of a lifelong friendship. Unfortunately, however, the sly and unpleasant Matilda Manners, who sees the girls enter the summerhouse and eavesdrops through the wall, determines to spread Kate's secret all over the school and claim that Molly betrayed her—a lie that succeeds in fracturing the girls' friendship. Though the summerhouse is technically a building that belongs to the school, its distance from the rest of the school buildings and its peripheral function—it's "nothing but a bare room" which stores the girls' sports equipment (Mockler 171)—render it a part of the grounds, and the fact that Matilda Matthews is also able to eavesdrop on Molly and Kate's conversation through a sizeable knothole in the summerhouse's wall further emphasizes the structure's diminished capacity for shelter. Instead, it is valued by the girls simply as a secluded spot, perfect for relaxation

⁶⁹ The wild Irish schoolgirl is a stock character that Meade used and reused in her stories. Bridget O'Hara in *Bashful Fifteen*, discussed below, and Kathleen O'Hara in *Rebel of the School*, discussed in the following chapter, also fall into this category.

and intimate conversation: when Matilda spreads the story of Kate's origins and claims that Molly herself shared the information, Molly is baffled, claiming again and again that "there was not a soul anywhere near—not a single soul" (Mockler 170).

In the same way that the summerhouse provides (albeit insufficient) privacy for Kate's revelation of her secret, this space provides the privacy that Molly's friend and schoolmate Cecil needs in order to solve the mystery. When Cecil begins to suspect Matilda of eavesdropping, she invites her for a walk on the grounds, luring Matilda out "with guile" under the pretense of friendship and reenacting Kate and Molly's earlier walk in order to catch Matilda off her guard and lead her into the summerhouse (Mockler 181). Once the girls arrive, the seclusion of the house from the rest of the school becomes essential as Cecil locks herself and Matilda in there in order to search the place for clues and interrogate Matilda until she confesses to her crime. The interruption of this tense scene by the headmistress, Miss Leicester, who requests entrance into the locked house to retrieve her tennis racquet, reiterates the summerhouse as the schoolgirls' jurisdiction; while Miss Leicester wonders at the locked door and asks Cecil not to do it again, she suspects what is going on and accepts Cecil's authority over the situation, leaving quickly so that the girls can resume their "very important talk" (Mockler 193). Cecil's conviction of Matilda at the summerhouse succeeds in repairing Molly and Kate's friendship, and because the girls discuss this issue only when secluded on the outer grounds or ensconced in Molly's private bedroom, they are able to "prevent the school generally, and the teachers, knowing of [Matilda's] baseness" (Mockler 191). This drama, played out in the summerhouse at a distance from the school, is relatively

trivial and quickly resolved, but it has a significant impact on the social microcosm of the school. It achieves the redresses of a breach in the codes of friendship and loyalty that are cornerstones of schoolgirl society and not only repairs the friendship between Molly and Kate but also stabilizes the social dynamic of the school which had been disrupted by the rumors circulating about both Kate and Molly.

Meade's *Bashful Fifteen* (1892) demonstrates the opportunity that the freedom of the open physical landscape gives schoolgirls to construct their own discursive landscapes, not only of school but of the adult society they plan to enter in the future, as they negotiate both personal and social identities through private conversations. The large outdoor grounds of Mulberry Court offer a space sufficiently removed from the supervision and regulation of the school itself that girls can discuss frankly with one another sensitive issues that shape the social microcosm of their school, such as the ethics of cheating on school assignments or the power dynamics that exist among the girls. It is out on the lawn after a game of tennis, for example, that Mulberry Court mean girls Janet May and Olive Moore find a chance to confer with one another on their impression of the new student, a wealthy, charming, and impetuous girl named Bridget O'Hara. They size up Miss O'Hara with a cool cynicism that would shock their schoolmistresses, debating whether or not she has the charisma to gain popularity and thus power over other girls; Olive points out that "she's pretty and she's rich, and she's destitute of fear. She's quite certain to have her own party in the school" (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 39). While Bridget's potential for social dominance has no bearing on the curriculum or structured activities of the school, it is crucial to both Olive and Janet,

who have taken an immediate dislike to Bridget and are concerned about maintaining their own status among their schoolmates. The girls' discussion of the potential threat that Bridget poses both reflects and contributes to the social dynamic of the school, but it is a conversation that would be difficult to have within the walls of the school itself, where teachers and other students are always nearby. The distance and relative privacy from others that the lawn gives the girls makes their talk possible.

This seclusion proves even more necessary for the fraught conversation that Janet and Bridget have later in the novel, after Janet has pretended to befriend Bridget in order to manipulate the girl to her own advantage. Janet has been doing homework for the under-educated and undisciplined Bridget, which Bridget does not realize is dishonest until she discovers that Janet has been copying her essays out of an obscure anthology instead of composing them herself. Because a confrontation with Janet on this matter would be impossible in the halls of the school, Bridget instead catches her on the outer grounds, and the discussion that ensues is filled with negotiations of Bridget's personal honor and Janet's socioeconomic constraints. Bridget finally sees that she has devolved from "an idle, scapegrace sort of girl" into someone "horribly dishonorable" and wants to redeem herself by confessing all (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 163). However, Janet points out that, if they confess to their misdeeds, Bridget "will suffer some sort of punishment, and by and by [she] will be forgiven" by her doting father and the school's headmistress (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 165), whereas Janet, a penniless orphan who has lived "a scrambling sort of life" (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 160), will lose all hope of future schooling and employment. Janet confesses truthfully albeit theatrically to Bridget that

“I am not rich like you....The only relations I have left in the world are an old aunt, who is very stingy and very hard-hearted, and who would never forgive me” (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 165). Janet’s statement is calculated to manipulate, but it is also a completely accurate view of each girl’s place in the world beyond the school, and Bridget loses a degree of her own obliviousness and innocence when she realizes the truth of Janet’s words. The girls’ need to develop a secret plan which will keep Bridget from losing her father’s pride and Janet from losing her aunt’s financial support is accommodated perfectly by a “shady walk, where no one will see [them]” (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 166).

While the schoolgirls’ independent social activity on the grounds of Mulberry Court is not limited entirely to Janet’s sinister calculations and manipulations, her scheming also plays a role in the most significant conversations in which the girls of the upper form engage outside of the school. The girls have determined to coordinate a Fancy Fair charity event for the school and community to benefit a local child whose parents have died, and, to do so, they use a special spot on the grounds of their school, the Lookout, to engage in business meetings. The Lookout, which the novel describes as “a rural tower” with a furnished room on the grounds of the school, qualifies as an indoor space but remains at a distance from the rest of the school and seems to serve no purpose but to afford the girls privacy. The fair itself, more than a simple, whimsical project that the girls take on out of kindness, signifies a sizeable social coup within—and beyond—the microcosm of the school. For Janet, who conceived of the idea for the fair in the first place, it provides an opportunity to increase her popularity in the school and

local community and thereby extend her social network to what she hopes will be her financial advantage. The girls' organization of such an event is also significant as a mature and ambitious undertaking, the sort of project typically tackled by respected married ladies who hold positions of authority in their society; as the girls' headmistress, Mrs. Freeman, points out and her students concur, "it is quite an unusual thing for girls like us to do" (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 4). The fair, located on the grounds of the school and attended by adults from the outlying communities, bridges the gap between the sheltered bubble of the school and the world beyond, further linking girls to the adult society of which they are about to become a part.

In this remarkable endeavor, the Lookout, also distanced from the school, functions as a kind of headquarters for the girls, providing them with the seclusion from the school buildings and other students as well as the comfortable accommodations that they need in order to discuss their plans. The girls exercise complete control over the space, ousting younger pupils who come to talk to them; even their headmistress, Mrs. Freeman, who requests that they "arrange the whole programme without troubling her" (4) and stops by the Lookout only once briefly to check on them, is anxious to avoid "interfer[ing] unnecessarily" (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 108). In this way, the Lookout offers the girls a place where they can remove themselves from some of the school's regulation and supervision and feel more like grown women making important decisions instead of schoolgirls. This clearly appeals strongly to them: instead of discussing matters and making decisions casually, the girls strive to make the Lookout meetings as businesslike as possible, establishing a steering committee and voting on every detail of

the event. Indeed, the girls' interactions in the Lookout cannot be characterized as particularly friendly or even always pleasant. Instead of school chums, the girls are business partners, and their planning is punctuated by significant power struggles, particularly with regard to the question of whether Mulberry Court's head girl, Evelyn Percival, will be invited to run the Fancy Fair when she returns to school from a prolonged illness. Much of this formality and thinly veiled aggression stems from the cold and aloof manner that Janet exudes, but, in the privacy of the Lookout, all of the girls find themselves able to speak openly about matters that would be nearly impossible to discuss in other parts of the school. Frances Murray talks frankly, even cynically, about the underlying financial issues of the Fancy Fair and the socioeconomic status of other schoolgirls when she points out that "There is not a single rich person on our committee" who can ensure the success of the venture by "send[ing] to London and hav[ing] some big packets sent down full of those sorts of little fresh tempting *souvenirs* which people always take a fancy to at bazaars and always buy" (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 79). The girls' ultimate consensus that one of the two girls at Mulberry Court who qualify as "rich" must be asked to join the committee reflects their pragmatism as a group, indicating that they do indeed have the worldly knowledge needed to make their project financially successful.

Though Janet is the villain of the story, and every interaction she has with other girls outside of the school is tinged with her corruption, it is important to note that Janet also represents a category of schoolgirl whom it behooves to learn of the harshness of the world before she leaves school because she is friendless and poor. Janet's likeness to

that prototype of devious Victorian social climbing and calculated manipulation, Becky Sharp of *Vanity Fair* (1848), is striking; like Becky, Janet is “a girl with a great deal of independence of character; she [is] not destitute of ambition—she [is] remarkable for common sense—she [is] sharp in her manner” (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 32). Both are capable of showing great gentleness and modesty when useful, and both have reached an unnaturally early maturity through hard times: Janet admits that she is “not young for [her] age,” like Becky, who “had been a woman since she was eight years old” (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 215, Thackeray 17). The manipulation of Bridget that Janet begins at school extends to Bridget’s family home in Ireland, to which Janet engineers an invitation through toadying to Bridget’s aunt Lady Kathleen—but, in Janet’s eyes, this is only the beginning: “I cannot stay long in this wild, outlandish sort of place, but it is very well for a short time....I mean to go to Paris with Lady Kathleen...and have a really gay and fine time” (Meade, *Bashful Fifteen* 257). Though her methods are reprehensible and her goals are base and selfish, Janet’s efforts to use her school experience as a springboard to launch herself successfully into financial security in adulthood shows that she knows exactly what girls like herself need to learn while she is at school. The social, cultural, and socioeconomic issues that girls like Janet navigate in school stories point to the ways in which school prepares girls for life in the “real” world.

These representations of unsupervised, private spaces at school in fiction suggest that schoolgirls had power to shape their own experience of school, from the skills and knowledge they acquired to the friends that they made; school is portrayed as less regulated than the home, even though it was typically understood to be a more

disciplined and regimented environment for girls. School-life is characterized as an important opportunity for girls to operate independently from their families, which will be of use to them later in life when they leave the family home, either as a professional working in public or as a wife interacting with a new family and community. For the girl whose family was no longer living and who would have to make her way in the world on her own after school, this would be even more important. That school stories depict pockets of liminal or unsupervised spaces all over the school in which girls find the freedom to work out their own issues suggests that this is one of the most important—albeit derivative—purposes of girls' education. However, the agency with which girls are endowed here is clearly informed by cultural norms, as well. Girls such as Madeline in *Laneton Parsonage* and Priscilla in *A Sweet Girl Graduate* are portrayed using their independence in the unsupervised spaces of school to engage in morally upstanding behaviors. Girls such as Janet May, who do not do this, are punished in the end; at the close of *Bashful Fifteen*, Janet's villainy is revealed and she runs away in disgrace, never to be heard from again. That Janet ultimately undoes her future through her misuse of school space brings home to girl readers the individual responsibility that they have to learn the right things at school and make the most of their time there. In this way, while these stories present school-life as giving girls the opportunity to develop their own social culture and codes of conduct, this fiction also presses for girls' adherence to the broader social norms and values that they must understand and respect as adults. School serves as a gateway for girls' entrance into a larger social world than their homes have to offer, preparing them for the responsibilities and pitfalls that come with a more complex

and varied environment. This larger social world included various public spaces, which are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

“MAK[ING] OUR WAY IN THE WORLD”: GIRLS’ TRAVEL AND WORK IN
PUBLIC SPACE

In January of 1862, a middle-class man who had recently moved his family to London wrote a letter to *The Times* to express his indignation regarding an unpleasant experience that one of his daughters had suffered while out on the London streets during a shopping trip. He explains that he was

a good deal surprised to learn from several friends here that I must be guarded in permitting my daughters (just out of their teens) to walk in the parks, or even go ‘a shopping,’ without protection in the shape of a servant, or one of their brothers, younger or older, as London was infested by a number of ill-conditioned blackguards who made it a business to insult and terrify young ladies by following them and even being daring enough at times to speak to them. (7D)

The letter goes on to explain that, to his daughter’s misfortune, her father, writing to *The Times* under the pseudonym “Paterfamilias from the Provinces,” did not follow this advice, and the young lady found herself harassed by a “young fellow in the garb of a gentleman” while shopping on Oxford Street (7D). With his angry complaint against “this deplorable phase in London life,” “Paterfamilias” sparked a weeks-long debate in *The Times* editorial section regarding the safety of public spaces for unaccompanied middle-class girls and these girls’ ability to behave properly when out on the streets

alone. While some sympathized with “Paterfamilias’s” daughter’s experience and opined that “in London, as in all other great cities, young and good-looking girls will always require a companion in public places frequented by young and good-looking men if they desire to be secure from interruption” (“Common Sense” 10A), others insisted that public spaces were perfectly safe and that girls were instead complicit in the inappropriate behavior perpetrated by the young men they encountered because they lacked the “quiet demeanour necessary for walking in the streets of London” (“Puella” 10A). All who responded to “Paterfamilias” concurred that he needed to “Look after [his] daughters properly” whenever he allowed them to go out in public (“Common Sense” 10A). Whether or not the daughter of “Paterfamilias” had brought the trouble she had experienced upon herself, the writers seem to agree on one thing: she was clearly incapable of safely negotiating the streets of London on her own.

This particular debate in *The Times* pertains specifically to London, the largest urban center in England, but it reflects a pervasive cultural perception of public space in general as particularly complicated and fraught for middle-class girls. As Anthony Fletcher suggests, the later decades of the nineteenth century saw a slackening of the “stress [on] privacy and controlled social interaction” that characterized girls’ lives in the early Victorian period and a widening of the girl’s social sphere into public spaces such as “galleries, tea shops, concerts and plays” (30). Girls’ growing presence in public places allowed them to occupy a more significant position in English society and interact more extensively with other members, but it also increased anxiety regarding the middle-class girl’s navigation of spaces that were still meant to remain more or less foreign to

her. The continuing perceptions of girls as domestic creatures who were needful of moral and physical protection, as well as the association of familiarity with the streets with members of the lower classes, contributed to the construction of unregulated public spaces as potentially dangerous to middle-class girls' bodies and sensibilities, as well as their reputations. As Fletcher and other scholars also indicate, certain social venues—particularly evening entertainments such as plays and concerts—were open to girls only when they were properly chaperoned, and, while the editorials in *The Times* indicate that not all Victorians believed chaperones were necessary, some deemed it altogether inappropriate for a girl to leave her home, even for routine shopping trips or walks, without at least a servant as chaperone to maintain her respectability.⁷⁰ Chaperones, as the “Paterfamilias” exchanges show, were valued for providing a buffer of propriety that mediated girls' experiences of public space and its inhabitants; chaperones both asserted and preserved the innocent nature of girls that prevented them from comfortably negotiating public spaces on their own.

Girls who ventured outside their homes on their own lacked this mantle of respectability, which made them vulnerable to inappropriate attentions of members of

⁷⁰ See the letter to the editor submitted to *The Times* by “Puella” entitled “The Streets of London” in the January 9, 1862 edition of the paper. The author remarks that she has been ‘in the constant habit of traversing Oxford-street alone...and never [had she] received the slightest incivility’ (10D). In her discussion of young women's need for chaperones in Victorian public spaces, Lynda Nead finds that “there were many different ways in which respectable women could inhabit the streets of London, and that respectability itself embraced a range of attitudes to the public domain” (63-64); Nead argues that “the whole issue of chaperonage was open to debate and interpretation” (64). It is important to note, however, that Nead is referring primarily to adult women rather than girls. In *Daily Life in Victorian England* (1996), Sally Mitchell asserts that “except in villages and very small towns, a middle-class woman was accompanied by a servant wherever she went” and that “[i]n its strictest form (at about midcentury) the custom of chaperonage dictated that an unmarried young woman of good family could not go anywhere alone” (151). Mitchell also points out that, in the 1880s, chaperones were still “essential at dances, dinners, concerts, theater events, and evening parties” (152).

the opposite sex or lower social classes—or to their own poor judgment. Eliza Warren’s *How I Managed My Children from Infancy to Marriage* (1849) warns girls against the act of entering public space unaccompanied and particularly against cultivating relationships with the young men they meet there; this sort of open behavior is wantonly flirtatious, and “No man cares to marry a flirt, whose modesty has exhaled, and whose purity is smirched by levity of manner” (70). Warren condemns as self-destructive the “girl who goes to a shop and purchases things she has no need of, on purpose to converse with the man who serves her” (70). Fifty years later, near the end of the century, J. R. Miller’s *Girls: Faults and Ideals: A Familiar Talk with Quotations from Letters* (1892), an American text also published in Britain, offers its readers a similar warning regarding the danger in which they place their reputations when they do not behave prudently in public: “On the streets [girls] talk loudly, so as unconsciously to attract attention to themselves. They act so that young men of the looser sort will stare at them and even dare to speak to them. In these and other ways, certain young women... imperil their own good name” (12). Miller goes on to ask, “When will young girls learn that modesty and shrinking from the public gaze are the invariable marks of true beauty in womanhood?” (12-13).⁷¹ Miller and Warren both suggest that girls who use the lack of supervision and social restriction afforded by public spaces to relax their own sense of propriety are courting moral and social disaster and impeding their ability to establish themselves within the domestic sphere by making a good marriage later on. In this way, they paint for middle-class girl readers a direct contrast between the vain pleasures of

⁷¹ Miller’s work was published in the United States in 1892 and in England in 1896.

social interaction in public spaces and the greater, long-term benefits of domestic stability.

While Warren and Miller raise concerns regarding the damage that can be done to a girl's reputation through imprudent behavior in public spaces, M.V. Hughes's memoir of her late Victorian girlhood in London reflects a fear-based geography constructed by Hughes's mother concerning the physical dangers that a girl could encounter there. Hughes recalls being endowed by her mother with a degree of freedom regarding her movements in public; as a girl in the 1870s and '80s, she "used to go out alone in [her] London suburb of Canonbury, for a run with [her] hoop or to do a little private shopping" (1-2). But Hughes also recounts how her mother figured public spaces as particularly dangerous for young girls: "lurid stories were told me of children offered sweets by a 'kind lady', or taken for a ride in a gig by a 'kind gentleman', and never heard of again," and Hughes's mother also warned her to "walk fast and look preoccupied [so that] no one [would] bother [her]" when she was out alone (1-2). The request that Hughes's mother made that her daughter avoid a nearby street on which "some 'very dreadful pictures'" were posted in a shop window also reflects how girls' innocence as well as their safety was considered at risk in public spaces, necessitating limits regarding where respectable middle-class girls could go (whether accompanied or alone) as well as how they must behave. Like Warren and Miller, Hughes's memoirs figure Victorian public spaces as morally compromised sites in which respectable middle-class girls should never feel completely comfortable.

However, at the same time that Hughes was learning to walk quickly and avoid certain shop windows, shifts were taking place in the culture of girlhood that began to foster in girls like her an increasing sense of comfort and confidence in public spaces. The growing culture of the New Girl—which, as Terri Doughty points out, was “uneasily related” to that of the New Woman (8)—fostered late-Victorian middle-class girls’ interest in education, work, living outside the family home, and progressive outdoor hobbies such as bicycling, all of which propelled girls more and more often into public places on their own, from the stores and markets where they shopped to the offices and hospitals where they worked and the streets where they cycled and walked.⁷² Standardized schooling took many middle-class girls out of the home and into the public spaces of trains, omnibuses, and streets on a regular basis as they traveled to and from school, even daily if they attended local day schools. This New Girl culture also exalted independence and adventure in the middle-class girl’s life; popular novels began to portray girls having fun and exciting experiences employed as nurses, secretaries, and clerks, and periodicals such as *The Girl’s Own Paper*, *Girl’s Realm*, and *Atalanta* provided information to their middle-class readers on how to work and live outside of the family home. These changes in the ways that girls envisioned themselves in the world encouraged them to develop a stronger sense of autonomy as they moved through and occupied public spaces. Yet these changes did not take hold in English society all at

⁷² See Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girl’s Culture in England 1880-1915* (1995) and Terri Doughty, *Selections from the Girl’s Own Paper, 1880-1907* (2004) for more discussion of the New Girl culture that developed in the late nineteenth century.

once; throughout the late Victorian period, this progressive dynamic competed in many ways with the dominant social norms regarding how girls should behave in public.

This chapter explores how late-Victorian fiction for girls navigates the tension between elements of the New Girl culture and hegemonic Victorian attitudes in its portrayal of girls' relationships with public space. In particular, I examine how changes in the middle-class girl's culture and lifestyle influenced the moral geographies that stories construct for girls regarding their interaction with the world beyond home and school. Tim Creswell defines moral geographies as "the idea that certain people, things and practices belong in certain spaces, places and landscapes and not in others," which aids in "the production of 'outsiders'—people...who are said to be 'out of place'" ("Moral Geographies" 128). Bearing this in mind, I trace in girls' stories the growing precedent for the representation of the Victorian girl as a legitimate social actor in public places and explore how this precedent was tempered by lingering cultural codes that limited girls' movements in and use of public spaces. This chapter divides its focus between the two activities which, with increasing frequency throughout the Victorian period, required middle-class girls to venture into public space on their own, unaccompanied by parents or other chaperones: travel and work. As employment and independent movement in public spaces became more and more feasible, even necessary, for girls, literature for girls began to endorse these activities while also circumscribing them with codes of conduct that incorporated more conservative

ideologies regarding girls' appropriate place and behavior in Victorian society.⁷³

Ultimately, in examining how stories from the 1870s through the turn of the century portray middle-class girls finding their place in the public world of Victorian England, I argue that, even as this fiction endorses progressive attitudes regarding the middle-class girl—indeed, even as it assists in the construction of the New Girl—it also guides the girl reader back to the security and moral superiority of the domestic sphere.

Travel

Lewis Carroll's depiction of a dream sequence in which his intrepid heroine, Alice, suddenly finds herself traveling in a train compartment in *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872) is one of the most unsettling scenes featured in Carroll's *Alice* books.

Alice, startled to find herself hurtling down the train tracks when she had only moments before been jumping over a brook, is immediately subjected to the intimidating demands of the adults—all male—who surround her in the compartment. The Guard, "looking angrily at Alice," insists upon seeing a railway ticket, which Alice, of course, doesn't have, while the other passengers join in a chorus to comment disparagingly on her unfortunate position (Carroll 23). Alice's strong sense of inadequacy in the situation, marked in the narrative by her "frightened tone" and in John Tenniel's illustration by her

⁷³ It is important to note that, while more and more texts dealt with girls' work and travel outside of the home later in the nineteenth century, as the number of day schools increased and paid work was increasingly accepted as an ideal for middle-class girls, earlier Victorian novels can be found that portray girls traveling and working in public spaces as well. Charlotte Yonge's *Countess Kate* (1862) portrays a girl's independent travel—particularly the act of running away from home, which is relevant to this chapter's discussion of girls and travel. Likewise, Maria Hutchins Callcott's *Home Among Strangers* (1848) depicts a middle-class girl working as a governess and constructing family bonds within her place of employment.



Figure 12: from *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872) by Lewis Carroll

bowed head and unhappy expression (see figure 12), is intensified by the others' dismissive assertions that she's "traveling the wrong way," she'd "Better say nothing," and "She'll have to go back from here as luggage!" (Carroll 23-24). But perhaps what makes Alice seem most vulnerable and out of place is the way in which the men stare at her. Today one might be inclined to read in the Guard's particularly intense gaze—which he turns on Alice "first through a telescope, then through a microscope, and then through an opera-glass"—the illicit interest of the sexual predator; however, whether or not his stare identifies her as a sex object in his eyes, it certainly marks her as an oddity, an interloper in the distinctly adult and masculine space of the train compartment. In reality (inasmuch as there *is* a reality in Looking-Glass Land), Alice's journey across the chess board has brought her onto the train, not any childish impertinence, and her journey is just as important and necessary as those of the man in the paper suit or the talking goat who disapprove of her so thoroughly.

Though it is meant to be fantastical nonsense, this scene in *Through the Looking-Glass* is reflective of a very real tension that surrounded unaccompanied middle-class girls' movement through public spaces. For such a young girl as Alice, independent train travel certainly would have been extraordinary at the time; in her study of Victorian culture, Mitchell notes, "Women and girls who traveled alone by train were escorted by a male friend of the family except on routes where a first-class ladies' carriage was available" (*Daily Life* 151-52). However, as more and more middle-class girls began to attend boarding schools or local day schools throughout the latter third of the century, girls' independent travel through public spaces to get to and from school became less

extraordinary and more necessary, and social norms began to shift accordingly to accommodate girls'—primarily older girls'—commute back and forth from school. Regarding girls who attended local day schools, Mitchell acknowledges, "Late in the century, secondary schoolgirls were allowed to walk to school without a servant to protect them if they went in a fairly large group" (*Daily Life* 151). The sheer mundanity of schoolgirls' daily traversal played a large role in this allowance, but also relevant is the fact that the "schoolgirl" differed from the typical middle-class "girl"; she had a place and a purpose that lay outside the boundaries of the domestic sphere and that attached to her a measure of social competence, which made her seem more capable of navigating public spaces.

With these late-century shifts in social norms, schoolgirls' presence on the streets and omnibuses and trains of English cities and towns, particularly *en masse*, had a significant impact on the landscape of public places. E.A.L.K.'s description of the North London Collegiate School for Girls in the 1881-82 issue of *The Girl's Own Paper* is meant to offer a positive representation of schoolgirls, but it also presents a telling image of the way in which groups of schoolgirls could dominate public spaces en route to and from school: "school begins at 9.15, the school doors being opened at 9, and any stranger walking about that time up the Camden or Sandall roads must be literally amazed at the streams of girls pouring into these roads from all quarters, and flowing steadily in one direction" (qtd. in Doughty 82). E.A.L.K.'s comment highlights the impressive size of the school and the punctuality of its students, who come and go at the appointed times like clockwork; her description also implicitly likens commuting

schoolgirls to an extraordinary force of nature that was likely to astound, and perhaps even consume, any innocent bystander who crossed its path. During these particular moments before and after school at the North London Collegiate, the streets belonged to the schoolgirls—an impressive feat for young female members of society for whom public spaces were thought to be the most dangerous.

A similar scene from Ewing's *Six to Sixteen* (1875) suggests that schoolgirls could effect an even greater change on their surroundings. When the students of the Bush House, including protagonists Margery and Eleanor, are sent to their respective homes all at once in a hurry due to an outbreak of illness at the school, the girls disport themselves merrily on the train ride to London, transforming the entire train into their own personal playground. According to Margery,

We chattered, and laughed, and hopped about like a lot of birds turned out of a cage....We [ran] up and down and stood on our feet about three times as much as need was; we talked and laughed and [shook] ourselves incessantly; we put out our heads in the wind and sun as the train flew on; we tried to waltz between the seats, and [ate] two ounces of "mixed sweets" given us by the housemaid, and deluged each other with some very heavy scented perfume belonging to one of us. (Ewing, *Six to Sixteen* 180-81)

Unlike Tenniel's illustration of Alice, small and cowering in the disturbingly testosterone-heavy atmosphere of the Looking-Glass train compartment, the image of the schoolgirls on the train in Ewing's novel portrays them filling the space of the



Figure 13: from *Six to Sixteen* (1875) by Juliana Horatia Ewing

compartment entirely as they look at one another happily and lean forward as if about to jump out of their seats (see figure 13). The girls' behavior reflects the power that unchaperoned schoolgirls have in numbers, and the narrative implies that this is acceptable and that schoolgirls will be schoolgirls, even in public spaces.⁷⁴ However, the impropriety of the girls' behavior in a public space is not completely lost on Ewing or her characters. After Margery and Eleanor engage in a "noisy parting" from their schoolmates at the train station in London, they pay the price for their overindulgence in merriment by feeling "faint, sick, anything but hungry...[and] in a rather pitiable plight" (Ewing, *Six to Sixteen* 181). They are clearly in need of the "motherly looking lady" who observes their "collapse" in the waiting room and takes them under her wing by making sure they get something substantial to eat in order to refresh and sustain them for the remainder of their journey (Ewing, *Six to Sixteen* 181).

While Ewing's novel suggests that late-Victorian schoolgirls' unaccompanied presence in public spaces was relatively harmless, both for them and for the rest of society, Mary Louisa Molesworth's work expresses a more ambivalent view regarding the boundaries of girls' appropriate use of public spaces by addressing the issue of girls' unauthorized travel. Through employing the plot formula of the runaway girl, several of Molesworth's novels recognize girls' ability to independently navigate public spaces successfully while at the same time figuring this independent mobility as transgressive.

⁷⁴*What Katy Did at School* (1873), by Susan Coolidge (née Sarah Chauncey Woolsey), offers a slightly more conservative, American counterpart to this scene in its portrayal of the girls' travel together to their boarding school at Hillsover by train and stagecoach (62-65). The Carr sisters, Katy and Clover, are accompanied to school by their father and then escorted home at the end of the term by family friends; however, the greater distance—across multiple state lines—that the girls traverse in part accounts for this chaperonage.

Attitudes of ambivalence and issues of transgression are not uncommon in Molesworth's portrayal of Victorian girlhood; as Mary Sebag-Montefiore points out in her discussion of Molesworth's paradoxical treatment of the ethics of work and money-making for middle-class girls in her novels, Molesworth's fiction engages "conflicting norm[s] in the plight of late nineteenth-century middle-class girls" (375), and Molesworth herself "was well aware of the inconsistencies of her stance and her period" (393) regarding "the struggle between convention and new goals" for girls and young women who wanted to work and move about outside of the domestic sphere (375).⁷⁵ As a woman who made her own living by her pen, Molesworth embodied the figure of the independent female, but her novels tend to emphasize the girl's rightful place in the nurturing home rather than her potential for self-sufficiency outside the home. In novels such as *My New Home* (1893), *The Carved Lions* (1895), and *Hermie* (1881), Molesworth uses the figure of the runaway girl to address similar issues of tension and contradiction regarding girls' independent movements in public space by portraying the middle-class girl as desirous and capable of autonomy in public while also suggesting that this autonomy is problematic.

In *My New Home*, the illicit journey that Helena Wingfield makes when she leaves the titular new home in order to return to her old residence is successful, but it reflects her selfishness and foolishness rather than pluck. What the orphaned Helena wants more than anything is to remain in the small cottage called Windy Gap, where she

⁷⁵ Sebag-Montefiore finds that Molesworth, who made a living for herself as a prolific novelist, largely discourages girl readers from work outside the home through novels such as *White Turrets* (1895) and *Blanche* (1893). See also footnote 8 in Chapter Three regarding Molesworth's privileging of home education over sending girls to school.

has lived all her life as the much-loved and petted ward of her impoverished grandmother. When circumstances cause the family to grow even poorer, Helena's grandmother accepts her nephew Cosmo Vandeleur's invitation to move with Helena to his townhome in London in order to help nurse his ailing wife, much to Helena's frustration and dismay. In London, left almost constantly by herself in the "gloomy" and cavernous townhome while her grandmother tends to Mrs. Vandeleur, Helena grows more and more miserable from homesickness and the lack of attention from her grandmother, until, after one day overhearing a conversation in which Cosmo Vandeleur and her grandmother discuss the possibility of sending her away to school, Helena decides to return on her own to Windy Gap. In preparing for her unauthorized journey, Helena reveals her capability to handle the outside world by demonstrating a sense of foresight and realism: she "eat[s] as much as [she] could" at breakfast because she realizes that "it might be some time before [she] got a regular meal again" (Molesworth, *New Home* 169), and she is careful to purchase a third-class train ticket because she "saw that care would be needed to make [her money] take [her] to [her] journey's end" (Molesworth, *New Home* 172). Though only about twelve years old, Helena manages to navigate the streets of London and various public transit systems, securing a hansom to Paddington station and taking a train, followed by an omnibus ride and concluded by a long walk uphill, in order to get herself back to Windy Gap (Molesworth, *New Home* 171-72).

However, while the novel acknowledges Helena's competence as an independent traveler almost as a matter of course, it also makes clear that Helena's behavior

constitutes a contemptible betrayal of her grandmother's love and trust. When Helena reaches Windy Gap, she is startled to discover Mr. Vandeleur's charges, schoolboys named Harry and Lindsey, staying there for the holidays, but she is even more surprised to find that these comrades in childhood are stunned and "grave" at what she has done instead of sympathetic; Harry, the elder boy, exclaims, "How could you come away like that? Why, your grandmother will be nearly out of her mind about you!" and ponders, "I can't make out...how you could treat your grandmother so" (Molesworth, *New Home* 178, 182). No concern is expressed about the dangers that Helena could have encountered during her travels or her recklessness in setting out on her own; it is her impudence in refusing to stay where her grandmother has placed her that horrifies everyone. Eventually, Helena is chastened by these remarks and the rebukes of the housekeeper, Kezia, as well as by the fact that Cosmo turns out to be considerably nicer than he had seemed, and a satisfactory living situation for the entire extended family is soon worked out. Ultimately, however, the only small consolation Helena has in her shame is that Cosmo and her grandmother "do not think it was *all* [her] fault" that she wanted to run away from home, and, as she narrates the story years after the fact, she still feels guilt for her lack of trust and obedience (Molesworth, *New Home* 156). Helena's success on the streets is completely overshadowed by her rebellion in forsaking the home her grandmother has made for her.

Much less blame is laid at the feet of nine-year-old Geraldine Le Marchant when she runs away from school in *The Carved Lions*. Geraldine lives with her genteelly-poor family in New Mexington, "a rather large town in an ugly part of the country, where

great tall chimneys giv[e] out black smoke,” and she is content there until her father accepts a business opportunity in South America and Geraldine’s parents place her in a nearby boarding school called Green Bank to live while they travel abroad (Molesworth, *Carved Lions* 2). Oppressed by the cold and callous atmosphere of the school and both misunderstood and mistreated by her teachers, Geraldine grows at odds with the school’s authority figures, even asserting angrily that she “*won’t* stay here if you say such things” when her they accuse her of laziness and deceit after an unnoticed illness causes her to fail at her lessons (Molesworth, *Carved Lions* 125, emphasis in original). Geraldine’s mounting frustration with these injustices, coupled with her fears regarding rumors that her parents have taken ill with fever in South America, finally lead her to carry out her threat, and she decides to leave the school in order to find someone in town who can help her get news of her parents. Like Helena in *My New Home*, Geraldine shows a sense of practicality by “dress[ing] [her]self as sensibly as if [she] had been a grown-up person” and taking all of her money with her, and she formulates the modest and sensible plan of finding a former acquaintance who can help her write to her guardian, Mrs. Selwood (Molesworth, *Carved Lions* 140).⁷⁶ The injustice of Geraldine’s mistreatment and her noble purpose lend her escape a certain cachet, and, as she leaves the school and begins walking in the cold and rain, Geraldine feels that she is on an exhilarating and liberating journey; she describes herself as “full of a strange kind of excitement; I did not mind the rain, and indeed it was not very heavy; I did not feel

⁷⁶ Part of Geraldine’s trouble rises from the fact that the teachers at her school insist on reading all of the students’ letters before they can be posted, which leads Geraldine to believe that she cannot be open or honest with her parents or her guardian about her situation at school. At its close, the novel makes a point of openly condemning “that dreadful old-world rule of letters being read, and the want of trust and confidence in the pupils” that it reflects (184).

lonely or frightened, and my brain seemed unusually active and awake” (Molesworth, *Carved Lions* 144).

Unlike Helena, however, Geraldine’s experience on the streets of New Mexington is far more difficult and far less successful: “two or three wrong turnings” prove that she does not know the town as well as she thought, and Geraldine is dismayed to find that her family’s former cook no longer works at her old home and that she cannot find her way to the local grocer (Molesworth, *Carved Lions* 141). Once evening falls, Geraldine’s travels on the “grim” streets of New Mexington become more stressful and even suspenseful as she gets lost and grows “very tired,” and, when Geraldine finds herself in that universal urban danger zone, “a much darker street than the others” (Molesworth, *Carved Lions* 145), it becomes clear that she is indeed “such a little young lady to be out alone” (Molesworth, *Carved Lions* 143). Ultimately, the success of Geraldine’s wanderings is due primarily to luck and the kindness of strangers rather than her own competence. Geraldine happens upon a familiar furniture shop, where she falls asleep in the showroom until the warm-hearted proprietors find and take pity on her. That Geraldine immediately falls sick with a serious illness could be read as just desserts for her disobedience and rebellion, but her collapse seems instead to be a reference to the hardships she has suffered by being out of a loving, home-like environment. The family she stays with pities her frankly and refuses to move her until she is well, while her mother implicitly validates her actions by writing in a letter to Geraldine that “she *could* not blame” her for running away “though she knew [Geraldine] had not done right” because school had clearly been such a difficult and unpleasant place for her

(Molesworth, *Carved Lions* 183, emphasis in original). In the end, Geraldine is not sent back to the horrid school where she was mistreated but is instead allowed to live with the granddaughter of the furniture store proprietors, who have become Geraldine's friends during her convalescence. Though Geraldine's escapades succeed in getting her the care that she both wants and needs in a situation where adults could or would not help her, the direness of her situation and stress of her travels ultimately portray the city streets as a fraught space, a dangerous last resort, for the young middle-class girl.

When Hermione Leighton in Molesworth's *Hermie* runs away, it is attributed to her own enduring "queerness" rather than to selfishness or a sense of injustice. This personality trait is both endearing and problematic but, above all, persistent; the novel follows Hermie from age eight to age twelve, and the narrative reveals throughout Hermie's development that, when left to her own devices, she will consistently make choices that are odd, illogical, and wrong. Hermie runs away twice in the novel, and each time she is motivated by skewed ethics that cloud a more conventional sense of right and wrong; thus, it is not the public spaces that Hermie traverses on her own that are particularly dangerous but rather the troubling way of thinking that leads her into these spaces. After a convoluted misunderstanding gets Hermie into trouble with a local middle-aged gentleman, Hermie decides to slip away from her nurse during a walk in town and go on an "exploring expedition" in order to find the man's home and apologize (Molesworth, *Hermie* 77). Once there, Hermie does not see the grave disobedience in the fact that she "came of [herself]" or the imprudence of her proposal to "run home alone....I am sure I can find the way" (Molesworth, *Hermie* 87). Hermie does not

understand that, though “Sunningley [is] a little place, and not one in which a child [is] likely to come to much harm,” she cannot be allowed to walk there alone for propriety’s sake (Molesworth, *Hermey* 91) When, years later, at the age of twelve, Hermey runs away from school (a journey apparently too uneventful even to be described in the novel), she does not do so because she is desperate to be home with those who love her, although she is misunderstood by some of the harsh teachers at school. Instead, she is prompted by a “mistaken spirit of self-sacrifice” that motivates her to take the blame for a crime committed by her young friend Gwinny, who is terrified of the consequences of her misdeeds (Molesworth, *Hermey* 242). Again, Hermey’s actions are shocking because they are wrongheaded rather than because they are dangerous. Hermey horrifies her family friend Miss Lavinia, to whose house she runs, when she explains to Miss Lavinia that she left school for the sole purpose of inducing her headmistress to suspect her of Gwinny’s crime: “I *wanted* them to think I had done it to save Gwinny, and that’s why I ran away....They are sure to think it was me now” (Molesworth, *Hermey* 226, emphasis in original). Hermey uses her capability for independent mobility not to restore herself to the security of the domestic sphere but to confuse those who hold authority over her and to manipulate their perceptions of her. It is significant that Hermey is sent back to school, unlike the girls in Molesworth’s other stories. The narrator even asks readers, “Are you disappointed, children, to hear that she did come back [to school]?” (Molesworth, *Hermey* 247) and explains that, for Hermey, this was necessary because “Shirking dangers and difficulties is not the way to master them” (Molesworth, *Hermey* 247).

Taking these three novels into account, one cannot help but conclude that the figure of the runaway girl held a sort of quaint charm for Molesworth—which is not surprising considering that, in Molesworth’s novels, the runaway girl tends to stand, ironically, as a testament to the irresistibility of home rather than the allure of public spaces.⁷⁷ Though Molesworth portrays her characters as intrepid girls who are capable of independent treks through streets and on trains and buses, her novels uphold a moral geography in which, to borrow Tim Cresswell’s words, “place and roots are given vivid moral and ethical resonance over and above more mobile states of existence and forms of identity” (“Theorizing Place” 11). The saving grace of Helena and Geraldine, which validates their illicit conduct and enables them to stay where they have placed themselves, is their valuation of the domestic sphere and their loyalty to “home.” On the other hand, Hermy’s “queerness” allows her to become entirely too comfortable with running away as a useful means to inappropriate ends; she has no strong sense of home to stabilize her, and she is willing to shift her identity in order to achieve her own—admittedly altruistic—goals. Molesworth’s novels suggest that the middle-class Victorian girl needed to be contained and protected, not from the dangers of the outside world, which she could navigate relatively successfully on her own, but instead from the independent thought that prompted her to do so.

Like Molesworth’s work, L. T. Meade’s turn-of-the-century novel *The Rebel of the School* (1902) places limits on middle-class girls’ independent mobility and

⁷⁷ Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig point out that Molesworth’s characters “are seeking not adventure but domestic security” when they “take destiny into their own hands and run away” (56).

identifies some of girls' movements in public as transgressive; Meade's school story also reflects its own participation in the emergence of the New Girl culture by romanticizing the spirit of independence and rebellion against convention that inspires its protagonist, Kathleen O'Hara, to venture into public spaces on her own without permission.⁷⁸ The novel focuses on the girls of Shirley School, a day school located in the "popular town" of Merrifield, just a half-hour train ride away from London (Meade, *Rebel* 5). The schoolgirls here are in their teens, several years older than Molesworth's protagonists, and they lead less sheltered lives as they move about the streets of Merrifield independently on a daily basis. At the center of Shirley school and Meade's story is Kathleen, a rich, beautiful, unruly, and devastatingly charming Irish girl who is new to Merrifield and the school. Kathleen, like many of the "wild Irish girls" that Meade uses as stock characters in her novels, completely refuses to submit to the drab discipline of English school life, but for Kathleen in particular, her lack of self-control translates specifically into her insistence upon going wherever she wants whenever she wants.⁷⁹ From leaving the classroom during lessons on her first day at school because she is bored, to roaming around town all afternoon instead of returning to school for tutorials, Kathleen delights in retaining her independence and refusing to allow authority figures to tell her where she belongs, including her teachers and her English hostess, Mrs.

⁷⁸ Although *A Rebel of the School* technically postdates the Victorian period by one year, I find it useful and relevant to a discussion of Victorian literature and girlhood due to its chronological proximity and similarity in theme to the large number of school stories that Meade wrote in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

⁷⁹ Kathleen O'Hara is the virtual carbon copy of Bridget O'Hara in Meade's *Bashful Fifteen* (1892), which is discussed in Chapter IV of this study. Both girls are the spoiled, uneducated only daughters of spectacularly wealthy Irishmen, and they both have no intention of following the rules and regulations of the schools to which they've been sent. Both novels also feature the visit of a lively Irish aunt who complicates matters. Meade herself was born in County Cork, Ireland in 1854 and emigrated to England at the age of twenty-one.

Tennant. That Kathleen's appeal and her blithe assertions that "I am very naughty....I always was, and I always will be" succeed in disarming those who would punish her suggests that kind-hearted and high-spirited girls can live above certain Victorian social norms that conventionally bind middle-class girls (Meade, *Rebel* 51).

However, when Kathleen extends her adventures beyond the safe, quiet suburb of Merrifield into the urban center of London, her naughtiness becomes less charming and more troubling. The arrival of Kathleen's aunt, Mrs. O'Flynn, to London and her request that Kathleen visit her at her hotel places Kathleen's movements in grievous opposition to dictums of propriety and rules of the school that cannot be broken; Kathleen's invitation to her schoolmate Alice Tennant to join her is met with the information that "We girls are not allowed to go to London by ourselves" and that the headmistress of the school has requested an evening meeting with Kathleen that would be unconscionable for the girl to miss (Meade, *Rebel* 184). Eschewing the advice and requests of others, Kathleen persuades another schoolgirl, Ruth Craven, to accompany her and confidently boards the train to London, but, when the girls get there, it is clear that they do not know how to navigate the city on their own. They grow "very forlorn and slightly frightened" once they reach Charing Cross, and even the courageous Kathleen, who is the elder of the two girls, must ask "Now what are we to do?" and admit to a nearby porter that "We don't know anything about London" (Meade, *Rebel* 196-97). The girls' ignorance and trepidation testifies to the city's foreignness, largeness, and potential danger for young, unaccompanied schoolgirls, particularly those who belong in the suburbs. With the help of the porter, the girls make it to Kathleen's aunt at the Hôtel Métropole, but Ruth's

misgivings about “do[ing] wrong” by being out so late without permission and the arrival of Mrs. Tennant, who has come to retrieve the wayward Kathleen, indicate to readers that the girls have crossed the line from innocuous naughtiness to definitely unacceptable behavior (Meade, *Rebel* 199).

If this illicit jaunt defines the limits of permissible mobility for unchaperoned girls and identifies the streets of London as out of bounds, it also provides Kathleen with the confidence to transgress these boundaries again. Though Kathleen is clearly “ignorant...of London and its ways,” she insists that she has “got a head on [her] shoulders” that allows her to negotiate the streets sensibly and proposes another trip into London with the members of a secret society of schoolgirls she has founded (Meade, *Rebel* 83). Kathleen’s society, dubbed by her the “Wild Irish Girls,” is itself problematic. Seen as a threat to school order by school authorities, who only vaguely know of its existence, the “Wild Irish Girls” hold secret evening meetings all over Merrifield, which exasperates their parents, who find they can no longer keep their daughters at home in the evenings or control their movements about town. When the girls decide to depart on a “great, daring, midnight excursion into the heart of London,” their plan resembles the formulaic plot point of the secret midnight feast found in many Victorian school stories (Meade, *Rebel* 286-87).⁸⁰ Yet this adventure, located in the public spaces of the largest city in England rather than the walled garden of a girls’ school, is clearly portrayed as much more dangerous and grievously wrong. Susy Hopkins, one of the officers in

⁸⁰ Sally Mitchell indicates in *The New Girl* (1995) that it was Meade who introduced the plot elements of the secret feast and the secret society (such as the “Wild Irish Girls” in *The Rebel of the School*) into the school story formula that was employed and manipulated by Victorian writers of both boys’ and girls’ school stories (see pp. 16-18).

Kathleen's society, acknowledges that the girls' treat will likely end with "our all being expelled," and she admits that "of course it is wrong" (Meade, *Rebel* 279-80). The girls' efforts to behave exactly as if they are *not* schoolgirls when they meet at the Merrifield train station also acts as tacit acknowledgment that they are seriously misbehaving; in order to avoid the notice of miscellaneous adults, they "go in quite quietly by twos and twos...to the booking-office and take their tickets" and are "not even to take any notice of each other until they [are] off" (Meade, *Rebel* 295). While the girls' trip to London is wrong, it is very easy: in a group of seven this time and led by a schoolmate named Kate who has been to London before, they navigate the city effortlessly and take an omnibus to the Princess Theater in order to watch a show and have "a glorious time" (Meade, *Rebel* 304).

Despite the girls' success in engineering their "great expedition," the novel condemns their escapade and puts an end to Kathleen's transgressive mobility by heaping shame upon them in the form of a lady and a gentleman at the theater who perceive that the girls have no chaperone and gently but firmly insist on "help[ing] them" by seeing them home immediately (Meade, *Rebel* 262). The lady's ethos and pathos as "a mother with children at home," accompanied by her quiet assertion that any mother "would be horrified" by the girls' current situation, pierces the conscience of each girl, and they slink home "with all the lightsomeness and gladness of heart gone" (Meade, *Rebel* 306-07). This ultimate feeling of failure that clouds the girls' adventure forces Kathleen to accept and internalize a moral geography that adheres to Victorian conventions; by marking the party of unchaperoned schoolgirls as out of place in the

theater and automatically taking control of the girls' movements about the city, the concerned couple—and the novel itself—reinforces the culturally-dominant concept of “public space . . . as ‘naturally’ or ‘normally’ an adult space” and domestic space as most appropriate for girls (Valentine, “Children Should Be Seen” 206). Though the lady and gentleman are kind and courteous to the girls, they clearly assert the moral authority that their status as middle-class parents gives them within the public space of the theater. The couple's actions underscore that, when middle-class girls are unattended in public space, any adult of their rank has the right, if not the obligation, to exert authority over them.

Kathleen is duly subdued by this lesson that the urban center of London is *not* her oyster, and she insists to the other girls that the lady and gentleman “were like two angels” and that “We did an awful thing coming to town” (Meade, *Rebel* 307). Yet, while the novel demonstrates that Kathleen repents of her rebellious behavior and has learned her place regarding her movements within the public spaces of London and Merrifield, the story's concluding paragraph indicates that Kathleen's merits as an honest, generous, and fun-loving girl far outweigh her transgression of these normative codes. Indeed, the closing lines of the novel assert that “all the characters in this story did well, and were proud to admit that they owed most of their future prosperity to the Wild Irish Girl, Kathleen O'Hara” (Meade, *Rebel* 336). One of the reasons that the novel is able to excuse Kathleen's bad behavior as negligible is that she redeems herself by publicly acknowledging her disobedience and forcing her cohort to do the same; by demonstrating Kathleen's sense of honor in this way, Meade endorses a system of values created and upheld by the schoolgirls themselves, thereby validating the independent girl

culture that fostered the New Girl.⁸¹ Kathleen's inappropriate perception of public spaces is also excusable because it is figured as a function of her Irish ethnicity rather than a personal character flaw. Kathleen claims repeatedly throughout the novel that she cannot help being a "Wild Irish Girl," and she founds her "Wild Irish Girls" schoolgirl society in order to carry out an Irish "Manifesto of Independence" (Meade, *Rebel* 261). In portraying Kathleen's energy, impetuosity, rebelliousness, and charm as features of her Irishness, the novel ultimately exoticizes and romanticizes even her bad behavior.⁸²

This figure of the runaway girl, seen in both Meade's and Molesworth's work, reveals an attitude of ambivalence that surrounded girls' increased mobility in public spaces through the end of the nineteenth century. On one hand, the runaway girl's travels constitute "transgressive, agency-driven, potentially empowering moves" (Silvey 142) as she refuses to follow rules and stay where others place her, pursuing her own interests and desires instead. This construction of "mobility as opportunity" hints at girls' ability to control their own circumstances and futures. (Silvey 142). On the other hand, the runaway's transgressive movements rise out of a sense of "mobility [that is] seen as disruptive and furtive—morally suspicious" by the dominant (adult) culture, which

⁸¹ Kathleen does this in order to save a schoolmate who has refused to give school authorities information about the Wild Irish Girls because she promised Kathleen she wouldn't and who faces expulsion as a result. In telling on herself, Kathleen shows that, despite her superficial naughtiness, she adheres to a higher code of ethics valued by schoolgirls (and schoolboys) in Victorian school fiction which revolves around honesty and loyalty to one's friends. See also Beverly Lyon Clark's *Regendering the School Story: Sassy Sissies and Tattling Tomboys* (1996) for more discussion of the ethics of tattle-telling in nineteenth-century school fiction.

⁸² Kathleen's Irish aunt, Katie O'Flynn, who comes to visit, further enforces the cultural stereotypes that the novel creates regarding the Irish's lack of propriety; Mrs. O'Flynn thinks nothing of Kathleen's unchaperoned jaunts all over town, even commenting that "it seems to be a sort of death in life, that town of Merrifield" and wondering what Kathleen finds to do for fun (207). For more discussion of the cultural-political context and implications of Meade's use of the wild Irish girl as a stock character, see also Carol Dunbar's "The Wild Irish Girls of L.T. Meade and Mrs. George De Horne Vaizey" in *Studies in Children's Literature, 1500-2000* (2004), eds. Celia Keenan and Mary Shine Thompson.

privileges the containment of girls in the structured settings of home and school (Cresswell, “Moral Geographies” 130). Only movements that serve a moral authority such as religious and domestic ideals are thoroughly sanctioned, as we will see in the discussion of girls’ work in public spaces below.

Work

“In these enlightened days, most girls want to work, girls at least who have any “grit,” as our American cousins would say, in them, and whether it be philanthropy, art, or the purpose of earning money, which makes them take wing from the old nest, or whether they are practically alone in the world and have no nest to leave, it matters little—the result is pretty much the same. Towns, usually big ones like London, etc., are constantly the centres of attraction to them, simply because there the ways and means for attaining their desire are easy, and training in all kind of arts and crafts is to be had cheaply.” (qtd. in Doughty 150)

Josepha Crane offers this assessment of late-Victorian middle-class girls’ interest in working in her article “Living in Lodgings,” published in a June 1895 edition of *The Girl’s Own Paper*. As Crane indicates, by the close of the nineteenth century, working outside of the home had become a realistic option for many middle-class girls who were beyond school age but who were not yet married, both those who needed to earn their own living and those who did not. This decision took girls out of the “nest” of their family homes, regardless of whether they actually moved out. Paid employment shifted the girl’s attention from the private sphere to the public sphere—or, as feminist

geographer Gillian Rose puts it, from a space of reproduction to one of production.⁸³ It also gave middle-class girls greater access to public spaces than simply the license to walk on the street or ride the omnibus unaccompanied; professional employment offered girls an identity and purpose as useful members of society outside the domestic sphere, which allowed them to *belong* in public spaces. Crane's article was one of a number appearing in journals such as *Atalanta* and *The Girl's Own Paper* throughout the end of the century that gratified girls' interest in the various kinds of training they could undertake and careers they could pursue in order to fulfill their desire to support themselves or simply to lead more independent and adventurous lives.

As the prospect of working grew in popularity among girls, it also came to be more accepted by mainstream society because it could be considered "training" for the girl's future role as a wife and mother; the skills a girl developed while working professionally were believed to be transferrable to domestic duties. As Sarah Bilston points out, "Girls' literature of the later nineteenth century was characterized by its engagement with the new possibilities becoming available to women, and many such texts worked hard to fuse support for these possibilities with socially conservative conceptions of femininity" (190); the perception that "a girl will *best* discharge her familial and societal duties through employment" began to replace the concern that work

⁸³ In *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (1993), Rose raises the binary of masculine/public/productive space and feminine/private/reproductive space in order to problematize it, calling for a third definition that describes a space in which production and reproduction are allowed to overlap and interrelate in women's lives. While Rose's points about the limits of this dichotomy in feminist geography are valid, I suggest that this binary is useful in the analysis of Victorian middle-class girlhood because the kind of overlap of the public and private to which Rose refers was less of a cultural reality, and middle-class girls were raised to think of themselves as future full-time occupants of private/domestic/reproductive space as wives and mothers.

outside the home kept girls from futures as wives and mothers or from fulfilling their current obligations in the domestic sphere as sisters and daughters (Bilston 189). The literature being produced for girls often portrayed public spaces as providing the middle-class working girl with compelling opportunities to return to the domestic sphere. In this way, this fiction suggests that the place of belonging that girls find in public through pursuit of a career is only temporary and provisional.

Evelyn Whitaker's *Our Little Ann* (1885) does this by conflating the middle-class girl's work outside of the home with the domestic roles of sister, daughter, mother, and wife, portraying the working girl's experiences of public space as a slippery slope that leads her right back into the private spaces of the home. Though the protagonist, the young Irish orphan Ann Nugent, spends the majority of the novel earning her own bread, she is not an independent and competent New Girl worker, and the most fulfilling work environment for her is in domestic spaces that replicate the middle-class family rather than the public sphere. When the novel opens, fifteen-year-old Ann is already a working girl of sorts, serving as a tutor and general servant at Miss Primmer's school for girls in Laburnum Villa in exchange for her room and board and occasional lessons, à la Becky Sharp or Sara Crewe. But Ann is not an empowered worker; Miss Primmer, a genteel tyrant, has impressed upon Ann that her position in the school is an act of Miss Primmer's charity rather than a contract of employment, which Miss Primmer uses as leverage to overwork Ann without teaching her anything.⁸⁴ For her part, Ann does not

⁸⁴ Unlike Frances Hodgson Burnett's Sara Crewe, Ann was sent to Miss Primmer's school expressly under this arrangement. Therefore, Miss Primmer's assertion that Ann is a charity case is even less true and her exploitation of Ann as a worker even more pronounced (though certainly no more grievous) than Miss

work efficiently or keep the younger children in good order; characterized by the novel as little more than a “poor child” herself (Whitaker 31), Ann prefers to sing Irish songs “at the very pitch of her voice” or listen through the window to the Punch and Judy puppet shows being performed down the street and to run through the house like a hoodlum (Whitaker 21). The inappropriateness of Miss Primmer’s use of Ann and Ann’s own inaptitude for the work comes to a head when Ann accidentally places herself in a compromising situation with the handsome young Latin tutor, Tom Garnett, and is fired from her position and thrown out of the house in disgrace.

With this crisis, Ann trades one uncertain yet decidedly domestic form of employment for another, albeit infinitely more pleasant one. Instead of being condemned to wander the streets, searching desperately for another position, Ann is saved by Tom Garnett, who himself is quitting Miss Primmer’s to leave for China on a business venture. Tom rashly proposes that Ann immediately come home with him to his mother’s house. However, in the Garnett household with Tom, his mother, and his brother Will, Ann has no clearly defined position; she is neither guest nor family member nor paid worker, a fact that troubles her greatly during her first weeks there. When she tearfully insists to Tom that she must return to Miss Primmer’s or look for “other schools in London where they might want a poor, little, ignorant girl to help with the little ones, and make herself generally useful” (Whitaker 69), Tom instead suggests that she “take care of the mother...and make it cheerful for Will here....And when I come back from China...I shall expect you to marry me, and make my gruel and bear

Minchin’s because Miss Primmer is reneging on the agreement she entered with Ann when she accepted her into the school.

my grumbling and let me hobble out leaning on your arm” (Whitaker 73). While Tom tosses off these remarks without thought and is clearly joking about the marriage addendum, Ann takes up these orders as her new duty and vocation in life and works to fulfill her debt of gratitude to the family, identifying it as her job to become as good to Mrs. Garnett and Will as a real daughter and sister would be and to fulfill her role in the future as a wife to Tom. Ann assumes responsibility for all of the household management and the making of Mrs. Garnett’s hats and dresses and makes herself “generally useful” and pleasant to the family, including even the maid of all work, Mary Anne. In this way, Ann finds employment that keeps her rooted in a home and out of the public spaces in which late-Victorian girls typically found work to busy and support themselves. As a pseudo-daughter, Ann becomes a quite literal example of the girl described in Charles Peters’s *Girl’s Own Indoor Book* (1888) who “pay[s] her way quite as much as one who earns and pays current coin....by filling in the little spaces in home life as only a dear daughter can” (Whitaker 19). Subsequently, when Ann realizes that she has slowly fallen in love with Will during Tom’s five-year absence and cannot bring herself to marry Tom upon his imminent return, she considers herself in breach of her implicit contract with the Garnett family and decides to leave the house in secret to find employment as a governess.

Though Ann leaves her home reluctantly and with great sadness, her voluntary flight from the Garnett household provides her with an opportunity to enter the public sphere for the first time in search for work. Yet this proves more difficult than

anticipated; Ann finds that employers are reluctant to hire girls who refuse to give references, and even the very streets seem to Ann to be unprecedentedly hostile:

She had often been about by herself....She had threaded her way fearlessly through noisy, bustling thoroughfares, or by poor, unfrequented streets, and had never met with any rudeness, nor feared any; but now it seemed as if all the world were against her, people jostled her roughly, men stared at her with eyes that made her sick and hot with shame, boys shouted at her, the water-carts splashed her as they passed; it seemed as if they all knew she had no home to take refuge in, and no one to protect her or avenge her if she were hurt or insulted. (Whitaker 170-71)

Through Ann's dismal state, so similar to her pathetic helplessness when she was cast out of Miss Primmer's (even though she is now five years older and certainly of an age to work), Whitaker implies that the job-seeking girl goes out, not to find her rightful place in public, but instead to become a victim of the cold, harsh world. Rather than a testament to her own ability, Ann's former confidence on the streets of London seems instead to have been derived from her identity as the loved and well-cared-for member of a middle-class family. Stripped of this home and this identity, Ann cannot find her place in public; even though "she was by no means one of those girls who have been kept in cotton-wool, or under a glass case, till they are unfit for contact with the outside world," Ann clearly belongs at home and nowhere else (Whitaker 170). Even the registry offices where Ann seeks employment provide settings for embarrassment and affront when Ann must scurry out of each room "with flaming cheeks and indignantly beating

heart” because she cannot explain her lack of references and home address to her interviewers (Whitaker 171). The final blow comes when Ann discovers at the end of the day that her coin purse has been stolen and she is now penniless, which signals the completeness of her ineptitude in navigating the city streets on her own. The public sphere simply is not the right place for Ann.

The way in which Ann’s problem of employment is solved further emphasizes this. Ann’s wanderings by herself in London in search of work ultimately prove fruitful; as she sits in Paddington Station, sobbing over the indignities of the day and the loss of her purse, Ann meets the elderly Mr. Loxton, who happens to be searching for a governess to care for his four-year-old grandnephew, Hal. The employment that Ann needs and hopes for is secured, but, once again, Ann has sallied forth into the world only to find herself ensconced in a cozy domestic scene as a sort of daughter-for-hire: insinuated into the crusty Mr. Loxton’s household, Ann is considered a beloved member of the family instead of an employee and in turn loves Hal like a younger brother and Mr. Loxton like a father. When, five years later, preparations are made to send Hal away to school, both Mr. Loxton and Hal assume that Ann will stay “at home” with the Loxtons indefinitely, regardless of the absence of her charge. But the degree to which Ann’s bond with the Loxtons transcends that of an employee is proven most extraordinarily when Mr. Loxton is severely weakened by a series of strokes. Told by the vicar and his wife that it would be impossible for a young lady her age to live alone with a single man and that she must find another position, Ann’s determination to stay with and care for Mr. Loxton moves her to make the ultimate sacrifice of promising to

marry the old man: “‘How could I leave him?’ she asked herself, ‘and they [will] not let me take care of him just as a daughter, so I must needs be his wife’” (Whitaker 245). Mr. Loxton’s dying act of passing Ann off to Will Garnett, who has been pining for her through the years, saves Ann both from marital purgatory and from having to leave home to find a job again.

Ann Nugent clearly is not a girl in charge of her own destiny; her half-hearted efforts to work and take care of herself lead to installment in new homes and families rather than independence, and the public sphere offers her nothing but a chance to return to the domestic. The investment that the novel consistently demonstrates in keeping “poor little Ann” off of the streets of London rivals that of tract literature such as Hesba Stretton’s famous sentimental evangelical tale *Jessica’s First Prayer* (1867), despite the significant age difference between Stretton’s pathetic ragged child, Jessica, and the grown-up girl Ann. Though the novel does not explicitly speak out against girls’ comfort and confidence in public spaces and the legitimacy of work outside of the home, it clearly privileges the domestic sphere as the place where the good middle-class girl can find true fulfillment.

Sarah Tytler’s *A Houseful of Girls* (1889) portrays two middle-class girls who are much more successful at finding their own place in the public spaces of London through work. When Dr. Millar, the father of four nearly-grown girls, finds that poor investment choices have brought financial ruin on his family, his daughters have no choice but to leave their home and “do something to keep [them]selves” (Tytler, *Houseful* 66). Like Ann Nugent, the Millar girls do not choose to seek employment of

their own accord, and their mother, Mrs. Millar, foresees similar difficulties for her daughters as she mourns sending them “out into a cold world, to have to struggle for a pittance, to lose their youth and its privileges, to be knocked about, and perhaps ill-treated, and looked down upon by people in every way their inferiors” (Tytler, *Houseful* 67). However, her most extroverted daughters, Annie, the eldest, and Rose, the third, see the family’s misfortune as a golden opportunity. While the other two sisters, Dora and May, face the future with trepidation, Annie and Rose glory in their flight from the family nest: “There was something so fresh and exciting in looking about for openings and careers, in calculating how they were to earn their bread—which would taste so sweet to those who earned it—and at the same time save money” (Tytler, *Houseful* 96). The girls’ anticipation of “hav[ing] plenty of adventures and ris[ing] triumphant over them all” sustains them as they leave home, Annie to become a nurse and Rose to teach drawing in a girls’ school while she trains to become an artist (Tytler, *Houseful* 79).

Unsurprisingly, the novel answers the girls’ naïveté with unexpected hardships. Rose’s struggles are relatively petty and involve coping with the tedium of the girls’ school where she teaches and her own inadequacies as an artist. But Annie’s work brings her into contact with horrors and the physical dangers of contagion, as well as the caustic atmosphere of the hospital; she constantly contends with exhaustion and “suffer[s] considerably from what is known as hospital or infirmary sore throat... caused by inhaling the fumes from the carbolic acid used in the wards.... she seem[s] still to smell

the peculiar air of the wards wherever she [goes]" (Tytler, *Houseful* 161-62).⁸⁵ Annie must also navigate substantial dangers in the form of sexual tensions that charge the predominantly masculine spaces of the public hospital in which she works.⁸⁶ Annie struggles to deflect the subtle attentions of the male doctors and patients of St. Ebbe's hospital, who are, "at the moment of entering the ward, fully alive to the circumstance that 'the pretty nurse,' as she [is] known to them, [is] on active duty" (Tytler, *Houseful* 178-79). Whenever Annie assists in the operating theatre, too, her intriguing person cannot help but compete with the spectacle of the surgery being performed, and she becomes a feast for the gaze of the of all the male physicians in the audience, who look at her with "marveling, admiring, condemning, or ridiculing" expressions (Tytler, *Houseful* 177). Annie masters her weaknesses, her environment, and her work, but she has to struggle hard to keep her relationship with the doctors and the patients "purely professional" (Tytler, *Houseful* 267). In this way, Tytler's novel figures the hospital as

⁸⁵ In this way, Tytler, like other contemporary authors, offers an implicit warning about the hardships of nursing to any girl readers who would romanticize and idealize the profession. The author of "The Unvarnished Side of Hospital Nursing" in an 1887-88 issue of *The Girl's Own Paper* does the same when she describes the details of a day in the life of a nurse and asserts sternly to her audience that "Hospital life is not play" (qtd. in Doughty 107). Though Tytler's description of St. Ebbe's hospital echoes this sentiment, the novel's romantic climax, in which beautiful nurse and handsome doctor fall in love over the bed of the patient whom they save together, undermines Tytler's more practical message and causes the novel to resemble other contemporary fiction that glorified nursing as a romantic adventure.

⁸⁶ Through its portrayal of Annie's struggle to maintain professionalism in a sexually charged environment, Tytler's novel reflects Victorian concerns for maintaining propriety in the mixed company of hospital nurses, doctors, and patients, which stemmed from cultural anxieties regarding the sexual promiscuity that such an environment could foster. As Kristine Swenson points out in her study of medical women in Victorian fiction, "nursing in public made [the young woman] susceptible to improper advances—even attempted rape—and perhaps unleashed her own hidden passions" (52-53), while the nurse's "proximity to male bodies and her freedom from normal social restraints rendered her as potentially susceptible to her emotions as fallen women of "weak generosity" who yield to the "passionate entreaties of the man they love" (54). Swenson points out here the troubling link that the Victorian cultural consciousness made between professional women and fallen women, which complicated the nursing career.

just as dangerous as the city streets for having to suppress inappropriate behavior from members of the opposite sex.

The city streets, as a matter of fact, pose very little threat to Annie and Rose as they move about London on their own for both work and leisure. The streets are not necessarily pleasant for either girl: Rose suffers “many a weary trudge in fog and drizzle” as she travels back and forth between art classes, her teaching position, and the boarding house where she lives (Tytler, *Houseful* 261), while Annie goes out for her constitutional walk “either to be jostled and forced along in a crowded thoroughfare...or to creep the length of the cleanest side of the pavement in a depressingly empty street” (Tytler, *Houseful* 163-64). Yet physical danger does not seem to be a problem. Hester Jennings, the daughter of Rose’s landlady and fellow artist who distinctly fits the mold of the New Woman, insists that girls such as Rose and Annie can walk the streets with “fearless independence” (Tytler, *Houseful* 259), claiming that London’s “crowded thoroughfares, to those who honestly went about their own business...were as safe, and safer, than any quiet country road” (Tytler, *Houseful* 259-60); though Hester’s assertions ring with an idealism that is almost silly, they tend to be true. Rose, “like most middle-class girls not fairly out of their teens, and committed to their own discretion in the huge motley world of London, had been solemnly charged [by her parents] to behave with the greatest wariness” on the streets, but she ignores this advice with serendipitous results (Tytler, *Houseful* 259). When a nice-looking young stranger offers to carry Rose’s parcels and walk her home from a shopping trip interrupted by a thunderstorm, Rose accepts the man’s invitation without reserve and proceeds to tell him everything about

herself and her family during their walk, a liberty that horrifies the careful and dignified Annie. Rose's lapse in caution, however similar to Little Red Riding Hood's unfortunate dalliance with the wolf, proves harmless in the end and even benefits those around her, including her landlady Mrs. Jennings, who secures the young man and his sister as new boarders in her house. Annie herself knows the stranger as Dr. Harry Ironside, the attractive and admirable medical man in her hospital whose attentions she has been trying to ignore, and Rose's friendship with Dr. Ironside and his sister, along with other events, contributes to the lowering of Annie's guard—she ultimately falls in love with and marries him.

In this way, Tytler's novel suggests that public spaces are not entirely unwholesome and dangerous for middle-class girls but instead can provide girls with surprising opportunities for widening their family circles as well as their professional horizons. The novel implies very little conflict and contrast between the public and the private; both of the Millar girls' relationships with Harry Ironside shift easily and fluidly from the professional world to the domestic, as Harry transitions from colleague to husband for Annie, and from stranger on the street to fellow boarder to brother-in-law for Rose. Yet the fact that Annie's career ends in marriage—as does her sister Dora's pathetically unsuccessful attempt to find work in London—also emphasizes that public work for the middle-class girl is simply a way station between education and marriage and that girls should ultimately return to home life. Moreover, the substantial assistance that Dora's fiancé offers the Millars as his future family overshadows the girls' efforts to make their way in the world and support their family. In construing the Millar girls'

independent movements all over the city of London as a form of duty to their family that ultimately becomes unnecessary, the novel seeks to fit the New Girl's desire to work into a more conventional, hegemonic schema in which girls are understood as family-oriented, domestic creatures. In the process of doing so, the novel asserts the moral license that girls have to insert themselves into public streets and workplaces with confidence. Furthermore, while this ethic could place limits on the parameters of girls' work outside the home—implying that it should be undertaken only when necessary to support oneself and one's family—the novel is careful to clarify that any girl should consider a career a superior alternative to “stay[ing] at home to lead idle, useless lives” (Tytler, *Houseful* 67). Though it privileges domestic spaces and their roles and duties for middle-class girls, Tytler's work also debunks public space as a perilous and unwholesome environment for girls and celebrates girls who do “what every young man, with few exceptions, has to do” (Tytler, *Houseful* 122).

The fulfillment domestic duty through work is not the primary concern of the heroine of Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* (1896). This is not surprising when one considers Meade's own ideological stance on girls' education and work. Meade was an advocate of progressive education for girls, as well as a champion of girls' ability to think and act for themselves, which is reflected in her copious body of fiction revolving around independent heroines as well as her contributions to *Atalanta*, the girls' periodical she edited.⁸⁷ Accordingly, Joan Prinsep, the heroine of the novel, is a twenty-

⁸⁷ For more discussion of Meade's views on education, see Mavis Reimer, “Educational Reform and Fictional Form in L.T. Meade's School Stories,” in *Culturing the Child* (2005). As Reimer points out, there has been contention about linking Meade to progressive ideas about girls and feminism. Reimer notes that scholars such as Kimberley Reynolds “often express disappointment in Meade's fiction for

two-year-old Girton graduate who is “up-to-date” in every way and “quite [her] own mistress,” and she has little interest in obliging the family with whom she grew up (42). An orphan, Joan has been raised in the London home of her sister’s mother, Fanny Bannerman, and Joan believes that “from every point of view, my relations and I [are] as the poles asunder” (Meade, *Princess* 5). Joan’s independence of spirit is accompanied by an independence in movement; she goes wherever she wants in the city by herself—typically traveling by omnibus instead of the hansom preferred by Aunt Fanny—and she seldom deigns to discuss with her relatives the various errands and appointments that take her out of the Bannermans’ home. When Joan inherits the massive fortune of her father’s brother, Ralph Prinsep, she grows even more independent. Taking to heart her uncle’s dying request that she improve the ramshackle East End tenements that made him rich, Joan rejects the suggestion that she live with the Bannermans in a West End townhome and live a society life with her aunt, instead resolving to move to the slums of East London and take up reform work. Though Joan’s family thoroughly disapproves, particularly her Aunt Fanny, Joan’s choice is not meant to be understood as foolish or rebellious. Rather, in keeping with the spirit of the *New Girl*, Joan’s family is construed to be silly for doubting her courage and ability; Aunt Fanny makes a fool of herself with temper tantrums and hysterics, while Joan calmly and matter-of-factly maintains that “[her] life is going to be independent” (Meade, *Princess* 61).⁸⁸ That she essentially

girls” and find that “Meade’s work offer less than it promises” in the way of independence for girls (199). As my discussion here indicates, I find that Meade’s representations of girlhood in her novels are progressive but not subversive.

⁸⁸ Joan’s superiority over and distance from her relations is also emphasized in the novel by Aunt Fanny’s mercenariness. Joan’s cousin Anne tells Joan that she “shudder[s] to think what kind of people [Joan] would have found [them] if mother had not been paid to look after [Joan]” (110), and Joan notes during

forsakes her family ties in order to follow her heart and her conscience is an indicator of her admirable resolve rather than ingratitude or treachery.

In setting out with her new vocation as a philanthropist, Joan flouts convention after convention by occupying spaces that are considered by most to be inappropriate for a young girl, revealing her status as thoroughly modern and independent. Her decision to eschew her aunt's conservative pronouncement that "a girl of Joan's age can't possibly live in a house without a chaperon" (Meade, *Princess* 61) by taking her own lodgings links her to the professional girl Josepha Crane refers to in "Living in Lodgings" who "wishes for freedom which cannot so well be obtained unless she live alone" (qtd. in Doughty 151). Most significantly, Joan's work takes her through dangerous streets in London that, as one businessman explains in understatement, are "not quite [the] place for ladies" (Meade, *Princess* 54). Indeed, Joan learns to feel at home on streets that most members of the middle class, male or female, would refuse to traverse, with or without an escort. Her work as the founder of a Girls' Club takes her daily through a neighborhood called Jacob Court, which her friend and mentor, the local clergyman Father Moore, describes as "Satan's undisturbed domain," whose inhabitants "would think nothing of taking [Joan's] life for half a sovereign" (Meade, *Princess* 140). The tenements she owns in Jasper Court are just as dangerous, and though she is warned never to go to either place without an escort, Joan braves mortal danger to visit both places alone when she believes it necessary to exert her influence over the people who

her argument with her aunt that Fanny has been "so much kinder since Uncle Ralph's death" made Joan a wealthy girl (98). The unpleasantness of Joan's own flesh and blood further vindicates her estrangement from the family.

live there. That she nearly loses her life while doing so seems a testament less to her foolishness than to her compassion for the impoverished masses and their own animalistic desperation. Joan's behavior reveals an empowered, even unstoppable, desire to work for the greater good of London.

In addition to the sheer physical danger and working-class population of the neighborhoods, Joan's position as a female reformer and businesswoman in what is portrayed as a predominantly male environment also renders her out of place in her work in the city. The other reformers who surround Joan are either clergymen with local parishes or the university men who inhabit the Balliol house and "radiate a religious, social, and educational life which [has] day by day a really permanent effect amongst the poor" (Meade, *Princess* 117). Joan is portrayed as a pioneer in full-time independent reformism whose work for girls provides a feminine counterpart to all of the work that the men do; her Girls' Club complements the Men's Club operated by Father Moore. Her position as a property owner also takes her into conventionally masculine territory. In insisting upon controlling her property and financial interests herself, Joan butts heads with various middle-aged businessmen who read her as "a rather weak, silly girl" (Meade, *Princess* 39-40). Her construction of the "Joan Mansions," an entire block of the best low-income dwellings to be found in East London, signals her triumph over the wealthy men who would not help her; it also makes her the landlord of many of the people she seeks to reform, giving her an added position of power in the community that is typically associated with the male businessman. Father Moore's wish that "a few more girls with money at their disposal would be induced to follow [Joan's] example" reflects

the great need that this part of the city suffers, but it also implies the potential social power that middle- and upper-class girls can wield in the city if they choose to do so (Meade, *Princess* 217). While the caveat “with money at their disposal” that Father Moore includes in his comment suggests that only financially independent girls have the license to do what Joan is doing, the arrival of Joan’s cousin Anne Bannerman, who is not wealthy like Joan, indicates that any girl can join in the work and make a difference in the city. Anne’s partnership with Joan in independent philanthropic work signals that this part of the city, typically deemed no place for young ladies, is in fact becoming just that.

Yet, for all of the distance that Joan puts between herself and the traditional middle-class domestic sphere, her work in many ways assigns conventional familial roles and duties to her. Even though Joan is not reinserted into the domestic sphere by marriage at the end of the novel, as many girl characters in this genre are, her work in the slums places her in the sanctioned domestic roles of daughter and sister—a rhetorical move that informs the moral geography of Joan’s work by linking it to sanctity of the middle-class home. Father Moore’s assertion that “Your place here is the place of a sister—you must be a sister to these girls,” and Joan’s heartfelt acknowledgement that “We are a large family” echoes the Christian tenets that inspired and guided reformers and charitable institutions throughout the nineteenth century (Meade, *Princess* 152); through this rhetoric, Joan’s activities are categorized as familial duty rather than work. Father Moore’s repeated commendations that Joan is “humanising” working-class girls through the Girls’ Club also points to Joan’s distinctly domesticating influence. While

she is not religious and exerts virtually no Christian influence on the members of the Girls' Club, she teaches the girls to behave with decorum and propriety instead of being lewd and rough, as she found them.

Most importantly, Joan nearly singlehandedly transforms the neighborhoods into more wholesome domestic spaces. When the Girls' Club grows too big to meet in Joan's lodgings, she hires a room that she proceeds to remodel with the same care that she used in her own rooms, asserting that the space "must be pretty" (Meade, *Princess* 145). Likewise, in offering the clean, well-built apartments of the "Joan Mansions" to the neighborhood, Joan literally makes homes for the needy in addition to generating income for herself. This link between philanthropy and domesticity is certainly not unique to Joan's situation; domesticating the poor and saving them from the streets were the common goals of the Victorian reformer, and charitable work was identified as women's work and aligned with their homemaking activities throughout the nineteenth century. As Lynne Vallone points out, a woman's charity work ultimately amounted to "an extension of the domestic ideology that kept her arts at home" (17). The only—and substantial—difference here is that Joan is a single girl who forsakes her natural family for this adoptive one and successfully synthesizes business interests with philanthropic pursuits. Joan's work on the streets of London is at once a powerful demonstration of the social agency that a single girl can have and a thorough acceptance of culturally prescribed gender roles and behaviors.

The transformation that Joan Prinsep effects in the slums of East London asserts most strongly of any of the novels discussed here the middle-class girl's potential as a

social actor in the public spaces of Victorian England; while other girl characters overcome various moral and fear-based geographies in order simply to navigate city streets, Joan *changes* her urban environment, making a place for herself in the landscape of inner-city London. Novels that portray girls who travel independently acknowledge that girls' presence in public is acceptable, even as they chastise the runaway girl's breach of moral authority through her transgressive mobility. However, the figures of working girls such as Joan and the sisters in Tytler's novel suggest that girls can actively participate in public life rather than simply pass through it; the notion of girls "push[ing] [their] fortunes like boys" in the workplace implies that girls can embody a masculine energy and even aggression that exceeds the competence required to master train schedules or omnibus routes (Tytler, *Houseful* 79). Ultimately, though, the working girls' experiences in Victorian public space are quite similar to those of the traveling girl characters: all of the girls depicted in these novels are transients in public space, on a return route to home duties. Even as girls find a place for themselves in the public sphere, ideologies that assert the moral superiority of the home both define and confine girls' presence and movements in public spaces. What can be thought of as girls' social agency in these novels can also be read as the mobilization of girls to serve domestic hegemonies in new ways. In this way, these texts both acknowledge and circumscribe the Victorian girl's individual agency according to dominant cultural codes, adapting representations of the moral geographies of public places to fit the shifts in late-century girl culture while also asserting the moral authorities that functioned as the bedrock of middle-class Victorian society.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: *DAPHNE IN FITZROY STREET* AS A CASE STUDY

My dissertation has worked to construct a literary geography of Victorian girlhood by analyzing how fiction and other Victorian discourses define, circumscribe, and even empower the middle-class girl through orienting her in various spaces. I have suggested that these literary representations of place and space prescribe appropriate behaviors for the Victorian girl while also addressing her negotiation of social responsibilities, pressures, and anxieties, as well as her navigation of her own desires and increasing sense of personal subjectivity. To close this study, I turn to a post-Victorian portrayal of girlhood in order to consider briefly how these ideas about the significance of spatiality in fiction continue to be relevant in studies of girlhood beyond the Victorian period. E. Nesbit's *Daphne in Fitzroy Street* (1909) demonstrates how the particular expectations and anxieties surrounding girls' place at home, outdoors, in school, and in public spaces, which are discussed in this dissertation, were subject to change in the early twentieth century; Nesbit's novel suggests new possibilities for the middle-class English girl's experiences in the four locations discussed throughout my project. My purpose in discussing Nesbit's novel here, then, is to explore how shifts in social norms and the cultural construction of girlhood can be encoded in the fictional representation of a girl's relationship with place.

Published eight years after the passing of Queen Victoria and one year before the death of Edward VII, *Daphne of Fitzroy Street* falls squarely in the Edwardian period, and the novel hints at its post-Victorian cultural context through certain references: advances in technology, particularly the use of the motor car; the increasing strength of the women's suffrage movement, of which Daphne's Uncle Hamley is a supporter; the height of Bohemianism in London's Bloomsbury neighborhood. Daphne Carmichael, the novel's protagonist, is an eighteen-year-old girl fresh out of school whose young life is being shaped and expanded by all of these developments. The novel, reviewed by *The Athenaeum* in 1909 as "a readable and pretty book, especially for young people" (qtd. in Wilson and Fanning 44), follows Daphne as she strikes out on her own in London, finds work, falls in love, travels, and celebrates the glories of Bohemian Art with a capital A.⁸⁹ As Nesbit's portrayal of Daphne shows, the figuration of girlhood that pervaded the Victorian imagination did not disappear or even change greatly between 1889 and 1909; Nesbit's Daphne is clearly a specimen of the same construct of girlhood that Tytler describes in *A Houseful of Girls* (1889), discussed in the introduction of this study. Daphne embodies "the thoughtlessness, fearlessness, and impracticability of girlhood"; Daphne is proof that "girlhood, like many another natural condition, dies hard; and its sweet, bright illusions, its wisdom and its folly, survive tolerably severe pinches of adversity" (2). Yet the figure of girlhood that Nesbit presents in her novel is not bound by the conventional Victorian organizations of space discussed throughout this study.

⁸⁹ For a sampling of contemporary reviews of the novel, see Justina Leavitt Wilson and Clara Elizabeth Fanning, *The Book Review Digest: Fifth Annual Cumulation* (1909).

Daphne embodies new understandings and relationships with home, school, the outdoors, and public space that were becoming possible for girls.

The novel opens on Daphne in a French boarding school for girls, where she reigns as queen of the school. The school Daphne attends follows various conventions and dictums of Victorian girls' schools. The girls are cloistered from the outside world—particularly the nearby boys' school—by a high wall and a bevy of suspicious and attentive schoolmistresses. The spaces of the school are highly regulated, complete with a moratorium on talking during mealtimes in the dining room. Daphne, however, is celebrated by her fellow students as a breaker of all school rules who is too good ever to be caught. She finds ways to go wherever she wants in the school whenever she wants, whether it be feigning illness to slip out of art class and retrieve an illicit love letter shot by bow and arrow into a tree in the garden, or stealing a key from the school's portress in order to gain access to off-limits rooms and passageways. While Daphne is never openly rebellious and is beloved by her teachers, her activities belie the notion of school as a site of discipline, which Daphne denounces as “old tradition” (Nesbit 13). One explanation for Daphne's boldness in flouting the rules of the school is the fact that she has been a student there for so long that she has developed a stronger sense of confidence in her movements about the school than most schoolgirls have. From the age of five, “Daphne had always been at school...and felt for it all the ebb and flow of varied emotion which girls feel for their homes” (Nesbit 4).

But even this does not excuse Daphne's greatest escapade. In order to coordinate a final secret midnight feast (a common occurrence in Victorian school stories, though

typically disparaged as unwholesome and naughty) before she leaves school for good, Daphne arranges for a messenger boy to collect the required supplies from town and stealthily deliver them over the garden wall via a tree. However, when a young Englishman named Stephen St. Hilary intercepts the boy and meets Daphne in the tree instead, Daphne finds herself in a much more dangerous—and exciting—situation. When Daphne agrees to meet St. Hilary in the tree a second time, the exchange between the two is playful and silly but also the beginning of a real romance; St. Hilary, falling for the beautiful Daphne, even earnestly requests that she accept no other suitors for the next year. Daphne herself thinks nothing of inviting St. Hilary to sneak onto the school grounds in order to help with the girls' feast, and St. Hilary later returns during the event to serve as lookout from the rooftop of the girls' school. This kind of dalliance with a young man behind the backs of one's teachers is a transgression that is never forgiven when it occurs in Victorian girls' school stories; indeed, it is one of the few sins that the beloved and celebrated troublemakers in staples such as Meade's *A World of Girls* (1886) would never commit. That the illicit nature of Daphne's and St. Hilary's meeting in the tree serves only to heighten the romance of the encounter clearly indicates that this violation of the boundaries and proprieties of school space is not considered to be as egregious here as it would have been in a school story thirty years before. In validating Daphne's mischievous use of school space, the novel playfully privileges adventure and self-fulfillment over learning and self-discipline as the most important experiences that girls need to have at school.

In Daphne's case, this proves to be true. When Daphne leaves school with her younger sister, Doris, she expects and even desires, as many Victorian girls did, to become a "home daughter." When Daphne learns of her father's death upon returning home, she is heartbroken, not because she has lost someone close to her, but because "she had had dreams of the day when she should be called home to keep her father's house, to manage everything, to be all in all to him," and to shower upon him "delicate tact and unselfish devotion" (Nesbit 71). Daphne's goals reflect a desire to cohere to the domestic feminine ideal that is so often celebrated in Victorian discourses on girlhood, which exhort girls to lovingly and willingly give up independence, privacy, and leisure for their families. However, as it turns out, the rebelliousness and independent mobility that Daphne practiced while at school proves more useful to her. After her father's funeral, Daphne finds herself ensconced with Doris in the rigidly controlled and overly proprietous home of her middle-aged relatives Aunt Emily and Uncle Harold. In this house in Laburnum Villa, Daphne tries to submit to her family's lifestyle, but she discovers that living for the pleasure and comfort of others is "all choky, choky, choky" instead of being fulfilling (Nesbit 74), and she finds herself "fe[eling] like a bird in a cage—a dull and ugly cage" (Nesbit 73). Daphne's and Doris's movements in the house are tightly controlled by Aunt Emily; Doris is forced to go to bed whenever she makes too much noise in the house, and Daphne is not even allowed to leave the drawing room "to draw a free breath of solitude" (Nesbit 73). She writes in a letter to a school friend, "How is a girl to live her own life here, I should like to know" (Nesbit 74). The answer, of course, is that she is not. Like Ethel May in Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* or Pie Stubbs

in Tytler's *Girl Neighbors* (although neither of these girls had such unpleasant families), Daphne is called to submit to the confines of a life of domestic sacrifice. When Daphne threatens to leave the house after being insulted by her aunt and uncle, they assert their authority over her movements by smugly informing her, "You're in our charge.... You *can't* go" (Nesbit 90, emphasis in original).

Daphne's decision to run away with Doris to Bloomsbury to live with "the artists and disreputable people," then, constitutes a defiant rejection of the home life to which many Victorian girls had been called to subject themselves, as well as the familial authority of Aunt Emily and Uncle Harold, for the sake of creating her own domestic space (Nesbit 74). However, Daphne's act of rebellion is far from being condemned as transgressive, unlike those of the runaway girls discussed earlier in this study. That Aunt Emily and Uncle Harold mistreat Doris and want to control the girls' inheritance adds the necessary touch of villainy to their behavior in order to justify Daphne's flight, but the novel also validates Daphne's desire to "live her own life" and acknowledges her power to do so through seeking independence from her family. The attic apartment that Daphne rents for herself and Doris is "her kingdom," a Bohemian haven where the girls take care of one another and are safe, happy, and healthy (Nesbit 139). They create a new family for themselves of the artists and art students who surround them; their downstairs neighbor, the young and engaging Claude Winston, even encourages them to call him their "cousin." When a member of the girls' real family does intervene in their life, it is only to turn the conventional power dynamic of chaperonage on its head. The middle-aged Cousin Jane, who has lived on the exploitative "charity" of Aunt Emily for

decades, appears at the Fitzroy Street apartment one evening, declaring, “I’ve run away, too! *May* I stay?” (Nesbit 220). Faced with Cousin Jane’s pitiful request, Daphne finds herself feeling as if she is playing a game of hide-and-seek and “a smaller child” has just “blundered into [her] *cache* with a glad cry, and rejoiced that now it could ‘hide with [her]’” (Nesbit 220). Daphne is concerned that “Cousin Jane [will] be a tie—a drag—in this new free life....[and] also a critic—a watcher” (Nesbit 225). However, while Jane’s presence brings a degree of old-fashioned decorum to the living arrangements, she is too grateful and timid to interfere with Daphne’s lifestyle, and the novel suggests that she is most valuable in the apartment, not as a chaperone, but as “the lover of the child,” a babysitter who can take Doris off of Daphne’s hands while she runs about London with her friends (Nesbit 225). Jane’s usefulness in this capacity reflects Daphne’s prioritization of work and socializing in the public sphere over her domestic duties.

Daphne’s movements through public spaces also defy conservative conventions but are characterized as acceptable in the novel. Even as a schoolgirl traveling home to England on the train, Daphne breaks various codes of conduct. Although Daphne’s headmistress leaves her and Doris with a chaperone in the ladies’ carriage and instructs them to stay there, Stephen St. Hilary’s appearance on the train induces them to follow him to another compartment, shocking all of the French ladies around them, who “blush for a young girl so wanting in reserve” (Nesbit 47). Daphne breaches propriety even further when she dares to kiss St. Hilary during a pregnant pause in their conversation over the sleeping Doris. Daphne’s behavior in the public space of the train far exceeds the rowdiness exhibited by the schoolgirls in Ewing’s *Six to Sixteen* as inappropriate

behavior in public. Yet, like Daphne's encounter with St. Hilary in the tree at school, it is characterized as an exciting beginning to a new life of independence, the opening up of a world filled with possibilities instead of rules and proprieties.

Once Daphne moves to Bloomsbury and emancipates herself from Aunt Emily and Uncle Harold, her movements on the streets of London also reflect a sense of freedom and independence. Daphne travels through the city for work—to try to sell her drawings to magazine editors or to sit for paintings as a paid model—but she also wanders about the city for personal reasons and quickly becomes adept at navigating the streets and neighborhoods of London. Her competence even enables her to serve as guide to a newly arrived painter, the wild Russian Vorontzoff, whom she has never met. The result is that, when she travels across town to meet Vorontzoff, she finds herself “lunching in a little French restaurant with a perfect stranger who had, for anything she knew, killed a prison governor or a general of Cossacks and a Russian Grand Duke or two” (Nesbit 168). The impropriety and potential danger of this situation are soon dissolved, however, by the kindness and genius of Vorontzoff, who quickly becomes another Bohemian bosom friend to Daphne, leaving her to think of their strange public meeting and London wanderings as serendipitous instead of impropriety. By the end of the novel, the streets of London have become a second home to Daphne. When Daphne's new love interest, the painter Henry, rejects her, instead of writing him letters or pining for him at home, Daphne goes out and walks the streets to look for him: “she [begins] to haunt Bond Street, walking up and down it till the burning pavements scorche[s] her feet....she so often walk[s] now, from nowhere to nowhere” (Nesbit 354).

Daphne's endless, lonely traversal of the city streets is pathetic and inappropriate, not because she is an unaccompanied girl who has no business wandering through public places, but because she is wasting her time on someone who does not love her. Daphne's actions transform the streets from a public thoroughfare to a scene of private mourning and heartache. Her mobility, though in this case fruitless, demonstrates the comfort and confidence that she feels in public on her own; she is not out of place there, even when she has no particular reason to be out on the streets.

Even Daphne's relationship with the natural world belies the Victorian construct of the girl in the domestic garden. While the countryside is only minimally significant to Daphne as a venue for social gatherings with artists and other friends, Daphne connects passionately to the study of agriculture when, disappointed in love, she decides that she "must have a career!" (Nesbit 402). Daphne becomes a gardener because it appeals to her to "learn about the brown earth that is never ungrateful, and pays back a hundredfold all gifts given to it....To live in the beautiful life of trees and flowers" (Nesbit 402); she finds it a romantic and idealistic distraction from her broken heart. In studying the cultivation of plants and trees, Daphne engages in self-cultivation, as well, through focusing and educating herself on a particular subject of study. However, unlike the Victorian girls who learn motherly nurturing and domestic civility through gardening, this study leads Daphne away from the domestic sphere instead of toward it: she studies agriculture as a profession in order to rid herself of the desperate desire to be Henry's wife. As Daphne "studie[s] intensely, strongly," she falls in love with agriculture as she falls out of love with Henry (Nesbit 402). In this way, Daphne follows the lead of many

Edwardian girls who took up gardening as a profession and, thus, learned about the cultivation of plants in order to gain independence for themselves by “hold[ing] responsible posts in all parts of the country, and also in the colonies” (qtd. in Doughty 97).⁹⁰

If we place to one side Daphne’s adventures at school in France, at home in Laburnum Villa and Bloomsbury, and on the streets of London as the topography of a new, independent girlhood, the title of the novel alone— *Daphne in Fitzroy Street*—orients Daphne spatially for readers. Ultimately, the title’s linkage of identity to place is upheld throughout the novel, as the narrative maps the climax of Daphne’s girlhood along the streets of Bohemian London and implies that this is a suitable environment for the middle-class girl in which she can fully realize herself. Fitzroy Street is not just a place in London but a crucial stage in Daphne’s development: when Daphne encounters Henry in Paris as a changed person at the close of the novel, she asserts that “I’m not Daphne Carmichael of Fitzroy Street anymore” (Nesbit 412); in saying this, Daphne references both a period in her life and the place that made this period possible. Each of the novel’s chapter titles names an identity that Daphne occupies during her adventures, from “Brigand Captain” of the girls at school, to “Runaway” from her family’s home, to “Woman” in the penultimate chapter and, finally, “Beloved” when Henry declares his love for her. It is significant that Daphne becomes a “Woman” *before* she becomes

⁹⁰ This assertion that “there is undoubtedly a demand for women gardeners” comes from Lena Shepstone’s “Gardening as a Profession for Girls,” published in an April 1905 issue of *The Girl’s Own Paper* (qtd. in Doughty 97). Shepstone describes girls’ training at female horticultural colleges, noting “the quiet determination with which the young ladies go about their work” (99) and emphasizing that the productivity which girls learn here is turned to their financial gain rather than, as Victorian gardening books often suggest, to their spiritual development or domestic pursuits.

Henry's "Beloved"; Nesbit's two chapter titles emphasize here that it is no longer marriage or the knowing acceptance of domestic duty that makes a girl a woman, as the culture of the previous century asserted; instead, her own personal experiences and self-revelations mature her progressively.⁹¹ As the final lines of the novel indicate, "The Daphne of Fitzroy Street was not now anymore, anywhere—could never anywhere, anymore, be again" (Nesbit 417) because Daphne is no longer a girl but a woman. Her independent navigations of the various spaces in which she has spent her girlhood—home, school, public spaces, the natural world of cultivation—are integral in this process of maturation and identity formation.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Nesbit would endow Daphne with exuberant agency and portray her rebellions and adventures with indulgence rather than disapproval, given that the novel is understood to be a thinly-veiled, semi-autobiographical account of Nesbit's own extramarital—though unconsummated—affair with George Bernard Shaw.⁹² Famous for her engaging children's books, Nesbit also lived a life that was socially, culturally, and politically unconventional. She kept her hair short and refrained from wearing corsets. She maintained an open marriage to Hubert Bland, whose son she was pregnant with when they married, and raised the children of Bland's mistress as her own. Nesbit was also, like Shaw, a member of the intellectual

⁹¹ It is also important to note that the marriage plot is not fully enacted here; the novel closes without confirming the wedding of Daphne and Henry, although the pair do discuss marriage earlier in the novel.

⁹² See Julia Briggs, *A Woman of Passion: The Life of E. Nesbit* (1987), pp. 78-105, and Ruth Brandon, *The New Women and the Old Men: Love, Sex, and the Woman Question* (1990), pp. 174-75, for discussions of the correlations between Daphne and Henry's relationship in the novel and Nesbit and Shaw's.

socialist Fabian Society.⁹³ Nesbit's/Daphne's participation in a subculture that was counter-cultural, then, places limitations on the analysis of this text as an effort of Nesbit's to represent mainstream conceptions of post-Victorian English life and girlhood. Certainly, it is not the most conservative Edwardian portrayal of girlhood available, although the reviewer for *McClure's Magazine*, an American publication, claims that "It would be hard to find a more delightful picture of fresh young girlhood than Daphne" ("A Great Fall List" 16b).⁹⁴ Above all, the novel's construction of girlhood as a period of glorious self-realization—Daphne *happens* in the novel—demonstrates that the unbound girl was coming to be understood as the embodiment of possibilities rather than social danger and disorder.

If we think of *Daphne in Fitzroy Street*, then, as a text that defines the middle-class girl's position and agency in society as it moved out of the Victorian period, the novel suggests that evolutions in this definition are linked closely to girls' relationships with societal organizations of place and space; like the other texts discussed throughout this study, this novel's understanding of the girl's desires and obligations are articulated through its mapping of the spaces in which she lives. In this way, the analysis of Nesbit's novel indicates that there are multiple possibilities for the study of the role that place and space play in literature's efforts to represent and define girlhood, both adjacent

⁹³ As Briggs points out, however, Nesbit was not necessarily as deeply committed to the politics of socialism as she was excited about "the privileges that emancipation could confer" upon women like her (68). Briggs notes that Nesbit felt "It was exhilarating to be part of a new world struggling to be born, exhilarating to make new friends and find herself regularly in the company of young men once more" (68). This is much the way Daphne feels as she meets the artists of Bloomsbury in the novel.

⁹⁴For example, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1910-11), published not long after *Daphne in Fitzroy Street*, is much more culturally conservative in its representation of domestic space and the natural world. This can be accounted for in part by the significant age gap between Daphne and Burnett's Mary Lennox, although Daphne's younger sister, Doris, is close in age to Burnett's character, and Daphne's lifestyle, which Doris shares, is not portrayed as unwholesome for Doris.

to and beyond the Victorian period. As this study has sought to show, Victorian literature and culture had a special investment in articulating how, to use Tim Cresswell's words, "visions of the landscape are connected with ideas of appropriate behaviour" for girls ("Moral Geographies" 129). *Daphne in Fitzroy Street*, too, suggests that literature consistently takes the girl as the subject of the geography it constructs in order to encapsulate as well as empower her. Ultimately, what this study shows is that, as Michael J. McDowell asserts, "story, geography, and self are inextricably bound together," both for the girl characters in literary works and for the girl readers who consume them.

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