

**THE CRISIS OF MASCULINE SPACE:  
THE END OF THE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB IN BRITISH MODERN FICTION**

A Dissertation

by

LESLIE GAUTREAUX EDWARDS

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 2009

Major Subject: English

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Crisis of Masculine Space: The End of the Gentlemen's Club in  
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At the beginning of the twentieth century, men occupied a contested and transitional space in British society. The effects of the women's movement, the Great War, and industrialization changed their life at home, at work, and at their places of recreation. This dissertation examines how the British male writers E.M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence, and George Orwell depict this "crisis of masculinity" and its effect on the male population. I argue that one of the ways the writers convey their understanding of the changing gender codes and the ways in which men were attempting to manage the adjustments to their daily lives is through the description and purpose that they attach to masculine spaces.

These three threshold writers occupy an important place in the canon of British modern literature. They all are a part of a masculine literary tradition that privileges male bonding and additionally rituals that seek to reinforce and carry on the patriarchal narrative of men to distinguish between homosocial male bonding and patriarchal privilege (which is heterosexually based). While Forster demonstrates the gender tension between men and women in the exclusive masculine spaces of the text, Lawrence

characterizes masculine private space as a site for healing and revitalization for men after the war, and Orwell describes underground male spaces as sites where men can prove their masculinity by enduring intense suffering from pain that is inflicted by the work that they perform. In each chapter, I demonstrate that understanding masculine spaces provides a more complete understanding of each writer's masculine paradigm in literature and to some extent gives us a new way of thinking about the author and his own gender insecurities.

Whether it is the swimming hole or the automobile, the smoking room or the dining room, the battlefield war trench or the coal mine, the domestic and public spaces of male life are under siege in the modern era, according to Forster, Lawrence, and Orwell. In order to preserve and sustain the rites and traditions that are upheld in those settings, the writers remind readers about the genealogy of men that reinforces the necessity of male space in hopes of preserving it for future generations.

**DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the memory of my father

William A. Gautreaux.

Oftentimes surrounded by women,  
he was the first to show me the significance of male space.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

...to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames. The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it had borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Thomas Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled – the great knights – errant of the sea.

(Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* 5)

At the conclusion of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), the Director tells the group of men assembled on the *Nellie*, “‘We have lost the first of the ebb,’ and the narrator continues, “I raised my head. The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed somber under an overcast sky – seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness” (132). Conrad, signaling a change in the weather and also a change in the atmosphere of the world of men, concludes his story, leaving the reader with many questions unanswered. One way we might think about the canonical text is to consider what it is arguing through its depiction of masculine space.

Anchored and waiting for the turn of the tide, the men – a lawyer, an accountant,

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This dissertation follows the style of the *MLA Handbook*.

and the director – aboard the cruising yawl listen to the storyteller, Marlow, who narrates the tale of his harrowing quest to rescue Mr. Kurtz, deep in the jungles of Africa. The *Nellie* and the steamboats that Marlow travels on are masculine spaces where men in community with one another live and work for days, months and even years at a time. They are homosocial sites where men test and prove their masculinity and where they, forming lasting friendships and intimate ties, unite with one another in a brotherhood of sailors.

Conrad provides his readers with a glimpse into the naval world that is multi-layered with descriptions that attempt to reinforce and bolster a cult of masculinity, a movement that, along with the British Empire, was beginning to see signs of decline at the turn of the century. He uses the “bond of the sea” to explain the long tradition and “great spirit of the past” through Marlow (4, 5). Similar to the smoking room or the library in the Victorian country estate, the *Nellie* serves as a masculine space that reinforces the social codes that constitute gender performativity. There, Marlow uses the space to prove his own masculinity by recounting his death defying excursion to locate Kurtz, a symbol of British imperial manhood, by celebrating Kurtz’s life, by retelling his story and acting as protector of Kurtz’s memory, and by describing how he has *protected* Kurtz’s Intended from knowing the truth about her fiancé’s life and death. The ship provides him with an masculine space that encourages and makes it possible for the men to talk, share stories, and relive their masculine feats.

Men’s ability to speak freely in a space is central to Conrad’s perception of masculinity. In spaces such as the office of the shipping company in Belgium where he

first hires on and the drawing room where he speaks to Kurtz's Intended, Marlow's speech is stunted and strained. The ultimate demonstration of this point is when Marlow lies to the Intended about Kurtz's last words. Unable to tell the woman within the masculine space of the drawing room, Marlow does not allow her to know the truth about the man she loved. Yet, on the *Nellie*, he has all the time in the world to speak freely and relay the story in minute detail, giving the reader explanations, histories, and no doubt embellished anecdotes. Through the distinction between masculine spaces where women are present and where they are not present, Conrad argues that men cannot speak freely or be understood around women. Instead, they must find a homosocial community within specifically masculine space where they can without restraint tell their stories and recall their history.

Marlow is part of a long literary tradition of men who find confirmation for their masculinity aboard ships. Describing the history of man's adventures on the sea, Conrad writes, "Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from a sacred fire. What greatness had floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! ... The dreams of men, the seeds of commonwealth, the germs of empires" (5-6). For Conrad, the sea represents an opportunity for man to prove his masculinity.

Retelling the story of Kurtz is essential to Marlow's perception of how men should act and demonstrate their masculinity. The act of storytelling is significant because it allows Marlow to be the center of attention, the authority on the sea, the

steamboats, and the expeditions into the jungle – all masculine spaces that he claims to have experience in and know well. He tells the men that his time in Africa aboard the steamboat has been the “culminating point of [his] experience” (10). As he comes closer and closer to Kurtz, his anticipation builds at the thought of meeting the legendary ivory agent, who is admired by the trade company administration and “adored” by the natives. Kurtz, of course, represents the ideal of masculinity for Marlow, who himself is trying to demonstrate his own masculine prowess by retelling the story of the great ivory tradesman. The storyteller however, learns most of his information about the man and the myth from the Russian sailor who often took care of Kurtz when he was ill. Once Kurtz is aboard the steamboat en route to safety, he is too sick to speak with any sense. “[His] life was running swiftly, too, ebbing, ebbing out of his heart into the sea of inexorable time” (115). Again, Conrad’s image of the ebbing tide describes the life slowly fading from Kurtz’s body. Both Kurtz’s life and Marlow’s perception of British masculinity are on the verge of demise.

Marlow clings to the image of Kurtz and his reputation in order to prove his own masculinity. He uses the masculine space of the *Nellie* to find an appreciative audience for his tale, to draw on the tradition of manliness that the sea and the sailors embody, and to cast himself as the “keeper of Kurtz’s reputation” (106), the keeper of the empire and British masculinity. With each retelling of Kurtz’s story, which is also to a degree Marlow’s story too, Marlow is able to preserve the image of Kurtz and impart to his listeners a tale of adventure and heroism that he hopes they will not soon forget. Yet, the very nature of being a “keeper” means that something must be kept, or is in jeopardy of

being lost. While Marlow realizes that there will never be another Kurtz, Conrad argues that like the ebb of the sea, this Victorian notion of masculinity is gradually receding. But, masculine space, like that of the *Nellie*, is still a place where male identity is constructed and confirmed.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad is certainly critical of imperialism and the pursuit of its expression. He works toward explaining the impetus behind locating the nation's and man's need for blank space on a map and the conquering of that territory to prove that they are masculine. We can gain insight into Conrad's perception of gender divisions at the turn of the century by reading the masculine spaces that were an integral part of his literature and his paradigm of manhood. The category of masculinity and the ways in which it is judged mean different things at different time periods and to different people, so it is important that we look at the way writers construct texts and characters to demonstrate their own interpretations of what qualifies as "masculine." It is my contention that the writers I study often show us what it means to be a man specifically by showing us the masculine spaces in which the men live, work, and play.

By masculine space, I'm referring to settings, particularly in literature, that have traditionally been reserved for male homosocial activity, recreation, work, and study. Additionally, masculine space is where gender rituals, rites, and traditions are practiced and passed on to other men, creating a tradition or genealogy of manhood. Often, masculine space has a different set of social codes than the rest of society. The men who inhabit the space are not held to the same standards of etiquette and decorum as they would be in other settings where women and/or children are present. Although men

attempt to keep masculine space segregated, there are occasions when women are present, which as I will demonstrate, causes a significant tension. I have chosen the term masculine space, rather than male space because of the very fact that women were becomingly increasingly more present in places that in the previous century were off limits to them. While we know that women were present more often than not, some writers refuse to acknowledge their presence or only mention it briefly, which only demonstrates even more men writers' sensitivity to the changing atmosphere of gendered space.

In this dissertation I specifically focus on the modern British male writers E.M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence, and George Orwell and how masculine spaces in their novels illustrate concerns about the state of masculinity at the beginning of the twentieth century and suggest ways to bolster modern man's sense of his manhood, supremacy, vitality, and control. The writers repeatedly portray masculinity and the state of man as in crisis or jeopardy. I locate the writer's sense of defeat in the prevailing scarcity of male space that in the Victorian period was readily available and protected by strict gender codes and social rules. Victorian men enjoyed the sanctity of the gentleman's club, the smoking room, and the office. However, in the modern period, women have the right to vote and are increasingly finding employment, making a living on their own, and entering the public sphere and other places where their presence was once frowned upon by men.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the rules that had governed the spaces of the home and designated some rooms as "men only" were quickly being revised. The writers

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<sup>1</sup> *The Women's Suffrage Movement: New Feminist Perspectives* by Maroula Joannou, June Purvis (2009).

repeatedly focus on how they see spaces that at one time were exclusively set aside for men now being invaded or degraded. They attempt to carve out these masculine spaces in their texts and demonstrate how they are still capable of strengthening masculinity and the bonds between men.

The effect of the First World War and the increasingly disastrous consequences of industrialization on the British male population are two even more significant factors for the writers that are ever-present as an impetus for the men to regain masculine space and bolster man's sense of his manhood.<sup>2</sup> Broken, battered, and abused by warfare and industry, the men require the masculine space as a site for healing, shoring up their strength, and proving their self worth. While many critics have debated whether or not the male sex experiences a "crisis of masculinity" in modern fiction, we need also to consider and add to the conversation the prevalence of a "crisis of masculine space."<sup>3</sup> The writers that I have included in this study repeatedly argue that masculine space plays a fundamental and necessary role in the construction of masculinity for men, and without it their characters become impotent and feminized, worthless defenders of the already declining British Empire.

### **Argument: The Renovation of Male Space**

I shall argue in the forthcoming pages that this connection between masculine

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<sup>2</sup> See Sarah Cole's *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (2003).

<sup>3</sup> See these crisis who focus on the crisis of masculinity: Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (1990), Jonathon Rutherford's *Forever England: Reflections on Masculinity and Empire* (1997), Christopher Breu's *Hard-Boiled Masculinities*, and Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (2004).

space and the representation of masculinity by male writers serves as a plot-driving device in the English modernist period. Thus, Conrad, writing at the turn of the century, relies on the masculine space of the *Nellie* and the male tradition of seafaring to structure his story. Confronting the historical and national trauma of the failing British Empire, Conrad attempts to show that masculine space is reinforced by tradition and that men can still return to it to find friendship, acceptance, and a listening ear. With Kurtz messing up the mission, Conrad concedes that he senses a decline in masculine society. While some of their other masculine spaces might not seem the same anymore because of changing social and gender codes, the cruising yawl and steamboat are still safe places for men to retreat from the pressures of modernity. Unlike the shipping headquarters that now relies on the help of women to run a front office that would previously have only employed men, the seafaring vessels are still all-male spaces. Conrad describes the outer office where the men must register with the women before they enter the “sanctuary” of the inner office (10). The women know what is in store for the men. “The swift and indifferent placidity” of their faces troubles Marlow. He feels like there is “something ominous in the atmosphere” and cannot wait to get out of the space. While the office is a predominantly masculine space, the women’s presence there makes Marlow extremely uncomfortable and does not bode well for his journey ahead. His experience on the ship is actually much different. Although he is being shot at and other men are being killed, he relishes the adventure upon the boat and the chance to



meet the infamous Kurtz. Additionally, he knows that if he makes it back to England, he will have one great story to tell, which we, as readers, already know...he does.

This dissertation undertakes to make literary sense of masculine spaces, like those of the business office and steamboat, and of the changing gender and social codes at a time when there were increasing numbers of adjustments in the way individuals both male and female occupied previous sex-segregated settings. Victorian male spaces are central to my understanding of how the writers are interpreting the masculine spaces in their modern texts. They represent a tradition in masculinity that these writers wish to revive. Public schools and universities such as Eton and Cambridge instilled in the men a reverence and adoration for the sanctity of masculine space. Once the men graduated from school, gentlemen's clubs reinforced those time honored traditions and sought to preserve the masculine ethos of those institutions. Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy* is a portrait of the age, explaining the "myths, metaphors, and images of sexual crises and apocalypse that marked both the late nineteenth century and our own fin de siècle, and its representations in English and American literature, art and film" (3). She explains how "Clubland" helped to keep women out of masculine spaces and sought to facilitate a bonding process between men that also encouraged them to create new literature of their own in opposition to the group of women who were attempting to follow in George Eliot's footsteps.

Besides the university and the club, there were countless other masculine spaces where men congregated and reinforced their masculinity during the Victorian period. Whether it was at the boarding house, the music hall, the pub, the office, or a sporting

event, men were then able to congregate and socialize without having to worry about what women would think of them. Without the pressures of women's social codes and fear of offending a lady, the men were able to tell tall tales or depraved stories and jokes that would have been impossible to discuss in the company of women. With changing social and gender codes in the modern period, men felt more scrutiny and surveillance because women were now being allowed in spaces that were once off limits. Previously, they were policing each other, but women's judgment felt different. Their presence insured that men would have to conform and use their best etiquette in spaces that once were glorified for their lack of good manners and propriety. It is my goal to point out and break down the obvious and not so obvious masculine spaces that writers are using to defend their male characters' gender rights. The tradition of masculine space is timeless, yet at the turn of the century it is clear that men, including the writers presented in this study, felt like the space was still essential to the construction of gender identity, but that it was undergoing a significant paradigm shift. Many modernist writers read and studied the nineteenth-century canon of texts that specifically addressed masculine space and informed the writers of the twentieth century about how to be a man and how to write a narrative that focuses on British manhood. Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894), and H.G. Wells *Tono-Bungay* (1909) all present various models of masculinity and masculine space that occupied the literary and cultural imagination of Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Texts such as Thomas

Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843), Samuel Smiles's *Self Help* (1859), John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* (1884), and Sir Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* (1908) also sought to instruct British men on how to be "good citizens," "men of business" and captains of industry, to be "mighty of heart, mighty of mind" and "noble workers." The nineteenth century produced a plethora of texts that sought to tell men how to be manly. These texts were taught to and read by early twentieth century male writers, who later took that education and experience and used it to try to understand what the next generation of masculinity would look like. Although the writing and selling of books about men and the construction of gender identity are not particular to the nineteenth century, they do suggest that at this moment in history there was a heightened awareness regarding the manufacturing of masculinity and the production of making masculinity visible. If anything it demonstrates to us that the public's perception of "how to be a man" was undergoing a change or revision and required new texts to study the current state of man at length.

Although there were an abundance of texts that provided advice and suggestions for men on everything from business ventures to domestic alliances, no one could truly predict the changes that were upon them or anticipate how their lives would be transformed. The distinguishing factor for the modern period undoubtedly remains the effects of the First World War, followed by the women's movement and industrialization, but also perceptions of a declining empire and of class intermingling. The cultural history of the male body reached a crisis point in the experience of these factors. Each of them essentially brought the male population to its knees, both literally

and figuratively. Particularly the War and industry had a tangible and visible effect on the male body as the clash between technological innovation and physical vulnerability took a catastrophic turn, while changing notions of gender roles, class, and the status of the empire had a psychological effect. For male writers then, the body becomes a central concern. Its nakedness and vulnerability is a repeated subject of many texts. Male bodies, ill and diseased, bruised and broken, can retreat to masculine space after the War to find safety and security for physical healing and camaraderie for their mental anguish.<sup>4</sup> According to Niall Ferguson the total number of casualties for the British reached 2,556,014 of which 723,000 were killed in battle or from disease; 170,389 were taken prisoner and 1,662,625 were wounded (295). For many small towns an entire generation of young men was sacrificed to the war. Those that were not killed or wounded often returned home with severe psychiatric disorders that the nation was not prepared to treat. In *Flashback: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Suicide, and the Lessons of War*, Penny Coleman writes that at the beginning of the War, “the horrors of trench warfare produced psychiatric casualties in shocking numbers. Men in the trenches were trapped below ground level, often for weeks at a time, in a world bounded by cold, mud, rats, lice, dysentery, and the shrieks of both deadly incoming artillery and dying comrades” (29). Trapped at the front lines, the soldiers were “immobile, helpless, and passive witness to what those artillery shells did to the men around them” and forced them to consider what might lie in store for them (29). Once the men were relieved from

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<sup>4</sup> And in some cases, they were in search of a secure place for homosexuality which had been threatened since the late nineteenth century, following the Oscar Wilde trials. See Ed Cohen’s *Talk on the Wilde Side* (1992).

their posts and evacuated to safety, fifty percent were psychiatric, notes Coleman (29). Bombarded with constant threats to his physical and emotional safety and his masculinity, the modern man, following the war was in a state of crisis.

Many men returned home for the war to find that they needed more than just medical treatment. Because of the unprecedented number of lives lost and bodies returned home paralyzed and maimed, there was a pervading feeling of defeat and demise among the male population.<sup>5</sup> The men who did survive and were able to return home sustained a feeling of loss not just from their injuries, but also from the change in their environment. The trenches, tents, and barracks had offered them masculine spaces, but when they resumed their lives in the city and country, they still craved the easily found camaraderie and male bonding that was readily available during the war because of the gender specific sites. Virginia Woolf's Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway* and Rebecca West's Chris in *The Return of the Soldier* are two examples of literary men who return from war haunted by the memories of their fellow soldiers and the spaces that they inhabited while away from home. Some writers also see the potential for physical and mental healing in masculine space. Regaining the masculine space that was once lost, the male characters can potentially undergo the necessary healing that they need to survive in a changed society.

Industry, particularly coal mining, also had a devastating effect on men's bodies and their perception of their own masculinity. Before the war, industry was the

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<sup>5</sup> Sources on WWI masculinity include Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (1996), Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle* (1990), and Sarah Cole's *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (2003).

leading cause of death for men. And like the war, industry caused injuries that could physically maim or paralyze a healthy man and contributed to unhealthy living conditions in town that became polluted and toxic. “In England,” write Roger Schofield, David Sven, and Alain Bideau, “where the process of industrialization was already advanced at the time, mortality was high particularly at working ages and from causes linked to poor living and working conditions (infectious diseases, particularly respiratory tuberculosis, diseases of the circulatory system, and deaths from accidents” (75). Those miners who were hurt were often quickly forgotten about by disloyal employers. Trapped in a vicious cycle of patriarchal tradition and heritage, many young men went into mining and factory work because that was their father’s trade. Unable to choose another occupation without “losing face,” young men were destined to lives of hardship and insecurity. Coal mining plays a large role in England’s history.<sup>6</sup> It is a profession that is part of a long and storied tradition among blue-collar workers, one that has a well documented and romanticized record.

Although there was always the threat of physical devastation, some men relished in the labor that they performed alongside other men. The miners developed their own homosocial community that thrived on pushing their bodies to the limit as a sign of masculine prowess. The public and the nation glorified the work and image of the coal miner because they provided the very fuel and energy that kept England running. The coal that supplied electricity to homes brought light to their darkness and warmth in the

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of coal mining in British history, see John U. Nef’s *The Rise of the British Coal Industry* (1932) and John Hatcher’s *The History of the British Coal Industry* (1993).

cold. It is some modernist writers' goal to capture the spirit of the industrial worker, who works his knuckles to the bone to earn a living for his family, provide fuel for England's homes and businesses, and prove his manhood within the masculine space of the mines and factories.

Both D.H. Lawrence and George Orwell are preoccupied with the British coal miner and the space of the mines. For Lawrence it was a tradition that he wanted to avoid physically getting involved in at all costs; however, he was still fascinated by the work his father did and uses his personal memories in his literary work. Lawrence is a significant influence for Orwell, who refers to him by name in *The Road to Wigan Pier*. For Orwell the mines represent where "real" masculinity is attained. He did not hesitate to jump right into the daily routine right alongside the other working men. Growing up in a more privileged family, he could not wait to prove his own masculine prowess and strength (especially after not having been old enough to participate in the Great War). It is significant that two very different writers and not even of the same generation would use the coal mine and the men that work there as the crucible for resolving the crisis of masculinity. For each of them, man's work within the coal mine is portrayed as a noble occupation; however, the men who own the mines and push for increased productivity and revenue represent the evils of modern and industrial life.

At the same time that men are attempting to use any support and encouragement, including the energy that they gain from the camaraderie and brotherhood found in masculine spaces, they encounter another obstacle. Women's entrance into the public sphere and into previously male settings signified their newfound freedom and equality,

but to men it represented an invasion of their privacy, rituals, and intimacy with other men. After decades of being excluded from certain places, women celebrated their entrance into the men's club. Although the women's movement had a long list of complaints against Britain's patriarchal leadership, including "unhappy marriages, punitive divorce laws, the requirements of heterosexual conformity, the double standard which demanded chastity of women but not of men, women's lack of control over child birth, domestic violence, economic dependency, and intellectual infantilisation," (Joannou and Purvis 7) their winning entrance into the ultimate masculine space of the voting booth was a turning point of the modern period. According to Joannou and Purvis, "the women's suffrage movement embodies a deliberate and self-conscious attempt to break the traditional patriarchal mould of British politics, and to discover new, radical and often collective methods of working which seemed particularly suited to the skills and interests of women (10). Women in the voting booth, in the office, in the smoking room, at the university, and the pub changed the way men could behave in these spaces, and altered the way writers conceived of masculine space and men's interaction with women there. Losing the opportunity to share their tall tales or naughty stories and to use their gender-specific language, the men realize that their space was not their own anymore. Unhappy with the changing times, male writers vented their frustration with the invasion of masculine space by trying to capture the tension between the sexes in the contested setting.

Male writers in this period emphasized both the value and the frailty of masculine space. Early twentieth-century authors and readers treasured it because it



symbolized their understanding of British masculinity. Without the space, many men felt as if their world would end. Although a new era was dawning upon the British Empire, there were still plenty of people who were resistant to that change. Without masculine space, the men did not know how to act or what would define their masculinity in the future. Developing images of men and masculinity that were at once troubling, paranoid, suffering, impoverished, and defunct, writers stress the damage that a loss or redistribution of space would cause or was already causing. In *Howards End*, for example, both Mr. Wilcox and his son Charles are paranoid about Margaret Schlegel scheming to take their property, a fear that is unfounded but because of her intelligence and outspokenness dominates their view in the text. The writers argue that the destruction or elimination of masculine space would potentially be the last straw that the empire could bear. Without the men's club, the nation and its male population faced grave consequences.

While I have noted that there were many forces acting on and influencing men during this time period, including the war, industry, the blurring of the lines between classes, and the decline of the empire, the authors that I focus on in this dissertation demonstrate how more often than not, men blamed women for their discomfort and frustration. It is not the goal of this study to assign blame or suggest who is right and wrong, especially when for many years, men within some classes had been taking up more than their share of space (colonial, domestic, metropolitan). However, I would like to propose that we can read the character's hostility and anger towards women as a representation of *ressentiment*.

Friederich Nietzsche explains in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that resentment occurs when there is a sense of frustration, weakness, or inferiority in the face of a “cause,” which initiates a sense of fury and aggression that is directed at a person or a group. “The slave revolt in morals,” writes the philosopher, “begins when resentment itself becomes creative and ordains values: the resentment of creates to whom the real reaction, that of the dead, is denied and who find compensation in an imaginary revenge” (22). This idea of *ressentiment* is prevalent in Nietzsche’s philosophy because it corresponds to the idea of master and slave morality and, most importantly, explains how the lower slaves are able to overcome the higher masters and change the dominant morality to the slave morality. *Ressentiment* is the driving force that causes the anger and hatred of the slaves to rebel against the higher and noble masters.

Taking Nietzsche’s paradigm further, Wendy Brown in *States of Injury* contends:

Developing a righteous critique of power from the perspective of the injured, [a politics of resentment] delimits a specific site of blame for suffering by constituting sovereign subjects and events as responsible for the ‘injury’ of social subordination. It fixes the identities of injured and the injuring as social positions, and codifies as well the meanings of their action as against all possibilities of indeterminacy, ambiguity, and struggle for resignification or repositioning. (22)

Brown’s distinction of “the injured” is crucial to making Nietzsche’s theory of resentment work in my argument. In each of the texts that I examine, male characters appear physically and/or emotionally injured. The authors position them this way in

some cases to garner them support and sympathy. Playing the victim, the male characters *appear* to have lost their power and control. This accomplishes two objectives: it allows the men to blame the women for taking what has been “rightfully” theirs and provides them with attention that they so desperately covet.

My underlying contention, in essence, is this: that masculine space often occupies a complex position in literary works, that it does more than provide a setting for the novel, and that in the decades leading up to and following the First World War, the pressures on men to perform for the masculine health of the nation increased, leaving them in search of places that they could retreat to and find strength, comfort, and validation. In the cultural settings of later Victorian and early twentieth-century England, as in many literary works of these years, masculine space took on a heightened and intensified purpose. It was the one place that men felt they could be themselves and not carry the weight of the nation on their shoulders. At the turn of the century and continuing through World War II, Britain experienced a significant decline in its image as a world power. As a result of both the deterioration of its imperial efforts and the devastating number of lives lost in the wars, British men were forced to reevaluate their self-image and their perception of England’s world image as a dwindling force in global politics.

In order to understand the significance of masculine space to the “crisis of masculinity,” I have relied on several foundation texts that have considerably influenced my understanding of space and the construction of gender. Early works such as Walter Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project* and Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* have

helped me to approach my readings of the texts and their settings by first considering space as a deeply symbolic and metaphorical element of the story and as a way to broaden my understanding of the characters and the author. In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin identifies dwelling as both “age-old, perhaps eternal” and “a condition of nineteenth-century existence” (6). Benjamin resolves this apparent contradiction by arguing that, in the nineteenth century, a dwelling signifies more than mere shelter; it becomes coextensive with the person of the dweller, a kind of second skin. Benjamin had a name for this new cultural spectacle of inner life: “the phantasmagoria of the interior.” The very concept of the interior is a fantasy construct, a site for the public display of private dreams. “Phantasmagorias of the interior are constituted by man’s imperious need to leave the imprint of his private industrial existence on the rooms he inhabits.” Houses became themselves literary subjects, as writers discovered the creative potential of the changing face of architecture and design. In modern fiction, we might consider how much the houses and estates of the characters have a personality and importance to the novel of their own. Elizabeth Bowen’s novel *The Last September* illustrates this exact point when the country home in County Cork and the residents and guests that travel in and out of the space drive the plot of the novel and create the tension and resolution between the characters. Or consider the summer beach house in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, where the decay of the home throughout the war years symbolizes the decomposition of the family that once lived there. Woolf’s miniature portrait of family life uses the spaces of the house to convey a sense of the devastation following the war.

Another approach to analyzing literary space, Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) is an early, yet still critical text for my analysis of masculine space, especially within the home. "In the intimate harmony of walls and furniture," Bachelard writes, "it may be said that we become conscious of a house that is built by women, since men only know how to build a house from the outside, and they know little or nothing of the 'wax' civilization" (68). Although Bachelard treats the gendered house in binary divisions, he also contends that "every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house" (136). Nothing is ever empty. Bachelard believes that we can find unique poetry in a building, "one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind" (151). Both Benjamin and Bachelard are at the heart of much theoretical work of literature and studies of space.<sup>7</sup> Pointing to the construction of space that also facilitates the construction of identity, the writers anticipate later discussions about the construction of gender within gender-specific space. Both writers have made the spaces and settings of novels more relevant and have helped readers to see their importance through a different lens. Reading Benjamin and Bachelard forever changes the way that we think about or analyze a space and forces us to make sense of the underlying meaning that it provides for the text as a whole.

As I will argue and as others have discussed before me, conversations on space provides a critical way for us to understand the dynamics of gender politics. Initially

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<sup>7</sup> See Victoria Rosner, Diana Fuss, Joel Sanders, and Anthony Vidler.

focusing on the Victorian period and late nineteenth century, Griselda Pollock and Judith Walkowitz<sup>8</sup> represent work that focuses on the spatial restrictions that women encountered in their daily lives, and how ignoring those rules or bypassing them often resulted in women being ostracized from polite society or even becoming physically harmed. My work, in a sense, examines the other point of view in this scenario, as I examine the masculine spaces that women were excluded from in the Victorian era, but that became more open and fluid at the turn of the century. Both writers believe that space restrictions purposely regulate female sexuality. In “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity” (1988) Pollock describes the “matrix of space.” In her ground-breaking article, she notes the distinction between “the spaces of femininity” and the spaces of masculinity when she analyzes what spaces are represented in the paintings made by Mary Cassatt and Bertha Morisot. Although this critical discussion concerns Victorian art work and not Modernist literature, Pollock’s division between feminine and masculine space is the first of its kind to designate the gender of particular spaces. She contends that “dining rooms, drawing rooms, bedrooms, balconies/verandas and private gardens” are examples of private areas or domestic space, which signify feminine space (78). Pollock notes that the women painters do not portray the same settings that their male colleagues so freely visited and included in their works. Spaces such as bars, cafes, and backstage were sites and subjects that were closed not only to women artists, but all women in general, while men could move freely with all sexes, races, and classes in “the socially fluid public world of the streets, popular entertainment and commercial or

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<sup>8</sup> See Pollock’s “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity” (1988) and Walkowitz’s *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian England* (1992).

casual sexual exchange” (78). Ultimately, Pollock concludes that “Femininity should be understood not as a condition of women but as the ideological form of the regulation of female sexuality within a familial, heterosexual domesticity which is ultimately organized by the law. The spaces of femininity – ideologically, pictorially – hardly articulate female sexualities” (111-12). Arguing that the law enforces the gender codes that restrict women to certain spaces and enforce the segregation of the sexes, Pollock sparks a dialogue on gender and space that has yet to end.

The city of London and women’s entrance into the public sphere are the subjects of Walkowitz’s *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian England* (1992), a cultural studies text that locates the story of Jack the Ripper “as part of a formative moment in the production of feminist sexual politics and of popular narratives of sexual danger. It examines the competing cultural elements incorporated into the Ripper narrative, as well as those elements that the Ripper story excluded and resisted, particularly those in which women were not silent or terrorized victims” (10). Walkowitz’s analysis relies on the claim that at the time, women were present on the streets of London in growing numbers. In order to support her thesis, she cites the many public spaces to which women, who were once denied access to masculine space, could now go, but not without some protest. In music halls and department stores, women’s presence brought about issues of sexual harassment in public where their travel by bus and tram raised many eyebrows. Sites of charity work also allow women to have a productive purpose and an outlet to city work and movement. Their involvement in politics and worthy causes brings them out of the house and into audiences for protests,

parades, and demonstrations. Increasingly women were also allowed into spaces such as club meetings, discussion groups, concerts, picture exhibitions, galleries, playhouses and even the British Museum Reading Room, where women mingled with men in these once off-limits spaces. Walkowitz's study relies on the argument that the lines that have been instituted to segregate spaces between men and women have been redrawn in late-Victorian England and will have to be continuously redrawn as women's roles and mobility expands until they reach equality with men. The work of Pollock and Walkowitz serves to demonstrate how spaces are regulated by socially constructed divisions that seek to contain and exclude women. Both writers approach their subject from a feminist studies point of view, while my work attempts to address a complementary assessment of the debate – why are writers so focused on men who are invested in keeping women out of the space, what ideologies support masculine space, what did the men stand to lose, and what effect did it have on them once the barriers came down? Using the paradigm of masculinity studies and spatial theory, I hope to provide the other side of the story, to understand and make a contribution to putting together a more complete picture of the entire realm of gender dynamics at the turn of the century.

While Pollock and Walkowitz take a cultural studies approach to their work and discuss the public's perception of women in both domestic and public spaces, we must also consider the psychological effects of space on the mind of the individual. Even more of an enabling paradigm for my study, and indeed on the cutting edge of much theoretical work on modernism and spatial theory, are Anthony Vidler's *Warped Space*



(2000) and Victoria Rosner's *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* (2005).

Vidler traces the psychological baggage of modern space. Trained in architecture, Vidler focuses on fears that are endemic to the newly established metropolis, viewed as the source of evil, destruction, and alienation by many modern city dwellers. The writer uses psychoanalysis and the modern fixations on neurasthenia and agoraphobia to diagnose the dis-ease of Modernism with "the landscape of fear and the topographies of despair created as a result of modern technological and capitalist development, from Metropolis to Megalopolis" (2). Especially around the time of the First World War, "metropolis" came to mean both "a physical site and a pathological state which for better or for worse epitomized modern life" (26). Vidler treats each space as a case study and essentially reads the warping and bending of the space as indicative of his subject's own neurosis. His reading brings about a more clear understanding of modernity by extending the question of anxiety and the paranoid subject "to consider the idea of phobic space and its design corollary warped space"(7). For literary critics, Vidler establishes a unique way to diagnose both a setting and an author; he sees the two as intrinsically connected as creation and creator. By applying Vidler's method to my own work, I can demonstrate how writers are attempting to understand and work out their own frustrations about changing gender and social codes within spaces and about changing perceptions of masculinity. The writers often portray their male characters as paranoid, angry, anxious, and impotent men who are struggling to sustain their masculine image during a time of uncertainty and disappointment.

Rosner, who also takes a diagnostic approach, “reads spaces and objects as symptoms, overdetermined in their meanings and painful to experience” (15). She contends that the modern home is a laboratory, where social codes are dissected and regularly the subject for experimentation. Rosner puts emphasis on the home as a particular space, where there is the possibility of rebellion, redefinition, and reinvention. She organizes her argument and her chapters around specific sites in the home as she draws “on the history of personal, professional, and thematic relationships between designers and writers as a way of calling attention to the interarts foundation of modernist literary aesthetics,” which creates a new way for us to think about interiority for modernist writers (11). According to Rosner, during the modern period the home undergoes a radical transformation and gains a more important role as not just “a repository for tradition,” but “a kind of workshop for interior design and social change” (13). Modernist writers such as Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, and E.M. Forster criticize in their novels the gender and class restrictions of Victorian domestic social codes and the separation of spheres that restricted women and men from moving freely about their own homes. Instead, Rosner argues that through their literary work the writers proposed a new domesticity, which reconfigured both the actual space of the home and how one understands the meaning and composition of a family (13). Reading both the interior of the home and the literary work, Rosner’s work is the first of its kind to specifically focus on particular spaces of the home and take an interdisciplinary approach by linking designers and writers. Both Vidler’s and Rosner’s works have helped me to understand how spaces can be used for alternative purposes, how writers

place symbolic meaning in space for what they see as the social ills of the nation or how disease and illness, whether physical or psychological can become manifest in a particular space. Their research and analysis has helped me to diagnose masculine space as a location of crisis for male writers at the beginning of the twentieth century when so much uncertainty surrounded their status as “men.”

Additionally, it has been important for me to consider the effects of real spaces, rather than just literary ones, on the writers that I focus on in this dissertation. Speaking biographically, each of the male writers I discuss has a unique relationship to masculine spaces that they encountered in the public school system, at the university, in their travels, and at work. Thinking about “real” spaces, Joel Sanders and Diana Fuss take a cultural studies approach and consider the way historical spaces have worked to construct individuals’ identity. Both texts demonstrate how gender identity is constructed through space, particularly through architectural and interior design. Sanders’s *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity* (1996) is a collection of essays that he compiled which focus specifically on masculinity and architecture after World War II. The compilation includes theorists, architects, writers, and artists who interrogate the concept of cultural construction by examining the active role that architectural constructions play in the manipulation of gender. The text “interrogates how, through the precise organization and distribution of materials, objects, and bodies in space, physical structures assist in the fabrication of masculine identities at specific sites and at precise moments in history” (12). Although *Stud*’s focus is a later time period, Sanders’s text helps me to think about the relationship between the construction of architecture and the

construction of gender. Few texts have addressed architecture's impact on men from a masculinity studies perspective; however, the subject of women, feminism, and architecture has been more critically investigated.<sup>9</sup> The contributions to this volume investigate "how architecture, as a concrete material practice, works to institute sexual identities by delimiting and demarcating the interaction of human subject in actual space" (12). *Stud* investigates "a series of commonplace but ideologically overdetermined spaces – houses, bathrooms, gyms, offices, streets, parks – environments that we habitually take for granted but that quietly and decisively participate in the manufacture of male subjectivity" (13). Demonstrating that there are no insignificant spaces when it comes to gender construction, this text helped me to consider *all* of the possible ways that writers use and manipulate spaces, even the most mundane ones, to make a distinction about masculine space.

While Sanders sets out to analyze everyday locations in his text, Diana Fuss, author of *The Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and Rooms that Shaped Them* (2004) focuses on the more famous settings that played a key role in the construction of identity for some well known thinkers. Fuss creates a series of case studies on literary houses "that sheltered and shaped the imagination" of Emily Dickinson, Sigmund Freud, Marcel Proust, and Helen Keller. "The theater of composition," she writes, "is not an empty

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<sup>9</sup> A partial list of critical works that examine architecture and feminist theory includes Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (1981), Susana Torre, *Women in Architecture, an Historic and Contemporary Perspective* (1977), Leslie Kanes Weisman, *Discrimination by Design, a Feminist Critique of the Man-made Environment* (1994), Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller, *The Bathroom, the Kitchen, and the Aesthetics of Waste* (1992), Alice T. Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (1998).

space but a place animated by the artifacts, mementoes, machines, books, and furniture that frame any intellectual labor” (1). A writer’s domestic interior opens a window onto both author and text, reminding us that what we may at first perceive to be the timeless and universal truth of writing cannot be so neatly extricated from the complex particularities of its spatial and material origins (2). If architectural historians treat the domestic interior more literally than figuratively, ignoring the metaphorical in favor of the functional, literary critics, for their part, tend to treat the domestic interior as pure figuration (3). Fuss’s study of the literary house “challenges that too easy bifurcation between literal and figurative space reinforced by the separate disciplines of architecture and literature” (4). In regards to my own work, all of the writers that I focus on use much of their personal experience to create the masculine spaces in their texts. Their intimate connection to those private and public venues helps them to make a room come alive for the reader and also provides him/her with a glimpse into the author’s own world and own understanding of what masculinity means in the modern era.

In addition to this dissertation’s grounding in spatial theory and modern literature, it also depends on the work of gender theorists who have established paradigms for thinking about male homosocial intimacy and friendship. For the writers in this dissertation, issues of masculinity are a central theme in their literary work and their private lives. Masculinity has always been a subject of critical importance for modernist studies. At the turn of the century, many men and women were refashioning their understanding of cultural, social, and sexual beliefs. The rise in visibility of the New Woman, the increase in attention and policing of the homosexual, and the emphasis

on the cult of masculinity created a climate of revolution and apprehension that challenged patriarchal social codes while threatening to dismantle Victorian sensibility. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) and Sarah Cole's *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (2003) each inform and motivate my readings.

Sedgwick's study, which forms the basis for theoretical work on the subject of male homoerotics, offers an enabling paradigm for my study of masculinity and masculine space, two subjects that I believe heavily depend on homosocial bonding. Sedgwick's insight rewrites Rene Girard's theory of triangular desire in which he argues that there is nothing original about desire. According to Girard and essential to Sedgwick is the idea that we copy the desire of our models, who are also mediators. Their objects of desire become ours as well. This "promiscuity of desire" then becomes a source of disagreement when the mediator and desiring subject struggle for the same object.<sup>10</sup>

Sedgwick derives her own interpretation of Girard when she writes, "in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved:...the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love' differently as they are experience, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent" (21). The main concern of the text is what she describes as a rupture along the continuum of male relationships. She traces and explores what she sees as the inescapable union of patriarchal homosociality and homophobia. Finding a pattern of desire and exclusion with respect to male love and intimacy, Sedgwick argues that the model is ubiquitous in

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<sup>10</sup> Rene Girard's *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (1965).

genres across the canon. Any study of masculine space and the friendships that are established there must begin with the theorist's scrutiny of the cultural ambiguities that put male friendships under surveillance. While homosexuality is not the main focus of my dissertation, homosociality plays a large role in determining how the men have relationships with one another and the sexual, social, and spatial dynamics of those interactions. Gender-specific sites enable and promote homosocial rituals and traditions that rely on privacy and gender exclusivity. The spaces, rituals, and groups of men all rely on each other for survival and proliferation in future generations.

Also working with Sedgwick's paradigms of masculinity and homosociality,<sup>11</sup> Cole's work examines the literary and cultural history of masculine intimacy in the twentieth century. She approaches this complex and neglected topic from many perspectives - as a reflection of the social power wielded by the institutions that housed and structured male bonds, as a matter of closeted and frustrated homoerotics, and as part of the story of the First World War. Cole shows that the terrain of masculine fellowship provides an important context for understanding key literary features of the modernist period in the work of Conrad, Forster, Lawrence, and the war poets. My own argument is in critical dialogue with Cole's text, since male intimacy and friendship often relied on masculine space, where men could have more privacy and freedom. We

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<sup>11</sup> Sedgwick's theory of the homosocial love triangle has influenced the work of many writers and gender theorists. A small sample of texts in addition to Cole's that rely on her paradigm includes: Nancy Roberts's *Schools of Sympathy: Gender and Identification Through the Novel* (1997), Jennifer Poole Hayward's *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Serial Fictions from Dickens to Soap Opera* (1997), Marilyn Button and Toni Reed's *The Foreign Women in British Literature: Exotics, Aliens and Outsiders* (1999), Trev Lynn Broughton's *Men of Letters, Writing Lives: Masculinity and Literary Auto/Biography in the Late Victorian Period* (1999), Philip Holden and Richard R. Ruppel's *Imperial Desire: Dissident Sexualities and Colonial Literature* (2003), and Wendy S. Jones's *Consensual Fictions: Women, Liberalism, and the English Novel* (2005).

also have chosen to structure our arguments around several of the same authors, which suggests another way that our studies intersect. My work brings an additional angle – the importance of masculine space – to the conversation on modernism, masculinity, and homosociality that Cole has already begun with her focus on male friendships.

The critical research on masculine space and masculinity is really in its beginning stages. There is still a great need and opportunity for writers to consider the meaning of masculine space to the modern period. Although this study focuses on men writers, women writers also show an earnest curiosity and fascination with masculine space and would provide another dimension to my argument. Of course, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (lectures delivered in 1928, published in 1929) makes space its essential meditation. Woolf argues that women need masculine space for their own use; they too need a room where they can have privacy and peace from the demands of the household. The man's study would provide the perfect setting for Woolf's women to work; however, Woolf understands man's hesitancy to give it up. Much of the writer's introduction is about masculinity after the First World War and her interpretation of how men have lost their innocence and become angry and sterile. My dissertation is in direct response to Woolf's argument. While I agree with her that women need their own space, especially after men for hundreds of years have taken more than their fair share of spaces both at home and abroad, I argue that we must also discuss how men and their spaces change when women make demands for a room of their own, particularly if it involves confiscating a masculine setting. Woolf's text has supplied multiple generations of feminist critics with a powerful metaphor that inspires discussion and action. She



contends that in their own space creativity happens, yet many male authors argue the same thing about masculine space. In this time of transition, it is important that we also take into consideration how male author's were responding to the women's movement and to Woolf's directive.

The subject of masculine space is an integral part of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), in which the author describes how the main character, Stephen Gordon, a female invert, readily makes use of her father's study, the war front, the stables, and the hunting grounds. Within these masculine spaces, Stephen finds a sense of belonging and security; she is comfortable in the settings and even comes to understand her true identity there. Within the masculine space of her father's study, Stephen finds her father's books, texts that give names and descriptions which she sought for so long to understand on her own. With this knowledge found in the masculine space of learning and inquiry, Stephen is able to come to peace with herself and her work in life. Masculine space is integral to Stephen's identity and to Hall's construction of her narrative.

Another modern text, Gertrude Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), provides us with an alternative point of view regarding masculine space and the construction of gender identity. The text revolves around Alice's arrival, which also becomes the impetus for Leo Stein's plan to leave 27 Rue de Fleurus. With Leo there, Stein served as "Salon Matron"; however, with her brother gone, she becomes the masculine head of her own salon, where she discusses art and literature with "the geniuses," while Alice sits with "the wives" (81). Clearly, Stein distinguishes her

masculine role in the space of the salon. Her actions attempt to authorize not only her salon but her own work, as well. Even the walls of the atelier at 27 rue de Fleurus are covered in masculinity. The works of Picasso, Cézanne, and Matisse hang from ceiling to floor, literally bolstering or holding up the structure, a significant image considering that the male artists are men that Stein both identifies with and admires. As these examples suggest, there is still much work to be done that seeks to understand the significance of masculine space to the construction of identity for both literary men and women in the modern period.

### **Structure:**

#### **Three Case Studies, The Architects of Masculinity**

The early twentieth century is unique in the attention that space receives in texts. How it is used, designed, decorated, etc., along with the changing concepts of gender and sexuality preoccupy a number of social critics, architects, artists, and writers, from Le Corbusier and Walter Benjamin to Thomas Hardy and Wyndham Lewis. Many early twentieth-century writers had a serious interest in the interior arts, some even made a living at it. While Christopher Reed has expounded on the artistic merits of the Bloomsbury Group, and Richard Cork has provided readers with a chapter on the Rebel Arts Centre, it is important to acknowledge some of the less known efforts by literary novelists.

Although the chapters in this dissertation are not biographical in nature or argument, each writer has unique, if not curious, interest in space. In his writing and his personal life, E.M. Forster has always demonstrated a love of the domestic sphere and has shown a deep connection to houses, particularly homes that he has occupied and that are of significant value to both him and his family. Perhaps his appreciation for the home was a result of feeling homeless on more than one occasion in his life. Alistair Duckworth explains that “Forster was himself, on two occasions, ‘cast into the world’ from the cradle of a house” (61). Rooksnest, the home on which he modeled *Howards End*, was the first he had unwillingly to relinquish in 1893. Forster left Rooksnest in order to go to public school as a day boy at Tonbridge in Kent. While Mrs. Forster had every intention of staying on at Rooksnest and not letting the property go, the landlord declined to renew the lease on the house. The departure was disagreeable for both parties and left a significant impression on the young Forster.

The leasing system played a critical role in Forster’s perception of his home and his strong attachment to spaces that were essentially taken away from him under the pretext of business. In England families could lease a home for not just their lifetime, but their children’s too.<sup>12</sup> It was not uncommon to sign a one hundred year lease. And although a family might not own a home, because they had resided there for such an extended amount of time, a considerable connection to the space often arose and caused

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<sup>12</sup> For information on the English leasing system, see *Class and Space: The Making of Urban Society*, edited by N.J. Thrift and Peter Williams (1987).

a substantial heartache if the lease was not renewed, as was the case with Forster and his family.

Later in life, following his literary career, Forster again lost a property that was very close to his heart. In 1945 another landlord refused to renew the lease of West Hackhurst, a house designed by Forster's architect father for his Aunt Laura, who bequeathed the lease to Forster on her death in 1924. Although his removal from this house occurred long after he wrote *Howards End*, the loss of West Hackhurst is worthy of brief mention here because it demonstrates Forster's consistent attachment to houses. On this occasion Forster was, in a real sense, separated from his "father's house." But before he left any of his homes, he took with him what Mary Lago calls his "domestic totem," the mantelpiece designed by his father, an "inanimate object that represents his roots" (12). First installed at Rooksnest, the mantel accompanied him and his mother to Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Weybridge and West Hackhurst and finally went with him to King's, where it resides today in one of the most revered masculine spaces in England's history.

Like Forster, D.H. Lawrence moved several times throughout his life and never put down roots in one particular home or town. Although, he never stayed in one house for very long, he was an avid interior decorator. At his own home he constructed furniture and sewed curtains. Although he and Frieda were not wealthy, he always tried to make each of their homes comfortable and aesthetically pleasing to his critical eye. While staying with Ottoline Morrell at Garsington Manor, a home that to Lawrence represented the best of Old England, he helped her with the painting of the old paneled

room.<sup>13</sup> In her memoir, Morrell recalls, “We were an odd-looking company, tall and short, thin and thick, dressed in white overall, egg-cups in our hands, creeping slowly round the room, outlining each panel with a fine paint-brush...Lawrence of course did his far quicker and straighter than any of us” (36). Ottoline’s Garsington was also a space that the writer was interested in for his utopian vision, known as Rananim, a masculine space where Lawrence planned to establish and practice his concept for a new order.

Although Lawrence was unsuccessful establishing Rananim at Garsington, he continued to look for possible locations and disciples, while at the same time using interior design to lure friends to stay with him. On one occasion he even acted as a contractor for the remodeling that took place at the Cornwall cottages in preparation for John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield’s rental. Like Rupert Birkin in *Women in Love*, Lawrence had proposed a Blutbrüderschaft relationship to Murry, who refused. The two, however, remained friends, and Lawrence continued to pursue a committed relationship with Murry but was unsuccessful. At the time though, in an effort to entice Murry and Mansfield, he wrote several letters with drawings of the floor plans and a map of the grounds to the couple in an attempt to persuade them to move. He also composed detailed lists in letters to Mark Gertler and Catherine Carswell, who had all of his possessions in storage. And to Captain John Short, who was managing the cottages and aiding in the renovating process, he provides itemized instructions on how to

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<sup>13</sup> The Morrells restored Garsington from its ruins to provide a literary salon outside the city of London, where the Bloomsbury discussions could continue in the shade of the ilex tree. For more discussion of life at Garsington see Juliette Huxley’s autobiography *Leaves of the Tulip Tree*.

complete the renovations. The letters are fascinating because they contain detailed descriptions of the housewares that the Lawrences require, the floor plans to explain the exact layout of the cottages, and specific instructions for the supplies they will need in order to make the house ready for occupation.<sup>14</sup> Lawrence plays all roles when it comes to the Cornwall move; he is plumber, interior designer, painter, carpenter, moving coordinator, household accountant, real estate agent, and architect for masculine space. In addition to his influence at Garsington and Cornwall, he also participated in the decoration and design at homes in Italy, Taos, and Mexico.

George Orwell found his own utopian vision in the domestic space of the garden. Orwell was an avid gardener, creating detailed and elaborate garden plans, lists, and drawings that he kept in his personal journal that he titled *Domestic Diary*.<sup>15</sup> There he recorded what he planted, how much it produced, and how to improve on the next crop the following season. Each time he moved to a new location or remodeled a pre-existing plot, he also created a thorough diagram that mapped out the space of the garden and included meticulous labels and graphic representations of the plants and other landscaping details to scale. Orwell's domestic diaries demonstrate a side of Orwell that is often forgotten. Combined with my readings of the domestic spaces of his texts, they provide an alternative way of thinking about Orwell and his legacy. His passion for the daily maintenance of Barnhill, his copious note taking, ration recording, and list making

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<sup>14</sup> See D.H. Lawrence's *Letters Vol 2*

<sup>15</sup> George Orwell's *Domestic Diaries* can be found in *Smothered Under Journalism/George Orwell Vol. 18*, edited by Peter Davison.

present a depiction of Orwell that has been ignored or passed over for *more interesting* readings of his biography and psyche.

Most importantly the diaries give us a glimpse into Orwell's post-war life and his decision to exile himself to the primitive island of Jura, off the coast of Scotland, while he worked on his novel that would predict what life would be like in the future. It is significant that Orwell chose to reside at Barnhill, a farmhouse whose maintenance was not for the faint of heart because it lacked all of the modern conveniences that he was accustomed to in London and came to symbolize the ultimate test of his manhood and physical endurance. He embraced his nostalgia for the past, much like his characters, and tackled the tremendous undertaking of relying solely on the land and the work he completed with his own hands to provide food for his family. Although the diary is so much taken up with the frustrations and pleasures of what had become, for Orwell, something akin to his "golden country," where he intended making his main home, it also suggests the writer's longing for a bygone way of life and perception of masculinity and his need to escape from London, which he had grown to hate. After reading the diaries and watching as Orwell kept track of the daily egg count from his hens and the weather conditions, one feels as though Orwell was able to lose himself and find happiness in the details of running Barnhill and pushing himself to his physical and psychological limits.

Each author's literary interest in masculine space, I believe, emerges from his life interest in interiority and his nostalgia for the British Empire. Their attention to space in their own lives, although not integral to my argument about masculine space, is

significant because it points to the ways in which the writers were part of a larger fascination with the way that one thought about the gender-imposed restrictions that governed spaces and the rules that sex-segregated spaces imposed. Knowing that these particular writers each had a unique relationship to their own personal spaces gives us insight into their point of view and their devotion to male space in their literary work.

The chapters of this dissertation are organized as case studies around Forster, Lawrence, and Orwell, who all reported and cited in their literature a decline in their perception of masculinity at the beginning of the twentieth century and used their writing to voice their understandings and concerns about changing gender codes and social rules. Each chapter situates the author with his treatment of masculine space in multiple works and identifies patterns that help us read the writer's insight into how he sees that the changes in space are related to shifts in the sex/gender system. Once the pattern is identified, I then follow with readings of the masculine space and how the author's interpretation of masculinity can be located in his management of the setting. To do this I look for clues that the writer thinks that something is not quite right in the space. Perhaps the writer's tone hints at the problem or he places an object in the space that sticks out and causes the reader to wonder about its significance. He also provides clues in the masculine spaces, which I look for by asking the following: how is the space decorated; who is allowed to enter; who is allowed to speak; how does the masculine space conform to or resist the rules of that particular setting; does the masculine space follow its traditional function or a more modern function; what social codes are broken; what traditional or modern activity takes place in the space? Each section of each



chapter is organized by the particular masculine space that is the focus of the reading. The spaces are both private and public, British and Continental, working class and bourgeois, Victorian and modern, yet they all have one central commonality. They are all masculine spaces, where masculinity is in jeopardy and British men are attempting to recover the vitality of life that they once knew and the power and control that they once exerted over others.

The debate over masculine space, I believe begins in the modern era and continues to this day. The controversy appears to be a product of the age and is a topic of discussion for men and women, homosexuals and straights, High modernists, feminists, liberals, and imperialists. The writers that I discuss in this dissertation have a somewhat tenuous relationship with modernism. Although they are canonical authors and are taught in classes on modernism, they do not fall within the category of high modernists, whose prose performs radical literary experiments that change the way writers and readers think about the production and consumption of literature. According to Jed Esty, Forster and Lawrence, for instance, “kept alive residual elements of Victorian realism and Edwardian pastoralism in their work,” (5) which Peter Nicholls explains, high modernists Pound, Lewis, and Eliot completely contradicted the meaning of modernist art (255). My initial choice of these marginal modernists was deliberate and important in and of itself. Their exclusion from the club of high modernism indicated their refusal to break all ties with Victorian institutions and their distrust of modernization demonstrated their nostalgic connection to the past and explains why they have never been considered “true modernists.” Their unwillingness to sever their connection with the past and

relinquish their desire for control of masculine space revealed that in spirit they still held fast to the separation of spheres and the social codes that kept them in place. These writers, working in the spirit of the Victorian era, if not in the actual time period, embraced the ideology that would keep their masculine spaces intact and addressed their need for male homosocial recreation and ritual. However, the more I considered other texts that might also contribute to this study, the more I realized that the paradigm also works for high modernist authors. With my inclusion of Conrad in the introduction and my emphasis on Woolf, I came to the realization that the debate is a question of the age, but how writer's respond to it demonstrates to readers the desirable gender attributes that they support, as well as, how they interpret changing gender and social codes during a sexual and social revolution.

Chapter II, "Invaded Space: Gender Tension and Masculine Sanctuaries in E.M. Forster's *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*," examines these two pre-war texts in which the author sees the invasion of masculine space as a sign of wider tensions at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both at home and abroad, Forster's male characters feel the impact of the women's movement in the spaces that were once solely used for men's recreation. The Italian pension, the smoking room, the dining room, the automobile, the swimming hole, and the battlefield are just some of the masculine sanctuaries that Forster calls attention to in his investigation into the state of the nation and how the women's movement has altered traditional masculine spaces. Forster argues that while the Victorian masculine spaces of the past century were marked by Etonian camaraderie and British imperialism, they have become places of anxiety and

uncertainty, where the sexes are continuously finding themselves on opposing sides. With the lines no longer clearly drawn to segregate the sexes, the characters must negotiate each space, a hostile and oftentimes callous business.

After reading the masculine spaces in Forster's texts, we can come away with a list of attributes that the writer deems desirable for men in regards to their gender identity. Forster, whose sympathies lie with George Emerson and Leonard Bast, rather than Henry and Charles Wilcox, suggests that there should be a New Man for the New Woman. Educated and adaptable to challenging environments and situations, his modern man is ready to conquer the new era. While anti-imperialism and industrialization, he supports the women's movement and their fight for the vote. With the characteristics of masculinity that the writer endorses, we can also theorize about the writer's understanding of the state of masculinity during the modern period. The masculine attributes that Forster supports in each of these texts suggest that the author supports producing a new masculinity in the new era. George and Leonard are modern men, anticipating an era of hope and change in their future. Like Forster, they are tired of old-fashioned gender and class restrictions and Victorian politics.

The third chapter, "D.H. Lawrence's Post-War Space: An Appeal for Masculine Healing and a New Order," examines masculine space as sites of healing in *Women in Love*, *Aaron's Rod*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In his work, Lawrence argues that men have undergone a significant amount of distress following the war. Using the rhetorics of crisis and trauma, Lawrence argues that men must create a "new order" where they can again find strength and power to lead a more vital life. His male characters retreat to

masculine spaces – bachelor flats, estate libraries, and the gamekeeper’s hut, where they employ not just modern political and artistic theories, but also modern trends in holistic medicine. Using the emergent interest in nudism or naturism, exercise, and therapeutic massage, Lawrence also suggests how these apparent modern fads also have a significant history in the construction of masculinity since ancient times. By juxtaposing the treatment for the damaged male body, the writer suggests the rites and rituals that men share that can also replace heterosexual traditions that he believes only seek to weaken men and make them subservient to women. Lawrence demonstrates to his readers that men can revive their aching bodies and sore egos and reclaim their masculinity and sexuality by practicing the rituals of male homosocial bonding. Masculine space is essential to Lawrence’s conception of a “new order.” It allows the men the freedom that they require to experiment with these modern concepts without the stifling presence of the “magna mater” and the husbandly duties that accompany marriage and fatherhood. Masculine space for Lawrence offers his characters an escape from the destruction of their manhood and self respect that he believes is sure to follow in the wake of modernization.

While Lawrence tells the reader that he is only interested in creating a “new order,” his argument throughout all of the texts points toward the old and the ancient. His references to Greek masculinity and culture, *Blutbruderschaft*, the German blood brotherhood, and Old England demonstrate that the men in his texts are tied to the past and do not have a desire to modernize. For Birkin and Mellors, the two characters that Lawrence is most sympathetic towards, masculinity is about finding one’s organic

rhythm through meaningful and intimate relationships with other men. The writer's desire to remind the reader of man's long tradition of homosocial bonding through rites and rituals suggests that unlike Forster, Lawrence wants to return to the previous century's masculine norms rather than produce a new masculinity.

Orwell's creative nonfiction is the subject of my analysis in "Orwellian Masculinity: The Suffering Male Body and the Physical Trauma of Masculine Space," the fourth chapter, where the author focuses on the use of the masculine space to demonstrate the physical suffering that men must undergo to establish their masculinity in the modern era. In this chapter I investigate scenes in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, and *Homage to Catalonia* where the male characters undergo abhorrently stifling conditions where they work in hotel kitchens, coal mines, and war trenches, all underground spaces. The men toil away and endure torture to both their bodies and their sense of masculinity. Laboring beneath the surface of the earth, the men sustain injuries that impair their judgment and impose a severe handicap on the body of the working class man. Yet, Orwell, through his descriptions of the settings and the work that the men accomplish, valorizes their suffering and implies that it is a way to attain respect and a masculine persona. The writer argues that the torture and physical deterioration the male body goes through is a necessary part of the process of establishing one's manhood and should be looked at as a badge of honor rather than just an injury. While the men crave the space for the way it brings them into community with other men and creates rituals and rites that insure their masculinity, the spaces are also killing them. Orwell's perception of masculinity, then, appears in opposition to the

socialist philosophy that he endorses in many of his texts because he relies on the destruction of the male body and the totalitarian systems that prevent the men from working within a safe and non-injury inducing environment to solidify man's identity.

Because Orwell's attributes of desirable masculinity are so closely linked with bodily harm and physical suffering that is the result of class divisions and an imperial regime, his point of view in the works of literary non-fiction suggest that he does not want to establish a new masculinity, but instead believes in reproducing and enforcing the previous century's norms. When Orwell laments the loss of England's strong men to a modern generation that is sickly and weak from the effects of pollution and eating tinned food in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (97), he argues that masculinity in the modern period is suffering, but not in a *good* way. Orwell believes that both modern England and modern masculinity are "degenerate" and headed for the destruction that he captures in the character of Winston Smith in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Returning to the previous century's slower-paced and agrarian way of living, Orwell supports this lifestyle when he moves from London to Jura and in his fiction when he suggests that his own interpretation of masculinity depends on England's imperial success and the separation of classes governed by Victorian principles.

Overall, I hope that this examination and analysis of masculine space in early twentieth century literature will provide original and thought-provoking insights into the studies of modern fiction, literary spaces, and gender. Focusing on Forster, Lawrence, and Orwell, I wish to bring attention to these threshold modernists, who actively spoke out against modernization and whose work experimented less in literary form and

function like that of high modernist writers, such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, but instead mourned the passing of the Victorian era and its traditions.

**CHAPTER II**

**INVADED SPACE:**

**GENDER TENSION AND MASCULINE SANCTUARIES IN E.M. FORSTER'S**

***A ROOM WITH A VIEW AND HOWARDS END***

Forster published his novels *A Room with a View* in 1908 and *Howards End* in 1910, a span of years that represent a tumultuous and uncertain period in England's history, in the middle of that threshold between two worlds – the Victorian and the modern. The British experienced the deaths of Queen Victoria (22 January 1901) and King Edward (6 May 1910) and later the Great War (28 July 1914 – 11 November 1918), a time of crisis and revolution. Poised on the precipice of radical social changes, many British writers attempted to assess the state of the nation and provide an analysis of "the condition of England." Forster, who sought to understand and communicate his own interpretation of the changing atmosphere of the world around him through his writing, is one of a number who felt the need to take stock of the quickly changing atmosphere. "Most of Forster's works," writes Paul Peppis, "can be understood as national allegories that diagnose an ailing nation and offer literary cures for the malaise they anatomize" (47). Forster's novels examine in great detail what he saw as a waning, frail nation, succumbing to an unprecedented historical transformation registered synecdochally within traditionally male homosocial spaces. The writer demonstrates the tension and frustration that developed when women crossed the boundaries that separated sex-segregated spaces.



In response to this new phenomenon in British culture, Forster's male characters are often unsure about what to do now that their spaces are no longer just their own. Nicola Beaumont has noted his use of the trope of homelessness to convey his feeling that rural life was slipping away under the relentless "progress" of modern civilization with its suburbs, motorcars, and apartment blocks. I would also like to add the women's movement as an additional and perhaps stronger motivation for men to feel that they must vacate the premises. Wilfred Stone notes that "two great historical changes – the passing of the countryside and the passing of the Victorian family" – had a tremendous impact on Forster and encouraged him to write (24). Characterizing Forster's resistance to change, Daniel Schwarz observes that "Forster's novels are elegiac and nostalgic" (626). The writer laments the passing of the old guard and the established traditions and expresses his observations about the tension in male space that the new era ushers in.

In this chapter, I would like to concentrate on *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*. Specifically, I focus on how Forster locates the malady of modern man within the masculine spaces of both the home and the private sphere and argue that he articulates the effects of the social changes on these communal spaces that were once held sacred. Although the home has always been considered a feminine space with islands or pockets of masculine privilege, in the modernist period those islands were being invaded and overtaken by women. Forster locates the gender tension of the era within all-male spaces and articulates the conflict that arises when those spaces are contested. The male characters in both texts experience a foreboding sense of rootlessness that comes when

life decisions, such as marriage, are being negotiated, and individuals must choose where and how they will live with their future partners.

My interest is in how Forster makes distinctions between female and male, or feminine and masculine, private spaces and in the anxieties that arise for the male characters from having their once male-dominated space put in jeopardy. Spaces such as the dining room and the smoking room, the swimming hole and the tennis court, are masculine spaces, traditionally dominated by a masculine ethos. Governed by men and used to establish and reinforce a male tradition and genealogy, masculine spaces contain the rites and rituals of British masculinity. In the communal masculine space where men had a sense of permanence and stability, Forster inserts women, who, in a sense, invade the male territory, create tension and anxiety for the male characters, and establish a sort of fight or flight mechanism. The discordant tableau that Forster creates reveals the complexity of the modernist era and the changes that England was going through at the turn of the century. Forster marks what for many were very disturbing adjustments by his inquiry into all-male space and its consequent demise, leaving modern men without the security of their ancient rituals and secure settings.

Forster's point of view and understanding of the changing gender codes are significantly different than the other two writers in this study. Although he makes the tension of the masculine space when women are present the subject of his works and shows how both men and women have a difficult time communicating and connecting, Forster supports women's equality and does not suggest that they be excluded. Instead, he argues that men must accept the changing spaces and adopt a more modern and,

perhaps Forster would say educated, outlook on gender and social codes. Forster's *New Men* – George Emerson and Leonard Bast – demonstrate the writer's attributes of desirable masculinity and stand in sharp contrast to Lawrence's characters, who are running away from the women in their lives and Orwell, who pretends that women do not exist in his masculine spaces. Although Forster does agree with Lawrence and Orwell when it comes to the arguing about the devastating effects of industrialization on the health of the nation's citizens and the environment, he does not share their point of view on the woman question.

In order to chart Forster's treatment of gendered space, I have divided this chapter into two sections. In the first section, I discuss spaces within the domestic sphere at the Pension Bertolini, Windy Corner, and *Howards End* that Forster points to as key locations of gendered spatial tension. These include the drawing room, the smoking room, and the dining room. In both *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*, these rooms figure as significant spaces that are undergoing transformations of power and control. While they were once masculine rooms of privilege, strong-willed women are overtaking them. In the public sphere, the subject of the second section, women are contesting masculine communal spaces such as the swimming hole, the motorcar, the business office, and the battleground. Forster, sympathetic to the feminine household and the New Woman, portrays the male characters as controlling, insensitive, money-hungry, and paranoid. They are unable to cope with the changing world around them, made visible in the alterations that are going on in their homes. Forster uses both the public and private masculine spaces to communicate his interpretation of the gender

tension of the period. He suggests not only that social structures were changing during the modern period, but also that the actual rooms and spaces they inhabited were undergoing radical transformations.

### **Dining Rooms both at Home and Abroad**

*A Room with a View* opens with Lucy Honeychurch and Charlotte Bartlett's arrival at the Pension Bertolini, a quaint hotel set on the Arno River in Florence, Italy. Forster describes the pension's dining room as trapped within the past, a victim of a Victorian time and space warp for the women. Lucy tells Charlotte, "It might be London" as "She looked at the two rows of English people who were sitting at the table; at the row of white bottles of water and red bottles of wine that ran between the English people; at the portraits of the late Queen and the late Poet Laureate that hung behind the English people, heavily framed; at the notice of the English church (Rev. Cuthbert Eager, M.A. Oxon.)" (my emphasis) (7). In addition to the hotel being run by a Cockney woman, the place is packed with English people, much to the surprise and dismay of Lucy, who expected something quite different for this new experience. Besides the overwhelming presence of English bodies, the décor of the hotel is not only too British, but too Victorian, as well. In an era of forward thinking and movement, the pension is trapped within the Victorian past with the queen, Tennyson, and an overly ornate frame decorating its walls. The pension represents a decaying era.

While Lucy and Charlotte had expected accommodations with a view of the river, they instead receive rooms that overlook an ordinary courtyard. The women are surprised by the likeness of the hotel to those in London and very disappointed by the unsatisfactory lodgings. While Lucy is on her first trip abroad, her expectations appear to be unmet. Forster describes the pension as trapped within the past, a victim of a Victorian time and space warp for the women. Forster continues with the Victorian emphasis on setting when he describes the way in which the characters move and act within the spaces of the pension. The hotel still has gender-segregated public rooms much like those of a Victorian home, where social codes prevented the intermingling of the sexes or the discussion of certain topics within particular spaces. Because the women of the text, Lucy, Charlotte and the novelist Miss Lavish, are unaccustomed to such strict and outdated rules of etiquette that require them to be submissive, quiet, and unassuming, their actions and words are constantly creating tension with the male guests.

Forster experienced the gender tension first hand during an earlier journey, when he compiled much of his material for *A Room with a View*, while traveling through Italy with his mother in 1901. They occupied the Pensione Hayden, which, like all such pensioni, P.N. Furbank reports, “was crammed with English old ladies” (88). Forster explains that he had never seen so many females. The unexpected presence of the multitude of British women abroad alarmed Forster, who at the age of twenty-two was accustomed to the all-male community at Cambridge. After Forster sprained his ankle and broke his arm while traveling, the women and all of their remedies turned out to be

too much (Furbank 88). With what he perceived as their eccentricities, the abundance of women at the hotel provided him with a tremendous amount of material to work with and use for his own tale of travel and gender psychology (95). Although he could not hide the strain he felt in their presence and being separated from male companionship, he makes women's communities central to both of the novels, *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*, which explore the dynamics of the women within the context of their newfound freedom and independent lifestyles.

In June, after retreating to his and Lily's favorite Cortina, Forster, complaining of the lack of men abroad, wrote to his friend John Sheppard:

I do very much long for the presence of some male who is neither decrepit, mountain-mad, or clerical. At the present moment I am the only man – unless one counts an American boy who left the table last night because he thought the cooking bad. It is such a depressing thing to look down the table and honestly believe that you are the cleverest person seated at it, which is what I do day after day: I know you won't misinterpret this. (Qtd. in Furbank 104)

Forster is sure that Sheppard will not misunderstand his meaning, which leads the reader to wonder how he might be misinterpreted. Forster does not want him to think that he is an intellectual snob or a sexist. He hopes that Sheppard will grasp the situation and his awkward position. Starved for "good" conversation and intellectual stimulation, and feeling trapped by the abundance of women abroad, Forster began to compile notes for his "Lucy novel" in which his protagonist is one of the multitude. While the women

were sometimes a personal annoyance to Forster, they also proved to be a source of inspiration for his creative work. The increase in women's travel abroad, as well as the male response to their new presence, then, can be seen as a significant influence on Forster's work, which sparked the beginning of his novel-writing career.

Setting the novel in Edwardian England and Italy, Forster adds an additional dimension to the plot by having his protagonist encounter a world that is not exactly sure of what women's and men's roles in society and at home are anymore. With Lucy's coming of age and society's altering perceptions of women's place in both the private and public sphere, there are constant misunderstandings or "muddles," as Forster characterizes them, that occur between the sexes and create key plot devices. Forster develops these plot devices and provides his readers with his own insight into the social changes that he sees occurring before his eyes.

One way that Forster develops his narrative of social change is through his own perceptions of how individuals managed and worked through spaces, particularly interior spaces and the private sphere. During the Victorian period, spaces were divided between men and women and designated for masculine and feminine activities. However, increasingly after the turn of the century many of those barriers began to be broken down as more middle-class women entered the workforce and enjoyed the freedom of the city streets and as changes in architecture and interior design did away with gender-specific spaces. These changes have not caught up to the pension in Florence, so it is no surprise that the women from London cause a certain amount of tension in private spaces where the men of the text no longer know how to treat them. Their very presence in the pension

is part of a newly established trend in Europe. According to Mary Louise Pratt, Lucy and Charlotte's "travel is possible because a burgeoning tourist industry has established 'contact zones' that anglicize Italy just enough that it is 'safe' for young English women and their chaperones" (105). The pension represents this safe zone, where Lucy and Charlotte's main source of company comes from other English travelers.

Both George Emerson and Cecil Vyse, who are vying for Lucy's attention, experience displacement from spaces in which they might have before been perfectly comfortable. Forster poses the displacement of the men from the smoking room and the dining room as a competition for Lucy's affection; whoever is better able to adapt and adjust to the changing social code will be the victor. Ultimately, Emerson succeeds because he is better at adapting to Lucy's growing independence, is comfortable with his masculinity, and has a more enlightened point of view. Eric Haralson notes that Forster tests out a prototype of the new masculinity and new-age male in George. Cecil fails because he still wishes for a Victorian style of womanhood, married life, and the home. In order to demonstrate Forster's investigation and interrogation of all-male private space, I will examine the way in which he focuses on interiority as a way of describing the gender tension between the men and women in the private sphere of the Pension Bertolini and the dining room at Windy Corner. Although Forster acknowledges the tension that the presence of the women in male spaces causes, it appears that he also realizes the inevitability of the breakdown of segregated spaces. His sympathy for George, as well as his participation in the Bloomsbury group's salon model, where educated women conversed freely with Cambridge men, supports a reading of the text



that contends that he is not antagonistic to women in masculine spaces. It is best, then, to say that Forster proposes that men must find a way to adapt and adjust to the renovated settings.

The gender tension first arises, of course, when Lucy does not get the room she had hoped for with a view of the river. Because Lucy is at this turning point of her life, commencing on her tour, her “experience” is idealized by her paid traveling companion and cousin, Miss Charlotte Bartlett, as well as the other guests, most significantly the Emersons. When Lucy expresses her desire to have a room with a view of the Arno, Charlotte insists that she must have it even when there are no such rooms left. The request opens an opportunity for Mr. Emerson and his son George to make Lucy’s acquaintance and to offer her their rooms. The encounter suggests that the concern is not just about the room, but about an issue more significant, when Forster writes:

[Mr. Emerson] did not look at the ladies as he spoke, but his voice was perplexed and sorrowful. Lucy, too, was perplexed; but she saw that they were in for what was known as “quite a scene,” and she had an odd feeling that whenever these ill-bred tourists spoke the contest widened and deepened till it dealt, not with rooms and views, but with – well, something quite different, whose existence she had not realized before. Now the old man attacked Miss Bartlett almost violently: Why should she not change? What possible objection had she? They would clear out in half an hour. (9)

The real question or the “something quite different” that Forster refers to motivates Mr. Emerson to insist that Lucy take their rooms.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Emerson merely states that “Women like looking at a view, men don’t” (9). While Mr. Emerson makes this gendered distinction between men’s and women’s responses to views, perhaps a more accurate explanation is that he and his son, like Forster himself, feels outnumbered by the women and hope to make a good impression. Forster tells us that “whichever way they looked, kind ladies smiled and shouted at” Lucy and Charlotte, who are becoming a success with the other guests, whereas Mr. Emerson and George “did not do” and are growing more unwelcome and uncomfortable (11). “The offer reeks with a threatening masculinity,” argues Stone (220). Though Stone does not elaborate on this cogent insight, I would argue that threatened and threatening masculinity are central both to this scene and to our understanding of the novel’s social statement. The Emersons are outnumbered in a hotel full of women. Forster puts them in a very awkward and uncomfortable position that they are unprepared to face. Their only advantage is their room with a view. They feel unable to approach Lucy and Charlotte without offering the room as a bribe for friendship and attention. They sacrifice their own comfort in their room for comfort within the hotel guest community. In order to downplay their extravagant gesture, Mr. Emerson suggests that he, as a man, does not appreciate views, but really the reason is that he, as a man, feels threatened in the company of women and wants to ingratiate himself among them with the best asset that he has. Also, Mr. Emerson suggests a world

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<sup>16</sup> Winfred Stone notes that the defining of that “something quite different” is the chief interest of the book, and that alternative has as much to do with the Emersons’ maleness as with their openness.

where gender difference is absolute and binary. He cannot imagine an alternative to the strict social and gender codes that have regulated his entire life.

At the same time, Forster complicates the situation because, by having the men give up their hotel room, which is by its nature an itinerant space, George and his father are contributing to and furthering their own rootlessness. While travel and hotels are part of the Grand Tour tradition that the Emersons wish to make themselves a part of, they did not bargain for the challenges that they encounter. The Emersons thus suffer from the double disadvantage of being men and of the merchant class. The Emersons probably have as much or more money than the Honeychurches. The significant distinction between the two families' incomes is that the Honeychurch money is inherited, while the Emerson money has been earned. In the previous era they would not have had the money or the ability to make a Grand Tour. In this post-Victorian moment when women now figure as the majority in once all-male hotels, Pratt contends that they do not fit in, and try as they might to recover their charm and appeal, they can only fail.

Forster's setting invokes a complex tradition of representing English travel to southern Europe. Its monuments and artifacts were a staple component of the Grand Tour, the eighteenth-century tradition of travel to the Continent that functioned as the last stage in a young English gentleman's education. As Dr. Samuel Johnson's comment suggests, "a young gentleman ritually joined himself to the 'Classical Mind' by visiting the sites made famous by the texts he studied" (qtd. in Ardis 62). Mr. Emerson and George, however, have not been educated in the classics; they are not familiar with Ruskin's opinions of the tombstones, nor do they know how to act tactfully in the

presence of other tourists (Forster 27-29). Knowing the importance of the Grand Tour, Forster understands and appreciates the Victorian re-visionings of the tradition and is acutely aware of the “crass banalities and cross-cultural faux pas of early twentieth-century English middle-class tourists” (Ardis 62). Lucy, of course, is new to travel and to the Grand Tour. She most values the opinion of Baedeker, is a little unsure about the proper etiquette, and is somewhat uncomfortable with her new status as a young female tourist. At every turn, she represents a contradiction to the male tradition that celebrated a young man’s rite of passage.

Further, the women, who seem to be ushering in a new period of modernization, are equally abrasive to Forster’s notion of advancement. Elaine Showalter declares in “*A Passage to India as ‘Marriage Fiction’: Forster’s Sexual Politics*” that “we must accept the fact that Forster saw women as part of the enemy camp. While not precisely antagonistic to them, he believed them to be allied with the forces and institutions of repression” (7). While this statement is debatable for other Forster novels, such as *Howards End*, where Forster partly expresses his own point of view through the character of Margaret Schlegel, he does represent women in *A Room with a View* in a negative light. Lucy’s naiveté and ignorance on travel in Italy, Charlotte’s unrefined social skills in the drawing room, and Miss Lavish’s bombastic feminism in the smoking room create an uncomfortable and contaminated setting. Forster uses the women’s “abuse” of masculine space to demonstrate the growing tension between the sexes and the changes that all male spaces were undergoing.

Gender played a key role in how Victorian domestic rooms were divided between the sexes. Victoria Rosner explains that “gendered division was expressed through the broad ‘zoning’ of male and female regions of the home, the designation of individual rooms, and the contents of the rooms” (64). The study, the billiard room, and the smoking room were considered masculine rooms, associated with isolation and privacy. Traditionally the feminine rooms - the drawing room, the breakfast room, the boudoir, and the morning room – were deemed more social and open. Mark Girouard adds that the characteristics of each room “were defined by Robert Kerr as being ‘masculine importance and feminine delicacy’ which in effect usually meant massive oak or mahogany and Turkey carpets in the dining room and spindly gilt or rosewood and silk or chintz in the drawing room” (292). Although Kerr, Rosner, and Girouard are describing rooms in a private home, and I am discussing rooms within a pension or hotel, the same rules of division apply to this pre-modernist setting.

Lucy’s corruption of space lies in her constant reliance on the Baedeker travel guide, which she refers to throughout the text and which becomes a source of annoyance for her traveling companions and the reader. She reduces Italy to a list of monuments and locations that must be seen and memorizes the opinions of others rather than making her own judgment. The guidebook taints her experience and forces her to conform to a standard set of tourist attractions, rather than allowing her to explore, investigate, and appreciate Italy’s treasures. Lucy’s persistent reference to the book and utter dependence on it become a significant handicap and a symbol of her own involvement in the metaphorical degradation of the Grand Tour spaces. Forster counts on his educated male

reader to understand the intellectual crime that Lucy is committing by traipsing around Italy with a guide book when for decades young men have studied ancient Italy and its philosophers, painters, sculptors, and other great minds for years in preparation for their own Grand Tour. For Forster, Lucy's actions are a poor substitute for a tradition that became a ritual of manhood for British university men. Her presence in Italy and attempt to mimic the masculine convention serve to demonstrate how women sought to participate in even the most time-honored and hallowed male spaces and practices.

Although Charlotte disapproves of Lucy's Baedeker and argues that the book "does but touch the surface of things. As to the true Italy – he does not even dream of it" (19), she too sullies the atmosphere with her overprotective attention and voluble mannerisms. When Charlotte changes her mind about being able to accept the Emersons' offer, she announces it to all of the guests rather than just to Mr. Beebe in their private conversation. Forster describes the scene: "She raised her voice as she spoke, it was heard all over the drawing-room, and silenced the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. The clergyman, inwardly cursing the female sex, bowed, and departed with the message" (15). Charlotte disturbs the sanctity of the drawing room and everything that it represents in civilized society. The drawing room, writes Mike Hepworth, "was the acme of [respectability]: a purified social arena subject to constant surveillance dictated by the proliferating rules of etiquette" (23). The volume of Charlotte's response stops all other conversations and forces the other guests to look her way, which makes her appear both silly and rude and goes against the common decorum of the space. Forster's reference to the warring political factions in medieval Italy and Germany suggests that we take into

account the historical confrontationalism of Italy, which intensifies the reading of Charlotte's boorish actions. The clergyman's reaction to her is forced, unnatural, and abrasive. He, too, recognizes Charlotte's mistake – a violation of the rules of conduct and etiquette for women.

While the drawing room is one of the feminine spaces that women are permitted to occupy without fear of gender embarrassment, the smoking room was a space for men only, where they would often retreat after dinner. According to Girouard, the smoking room “rapidly became one of the most important features of Victorian houses. They acted as a safety valve. The male half of the house-party could retire to them and talk about all the subjects concerning which Victorian women were expected to be ignorant” (295). Following the women's departure for bed, the men ritually donned elaborate smoking jackets and indulged in spirits and cigars in the smoking room (296). There, they would tell stories and look at “books and pictures of a mildly naughty nature” that were considered inappropriate for female ears and eyes (298). Girouard explains that “a late-Victorian household with its troop of bachelors retiring to talk ritual smut in the male preserves, its animated house-party seated at separate tables in the dining room, and a certain amount of discreet adultery along the bedroom corridors, had moved a long way from domesticity, earnestness, and godliness of a typical mid-Victorian house” (298). Girouard's comments highlight the difference between the late and mid-Victorian houses and the separation of spheres, as well as provide the reader with reasoning as to why the room was off limits to women. He notes the important part that tradition and ritual played in the continuation of these male social gatherings once the women went to

bed. Part of Forster's point in describing the pension in Italy is that its segregated spaces are outdated, and his portrayal of Miss Lavish emphasizes the change that society is undergoing.

The subject matter of the dialogue is adverse to the respectability of the room and the rules of etiquette. Virginia Nicholson describes the rituals of etiquette that sought to ensure that outbursts and idiosyncrasies were reined in "within the walls of respectability and propriety" (251). "For decades," she recounts, "the upper and middle classes had held a tyrannous stronghold over the conduct of everyday social life in this country. Those twin pillars of the social edifice, status and advancement, dominated the architecture of nineteenth-century social life. Women, above all, faced a lifetime of behavioral constraints, fenced in on all sides by the complexities of etiquette" (251). Growing up in an upper-middle-class family within a household of women, Forster is fully aware of these intricacies of etiquette. He creates a spectacle out of Charlotte's reply to Lucy and Mr. Beebe, the clergyman, who has returned from the men's smoking room, the domestic male communal space par excellence, with a second offer from Mr. Emerson. "My own wishes, dearest Lucy, are unimportant in comparison to yours," laments the dowdy, yet dramatic chaperone. "It would be hard indeed if I stopped you doing as you liked at Florence, when I am only here through your kindness. If you wish me to turn these gentlemen out of their rooms, I will do it" (15). The discussion of one's individual room and accommodations is a private matter, one not to be conversed on in front of strangers, which is what Charlotte is determined to do in order to establish a certain view of herself among the other guests as an important figure, not just a paid



employee or an old maid associated with Lucy (which also brings up class and gender concerns). Not only does Charlotte create an embarrassing scene, her loud approval of the room change also corrupts the generous offer, damages her own status in the pension, and taints the sanctity of the drawing room because she forgets herself and fails to adhere to the social codes that require women to be passive, quiet, and nonconfrontational.

Charlotte, however, is not the only woman who does not adhere to the special etiquette of gendered room divisions and thereby creates tension among men. Miss Lavish, who becomes close friends with Charlotte, pays little attention to the social codes of society and is determined to invade the male communal space of the smoking room. Forster portrays her as a pulp romance writer, dressed in a military cloak and looking for adventure and a juicy plot for her next romance. Forster's depiction of the female character suggests that she is both a New Woman and that her disruptions are also protests. Lavish stops at nothing to get a story idea, including a room that has traditionally been off limits to her sex and the taboo of smoking that was commonly associated with loose women. According to Nicholson, smoking was a favorite pleasure of the gypsies and Bohemians. She notes that Arthur Ransome, author of *Bohemia London* (1907), "placed talking, drinking, and smoking together as the three indispensable pleasure of life – to be enjoyed in the company of 'half a dozen honest fellows.' But females were not to be left out of such pleasures, and soon Ransome's male havens were invaded by advanced women brandishing cheroots" (155). In modern England, smoking was an outward and visible sign of sex equality for women. "One by

one,” Nicholson writes, “the bastions were falling. The sex divide would never be the same again” (155). Miss Lavish is in support of tearing down the walls that separate the spheres and freedoms of women and men. Following a rousing debate at the dinner table, Miss Lavish wishes to continue her conversation with Mr. Emerson, who had retreated to the smoking room. Miss Alan explains to Lucy that Miss Lavish’s actions are a reflection of her poor character and describes how Miss Lavish tried to talk Miss Alan and several other women into entering the smoking room. “Needless to say,” Miss Alan tells Lucy, “I refused such an unsuitable invitation, and she had the impertinence to tell me that it would broaden my ideas...” (38). As part of an older generation, Miss Alan understands what goes on behind the closed doors of the smoking room and is not interested in broadening her ideas in that way.

The Italy section of *A Room with a View* establishes the gender tension in the masculine spaces that the characters are contesting at the Victorian pension. Forster’s discussion of the domestic spaces in the pension and the women’s invasion of them sets up the main characters’ return to England, particularly at Windy Corner, where Forster introduces his reader to Cecil Vyse and Freddy Honeychurch, two young men who are intent on preserving their sacred male space and resisting the wanderlust that seems to influence other Forsterian male characters and whom Forster portrays as gay. However, both Cecil and Freddy must contend with the female household that is in place at Windy Corner and run by Mrs. Honeychurch.

### **The Civilization of Luggage vs. the Feminine Household**

Windy Corner is Forster's first attempt at portraying a female household, a paradigm that he would explore more in depth in *Howards End* but that is nonetheless a very important characteristic of the Honeychurch home. Cecil is a newcomer to the Honeychurch family and Windy Corner and is not yet accustomed to everyday life in the feminine household. He has just proposed to Lucy and is anxious to whisk her away from the "uncivilized" environment. The reader's first glimpse of him is one of irritation and annoyance as he gives the curtains a twitch because "he couldn't bear the Honeychurch habit of sitting in the dark to save the furniture" (85). Throughout the text, Cecil, as in this moment, attempts to assert male control over Windy Corner. As Judith Scherer Herz asserts, "despite (or because of) Cecil's languor and indifference, much of what happens in the second part of the novel happens through and around him. It is his mockery, his patronizing condescension, and bloodless amusement at other peoples' words and actions, both the silly and the serious, that create the turns of the plot and inadvertently send his bride-to-be into the arms of his unsuspected rival" (144). I would add that it is Cecil's mockery of the feminine home that receives the most criticism and ridicule, which Forster employs to make him an unsympathetic character. Additionally, he refuses or is unable to establish a connection or roots to Windy Corner and her inhabitants. He is never comfortable in the setting and is unwilling to adapt or embrace the female-run household. His actions become a point of tension in the story and

inevitably lead to the end of his engagement to Lucy. Because Cecil cannot adapt to the egalitarian household with its undivided, gender-integrated spaces, he loses Lucy to George Emerson. Cecil's failure to modernize and accept a new outlook on the changing times brings about his downfall in the novel and the reader's interpretation of him as an unfeeling character.

Although Forster might be perceived as unfair for his caricature of late-Victorian aestheticism in Cecil, his character provides the reader with a significant subject through which to consider the tension over the feminine household and the man's place or lack of place within it. In preparing for their marriage, Cecil spends more time at Windy Corner and must become familiar not only with the Honeychurch family but with the surrounding female community as well, when he must attend neighborhood tea parties. According to Lionel Trilling, "Cecil despises women who talk about cookery and he has a quick eye for interior decoration; he is the cultured man in the story and although he is not cruel...his culture makes him peevish and superior. Culture for him is a way of hiding his embarrassment before life" (104). While for some readers, perhaps, Cecil is not cruel, he is definitely disrespectful. He repeatedly complains about the afternoon teas and becomes a very rude and unappreciative guest (96, 128). It is interesting, too, that Trilling uses the phrase "embarrassment before life," which I would argue betrays the character's threatened masculinity and also Forster's allusion to his homosexuality. Cecil cannot come to grips with the feminine households that he encounters. He is embarrassed because he is uncomfortable and feels that his own way of life is threatened and in jeopardy of being compromised. He then uses "Culture" as a

weapon to defend himself and the type of households that he values, those run with a masculine ethos.

Additionally, at this stage in his career, Forster can only hint to the reader that Cecil is gay, which also explains his discomfort and embarrassment at Windy Corner. Daniel Day Lewis's performance in the Merchant Ivory film also suggests the same. "Even an ostensibly 'heterosexual' text such as *A Room with a View*," argue Robert K. Martin and George Piggford, sees "sexuality as a potentially destabilizing force that undermines class and convention. Forster wrote his first five novels as, in effect, a 'virgin' who had never proceeded beyond kisses and hugs" (13). So while it is never confirmed that Cecil is homosexual, Forster does raise the question of his sexuality at many points in the text, which serve as a destabilizing force in Cecil's experience of gendered space. Unable to strictly adhere to any of the gender and social codes that seek to regulate heterosexual relationships and space, Cecil cannot find his place within the sex/gender systems that do not acknowledge any sexuality that does not fit within the binary.

Cecil's biggest point of concern and desire for change is in the feminine household management at Windy Corner, where important matters are typically discussed in the kitchen garden among the peas and potatoes (87). The most telling example of Cecil's tense relationship with Windy Corner is at the dining room table during the evening meal (132). Mrs. Honeychurch presides over the table and leads the feminine discussion that unexpectedly twists and turns from a reprimand of Freddy to

Charlotte Bartlett to women novelists and back to Charlotte and her boiler.<sup>17</sup> Cecil does not even try to veil his boredom and impatience. He yawns at the thought of women novelists and lays his hands over his eyes at the mention of Miss Bartlett. Moaning at the thought of more feminine conversation and Miss Bartlett's troubles, Cecil frowns again: "Oh, these Honeychurches! Eggs, boilers, hydrangeas, maids – of such were their lives compact. 'May me and Lucy get down from our chairs?' he asked, with scarcely veiled insolence. 'We don't want no dessert'" (135). Cecil's speech breaks down in his outburst and transforms into baby talk. By reverting to a childlike temper tantrum, Cecil claims that women's conversations infantilize him. Cecil's refusal to participate in the conversation and connect with the Honeychurch family foreshadows his failed relationship with Lucy. The feminine conversation in the dining room, which would have been very different at his own home, is too much for him to overcome. Subsequently, it leads Cecil to pull further away from the family and resist participating with them in their daily lives. Although he is trying to secure his marriage to Lucy and to begin to put down roots for his future family, his unhappiness with the feminine household makes the relationship impossible.

The dining room is a fertile setting to analyze the dynamics of sexual politics in relation to space. Forster further explores the effect of male tempers and gender tension within the Wilcox dining room in *Howards End*. While the Windy Corner dining room is

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<sup>17</sup> Mary Lago observes that "Mrs. Honeychurch retains other habits from her humbler origins. She shouts. At moments of crisis she is more at ease in the kitchen-garden than on the terrace. She imitates (lapses into?) low-class accent and grammar. Pudding recipes, water for baths, the infirmities of water-boilers furnish her domestic landscape" (25). In *E.M. Forster: A Literary Life*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. [Not clear why this bibliographical reference is put in footnote instead of just having reader look it up in Works Cited, which is normal MLA style.]

not the only one where anger erupts because of the bravery of women, in *Howards End* one of the key disputes of the text – Ruth Wilcox’s change to her will and decision to leave the family home to Margaret Schlegel – is discussed in the same space. The family members, Charles, his wife Dolly, and sister Evie, all convene in the dining room at Henry’s command, after receiving the penciled note containing the unexpected message of Ruth’s change of heart (71). Congregated around the dining room table, the family uses a space, which unexpectedly becomes a family conference room on the business model. Here, the masculinized space of the dining room is used to discuss family business without being in earshot of the servants. Jill Franklin argues that the “dining room breathes solemnity as much as any courtroom. It is the most overpoweringly masculine room in the house” (48). Also, in the previous century women would leave the dining room, and for a period men would be in it alone before joining women in the parlor. Forster makes use of the masculine space to emphasize the severity of the “problem” at hand and alerts the reader to the significance of the note and its discussion with the setting. However, as in the Windy Corner scene, the tension again comes from women.

For the most part, the discussion of Ruth’s will and Margaret’s character is between Henry and Charles. While Dolly attempts to add her opinion to the debate, Henry and Charles quickly silence her, while Evie, “scowling like an angry boy,” remains silent and in agreement with her father and brother (73). The entire family disregards the unbusinesslike handwritten note in pencil that Ruth Wilcox left with her nurse to give to Henry. They also argue that this transaction would fail to take into

account the family's own improvements to the property and the amount of money that they had invested in the addition of the garage and the kitchen extension.<sup>18</sup> Such a pragmatic and commercial view of the situation suggests the family's characteristically masculine approach to their home. It also paves over the labor Ruth provided to the family and home. Ruth's unpaid labor is of little consequence to the family but extremely valuable to the novelist as a symbol of her unselfish dedication to Howards End.

The Wilcox empire (or "fortress" as Forster calls it) and way of life is in danger throughout the text. Henry and Charles feel that they must preserve the patriarchal tradition that is being threatened by changing social codes and women like the Schlegel sisters. Ruth's decision to leave Howards End to Margaret is a threat to primogeniture and the security of the patriarchal family, even with the Married Woman's Property Act in effect since 1882. Before the act was passed, a husband and wife were one person in law. As a result, according to Sir William Blackstone, "the very being or legal existence of [a married] woman [was] suspended during the marriage, or at least [was] incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing" (2). This position was changed by the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 and subsequent legislation. The act ensured that for the first time in history, married women had the same rights to buy, sell, and own property as unmarried women did, and it became a rallying point for many feminists in the late

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<sup>18</sup> Girouard notes that "[Garages] were one of the novelties which country houses had to incorporate but had no language to deal with. The whole ethos of country romanticism made owners unwilling to flaunt their garages, as their predecessors had flaunted their plate glass windows" (314).



nineteenth century. The passing of the law meant that women were legally recognized as individuals in their own right. Forster's decision to make Ruth the lawful owner of *Howards End* is crucial in the novel and in the canon of modern literature. Along with Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, she is one of the few modernist female characters that own property, let alone will it to another woman.

The possibility of leaving the property to Margaret, "the spiritual heir," rather than Henry, the legal heir, poses a great danger to what Henry, who does not bother with "the mysterious or the private" (117), considers acceptable. As Martin puts it, both the female and the feminine in *Howards End* contest male privilege: "Ruth brings together her role as fertility goddess with her role as spirit of place to challenge the world of absentee ownership, whether of houses or countries" (266). When she leaves *Howards End* to Margaret Schlegel, Ruth draws attention to the contrast between codified relations and spiritual relations. Ruth's decision, conscious or unconscious, to challenge male privilege is the catalyst for the gender tension of the novel and the paranoia and antagonism that the Wilcox men experience throughout the rest of the story. Following the discussion of Ruth's will, Henry and Charles decide to take the law into their own hands. Forster notes that "the two men were gradually assuming the manner of the committee-room. They were both at their best when serving on committees" (73). A very personal and sensitive family matter is then turned into committee work that is mechanically broken down, point by point. Within the masculine space of the dining room turned committee room, and I would add business office and courtroom, Henry rules with the masculine codified law and dismisses his wife's "treacherous" request for

a female, spiritual heir. He attempts to squelch the female voice in male matters of law and space.

The narrator informs the reader that, following the family meeting, the Wilcoxes' opinion of their mother underwent a significant shift. Rather than celebrating her memory, they instead feel a sense of "treachery" and betrayal that their mother had even considered leaving the family property to a stranger and even worse, a cosmopolitan, liberal feminist, who goes against everything that the Wilcox family stands for. The narrator conveys the family's emotions:

Mrs. Wilcox had been treacherous to the family, to the laws of property, to her own written word. How did she expect Howards End to be conveyed to Miss Schlegel? Was her husband, to whom it legally belonged, to make it over to her as a free gift? Was the said Miss Schlegel to have a life interest in it, or to own it absolutely? Was there to be no compensation for the garage and other improvements that they had made under the assumption that all would be theirs some day? Treacherous! treacherous and absurd! (74)

In this moment of impassioned questioning, the narrator questions Ruth's actions, while Forster, the novelist teases the reader with irony. Ruth, of course, has not broken any laws; in fact, she has done the exact opposite. She has executed the new law to its fullest extent. Nevertheless, for the outraged Wilcoxes, Ruth has broken the traditional and male-written laws of business, family, and country (the Schlegels are not even "really English") (75), which decreases the family's memory and value of her. Rather than

remember their mother as a person with her own set of ideas and feelings, her husband and children turn her memory into currency within the business world. They feel it of the utmost importance to reclaim the house, once under Ruth's ownership and in danger of feminization under Margaret's acquisition, and impose a masculine ascendancy to supersede and erase all previous influences.

The Wilcox and the Honeychurch dining room, as well as, the Pension Bertolini dining room each play integral roles in their respective texts. However, there is one home that I have yet to mention that's complete lack of a dining room says equally as much. Forster describes Leonard Bast's home accordingly, "The kitchen was the same size as the sitting-room: through it was a bedroom. This completed his home" (38). Leonard's flat is located in the "semi-basement," (37) of "a block of flats, constructed with extreme cheapness, towered on either hand...It was the kind of scene that may be observed all over London, whatever the locality – bricks and mortar rising and falling with the restlessness of the water in a fountain, as the city receives more and more men upon her soil" (36). Leonard's home is both "makeshift" and "modern" (37). With only a kitchen, sitting room, and bedroom, it lacks the more gendered rooms of the Victorian house and suggests that the occupants live a more progressive lifestyle.

And while to a certain extent they do, Leonard still feels the need to play the part of gentleman. He responds to his live-in girlfriend Jacky, after she asks if they will still be married one day, "Besides, I'm an Englishman, and I never go back on my word" (41). Both Leonard and Jacky dream of one day having a nicer home, a family, and more security. Forster stresses that Leonard, in particular, sees himself as an Englishman,

dedicated to his nation and family and always in search of ways to better himself. He tells Jacky, “I care a good deal about improving myself by means of Literature and Art, and so getting a wider outlook...I don’t say this to boast, but just to show you the kind of man I am” (41). In this scene, following Leonard’s visit to the Schlegel home, Forster demonstrates that Leonard does not need masculine space or a dining room to be an Englishman. As he says, all he needs is his wider outlook, which in Leonard’s case applies to more than just books and art. Leonard, like George, is Forster’s New Man, ready to meet the challenges ahead in the modern world.

Forster makes it clear that all of the male characters in *Howards End* and *A Room with a View* are affected by changing gender roles and feel the very real alteration that society is undergoing. Both novels demonstrate the way women were both more mobile and more likely to cross spatial gender boundaries that they felt were no longer necessary with their newfound independence and sense of spatial freedom. Through the Italy portion of *A Room with a View*, Forster makes clear that the modern woman is at odds with the Victorian past. Setting the conflict within the dining room, drawing room, and smoking room of the Italian pension and the dining room of Windy Corner and Howards End, the writer exposes the ways women were invading the most masculine of domestic spaces.

### **Defending the Fortresses of Sport and Business**

In addition to the home, Forster also demonstrates how women were taking over previously masculine communal spaces in the public sphere. Particularly, in the worlds of sport and business, women were increasingly becoming participants, and Forster documents not only their involvement but also the tension that it created between the sexes. Masculine play and sport are central to both of the novels. Forster includes key scenes where men's play is disrupted by women. The masculine space of the activity, in this case, the motorcar and the swimming hole, becomes degraded or falls into disorder as a result of the women's disrupting presence.

Both novels include women characters who play sports alongside the men. At Windy Corner Lucy Honeychurch plays tennis with her brother Freddy and George when Cecil refuses to join in and be the fourth player they need for a doubles match. Lucy takes Cecil's place and is the only female player. While at Howards End, where recreation and competition are held in the highest regard, Helen, along with Evie, take part in the family's love of sports. Forster portrays Evie as a tomboy, focused on calisthenic exercises and dog breeding (6). Helen is completely enamored with the family's constant movement and talk. She records the activity in a letter from Howards End, "We live like fighting-cocks, and Charles takes us out every day in the motor – a tomb with trees in it, a hermit's house, a wonderful road that was made by the Kings of Mercia – tennis – a cricket match – bridge – and at night we squeeze up in this lovely house. The whole clan's here now – it's like a rabbit warren" (7). Helen provides a quick

list of the activities that they participate in, which looks like a modernist snapshot of the family's active day. Her rapid-fire description mimics the quality of capturing an image with a camera, an invention at the turn of the century that was continuously being improved on and was a trope that modernist writers were beginning to employ in their writing. It is the tempting notion of men, masculinity, and chivalry that seduce and enamor her, along with the constant movement and dizzying commotion. The attraction of the Wilcoxes, which Margaret later also falls prey to, is their ability to take charge, be efficient, and take care of their families, a luxury that the Schlegels have never had because of their father's early death and their brother's youth and lack of interest.

The Wilcoxes represent all of the hypermasculine traits of the modern period. Business, sport, and the law are the religions to which they subscribe. David Bradshaw contends that "the motoring Wilcoxes...are undoubtedly driven by the 'blatant' values of the market-place – so much so, in fact, that they comprise more of a business concern than a family unit, with Charles Wilcox filling 'the post of chairman'" (153). The motorcar ushered in an era of constant flux throughout London. The machine is not just a symbol for the Futurist movement and the cult of speed,<sup>19</sup> but also, in the context of my argument, a nomadic itinerant space of masculinity. Unsurprisingly, the Wilcox men are completely enamored with the invention.

While the Wilcox family takes pleasure in speeding across the countryside, Margaret does not and detests riding in the motorcar. At the beginning of the story she

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<sup>19</sup> See Stephen Kern's discussion of the Cult of Speed in his work *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983. [Again, not clear why the full bibliographical citation beyond author and title would be needed in this footnote.]

even goes so far as to condemn Henry in a conversation with Ruth for being a “road-hog” and exceeding the speed limit (63). Nevertheless, during her engagement, travel by motorcar with Henry becomes a necessity, as they whisk their way between all of the Wilcox properties in the city and country. One of Margaret’s biggest complaints about motoring is that she loses “all sense of space” (143). Forster describes the effect of the car ride on her first drive out to Howards End. The car literally makes her ill. “She looked at the scenery,” Forster writes. “It heaved and merged like porridge. Presently it congealed. They arrived” (142). Although it is raining, once Margaret enters the home, she immediately “recaptured the sense of space which the motor had tried to rob from her” (145). The stability and security of the home helps ground Margaret, and she is able to regain her composure. On this first visit to Howards End, Margaret has an immediate connection to the space and is able to relax.

While Margaret only experiences distaste for the motorcar when she is riding alongside Henry, when she is Charles’s passenger she revolts against the driver and his unearned authority. Forster demonstrates the tension between Charles and Margaret over not only the motorcar, but the battle of the sexes, in their trip to Oniton Grange for Evie’s wedding. The house party is traveling along in several cars when there is an accident. One of the cars hits a cat, and when the accident is revealed to the passengers, Margaret demands that Charles stop and that they return to comfort the little girl who is the cat’s owner.

“Do please stop!” said Margaret, leaning forward. She was standing up in the car, the other occupants holding her knees to steady her.

Charles took no notice...

“I want to go back, though, I say!” repeated Margaret, getting angry.

Charles took no notice. The motor, loaded with refugees, continued to travel down the hill. “The men are there,” chorused the others. “Men will see to it.”

“The men *can*’t see to it. Oh, this is ridiculous! Charles, I ask you to stop.”

“Stopping’s no good,” drawled Charles.

“Isn’t it?” said Margaret, and jumped straight out of the car. (152-53)

Charles is the driver and leader of the car loaded with refugees, as well as nomadic modern men. He attempts to ignore Margaret’s requests to stop the car and return to the scene, but she becomes more enraged and impetuously jumps out of the moving vehicle. Margaret actively resists the Wilcoxes, the motorcar, and all that their combination represents. Her reaction to Charles’s refusal to stop – standing up in the car and then jumping out of it – is dangerous and strictly prohibited, making it a protest to the masculine space of the motorcar and the Wilcoxes’ perception of their own masculinity. Charles assures her that the men will take care of the situation, but Margaret



is not calmed by the thought of the other sex's ability to make things right. Margaret checks Charles's bravado when she refuses to accept his excuses for not returning to the scene and takes matters into her own hands. Forster describes Charles's reaction to Margaret: "[He] had never been in such a position before. It was a woman in revolt who was hobbling away from him, and the sight was too strange to leave any room for anger. He recovered himself when the others caught them up: their sort he understood. He commanded them to go back" (153). Margaret represents a different kind of woman whom Charles is not accustomed to ordering around. (Forster often contrasts Margaret with Dolly,<sup>20</sup> who is always dominated by Charles and Henry.) Quite true, she is "a woman in revolt," who refuses to endure male authority when she disagrees with its practices. Charles's actions repulse her, and, without thinking of the consequences, she rebels against his masculine assurance that "the men will see to it" (153). Here Forster demonstrates how Margaret challenges the influence of masculine authority by manipulating male space. Risking her own security, Margaret refuses to adhere to the rules of the masculine space of the motorcar and instead challenges Charles as well as gravity itself.<sup>21</sup>

Margaret's actions get at the very core of the Wilcox belief system. She is constantly calling into question their judgment, their lifestyle, and their masculinity. The

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<sup>20</sup> Dolly, a childish name, suggests that Forster sees her as a passive character that provides an interesting juxtaposition with Margaret and Helen.

<sup>21</sup> Margaret is grateful for the advances that men like Henry have made in transportation, but she still cannot adjust her own personal feelings about the motorcar. Forster agrees with her. Accordingly, David Bradshaw argues that "Like many Edwardian intellectuals, [Forster] was appalled by the racket and stench of the automobile, and he regarded its intrusive and newfangled powers as symptomatic of the brutal, speeded-up and money-oriented culture which he loathed so intensely..." (168). Forster's anti-car sentiment anticipates concern about how cars would affect the environment with their air and noise pollution.

Wilcox men are unaccustomed to women contradicting them. They resent the woman's behavior and insolence, yet they do not know how to respond. Margaret's actions come as a complete shock to the men. Their training has not prepared them for women like her. Through Margaret, Forster demonstrates the way in which men who have embraced the traditions and rituals of masculinity as their entire life respond to a product of the women's movement. The men feel like Margaret represents a significant threat to their way of life and identity. Her revolt within the masculine space of the car suggests that the men are not in control of their women or their car, a feeling that makes them completely uncomfortable and powerless.

In the smoking room later that night, with the ladies naturally absent from the masculine space, the men continue to discuss the woman's strange actions and pin the cause of Margaret's rash behavior on nerves. The events, however, continue to make Charles nervous as "he carefully reviewed their dealings with his family, until he fitted Helen, and Margaret, and Aunt Juley into an orderly conspiracy" (154). Without even being physically present, Margaret affects the all-male space by constantly being in Charles's thoughts, inspiring paranoia and unease. Unlike Miss Lavish in *A Room with a View*, who physically invades the smoking room to collect material for her writing, Margaret is virtually present in the subject matter of the men's discussion (similarly, she was virtually present in the Wilcox dining room). As a result of this discussion, Charles cannot relax in the space, which usually brings him comfort. Instead, he is preoccupied with obsessed thoughts of his own perception of Margaret and her family's constant attempts to "steal" *Howards End*. The sanctity of the smoking room is no longer a safe

and relaxing place for Charles, as it had been before his family's relationship with Margaret and Helen.

The men in *A Room with a View* also seek masculine spaces where they can enjoy the company of friends and recreation. The Sacred Lake is not far from Windy Corner, and it is the perfect spot for swimming and fooling around. At the beginning of the chapter, Forster describes the Sacred Lake in an early moment before the bath as a picturesque and holy place. He refers to it as a "little alp of green – only a pond, but large enough to contain the human body, and pure enough to reflect the sky. On account of the rains, the waters had flooded the surrounding grass, which showed like a beautiful emerald path, tempting the feet towards the central pool" (123-24). The place is Edenic and serene before its invasion by outside influences.

Freddy Honeychurch enjoys escaping to this hidden refuge where he attempts to get away from the feminine household at Windy Corner for a few uninterrupted hours, take part in a masculine tradition and ritual of boyhood. While his attempts to befriend Cecil fail, he seeks the friendship of other male companions. Eric Haralson notes that "young Freddy, whose letters to his sister Lucy are 'full of athletics and biology' and who is seen 'studying a small manual of anatomy,' can easily be pegged as the earnest, hail-fellow-well-met creature of such homosocial institutions as the British public school and (prospectively) the medical establishment" (67). Freddy is familiar with male communal activity; however, he also has grown accustomed to the feminine household at Windy Corner. The Sacred Lake offers him an opportunity for escape, freedom, and

male bonding. Freddy claims the swimming hole as a masculine space, and he recruits other men to join him in an all-male bath.

Forster's decision to call the lake "sacred" and make it a masculine communal space is partly ironic, but also important in thinking about the gender tension of the text and the significance of religious myth, symbolism, and ritual. "Revelation of a sacred space," explains Mircea Eliade, "makes it possible to obtain a fixed point and hence to acquire orientation in the chaos of homogeneity, to 'found the world' and to live in a real sense" (23). For Freddy, the Sacred Lake represents his youth and boyhood; it is a "holy place of his private universe" (24). There, he is a supreme being and creates his own meaning and order amidst the chaos of the modern era and changing gender codes. The space provides him and others with an escape from the pressures of daily life. Besides the outlet that the space provides, its sacred nature carries a noteworthy symbolism and connection to myth. Although Eliade is a theorist of religious space and does not specifically comment on *A Room with a View*, we can use her interpretation of how sacred spaces are created and maintained to understand in part Forster's work. Eliade writes, "An unknown, foreign, and unoccupied territory (which often means, 'unoccupied by our people') still shares in the fluid and larval modality of chaos. By occupying it and, above all, by settling in it, man symbolically transforms it into a cosmos through a ritual repetition of the cosmogony" (31). The ritual by which man constructs a sacred space serves as a reproduction of "the work of the gods" (29). In Eliade's reading, Freddy's actions become imperialistic. He has established his claim on the space and then recruits other men to join him.

Freddy purposefully seeks out the companionship of George Emerson and asks him to join him and Mr. Beebe at the Sacred Lake (121). The scene is comical, but also highlights the gender specificity of the request, when Mr. Beebe, who is “highly entertained” with the invitation, chuckles, “How d’ye do? How d’ye do? Come and have a bathe...That’s the best conversational opening I’ve ever heard. But I’m afraid it will only act between men. Can you picture a lady who has been introduced to another lady by a third lady opening civilities with ‘How do you do? Come and have a bathe’? And yet you will tell me that the sexes are equal” (121). But suggesting that the sexes are equal but not interchangeable, Forster positions himself as a supporter of women’s rights. Beebe recognizes that this is truly an all-male activity that they are preparing to embark on, and it is telling of the time period that he calls attention to the fact that women could never make introductions in the same manner. Women’s social activities, even with each other, were also subject to the formalities of etiquette.

In contrast, the men are free to let go of their inhibitions both sexual and otherwise and enjoy the utter looseness of masculine spaces. Describing their unreserved emotion and activity Forster writes, “...for some reason or other a change came over them, and they forgot Italy and Botany and Fate. They began to play...Then all the forces of youth burst out” (125). The men follow the codes of all male spaces where men can be uninhibited but only in prescribed ways – by rambunctious activity, but not by intimate confidences. “They ran to get dry, they bathed to get cool, they played at being Indians in the willow-herbs and in the bracken, they bathed to get clean” (125). As Haralson points out, they are able to play freely, to try on “alternative genders,

ethnicities, and social roles in a temperate carnival of deviance,” while the Law is suspended (70). They continue in this unrestricted play until “barefoot, bare-chested, radiant and personable against the shadowy woods,” the young men are stumbled upon by Mrs. Honeychurch, Lucy, and Cecil, and the spell is broken (127). Tramping through the woods on their way to a socially-mandated “call,” the women do appear as invaders, overrunning the private gathering of the men and disbanding their activity. Freddy tries to defend their actions by telling Mrs. Honeychurch, “Look here, mother, a fellow must wash, and a fellow’s got to dry, and if another fellow – ” (127), but he is interrupted by more maternal protests and calls for established etiquette. Freddy’s argument is no match for Mrs. Honeychurch, who represents the maternal, the domestic, and the bourgeois forces of normalization that seek to terminate masculine regression. The young man tries to use his masculine authority to defend his actions as necessary and natural rights of manhood. His protestations are too late, though, and Forster leads his readers to believe that this bath was Freddy’s last in the Sacred Lake.

After the men’s bath and their encounter with the women during a moment of private play, Forster describes the ruinous transition that the Sacred Lake undergoes: “That evening and all that night the water ran away. On the morrow the pool had shrunk to its old size and lost its glory. It had been a call to the blood and to the relaxed will, a passing benediction whose influence did not pass, a holiness, a spell, a momentary chalice for youth” (127). The space is no longer the Eden-like retreat. The holiness and sanctity of the place and what it represents to the men – freedom, pure enjoyment – is taken away and ruined. The lake, described as sacred because it represents the last

hidden and protected male homosocial bastion, succumbs to an invasion by the opposite sex. In addition, Forster's erotic and phallically connotative imagery in the passage has symbolic significance.<sup>22</sup> The pool of water that once stood for the masculine body and its virility and strength shrinks and loses its glory because of the women's arrival. Although Mrs. Honeychurch blames the encroachment of suburbia for destroying one of the last male refuges of Edwardian England, when she later scolds Freddy and says, "You had no business to take them bathing in the Sacred Lake; it's much too public. It was all right for you, but most awkward for every one else. Do be more careful. You forget the place is growing half suburban" (131), it is the women's presence in particular that halts the men's youthful play and attempts to keep their sexuality in check.

Within both the masculine public sporting spaces of the motorcar and the Sacred Lake, the presence of women conflicts with the men's recreation and their sense of authority. Margaret's defiance of Charles and her flight from the moving vehicle undermines the power of this masculine space, which was symbolically part of its appeal to men and creates conflict between the characters. Likewise, Mrs. Honeychurch and Lucy's invasion of the Sacred Lake degrades the sanctity of the space. The feminine forces of normalization quell the masculine homosocial recreation and trigger the Sacred Lake's ruin and the end of Freddy's hidden escape from women of Windy Corner.

Although at the conclusion of both *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*, the men who most oppose the entrance of women into their spaces, particularly Cecil Vyse

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<sup>22</sup> The scene at the Sacred Lake is equivalent, perhaps, to the sex-ed scene on the beach in *Maurice*, which is likewise interrupted by female intrusion.

and Henry Wilcox, are unsuccessful in their attempts to keep women subservient to their demands, they nonetheless attempt to use alternative methods to find a sense of belonging and control over space. Rather than become attached to one home, they develop an interest in real estate, and they find comfort in constant travel. The attention that they pay to real estate and travel suggests that they are no longer interested in putting down roots and establishing a central home, where they will have to equally share power with women.

For example, rather than sacrifice his own way of running the show or trying to fit into the Honeychurch family and Windy Corner neighborhood, Cecil makes every effort to alter both groups by acting as a realtor for the newly available Cissie Villa. First, in an attempt to recruit more men to the area and stop what he sees as a barrage of meaningless feminine chatter, he ignores Lucy's efforts to install the Miss Alans, "the decayed gentlewomen" from the Italian pension, into Cissie Villa, a nearby rental property, and instead secretly has Mr. Emerson and his son George sign a lease with the proprietor (101, 113). He purposefully goes behind Lucy's back and invites the men, who have yet to settle down, to live in Cissie Villa after a first, chance meeting in the National Gallery. Then Cecil tries to explain his intentions to Lucy: "That old man will do the neighbourhood a world of good. Sir Harry is too disgusting with his 'decayed gentlewomen.' I meant to read him a lesson some time. No, Lucy, the classes ought to mix, and before long you'll agree with me. There ought to be intermarriage – all sorts of things. I believe in democracy –" (113). Although Cecil argues that the issue at hand is class, from his previous vulgar actions it would appear that his dealings are more the



result of his sexism. Cecil's motivation is one of prevention. He must try to stop more women, especially older, single women, from moving into the area and causing him more discomfort at abominable tea parties. He courts the Emersons to rent the house neither because he wants men companions nor because he wants to keep his rival close or to appear in a positive light in contrast to men who must earn a living. It is purely a gesture to keep more women from invading the area. The Emersons also play a part in the connection to real estate. They are available to rent the property because they do not have a permanent home. Recently returning from Italy, where they experienced the influx of women travelers first hand, they are looking to settle *for a moment* at Cissie Villa.

According to Daniel Born, "[*Howards End*] is preoccupied with houses, interiors, and real estate; discussion of values in *Howards End* is never rarefied or pursued apart from a material context of physical living space" (142). "Critics," he argues, "have paid too much attention to Margaret's rhetoric about connection, and not enough to this primary obsession with realty – the matter largely responsible for her marriage to a man so incompatible as Wilcox" (152). Born suggests that it is because Henry owns so many houses that Margaret, hoping to secure one home following her loss of Wickham Place, is attracted to him. Although it is true that Margaret needs a new home, the most interesting analysis to me is not about her interest in real estate, but about Henry's. Henry's real estate business has more to do with investing, but I would also argue that it is spurred by his wife's death and her alterations to her will. Henry, emasculated by his wife's ownership of *Howards End* and her decision to leave it to Margaret, goes on a real

estate shopping spree. With Ruth gone, Henry goes on a quest to secure more properties that he can include in his real estate empire. Without the matriarchal figure of the mother, the family appears to disband, while their connection to their home at Howards End fades. The family members go their separate ways, leaving Howards End leased to a tenant. At one time, the house represented the strength and stability of the Wilcox family, but it is abandoned following Ruth's death. While the family continues to purchase more houses, their sense of "home" diminishes, and they become drifters. Helen, in a conversation with her cousin, mockingly describes the Wilcoxes' growing collection of houses:

You see...the Wilcoxes collect houses as your Victor collects tadpoles. They have, one, Ducie Street; two, Howards End; where my great rumpus was; three, a country seat in Shropshire; four, Charles has a house in Hilton; and five, another near Epsom; and six, Evie will have a house when she marries, and probably a pied-a-terre in the country – which makes seven. Oh yes, and Paul in a hut in Africa makes eight.

(123)

The Wilcoxes have plenty of houses, but no real home, once Ruth is gone. They are spread out across not only England, but to Africa as well. Helen's sarcastic comment suggests that Forster is making a point about the Wilcoxes dominance as settlers/colonizers of real estate.

Speaking to Henry's motivation, Lionel Trilling contends that the plot of *Howards End* is about "the rights of property, about a destroyed will-and-testament and

rightful and wrongful heirs. It asks the question, ‘Who shall inherit England?’” (118). In an attempt to make sure that his children never have to worry about or question their inheritance, Henry secures more property and equity that they will one day inherit. Additionally, Jon Heggund explains the architectural and spatial importance of *Howards End*. He writes, “Howards End is equated with a ‘sense of space,’ an immanent presence embodying the abstract idea of England. This sense of space, however, only signifies through its opposition to a ‘sense of flux,’ identified with various symptoms of a rapidly transforming urban modernity” (402).

In the novel “the sense of flux” is embodied by the constant travel between city, country and continent, which is fueled by a feeling of wanderlust. Pat C. Hoy II insists that Forster, channeling Ruskin, focuses on the “notion of ‘homelessness on earth’ in a period of ‘flight and distress’ [which] lies at the heart of *Howards End* and is central to Forster’s dramatic presentation of the ‘flux’ of a modern ‘nomadic civilization’” (229). In this turbulent environment, what all of the “sensitive people in this novel seek is a real home in the midst of chaotic change, something luminous and permanent” (230). Margaret represents the “sensitive people” in the text. She desires a real home, while Henry continues to be controlled by the market values of property, rather than the emotional and intrinsic value of a house. Henry believes that the constant change is “good for trade” (132). Margaret dislikes it and tells her future husband, “I hate this continual flux of London. It is the epitome of us at our worst – eternal formlessness; all the qualities, good, bad, and indifferent, streaming away – streaming, streaming away for ever” (132). Henry, Charles, Paul, Cecil and the Emersons are part of the nomadic

masses that are constantly moving without establishing roots in any one place. Their wanderlust is exemplified in their resistance to settling down in one home and their love of motorcars and travel.

Because “Imperialism always had been one of her difficulties” (141), it is no surprise that Margaret is uncomfortable in the offices of the Imperial and West African Rubber Company and their imperial real estate purchases. Margaret braves the masculine space in order to get Henry’s input on Helen’s “madness.” Here, the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes come into radical conflict. Forster writes, “Mr. Wilcox, who was in good spirits, retorted, ‘I don’t suppose I ever shall’ [understand the Schlegels]. He leant back, laughing at the gifted but ridiculous family, while the fire flickered over the map of Africa” (200). The map of Africa is a reminder to readers about the source of Henry’s wealth and prosperity.

At the time that Forster was writing the novel, Africa and rubber were taboo subjects for discussion and tainted commodities in the marketplace. In 1904, a shocking exposé of the systematic barbarity associated with the exploitation of rubber in Leopold II’s Congo territory had been published by Roger Casement, which resulted, four years later, in the international community insisting on a major reorganization of Belgian rule there.<sup>23</sup> Henry endorses the abusive harvesting of rubber, not only for his financial gain, but also for the support of his recreational pursuits, since the commodity is necessary for the tires on his beloved motorcar and sporting goods.

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<sup>23</sup> *Correspondence and Report from His Majesty’s Consul at Boma Respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo*. London: HMSO, 1904. See also “The King and the Congo,” Chapter 7 of John Loadman, *Tears of the Tree: The Story of Rubber – A Modern Marvel*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 108-42.

When Margaret experiences the imperialist side of Henry's personality, which becomes evident once she enlists his help for securing Helen and he suggests steps to deceive Helen into a confrontation at Howards End, she begins to understand just how different they really are. Accordingly, Forster explains, "The genial, tentative host disappeared, and they saw instead the man who had carved money out of Greece and Africa and bought forests from the natives for a few bottles of gin" (201). In his office, Henry calls on these manipulative skills every day in order to keep making money. Even in his attempt to manage Margaret and Helen's family affair, he attempts to control the situation and make sure that his orders are followed.

Henry's imperialist attitude and failure to connect, a serious handicap in the writer's point of view, encapsulates the last scene that Forster sets in a male space. On the Six Hills, where the tombs of warriors lie, and an ancient sacred male space, the couple performs their final battle, when Margaret meets Henry to discuss her request for her and Helen to be able to spend the night together at Howards End. Forster, emphasizing the severity of the moment, tells the reader that Henry has reached "the crisis of his life" (217). Threatening to invade Howards End and challenging Henry's authority on an ancient site of male warfare, tradition, and ritual, Margaret represents a direct threat to Henry's ability to be the patriarch of his family and his masculinity. In an effort to divert Margaret's argument, Henry unsurprisingly turns the scenario into a question of business when he brings up Charles, "as the future owner of Howards End," and his concern in the matter. Margaret understands the meaning behind Henry's refusal and speaks plainly, "Will Helen's condition depreciate the property" (218). Henry's

interest in real estate and the marketplace supersedes his love for Margaret and her concern for her sister. “Straight from his fortress,” he answers his wife: “I seem rather unaccommodating, but I have some experience of life, and know how one thing leads to another. I am afraid that your sister had better sleep at the hotel. I have my children and the memory of my dear wife to consider. I am sorry, but see that she leaves my house at once” (218). Ignoring Henry’s refusal to allow them to stay the night, Margaret claims Howards End as her own because of her spiritual connection to the home, rather than her rightful ownership of the property. Defeating Henry and refusing to be humbled by the history of the Six Hills, she wins a victory on the sacred ground of masculinity.

Charles is Henry’s successor and with him disgraced and incarcerated, Henry suffers an even greater defeat. A noticeable change takes over Henry’s physical appearance and emotions. The Imperialist has been conquered. Rather than drive to the police station in his beloved motorcar, Henry walks. Charles believes that he has a “petulant touch about him – more like a woman” (233). “Broken” and “ended,” Henry puts his trust in Margaret. Forster writes, “Then Henry’s fortress gave way. He could bear no one but his wife, he shambled up to Margaret afterwards and asked her to do what she could with him. She did what seemed easiest – she took him down to recruit at Howards End” (237). The masculine fortress gives way under the pressures from the world and can no longer stand under the weight of the changing society.

Forster does indicate a moral improvement in the defeat of Wilcox’s imperial masculinity. At the novel’s end, a new day has dawned on Howards End and a new generation, comprised of the Schlegel and Bast families, promises to take the family and

the home into the future. During a family meeting, in the same dining room, where Ruth Wilcox's first request was ignored and her memory vanquished, Henry and his children reconvene to review his will. This time the masculine space of the dining room confirms Margaret's victory. Forster describes the moment, "There was something uncanny in her triumph. She, who, had never expected to conquer anyone, had charged straight through these Wilcoxes and broken up their lives" (241-42). The writer gives Margaret her moment in the sun and provides the reader with a conclusion that ends on a high note. Providing *Howards End* to Margaret, who plans to pass it on to her nephew, Leonard and Helen's son suggests that the Wilcox dynasty will end with this generation. While Paul and Dollie consider changing their last names after Charles's incarceration, Henry retreats to *Howards End* and places it in its rightful owner's hands. The scene famously concludes with the new modern, meshed family celebrating the freshly cut hay in the idyllic space of the meadow and promising a bright future for the Wilcoxes and Schlegels, *Howards End* and England.

In addition to the almost heavenly setting and the gold light that seems to be shining down on the new smiling family, we must also consider why Forster is so invested in this image of domestic bliss. The melding of the Schlegels, Wilcoxes, and Leonard Bast's son create a non-nuclear, non-normative, and non-heterosexual family. This is significant and crucial to our understanding of Forster's nostalgia for the Victorian period and his vision of the future. First, it hints at his nostalgia because during the Victorian period categories and labels for sexuality were much more lax. Following the Wilde trials and with the research on and categorization of homosexuals by Richard

von Krafft-Ebing in his work *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), categories were becoming more and more prevalent, which prevented men from being able to have casual sexual relationships with other men for fear of being labeled or diagnosed, caught, and prosecuted.

Secondly, the demise of the imperial also plays a crucial part to the ending of the novel. With Charles in jail, his name ruined, and *Howards End* returned to its rightful owner, Henry Wilcox, the imperialist is a broken man. Before his family and wife, he appears a lost and impotent shadow of the man he once was. Forster does not indicate that Henry and Margaret will have an intimate marriage. Both his age and his ruined masculinity suggest that their relationship will not be sexual. Additionally, the Wilcox reign ends with Leonard Bast's illegitimate son named as the heir of *Howards End*. With these provisions all in place – the fallen imperialist and the non-nuclear family – Forster argues that the combination of the Victorian and the modern allow for the ability to “only connect.”

Both Cecil and Henry suffer great losses to their confidence and male egos in Forster's conclusions to each of the novels. Defeated, the men offer us an assessment of the state of the British man at the beginning of the twentieth century. While Forster is known for his “condition of England” analysis, it is safe to say that he is very much concerned with how men are measuring up to the demands and changes of gender politics at this moment in history and wants his reader to know that the prospects for men who refuse to adapt do not look promising. Reading the male spaces of *A Room with a View* alongside *Howards End*, we get a clear picture of what Forster thought



about women entering and/or invading the settings that were once set aside for men only. Although he is sympathetic to the women, he demonstrates the male point of view and how men with strong ties to a definite image of British masculinity have the most to lose. Implicitly critical of those men, Forster suggests that men who fail to adapt and accept women's more active role in masculine space will only experience defeat and perhaps social and financial failure.

By recalling his experiences in masculine spaces in Eton and in Italy and London, Forster draws from his own frustration with the new dynamic that the presence of women creates. I am not saying that he thinks they should not be there; instead I contend that he suggests it is going to take some getting used to before both sexes are able to communicate and understand one another on this new ground. Forster wants the reader to see what he perceives as a possible source of tension between men and women at the beginning of the century and proposes that both sexes need to accept and work within changing gender and social codes and establish new, less judgmental understandings of individuals and their sexualities. Forster understands that time cannot stand still, nor does he want it to, even though he is nostalgic for the past. While he laments the ending of one era, a new understanding of gender and space in the present time period can only help to bring more awareness and consideration for individuals of different genders and sexualities in the future.

### CHAPTER III

#### D.H. LAWRENCE'S POST-WAR SPACE:

#### AN APPEAL FOR MASCULINE HEALING AND A NEW ORDER

We are now in a period of crisis. Every man who is acutely alive is acutely wrestling  
with his own soul. (1919 Foreword to *Women in Love*)

“We’ve got this great industrial population, and they’ve got to be fed, so the damn show  
has to be kept going somehow. The women talk a lot more than the men, nowadays, and  
they are a sight more cock-sure. The men are limp, they feel a doom somewhere, and  
they go about as if there was nothing to be done. Anyhow nobody knows what should be  
done, in spite of all the talk.” (Oliver Mellors in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* 280)

During the Great War, D.H. Lawrence experienced a turning point in both his  
professional and his personal life. His spirit was at the breaking point. Lawrence’s  
publisher refused to have his third novel, *Women in Love*, printed, after *The Rainbow*  
had been banned; he had no income, and he and his wife, Frieda, were accused of being  
spies. He was in very poor health because of his ongoing battle with tuberculosis and  
was reminded of his physical condition each time he had to report for a medical  
examination before the British military draft committee. In Cornwall, where Lawrence  
and Frieda planned to hole up during the war, they were ordered to leave and never  
return because of their assumed espionage roles in the war. Biographer John Worthen

describes this as a climactic moment in the writer's life: "Lawrence felt that there was no longer any such thing as a free citizen of England, his expulsion from Cornwall changed him forever" (192). Whether in his writing or personal life, the war affected Lawrence's daily existence and how he made each decision. Lawrence emphatically felt that the world was no longer the same.

Following the war, Lawrence felt compelled to change not only the style of his writing but also his subject, tone, and argument. According to Hugh Stevens, Lawrence believed that "the war was responsible for the passing of an old organic England, which is supplanted by modernity, an England of mechanized, inorganic alienation" (50). The writer attempted to describe the deterioration that England would undergo and offered ways for the nation to return to its "natural" origins. Lawrence makes his quest for wholeness and rhythm his purpose and the main male characters' purpose in his novels during this time period. Because of the war, Lawrence "set off on his 'savage pilgrimage,'" writes Neil Myers, which "transformed him from a symbolist experimenter in the traditional novel into the compulsive, chaotic, half-comic propagandist of the popular imagination" (44). In his novels, Lawrence argued for a return to the old organic England, which he also believed would help men to regain what he saw as their failing masculinity.

Organicity and organic masculinity are important to Lawrence. He repeatedly uses the term "organic" in each of the texts that I will discuss. His interest in organic life can be linked to his studies of John Ruskin, whose philosophy he used for inspiration in his work and his plans for a new order. According to Ruskin, an organic vision is a way

of seeing the natural world as an integrated whole, resembling a living organism in which the component parts undergo individual variation and growth, subject to certain fundamental laws of life. Ruskin insisted that artists produce their best work when they are inspired by the natural world, for this, he argues, is how life enters their work.<sup>24</sup> By 1860 he maintained that the same essential patterns that characterized the natural growth of leaves on a tree were also the characteristics of the composition of a great painting, and of the behavior of an ideal society. Lawrence took much of Ruskin's philosophy and theories into account in his writing and in vision for a utopian community.

Establishing a *new order* for men, following the war and in opposition to the women's movement, is the theme of several of Lawrence's novels including *Women in Love* (1920), *Aaron's Rod* (1922), and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), and it is a term that he repeatedly uses to convey his quest for a reinterpretation of gender roles and the social codes of intimate friendships and sexual relationships. Disenchanted by modern progress, Lawrence was always in search of a world, where men could find healing and support, and where he could live a more utopian life. He traveled extensively, visiting Italy, Australia, the United States, and Mexico in order to experience different cultures and alternative ways of life and to bring an original understanding and point of view to his work where his characters interrogate traditional understandings of individual relationships between people and places. Lawrence tests his theories through male characters who are intent on trying new forms of life and who make it their goal to experiment with their interactions with men throughout the text. Paul Poplawski argues

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<sup>24</sup> See Ruskin's "The Lamp of Life."

that Lawrence is most interested in “exploring the creative potential of what... he calls ‘purposive activity’ in conjunction with others, in particular with other men. In a sense, this concern develops from the relationship between Birkin and Gerald, but in these later novels and elsewhere, the search for ‘male comradeship’ in purposive activity becomes more prominent and even obsessive” (38). While Poplawski is correct in his interpretation of the novels’ quest for male relationships and purposive activity, I believe that the purposive activity is centered on establishing a genealogy and calling attention to the history of male friendship, devising rituals for male homosociality that are coeval with the marital bonds between men and women, and healing men who have experienced a crisis in their masculinity.

Homosocial work, activity, and bonding are essential attributes of masculinity for both Lawrence and Orwell because both writers believe that they can bolster British men’s waning masculinity in the present by calling to mind England’s rich genealogy of man making exercises at school and at work. They both rely on masculine space as a site for traditions and rituals of manhood. Although Lawrence and Forster were the ones to attend university and participate in the masculine rites of passage for authors and other educated men in society, Orwell received some of his British masculinity training in Burma. Through their texts, both Lawrence and Orwell suggest that men are in danger of losing their power and masculinity. Each writer argues that their male characters are also becoming weaker, both physically and mentally because of changing opinions about men and women’s roles in society, following the First World War. Although Forster does not have to address the effect of the War on his characters because his text is

published in 1910, four years before the outbreak of fighting, Lawrence and Orwell argue that it is directly responsible for causing a devastating effect on the British male population.

In response to changes in society's notions of masculinity and femininity and the state of marriage, Lawrence's male characters try to establish a new world, their interpretation of a more modern paradigm, through their concepts of masculine spaces. From the domestic spaces of their London bachelor flats and country estate libraries to their work spaces in the coal mines and gamekeeper's hut, the men attempt to revise the Victorian social and domestic codes that have influenced their lives and to rethink traditional understandings of marriage and family life, work, and leisure. Tired of conspicuous consumption and a materialist culture, the war, and inveterate understandings of married life, Rupert Birkin, Rawdon Lilly, and Oliver Mellors seek to test new forms of life in spaces that have been set aside for men's use with the hope of restoring and revitalizing their minds and bodies. The masculine spaces become sites of healing and act as transformative spaces where the characters and the author investigate what it means to be a man in a new era. These settings offer ways for the men to recover from the damage of the war and begin a more vital life.

Lawrence sets each of the texts within a milieu of cultural, social, and political excitement. He incorporates political theories as well as innovations in art, dance, dress, architecture, and design into the novels. Lawrence's characters are on the cutting edge of these changes in society and want to discuss, experiment, and employ the new ways of thinking, working, and creating in their daily lives. More specifically, Lawrence uses

modernist experiments of healing in alternative medicine and exercise as metaphors for sexual experimentation. Naturism, massage, jiu-jitsu, and hermitism are just some of what at first glance appear to be examples of modernist practices that Lawrence's characters perform in masculine space.

While it might seem that Lawrence is trying to tap into modern cultural ideology and discuss the trends of the era, I believe that he is attempting something much more complex and purposeful. Although the activities were currently in "fashion," they are at the same time part of a long history of masculine ritual and tradition. Lawrence then is not trying to embrace modernism by pointing to these fads; quite the contrary, he is arguing that men must return to the origins of masculinity and to the ancient rituals and traditions that have always enabled men to find strength during a time of uncertainty and crisis.

Lawrence made the state of the English man and masculinity his main focus; he felt that England was in a dismal situation. More specifically, he believed that British men were experiencing a significant decline in their own personal masculinity, their control over their families, and their position within the state. Broken and exhausted from the war, the men returned to their homes, where they found a new management system in place, created by the women of the family. In many of his novels, the male characters are impotent, depressed, and lost beings who are searching for meaning in their lives, fulfilling relationships, and an understanding of the world in a post-war era. In order to turn the nation around and revive the male population, Lawrence suggests

that it is time for a new order in England, one in which the people's understanding of gender roles and intimate relationships need to be analyzed and rethought.

In *Women in Love*, which was finally published in 1920, Lawrence suggests how men can have relationships with other men in addition to their marriages to women.<sup>25</sup> Rupert Birkin, the character who is modeled on Lawrence, makes some of the clearest statements of the author's beliefs, begins the interrogation of men's role in society and the family, and sets about breaking down traditional stereotypes and opening up a dialogue on sexuality. Birkin, whom Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* refers to as Lawrence's "prophet, the Son of God at last" (262), can only begin the process of inquiry into the state of masculinity after the war, which would continue to perplex Lawrence throughout his career and find its way into many of his other texts as he returns to the issue in his subsequent novels. Interestingly, Michael Bell notes that at no point in the novel does Lawrence actually make specific reference to or name the war. Still, Bell believes that "the book communicates, irrespective of the war, a bitter, some would say excessive, rejection of the contemporary culture combined with a deep sense of isolation, of incapacity to get the feeling shared" (101). While Lawrence does reject modernization, industry, and the mechanization of life, I believe that he taps into the trends in his contemporary culture when it pertains to men's health and well-being and leads them to a more vital life by suggesting therapeutic fads in alternative medicine. At the same time, I hope to show, Lawrence is relying on the ancient male history of the Greeks and Germans. His references to their activities and friendships suggest that he is

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<sup>25</sup> *Women in Love* was first published in the United States. The British publication came out one year later.



trying to show how men can replace or supplement their heterosexual relationships. His characters Birkin and Gerald combat their feelings of isolation by experiencing contemporary culture as a couple. They take from it what they can to try to regain their sense of masculinity and power in society. The men become a paradigm for Lawrence, who continues to explore male relationships and masculinity in the novels that followed *Women in Love*.

In 1922, with the publication of *Aaron's Rod*, Lawrence focuses on the question of men's roles and masculinity more directly by having the characters participate specifically in a male homosocial group throughout much of the novel. Rawdon Lilly, although not the protagonist of the text, provides some of the more philosophical interpretations of modern manhood and sexuality. Lawrence experiments with homosociality and the possible relationships that the men can establish with each other to test a new order where both Lilly and Aaron Sisson separate themselves from their wives and children in pursuit of a life that they believe promises more personal integrity and helps them regain the power and control that they feel they relinquished to their wives when they married. Lilly and Sisson are waiting for a "deep power-urge" that men will issue forth and that women will submit to once "man disengages himself from the love-mode, and stands clear" (470). Essentially, Lawrence is arguing that women hold power over men as long as the men submit to women sexually and allow them to control the relationship by controlling sex. Once men no longer rely on women for sexual satisfaction, they will again be able to rule. For most of the story, Aaron and Lilly live apart from their wives and instead find company with a group of men. At the novel's

end, the men are still unsure about their future and their understanding of their roles as men in society. Lawrence leaves their destiny uncertain and his philosophy unfinished, still awaiting conclusion.

Lawrence presents us with another scenario when he returns again to the question of masculinity in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Here we are introduced to Oliver Mellors, the gamekeeper at Wragby, Sir Clifford Chatterley's estate, who has left his wife and is living the life of a hermit in a small cottage on the estate and whom Millett describes as "the final apotheosis of Lawrentian man" (238). Mellors has pledged himself to a life of celibacy and lives as a recluse. He has experienced enough of life, after working as a blacksmith and fighting in the war, to have definite ideas about his theory of masculinity. Mellors believes that in order for men to experience a more organic life, they must take a closer look at themselves. He explains to Connie:

I'd tell'em: ...Take yer clothes off an' look at yourselves. Yer ought ter be alive an' beautiful, an' yer ugly an' half dead. So I'd tell 'em. An I'd get my men to wear different clothes: 'appen close red trousers, bright red, an' little short white jackets. Why, if men had red, fine legs, that alone would change them in a month. They'd begin to be men again, to be men! An' the women could dress as they liked. Because if once the men walked with legs close bright scarlet, and buttocks nice and showing scarlet under a little white jacket: then the women 'ud begin to be women. It's because th' men *aren't* men, that th' women have to be – ... (205)

With this passage, we can see that Lawrence is taking a different approach to understanding who is to blame for the demise of masculinity in British men. He accepts that men have also had a part in what he sees as their ugly and deathlike appearance. In this last novel, the reader senses that Lawrence is attempting to make peace with women. In this heightened moment of passion and conviction, Lawrence enacts a tone of reconciliation for his aggression against women in some of his previous works, including *Aaron's Rod*. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* then serves as an act of atonement for Lawrence's previous diatribes against women and somewhat helps to soften the writer's image.

Many critics have scrutinized Lawrence's interpretation of a new social order and noted how the rise of the man is always to the detriment of the female sex.<sup>26</sup> Before writing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence unreservedly believed that women were to blame for the condition of man in England and that the crisis of masculinity was spurred by what he perceived as their untimely dominance. Terry Eagleton argues that the war, "the most traumatic event of [Lawrence's] life," "signifies the definitive collapse of the liberal humanist heritage, with its benevolistic idealism and 'personal' values, clearing the way for the 'dark gods' ... in short, for a social order which rejects the 'female' principle of compassion and sexual intimacy for the 'male' principle of power" (158). Charting the writer's "whole new set of attitudes on the relationship between the sexes," Hilary Simpson sees Lawrence's shift in gender politics "as part of a general tendency in male ideology and culture – from a liberal, pro-feminist position before the First World War to the rabid post-war vision of women as the destructively dominant sex, and of

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<sup>26</sup> See Terry Eagleton, Kate Millett, and Hilary Simpson.

programs for masculinity revolution” (x). Millett also contends that the war changes Lawrence’s writing focus and brings on “a shift that, when accomplished, finally produces powerful feelings of hostility and a negative attitude toward women of his own generation, who come more and more to threaten him” (Millett 257). Although he initially set out to help the women’s cause in writing *Women in Love*, by the end of the war and the final draft, Lawrence’s feelings and focus had clearly changed.

Millett rightly points to the personal implications that the shifts in gender power have on Lawrence. “It is important to understand,” she continues, “how pressing a mission Lawrence conceived this to be, for he came himself upon the errand” (262). Although Frieda Lawrence often challenged her husband and reportedly participated in both physical and verbal quarrels with him, and according to Worthen, she also served as the model for Ursula Brangwen, while their relationship helped to establish the marital tension and strife in *Aaron’s Rod* (223). Lawrence always included Frieda in his utopian vision and conception for a new order. However, according to Brenda Maddox, the couple considered their marriage an open relationship; each of them had extramarital relationships, and they frequently lived apart from each other.

At the beginning of his writing career, Lawrence is not sure what form the new way of organic living will take. With each novel, he explores different versions of his theory; however, there is always one central form of experimentation that appears in each text – sexual. Often, the implementation of innovative concepts occurs in a sexually charged atmosphere, which are in masculine spaces. More importantly, I wish to argue that Lawrence uses the innovative practices as metaphors for discussing male sexual

experimentation that would have been impossible to have published without facing criminal charges. Lawrence seeks to understand the modern world after the war and diagnose its major ailments, and he believes that men have suffered because of changing notions of sexual roles. The writer believes that men can regain their sense of masculinity by revitalizing their sexual performance. For Lawrence, then, masculine spaces are sites of healing for both the mind and body.

Uninhibited by the rules of society and providing a refuge from the pressures of masculine gender stereotypes, the spaces that Lawrence creates offer freedom to the men that other places do not and a setting where, at a time of gender uncertainty and anxiety for men, they can explore without the threat of judgment or punishment what it means to be a man. The spaces provide a crucial element to his work because they are not governed by the same social codes as a traditional domestic setting where women and/or children are present. Instead, within these spaces, Lawrence is able to experiment and allow his male characters to try out some unorthodox practices that would be unacceptable and unbelievable in a setting where women are present. Furthermore, the masculine space is fundamental because Lawrence is arguing for male-male relationships. The male bond of friendship is central to the writer's concept of a modern understanding of masculinity, so much so that they stand in competition with heterosexual bonds. Lawrence sees relationships with men as equally or even more essential to men's health and well being than their marital bond with women. In order to demonstrate this argument, Lawrence devises rituals for men that materialize through the space that I see as essential to all of the writers' conception of masculinity.

In this chapter, I have organized each section according to the masculine spaces that Lawrence employs. The London bachelor flat is a particular site that Lawrence develops in both *Women in Love* and *Aaron's Rod*. In the city, the men escape from the pressures of their domestic relationships and the Victorian décor and social codes that restrict their autonomy. The second section of the chapter examines the spaces of the village estate library, a setting of great significance in regards to masculinity in *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and the gamekeeper's hut in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In both the city and the mining village, Lawrence locates modernist and sexual experimentation in spaces that have traditionally been reserved for men. Intent on making sense of man's place within society and making his own argument about what the male sex must do to achieve the new order that he thought necessary, Lawrence sees masculine space as a place of experimentation, a fictional laboratory where he could test his new ideas and express them to his readers.

### **The London Bachelor Flat as Infirmary for Masculinity**

*Women in Love* contains some of the clearest statements of the writer's own beliefs through Rupert Birkin. Like Lawrence, Birkin is a transient figure, rootless and never in one place for very long. While he has multiple homes at the beginning of the story, by the end he has written off the comforts of domesticity and has decided to travel the world rather than share a home with his wife, Ursula Brangwen. Throughout the text, Birkin is intent on resisting the outdated version of Victorian home life characterized by

a static relationship between a man and a woman existing in a fixed home filled with plush furniture and a pianoforte (45). Instead, Birkin argues for a “new religion.” His modern reinterpretation of domestic happiness includes having committed relationships with a man and a woman at the same time and not being tied down by the maintenance and furnishings of an elaborate home. The young man insists on a revolt against Victorian social codes and domestic ideals, which he compares to a dreadful bondage, a sort of conscription: “What it was in him he did not know, but the thought of love, marriage, and children, and a life together, in the horrible privacy of domestic and connubial satisfaction, was repulsive” (171). While Birkin is not a very wealthy man, like his friend, Gerald Crich, the captain of industry, he makes domestic space a priority in his life. Because of his desire for a multitude of homes, Birkin is an anomaly in the novel. He does not fit in with the typical image of man because he refuses to settle down in one home with one woman and instead sets up a tension in the text that has yet to be explored, but deserves close reading. Lawrence’s particular focus on the space of the home, its décor and management, makes its own argument about the centrality of space to the novel and provides another way for us to read the text.

In addition to having multiple homes, Birkin’s other answer to finding happiness and breaking free from the prison of marriage is to have an equally important and committed relationship with a man. Birkin makes a proposal to his companion Gerald, that they pledge their loyalty to one another and create a new understanding of male friendship. Lawrence suggests that in addition to Birkin taking a wife, he can also have an intimate relationship with a man, a *Blutbrüderschaft*, modeled on the bonds of the old

German knights. According to James Miracky, “The dual threats to manhood of female smothering and homosexual love...are given graphic literary treatment in *Women in Love*” (121). He also draws attention to how the novel also reflects “Lawrence’s personal sexual conflict in this period, a time of marital tensions with...Frieda as well as struggles with same-sex attraction toward men like [John Middleton] Murry and [William Henry] Hocking” (121). In creating sexual tension between Birkin, Hermione Roddice, and Gerald in the beginning of the book, and then between Birkin, Ursula, and Gerald later on in the text, Lawrence provides us with a multi-faceted example of Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick’s argument focused on the distorted enactment of male homosocial and homosexual desire through a heterosexual love triangle, which she discusses throughout the first chapter in *Between Men*. Because it is socially unacceptable for Birkin to pursue his attraction to Gerald, he displaces his feelings onto his relations with Hermione and Ursula.

We might also think about the novel’s publication in terms of a heterosexual love triangle. In his well-known letters to Lady Cynthia Asquith, explaining how he was doing his part for the women in *Women in Love*, Lawrence opens himself up to scrutiny and criticism for his treatment of women in the novel.<sup>27</sup> While he tells us that the novel is for women, and the title and opening chapter suggest that it is about women, it is clear by the end of the story that the Brangwen sisters are not his central concern. Instead, Lawrence’s main focus is the men of the text – Birkin and Gerald and their relationship. Therefore, returning to Sedgwick’s model, Lawrence, whether consciously or

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<sup>27</sup> See *Letters* vol. 2, 21 October 1915, p. 415 and 2 November 1915, p. 425.



subconsciously hesitant to label the subject of his text as male love, shifts his focus and attention onto Ursula and Gudrun and triangulates his own interest in men through these women. Fiona Becket tries to explain and teases out the meaning of Lawrence's title: "Indeed, the phrase 'women in love' begins to resonate like the phrases 'women in work' or 'women in politics', signifying a female 'trespass' into predominantly masculine domains" (161). At the time that Lawrence was writing the novel, many women were entering the workforce and voicing their opinion on politics. Because much of the working-male population was at war, women were left to take on responsibilities and work that were previously left to the men. These changes in society left a considerable strain on the relationship between men and women once the war ended and the men returned home. Ruderman explains how the altering gender and social codes affected the young author: "These changes were deeply threatening to Lawrence, with his need to assert male dominance over (strong) females. Women in trousers, women lobbying for the vote, women conducting trams and running farms – all were, to him, signs of society's decay" (17). Emasculated by independent women, Lawrence sought an alternative way for men to find satisfaction in their personal lives and offers his theory to his readers in *Women in Love*.

While critics agree that the women of *Women in Love* are not the central focus of the text, neither is Birkin and Ursula's marriage. Joyce Carol Oates writes, "Preliminary to the action of *Women in Love*... is the passionate and undeclared relationship between Birkin and Gerald, and the tortured split between Birkin's spiritual and sisterly love for Hermione and his 'passion of desire' for Gerald" (223). Millett also concludes that "the

real erotic center in the novel” is “the story of Birkin’s unrequited love for Gerald” (265). The feminist critic rightly points to the tension of the men’s relationship that takes center stage in the text because much of the relationship is one-sided. I would contend that Lawrence’s focus and subject matter is more complex in that he is attempting to establish a history for male relationships within masculine spaces. While Birkin and Gerald’s relationship and the tension that it brings is crucial, Lawrence constructs a genealogy for men at a historical moment when he feels that they need to remind themselves of the historical significance of male friendships. It is my goal to extend this theory more and demonstrate how the friction between the men and women is exposed in the unrest of the all-male settings, which for Lawrence is a key site for crucial male bonding and community building. Lawrence uses space to signal Birkin’s apprehension about life in a traditional marriage and home and the transformations that were threatening the integrity of the masculine sanctuaries.

Lawrence demonstrates Birkin’s inner struggle between the Victorian domestic ideal and a more modern interpretation of intimate relationships and home life by having the character maintain and inhabit two separate homes that correspond to his desire to have an intimate relationship with both Ursula and Gerald: a bachelor’s flat in London’s trendy Soho district off Piccadilly Circus and a more traditional home on Willey Water in Beldover, a northern mining village. Describing Birkin’s unique living situation, Lawrence writes, “He was not very fixed in his abode. He had rooms in Nottingham, because his work lay chiefly in that town. But often he was in London, or in Oxford. He moved about a great deal, his life seemed uncertain, without any definite rhythm, any

organic meaning” (42). (Rhythm and organicity, we recall, are central to Lawrence’s concept of masculinity.) Birkin’s uncertainty about life stems from his attempt to break with tradition and resist following a Victorian ideology that argues for the ultimate centrality of the home. Instead, he chooses to have multiple homes that serve different purposes in his intimate life. While Birkin wants to marry Ursula Brangwen and have a home and a family with her, he also desires a male love relationship with Gerald. His desire for separate relationships with both Gerald and Ursula corresponds with his two distinct homes.

The cottage in Beldover is Birkin’s traditional home, where he appears to be preparing the space for his future family. Lawrence describes the space when Ursula comes to visit, writing, “He had everything so nice, such pretty cups and plates, painted with mauve-lustre and green, also shapely bowls and glass plates, and old spoons, on a woven cloth of pale grey and black and purple. It was very rich and fine. But Ursula could see Hermione’s influence” (129). By making reference to Hermione’s input on the furnishing and decor, Lawrence suggests that the cottage, its furnishings, and the relationships that Birkin designates for the space are a sham and only for show. Using Sedgwick’s model, we can argue that because Hermione’s relationship with Birkin is only a cover for his feelings for Gerald, we must question the validity of Birkin’s actions and motives each time she is present in the text. Ursula is wary of Hermione and Birkin’s relationship, but not for the same reasons that we are. While Ursula is jealous of Hermione and Birkin’s close connection, I would argue that Hermione, providing a distraction from the male relationships, serves the same role as the other women in the

text. Although the kitchen accoutrements are beautiful and are a reminder of Birkin's relationship with Hermione, they merely are part of Birkin's performance of heterosexuality.

The London flat is a very different space because it serves as Birkin's bachelor pad which he shares with other men and where he serves as host for the weekend. It is central to this chapter's discussion of masculine space. The London flat as an all male space is a key element in Birkin's strategy to make the dual relationships work. By designating certain spaces for each relationship, he attempts to compartmentalize his interaction with each sex. Lawrence uses the descriptions and characterizations of the domestic spaces in London and Beldover as symbols for Birkin's struggle to find domestic happiness. In London, he keeps a flat, where men live and enjoy the freedom of the uninhibited space.

Lawrence designs the masculine space as a part of modern originality in art by making reference to a Primitivist statue and two pictures "in the Futurist manner" (62). Lawrence goes into detail about the statue when he describes how the men try to bring culture and innovation to what on the surface level appears to be an unexceptional setting. He first tells the reader,

It was an ordinary London sitting-room in a flat, evidently taken furnished, rather common and ugly. But there were several negro statues, wood-carvings from West Africa, strange and disturbing, the carved negroes looked almost like the foetus of a human being. One was a woman sitting naked in a strange posture and looking tortured, her

abdomen stuck out...The strange, transfixed, rudimentary face of the woman again reminded Gerald of a foetus, it was also rather wonderful, conveying the suggestion of the extreme of physical sensation, beyond the limits of mental consciousness. (61)

The flat that Birkin shares with Halliday is described as “ordinary,” “common,” and “ugly,” stereotypical attributes of a masculine space that is devoid of decoration. “But,” Lawrence explains, there are some statues from West Africa. The sculptures, particularly the one of the naked woman giving birth, are the only things that distinguish the space’s appearance. In the masculine space, the statue is out of place and sticks out among the other more conventional surroundings and décor. Because Lawrence tells us that the statue is of a woman, who is also, importantly, African, we can read her presence as both a racial and sexual “other” in the scene. Her posture, described as strange and tortured, makes her appear even more foreign and unfamiliar to the men who gaze at her nakedness at a moment of sheer pain and physical exertion. By the very nature of her being, she represents a challenge to the men and their space.

By including the African statue, Lawrence immediately calls on his readers to interpret the significance of his primitivist symbol. Jack Stewart, author of *The Vital Art of D.H. Lawrence: Vision and Expression*, contends that “The grotesque distortions of facial features and anatomy seemed to European artists to speak a language of ‘raw emotion’ and to embody feelings long suppressed in their own culture. These forms had the power to shock but also to liberate, by articulating unconscious drives and forces beyond the ego” (94). In the room, the sculpture symbolizes all the things the men want

to run away from and hide in the closet. The form of the woman in childbirth challenges Victorian social codes by exposing the physicality of labor and the strength of the woman. It is not surprising therefore that Gerald is not impressed by the art that he finds in the flat. In fact, he hates the “sheer African thing” and resents the way it makes him uncomfortable (64). But he cannot help but return to it and stare. He questions Birkin about its value as an object of art and cannot get the image out of his mind. Lawrence tells the reader, “He saw vividly with his spirit the grey, forward-stretching face of the negro woman, African and tense, abstracted in utter physical stress. It was a terrible face, void, peaked, abstracted almost into meaninglessness by the weight of sensation beneath” (66). Marianna Torgovnick argues that Birkin glaringly analyzes “African and Oceanic art according to what we would now call the expressionist misreading; he sees in it the expression of violent emotions and taboo sexuality. And he believes that African and Oceanic statues provide evidence of a slide into imbalanced ‘mindless sexuality’ that happened long ago, among the primitives carving the works” (161). Birkin and Gerald’s responses to the statue are bound up in their personal views and fears. The men read into the statue their own anxiety about women’s sexuality and their own fear of emasculation.

The Primitivist artwork and references to Africa suggest to the reader that Lawrence intends for the space to be read as a site of sexual liberation and open-mindedness for his male characters. Stewart explains that in the Primitivist movement “The Dark Continent and its ‘fetishes’ came to represent what was desired or feared but deemed lost or repressed in civilization; African masks and carvings struck viewers as

grotesque, violent, or 'expressionistic.' African artifacts in fiction are constructed 'images of the primitive' that tell more about the novelist than his sources" (96).

Lawrence's implementation of 'primitive' art objects provides readers with a productive canvas to analyze and examine for a critical perspective on Western culture. According to Stewart, "Lawrence neither romanticized 'primitives' nor shared the evolutionist theory that saw them as belonging to an earlier phase of cultural development. Culture, to him, was not a continuum but a series of experiments along divergent lines, each with its own dynamic of development and decline" (101). It is significant that Stewart uses the word "experiments." It coincides with my belief that Lawrence is experimenting with the all-male space and the alternative methods of healing that he incorporates in the novel. Gerald's examination of the sculpture, then, is an "experiment" in culture for Lawrence. Thinking about the sculpture, beside the implications of the primitivist movement, we can also see how the woman represents a sexual freedom that the men crave. Naked, she embodies the organic lifestyle that they wish to mimic. The men also want "to feel," and the women's appearance and posture demonstrates that her body language and freedom of expression are valuable resources to Birkin and Gerald, who are trying to come to terms with their own sexuality and gender identity in the changing social atmosphere.

The men of the Soho flat also take a "primitivist" and organic approach to their home life. On this occasion, Halliday, Birkin's flat mate is enjoying the company of his Russian friend Maxim Libidnikov (perhaps a pun on libido), who is staying with him overnight. Within the masculine space of the flat, the men can enjoy a sexual freedom

that would be more scandalous in another setting. Lawrence gives the reader clues about the sexual orientation of the men when he tells us that Halliday and Libidnikov “were friends since Eton” (63). Already acquainted with the masculine space of their school, the men are perfectly comfortable with each other and their surroundings, so much so that they enjoy each other’s company in the morning as, without the encumbrance of clothing, they sit around the fire. Like Eton, the bachelor flat provides the men with a liberal atmosphere, where they feel relaxed enough to explore their sexuality and masculinity without the pressures of domestic codes of conduct. It is significant that Lawrence makes reference to the men’s education at Eton, the breeding ground for male friendship, tradition, and ritual, not to mention schoolboy sexual experimentation. By calling attention to their attendance at the public school, Lawrence suggests that the men already have a deep appreciation for ritual that defines a collective or group history.

Halliday and Libidnikov argue for a more natural and organic lifestyle that embraces the nudist or naturist mentality. The naturist philosophy can be traced back to health and fitness philosophy in early twentieth century Germany. As early as 1905, Francis and M. Merrill found nudist groups in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland; he later also visited clubs in Hungary, Belgium, and France. The travel writer notes, “Even England, the European stronghold of Puritanism is being invaded” (192). According to Arnd Kruger, the first organized nudists’ groups in North London began in 1924 (135). A burgeoning movement in England and all over the Continent, nudism attracted members who, like Lawrence, were interested in rethinking the past way of living. They craved an alternative lifestyle that would match their desire for more freedom and better



health. Ruth Barcan explains that, while always being contentious, nudism “enjoyed considerable popularity in the early decades of the twentieth century in Europe. It stood in paradoxical relation to modern society. It was an explicit critique of modern civilization, both a nostalgic attempt to imagine a return to Edenic perfection and a utopian projection forward to an imagined era of healthful egalitarianism” (64).

Although, the movement did not officially organize in England until after the publication of *Women in Love*, Lawrence could have learned about it from his visits to Germany and Austria when he first began to court Frieda, whose family, the von Richthofens, were part of the German aristocracy and upper class, a group noted by Kruger for including social nudity in its daily life (139). Like Lawrence’s attempt to establish a “new order,” nudists wanted to create a “new Eden,” where they could live in freedom from the evils of Victorian social codes and gender roles.

Halliday and Libidnikov represent the philosophy of naturism when they express to the somewhat surprised Gerald their decision to go without clothes. They argue that they want to be able “to feel the fire” on their skin and live in a climate in which they can go without clothes all of the time (64). Halliday tells Gerald, “It’s one of the things I want most to do – live from day to day without *ever* putting on any sort of clothing whatever. If I could do that, I should feel I had lived” (65). The men are envious of Gerald’s travels to the Amazon, where the native people go about naked. Wanting to “live” and have a healthy lifestyle, Halliday, like the nudists, argues that clothes do not promote physical and sexual health. According to Barcan, “In its medical underpinnings, nudism overlapped with heliotherapy, or sun-cure, which enjoyed some popularity in

Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century” (71). Heliotherapists believed that the sun was the ultimate life source, and clothes were an unnatural barrier that concealed the body. Nudist and medical doctor Maurice Parmelee writes in 1927, “The impulse to be nude arising out of man’s original nature as an unclothed animal has been repressed by civilization” (31). He further argues that clothing the body “hampers the rearing of young children, gives rise to unhealthy mental complexes and creates abnormal relations between the sexes” (5-6). Many nudist doctors also practiced heliotherapy and advocated nude sunbathing to counteract diseases, including tuberculosis, from which Lawrence suffered (Kruger 142 and Barcan 71). As a TB patient since about 1910, Lawrence would have been familiar with the theories on treatment. Although there are no reports of him sunbathing in the nude, he often made trips to the coasts of England and Italy, where the climate, doctors advocated, would be beneficial for his health.

Important to their physical health, as well as their psychological well-being, the masculine space offers the men a place where they can go without clothes and rebel against their upbringing. Wanting to embrace his bodily freedom and explain his motivation behind his nudism, Halliday tries to justify his decision: “...one would feel things instead of merely looking at them. I should feel the air move against me, and feel the things I touched, instead of having only to look at them. I’m sure life is all wrong because it has become much too visual – we can neither hear nor feel nor understand, we can only see. I’m sure that is entirely wrong” (65). With this scene Lawrence suggests to the reader that his characters not only have an appreciation for primitivist artwork, but also want to embrace a more “primitivist” and naturist attitude in their private lives.

Rather than just looking, Halliday suggests that feeling, whether it be the rays of the sun or the skin of a comrade, has an emancipatory effect on him, a sentiment straight out of naturist philosophy. And while the nudist clubs and groups were not yet established in London, Lawrence sets the scene within the sexually free space of the bachelor flat.

Although Birkin is at the flat, Lawrence does not give us many details about his point of view or interaction with the other men. Instead, the chapter is more about Gerald's interpretation of the scene. Through Gerald's virgin eyes, we enter the living room and see all of the décor of the space and the interactions between the clothed and unclothed men. Caught up in the avant-garde atmosphere of the space, Gerald inadvertently and unexpectedly begins to participate in the homoerotic scene. Using Gerald's point of view, Lawrence first provides an evaluation of the men's physiques:

Gerald looked at him, and with a slight revulsion saw the human animal, golden skinned and bare, somehow humiliating. Halliday was different. He had a rather heavy, broken beauty. And Gerald realized how broken also in their expression. The fireglow fell on his heavy, rather bowed shoulders, he sat slackly crouched on the fender, his face was uplifted, weak, perhaps slightly disintegrate, and yet with a moving beauty of its own. (64)

Gerald's description shows not an admiration for the male body, but a mixed understanding of the suffering and hardship that have taken their toll on men who have endured a sort of torture because of the war. Lawrence uses words such as "revulsion," "bare," "broken," "weak," and "disintegrate," which suggest the damage both physically

and mentally that he feels is the result of their war experience and their return to a very different society, where they no longer fit into the altered atmosphere. Lawrence implies that they can find comfort and acceptance in each other. Gerald acknowledges the men's "broken" and "moving" beauty, which he finds attractive and admirable.

Lawrence does not give us the point of view of Halliday and Libidinov. We are led to believe that they are content with their flat and the freedom that it offers them. Intent on living a life that embraces the naturist philosophy, they find healing and happiness in their ability to experience the world through a new perspective that advocates a return to a more simple and healthy lifestyle. Gerald acknowledges the attractiveness of their way of life and feels inspired to embrace his own primitive nature and enjoy the freedom of life without clothes. Lawrence describes how "he strode with his blue silk wrap over his arm and felt defiant" (64). In this early scene in the novel, Gerald, Birkin, and the other flatmates are focused on finding an environment in which they can explore their masculinity and their sexuality without judgment. Each of the men wants to live a more healthy and contented life, yet they are unsure how to accomplish the task in the post-war environment. Primitive art and naturist living, seen empathetically and critically, play a crucial role in the men's ongoing quest for vitalized being. Creating rituals of masculinity and continuing traditions established by other masculine institutions such as Eton, the men strive to secure their homosocial bonds, while at the same time they wish to create a genealogy of male customs that revolve around men's friendships.

In the scene at the Soho flat, Lawrence is working on several different angles and establishing an important plot for the rest of the novel. Anne Fernihough reminds us that *Women in Love* “is set against a backdrop of cultural and political ferment; political manifestoes and new theories of art are burgeoning side by side” (182). Fernihough is correct in her assessment; however, we can also add to her list new theories of living and alternative medicine, as well as a re-imagining of male space. The setting is crucial because it makes the interactions between the characters possible and opens up a space for a dialogue on sexuality. Lawrence uses the modernist movements of primitivism and naturism to spark the conversation about the body and bring attention to the men’s desire to return to nature and embrace their own sexual urges and desires. At the same time that the trends that Lawrence cites are modern, they can also be traced back to ancient civilizations. Lawrence puts more emphasis on the significance of traditional male activity than he does on the practice being modern, which suggests that the writer wants to establish a genealogy of masculinity and male friendship rituals.

Testing for himself an unprecedented setting, Lawrence pushes the envelope and makes the space a refuge for male bonding, masculine health, and sexual experimentation. Supplementing the men’s heterosexual relationships with homosocial unions is only possible within the secrecy of private space. While in earlier works Lawrence focuses on the masculine space of the mines, they do not operate the same way as the rooms in the domestic sphere. For both Lawrence and Orwell the mines are public work spaces where working-class men must toil to earn a living for their families and prove their masculinity. Within the middle-class private spaces of *Women in Love*

and *Aaron's Rod*, the men are educated and of a higher class. Lawrence represents their personal spaces as sanctified and cultured centers of healing and ritual, the source and hub for the preservation of male history.

Lawrence includes his second London bachelor's flat in *Aaron's Rod*, a novel that takes another step toward trying to understand modernist masculinity and male relationships following the Great War. *Aaron's Rod* is part of a group of works that critics have labeled Lawrence's "leadership novels." Judith Ruderman, whose book solely addresses this period of Lawrence's writing, explains, "As early as *Women in Love*, written and revised between 1916 and 1919, Lawrence had expressed society's need for 'a man who will give new values to things, give us new truths, a new attitude to life, or else we shall be a crumbling nothingness in a few years; a country in ruin'" (WIL 45). "In the postwar years of 1921 and 1922," she asserts, "Lawrence showed his characters in desperate search of this man of authority..." (6). *Aaron's Rod* is a good example of Lawrence developing characters who are in search of a new masculine leader, one who would lead them out of the darkness and misery that the writer describes as the state of masculinity following the war.

Lawrence's fiction underwent a severe change between the publication of *Women in Love* and *Aaron's Rod*. While Birkin and Gerald attempt to find freedom and healing through male relationships and masculine spaces, the men of *Aaron's Rod* completely reject the potential of sexual love and intimacy with their wives for the male cult of power and impersonality. Rawdon Lilly is the leader that Lawrence first creates and uses to express his theory about the need for a masculine leader. At the outset of the

novel, Lilly and his wife, Tanny, have parted ways. She has left England to visit her family for several months. Lilly takes this opportunity to let a flat near London's Covent Garden Market, where he hopes to get more writing accomplished. The young man, although married, lives like a bachelor. Cooking, cleaning, making tea, and darning socks, Lilly takes care of all his domestic duties without the aid or assistance of a woman (151). Lilly's plans of making headway with his writing, however, are foiled when he finds Aaron Sisson drunk, ill, and on the verge of being arrested outside of his apartment window. Commanding control over the situation, Lilly takes Aaron (whom he has only met on one other occasion) into his home, saves him from imprisonment, and nurses him back to health. Being a leader, Lilly takes charge of the scene and saves Aaron's life. Aaron is suffering from both a physical and a mental ailment. He has recently abandoned his wife, three children, and management position in the mines in order to pursue his musical career and find freedom. He needs guidance and advice about how he might live what others consider an unorthodox lifestyle away from his family, as well as medical treatment and care once he turns ill. Lilly is able to aid Aaron in both of these capacities. He becomes both a healer and a mentor for Aaron.

Worthen explains that "By the early 1920s, [Lawrence's] creation of Aaron's marriage was radical in its grasp of his own predicament" (244). In a sense, "Lilly is a kind of alter ego to Aaron," contends Worthen; "he is married but his relationship looks like a perfected version of Lawrence's idea of what he should have with Frieda: the couple are together or apart just as it suits them" (244-45). At the same time that Lawrence was trying to find a healthy and productive way in which him and Frieda

could live as husband and wife, whether together or separate, and in which he could continue to pursue his career as a novelist, his novels mirrored the turmoil and uncertainty in his personal life.

David Holbrook, who sees comparatively little literary merit in Lawrence's leadership novels, argues that "With Aaron, nothing happens of any interest whatever: he drifts about, entertained by Bohemians or upper-class people he despises, and has an unsatisfactory affair with a marchesa" (276). The critic is not certain why Aaron abandons his wife and children, but asserts that "all we can feel is a kind of lukewarm irritation at his egoism, his irresponsibility, and his rootlessness" (276). "Lukewarm" is not the adjective that I would use to describe my reaction to *Aaron's Rod*. While many critics view *Aaron's Rod* as a failure in plot and form, I believe that reading it as a metanarrative on the state of man and masculinity following the war produces a more productive assessment. Eagleton seems headed toward this same conclusion; he writes, "After the war, Lawrence's near-total ideological collapse, articulated with the crisis of aesthetic signification, presents itself in a radical rupturing and diffusion of literary form: novels like *Aaron's Rod* and *Kangaroo* are signally incapable of evolving a narrative, ripped between fragmentary plot, spiritual autobiography and febrile didacticism" (160). *Aaron's Rod* is the embodiment, but also the literal enactment of Lawrence's understanding of the crisis of masculinity in his personal life and the fictional world of the novel.

Although Elaine Feinstein tells us that "Lawrence's own personality is divided between Aaron and Lilly, who in many ways resemble each other" (165), I see the male



characters as a re-figuring or recasting of the male friendship between Birkin and Gerald. Intent on finding a productive example of an intimate male relationship after the failed outcome in *Women in Love*, Lawrence returns to the theme, this time with a much more overt and determined point of view. In addition to the recurrence of a male union in the novel, I maintain that the replication of the setting in a London bachelor flat, where the men use alternative methods of healing, also supports my argument that masculine space allows for the materialization of a male narrative based on homosocial bonds and male friendship.

In his Covent Garden flat, Lilly physically heals Aaron and assists in his recovery by means of a newly practiced method that was introduced to England and increasingly became popular at the turn of the century – massage. According to Stanley and Jason Burns, “World War I and the polio epidemic were significant events in promoting massage therapy in the early part of the twentieth century. The necessity to treat and rehabilitate thousands of wounded soldiers, along with polio patients, fueled the need for proven physical methods and demonstrated the medical importance of massage therapy” (217). Often combined with other alternative treatments such as “hydrotherapy, thermal bath, diet, electrical, light [or sun] and exercise therapies” (218), massage could be performed by attendants other than doctors and provided an immediate treatment for patients in pain or seriously ill. During and after the war, London’s St. Thomas Hospital treated soldiers with shell shock and nerve injuries with therapeutic massage.

Lawrence explains that within the secure environment of the Covent Garden flat, Lilly, a war veteran, “uncovered the blond lower body of his patient, and began to rub the abdomen with oil, using a slow, rhythmic, circulating motion, a sort of massage” (147). Calling attention to Lilly’s inexperience and attempt at a new technique of treatment, by not fully calling it a massage, Lawrence hints at the innovative practice that the young man employs to nurse his friend. Again, rhythm is an important element to Lawrence’s theory about the new order. (We should recall how in *Women in Love*, Lawrence states that Birkin’s life lacks rhythm.) He saw it as an essential aspect of how an individual could lead a more organic existence. Following the war, he felt that the nation’s rhythm was off center. Here he demonstrates how man can regain his rhythm by employing a more organic form of healing and medicine. Additionally, Lawrence makes another allusion to ancient Germanic body culture and the naturist movement when he refers to the oil that Lilly uses to aid him in healing Aaron. Kruger notes that while some naturists mocked the “excessive use of olive and other vegetable oils, [Hans] Suren continued publishing works on self massage (for him an important preventive measure for various diseases and proved effective by the Finns) and skin care” (142). Massage, as a method of treatment and healing, is a modern concept for England. Lawrence’s use of it, again in the masculine space, signifies its association with the healing of wounded men.

Lawrence’s description of the scene is significant because it gives us insight into the types of intimate relationships that he thought were possible and valuable between two men. In addition to having healing properties, massage is also used for sexual

stimulation. The rhythm of the massage has a trance-like effect on Lilly. The repetition and friction of the motions help him to relax as well and drift into “a sort of incantation,” which pushes him further and further into what could be considered a sexual spell (148). Lilly’s circulating motions leave him spent and exhausted, while Aaron’s body is “warm and glowing.” Both have reached a postcoital moment.

While Millett makes an irrefutable case for “Lilly’s rubdown – the novel’s surrogate for sodomy” (271), I would like to point to another significant reading of the scene. The importance of the massage, and also the sexual intercourse, to my reading is their healing properties for the men. After being kneaded and rubbed until fully stimulated, Aaron is left in a flush of ecstasy, which we later learn speeds his recovery. “[Lilly] saw a change,” Lawrence tells us. “The spark had come back into the sick eyes, and the faint trace of a smile, faintly luminous, into the face. Aaron was regaining himself” (148). Lawrence makes it clear that the massage turns Aaron’s health around and allows him to achieve a better and faster recovery than the medicine prescribed by the doctor. Still, we must also consider the effect that the massage has on Lilly. First, the massage allows Lilly to achieve a rhythm in his life, and second, the scene establishes the writer as a healer and leader in the text.

Aaron’s stay in Lilly’s flat forever makes him grateful to his host. Aaron looks up to Lilly and seeks to spend more time with him to learn more about his way of life and thoughts about the state of society. Aaron is especially drawn to Lilly’s theories regarding what men must do in order to regain their power and control over women and society. Once he recovers from his illness, he and Lilly have a long conversation about

gender politics. At the heart of Lilly's unease is his desire for his wife's submission. He explains to Aaron, "She does nothing really but resist me: my authority, or my influence, or just *me*. At the bottom of her heart she just blindly and persistently opposes me. God knows what it is she opposes: just me myself. She thinks I want her to submit to me. So I do, in a measure natural to our two selves. Somewhere, she ought to submit to me"

(149). Submission is important to Lawrence's other two novels as well, although here, he directly addresses the character's demand for it. Lacking the power and control over their wives to make the women submit to him, Lawrence's characters receive a severe blow to their masculinity.

Lilly finds fault with marriage as a concept. He has no interest in having children and argues that the reason why men are suffering is because of mothers. "Sacred children, and sacred motherhood, I'm absolutely fed stiff by it," he complains to Aaron (154). Lilly argues that before men will be able to "get on their own legs again" they will have to learn how to stick together and oppose the power that women derive from motherhood. He explains to Aaron, "Because once a woman has climbed up with her children, she'll find plenty of grovellers ready to support her and suffocate any defiant spirit. And women will sacrifice eleven men, fathers, husbands, brothers and lovers, for one baby – or for her own female self-conceit" (156). Here again, the reader's attention is brought to the image of the mother. Similar to the image of the African sculpture of the women in childbirth and the attention that the men bestow on her in *Women in Love*, the image of the mother is once more interrogated by the men of Aaron's *Rod*. Clearly, the men feel threatened by woman as mother, yet, they repeatedly call attention to her

and allow her into their all-male space by making her a literal fixture (as in the sculpture) or a mystical symbol. One might even go so far as to say that they must keep the threat of the mother alive to keep their version of masculinity alive. For Lawrence, perhaps, she is an inescapable challenge to masculinity and male authority, especially when his characters repeatedly try to run from her.

Attempting to escape marriage and his life in London, Lilly makes plans to board a ship and work as a cook's assistant (158). He leaves the space of his London flat to take residence aboard another masculine space on a shipping vessel. With Lilly making his own arrangements to run away, Aaron also sets out on his own adventure to find male companionship. Although he wished to travel with Lilly, when he learns of the writer's plans to join the crew of a boat, he instead sets off for Italy and eventually joins an all-male community in Florence, "a town of men" (340). "Aaron felt a new self, a new life-urge rising inside himself. Florence seemed to start a new man in him. ...He found the Piazza della Signoria packed with men: but all, all men. And all farmers, landowners and landworkers. The curious, fine-nosed Tuscan farmers, with their half-sardonic, amber-coloured eyes" (340). In Florence, Aaron finds a community of men, who value his musical talent and welcome him into their society. Later, Lilly joins him there and the men feel energized by their reunion. However, Lawrence does not end the novel on this positive note. While Aaron and Lilly sit at a café, a bomb goes off nearby, killing and injuring many people and destroying Aaron's flute, essentially jeopardizing his musical career, his freedom, his sexuality, and his masculinity.

In *Aaron's Rod* the masculine spaces provide not only a place for healing, but also a place of refuge, an escape from the women and children that Lilly believes are preventing men from taking their rightful place of power and control. Lilly's bachelor flat allows him to get away from what he sees as the source of male strife in the world. Without the women and children, Lilly and Aaron experiment with their individuality and theories on masculinity, as well as attempt to incorporate modern concepts of alternative medicine and sexual arousal. Without the masculine space, these unorthodox activities would not be possible. The bachelor flat provides the men with the freedom and comfort to test their ideas and theories without the threat of outside ridicule or punishment. With Lilly and Aaron the experimentation brings them closer together as intimate friends and confidants. The experience acts as a bond that strengthens their resolve from their wives, while also preparing them for the trials that lie ahead in their quest for male domination. When the bomb goes off outside the Florence café where the men sit enjoying their drinks and the conversation, Aaron and Lilly are side by side. With masculinity still symbolically under fire, the two men banded together to face the trials ahead of them.

Lawrence leaves the future of Aaron and Lilly uncertain at the conclusion of the novel. The reader is unsure whether they will stay in Florence, now that a central male space has been attacked. Without his flute, it is not clear how Aaron will be able to make a living or whether he will have to return to England to work in the mines. The bomb serves as a reminder that the men are not all-powerful and do not have control over their destiny. It is also another sign of the novel's protest against order and reason. Lawrence

gives the reader very little information about the source of the bomb, which makes us infer that it might have anarchist origins. The randomness of the bomb further complicates the text and refuses a predictable ending to the story. Try as the men might to protect themselves by banding together in masculine spaces and by practicing alternative medicine to heal one another, some forces are stronger than their wills. Lawrence leaves the fate of man in a precarious situation in *Aaron's Rod* and his discussion of the fate of modern masculinity without conclusion.

### **The Miner's Estate, A Seat of Masculine Uncertainty**

Lawrence's characters also find masculine spaces within the mining villages where they can further test their modern theories of gender, sexuality, and personal health and well-being. Whether it is within the mining tycoon's mansion or the lowly gamekeeper's hut on the miner's estate, the men try out new ways to keep themselves healthy and support their goal of bolstering their masculinity. Here, I will again turn to Birkin and Gerald's relationship in *Women in Love* and Lawrence's wrestling scene set within the Crich estate's library, a traditionally masculine space set aside for men, their business affairs, and social life. Then I will examine a library setting on another mining estate, this time in Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Sir Clifford Chatterley's home, Wragby, has been the family seat for generations. The library there has seen the work of many great industrial magnates who have created an empire and great wealth for the

Chatterley estate, yet upon Clifford's reign the lineage receives a blow to its masculine heritage. While I will compare the Chatterley and Crich libraries, I will also contrast Lawrence's final all-male setting – the gamekeeper's hut, the site where Oliver Mellors stores the equipment that he uses to manage the wildlife. Mellors's gamekeeper's hut is a masculine space where he lives as a hermit and practices celibacy and meditation within the isolated atmosphere of the Wragby forest. Mellors, Clifford, and Gerald are all suffering from damaged male egos. They have retreated to these masculine spaces to find solace and relief from the pressures of their past lives.

Gerald is trying to remodel the mines that his father once owned and ran using an antiquated method of excavation and manufacturing. The modern son feels pressure to replace the outdated machines and old miners with newer models that employ the latest techniques that maximize proficiency and production. Leo Bersani sees Gerald's actions as indicators of his ultimate demise. Accordingly, he writes, "Gerald exalts the will and the machine in order to flee from the organic death that terrifies him," yet "[his] life is, most profoundly, a chase after death" (160). In order to combat his anxiety about death, he attempts to perfect his life and make it the picture of Victorian masculine success. Not only does he wish to revamp the entire mining system, he also takes on the task of becoming the family's patriarch with a suitable wife to complete his picture of domestic and professional respectability; however, he experiences a moment of tension and confusion when he finds more comfort and relief in the company of his friend and confidant, Birkin.



Both men retreat to the Crich library, where they hope to find consolation and relief from the stress of their lives. After Birkin fails at proposing to Ursula because he resorts to the old-fashioned tradition of asking her father, he flees to Gerald at Shortlands and finds him “in the library, as motionless as a man is, who is completely and emptily restless, utterly hollow. ...like a machine that is without power” (231). However, when he sees Birkin walk through the library doors, his face lights “up in a sudden, wonderful smile” (231). Birkin brings Gerald happiness and comfort. Together they can be completely relaxed. The two men have a unique relationship. In a previous chapter, Birkin “proposes” to Gerald that they swear *Blutbrüderschaft* and promise to love each other “without any possibility of going back on it” (178). Gerald leaves the proposition unanswered, but in the later chapter “Gladiatorial,” the one that I wish to focus on here, his actions speak for themselves.

*Blutbrüderschaft* was a union of blood, a spontaneous masculine rite of brotherhood in the German tradition. According to Christopher Craft, Lawrence’s reference to the sacramental act mimics the mingling of blood in both the act of sodomy and the marriage of bodily fluids, a substitute for heterosexual intercourse in the marital bed on the wedding night. By making Birkin’s quest for *Blutbrüderschaft* a major part of the character’s life and by having the men participate in male rituals of bonding, Lawrence suggests that his characters are intent on establishing male homosocial rites and ceremonies that legitimize men’s relationships and elevate their bonding experiences to the level of heterosexual marriage.

Upon Birkin's arrival Gerald tells him that he "needs something to hit" to relieve stress (232). Unfamiliar with boxing, Birkin suggests that they try Japanese wrestling or jiu-jitsu, with which he has some experience. Lawrence's use of jiu-jitsu is significant because of the specificity of the exercise and its increasing popularity at the turn of the century. Douglas M. Catron, whose essay suggests that Lawrence's inclusion of jiu-jitsu is pointed and intentional, writes, "His descriptions of Birkin's mysterious force, his almost 'necromantic foreknowledge' of Gerald's movements, coincides well with a basic principle of the art – namely, *ki* or *chi* – and suggests that Lawrence knew the rudiments of Jiu-jitsu" (92). In addition to Catron's most convincing evidence, the descriptions of the movements matching the jiu-jitsu philosophy, he points to two other ways we can estimate Lawrence's knowledge of the sport: the prominence of Japan as a burgeoning world power following the Russo-Japanese War from 1904 to 1905 and the volume of books published in England that specifically provided instruction and advice on the exercise as a form of art and self-defense (93). In my own examination of the British Library's catalogue for the 1920s and 30s, I found more references to jiu-jitsu under the heading "Wrestling" than any other derivative of the sport, with titles such as *Jiu-Jitsu: What it Really Is*, *Ju Jitsu, the Japanese Physical Training and Self-Defense*, *The Complete Kano Jiu-Jitsu-Jiudo-the Official Jiu-Jitsu of the Japanese Government*, and *The Fighting Man of Japan: Training and Exercises of the Samurai*. The titles demonstrate the newness of the sport and the need to have explanatory texts that teach and elucidate the basic principles.

An additional point that I would like to add to support the argument that Lawrence specifically chooses jiu-jitsu is that the sport coincides with the naturist philosophy and the other intimate male scenes in the texts. We can draw a parallel between jiu-jitsu as a form of physical exercise that disciplines both the mind and the body and the German body culture movement that advocates the same. The men also wrestle without clothing, another allusion to the naturist philosophy. Similar to Lilly's massage of Aaron, the physical activity and creation of a definite "rhythm" in the execution of wrestling, as well as the men's sexual climax, bring about the characters' healing.

Furthermore, by choosing the title "Gladiatorial," Lawrence also invokes the Greek tradition of wrestling and homosocial friendship. He demonstrates that the cultural trends are not just practices of modernity, but that they have an ancient history that reinforces his need and pursuit of a genealogy for men. Emma Dench tells us that the Greeks practiced the sport of wrestling, and that the men often participated in the nude. Greek men privileged male homosocial relationships over heterosexual unions and serve as a significant model for Lawrence's understanding and depiction of friendships between men. Greek men cherished the intimate connections that they had with young boys and other men more than they valued the bond of marriage with women. The writer's inclusion of ancient Greek masculine rituals provides us with another example of how he repeatedly connects modern trends with ancient rituals of masculinity and

composes a narrative that seeks to establish and publicize a line of descent from the past to the present, which will legitimize his own philosophy and appeal for a “new order.”<sup>28</sup>

While the scene begins with the men experimenting with a form of physical exercise, their increased heart rate and attraction to one another culminates in what Lawrence describes as a highly homoerotic duel. The writer tells us that Gerald fastens the door so that no one can disturb or interrupt them, and then the men strip off their clothes. Naked, flushed, and entwined, they practice their “grips and throws” (234). They become accustomed “to each other’s rhythm.” Here again, we see Lawrence use the term rhythm in a sexualized scene, where the men are trying to find a rhythm in their individual and sexual lives. Practicing jiu-jitsu, where adjusting to your opponent’s rhythm is important, helps the men to come to understand and adjust their own rhythm in life, where they are both experiencing challenges. Lawrence writes, “They seemed to drive their white flesh deeper and deeper against each other, as if they would break into a oneness” (234). He suggests that Gerald and Birkin are able to coordinate their own rhythms to match each others, becoming in sync and one. The act of wrestling becomes a representation of the more intense and provocative act of sexual intercourse between the two men. Safe and secure in the masculine space of the Crich library, the men are able to experiment with their sexuality, test the limits of their physical stamina, and relieve themselves of the tension and stress that plague their lives.

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<sup>28</sup> Here Lawrence is of course tapping into a particular ethos of male homosexuality associated with the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and widely discussed by historians in recent years. Lawrence wasn’t writing in a vacuum here; the “new order” isn’t as new as he suggests.

The library offers them the space they need to try out new forms of sex and well being. It is a space designated for men and their intimate conversations and debates. Similar to the smoking room in the E.M. Forster novels discussed in the preceding chapter, the library has a comparable connotation and mystique. The library is an optimal setting for Birkin and Gerald to pledge their loyalty to one another, in the tradition of the old German knights. James Cowan claims that “Birkin’s concept of *Blutbrüderschaft* as an irrevocable male bond tantamount to marriage in sacramental commitment is a form for experiencing emotional closeness that includes sensual, physical awareness in which sexual feeling is elevated to noble ideals of male devotion and loyalty” (193).

The library serves as an ideal setting for the possible sacramental union of Birkin and Gerald. Robert Kerr lists it as one of the seven possible rooms set aside for the needs of gentlemen (115). Mark Girouard notes, however, that the room was not only used for somber study and diligent work. Libraries, he contends, were also used as “essential adjuncts to the entertainment of a house party” (180). While it serves as a repository for learning and research and a venue where business and social transactions are made, Lawrence demonstrates that it is also an extension of the boy’s public school and university in the gentleman’s home, a place where he can carry on the rituals of acquiring knowledge and constructing masculinity.

The physical exertion the wrestlers endure has several benefits for the men. Lawrence tells us that their bodies are spent with exhaustion and that the men lose consciousness (235). Again, Lawrence employs postcoital imagery as he writes, “And

Gerald's hand closed warm and sudden over Birkin's, they remained exhausted and breathless, the one hand clasped closely over the other" (236). Here, it is Gerald who reaches out to Birkin and confirms his unspoken desire for their union. The jiu-jitsu, which serves as a substitute for sexual intercourse and a method of healing, helps them to relax and forget their troubles for a minute; it physically relieves their bodies of pent-up anxiety and stress, and they share an intimate moment.

Although they both appreciate their steadfast friendship, as well as the beauty of each other's body, Gerald is not sure whether he can pledge *Blutbrüderschaft*, while Birkin is certain that there is more to life than traditional marriage. Throughout the text, he repeatedly tries to get Gerald to understand his point of view that committed male relationships can only bring them health and happiness. Birkin explains, "You've got to take down the love-and-marriage idea from its pedestal. We want something broader" (308). Contrary to Gerald, he believes that there is the opportunity for the relationship with a man to be "not the same – but equally important, equally creative, equally sacred, if you like" (308). Levenson explains that "Birkin and Gerald, of course, do not achieve this 'additional' ultimate relationship. Gerald declines the offer and then dies before Birkin can revive the prospect. Their *Blutbrüderschaft* and surrogate marriage remains an unrealized possibility, but that it is a possibility and that it is unrealized establish its importance within the unfolding configuration" (162). Although Lawrence suggests to the reader that Gerald has sexual feelings and desires for Birkin, the character does not allow himself to act on them and instead demonstrates how in his personal life he is not able to see past the traditional restraints of heterosexual marriage. Gerald cannot imagine

a new order for the social codes that have traditionally governed marriage and domestic life. Therefore, Lawrence sentences him to death.

Gerald's personal quest for a new order lies not within social codes, as it does for Birkin, but in updating the obsolete system that his father implemented and creating a new underground world where coal is removed quickly, efficiently, and for a greater profit. Gerald is the modern industrial magnate par excellence, a figure that Lawrence detested. The writer tells us, "Gerald was their high priest, he represented the religion they really felt. His father was forgotten already. There was a new world, a new order, strict, terrible, inhuman, but satisfying in its very destructiveness. The men were satisfied to belong to the great and wonderful machine, even whilst it destroyed them" (200). To Lawrence not all "new orders" are good. While Gerald is advanced in his thinking about mining technology and business, he does not hold progressive ideas about relationships. He cannot see alternative ways of living, as Birkin can. Without Gerald's consent to join him in an intimate relationship, Birkin instead must attempt to rethink his relationship with Ursula. If he is going to marry and have only a wife, he decides that they cannot have a set home. Birkin's last attempt to rebel against the domestic establishment, what he has described as "a whole community of mistrustful couples insulated in private houses or private rooms" (171), is to sell all of their earthly possessions and set off on an excursion, a practice that Lawrence also regularly employed in his own married life.

For Lawrence, the crisis that masculinity was undergoing could be remedied with an overhaul of how individuals thought about marriage and intimate relationships. Birkin

acts as a mouthpiece for Lawrence's theories on gender and social codes. He serves as an innovator and leader who is always trying out new ideas and theories. It is Birkin who suggests *Blutbrüderschaft*, who has learned the trick of having multiples "homes" for the intimate relationships in his life, and who understands the importance of the health of the mind, body, and soul through the practices of naturism and jiu-jitsu. After establishing the tension between Birkin and Gerald, Lawrence still feels that there was a need to continue investigating the dynamic of their relationship, which led him to create Aaron and Lilly, and later Clifford Chatterley and Oliver Mellors. With each rewriting, Lawrence comes closer and closer to understanding the relationship between man, masculine space, healthy living, and industry.

*Lady Chatterley's Lover* is Lawrence's final novel and his last attempt to revise his philosophy for a new order. The tone of the text is different from *Women in Love* and *Aaron's Rod*. It is as if Lawrence has finally come to terms with his life and his relationships with women. No longer is he the crazed and confrontational artist; age, traveling, and distance from the war have given him a new perspective. However, there is a cost. In a candid way, Lawrence confesses to the reader the insecurities and fears of men. Masculine spaces that were once represented as centers for male bonding and healing are now described as impotent and lonely. Incapable of recovery and healing, Clifford Chatterley and Oliver Mellors must find their own way, but inevitably end up alone.

Our discussion of space in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* begins where we left off, in the crucial setting of the industrial captain's library. Again, we see essential scenes for



the male characters set within a library, specifically Sir Clifford Chatterley's Wragby library, which serves as a fundamental masculine space in the work that Worthen believes "forever altered [Lawrence's] reputation" (349). Early in the novel, Lawrence establishes for the reader the significance of the estate and its place within the mining community. "Wragby was a long low old house in brown stone," Lawrence writes, "begun about the middle of the eighteenth century, and added on to till it was a warren of a place without much distinction. It stood on an eminence in a rather fine old park of oak trees, but alas, one could see in the near distance the chimney of Tevershall pit, with its clouds of steam and smoke" (12-13). Wragby is not distinctive; it is not beautiful. It serves its purpose and can be described as utilitarian at most. Whatever is found lacking in space at Wragby, it is added on without much thought about design or aesthetics. The fact that Lawrence tells the reader that Tevershall pit is always within sight of the estate suggests that it has an unwavering hold on the schedule and practices at Wragby.<sup>29</sup> To this point, Lawrence explains, "All these endless rooms that nobody used, all the Midlands routine, the mechanical cleanliness and the mechanical order! For the rest of the place seemed run by mechanical anarchy" (16). The term "mechanical anarchy" is an odd phrase. Like the mines, the house is set up to run without any regulation or government. The workers and systems put in place at the home have been there for so long that they do not need oversight. As owner of the mines and the estate, Clifford is invested in the "mechanical order," a very important distinction that Lawrence makes, as

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<sup>29</sup> In thinking about how Lawrence describes Tevershall pit always being within view of the estate and keeping the occupants on schedule, we might compare it to Big Ben in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Everywhere the characters go in the city of London, their schedule is maintained by the clock that proclaims each hour.

opposed to his previous references to a “new order” in *Women in Love* and *Aaron’s Rod*. And unlike Gerald, Clifford is not interested in revamping the mine’s systems and procedures. His only requirement is that they provide enough income for him and Connie to live comfortably at Wragby. Fernihough asserts that “[Clifford’s] own life effort is represented by the mines and the physical devastation they leave in their wake; he has impoverished the earth in the name of advancement” (178). The cost of that advancement is embodied in Clifford’s disability. The havoc that he and his family have wrenched on the land has also come back to punish the Chatterley lineage. George Levine reminds us that “What we first learn about Clifford is that he was shipped back to England from the war ‘more or less in bits.’ Like Frankenstein’s monster he is ‘more or less’ put together again. For Lawrence he is no longer human, but merely pieced together mechanical fragments” (234). Clifford is strapped to a mechanical chair that is his only source of mobility around the estate. Paralyzed from the waist down, he depends on the chair to ensure that he can have some semblance of an active life, although his relationship with his wife has become mechanical and routine as well. Like the mines and the estate, Clifford and Connie’s relationship is emotionless, automatic, and obligatory.

While in many ways Lawrence associates Clifford with the mechanical, he also demonstrates how the young man desperately wants to be a thinker and a writer. The library serves as a space where Clifford retreats from the gaze of the house servants and the pit bosses and where he can forget about his disability and turn his attention to the books and papers at his desk. The space also serves as a room for conversation and

debate among Clifford and his visitors. Clifford looks forward to the opportunities when men call at Wragby and indulge in the *tête-à-tête* the young “invalid” craves.

Surprisingly, though, Lawrence reveals that Connie is present in the library during the men’s debate. “The four men smoked. And Connie sat there and put another stitch in her sewing... Yes, she sat there! She had to sit mum. She had to be quiet as a mouse, not to interfere with the immensely important speculations of these highly-mental gentlemen. But she had to be there. They didn’t get on so well without her; their ideas didn’t flow so freely” (33). Connie’s presence in the library prevents impotence in the men and also establishes another example of Sedgwick’s heterosexual love triangle. Unable to make conversation without her there, the men depend on the woman’s presence in the masculine space as a source of gender security and intelligence. Clifford, in particular, “was much more hedgey and nervous, he got cold feet much quicker in Connie’s absence, and the talk didn’t run” (33). Lawrence’s language pokes fun at the men in the library and makes them appear weak and ineffective. The narrator of the text also mocks the subjects of their conversation with his sardonic description. In this early scene in the novel, Lawrence suggests that the masculine space of the library has undergone a significant transformation. No longer a site for male healing, bonding, and the exchange of knowledge, because of the insecurity of men, it has become a space characterized by impotence and ignorance.

Once Connie tires of Clifford, his company, and what she sees as his empty dream of becoming a writer, she has Mrs. Bolton, her husband’s caregiver, take her place. Clifford soon invites his new caretaker into his library for conversation and

entertainment. She also serves as his secretary and gossip source, as well as his playmate for cards and chess. Lawrence takes another stab at Clifford when he provides details about Clifford and Bolton's relationship. Accordingly he writes, "Connie heard long conversations going on between the two. Or rather, it was mostly Mrs. Bolton talking. She had unloosed to him the stream of gossip. It was Mrs. Gaskell and George Eliot and Miss Mitford all rolled in one, with a great deal more, that these women left out" (93-94). Referencing the Victorian women writers, Lawrence implies that Clifford's efforts are feminine, outdated, and based on women's chitchat. Miracky concludes that "Lawrence's representation of these conversations as akin to women's gossip casts even more aspersions on Clifford's masculinity, and the placement of the discourse on the novel in the midst of this tattletale scene suggests that Clifford's fiction is not much more than secondhand scandalmongering" (137). Uninterested in the mines and the power and riches that, like Gerald, he can gain from them, Clifford seeks to demonstrate his masculinity by becoming a popular writer. Lawrence, however, casts him as a hack who gets his material from the village gossipmonger. Clifford's relationship with Mrs. Bolton is emasculating, a sign of his impotence. The fact that the hired help physically cares for Clifford disgusts Lawrence, who sees the body as a repository for truth. Lawrence has no sympathy for Clifford, a broken man who is unable to keep the attention and attraction of his wife and who can only find friendship and entertainment with a paid employee. Fearing that he might end up in the same situation because of his

own illness, Lawrence loathes his own impotence and disability, especially at this point in his life, when his tuberculosis increasingly was becoming a handicap.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike the Crich library, the Wragby library does not host wrestling matches or spirited debates. It is left to house only the conversations between a paralyzed war veteran and an old caretaker. The space is devoid of the power and significance that it held for previous generations of Chatterley men. The war has left Clifford broken and dependent on women to take care of him. He has no choice but to invite them into a once sanctified masculine space or sit there alone and helpless. Because of his injuries he has no hope for a meaningful future and no hope for an heir to the Chatterley estate. Unlike the previous novels, there is no attempt at alternative medicine – heliotherapy, massage, etc. The only revitalization that occurs is for Lady Chatterley through her connection to Mellors and her renewed sexuality. There is no hope for Clifford; Lawrence's characterization of him and his work in the Wragby library reinforces our reading of him as a broken man. Try as he may to control the household through mechanical order, it will not be enough to hold onto his wife, or to conceive a child, signs of viability. Instead, the only purposeful and meaningful initiative he can oversee is the rebuilding of the Wragby woods, but even that undermines his authority and reinforces his helplessness.

Separated by space and by purpose, Clifford's library and Mellors's gamekeeper's hut offer the reader an opportunity to analyze competing masculine spaces. The hut is set in the Wragby woods, a barren wasteland after the war because

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<sup>30</sup> See Worthen page 376.

timber was cut and given to war effort. All of the wild game “had been killed off during the war, and the wood had been left unprotected” (39). Upon Clifford’s return, he promises to restore the wood to its original grandeur and hires a gamekeeper to look after the grounds. Lawrence draws a connection between the trees of the wood, Old England, and Clifford’s legacy and his heir. He writes, “Clifford loved the wood; he loved the old oak-trees. He felt they were his own through generations. He wanted to protect them. He wanted this place inviolate, shut off from the world” (39). Clifford vows to preserve the trees. He tells Connie, “But we’ve preserved it. Except for us it would go...it would be gone already, like the rest of the forest. One must preserve some of the Old England!” (40). Similar to the experience of characters in other Lawrence novels, Clifford’s desire to preserve Old England is challenged by the modernization of Europe and the effects of the war. Paralyzed and impotent because of that same war, Clifford realizes that if he cannot produce a son to become the heir of Wragby, the only contribution he can make to his mother country is the resurrection of the forgotten forest. The woods are a promising source of masculinity and virility for Clifford. They give him hope that as the proprietors of Wragby, he and Connie can sustain a relationship and that he can restore the beauty and magnificence of the forest. Because his plans for the forest require a gamekeeper, Clifford risks his own relationship with Connie, who finds an escape from her invalid husband by retreating to the woods and the gamekeeper’s hut, where she finds another masculine space; however, this one she finds more intriguing because she is initially not invited there and not depended on to insure that men feel manly.

Deep within the forest lies the gamekeeper's cottage and hut. Like the library, the hut is a masculine space; however, unlike Clifford's work room, Lawrence portrays it as a place of real labor. Providing to the reader a detailed description of the masculine space, Lawrence writes:

The hut was quite cosy, paneled with unvarnished deal, having a little rustic table and stool besides the chair, and a carpenter's bench, then a big box, tools, new boards, nails; and many things hung from pegs: axe, hatchet, traps, things in sacks, his coat. It had no window, the light came through the open door. It was a jumble, but also it was a sort of little sanctuary. (82)

Lawrence describes Mellors's work space as replete with tools and equipment for his occupation. Unlike Clifford's work space in the library, Lawrence gives the reader the sense that within Mellors's hut there is bustling activity and that the work is admirable. Morag Shiach contends that "the possible recovery of 'manhood' through labour is imagined, through the activities of the gamekeeper" (98). Full to the brim with the gamekeeper's gear, the hut is a male space that stands in stark contrast to Clifford's library. Here Lawrence uses the word "sanctuary," a significant classification. For Mellors the space is a sanctuary because he stores all of his belongings there that ensure his success at his occupation. He has pledged himself to a life of celibacy following his return from the war and the demise of his marriage. The hut provides him with work to keep himself busy and with solitude that brings him peace.

Mellors's sanctuary is in jeopardy of being invaded once Connie finds shelter there from the damp woods, refuge from her loneliness and oppression at Wragby, and protection from the social codes of the upper class. She is attracted to the masculine space and the man who works there. Although they have a relationship together and he makes a key for her to use to access the hut whenever she wants, Mellors, as a member of the working class, must sacrifice his own privacy and the sanctity of his space.

Lawrence demonstrates this point when he tells us, "He had made the little hut tidy, put the little table and chair near the fireplace, left a little pile of kindling and small logs, and put the tools and traps away as far as possible, effacing himself" (105). Mellors feels that he must alter his space and obliterate his presence and the work that he does in order to make Connie comfortable, all of which is at the expense of his isolation from a world that he wishes to escape and his attempt to restore his individuality and masculinity following the war and a messy divorce. Although he enjoys the sexual relationship that they have together, it is clear that he resents his space being invaded by the woman.

While the couple conceives a child together, Lawrence still reminds the reader of Mellors's unhappiness and how he laments for his lost space when he writes, "She had connected him up again, when he had wanted to be alone. She had cost him that bitter privacy of a man who at last wants only to be alone" (110). "A man could no longer be private and withdrawn. The world allows no hermits" (111). Mellors's life has been altered, and the silence, seclusion, and sanctity of his hut has been taken away from him. Lawrence claims that the male space that represents hard work and dedicated service is an impossible dream in the modern world.



Who is to blame for the demise of the male space of the hut and the impotency of the library? Articulating a definite change in Lawrence's philosophy from what Birkin and Lilly touted in the previous works, Mellors argues that the real tension lies in the opposition between the pastoral ideal of the hut and the world of mechanization:

It was not woman's fault, nor even love's fault, nor the fault of sex. The fault lay there, out there, in those evil electric lights and diabolical rattlings of engines. There, in the world of the mechanical greedy, greedy mechanism and mechanized greed, sparkling with lights and gushing hot metal and roaring with traffic, there lay the vast evil thing, ready to destroy the wood, and the bluebells would spring no more. All vulnerable things must perish under the rolling and running of iron. (111)

No longer blaming women for the woes of mankind, Lawrence identifies industry and the mechanical men like Clifford and Gerald as the forces behind the destructive empire for the devastation not only of the woods, but also masculine space. Lawrence attempts to make amends to the female sex when, placing Connie within the library where the men debate and the hut where Mellors works, the author invites the woman into the spaces.

At the end of the novel, the reader is still unsure about the fate of the couple. Lydia Blanchard contends that "as the story of two lovers, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is curiously unfinished. The future of Mellors and Lady Chatterley is unresolved, and in 'A Propos' Lawrence makes clear the uncertainty that the two will ever be freed from their previous marriages to come together again" (72). Yet Mellors is still attempting to live

on the land and searching for the answer to the question of how men can become men again. Worthen tells us that the story “ends not with one of Lawrence’s debating and debatable endings, but with an angry voice, solitary yet confident: Mellors speaking out about what is wrong with the world” (367). It is not surprising that Mellors retreats to a rural farm where he can escape the noise and lights of the mines and factories. Perhaps there he will find the silence and sanctuary that he craves in male space.

With an understanding of how Lawrence believed a new order was possible in society, we can also see how much a revisioning of space was part of his formula for success. To Lawrence, male space is crucial for the sexual, social, and physical well-being of men. He believes that men can derive power from it and that it can also provide a setting for sexual experimentation and healing. Without it men will lose their quest to restore their sense of self-worth and vitalized being.

Thinking about masculine space and reading this group of texts alongside each other complicates and enriches Lawrence criticism in that it adds a new dimension and angle from which to consider the writer’s attachment to the past and interpretation of state of man at the beginning of the twentieth century. While it is one thing to argue that Lawrence has nostalgia for the Victorian past, we also have to identify substantial examples of how he conveys his love and longing for “old England.” Lawrence wishes to remind men about their past vitality and strength. He attempts to show that they have a rich history of masculine rituals and traditions that bond them together and that these ceremonial rites are just as important or even more important than the marital bonds that they share with their wives. We, then, can read Lawrence’s representation of men and

modern masculinity as part of a call to action on the part of the author. What the writer wants most for British men is for them to live an organic and revitalized life. The only avenue he believes will lead them there is male space and homosocial relationship.

Although the writer incorporates modern trends in healing and living to suggest his character's participation in the avant-garde movement, what those activities actually represent are ancient rituals of male bonding and community building. Reminding his readers about the long history of male homosocial relationships and space, Lawrence attempts to prompt readers to recall the rich ancestry and uses it to argue for a return to an organic past during a time when the future of masculinity and male space is unstable and uncertain.

In focusing on private masculine space, Lawrence suggests that the sites provide men safety, freedom, and healing from the chaotic and sickening atmosphere of the modernized, industrialized village and city. Space is an essential component in Lawrence's vision of masculinity. The gender-specific space makes it possible for men to participate in male homosocial and homosexual behavior that in the early twentieth century would be suspect because of the laws against male sodomy. Masculine space then is essential to the recovery of masculinity and male homosocial community; at the same time, Lawrence makes it the cornerstone of his new order. Lawrence's real value to literary criticism lies in his interpretation of the gender anxiety and crisis of space that he felt plagued the modern era. Demonstrating the long tradition of organic manhood and homosociality, Lawrence seeks to continue promoting the re-enactment of male rituals

that materialize through masculine space as a life giving and revitalizing force in his paradigm for a new order.

Resisting changes in gender codes and the segregation of space, Lawrence refuses to accept modernism's attempt to remodel society and interior design. Instead, the writer reminds that reader, especially the male reader, that men can still find refuge from the modern era and support for a life that seeks to uphold "old fashioned" ideas of living. By pointing to the history of masculine space, friendship, and homosocial activity, Lawrence argues that his point of view is neither outdated nor trendy and that his way of life and desire for a more organic and revitalized masculine existence is part of a timeless tradition of men.

**CHAPTER IV**

**ORWELLIAN MASCULINITY:**

**THE SUFFERING MALE BODY AND**

**THE PHYSICAL TRAUMA OF MASCULINE SPACE**

On the day when King George V's body passed through London on its way to Westminster, I happened to be caught for an hour or two in the crowd in Trafalgar Square. It was impossible, looking about one then, not to be struck by the physical degeneracy of modern England. The people surrounding me were not working-class people for the most part; they were the shopkeeper-commercial-traveller type, with a sprinkling of the well-to-do. But what a set they looked! Puny limbs, sickly faces, under the weeping London sky! (*The Road to Wigan Pier* 97)

Three days before leaving for the northern mining villages on 31 January 1936, Orwell takes a snapshot of the state of England. It is an image that he carries with him and is never lost in his future research and documentation. He includes the description in his report on working class miners in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, where he takes a moment to remember and record his thoughts on an inauspicious day in England's history. The memory of the day in Trafalgar Square is triggered by the images of the miners and his interest in their employment and physical wellbeing. He dismisses the notion that the miners' "prevailing bad physique is due solely to unemployment, for it is probably that the physical average has been declining all over England for a long time past, and not

merely among the unemployed in the industrial areas” (97). Although he admits that he cannot prove this statistically, he argues that it is a problem the British are forced to consider when they see the condition of the men around them. As he continues to look around him at the crowd gathered in the heart of London, he laments, “Where are the monstrous men with chests like barrels and moustaches like the wings of eagles who strode across my childhood’s gaze twenty or thirty years ago? Buried, I suppose, in the Flanders mud” (98). Orwell believes that the Great War is only partly to blame for the decline of the English physique, after it “carefully selected the million best men in England and slaughtered them, largely before they had had time to breed” (98). The culprit he sees as responsible is the nation’s reliance “on unhealthy ways of living, i.e. to industrialism.” More specifically, he points to the way in which the nation has come to rely on “cheap substitutes for everything.” Orwell concludes, “We may find in the long run that tinned food is a deadlier weapon than the machine gun.” The declining male population deeply saddens Orwell, who sees before his very eyes the destruction of his sex. His dismay only strengthens and heightens his memory of the past and the pride of British masculinity. The scene reveals how Orwell viewed the working-class suffering male body, which he finds at this moment in history lacking in strength, vigor, and stamina. He regrets that the great men of the British empire are no more. His interest and regret are not just a passing phase or fleeting comment. Orwell spent much of his time and energy in his literary work exploring what he saw as the devolution of the British man from the Victorian to the modern period.

Malcolm Muggeridge observes that what made Orwell unique among leftists of his generation was that he was a revolutionary in love with the past. Orwell experiences nostalgia for a lost era. He mourns the past in his work, while he seeks to recreate experiences for himself that reverberate for him with the meaning of British masculinity. Orwell's ability to move and travel played an integral role in his writing process. Peter Stansky and William Abrahams note, "Considering that Orwell was a man who yearned to put down roots, there is a special poignancy in the way he was virtually on the move, never quite coming to rest or at home anywhere for an extended, uninterrupted period at any time throughout his life" (92). With each trip comes a new book project and a new quest to extend his imagination and understanding of British masculinity.

Additionally, Orwell's travels and exploits represent the writer's attempt to establish his own masculinity, as well as a masculine manifesto that dictates how a man's masculinity is established through physical suffering. Unable to fight in WWI, Orwell makes up for the lost experience by creating his own opportunities through his travels to demonstrate and prove his manhood. With each assignment the work becomes more grueling and the danger more apparent. Orwell guides us through the labyrinth of challenges that the working class faces, while at the same time he presents his reader with a revealing glimpse into his assessment of the state of British masculinity in the latter half of the modern period.

In each of his reportage texts, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, and *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell chooses to participate in jobs that take place in harsh locations and also have harmful effects on the male body. While we think

of Orwell as a writer with a canon of writing that is vast, it is uncanny how he restages images of male suffering at work in scene after scene. By putting his own body through torture and recounting the painful and destructive suffering that the men go through on a daily basis, Orwell establishes his own definition of masculinity. For Orwell masculinity emerges through actions, rigors, and torture, and its ritual enactment is a spectacle of self-destruction.

Orwell's brand of masculinity and his method for conveying it to the reader are significantly different than the other two writers in this dissertation. Orwell's emphasis on physical suffering and wounding leave little room for doubt about how Orwell's desirable attributes of masculinity differ from Forster and Lawrence's. Still, the journalist's technique and use of literary non-fiction to convey his story of the state of masculinity in the time between the First and Second World Wars is significant. Unlike Forster and Lawrence, Orwell is a character and also the narrator in his texts. While not more or less complex than the others' work, it does change the way that one has to read both the story and the writer. Because Orwell takes an active part in the working, the suffering, and the reporting, we can read his publication as a spectacle, a performance in and of itself and that takes into account a lifetime of training and practicing to be a strong British man.

Orwell did not come to this point of view on masculinity overnight. A combination of the British public school system and his travels around the globe prepared the way. Later in life, Orwell set about creating his own interpretation of life at school, which provides us with a useful model to understand Orwell's particular



masochistic version of masculinity. Written in 1940 and posthumously published, Orwell's essay "Such, Such Were the Joys" is an exaggeration of his life as a young boy at Crossgates, the fictional representation of St. Cyprians, the school that the writer attended before moving on to Wellington and then Eton.<sup>31</sup> Several fellow students of Orwell's, including writer Cyril Connolly,<sup>32</sup> have confirmed the creative elements of the tale. The startling and disturbing quality of the essay lies in how Orwell recounts how he was beat on multiple occasions for wetting his bed (and for admitting that the beating did not hurt) and for not performing well in class (14-15, 22). Although he does not enjoy the beatings, Orwell argues in the text that they make him a "good" boy, and that they will make him a better man. Here, in this representation of Orwell's young life, we can see already the beginning of how the writer links pain and suffering with masculinity. I believe that the essay is a core text for Orwell's vision of masculinity as a spectacle of suffering and crystallizes for the reader one of the writer's central themes.

Set within the all-boys school, the story follows Orwell, the boy and first-person narrator, who tells us that he was among the less privileged students and therefore not in the good graces of the headmaster and mistress. Instead, Orwell, a student on scholarship and with academic promise, suggests that the school owners used him in order to garner prestige for the school by boosting the number of students accepted into prominent public institutions. The writer goes on to describe a moment when a fellow student tried for a scholarship at another school, but came back feeling unsuccessful. A day or two

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<sup>31</sup> Orwell, George. "Such, Such Were the Joys." In *Such, Such Were the Joys*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1953.

<sup>32</sup> See Cyril Connolly's *Enemies of Promise*. New York: Persea Books, Inc., 1983.

later, the boy “received a severe beating for idleness” (22-23). He later told Orwell, “I wish I’d had that caning before I went up for the exam” (22-23). Sadly, Orwell agrees with him. The beatings become a part of everyday life, and the children begin to expect and value them as part of their education and training. Accordingly Orwell writes, “[The headmaster and mistress] had chose to befriend me, and their friendship included canings, reproaches and humiliations, which were good for me and saved me from an office stool” (29). While Orwell uses satire to demonstrate the abuse that the boys endured at the hands of the headmaster and mistress, we cannot but see the long-term damage that this treatment may have caused. In the story, Orwell, although not a member of the working class, is relegated to the role of a lower-class citizen in the hierarchy at St. Cyprian’s. The headmaster and mistress play the role of tyrannical rulers and demonstrate to the boys of higher status how members of a lower caste should be treated. Even in his account of early child development, we see Orwell suggesting that pain is a necessary part of becoming a “good” boy and eventually a strong man in British society. Here Orwell also articulates how a culture of masculinity as a system of dominance and torture is instilled in England’s ruling class.

Anthropologist David Gilmore cites the British public school as a system within the social stratum that established trials for the young boy to meet in order to achieve “true manhood.” There, he contends, the route to manhood was attained through “a cruel ‘trial by ordeal’ including physical violence and terrorization by elder males, [which] provided a passage to a ‘social state of manhood’ that their parents thought could be achieved in no other way. Supposedly, this harsh training prepared young

Oxbridge aristocrats for the self-reliance and fortitude needed to run the British empire” (17-18). From an early age, Orwell received instruction on how to be a British “man.” Orwell’s education, like that of many boys of the middle class, celebrated the Victorian ideal of manhood. At St. Cyprians, as well as at Eton, Orwell learned and practiced the rituals of manhood. One such ritual involved the social structure known as “fagging.” Every new young man was required to fag, which meant to be at the mercy of members of the College Sixth Form, the top ten Scholars, who could be recognized by their distinctive robes. The older boys ordered the new students around and beckoned them with long cries of “Here.” According to Gordon Bowker, “the shameful fag was expected to respond or risk being beaten” (Bowker 55-56). Within this enclosed society of adolescent boys, fueled by the turbulent relationships between the Sixth Form and their fags, an intense emotional subculture arose, which was charged even more by the young men’s frustrated sexuality. Orwell’s training at Eton was good preparation for his future participation in male homosocial groups that he encountered in Burma and when he returned to England and began his research and travels.

As a male writer during a period of rapid alterations in social and gender codes, Orwell presents his most concise interpretation of British masculinity in his three book-length works of literary nonfiction. Orwell provides his readers with an analysis of the common man in masculine work spaces and his work environment, such as the Hotel X kitchen in Paris, the coal mine shafts of the North, and the war trenches in Catalonia, Spain. In order to understand fully the state of the working man, Orwell literally travels underground to remote and intolerable spaces to investigate not only the harsh working

conditions, but also to see for himself the result of the influx of material culture, industrialization, and war: the male body in severe decline. Battered and broken, the working male body and English masculinity are no longer the pride of the western world, according to the writer. Throughout this chapter, I argue that initially Orwell was primarily seeking adventurous material for his next literary work. By inhabiting the masculine work spaces and working alongside the men, he experienced their hardships first hand and was able to go beyond just recounting the facts and figures of the poor and downtrodden. He testifies to how the modern working man must endure the most extreme conditions and suffering at work and gains insight into what it means to be manly in British culture. After repeatedly finding scenes that describe the physical torture and suffering of the male body, I believe that we can identify male mortification as a central theme in these texts. Within each work, the men must contend with harsher environments. Orwell emphasizes the decay and rotting that surround the men as they work for the ruling class.

Orwell's repetition of certain characteristics of suffering – working in extremely cramped spaces, in tremendously hot temperatures, in filthy conditions, made distinct by references to decay and death, and enduring physical and mental injuries to the body – establishes the particular “rites” that each man must enact through actions, rigors, and tortures. The work and labor that the men do then becomes a performance of their masculinity. According to Judith Butler, “‘performance’ is not a singular ‘act’ or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death

controlling and compelling the shape of production” (95). Gilmore specifically describes how cultures identify rituals of manhood. He writes that “people in so many places regard the state of being a ‘real man’ or ‘true man’ as uncertain or precarious, a prize to be wrested through struggle, and [that is] why so many societies build up an elusive or exclusionary image of manhood through cultural sanctions, ritual, or trials of skill and endurance” (1). In Orwell’s understanding of masculinity, the performance of work, labor, and bodily suffering are key elements. The ways in which the workers’ bodies are mutilated and abused are badges of honor. Orwell sympathizes with how the male body is deformed in visible ways. For him the spectacle of self-destruction is the spectacle of masculinity.

Orwell focuses on masculine work spaces and exposes modern cultural forces such as the conspicuous consumption of luxury hotel guests, the industrialization of the north and increasing demand for mass quantities of coal, and the absurdity of the fighting conditions in Spain, all of which have a devastating effect on the modern man’s body and psychological wellbeing and continuously drive the worker into decline. While the working-class men realize that their occupations are harming them, they cannot quit for fear of unemployment and emasculation. Orwell observes their hardship and suffering and makes it the focus of his writing.

Ben Clarke believes that “the working men that Orwell idealizes are figured as heterosexual, virile and, as such, as ‘real’ men. In contrast, the middle classes are frequently figured as sterile or homosexual” (82). Orwell’s concentration on the plongeurs, the miners, and the soldiers allows him to describe specific work that evokes

traditional images of masculinity, while his admiration takes the form of a humble declaration of the inferiority of his class. Moreover, Daphne Patai suggests, “we must recognize that what he admires is not the working class’s ability to survive in adverse conditions but, rather, the inherent manliness, as he sees it, of working class men’s way of life” (77). However, Orwell also values the working man’s ability to contend with the challenging working conditions. He expresses this admiration directly in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, but also indirectly in the other texts. The admiration stems from his own feelings of inadequacy and emasculation at times when he feels that he cannot accomplish the same amount of work and/or tolerate the awful conditions. In taking these writing projects, Orwell can accomplish a dual purpose. He can participate, even if it almost kills him, and prove his masculinity, validate his ego, and accomplish feats that he and others of his generation felt were lost to them, while at the same time, he testifies to England in print what “real” men do to make an honest living.

Although the reader can quickly be captivated by Orwell’s experiential writing, his crisp prose and eye for detail, one must be careful and conscientious and take note when we see Orwell begin to blur the line between reporter and a writer. Taking on the jobs of the hotel plongeur, coal miner, and Spanish Civil War soldier, Orwell enters the masculine space, gathers his research, and quickly escapes back to bourgeois respectability. As Louis Menand reminds his readers, “Orwell was not a reporter or a sociologist. He was an advocate. He had very definite political opinions, and promoting them was his reason for writing” (4). Along with an increasing number of critics and scholars who have investigated Orwell and his work, Menand contends that the popular

understanding of Orwell is in fact a misrepresentation of what he really supported and the kind of writer he was (2). Biographers such as Bernard Crick and Jeffrey Meyers have gone to great lengths to demonstrate how Orwell fabricated evidence in some of his most famous works such as “A Hanging” and “Shooting an Elephant,” not to mention the texts that I discuss in this chapter. “The point is,” Menand concisely argues, “that he used writing in a literary, not a documentary, way: he wrote in order to make you see what he wanted you to see, to persuade” (4). Orwell was first and foremost a writer, luring his readers into agreement with him by using specific literary techniques to earn their trust, establish his credibility and value as an author, and earn a livable wage; only secondarily was he a political activist. What then is Orwell trying to make his readers “see” by taking us down into the labyrinth of the hotel kitchen, the coal mines, and the battleground trenches? While he tells us that he wants to expose his readers to the dangers of industrialization and the plight of the working class, he also establishes his own rhetoric of masculinity in crisis as a passive ritual of pain and destruction to the male body. While many scholars agree that Orwell’s work is not “just” reportage, few have gone on to find ways into the texts and perform literary critiques. Looking for continuity between the texts, I find Orwell restaging the scene of suffering and making it more debilitating and more complicated with each turn of the screw.

Orwell plays into the rhetoric of the crisis of masculinity that became widespread during the modernist period. In the early 1930s, in the aftermath of women gaining the right to vote and entering the workforce in large numbers, Orwell chooses to focus specifically on masculine spaces and occupations that excluded women. Also, with the

decline of the British empire around the world and the feeling of England's loss of power and control over world affairs, white British men begin to be decentered. While Sally Robinson focuses on American men during the late 1960s and that period's "crisis of masculinity," her discussion of masculinity and the male wounded body helps us to understand how authors use images of "wounded white men, manufactured traumas, and metaphorical pains" (6). She writes, "I stress the 'manufactured' and 'metaphorical' nature of these bodily traumas in order to insist that such representations function in the service of certain social, political, and artistic ends, and to insist, as well, that there is something irresistible about the logic whereby white male angst gets represented in bodily terms" (6). We can then read Orwell as a cultural critic of the state of manhood during the modernist period. His representation of white working-class masculinity as victimized and inhabiting a wounded body can bring men back to center stage and take the emphasis off of women. "Such a move," Robinson argues of her American sources, "draws not only on the persuasive force of corporeal pain but also on an identity politics of the dominant. The logic through which the bodily substitutes for the political, and the individual for the social and institutional, reveals that the 'marking' of whiteness and masculinity has already been functioning as a strategy through which white men negotiate the widespread critique of their power and privilege" (6). Orwell's discussion of masculinity and the wounded working class man accomplishes the task, according to Robinson, of "*recentering* white masculinity by *decentering* it" (12).

Although there is the hesitancy to identify a "crisis of masculinity," we can discuss the rhetorical strategies that Orwell employs to suggest what he sees as the state



of masculinity in England. While I have already touched on how we might think about how the work that the men do is a performance of their masculinity, we also need to consider how Orwell's attention to the wounded body in crisis is performative. Before Orwell brings the male workers to life in his work, they are hidden beneath the surface, their work and suffering ignored. Orwell turns their work into a performance because he "uncovers" them, so to speak, before the reader's very eyes. The ruling class, clearly in charge of each group of men Orwell portrays, marginalize and aid in hiding working-class virility and masculinity. Orwell makes their suffering visible and in doing so creates a spectacle of their masculinity. His use of powerful imagery and metaphor, as well as the power he uses to command the descriptions of the masculine spaces, persuasively conveys a sense of trauma and suffering. The descriptions of the wounds that the men have and the oppression and repression that they endure in their work spaces are central to Orwell's announcement of the crisis of British masculinity.

### **The Den of Maniacs**

It is a fairly trivial story, and I can only hope that it has been interesting in the same way as a travel diary is interesting. I can at least say, here is the world that awaits you if you are ever penniless. (*Down and Out in Paris and London* 189)

In the last lines of *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), Orwell labels his work "a fairly trivial story." The writer makes the "trivial" matter in offering readers a

glimpse into the men's world of debilitatingly hard work, starvation, and physical exhaustion within the complex system of the masculinized Parisian hotel kitchen. Carl Freedman notes that "*Down and Out* in one of its aspects, is clearly intended to force the bourgeois reader to appreciate the striking and disgusting facts which constitute a large part of his society but which he would prefer not to hear about" (41). I would add that he also forces the same bourgeois reader to acknowledge and appreciate how the *plongeur* suffers both physically and mentally from the conditions of the hotel kitchen and the oppressive management. However, I would not call Orwell's rendering a factual account, but rather a rhetorical performance.

The kitchen, which in the bourgeois home would have been characterized as feminine, is run with an extreme amount of testosterone and machismo in the Parisian hotel. P.M. Singh suggests that "Orwell came forward to strip the false, romantic and sentimental aura off Paris" (62), and in doing so tells "the story of social outcasts, economically wretched, mentally weak and physically decrepit. It is a saga of human suffering, narrated by one who had the privilege of experiencing it himself" (63). Orwell characterizes it as a masculine space and concentrates all of his energy on making us see the torture that he and his fellow workers endure on a daily basis. While it is clear that the yelling and screaming, cursing and ordering that the men participate in is a performance of their masculinity, Orwell suggests that their suffering is also part of how they prove themselves as real men.

Orwell, the writer, is the main "character" of the text. He creates a semi-fictional "I" in *Down and Out*, a naïve and literal-minded but frank narrator who is indefatigable

in his attempt to communicate the sensations of those who work in unthinkable conditions. Orwell attempts to relate to the reader every image and offense to the senses that he encounters within the hotel. He is both a worker and a recorder of the sights, sounds, and of course smells of the space. On his first day as a *plongeur*, or dishwasher at the Hotel X, the writer describes it as “a vast, grandiose place with a classical façade, and at one side a little, dark doorway like a rat-hole, which was the service entrance” (49). Throughout the text, Orwell illustrates the kitchen space as a dirty, dark, and stiflingly hot labyrinth, where men are constantly yelling curses at one another.

*Down and Out* sets the stage for Orwell’s repetition of scenes of working-class male suffering. His time spent in the Hotel X and on the streets makes a significant impression on his thinking and his writing. Everywhere he looks, following his experience in Paris, he sees the same scenario, working-class men suffering from the debilitating environment that they are trapped in and from the class system and social codes that keep them ensnared. Orwell’s repetition of the scene suggests that he is in some way gripped by its meaning and significance and fixated on the imagery, activity, and suffering. While the texts that follow *Down and Out* seem vastly different in setting, character, and purpose, there is a pronounced continuity in how Orwell represents the spectacle of masculinity and suffering at the hands of the ruling class.

We get our first glimpse of the kitchen in *Down and Out* on Orwell’s first day of work, when the chef du personnel takes him on a tour of the work space:

He led me down a winding staircase into a narrow passage, deep underground, and so low that I had to stoop in places. It was stiflingly hot

and very dark, with only dim, yellow bulbs several yards apart. There seemed to be miles of dark labyrinthine passages – actually, I suppose, a few hundred yards in all – that reminded one queerly of the lower decks of a liner; there were the same heat and cramped space and warm reek of food, and a humming, whirring noise (it came from the kitchen furnaces) just like the whirl of engines. We passed doorways which let out sometimes a shouting of oaths, sometimes the red glare of a fire, once a shuddering draught from an ice chamber. (50)

Every day, Orwell contends with the treacherous conditions of the underground hell. He describes his space as a “cellar below a cellar,” too low for him “to stand quite upright,” with temperatures at least 110 degrees and sometimes reaching as high as 130 degrees (50). The heat forces the men to drink large quantities during the day to stave off their nausea from the heat (57). The volatile space of the underground kitchen plays a vital role in the mood of the workers. The mixture of cramped, dark, and hot work spaces creates an explosive atmosphere, where the workers are quick to erupt into curses and expletives. His intense focus on the sheer brutality of the space and the workers suggests that he sees them as being treated like beasts relegated to work under the surface. Orwell reports that he worked from seven in the morning to a quarter past nine at night completing an endless list of washing, polishing, and fetching (51), which suggests that the kitchen staff is overworked and underpaid by an abusive management system. By providing the elaborate account of his first tour of the underground kitchen, Orwell sets the stage for his later discussion of the abuse that goes on in the unbearable atmosphere.

The debilitating spatial environment at the Hotel X also encourages the management in their abusive and unforgiving practices. Orwell argues that rather than try to relieve some of the strain on the workers, management intensifies the situation even more and instigates more problems for the workers. The managers rarely allow workers to get a day off from work because of the constant turnover of workers who do not show up for their shifts. During these intensive hours, the managers only allow the lower staff to eat the leavings of the higher employees, but provide each worker with two liters of wine on the principle that it would be stolen if they did not willingly supply it (52). While the workers are clearly starving, the wine helps to satiate them, while at the same time it keeps them inebriated and passive. In addition to the long hours and poor food, the hotel kitchen management is also verbally abusive to its employees. They constantly and publicly curse them and demean them. The entire atmosphere breeds what Orwell describes as a “den of maniacs” (58). He writes, “twelve cooks skipped to and fro, their faces dripping sweat in spite of their white caps. Round that were counters where a mob of waiters and *plongeurs* clamoured with trays. Scullions, naked to the waist, were stoking the fires and scouring huge copper saucepans with sand. Everyone seemed to be in a hurry and a rage” (51). The constant motion and excitement coupled with the heat and pressure to perform sends the workers into a constant delirium.

For the modern reader, the text is both titillating and extreme. Orwell demonstrates how the workers are pushed to the breaking point by the oppressive work conditions. Orwell’s language – “den of maniacs” and “mob of waiters” – suggests that the men are crazed by the conditions they work in every day. The writer uses

descriptions and metaphors of mental instability to emphasize that the men in the hotel kitchen are suffering from the work that they do.

Given his background and political investments, one might think that Orwell would be appalled by the totalitarian management system that controls the workers in the Hotel X. However, he surprisingly sees it as a *necessary* evil. Through his observations and participation in male homosocial working communities, Orwell describes how the work and suffering that the men encounter enhanced their masculinity. Orwell essentially is arguing to his readers that the more the more pain they go through, the more they stand to gain in both his and the public's perception of their virile masculinity.

Throughout his life, Orwell presented himself as a defender of socialism and an enemy of totalitarianism. However, his support of the tyrannical management practices at the Hotel X suggests a contradiction to his writings and the public's understanding of his philosophy. In each of the texts I discuss, Orwell provides a discussion of the hierarchical systems that are put in place by the authorities that are in power. Although this is Orwell's first published work, several years before his more overtly political texts, he still shows interest in the dynamics of workplace politics, revealing the tyranny of the managers at the hotel. While Orwell states that the hotel management is only partially to blame for the hostility between the workers, the elaborate caste system among the employees contributes a large extent to the abrasive atmosphere. Orwell explains, "Our staff, amounting to about a hundred and ten, had their prestige graded as accurately as that of soldiers, and a cook or waiter was as much above a plongeur as a captain above a private. Highest above all came the manager, who could sack anybody, even the cooks"

(63). The hierarchical system of men creates a significant dynamic between the workers in that we see another version of “fagging” playing out between the management staff, waiters, cooks, and dish washers. Interestingly, Orwell writes that he was told he had to shave his signature mustache because only cooks were allowed to have facial hair (62). Arbitrary rules like this one attempt to keep the workers in a subjugated position. Weakening their individuality and demeaning their wishes, the orders infantilize the workers. In addition to being ordered to shave his mustache, the *plongeur* also has money stolen from him by the doorkeeper, whose job it was to pay the workers each week (65-66). The managers of the hotel are able to control the workers and keep them in check by never explaining or listing all of the rules.<sup>33</sup> The workers are constantly being taken advantage of because of the hierarchical system of power that the managers employ and use to manipulate the workers. For the reader, in addition to the stiflingly hot and cramped working condition, the management of the hotel represents a key force in the repression of the working-class man.

Orwell, in the next breath, admits: “Indeed the quarrels are a necessary part of the process, for the pace would never be kept up if everyone did not accuse everyone else of idling” (67). He reasons that idling could leave a man with time to steal, so the quarreling, which is just perhaps a pleasant way of saying that the managers yelled at the workers, is actually helpful because it keeps everyone productive. Orwell comes to a better understanding of the system of totalitarian control is an oppressive force on the working man. The managers rule with tyranny and malice, yet Orwell sees them as an

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<sup>33</sup> We can see a similar system of manipulation put in place in Orwell’s *Animal Farm*.

indispensable part of the hotel system and his understanding of masculinity. For Orwell, they ensure that even if the heat, lack of food, cramped quarters, and frenzied pace does not make the worker suffer, they will.

Orwell continues to discuss how the management and the amount of work that is required affects more than just his time at the hotel and interferes with all aspects of the worker's life. Although Orwell asserts that the men were proud of their efficiency and their ability to pack "four hours' work into two hours" (67), the chaos and drudgery of their work life also extends to their home life. Orwell suggests that life as a *plongeur* has debilitating consequences on one's emotional and physical health and well-being. The *plongeur's* wages did not allow him to marry because he could not afford to support a wife or children, which also meant that he could not have sex with women other than prostitutes for fear of conceiving a child out of wedlock. When these men could scrounge up enough money, they found other sources of entertainment and other ways to occupy their little free time – namely the brothel and the bar (80). Orwell attests to the working man's sexual restrictions in other texts as well. Particularly in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, the protagonist Gordon Comstock suffers from this same dilemma and blames his lack of sexual activity on his paltry income as a bookseller and poet. For the *plongeur* the inability to enter into a long-term relationship with a woman is perhaps the most debilitating result of his job and the clearest representation of his suffering body. "Blockage – of male speech, male sexuality, male privilege – " notes Robinson, "becomes synonymous with not only repression but oppression" (13).



The *plongeur's* debilitating work schedule, chaotic lifestyle, and lack of money prevent him from being able to have relationships with women, a serious hindrance to his efforts to establish his masculinity. Because they have no financial responsibilities or a family or spouse to provide for, they have no sensation of poverty, because they have enough money for drinks (81). “The weekly drinking-bout was the one thing that made life worth living” (86). Orwell describes the situation as “the contentment a well-fed beast might feel, in a life which had become so simple” (81). With only enough money to keep food in their bellies and drinks in their hands, the *plongeurs* lead a numbed existence.

Not active members of society, but slaves to the hotel and its guests' desires, the workers, Orwell argues, suffer in the oppressive and repressive masculine workspace. The abusive caste system, the manic pace of managing the kitchen duties, the lack of sexual fulfillment, and the abuse of alcohol to placate oneself have a detrimental effect on the body and mind of the *plongeur*. His lifestyle is both unhealthy and self-destructive, yet Orwell understands it as integral to establishing the *plongeur's* manhood and seeks to expose to the public how that system works. In this early text, Orwell establishes a paradigm of masculinity that he will continue to interrogate in his future works of literary nonfiction. His experiences in Paris and London as a *plongeur* enable him to probe the meaning of British masculinity and then to embark on his own interpretation of what it means to be a man.

## Hell on Earth: The Coal Mines in Wigan Pier

Orwell travels to the coal mines of northern England for another masculine experience and book project, this time commissioned by the Left Book Club and his publisher Victor Gollancz, to make a study of the conditions of unemployment that prevailed during the depths of the economic depression.<sup>34</sup> Highly personal and consequently controversial, Part One of *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) is a study of contemporary working class conditions in Lancashire and Yorkshire, written with the concentration on empirical detail, particularly about the conditions of the mining villages, the miners' homes, and the mines themselves, that Orwell's earlier fiction, particularly *Down and Out*, would lead one to expect. In Part Two the book takes on a completely different tone and purpose. Beginning with an autobiographical account of the effects that class had had on Orwell's own life and thought, the latter half of *The Road to Wigan Pier* is devoted mainly to long rants, on both moral and political grounds, against the existing British socialist movement, which, he suggests, will succeed in taking power only if it follows his advice. Gollancz was very hesitant about publishing the two parts together especially with Orwell's open condemnation of socialists as a "dreary tribe of high-minded women and sandal-wearers and bearded fruit-juice drinkers who come flocking towards the smell of 'progress' like bluebottles to a dead cat," which

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<sup>34</sup> Bernard Crick tells us that "Orwell accepted readily Gollancz's suggestion of going north, especially as he offered an advance of 500 [pounds]...Orwell told Geoffrey Gorer that but for the money he would never have gone" (181). Crick, Bernard. *George Orwell: A Life*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980.

has perhaps become one of the most quoted lines from the text (203). The editor had hoped to convince Orwell to let Part One stand alone as the book club piece; however, Orwell refused, and both parts went to print.

Orwell had a tense relationship with British socialism. Although he professed to believe in the tenants of the movement, he also had strong beliefs that contradicted socialist doctrine. Judging from his description and disapproval of socialists, we might conclude that Orwell saw British socialism as taking a departure from its working-class roots and instead adopting a more feminized agenda and image.

In this section, I focus mainly on Orwell's attention to mine's work spaces of the mine, a space that Stansky and Abrahams refer to as an "underground world of men" and its effect on the miners' bodies, and the writer's tense relationship with the practitioners of socialism (176). While it becomes clear to the reader that the mines are killing the men, Orwell celebrates and praises their masculinity and virile bodies. The hellish masculine work space is literally destroying the male body, which is black and blue from the cramped underground tunnels, the heat, and the back-breaking work. Orwell's descriptions of the space alert and educate his reader about the deplorable working conditions. Orwell knows from experience that it will not be enough to tell his reader that the miners do not earn enough money to support their families, so instead he uses graphic descriptions of the dark tunnels and creates both disturbing and alluring imagery of the half-naked men, toiling away at the walls of coal. At the same time, Orwell, studying the common man's suffering body and working conditions, continues to develop his own model of masculinity with the miners making an exemplary study. In

the mines the environment is more severe and the bodily effects more visible and critical than in the kitchen. With each text the masculine work environment becomes increasingly incapacitating and the suffering more acute. While the work in the hotel kitchen was stifling and oppressive, work in the mines is that too, plus physically harmful to the men's bodies. Their work there leaves visible scars and bodily harm that do not soon heal.

Peter Stearns, in discussing changes in the concept of manhood that resulted from industrialization, cites "the dark shaft of a cold mine as one of the real tests of nineteenth-century masculinity" (39). Stearns discusses the way in which gender distinctions intensified with the advent of industrialization (40), noting, "Early industrialization increased the number of jobs requiring heavy labor, such as metallurgy or construction. Pride in physical prowess was at least as great in nineteenth-century labor as before, an important aspect of working-class masculinity" (41). Moreover, technical change was frequently resisted by men who continued to associate strength with production and refused to seek other employment or encourage their sons to choose a different career path (42). While the mines represented one of the ultimate challenges of masculinity, they also posed the greatest risk to a man's health and life. Michael Anderson reports that a miner was fifteen times more likely to die an accidental death at work than a member of the clergy; they which had a death rate of six per thousand (22). As we shall see, Orwell embraces this besieged working-class concept of manhood that involves all aspects of life, from the adulation of physically demanding work to the belief that potency proves manhood.

Orwell's tendency to idealize the worker seems connected to his membership in a class to which such experiences were foreign; he belonged to a comparatively prominent family and was a product of the public school system. Richard Rees, who was a close friend of Orwell's during the last twenty years of his life, describes the writer's own class consciousness: "Orwell once meticulously defined himself as a member of the 'lower upper-middle class,' and this was approximately correct...and he possessed, in fact, many of the characteristics of a quite exclusive section of it" (16). Orwell laments both the enormous men, who were mythically strong and powerful and whom he idealized in both his youth and adulthood, and the places where they showed off their strength and masculinity (98). For Orwell the miners represent the masculine physique par excellence.

Still, in the text, he cannot help but be put off by their "smell," a stereotypical characteristic of the lower classes that he admits was ingrained in him as a belief since childhood (127). Orwell carries the prejudices of his class with him to Wigan Pier. Gordon Bowker contends that Orwell has an obsession with dirt and foul smells, which is an "identifiable feature of his writing. Stinks, stench, reeks and odours of unimaginable repugnance swirl and permeate throughout his wretched words" (197-198). Patai suggests, "His revulsion from the odor of working-class men should be viewed as intricately related to his fascination with their strong bodies. The one is the negative aspect of the other, the attraction offset by the aversion" (82). She quotes Orwell's description of a childhood recollection:

You watched a great sweaty navvy walking down the road with his pick

over his shoulder; you looked at his discoloured shirt and his corduroy trousers stiff with the dirt of a decade; you thought of those nests and layers of greasy rags below, and, under all, the unwashed body, brown all over (that was how I used to imagine it), with its strong, bacon-like reek.

(112)

Orwell's erotic description of the navvy suggests both a fascination and love for the male working body. The attention to detail, as well as the reference to how he "imagined it," makes it clear that this is an image that Orwell is captivated by or has fixated on. The childhood memory and its lasting impression on Orwell makes the writer's attention to the miner's body more deliberate and can be seen as integral to understanding the puzzle of Orwell's interest in the male working body. While Patai suggests that Orwell's attention to the navvy is a matter of aversion and fascination, I contend that is another example of the writer recreating the scene of the suffering male body and restaging masculinity. While our readings are not mutually exclusive, my reading suggests a more purposeful motive on the part of Orwell. The childhood image of the navvy serves as an early model for Orwell to replicate and use to manufacture more examples of the male body, worn and wounded. The inclusion of the memory implies much more than fascination; it intimates an irresistible compulsion. Orwell carries the image of the navvy with him to the mines, where he hopes to uncover what lies beneath "the nests and layers of greasy rags" and get a little dirty himself.

In his study of the miners and their work, Orwell often compares his own inability to their capability. Having tried himself to perform the same work as the

miners, Orwell quickly realizes that it is much tougher than he expected and tells the reader, “by no conceivable amount of effort or training could I become a coal-miner; the work would kill me in a few weeks” (33). He experiences humiliation watching the miners work and knowing that he is not up to the task. Although by the end of the book, Orwell tells us that he simply “went there partly because [he] wanted to see what mass-unemployment is like at its worst, partly in order to see the most typical section of the English working class at close quarters” (121), there are also moments when he fully understands the impact of his observations on his own class consciousness. Orwell confesses, “In a way it is even humiliating to watch coal-miners working. It raises in you a momentary doubt about your own status as an ‘intellectual’ and a superior person generally. For it is brought home to you, at least while you are watching, that it is only because miners sweat their guts out that superior persons can remain superior” (34-35). In taking this path in his description of the miners and analysis of their work, Orwell romanticizes their bodies and their labor. To Orwell they become underground gods who fuel England’s economy and her homes while representing British masculinity and brute strength, a characteristic he saw declining in the modern nation’s population and mourned in his work.

From the beginning, Orwell dreads the descent into the underworld. He explains, “It was not only the dirt, the smells and the vile food, but the feeling of stagnant meaningless decay, of having go down into some subterranean place where people go creeping round and round, just like blackbeetles, in an endless muddle of slovened jobs and mean grievances” (17). While he protests about going, this is not his first or his last

trip. Having worked in the Hotel X kitchen in Paris and managed those hot and close quarters, going into the mines is much more significant to him and also much more treacherous. Orwell makes a point about the dirt and decay that he sees around him. At the Hotel X kitchen, he is surrounded by decaying food that is left on the floor throughout the busy day. In the mines, the decay, the smell of the earth combined with the smell of the men, provides us with an overwhelming image and metaphor for the masculine workspace of the suffering body. Orwell is encased in the mine and in the agony of the decomposition that he sees around him, both literal and figurative.

Surrounded by rotting matter – dirt, animals that have become dead matter from decades past – the men also risk being buried alive if the mine collapses and they are not rescued. Each day below the surface they must face the possibility of becoming fossils themselves. Once Orwell arrives he understands that the space is “like hell, or at any rate like my own mental picture of hell. Most of the things one imagines in hell are there – heat, noise, confusion, darkness, foul air, and, above all, unbearably cramped space” (21). Orwell fittingly portrays the suffering body of the miner that is slowly being beaten and broken and disintegrating in a space of decay and death to make his class argument, yet he suggests his own interpretation of masculinity at the same time.

In addition to the writer’s descriptive prose his point of view guides the reader to conceptualize the space and the miners’ daily existence. His constant use of the second-person “you” is also worthy of some attention. In the following excerpt, Orwell walks the reader through the mine shaft by pointing out what “you” will see: “Probably *you* have to go down several coal-mines before *you* can get much grasp of the processes that



are going on around *you*...*You* get into the cage, which is a steel box about as wide a telephone box and two or three times as long...*You* have the usual momentary qualm in *your* belly and a bursting sensation in *your* ears” (my emphasis 24). Lorraine Saunders comments, “The variety of ways Orwell ‘talks’ to the reader through a prolific use of ‘you’ reflects that he is part of a modernizing force in English language usage, one that is consciously moving away from the upper-class accents of ‘one’” (8). Orwell makes a class argument both in his reportage and in his rhetoric. Additionally, Freedman explains that Orwell is using the second-person singular of experiential generalization. “The device is to focus on some particular empirical detail – on some ‘thing,’ usually quite vividly – and then not place it within a theoretical framework or problematic, but rather to invest it with the Imaginary attention of the allegedly generalized ego” (99). By using this literary technique Orwell is able to focus on each minute detail of the miner’s arduous trek to the coal face and take the reader along on the journey. Orwell attempts to transport the reader into the mine, right alongside him. The technique works to make the reader sympathetic to both Orwell and his message.

Now that Orwell has the reader down in the mine with him, experiencing the damp, dirty, and dark conditions, he shifts his focus to the miners themselves. The reader as audience is necessary to Orwell’s discussion of masculinity and the working man. While much of what Orwell describes is underground and hidden, his bringing it to light is part of how the acting out of masculinity is a performance.<sup>35</sup> Orwell depends on gender being performative. He too makes his own act of uncovering of the workers’

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<sup>35</sup> See Judith Butler’s *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993).

masculine prowess into a performance by bringing it to light within a published travel narrative, which helps him to earn a living. Orwell must strike a balance between his desires to entertain his reader and to show them the realities of the male space of the mines.

The creeping to and fro, bending, and making slow progress through the tunnels has an unimaginably harsh effect on the miner's body. Orwell writes "You have, therefore, a constant crick in the neck, but this is nothing to the pain in your knees and thighs. After half a mile it becomes (I am not exaggerating) an unbearable agony" (60). Yet Orwell celebrates their bodies and concentrates more on their strength and ability to endure than on the way the work weakens them. Accordingly, Patai argues that "Orwell's picture of the miners' lives, after all, is very much a positive one; he even persuades himself that their work is health-building rather than health-destroying, in contrast to the debilitating effects of book learning, which has no masculine connotations" (77). Patai's interpretation of Orwell's unique perspective is astute. Extending her argument that the writer sees the miner's work as health-building, I contend that he suggests that the work and wounds the miners receive are also masculinity-building. Their performance in the mine is directly connected to their performance of masculinity. Both their strength and physiques impress Orwell, who refers to them as "hammered iron statues" (23). The writer observes their every move, as they drive their shovels under the fallen coal and fling it swiftly over their left shoulders (22). Orwell envies their toughness and their robust form. We must remember that Orwell himself was a tall and thin man, never in good health, and always susceptible to

the cold and damp. Crick reveals that at the time of Orwell's visit to Wigan Pier, he was suffering from bronchitis and had to be half-carried out of the pit because of exhaustion. Within the mines, he encounters a species of men very different from him, and he is unabashedly in awe of their physical bodies. He celebrates the male miner's body when he writes,

It is only when you see miners down the mine and naked that you realize what splendid men they are. Most of them are small (big men are at a disadvantage in that job) but nearly all of them have the most noble bodies; wide shoulders tapering to slender supple waists, and small pronounced buttocks and sinewy thighs, with not an ounce of wasted flesh anywhere. In the hotter mines they wear only a pair of thin drawers, clogs and knee-pads; in the hottest mines of all, only the clogs and knee-pads. ...when they are black and naked they all look alike. (23)

The miners' "splendid" and "noble" bodies represent the best physical specimens of English masculinity. In the mine where they are hidden away from the rest of the world, they work, naked, covered in the black coal soot. Like the navy, covered in layers of rags that Orwell described in a highly sexualized tone, the miners are also erotically described. The writer calls attention to each body part that he sees in its "splendid nakedness." Shoulders, waist, buttocks, and thighs, he explains, are parts of "tight" and "lean" bodies. Orwell's use of overtly sexualized language and imagery links the men's sexuality with their work and inevitably their suffering. Considering the writer's glorification of the miners and their work in his text, along with the sexualized

representation of them and their suffering bodies, I believe that Orwell is also suggesting that masculinity depends on a masochistic ritual and spectacle. The writer's enthusiasm for their work, which damages their health and wellbeing and is both painful and tedious, has sadistic and voyeuristic qualities. Orwell, the writer and narrator, derives pleasure from watching and documenting the details of their muscular bodies, brute strength, and raw demeanor, which is evident in his descriptive language.

In addition to sexualizing the miners and their bodies, Orwell valorizes the bodily harm that they endure from the physical nature of their profession. Although the miners are strong and physically fit, they cannot escape some of the damaging consequences that are part of the job. Orwell reports that because of the cramped spaces and the need to be bent over when traveling through the tunnels, the men often bang their backs. "This is the reason," explains Orwell, "why in very hot mines, where it is necessary to go about half naked, most of the miners have what they call "buttons down the back" – that is, a permanent scab on each vertebra" (28). Rather than seeing them as signs of injury, Orwell treats the scars more like badges of honor or war medals. The scars on the back, however, can only be seen by an intimate gaze. In public they are hidden by the miners' clothing, but in the mines, where everyone is bare-skinned, the buttons symbolize a life time of hard work, sacrifice, and pain. Like the hidden work the miners do deep beneath the surface of the earth, the buttons are invisible to the outside world.

While the miners have scars on their backs, they also have visible signs of their labor in the matching ones on their heads. Orwell reports that the most distinctive results of working in the mines are the blue scars on the miners' noses and foreheads. The

writer explains, “The coal dust of which the air underground is full enters every cut, and then the skin grows over it and forms a blue stain like tattooing, which in fact it is. Some of the older men have their foreheads veined like Roquefort cheeses from this cause” (36). Permanently scarred by the mines, the miners have a constant reminder of their debilitating occupation and the very real damage it has done to them physically. The worker’s visible veining on his forehead is the only mark that people outside of the mine can see. The stain or tattoo can be compared to the biblical mark of Cain. Cursed to toil among the working class and relegated to the underground hell of the mine, the miners bear a mark of their torturous occupation and suffering.

Orwell wants his readers to see and revere the miner’s body. He uses the mines and the hellish conditions to show how the miners have superhuman strength and endurance in order to work there. His descriptions of the men demonstrate his reverence for their ability. While he sees a virile and masculine body, the reader cannot help but see a suffering body, one that is black and blue from the damaging atmosphere of the mine. The conditions of the mine represent a more severe and devastating work environment than the hotel kitchen in *Down and Out*. With this work, Orwell increases the stakes and pushes the audience to further question what working class masculinity means in these unsettling settings. The suffering and harm that Orwell reports the miners must endure in Wigan Pier are more grave, yet the writer treats the men that bear the torment like underworld gods of masculinity.

### Trench Life:

#### The Glory of War in *Homage to Catalonia*

*Homage to Catalonia* (1938) is in many respects a companion volume to *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Like *Wigan Pier*, it is a book of tenaciously personal and polemical journalism and literary nonfiction in which free use of the first person is made and in which Orwell's naturalistic talent for the evocation of empirical detail is again exercised in a noteworthy way. Although the texts have similar styles, on the most evident level of content, the Orwell of this volume is no isolate observer, following and recording, but an active, indeed an armed and wounded, participant in the process he describes. Similar to his experience in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Orwell is able to prove his own masculinity with the rest of the men in the space of the battlefield trench. Not only did Orwell participate in the Spanish Civil War as a soldier, but he was quickly promoted through the ranks, became an officer, and was seriously wounded in battle – all key signs of a successful masculine rite of passage.

It is not difficult to surmise why Orwell was so eager to join the Spanish militia and fight against Franco in the Spanish Civil War. In the essay "My Country Right or Left," Orwell speaks about growing up too young for the Great War. He writes, "You felt yourself a little less than a man, because you had missed it." He had received military training in his school cadet corps and had held a responsible position in the Indian Imperial Police "Part of the fascination," Orwell explains, "that the Spanish Civil War had for people of about my age was that it was so like the Great War" (12). Orwell

realized that this was probably his best chance to experience combat. He had also just sent the final draft of *Wigan Pier* to Gollancz, so the timing was perfect for him to begin thinking about a new project. His newly established political views also offered a fresh lens through which to view the Spanish conflict and an opportunity to continue analyzing and publicizing his own socialist agenda. Although Orwell could have gone as a journalist to collect his information and did not need to actually join the militia, he instead fulfilled a lifelong desire to participate in one of the quintessential acts of manhood.

While the forces of industrialization are what debilitate the men of north England, who are constantly at the will of the nation's demand for more coal and more energy, the men from all over Europe who are fighting in the Spanish Civil War suffer from the poor decisions of commanding officers and government officials. Disorganization, misunderstandings, and unwavering partisanship by the men in charge lead Orwell to acknowledge the absurdity of his experience with warfare. Orwell characterizes his experience in Spain by focusing on the ridiculous and nonsensical nature of the fighting, while he uses his descriptions of the barren land, where the soldiers must wage more combat against the real dangers of war – mud, cold, hunger, lice, and the ever increasing piles of excrement – as metaphors for what the war became to symbolize for him. Because there is so little actual fighting, Orwell becomes distracted by the conditions of the trenches, another underground work site, where he focuses much of his attention and energy on the conditions of the space during the long hours of idleness.

Orwell is repeatedly drawn to the scenes of male suffering because he sees them as integral to his understanding of masculinity. The trenches offer an ideal setting for the writer to further his investigation of gender and masculine spaces in the context of WWI. Sarah Cole explains the centrality of male relationships to the ideology of war: “Whatever war may mean for a culture, whatever terrible losses it may entail, and whatever troubling instincts it may invoke, it nevertheless is fraught and lived as a matter of male relationships, and these powerful ties are often highly valorized, both by the participants themselves and by the home culture that will be responsible for interpreting and assimilating the war’s legacy” (138). Bowker attests to Orwell’s interest in building relationships with the other soldiers: “Despite not understanding Catalan and having to use a dictionary most of the time, he was utterly seduced by the camaraderie and warmth of the other POUMists” (205). Orwell is drawn to the ritual and performance of masculinity; the war trench where male relationships are fostered is a model location, where he can build upon his growing canon of analysis of men, suffering, and masculinity and which in itself is becoming a ritual for him as a writer.

In Orwell’s retelling, the men are first plagued by the lack of organization and poor management of the officers in charge.<sup>36</sup> Once Orwell makes it to the front line trench, after straggling along with his unit that has “far less cohesion than a flock of sheep” (18), he realizes that the enemy is nowhere to be found. The writer is shocked, annoyed, and disgusted. “We were nowhere near them!” he exclaims. “At that range our rifles were completely useless” (20); he adds, “Except at night, when a surprise-attack

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<sup>36</sup> Historian Hugh Thomas notes that Orwell “reached Barcelona at the end of December and joined a POUM column on the Aragon front, with whom he stayed till April” (495 n3).



was always conceivable, nobody bothered about the enemy. They were simply remote black insects whom one occasionally saw hopping to and fro. The real preoccupation of both armies was trying to keep warm” (22). Because Orwell has no combat experience, and perhaps isn’t sure that he will get any, considering the lack of activity on the front, he focuses on what he does understand – male working communities. Although he is disappointed by the lack of fighting, he decides to reveal to his readers the “real” hardships for a soldier at war. Throughout the text, Orwell demystifies the glories or myths of war that have been falsely established by centuries of stereotypes and instead focuses on the male body in war and the suffering that he sees as integral to the complete experience.

Although there was very little hand-to-hand combat, Orwell ironically admits that “on this front and at this period of the war the real weapon was not the rifle but the megaphone. Being unable to kill your enemy you shouted at him instead” (41-42). And those who did see fighting and were wounded had more chance being killed by the joltings of the ambulances down the abominable roads than by their injuries (51). Orwell’s satirical representation of the war highlights his own feeling of its uselessness and absurdity. He suggests that this period may have been one of the most futile in his entire life, since he had joined the fight against Fascism but “had scarcely fought at all, had merely existed as a sort of passive object, doing nothing in return for my rations except to suffer from cold and lack of sleep” (82). Orwell’s expectations for war life have not been met. Margery Sabin describes the scene at the front as a place “where there was so little action as to make boredom or a sense of futility almost as much a

danger as bombs or gunfire” (57). His unproductiveness is both draining and depressing. As a prolific writer, he is accustomed to constant work. At Wallington, where he and his wife, Eileen, kept a store, as well as a thriving garden, his days were filled with writing and managing and supplying the general store, as well as tending to their pet goat, Dolly.

Much of Orwell’s idea of masculinity is tied to a relentless work ethic, one that he himself maintained in his writing career and public life. He repeatedly links productivity and employment with masculinity in all three texts. For example, in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, being out of work, money, and food, Orwell and Boris, his Russian companion, go out looking for employment and try not to look like two famished animals. A good impression on the patron, Boris argues, makes all the difference. “It is fatal to look hungry,” he says; “It makes people want to kick you” (51). While the men’s hunger affects their appearance, it also has psychological consequences and causes them to question their own masculinity and ability to think straight. Throughout the text, Orwell refers to the mentally debilitating influence of hunger: “You discover that a man who has gone even a week on bread and margarine is not a man any longer, only a belly with a few accessory organs” (19). After feeling his hunger pains for too long, he says he is reduced to an utter spineless, brainless condition (38). Unable to provide even enough food and clothing for himself, let alone a family, Orwell feels not only hunger but also emasculation. Living a carefree lifestyle on the streets is no longer all he once imagined. Having to conceal his hunger, poverty, and joblessness, the down and out man compromises his feelings of confidence, self-worth, and masculinity. In

order to cope with his challenges, the narrator seeks employment where he believes he can reassert his masculinity.

The miners in *The Road to Wigan Pier* also view their work in the mines as an essential part of their masculinity. Orwell argues that men will never do housework, even when they are unemployed, and the women understand their idleness. He writes, “I believe that [the women], as well as the men, feel that a man would lose his manhood if, merely because he was out of work, he developed into a ‘Mary Ann’” (81). The writer continues, “Hence that frightful feeling of impotence and despair which is almost the worst evil of unemployment – far worse than any hardship, worse than the demoralization of enforced idleness” (86). Lack of work and activity are death sentences for Orwell and the working men that he observes. As a source of emasculation and depression, we can see how unemployment is also a characteristic of the suffering male. Putting the working man in an impossible dilemma, the effects of work and idleness are equally harmful and debilitating.

Although the front resembles the earlier spaces in its discomfort and inactivity, Orwell concludes that the conditions of the Spanish Civil War are remarkably frustrating. He tells the reader, “It was an extraordinary life that we were living – an extraordinary way to be at war, if you could call it war. The whole militia chafed against the inaction and clamoured constantly to know why we were not allowed to attack” (32). Orwell suggests that their inability to fight as active members of their cause, coupled with the conditions of the trenches, magnified the absurdity of the war. Without the chance to fight, trapped within the most wretched trenches with no chance to return

home, the men become their own prisoners of war. Their lack of purpose and occupation, as well as their lack of basic supplies such as food, clothes, candles, and firewood, puts them in a situation very similar to the unemployed that Orwell has described in other contexts. For Orwell, employment and action are characteristics of masculinity, whereas this suffering male body in this war is unemployed and inactive and thereby emasculated. Bowker notes that in order to stay occupied, “Orwell made careful notes throughout his time at the front. [Stafford] Cottman [a fellow soldier] found him writing at five a.m. before going on guard duty, and by candle light in the evenings. Even while fighting, his commitment to writing was overriding, his literary instinct never lulled” (210).<sup>37</sup> Refusing to be idle and frustrated by the lack of activity and work to be done, Orwell finds an opportunity to work at his writing and to be masculine.

Orwell’s feelings of futility and regret about the war become even more apparent to the reader as he discusses the physical spaces that he inhabited and the conditions in which he was living and working. In the middle of winter, the Spanish hills are barren because of the cold weather, but also because they have been repeatedly scoured for firewood and fuel. Orwell describes one depressing scene:

In front of the parapet there ran a system of narrow trenches hewn out of the rock, with extremely primitive loopholes made of piles of limestone. There were twelve sentries, placed at various points in the trench behind the inner parapet. In front of the trench was the barbed wire, and then the

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<sup>37</sup> According to Bowker, all of Orwell’s notes, his diary, and letters were taken from the hotel room that he shared with his wife, Eileen, in Barcelona during a raid on 18 June 1937 (222).

hill-side slid down into a seemingly bottomless ravine; opposite were naked hills, in places mere cliffs of rock, all grey and wintry, with no life anywhere, not even a bird. (20)

The view, once scenic and lush, is now devoid of life and beauty. The writer's desolate description sets the stage for the suffering man, whom he repeatedly links in previous works to places of decay and in this work – to death.

Amidst the decaying land around them, the men initially suffer from the cold, but once the weather turns warmer they must contend with the bugs that infest their clothes. Orwell, who has had other experiences with “body vermin of various kinds,”<sup>38</sup> contends that for “sheer beastliness the louse beats everything [he has] encountered” (51). Orwell describes how these “*resident vermin*” are a nuisance to all soldiers in war. “The human louse somewhat resembles a tiny lobster, and he lives chiefly in your trousers. Short of burning all your clothes there is no known way of getting rid of him. Down the seams of your trousers he lays his glittering eggs, like tiny grains of rice, which hatch out and breed families of their own at horrible speed” (51). Orwell reveals to his reader the not so glamorous side of warfare. He unabashedly debunks one of the myths of warfare when he declares, “Glory of war, indeed! In war all soldiers are lousy, at least when it is warm enough. The men who fought at Verdun, at Waterloo, at Flodden, at Senlac, at Thermopylae – every one of them had lice crawling over his testicles” (51). Orwell is attempting to debunk the myths about the “glory of war.” Orwell argues that this type of suffering is universal in warfare and that all men must endure the torture. By calling to

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<sup>38</sup> In *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Orwell discusses having bed bugs and learning to treat them with pepper.

mind the major historical battles and the way in which those soldiers also had to bear the louse, Orwell suggests that the condition is part of the ritual of masculinity and part of the tradition of warfare. Elsewhere these rituals have had their glorious side (e.g., the wonderful bodies of the miners), but in the trenches the men must accept and embrace the torture even while it is clearly low. Were they to say, “Forget this; I’m going to go home and have a bath,” they would not be completing the rite of passage that war provides men.

Like Lawrence, Orwell works to establish a history of men at war and all of the challenges that they encounter. A soldier’s ability to carry on and continue with his duties implies the extent to which he must perform his role as a soldier and participant in the pretense of the glory of war. Additionally, we might also consider the metaphorical implications that Orwell suggests by describing how the suffering body of the soldier is infested with bugs and becomes a host for pests. Similar to the way that flies feed on a dead corpse, the lice riddle the soldier’s body that is part of an entire representation of death and decay.

Orwell’s investigation into the imagery of death and decay continues with his description of how the soldiers encounter another force of nature that they find to be particularly troubling – the mud, which, he reports, covers everything within the trenches. After spending months in the line, the soldiers’ uniforms, boots, blankets, and rifles become caked with mud (29). At one point, Orwell is back at the front after being on leave, when there are torrential rains for two days. With the cherries whitening on the trees, he tells us that “the dug-outs flooded and the parapet sank a foot; after that there

were more days of digging out the sticky clay with the wretched Spanish spades which have no handles and bend like tin spoons” (136). Mud becomes a force of nature that is more debilitating than the enemy itself. Orwell’s account of the mud establishes a more serious problem and tackles an argument of definition – what is mud and what is waste.

Similar to the hindrance of the mud is the quantity of excrement that appears to be everywhere one turns. Orwell clears up any misconception we might have about the “glory of war” when he repeatedly describes the smell and overabundance of bodily waste. He paints a vivid, albeit sickening picture of the conditions of the front line and the decay that surrounds him. For Orwell, it is nothing new; especially when he tells the reader that the odor of excrement and decaying food is “the characteristic smell of war” (15). In the trenches for three-month tours, the soldiers designate one spot for their garbage, which is never removed and lies piled off to the side of the trench. It produces “a sickening sweetish stink that live in my nostrils for weeks afterwards. Into the cleft immediately behind the position all the refuse of months had been tipped – a deep festering bed of breadcrusts, excrement, and rusty tins” (19). At each location Orwell provides an assessment of the smell and extent to which the area is “crusted with dung” (23). At one camp, Orwell reveals that some of the militiamen “habitually defecated in the trench, a disgusting thing when one had to walk around it in the darkness” (30-31). Orwell’s descriptions suggest that the trench is not a place of refuge for the soldier, but instead a filthy hole, full of decay and mud. In Orwell’s situation, because there is very little fighting happening, the trench is used as a toilet in addition to a safe haven. Even when the soldiers find buildings to shelter them, they too become defiled. “In La

Granja,” Orwell writes, “every room that was not in use had been turned into a latrine – a frightful shambles of smashed furniture and excrement. The little church that adjoined it, its walls perforated by shell-holes, had its floor inches deep in dung. In the great courtyard where the cooks ladled out the rations the litter of rusty tins, mud, mule dung, and decaying food was revolting” (54). As the trench serves as the soldier’s home while he is at the front, there is no clear division between where one eliminates waste and where one sleeps, eats, and fights. While Dominique Laporte argues that in a normal community one can say, “Mind your own business, and I will mind mine... What happens in my home, in my family, my dirty laundry, and all the rest is no affair of yours. This little heap in front of my door is my business; it is mine to tend” (30), within the trenches there is no privacy or sense of a separation of public from private. In the trench there are no social codes or rules of conduct, which suggests an unspoken intimacy among the men. Traditionally, excrement is a subject that is not discussed. But in the modern era, post-*Ulysses*, Orwell is not concerned with polite traditions. Instead, he refers to it to achieve two purposes.

First, similar to the way he describes the nakedness of the miners in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he describes the soldiers’ waste, which in polite circles would have been avoided and ignored because it was a source of embarrassment. Excrement represents weakness, disease, and uncivilized life, while it also implies an unspoken intimacy between the men. The trenches are open spaces in which the men have no walls and no privacy. In the home, rooms separate specific activities, especially those that are private,



but in the trench there is nowhere to hide intimate matters, no walls to separate the private from the public.

Secondly, Orwell's repeated references to the mud and dung imply that he has the ability to decipher the difference between the two forms of matter. However, as the trenches were filled with mud and rain that mixed with the human waste, it is hard to believe that one could tell them apart. And when Orwell describes how the soldiers were covered in mud, which caked their clothes and their weapons, I believe we might also assume that the men are covered in excrement as well. Both wearing and smelling like human waste, the men become associated with morbidity, according to Laporte (82), and the image brings a new understanding to Orwell's phrase from *The Road to Wigan Pier*, "buried in the Flanders mud." While still alive, the soldiers are always already dead. The suffering male body, then, in *Homage to Catalonia* is undeniably the soldier who is covered in waste, or death and has no choice but to sit and wait, with no prospect of becoming an active member of the fighting.

It is these memories that Orwell makes the most of in his text, rather than the actual politics or descriptions of the fighting, which he includes in an appendix to the book. Instead, he puts more emphasis on details of daily life in the trenches. The book itself is more about what it is like for the male body to go to war against the stereotypes of battle. Orwell's experiential journalism and creative license present a finer and more psychological account of what is happening on the front lines and in the trenches and the effect that it has on the male ego and his understanding of masculinity.

In *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell reaches the end of his travel writing and the end of his own adventures for pay. After being wounded in battle and feeling the escalation of discontent against the POUMist faction, Orwell and his wife fled from Spain, risking their lives. Without his diary or notes, Orwell set down to rewrite and recreate his experience of the war and unsurprisingly focuses much of his attention on the masculine space of the trench and the suffering soldier. In his final representation of the working-class man, Orwell reveals the hidden and defiled space of the underground world, the trench and its inhabitants, and the torture that they must endure.

Through Orwell's observations and writing, the writer provides his own interpretation of manhood and masculinity during the early twentieth century, a time when gender roles were under intense scrutiny. Orwell works out his understanding of gender identity by restaging scenes of men at work in masculine spaces that are characterized by decay and death and set underground, out of sight, where the deciding factor rests on the individual's endurance of torture and bodily harm. In compulsively restaging and retelling the scene of the suffering male body, Orwell is able to refine his interpretation of masculinity with each text. He explores images and stereotypes that have been ingrained in him since childhood in addition to the ones that he encounters with each journey. With every retelling the suffering becomes more acute and the long-term damage more serious. Orwell's characterization of the starving *plongeur*, the mutilated miner, and the "dead" soldier represents a continuum of masculinity in which the ultimate condition of manhood is the performance of the destruction of the body.

Through our reading of Orwell's literary nonfiction, we see how the writer attempts to uncover and reveal the workers, who have been kept hidden underground by the hierarchical systems that govern their employment and a middle- and upper-class population that demands more material wealth and comfort. Although Orwell condemns these practices and is quick to judge the debilitating forces of capitalism, his writing betrays his own complex understanding of British masculinity based on his fixation on the suffering working-class man. What makes the working-class man an attractive and potent figure for Orwell is the torture that he endures through his work; however, he is regulated by an authority whose control the writer rebukes. Orwell's relationship to totalitarianism then is not as clear as he would make it seem. He understands how the construction of masculinity relies on torture, but he also condemns its power and effect on working-class men. It is important then for us to consider the spectacle of mortification of the male body, and its ritual enactment by a higher power that is both accepted and condemned, as a central theme in the texts that communicates a dimension of Orwellian masculinity that is read through the male spaces of his texts.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

Each writer's attention and interrogation of the purpose and future of male space helps us as readers to understand the tension and anxiety that many people felt at the turn of the century. The writers' repeated attention to the masculine locations suggests that they felt the need to expose and demonstrate its essential purpose in the creation and maintenance of the socially constructed image of masculinity and the homosocial communities that relied on the space because of the privacy and safety that it insured during a time when sexual and gender deviance was unacceptable and punishable by law. Additionally, the writers' insinuation that masculine space was in danger of being invaded, degraded, or lost appears timely in the wake of England's failing imperial dynasty, which at the time was falling into a severe decline. While no longer a world super-power and an imperial stronghold, especially following the Great War, England must reassess its "right" to seize and to dominate any space. No longer the invaders, but instead the invaded, the men that Forster, Lawrence, and Orwell create diagnose the crisis of masculine space and seek to protect it as the seminal origin of the rituals and traditions of manhood that remain integral to the creation and proliferation of masculinity.

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