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This work traces a connection between gothic narratives, noted for their particular depictions of carceral and sublime landscapes, and a women's rhetorical tradition elided by Plato and Aristotle. In order to accomplish this work, I follow Krista Ratcliffe in reading Virginia Woolf as a rhetorical theorist, one specifically interested in alternative narrative structures which facilitate women's writing. I argue that Woolf analyzes the process of composition in order to suggest material and bodily rhetorics, what I call androgynous rhetoric, as a mechanism for overcoming phallogocentrism. By connecting Woolf's androgynous rhetorics to a series of specific spatial markers also located in Plato, I question a literary tradition which contains gothic within problematic eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts and a rhetorical tradition which limits gothic to a genre of literary study. Specifically, I interrogate gothic novels by Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley, locate gothic moments within the work of Jane Austen, examine Charlotte Brontë's gothic spaces and culminate in an examination of Woolf's most relevant novel: *Orlando*. My work rereads gothic writing across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in order to reclaim gothic as a specific narrative strategy, one which reflects an embodied, explicitly feminist aesthetic. Therefore, I argue that gothic is not a genre or a particular feature of plot, character or even setting, but is a process of both invention and arrangement, one which allows women to write and reflects specifically feminist approaches to argument.

DARK MATTERS: GOTHIC LANDSCAPE AND WOMEN'S WRITING  
IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BRITISH NOVEL

by

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel* stressed the "changed nature" of eighteenth-century fiction, a textual revolution which its eager authors were quick to label "new" (10). In stark contrast to the realistic novels of Richardson, Fielding and Defoe, which characterized the early part of the century, the gothic novelists who titillated their eager readers with a series of supernatural horrors sought a pedigree not of novelty, but historical authenticity. *The Castle of Otranto*, written by Horace Walpole in 1764, is a text fixated on denying its originality. Walpole devotes significant textual attention to establishing *Otranto* as "a story, translated by William Marshal, gent. From the Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto" (4). Walpole takes great pains to convince his readers that he has found a legitimate historical text, offering his critical evaluation of the document: the "style is purest Italian," emphasizing its antiquity, a story written "between 1095, the era of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last or not long afterwards" (5). Walpole constructs an entire fiction about his fiction—the language of scholarly authenticity works to legitimize a narrative whose supernatural thrills borrow more from the fairy tale than the historical treatise. This insistence on the material reality (and history) of a fictional text immediately provokes a strong epistemological paradox: Gothic as a genre is characterized by its insistence on an, albeit deceptive, narrative and historical authenticity, while,

simultaneously, gothic is often defined critically by its reliance on fantastic themes. Walpole's project is dramatically distinct from the "realism" articulated by Watt: "gothic" as an attempt to establish historical precedent, a strikingly "new" genre that seeks nothing more than to present itself as deeply antique.

In order to clarify this tension between gothic and "realistic" novel forms, a short study of Watt helps us clarify Walpole's formulation of the gothic novel. While there have been many studies of the novel since Watt's, it is useful to return to the primary source on the form of the novel in order to interrogate some of our foundational assumptions of what constitutes "realism"—a highly problematic term against which studies of the gothic are driven to engage. Ian Watt's frame for "realism and the novel form" is centered on the premise that "the novel's realism does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it" (11). Watt's "way" is situated in two areas he characterizes as of "especial importance in the novel—characterization, and presentation of background" (17). Character, for Watt, is defined by a move away from allegory, toward "particular individuals in the contemporary social environment" (19). Background, on the other hand, is more loosely constructed. Watt argues that realistic novels depict flawed, non-allegorical characters in settings logical for their circumstances. For Watt, setting is noteworthy for "solidity" which depicts "an actual physical environment" (26). However, this clear definition begins to deconstruct as Watt surveys the early eighteenth century novelists in chronological order. In his reading of Defoe, Watt focuses on objects that possess a comforting material and domestic reality, such as in *Moll Flanders* where "there is much linen and gold to be counted, while

Robinson Crusoe's island is full of memorable pieces of clothing and hardware" (26). However, Watt's analysis of Richardson switches its focus from place to a specific location carrying emotional force: specifically, Pamela's "prisons" where the "Harlowe mansion becomes a terrifyingly real physical and moral environment" (27). Watt never elaborates on his language, but his suggestion that an environment can be both physical and moral suggests a kind of slippage that defies his earlier theory of novelistic setting as analogous to contemporaneous physical space. Furthermore, Watt's interest in the "terrifyingly real" aspect of the mansion invokes the physical power of gothic novels noted for their hair-raising plots. Watt continues by reading Fielding, coming to the surprising assertion that "Tom Jones features the first Gothic mansion in the history of the novel" while simultaneously retreating to the notion that Fielding accurately portrayed the London topography (27). How setting can transform from safely possessing "verisimilitude" to a description as overtly "gothic" calls into question Watt's carefully structured frame.

Watt's classic reading of realism and novel is situated in a history of Western philosophy as Watt ties the project of the novel to the Enlightenment tradition. For Watt, the novel fictionalizes the enlightenment break from classical philosophy through its reliance on time as the "shaping force of man's individual and collective history" (22). Watt uses Forster's frame, which contradicts the eighteenth-century novel's "life by time" with the earlier, romantic "life by values" which Watt aligns with Platonism and the world of the ideal figure (22). Despite Watt's use of both character and setting to reflect this trend, character, for Watt, is clearly primary. Readers journey through the

novel in a temporal progression even as characters experience events in a roughly sequential fashion; however, a character's identity transcends the events to which they are subjected and the places through which they wander. Clarissa, Pamela, Tom Jones, and Robinson Crusoe may be changed by the events they experience, but they remain recognizably Clarissa, Pamela Tom Jones and Robinson Crusoe. Setting, on the other hand, is much more epistemological—characters respond to the setting depending upon where they are in their development—the daffodils may be lovely or hideous depending on a character's personal lens. For the “realistic” novel, setting remains, while appropriate to the time, symbolic in nature: a piece of linen in Robinson Crusoe is never simply a piece of linen; it reflects or represents Caruso's experience.

In contrast, the paradigm appears to be reversed within novels identified as gothic. While Walpole does gesture quite explicitly to the literary values of his time, remarking that “rules of drama are almost observed throughout the conduct of the piece” and that his “characters are well drawn” and the “style” is “as elegant as his conduct of the passions is masterly,” he ultimately dismisses the value of character and plot (6). For Walpole plot, what he suggestively terms the “machinery,” is “invention” and the “names of the actors imaginary”; however, he tellingly asserts “that the groundwork of the story is founded on truth” (8). Walpole's pun is intentional. Gothic veracity lies in the groundwork, the novel's physical setting “undoubtedly laid in some real castle” (8). Walpole even encourages his readers to “discover in the Italian writers the foundation on which our author has built” (8). While this phrase can be seen as further evidence of Walpole's deception (no such place, after all, exists) that authenticity is attributed to setting, that the

castle becomes the only “real” object in the narrative, points to a special relationship between gothic and space.

The “spatial turn” in millennial literary criticism has called our attention to how a text engages with its setting, the power of place with respect to both reifying and subverting a text’s dominant agenda. Indeed, criticism of the gothic often centers on its role as an escapist fantasy, a poor-woman’s travelogue often written by women who did not travel. These spatial meditations on gothic’s encounter with sublime and local landscape often exist separately from a feminist reading of the gothic, focused on the political and social power inherent in gothic novels written by women, the “female gothic” to use Eileen Moer’s classic formulation. In essence, feminist critics recognize a special connection between women writers and the gothic novel. Gothic novels written by women flooded the nineteenth-century literary market with thrilling adventure after thrilling adventure. The gothic phenomena was so widespread that even Jane Austen was drawn to satirize its tendency, and her association of gothic novels with silly young women still persists.

Gothic’s popularity as a genre for the young female writer does suggest a connection between gothic narratives, noted for their particular depictions of carceral and sublime landscapes, and a women’s rhetorical tradition. Reading the gothic novel as a particularly fertile ground to inspire women’s writing, in other words, reading a particular rhetoric within the gothic that participates in a feminine tradition, long occluded, has significant implications for redefining gothic. In this light the gothic functions not as genre, or even a particular feature of plot, character or even setting, but as a process of

both invention and arrangement, one which allows women to write and reflects specifically feminist approaches to argument. In establishing a feminine rhetorical tradition, it is natural to head toward the work of feminist theorists such as Cixous, Kristeva, Irigaray, Butler, Spivack, Moi, hooks (just to name a significant few). However, Krista Ratcliffe makes a compelling argument to consider an Anglo-American rhetorical tradition outside of the French feminists. Certainly, the authors I have chosen are highly traditional, white, upper-middle-class women, writing in English, and in England. I am drawn to this admittedly narrow focus, not to occlude powerful work written by women who fall outside this tradition, but to trace a particular trajectory of protest by Western white middle-class women against a Western rhetorical tradition informed by classicism. While Virginia Woolf's work is that of a modernist author, she shares a much closer cultural and literary history with these female authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

This study will reread gothic writing across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in order to reclaim gothic as a specific narrative strategy, one which reflects an embodied, explicitly feminist aesthetic. I contextualize this approach by exposing gothic rhetoric in modernist works normally considered to lie outside a gothic tradition.

Ultimately, this work strives to articulate a connection between gothic spaces and a feminist rhetorical aesthetic. The purpose of this discussion is to uncover these motifs in a series of significant works by female authors writing in England in order to place gothic, less as a genre than as a specific series of locative devices, a mechanism of emplacement that generates expression unfettered by patriarchal restraint. Understanding

and deploying the power of gothic space has relevance to any writer attempting to access a structure outside the Western rhetorical tradition.

I follow Krista Ratcliffe in reading Virginia Woolf as a rhetorical theorist, one specifically interested in alternative narrative structures which facilitate women's writing. I argue that Woolf analyzes the process of composition in order to suggest material and bodily rhetorics, what I call androgynous rhetorics, as a mechanism for overcoming phallogentrism. By connecting Woolf's androgynous rhetorics to a series of specific spatial markers also located in Plato, I question a literary tradition that limits gothic to specific eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts and a rhetorical tradition that limits gothic to a genre of literary study. After establishing this theoretical frame, I will survey Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley in order to trace the relationship between gothic and space across two diverse female authors. Radcliffe is generally seen as a classic source for women's gothic, whereas Shelley's status as a gothic novelist remains critically fraught. The presence of a coherent use of spatial markers enabling communication in both texts will indicate the consistency of gothic's locopoetics. Next, I will turn to Austen to determine if the rhetorical power of gothic space continues to function in eighteenth century women's writing generally characterized as "realistic." Finally, I will examine how the notion of gothic space continues to evolve in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

## CHAPTER II

### SHADOWS OF THE PHARMACY: MONSTERS, MAIDENS AND THE ANDROGYNOUS RHETORICAL TRADITION

For Jacques Derrida texts operate like specters: “in the back room, in the shadows of the pharmacy, prior to the oppositions between conscious and unconscious, freedom and constraint, voluntary and involuntary, speech and language” a beautiful (dis)assemblage can occur (“Plato’s Pharmacy” 129). I would like to return to Derrida’s 1968 essay “Plato’s Pharmacy” in order to situate a conversation about writing, particularly women’s writing, in Derrida’s highly suggestive reading of Plato’s *Phaedrus*. My intention here is to quickly summarize some of Derrida’s insights, with special emphasis on the implications for theorists of lived and literary spaces and, secondly, to return to some aspects of the Platonic dialogue that Derrida ignores. This return will allow a more comprehensive articulation of the connections between the act of composition and the system of economic, political, philosophical, and intellectual constructs generally defined as patriarchal. It will also suggest a solution other than Derridan deconstruction, which, for all its beauty, fails to articulate a workable model for women’s writing. A secondary goal is my own methodology which, while not deconstructive, also illustrates a series of “points of presence”: a transmission of motifs,

while not necessarily deliberate, carry deliberative force, motifs which, as the term “points” imply, are both rhetorical and spatial (129). This methodology will set the stage for a number of key concepts to emerge: the characteristics of patriarchal discourse, their reliance on a spatial orientation that specifically invokes and then rejects features which we will later term gothic, and a method of resistance articulated by the feminist rhetorical theorist Virginia Woolf, who invokes problematic and transgressive bodies within these resonant spaces. This work repositions the gothic narrative, not as a spontaneous production of the mid-eighteenth century, but as the literary inheritor of a series of occluded rhetorical strategies exiled from western discourse at the time of Plato. Under this lens, gothic is less a series of thrilling plot devices, a psychological modality interested solely in interiority, or a pulp genre serviced by “hack” writers, than it is a literary tradition, one which has always existed, silent sister and dark mirror, to the more clearly defined values of the realistic eighteenth and nineteenth century novel.

Derrida, in order to set deconstruction in direct opposition to the western philosophical tradition, exposes the roots of his methodology within a key rhetorical and philosophical text: Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Derrida focuses on two mythological figures present in the dialogue, Pharmica and Thoth. By connecting Pharmica to Thoth’s power over the medical arts, Thoth, hybrid god of moonlight, medicine and writing, comes to signify deconstructive play, irony, subversion, protest and inversion: the moon’s luminous and wavering refraction of philosophy’s straightforward truth. For Derrida, moral or socially productive rhetoric, the power of sun-god-and father, logic, and capitalism are all undone by Thoth’s deconstructive model. Derrida specifically calls

attention to “the permanence of a Platonic schema that assigns the origin and power of speech, precisely of *logos*, to the paternal position” and that this ideology “sets up the whole of Western metaphysics in its conceptuality” (76). In other words, any interrogation of the western rhetorical tradition, even one as radical as Derrida’s, points immediately to the inherent patriarchal constraints surrounding and embodying, quite literally, these written and spoken discourses. Derrida chooses *Phaedrus* because this dialogue allows him to codify certain ideas inherent to the western tradition and their latent protest, and these ideas include what feminist scholars would describe as patriarchy or phallogentrism.

Two factors are of interest here, first and foremost that *Phaedrus* is considered a lasting influence on the explicitly rhetorical principles clearly outlined in Aristotle’s rhetoric. Plato is seen as a key source in the history of Western rhetoric. Secondly, Derrida’s methodology with respect to the *Phaedrus* is predicated on an approach to text we would now define as geographic or place/space. Anticipating this criticism by fifty years, Derrida insisted on setting as a pivotal means of reading Plato: the *topography* behind the *topos*, “the *topoi* of the dialogue are never indifferent. The themes, the topics, the (common-)places, in a rhetorical sense, are strictly inscribed, comprehended each time within a significant site” (69). Derrida’s emphasis is on the physical location as much as it is on the rhetorical *topoi*; in fact, the two are inseparable: “the fable of the cicadas would not have taken place [...] if that heat, which weighs over the whole dialogue, had not driven the two friends out the city, into the countryside, along the river Ilissus” (69). For Derrida, the Ilissus is “common-place,” a location that suggests

invention and memory, arrangement, style and delivery. It is worthwhile to pause at this point in "Pharmica" as Derrida conflates "(common-) places" with "topics" in his description of the Ilissus (69). Aristotle would object, stating that *topoi* are "arguments about questions that may arise and are suitable for us to handle;" topics, therefore, are explicitly distinguished from unpersuasive commonplaces, too universal to be rhetorically effective (1396b). Derrida suggests that these two ideas, the classifiable, moral enthymeme, and the global commonplace are the same, are, in fact, grounded (the pun is inescapable) in a third term, the "significant site" in which the discourse occurs (69). Derrida is not really that distant from Aristotle's premise that certain kinds of arguments are suggested by certain events: political, judicial, and oratorical speech; however, Derrida's play is provocative in its implicit suggestion that Western written argument has a proper setting as well as a genuine (in contrast to a fallacious) enthymeme.<sup>1</sup> Deconstructing both the Western philosophical tradition and its corresponding logocentric location would require an alternative notion of space and an equally divergent rhetoric—both of which would lie outside of the enlightenment tradition.

Spatial theory has undergone a radical reconceptualization since Derrida first invoked the power of space. The "spatial turn" in literary and philosophical discourse has marked a growing concern with eco-consciousness, a new vision of interconnected human communities and a resistance to established models of space and time. Henri

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<sup>1</sup> Enthymeme, it is worth noting, comes from the greek verb *enthumeomai*, from *en thumos*, to take into the heart or soul. The enthymeme is linguistically dependent on the idea of inspiration.

Lefebvre asks us to question the traditional categorization of space as “empty” or “absolute” and instead proposes the potential for representational spaces which are “more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs [...] linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, and also to art” (33). Lefebvre’s argument is that these spaces cannot be divorced from the human system which designed the space and the human inhabitants who populate it. For our purposes, however, Lefebvre is useful in that he identifies the power of space, even the purely representational space found within the non-physical world of the text. Additionally, Lefebvre’s analysis, though rooted in the social sciences, contains some familiar concepts. Like Derrida, Lefebvre remarks that “phallocracy” exists as the current “orientation of space” (287). Just as Derrida<sup>2</sup> views deconstruction as a protest to the logocentric systems of Western philosophy, Lefebvre seeks a new “differential space” which by “accentuating” differences can “restore unity” to the “the integrity of the individual body, the social body, the corpus of human needs and the corpus of knowledge” and “distinguish[ing ...] social reproduction and genitivity, gratification and biological fertility, social relationships and family relationships” (52)<sup>3</sup>. This space is an alternative to both patriarchy and capitalism in that it can be “co-

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<sup>2</sup> Lefebvre is, of course, critical of Derrida (and Kristeva for that matter) claiming that these critics ignore “the yawning gap that separates this linguistic mental space from that social space where language becomes practice” (3). While I am unabashedly using Lefebvre to interpret a series of texts, it is important to recognize that Lefebvre would be quite put out with me for using his theory in the service of an abstract critique rather than constructing a real conversation or an actual physical space.

<sup>3</sup> Deleuze picks up on the same idea when he reminds us that “Platonism as a whole is erected on the basis of this wish to hunt down the phantasms or simulacra which are identified with the Sophist himself, that devil, that insinuator or simulator, that always disguised and displaced false pretender” (127). Deleuze argues that this Platonic move subordinates “difference” to “the Same” and lauds the simulacra in much the same way that Derrida does. Like Derrida, Deleuze points to the lingering Sophistical elements lurking within Platonic dialogue. For Deleuze the Sophists “haunt” “Plato’s style” “inserting” themselves “into the repetitions and variations of that style” (127).

optated”—not simply dominated or appropriated (369). Lefebvre is interested in “movement instead of stagnation” (370) and “linking” “logic and dialectic” (372) in order to interrogate “the unknown and the ill-understood” “rhythms” “circulations of energy” “the life of the body” (373).<sup>4</sup>

Lefebvre’s differential space can be compared to Gillian Rose’s concept of “paradoxical space.” Rose’s argument, which focuses on how gender informs the academic discipline of geography, terminates by attempting to articulate a theory of space outside of gendered dualisms.<sup>5</sup> In a reading informed by both mainstream and radical feminist theory, Rose reminds us that “feminist writing makes use of spatial images extraordinarily often” (140).<sup>6</sup> Confirming that “both the human agency and the space through which it moves in time-geography are masculine; they are constructed in the image of the master subject,” Rose sets out her notion of “paradoxical” space in order to find “spaces and landscapes beyond the attempted masculinist closures of geography” (38). Rose cites Teresa de Laurentis who “insists [...] the subject of feminism must be

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<sup>4</sup> I also need some major footnotes on Doreen Massey (the major feminist place/space geographer.

<sup>5</sup> More specifically, Gillian Rose suggests “the everyday, the emotional, the bodily, the domestic” (53) ideas familiar to any contemporary feminist scholar, although Rose is careful to note that “white feminists [...] argued that the home was ‘the central site of the oppression of women’ [...]” and women must “break the link between women and the home” (55). Next, Rose discusses a more general “feminization of place. Place is represented as Woman” which she critiques along feminist lines (56). Rose then turns to the conflation of woman and nature, i.e. mother nature which we would now call ecofeminist (78). Rose complicates a celebratory reading of women and nature by reminding us that “only hegemonic readings of the body encode bodies into two absolutely different kinds” and “radical feminism’s celebration of Nature then absolutely erases differences between women as well as between men, and replicates the closures of masculinist thought” (81). Rose then holds radical feminist Mary Daly against Simone De Beauvoir: Rose equates De Beauvoir’s attempt to erase the female body with Daly’s attempt to laud “feminine difference” as similar examples of dualistic thinking (82). Rose adopts an “oscillatory strategy” (83) in order to “deconstruct the polarities that is oscillates between” (84).

<sup>6</sup> Rose cites specifically Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, and I am also reminded of Gilbert and Gubar’s attic, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s closet and the recent reader titled *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics: Landmark Essays and Controversies*.

positioned in relation to social relations other than gender” (138) in order to present “radically heterogeneous geometries” as multicultural, transgendered and embodied loci (140). However, Rose’s definition of this productive, paradoxical space remains vague. Minelle Mahtani characterizes “Rose’s exploration of paradoxical space as rich and tantalizing, pointing towards the possibility of describing some new feminist geographies which require a more reflexive, spatialized vocabulary to weave together new, colorful tapestries of identity—especially in relation to the dimension of race” (300). Mahtani’s thesis, that “mixed race women occupy spaces that are inherently paradoxical,” despite its obvious divergence from this particular series of feminist concerns, is relevant in that it points to a direct relationship between certain kinds of identities and certain forms of space (301). Caroline Desbiens continues this emphasis on identity and the relationship between objects and space, suggesting a more specific methodology where “erasures” are returned to the “forefront” so that it becomes impossible to view the work “in its previous frame” (183). Desbiens notes that in this kind of analysis “the figures, colors, objects have remained unchanged;” she seeks to transform “the set of relations between them” (183).

Desbiens further elaborates Rose’s paradoxical space by describing “the near impossibility of representing the female subject within patriarchy results from the fact that its contours are in constant danger of being absorbed by traditional representations, even as the subject actively seeks to undermine them” (183-84). Desbiens notes that “choosing to place the subject of feminism in an elsewhere within or beyond patriarchy presupposes a different politics of location in which to articulate resistance (184);

however, she ultimately concludes that Rose's push to escape traditional notions of geography leaves the feminist geographer without a place to stand. While Desbiens's critique of Rose may have some merit for the geographer attempting to describe lived spaces of living women, the literary critic benefits from the very two-dimensionality that feminist geographers tend to critique. Pages do not have to obey the laws of space and time: literary narratives are often weightless, freed from the gravity of possibility, open to a level of permeability, indeed, impossibility. Texts describe paradoxes our three-dimensional reality cannot easily contain.

Doreen Massey's work on space also stresses the value of relationships within a space. Massey's work suggests that Rose's paradoxical space is actually the innate character of all space, which can be achieved by undermining the traditional boundaries between space and place (57). Massey seeks a "sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity" in (9). Massey's version of space actually resembles Rose's paradoxical space writ large, even down to its resistance to paradigms of "white, heterosexual male" identity (10). In other words, Massey accomplishes for space as a whole what Rose situates in her notion of paradoxical space: heterogeneity (10). Massey concludes that it is the constantly changing relations of objects in space that produce its delightful, transformative and deeply political power, once again calling attention to the way in which objects interact with and among the spaces they inhabit (119). Space, for Massey, is not a container for

objects, but rather a participant in the relationships between object and time. For Massey, space is active, differential and heterogeneous, and ultimately transformative.

A feminist spatial methodology would suggest that differential or paradoxical space can be found lying, latent, suggested or even eclipsed by the locus of the Platonic dialogue, alongside the river Ilissus. However, significant work must be done to understand Plato's Ilissus and the figures which populate this problematic space before any seeds of Rose's paradoxical space can be identified. Derrida fixates on Plato's description of the Ilissus, and suggests, quite strongly, that this Platonic location is defined by its danger (70). Socrates, sage of the city streets, has left Athens, even if only to travel briefly outside the city walls. Derrida notes that Socrates loved the city enough to remain in it, even to arrest and death; *Phaedrus* highlights the dangerous and seductive appeal of an unfamiliar terrain (70). Certainly, Plato devotes significant textual attention to his description of the landscape, significantly more than is within a Platonic dialogue. Far from the urban and urbane dining rooms and public spaces of Athens, Socrates and Phaedrus sit down by the banks of the Ilissus under the "very tall plane tree" (Plato 229a-b). It is "shady" there, and a "light breeze" blows the hair of the soft grass back. The summer air is warm and the cicadas whirr, compelling background to the cool river. Despite the idyllic milieu, Socrates and Phaedrus cannot simply relax under the plane trees and read the speeches of Lysias; certain ideological and cultural work must take place before this discussion, the philosophical heart of the dialogue, can occur. Socrates hints at the nature of this work when he describes the Ilissus as a location "just right for girls to be playing nearby" (229-B). Plato's Socrates probably meant that the spot, open

to view and not too far from the city walls, conformed to Athenian notions of proper feminine behavior; however, most fifth-century Athenian women were geographically restricted, both to their own quarters within a house (the *gunyktion*) and to a series of rigidly defined cultural roles. The old joke about Athenian romance is that it is always either morbid or problematic as young lovers can only interact at weddings, funerals or religious festivals. The cultural truth, however, is a sobering one: weddings, funerals or religious festivals were the only time fifth century Athenian girls of a certain social class could catch a suitor's eye, because these were the only times women were *let out of the house*. Given the rigidly defined topographies of Athenian femininity, the fact that Plato allows Socrates to characterize the Ilissus as "just right" for "women" suggests Socrates's plane tree and river can be read as a feminine or feminist space.

Derrida also hints at the potential role of women in the *Phaedrus* when he insists that Plato "marks out for the entire dialogue the scene where that virgin was cast into the abyss, surprised by death *while playing with Pharmica*" (70). However, Derrida's Pharmica quickly ceases to be a person, a woman with a particular mythological power and resonance, and becomes a concept: the intersection between the palliative, the poisonous, and writing, embodied in figure of Thoth, himself a masculine force. While Derrida does suggest that there could be "some entirely-other of both sophistics *and* Platonism, some resistance having no common denominator with this whole commutation," he ends up lauding parricide and holding up a writer/son as an alternative to Ammon, the speaker/father (108). Derrida only breaks away from the masculine principle when he suggests that the mother's "unstable form" "as in those pictures in

which a second picture faintly can be made out” can be seen in his discussion of the Adonis myth (143). Furthermore, Derrida is not concerned with issues of feminine composition; his metaphor dissemination, Derrida lauds the playful and rebellious scattering of *semiotics*. Any discussion of feminine fertility, textual or otherwise, remains “drawn upside down in the foliage” and lurks “in the back of the garden,” (143). Derrida equates feminine presence with instability. Faint as the afterimage of a ghost, women are consigned to lie quietly among the shadows in Derrida’s pharmacy. My analysis, however, seeks to provide feminine rhetorical agency some room of its own.

Given the prominence of phallogocentric models of discourse, it is little wonder that feminist critics have been engaged in a consistent practice of proposing alternatives. While plenty of strong work has been done in linking feminist rhetorical principles with the lost, the maternal, the oracular and the unuttered, Derrida’s methodology suggests a productive way to restage this conversation. If Derrida claims the *Phaedrus* as text where the Western paternal tradition offers its most canonical case, we must return again to this foundation, both for the Western rhetorical tradition and our own postmodern theoretical practice, and seek a third alternative outside both the “paternal position” of Platonism and Derrida’s deconstructive revision.

Marilyn Frye (1983) notes that “phallogocentric reality” consists of the “foreground” while it is the “constant repetitive uneventful activities of women” which constitute and maintain the background against which this foreground plays” (167). Frye remarks that “it is essential to the maintenance of the foreground reality that nothing within it refer in any way to anything in the background, and yet it depends absolutely upon the existence

of the background” (8). Frye’s feminine background participates in a larger theoretical orientation in feminist geography linking time to masculinity and space to femininity (Massey 57). Frye also anticipates Desieben’s (1999) interest in de Lauretis’s “space off,” the place in a film where an object whose presence is not visible can be “inferred” from what the frame does choose to show (183). Feminized space complicates Derrida’s claim that rhetoric depends absolutely upon a “significant site” by suggesting that the women in the background of that site are the key upon which the foregrounded masculine rhetoric rests. In other words, to locate the women in the background is to finally hear, and hopefully understand, the nature of their communicative acts.

In the case of the *Phaedrus*, the women in the background do not stay there for long. Two women stand on the banks of the Ilissus: Pharmica and Oreithuia, mortal daughter of an Athenian king. While Derrida reminds us this scene “marks out” the “entire dialogue” that follows and stresses Oreithuia’s “virgin purity and an unpenetrated interior,” he neglects any further analysis of this figure (70). However, it is Oreithuia, not Pharmica, who interests Socrates and Phaedrus. Socrates uses the story of Oreithuia as an exempla: although mythology states that Oreithuia was “carried away” by Boreas, god of the North Wind, a philosopher could also “claim that a gust of the North Wind blew her over the rocks where she was playing with Pharmaceia; and once she was killed that way people said she had been carried off by Boreas—or was it, perhaps, from the Aeropagus” (229C). Feminist geographical methodologies would suggest that we pay careful attention to a figure who must be essentialized, historicized, and ultimately displaced before a treatise on rhetorical ethics can occur.

Oreithuia's history follows an all too familiar mythological trajectory: snatched by the north wind, Boreas, she is raped and eventually becomes a divine consort of the god. Her name, "mountain-rager," suggests dangerous, physical power. Socrates specifically mentions that the locus for Oreithuia's rape is currently disputed, assigned to both the Ilissus river and to the high cliffs of the Areopagus (229-D).<sup>7</sup> The Areopagus, a location inextricably connected with both judicial and civic rhetoric, is certainly what Derrida would call a "significant site." Even in the fifth century, the Areopagus still held trials for murder and would be a venue where rhetors, both in person and by proxy, composed speeches to sway the archons. The key concepts are worth repeating: law, court, government, judgment and rhetoric. Oreithuia's rape and subsequent incorporation into the Greek pantheon as docile wife suggests the need for that power's removal.

Unfortunately, even in a basic reference work of classical scholarship such as the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oreithuia remains lost in the pharmacy. There nothing under her name but a cross-reference; we are instructed to "see Boreas." The entry on Boreas, written by Alan H. Griffiths, cites the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* as its primary source. According to Griffiths, Boreas's "vivid characterization is owed to the story of his forcible seizing of the Athenian princess Oreithyia, daughter of Erectheus, from the banks of the Ilissus (Pl. *Phdr.* 229 c-d)" (253). Emily Kearns clarifies that Erectheus is the first king of Athens and "the prototype ancestor of all

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<sup>7</sup> There is a certain amount of critical contention regarding the mention of Areopagus in the *Phaedrus*. I would assert that whether the phrase is attributed to Plato or an eager medieval commentator, the invocation of the Areopagus in this context makes perfect rhetorical sense.

Athenians” (555). Strikingly, there is no mention in either the Plato, or in the classical reference sources, of Oreithuia’s brothers. The inescapable implication of the various mythological narratives surrounding Oreithuia is that Oreithuia is not just a *princess* of Athens, but its heir. As daughter to the prototype Athenian ancestor, Oreithuia can be read as something of an Athenian “Eve.”<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, Socrates does not refer to Oreithuia’s narrative as a myth (*muthos*), but as *legetai*, “something told” (229b). Phaedrus, in his reply to Socrates, will use “*muthologema*,” a mythical narrative, to describe these same events (229c).<sup>9</sup> Plato uses the same term, “*muthologema*,” in *Laws* to refer to Cadmus reputed to be the founder of Thebes (666e). Reading Oreithuia in light of Cadmus would also suggest a quasi-historical status. In all probability, Athenian audiences would have reacted to Oreithuia’s story with varying degrees of skepticism and belief, much in the way many contemporary Americans believe the George Washington actually did chop down a cherry tree or that Johnny Appleseed was simply a mythological figure. To a fifth-century Athenian, Oreithuia functions as no more or less a cultural construct than George Washington, Susan B. Anthony or Rosa Parks. This ambiguity produces both freedom and empowerment. A woman like Cheryl Glenn’s *Aspasia* could choose to read Oreithuia’s story quite differently than Socrates: Oreithuia as powerful princess, exiled from her city, displaced from the locus of her power and her voice.

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<sup>8</sup> If that picture is too rosy, we could at least see a potential “Queen Elizabeth” of Athens—a woman who, while operating under patriarchy, possesses power in her own right.

<sup>9</sup> According to the Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon *neu nominative/accusative singular from mmuthologia*: “a mythical narrative” (454).

When Phaedrus and Socrates come to the Ilissus to discuss philosophy they cannot do so without literally and symbolically exorcising Oreithuia—first by invoking the story of her rape, and secondly by insisting on her mythological origins and her silence. Oreithuia’s relationship to female authority and power makes her removal from the site of philosophical discourse a necessary act for Plato. Derrida’s essay follows almost the same trajectory, summoning Oriethuia only to dismiss her. At first referring to Oriethuia by name (69), Derrida quickly refocuses on the body—Oreithuia becomes “the virgin,” her identity conflated entirely with her reproductive and sexual organs (70). Masculine agency is displaced as well. Boreas becomes the “wind” that “cast” the girl “into the abyss” (70). While we can appreciate the ambiguity of any translation, we should also acknowledge the potential of language to occlude sexual violence: despite Derrida’s elegant retelling of the myth, Oreithuia does not “retreat” from Areopagus, Ilissus or even Pharmika, nor does she necessarily die, to use Derrida’s description, “intact” (70). Even more disturbing is that Derrida finds it necessary to focus on Oreithuia’s “virgin purity and [...] unpenetrated interior” (70). Derrida calls our attention to Oriethuia’s body, placing us in the problematic position of Boreas; our eyes, insubstantial as the wind, focus on the genital, violate Oreithuia all over again. While Derrida claims to protest the Western rhetorical tradition, he still casts Oreithuia off the textual cliff.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Gillian Rose cites C. Pateman’s *Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory*, that a “‘new, specifically modern’ form of patriarchy” manifests itself in “the overthrow of the primal father by his sons” (Rose 35). We are reminded sharply of the language Derrida uses in “*Plato’s Pharmacy*” to characterize the deconstructive impulse: to put “*Thoth in Ra’s place* as the moon takes the place of the

For both Plato and Derrida, relegating Oreithuia's presence to mythology (rather than history) serves several functions, the most obvious of which is to dismiss the reality of sexual violence, patriarchy at its most violent and repressive. However, Plato's Socrates does more than diminish Oreithuia's identity and the violence of her rape; he dislocates her, placing her abduction "two or three hundred yards further downstream" and later on the "Aeropagus" itself. Plato's need to place and then dis-place Oreithuia points strongly to her importance: a specifically Platonic reaction to a tradition which Oreithuia's violated and displaced body could instantiate. This reaction is explicitly spatial: Plato insists that Oreithuia was never here. Doreen Massey calls attention to the power inherent in spatial narratives: putting someone into, or out of, a place is a political act. Specifically, Massey notes that "recognizing spatiality involves (could involve) recognizing coevalness, the existence of trajectories which have at least some degree of autonomy from each other (which are not simply alignable into one linear story)" (71). Plato's textual strategy, exacerbated by a series of translators, has been to suppress this potential coevalness.

However, the secondary result of Plato's negotiation is actually more productive, at least for the purposes of uncovering an alternative rhetorical mode within *Phaedrus*: it forces us to reconsider myth. Specifically, Plato explicitly invokes "Hippocentaurs," "Chimaera," "Gorgons," and "Pegasuses," along with his discussion of Oreithuia's rape. Hippocentaurs, half men, half horses who are noted for their savagery and sexual

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sun;" Thoth "helps the sons do away with the father, the brothers do away with the brother that has become king" (89). Why is

appetites; Chimera, a female mishmash of lion, snake and goat known to breathe fire; Gorgons, whose powers destroy unwary men; and Medusa's child Pegasus, are all creatures linked to Oreithuia's displaced story. The tension in Plato is that this mythological space exists simultaneously with the rational space inhabited by the philosopher and his student. Like most Platonic conversation that touches on religion, Socrates skirts around outright atheism in favor of a negotiated relationship with the supernatural—it may be there, it may be possible to explain, but a philosopher should first “know myself” (229-E). Despite Socrates's careful posturing, the end result of his digression is dismissal. Platonic philosophy and, by extension, Platonic rhetoric, are framed in a world predicated on rational laws. Although Plato's purpose in offering his readers Oreithuia's myth is quite clear, the act itself recreates a provocative spatial paradox: rhetoric and philosophy's significant site, a sunny, peaceful river bank inhabited only by the chirping of cicadas, may be the home of a variety of other powers and forces, and not safe at all. Indeed, Plato notes that the cicadas themselves might be muses, mythological women in disguise. Oreithuia's riverbank transcends easy characterization as an appropriate space for women to play; the simultaneous invocation and rejection of mythological figures points to paradoxical space.

Gillian Rose distinguishes between feminine space and paradoxical space. While feminine space is still indebted to a patriarchal epistemology (106), paradoxical spaces are “beyond the attempted masculinist closures of geography” (38). This coeval space is “multidimensional, shifting and contingent”: “spaces that would mutually exclusive if shattered on a two-dimensional map—centre and margin, inside and outside—are

occupied simultaneously” (Rose 140). Rose offers several versions of feminized structures, the domestic house and the garden, as well as feminized landscapes, land as mother earth, “land as irresistible temptress” and finally, “not the welcoming topography of nurturing mother but terrifying maternal swamps, mountains, seas, inhabited by sphinxes and gorgons” (106). While Rose includes our monstrous Sphinxes and Gorgons within a set of traditionally feminine spaces, still limited by patriarchal epistemology, Oreithuia’s presence suggests that the body of the mythological creature, especially monstrous creature, may have a completely different epistemological power: that it may, in fact, provide the very locus of paradox that Rose’s geographical theory seeks but fails to articulate. In order to illustrate the potential of myth to function as a site of paradox, a closer examination of a mythic body is warranted. Daphne, much like Oreithuia, is another famous daughter who resisted sexual violation. In order to evade Apollo, Daphne calls on the gods to transform her into a laurel tree. Apollo’s need to possess Daphne transcends the boundary between human body and natural terrain; he claims the tree for his own, “raping” Daphne’s branches to crown his honored poets. This alternative violation satisfies the god (the woman, presumably, has nothing else to say about it). Mythology allows for explicit spatial paradox: tree as both tree and not/tree, body as both flesh and not/flesh. Apollo’s final act of possession erases some of the distance between figure and landscape; possessing the tree is, ultimately, equated with possessing the female body. In myth, bodies can transform into background, spaces (Boreas, the wind) can become bodies. Center and margin shatter. Mythology is the realm of the unstable; the impossible bodies of its inhabitants the sites of paradox.

Doreen Massey's radical re-characterization of space also suggests mythology as a form of space, a "simultaneity of stories so far" (9). Massey cites architect Bernard Tschumi whose work is based on "superimposing three separate structures (a point system, coordinate axes and a curve) each of which in themselves was coherently logical" (113). Massey's interest lies in the "spatial juxtaposition which produces the openness" and goes on to state that "the change/openness of space results from the co-existence of structures which are each in themselves by no means chaotic" (113). Massey goes on to critique the "horizontalness" of Tschumi's conception of space; however, her interest in "happenstance juxtaposition, in the unforeseen tearing apart, in the internal interruption, in the impossibility of closure" all seem to reference what I am going to term the mythic component of Tschumi's work (116). After all, what is a Gorgon but embodied paradox, woman and monster occupying the same body at the same time. Medusa's legendary power, to turn men into stone, literally the subject of landscape, further erases the division between background and foreground, object and subject, figure and space. Caroline Desbiens's clarification of paradoxical space via the power of heterogeneous relations also invokes these mythological tropes. Mythology is all about epistemological instability: nothing is what it looks like, assumptions are always, ever undercut. If anything, Plato's entire description of the Illsus intensifies this paradox—locations are blurred: upstream, becomes right here, becomes the Aeropagous. With respect to scene, to space, to figure or to body, myth displaces unity. In the world of the text, it is the supernatural which embodies paradox.

The Western rhetorical tradition instantiated by Plato and Phaedrus was designed to stabilize and reify these problematic spaces. Returning the Ilissus to Oreithuia and the citizens of paradox requires rhetorical alternatives. Even as we recognize Oreithuia's importance, we still lack her speech; whatever Oreithuia and Pharmica whispered about, there among the golden river, remains lost. While there has been plenty of contemporary attention to all sorts of verbal, visual, material, autobiographical and historical female and feminist rhetorics, rereading of classical sources through a feminist lens marked the start of the field, not its current focus. Cheryl Glenn and Susan Jarratt's performed amazing work on Aspasia with respect to the Periclean funeral oration and the Sophistic School. C. Jan Swearingen articulated the philosophy of Diotima, whose words are repeated in Plato's *Symposium*, as that of a rhetor in her own right. However, there has been a dearth of recent readings of classical rhetors or rhetorical theory through a feminist lens; the only exception being Melissa Ianeet's recent article "'She Must Be a Rare One: Aspasia, Corinne, and the Improvisatrice Tradition.'" None of these valuable studies provide a theoretical frame sufficient to uncover Oreithuia, to theorize what she might instantiate, and to describe the space in which she once dwelled. We must, therefore, find a rhetor willing both to interrogate both the classical tradition and to theorize the possibility for a feminine or even a feminist alternative. Krista Ratcliffe points out the value in using an Anglo-American rhetorical theorist over a French feminist theory, despite the "sophisticated critiques of language, subjectivity, closure, writing, and so on" located in the French feminist tradition (30). While Ratcliffe is certainly correct, our most relevant reason for reading outside Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva, and now Butler and Spivak's

theories of language is simply that they do not explicitly interrogate the Platonic moment with which we are concerned. Virginia Woolf, however, does.

Woolf is not unfamiliar with Plato's *Phaedrus*; she translated and made reading notes on the dialogue as early as 1907 and returned to the text again in 1917 (Monks 76). Krista Ratcliffe made an extremely strong case for Virginia Woolf as feminine rhetorical theorist in her book *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions*.<sup>11</sup> Ratcliffe reads two nonfiction works by Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, to argue that Woolf "constructs a feminist agenda to subvert the dominant ideology and promote a feminist pacifism" through "a textual strategy of reading and writing against the dominant ideology" (32). Ratcliffe describes this work as a "gendered interweaving" which combines the "textual" the "cultural" and the "psychological" (33). Specifically, Ratcliffe theorizes Woolf's rhetoric through a series of solutions to phallogocentrism, the last of which is that "women will write well if an androgynous cultural space is carved out for them" (Ratcliffe 37). I have highlighted Ratcliffe's fourth solution for several reasons. The first is that it locates some of Woolf's rhetorical theory within *A Room of One's Own*, a text which Ratcliffe reads closely in her chapter on Woolf. The second is that the importance Ratcliffe places on both space and gender—Ratcliffe uses Woolf's term androgyny here, but her description of an androgynous

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<sup>11</sup> Ratcliffe's work on Woolf is deeply ethical and draws attention to all of Woolf's most problematic comments about class and race, as well as her privileged status as an upper middle class British intellectual. As Ratcliffe has treated this issue with such depth and fairness, I see no need to recapitulate that work here, outside of the necessary identification of subject and subjectivity so essential to feminist work. I do not use Woolf to insist that a white woman's voice is the only voice. I use Woolf because this white woman just so happened to encounter this particular Greek philosopher in a way that is highly productive for theorizing women's writing.

cultural space allows us to appreciate Woolf's language with a greater level of critical attention. While androgyny is generally taken as the absence of gender, the Greek word is actually a combination of the Greek word man "andros" and woman "gunos"—both genders and none give us a productive and provocative paradox. Woolf further clarifies her use of this term in *A Room of One's Own* when she situates the term "androgyny" in Coleridge, but clarifies that she means "man-womanly" and "woman-manly" (98-99). Ratcliffe sees androgyny functioning in a "cultural space," a move that links paradoxes of gender to those of location. A closer examination of Woolf's rhetorical theory is necessary to see if she does, in fact, situate paradoxical space in bodies that combine masculine and feminine identities, and if these hybrid bodies function as a mechanism for encouraging feminine composition.

*A Room of One's Own* is a compelling record of an author and her struggle with writing, in this case a lecture on "Women and Fiction" for a local women's college. Woolf devotes much of her talk to articulating the constraints of what we will later term patriarchy, tracing both the physical impediments to women's writing (the Beadle who chases her out off of the Oxford path, the child and job that keep the woman in the home) and the mental obstacles to composition. Woolf searches for a female Shakespeare who can transcend the silence dictated by the aesthetics and mechanics of patriarchy. Most critics take Woolf's word that *A Room of One's Own* has "one minor point;" namely, her famous thesis that women "must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (4). However, Woolf's program, while it does certainly include a strong economic and social critique of patriarchy as barrier to a feminine creative process, does

not terminate in or simply circle about this one revelation. Feminist critics compound the problem, as Ratcliffe does herself mistaking Woolf's articulated "peroration" as its driving thesis. Read through this lens *A Room of One's Own* becomes nothing more than the siren call for a Judith Shakespeare, as yet unborn (112).

Woolf's rhetorical purpose is far more subtle than either of these readings suggest. Woolf claims that she is going to show her audience "how I arrived at this opinion about the room and the money" to "lay bare the ideas" (4). In other words, Woolf wants to describe her own process of invention so that her readers may "seek out this truth and to decide whether any part of it is worth keeping" (5). Through a series of very carefully articulated descriptions, Woolf sketches out for her audience the barriers to feminine composition in the first half of the twentieth century and her theories for a solution. Woolf goes on to formulate the aesthetics of that female rhetorical tradition, but her purpose is more than a simple laying out of stylistic guidelines for women writers. Woolf's trajectory is an active one. If Shakespeare's sister sits in the lecture hall, her one gray shoe tapping, fingers working the edge of her wool collar, breath moving strands of hair on her cheek, Woolf wishes to help her speak. In order to accomplish this empowerment, she explains her own intellectual process, the way in which she finally arrived at her own ideas. Deliciously metacognitive, Woolf layers underneath her call for a Judith Shakespeare a map of her own ability to invent fiction despite the pressures of patriarchy.

While much of *A Room of One's Own* seems conversational, even playful, Woolf has actually designed the arrangement of her argument with special care. Her scheme is

scenic; physically walking her reader through a spatio-temporal progression, consisting of the spaces she visited during a three-day period of composing this lecture, Woolf lays out an entire theory of feminine composition. *A Room of One's Own* begins at the “collar,” the impediment to speech, which Woolf sees as a “need of coming to some conclusion on a subject” (5). Naturally this logocentric value, conclusion, has as its partner the articulation of that conclusion: the thesis. Classically trained herself, Woolf knows that her audience expects the point to be made immediately and then made again. Instead, Woolf presents her argument using a chronological and spatial logic that defies these traditional expectations.

First, Woolf describes the scene so her audience can inhabit it along with her:

[...] sitting on the banks of a river a week or two ago in fine October weather, lost in thought. To the right and left bushes of some sort, golden and crimson, glowed with the colour, even it seemed burnt with the heat of fire. On the further bank the willows wept in perpetual lamentation, their hair about their shoulders. The river reflected whatever it chose of sky and bridge and burning tree, and when the undergraduate had oared his boat through the reflections they closed again, completely (5).

This language is both evocative and beautiful—there are images of both illumination “glow” and “crimson,” and immolation, “bunt with the heat of fire,” married to images of pain, the willows weeping “in perpetual lamentation.” Woolf’s emphasis on landscape is easy to dismiss as another artistic effusion from a lyrical prose stylist; however, she makes the point that landscape and thoughtscape are inextricably linked.

Woolf relates that looking at the river inspires her with a “thought”—a thought presumably about women and fiction which “became at once very exciting and

important” “darted and sank, and flashed hither and thither” in a “wash and tumult of ideas” (96). The language is ripe for a potential misreading, while Woolf describes her thought as “small” and “insignificant” and while she will “not to trouble you with that thought now” she promises “if you look carefully you may find it for yourselves in the course of what I am going to say” (5). Clearly, Woolf is gesturing to her missing thesis, the premise of her locution; however, she cloaks the importance of this idea in metaphor, her thought “let its line down into the stream [...] until- you know the little tug- the sudden conglomeration of an idea at the end of one’s line: and then the cautions hauling of it in, and the careful laying of it out” (5). Another monster is born: thesis as fish. Woolf’s metaphor links cognition directly to landscape; mind “fishes” the landscape and thought becomes the fish. Invention, therefore, becomes inseparable from the material conditions which surround the author.

However, something stops Woolf from communicating; the movement between composing and composition, between planning and articulation is arrested. What occurs, of course, is the famous moment when Woolf is reprimanded by the Beadle for straying off the path. The response is playful, but her comment that men “in protection of their turf, which has been rolled for 300 years in succession, they had sent my little fish into hiding” contains a sinister register (6). Gillian Rose agrees, describing the Oxbridge lawn as “transparent space,” the natural “territory of the oppressors” (147). The implication here is specifically rhetorical— men defend their turf, intellectual and artistic; women are kept to carefully controlled paths (we are reminded of the many metaphors linking women to gardens) not merely silenced, but made thoughtless through their

expulsion. The remaining pages of Woolf's text become, in essence, a search to regain both the lost topic, the idea about Women and Fiction which originally inspired her lecture, and the lost topos, the physical terrain of the academy form which she has been so symbolically excluded.

In order to accomplish this work, Woolf returns to place, providing her audience with a walking tour of "Oxbridge" University; however, the physical spaces Woolf selects also carry symbolic resonance. Woolf chooses, in essence, to give her audience a tour of the significant sites of patriarchal oppression (the library, the church, the laboratory and so on). At each stop, Woolf tries and fails to reclaim her lost thought-fish about women and fiction. Frustrated, Woolf attempts to reintroduce material reality into the abstracted terrain. She begins to imagine that "this quadrangle with its smooth lawns, its massive buildings, and the chapel itself was marsh too, where the grasses waved and the swine rooted" (9). Doreen Massey notes in her survey of spatio/temporal philosophy that there is a "classic (modernist?) prioritization of time" (21). Massey's argument highlights the resistance of modernist philosophers to consider the dynamism of space; focusing instead on temporal continua such as the Bergsonian *duree*. Certainly Woolf's work tracks with that of her fellow modernists, reflecting Proustian temporal slippage. Indeed, my own reading suggests that Woolf reaches back beyond the restraints of Western phallogentrism through the invocation of certain topoi. However, unlike Massey's modernist philosophers, I would argue that Woolf's priority is space. Woolf's imagining is noteworthy because it insists so vividly on the lived character of the space on which she stands.

Specifically, Woolf's description is obsessed with the physical reality of the buildings she encounters, the:

teams of horses and oxen [who...] must have hauled the stone in wagons from far countries, and then with infinite labour the grey blocks in whose shade I was now standing were poised in order one on top of another, and the painters brought their glass for the windows, and the masons were busy for centuries up on that roof with putty and cement, spade and trowel (9).

Woolf is careful to stress the physical here—the stone is dragged, lifted, placed and shaped. Finally, at the moment when Woolf returns to the present, the moment in which space should also return to a fixed and stable status, Woolf plays again with setting. The “libraries and laboratories; the observatories; the splendid equipment of costly and delicate instruments which now stands on glass shelves, where centuries ago the grasses waved and the swine rooted” are once again displaced in time (9). Even as Woolf is careful to reassure her readers that the “foundation of gold and silver seemed deep enough; the pavement laid solidly over the wild grasses” her sly alchemy transforms stone foundations into “gold and silver” (10). Woolf's space is both quadrangle and marsh, stone and not/stone: “the grasses waving and the swine rooting” “the foundation of gold and silver” simultaneously sharing the exact same physical space, with the assorted stories of their individual spatio-temporal journeys. If Woolf later encourages her audience to think back through their foremothers, here is the first glimpse of this work—a work accomplished through a particularly embodied and emplaced consciousness.

It is the physical space on which Virginia Woolf stands that both invokes the temporal movement and suggests the historical narrative. In this description we see a hint of Rose's paradoxical space, but Massey is actually quite helpful, offering a clarification between the palimpsestous view of space and the dynamically coeval. Palimpsestous space, founded on a backward historicity, is limited in its potential for freedom. Woolf's narrative supports Massey's critique of a purely historical vision. Again, the author is interrupted, tellingly by a chiming "clock" and "the reflection whatever it may have been was cut short" (10). For Woolf, embodiment is only half of the process. The thought-fish cannot be captured, Shakespeare's sister cannot be born, until women are returned to the conversation—the ordinary lives of Mary Beaton, Mary Carmichael, Chloe and Olivia brought back into the frame.

*A Room of One's Own* covers a great deal of ground before Virginia Woolf is able to compose her lecture. Despite a stinging indictment of the economic disparity between women's and men's colleges and a biting critique of current literary theory, Woolf still lacks a thought-fish of her own; she has not "brought back in the evening some important statement, some authentic fact" for her "paper, Women and Fiction" (40-41). The reader remains, for all that Woolf discusses arrangement, style, and delivery, trapped in that paused moment of invention. Eventually, she reads a novel by "Mary Carmichael" in which "Chloe likes Olivia," and begins to sketch out a program of women's writing that focuses on "your own soul with its profundities and its shallows and its vanities and generousities," one which will record the life of "the girl behind the counter," her "true history" more valuable than "the hundred and fiftieth life of Napoleon or eightieth study

of Keats and his use of Miltonic inversion” (90). Despite the complicated nature of her argument, Woolf maintains unity. Her discussion of Mary Carmichael’s novel culminates in some advice for this young female writer. Mary must ignore the “bishops and the deans, the doctors and the professors, the patriarchs and the pedagogues all shouting [...] Fellows and scholars only allowed on the grass” (93). Woolf has offered her audience of young Mary Carmichaels some valuable advice, but her repetition of the Beadle’s injunction has also effectively returned the author to that first moment of patriarchal silencing. Carrying her readers full circle, Woolf’s text remains frozen in search of its thought. Female companionship is not enough to create a moment when thinking becomes speaking, when a women writer can actually sit down to write.

It takes Virginia Woolf one hundred and four pages to write “the very first sentence” of her lecture—on a blank page entitled “Women and Fiction” (104). The “plan of soul” (98), what Woolf will later call her “theory”: “It is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex” (104). This moment of composition can only occur after Woolf observes a scene that that “eased the mind of some strain” (104). Naturally, it is vital that a scene, a particular setting generally placed behind the dramatic action, serves to voice writing with the same force that the Beadle once silenced it. That scene is as follows:

At this moment, as so often happens in London, there was a complete lull and suspension of traffic. Nothing came down the street; nobody passed. A single leaf detached itself from the plane tree at the end of the street, and in that pause and suspension fell. Somehow it was like a signal falling, a signal pointing to a force in things which one had overlooked. It seemed to point to a river, which flowed past invisibly round the corner, down the street and took people and

edded them along, as the stream at Oxbridge had taken the undergraduate in his boat and the dead leaves. Now it was bringing from one side of the street to the other diagonally a girl in patent leather boots, and then a young man in a maroon overcoat; it was also bringing a taxi-cab and it brought all three together at a point directly beneath my window; where the taxi stopped; and the girl and the young man stopped; and they got into the taxi; and then the cab glided off as if it were swept on by the current elsewhere (96).

As with so much in Woolf, this passage is easy to dismiss as lyric description. Several factors, however, insist on its importance. Woolf returns us to the physical space of the Oxbridge stream, the very moment when the “undergraduate in his boat and the dead leaves” rowed by and her thought-fish dangled, temptingly, about women and fiction. However, the scene has changed. No longer the banks of a river in the middle of a university, we are both in London and not/London. Earlier Woolf tried imagining back to Oxbridge’s medieval materialism in order to secure her fish. This approach was ultimately unsuccessful. Now her imagination takes a different turn. Woolf sees “a single leaf” detach itself from “the plane tree at the end of the street.” This action strikes her deeply; it is “a signal falling,” “a signal pointing to a force in things which one had overlooked,” and this sign makes Woolf imagine an invisible river, a river she associates with Oxbridge university and female exclusion. Krista Ratcliffe reads this moment quite beautifully as “the narrator encourages women and men to strive for an androgynous vision, a unity of mind, so that one’s mind is rather like a taxi driving off, carrying both a young man and a young woman” (42). She suggests that Woolf has developed these ideas as response to and protest against the classical tradition: specifically, the “introduction, narration, proof, refutation, and peroration formula that Socrates ridicules

in the *Phaedrus*” (Ratcliffe 53). Ratcliffe’s claims that Woolf intends to “parody Plato’s parody” by “blurring boundaries between genres, genders, and literary functions” (Ratcliffe 53). While Ratcliffe never develops her analysis to illustrate how Woolf accomplishes this critique of the *Phaedrus*, our emphasis on space suggests an easy correlation. Woolf isn’t merely attempting Platonic parody, as in *Phaedrus*, she is reoccupying the *Phaedrus* itself, introducing another, alternative rhetorical model to the sophistic, an explicitly feminist rhetoric.

Plane tree, river, male students and their teachers, something excluded, something overlooked—we are back on the banks of the Ilissus where Socrates and Phaedrus sit under the “very tall plane tree” to redefine rhetorical theory (Plato 229a-b). Woolf sees down beneath the streets of London to where girls once played along the banks of the river. In the lady’s hands lie a potion, deadly to those who do not know its secrets; on her feet she wears black patent leather boots. Oriethuia has had a hard journey. The Beadle will not give her a boat. The statesman must violate her; throw her from the high places of government. The philosopher must explain her; banish her from the places where wisdom happens. The postmodern scholar must reduce her body to signals, concepts he can scatter with a smile. Virginia Woolf calls her cab. Shiny patent leather boots firmly planted on the pavement, Oreithuia meets these men halfway. Neither accosted nor dislocated, she can simply join her missing half, enter the river together, sail off down the street.

While this reading of *A Room of One’s Own* rests upon some subjective conclusions, what Derrida would call “points” of Platonic “presence” articulated

evocatively rather than assertively, it supports Woolf's other, more clearly articulated, readings of the dialogue. Woolf's second novel, *Jacob's Room*, actually contains a scene where the *Phaedrus* is translated. Although Ratcliffe's articulation of Woolf's rhetorical theory never engaged her fictions, Woolf defines her rhetoric on an acknowledgement of subjectivity and asserted the value of her fictions as venue for her criticism:

[...] one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold. One can only give one's audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the limitations, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker. Fiction here is likely to contain more truth than fact (4).

Virginia Woolf's fictions, then, are as productive a site for theory as her nonfictions. Given Woolf's own practical experience reading Greek with a series of translators, it is a small step to imagine that Jacob's fictional reading of the *Phaedrus* must allow us to come quite close to Woolf's own experiences with or critiques of the dialogue. Jacob "reading the *Phaedrus*, heard people vociferating round the lamp-post, and the woman battering at the door and crying, 'Let me in' as if a coal had dropped from the fire" (109).

Brenda Lyons claims that "the Platonic dialogue is foregrounded as an undisturbed force against which the more transient realities of rain, cab whistles, and the cries of a drunken woman locked out of her house face into the background" (295). Lyon's use of "foregrounded" invokes Frye: once again masculine foreground eclipses the women who stand in the wings. However background, the woman behind the shop counter, is precisely what Woolf is interested in. Woolf is playing a complicated game, literally laying the texts on top of each other. Those who know the *Phaedrus* are

remembering Plato's text. In some ways our minds actually mirror Jacob's fictionalized translation as we reconstruct what we know of the dialogue. Like it or not, Woolf places Jacob, and thus her readers, back on the banks of the Ilissus, banks that have been carefully purged of myths, monsters and women. Furthermore, Woolf deliberately avoids articulating Jacob's translation. Plato is silenced, subsumed entirely in Jacob's immediate moment which includes landscape "the lamppost," polyphony "people vociferating," and an angry woman battering at the door and crying "let me in." Compared to the evocative passage in *A Room of One's Own*, what Woolf is about in this discussion of the *Phaedrus* is really quite overt—this text demands that its women, its loiterers on the street-corner, be let back in. Woolf forces us to look around Jacob's room and the material world that surrounds and eclipses the scholar's interpretative act. Instead of philosophy, Woolf gives us material bodies inhabiting real space: a paradoxical space. The bodies she chooses, these woman crying let me in, combine with the undifferentiated people around the lamppost, combine again with the known figures of the Platonic dialogue—Woolf's language is polyphonic, heterogenous, and coeval, the language of paradoxical space.

Rose defines paradoxical space as "multidimensional, shifting and contingent" and "paradoxical, by which I mean that spaces that would be mutually exclusive if shattered on a two-dimensional map—centre and margin, inside and outside—are occupied simultaneously" (140). *Jacob's Room* summons this space by explicitly invoking the *Phaedrus* and contrasting the Platonic dialogue with the material world Jacob inhabits: inside and outside, inside Jacob's mind, inside Jacob's room, outside

where voices catch Jacob's attention, outside Jacob's room, inside Plato's dialogue, outside Plato's dialogue, in Athens, in England, in the character of Jacob, in the unnamed woman he hears. Woolf's theory of the androgynous mind translates these concrete images, woman banging at the door, man and woman in a cab, into a philosophical scheme. Woolf claims that "thinking of one sex as distinct from the other is an effort" that "interferes with the unity of the mind" (97). By invoking the *Phaedrus*, Woolf implies that this separation has occurred since the instantiation of phallogocentrism. Now she seeks a new alternative, a way of thinking that has "no single state of being. It can separate itself from the people in the street [...] or think with other people spontaneously [...] it can think back through its fathers or through its mothers [...] a state of mind in which one could continue without an effort because nothing is required to be held back" (97). Woolf moves from physical terrain, the street, and physical bodies, "the people," to a mind cosmic and unchained. She reminds us again of the couple in the taxi-cab, connected and uninhibited: a landscape both associative and disassociative—one which communicates, mind to mind, body to body, even as it preserves each subject's integrity. Woolf's androgynous mind is "resonant and porous"; it "transmits emotion without impediment," "naturally creative, incandescent and undivided" and, ultimately, paradoxical. Woolf's composition is located in spaces with exactly the same character, spaces which elude a discrete boundary in space and time (98).

Woolf provides us with some important clues as to the nature of paradoxical space through her comments on Plato's *Phaedrus*. Her unpublished notes on the

*Phaedrus*, while brief, do indicate that she read the *Ilissus* passage closely and had a strong comprehension of the text. Woolf begins her notes with a summary of the dialogue: “Lysias has been talking on Love. *Phaedrus* has the volume with him” (Monks 76). Next, she writes “S a myth” (Monks 76). At this point, Woolf has clearly arrived at the banks of the *Ilissus* and *Oreithuia*’s abbreviated narrative; what she finds there is represented in a series of very interesting abbreviations: “Are they trans a nov.? Whe? A labour to explain then/m ah!” (Monks 76). While there is plenty of room for interpretation, I want to offer the one I find most probable: “Are they trans a nov?” as “Are they translating a novel?” The “they” here refers to Plato and *Phaedrus*; the “translation” this act of telling and retelling *Oreithuia*’s story. Woolf’s abbreviation *nov.* certainly suggests “novel;” however, Virginia Woolf was certainly not ignorant of the conventions of nineteenth and early twentieth century literary history. She knows full well that the “birth” of the novel as ascribed to a particular cultural moment in eighteenth century Britain in general and Samuel Richardson in specific. Woolf’s decision to characterize *Oreithuia*’s mythology as “novel” suggests that Woolf perceived a relationship between fiction and myth.

Woolf continues by writing “What a labour to explain then ah!” Here Woolf could actually be referring to the very passage containing *Oreithuia*’s story, where Socrates notes that mythology is an exhausting practice and a philosopher should concentrate on the known questions of his human existence. Plato points to the impossibility of a “rational account of the form of the Hippocentaurs, and then of the Chimeara; and a whole flood of Gorgons and Pegasus and other monsters” (229-C).

The Socratic argument is simply that it is far too much trouble (labour here in the sense of work) to try and explain away every myth. The Platonic philosopher should turn inward; learn the nature of the self (229C). Woolf's next comment— "Meanwhile people knew little of the strange monster. Let us know the nature of that beast first"—supports this traditional reading of Plato (Monks 76). It is, however, interesting that Woolf used "beast" to describe the philosopher's search for self-knowledge, forging a connection between monsters, novels and philosophy. Furthermore, she repeats this language in her diary entry for August 19, 1929, when she characterizes *A Room of One's Own* as a "creature arching its back & galloping on" (242). Once again a conversation about writing, patriarchy and women is described as a creature, not easily definable in rational terms. Intentional or accidental, Woolf allows us to focus in on a very particular set of elements emerging from the *Phaedrus*: the "strange monster." Plato's Hippocentaurs, Chimeara Gorgons and Pegasus hold the answer within their strange bodies; bodies which lie, ultimately, at the root of the gothic novel.

Woolf's theories of androgynous rhetoric draw a clear connection between the power of the monstrous body, paradoxical spaces, and feminine composition. However, in order for Woolf's proposed rhetoric to be more than a suggestive personal methodology, we must see it been deployed in the actual spaces of feminine composition operating under the constraints of patriarchy and/or within the work of male authors seeking to undermine traditionally Western models of composition and arrangement. This is not to suggest that any author seen performing this rhetoric was necessarily aware

of Virginia Woolf as a rhetorical theorist, but that Woolf has successfully articulated a mode of composition that appears, quite strikingly, in the work of a number of writers.

Doreen Massey's crucial attempt to redefine spatial theory, *For Space*, was published in 2005. The importance of this work in the current "spatial turn" in critical theory and philosophy is significant, as witnessed by my own use of Massey's theories of coeval space. Massey's attempt to articulate a revised vision of space remains strongly grounded in the values of her own background as a feminist geographer and explicitly reflects Woolf's androgynous rhetorical strategy. Despite a fascinating and intellectually compelling survey of contemporary spatial theory, philosophies of space, and globalization, Massey's key theoretical contribution is contained in part four of her text, titled "Reorientations." Massey chooses to situate the articulation of her first major concept, "slices through space" within the context of her daily commute from London to the town of Milton Keynes (117). Massey's first conclusion, that "space comes to seem so very much more material than time," is held against her observations from the train car window "out of the London basin, the sharp gash carved in the chalk hills, emerging finally into the expanse of the clay of the East Midlands"; these observations stress the very material of the earth Massey travels through in distinctly geological terms: basin, clay and chalk (117). As Massey attempts to "puncture that smooth surface" and deepen her understanding of space, she is drawn to Anne McClintock's theory of anachronistic space, reinforced by a view found in the middle of her journey "the remains of a Norman castle: the motte and bailey and the moats around them still clearly defined, the grey stone walls now fallen and discontinuous, with the air of old grey teeth" (118). The

ruined castle's presence historicizes the moment for Massey; however, Massey is not just able to interface horizontally with her terrain (to invoke her critique of Tschumi), she passes beyond history to the "space of today," the "product of social relations" (118).

At this moment, Massey's own text changes dramatically. She speaks about her own understanding of space, how "the London you left just a half an hour ago (as you speed through Cheddington) is not the London of now" (118). Massey's prose becomes even more lyric: "Lives have pushed ahead, investments and disinvestments have been made in the City, it has begun to rain quite heavily (they said it would); a crucial meeting has broken up acrimoniously; someone has caught a fish in the Grand Union canal" (119). Doreen Massey reaches out her hand from the window of a London train to capture Virginia Woolf's thought-fish. Her prose, eerily evocative of Woolf's characteristic stream-of-consciousness syntax, follows the same progression as Woolf's encounter with the stones of Oxbridge—moving from material reality, to history, to interrelation, "you are, on that train, travelling not across space-as-a-surface [...] you are travelling across trajectories" (119). The image Massey chooses to describe this progression is a "tree which blows now in the in the wind out there beyond the train window [which] was once an acorn on another tree" (119) an element which leads her to meditate on a painting of a woman "in her pinny bending over to clear the back drain with a stick" (119). Tellingly, Massey launches into a vivid imagining of that ordinary woman's internal life "Perhaps she's doing it (I really *must* clear out that drain before I go away') just as she locks up the house to visit her sister, half the world away, and whom she hasn't seen for years. From the train she is going nowhere; she is trapped in

the timeless instant” (119). Doreen Massey chooses to articulate her theory of series of “stories so far” by “bringing the woman in the pinny to life” (119). I am reminded of *Jacob’s Room*, where the washerwomen cluster outside the university window, ask to be let into the conversation. Similarly, Massey’s “woman in the pinny” becomes the story she needs to tell about space. Even more vital from the perspective of a literary critic and teacher of writing is the effect this imagining has on Massey’s prose, suddenly vivid, arresting, and strikingly beautiful. If an androgynous rhetoric is dependent on a significant space and a recognition on the part of the locator of that space as inherently paradoxical, then Massey here has both signified and participated in that tradition.

Massey concludes her lyric description of a new theory of space by remarking “thinking space as a sphere of multiplicity of trajectories, imagining a train journey (for example) as a speeding across on-going stories, means bringing the woman in the pinny to life, acknowledging her as another on-going life. Likewise with Berkhamsted Castle” (119). Obviously Massey has chosen to conclude her description of this spatial theory with an articulation of the objects which have served as exempla for her readers. However, Massey’s choice of spatial motifs (of all the places that can be seen from the train, Berkhamsted Castle) and interpolated narrative (the life of a lost and occluded woman) is not a random one. Massey remarks that the castle capturing her attention “with full force unawares” provokes an articulation of both “buried histories” and “histories still being made” (118). The importance of the castle in the first part of Massey’s theoretical exposition is echoed by another series of significant sites in the second half of part four.

In order to describe “the elusiveness of place,” Massey chooses another significant feature of the landscape. This time her imagination is captured by the mountains she saw during a vacation with her sister in “the northern Lake District, in north west England” (131). Massey remarks on the “different social stories” inherent in the place, among them “longstanding farmers, the grey-stone country house of the aristocratic incomers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, poets and Romanticism [...] a focus of discourse on the sublime” (131). These elements coalesce for Massey in the form of Skiddaw. The “massive block of a mountain” signifies the “impressive; immovable, timeless” while paradoxically offering a “new” environment formed by glacial movement ‘scraped smooth and striated as the ice ground over them then plucked into jagged shapes” the rocks themselves “immigrants” from some prehistoric sea (Massey 131-33). Massey’s foray into the geographic sublime also serves as a governing metaphor for her second major thesis, the “throwntogetherness” of space without the “assumption of pre-given coherence, or of community or collective identity” (141). While the deteriorating edifice signifies a dimension of stories yet to be told, the sublime cliff, marked by glacial power and progress promotes a level of human inter-relatedness that destroys the old loyalties to immediate place and immediate community. Massey postulates that these sublime spaces “implicate us, perforce, in the lives of human others, and in our relations with non- humans” (141). In other words, Massey echoes Woolf’s claim that certain paradoxical spaces carry rhetorical force; they provoke communication, communications which are particularly resonant among those traditionally exiled to the cultural margin.

Doreen Massey points to two significant paradoxical sites in her articulation of spatial theory, the ruined and reformed Norman Castle of Berkhamsted and the craggy peaks of Skiddaw in the northern Lake District. As spatial signifiers, these two locations of ruin and crag carry particular rhetorical and philosophical force. Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* establishes the characteristics of sublime landscape, noted for "obscurity," "power," "privation," "vastness," "infinity" "difficulty" "darkness" and "excessive loudness" (53-79). Burke situates these characteristics in landscapes that contrast sharply absence and distance, darkness and light, and the torrential forces of nature. For Burke, sublimity in landscape is determined by its ability to arrest the soul in "astonishment" "with some degree of horror" (53). Burke calls particular attention to the qualities that link both abandoned castle and glacial crag "a perpendicular has more force in forming the sublime, than an inclined plane and the effects of a rugged and broken surface seem stronger than where it was smooth and polished" (66). Burke links these sublime elements to the mythological by explicitly equating the sublime with the monstrous. Selecting a horse to illustrate his point, Burke "the horse in light of a useful beast, fit for the plough, the road, the draft, in every social and useful light has nothing of the sublime" (60). Burke argues for the power of poetry to transform the animal "whose neck is cloathed with thunder, the glory of whose nostrils is terrible, who swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage" (60). Poetry's power is to occlude the "useful character of the horse" allowing the "terrible and sublime" to "blaze out together" (60). Although Burke does not explicitly make the distinction, what characterizes the sublime description of the

house is the figurative language the poet employs. This figurative language, the neck “clothed in thunder,” the legs which “swalloweth the ground,” transforms the horse into an impossible creature.

However, it was Longinus, a first century rhetorician, who made a clear case for sublimity with respect to language. Longinus lays out the “five most productive sources of the sublime in literature” the “power of grand conceptions” the “inspiration of vehement emotion” the “proper construction of figures” the “nobility of language” and “dignified and elevated word choice” (181). Longinus stresses the development of sublime habits of mind, an ethics for provoking genius, which reflects Burke’s own program of inspiration in the natural world. When adapting theories of the sublime for his eighteenth-century audience, Burke downplays the Longinian focus on spoken and written communication; that focus, however, points directly back to paradoxical figures who inhabit gothic space. Specifically, Longinus is concerned with the rhetorical strategies that constitute the sublime in oral and written communication, namely, the figure, language and word choice which can inspire a sense of sublimity in the reader of written discourse.

Longinus’s first rhetorical feature is that of the figure, in Greek, *phantasiasi*. The uses, categorization and deployment of various figures of speech have been given plenty of attention from classical rhetors; however, Longinus’s treatment of the figure is noteworthy. He is not interested in debating the merits of various figures; rather he is concerned with the effect a well deployed figure can have on its auditor. Longinus describes the figures as “an idea which enters the mind from any source and engenders

speech” (215). The Greek uses *ennoema* for thought and “speech” is actually *logos*, translated here as speech created “in the manner of being born.” Longinus, writing in the Aristotlean tradition, must have also had the Athenian meaning of the term firmly in mind: *logos* as rational, persuasive argument. Despite the Athenian tradition, Longinus’s example of sublime figure owes little to rationality; instead, Longinus is interested in the figure’s ability to “enthrall” in poetry and “present things vividly” in prose (217). The key affects are “emotional” and “excited” audience response (217). Longinus chooses his example from the *Oreistes*, where Orestes fears the Furies have come to confront him “‘Mother, I beg you, do not drive against me/These snake-like women with blood-reddened eyes/See there! See there! They leap upon me close.’ In these passages the poet himself saw Furies and compelled the audience almost to see what he had visualized” (Longinus 217 quoting Euripides, *Orestes* 255-7).

Longinus’s example of the sublime figure brings to mind another Greek term, closely associated with *phantastia*, *phantasma*. Rooted in the same verb (*phantazdo*), *phantasma* is, of course, the phantom, the ghost, the unreal made manifest. Longinus is impressed that Euripides actually could visualize the Furies, literally *phantasia* as phantasmic encounter. The power of Longinus’s sublime figure is, therefore, to make the impossible manifest. That Longinus is drawn to a description of the monstrous and female Gorgon returns us back to Virginia Woolf’s androgynous rhetoric. The mythic and monstrous body sits beneath the Longinian sublime like a patient spider, crunching on bones.

While Burke devotes much of his *Philosophical Inquiry* to discussions of visual art, he also includes a deeply truncated analysis of the linguistic force of the sublime. Located in section five, Burke begins by diminishing the power of written language. He divides up words into three levels, the simple abstract, the aggregate, and the compound abstract. While compound abstract words represent sophisticated concepts, “honour, justice, liberty, and the like,” simple abstract words relate to the senses “blue, green, hot, cold” and aggregate words suggest more complicated realities “man, castle, horse” (152). Burke is careful to note that “the most general effect even of these words, does not arise from their forming pictures of the several things they would represent in the imagination” (152). In order to find the power of the sublime figure, Burke turns (as did Longinus before him) to poetry. He quotes Virgil’s description of Aetna, labeling it “admirably sublime”; however, he notes “if we attend coolly to the kind of sensible image which a combination of ideas of this sort must form, the chimeras of madmen cannot appear more wild and absurd than such a picture” (156). Burke remarks that “this strange composition is formed into a gross body; it is hammered by the Cyclops, it is in part polished, and partly continues rough” (156). Burke describes the sublime figure as a chimeric body. Once again, language surrounding the literary sublime has returned us to Virginia Woolf’s recognition of the power of androgynous bodies, monstrous bodies, bodies which have been, through their very hybridity, freed of normal markers of race, of class, and, ultimately, of gender.

This project will explore the effect of those mysterious, paradoxical spaces within women’s writing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In order to understand how

gothic space functions as a mechanism for feminine invention, I would like to pay close attention to what constitutes a gothic space and how it operates in the works of Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley. This reading will situate and describe two kinds of gothic space, the traditional exterior sublime location, often cited as the gothic locus par excellence, and the interior world of the domestic gothic. Radcliffe draws a sharp distinction between these two locations, privileging the domestic as a site for women's story telling. My next argument will center on two novels by Jane Austen, one overtly critical of the gothic, *Northanger Abbey*, and the second seemingly lacking in gothic content, *Mansfield Park*. In both cases, I will trace a trajectory of gothic topoi that have interesting implications for writing and communication. I will also turn to Charlotte Brontë's most realistic novel, *Shirley*, to continue this argument. Finally, I would like to return to how gothic space functions with respect to the physical body, returning to Woolf's most gothic work, *Orlando*.

The mythical, the monstrous, the magical and the terrifying are the natural inhabitants of paradox: their own bodies deny our attempts to explain them, their own stories linger, suggestive, even in the most rational philosophy. To put the monster back in, to tackle, as Woolf suggests, that beast first, is a way for women writers to write.

### CHAPTER III

#### HOME SWEET CASTLE: THE RHETORICAL POWER OF DOMESTIC SPACE

The production of gothic novels in the nineteenth century has always been described as a narrative of increasing uncanniness. Spiraling inward, gothic increasingly invaded the domestic spaces of the “real world.” There is generally seen to be a strong transition between Ann Radcliffe, Horace Walpole and Charlotte Dacre’s historicized Italian landscapes and Peacock’s parodic *Nightmare Abbey*, Polidori’s *Vampyre* as well as the domestic gothics of the Brontë sisters and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, whose prominent locations are always read as the sublime, external glacial expanse. In order to contextualize this contrast between the uncanny chambers of the gothic home and the mysterious expanse of gothic landscape, this chapter poses a contrast between two very different female novelists, Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley, in order to interrogate the presence of paradoxical space in the gothic novels written by women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By examining the potential of these spaces to encourage and even nurture female communication, I want to trace a connection between paradoxical, gothic space and the domestic. This reading will demonstrate that Mary Shelley’s sublime landscapes, locations whose gothic power always seem to lie in their sharp distinction from domestic realities, actually function in the same way Radcliffe’s

domestic spaces do: as locations that encourage and sustain productive communication between female characters.

Virginia Woolf's theory of androgynous rhetoric suggests paradoxical space as inherently productive for feminine composition and communication. For a twentieth-century modernist writer, paradoxical space is enabled through stream-of-consciousness style; the spatio-temporal slippage present in Woolf's space erases fixed boundaries between both locations and those who inhabit them. However, writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries hadn't yet derived such overt mechanisms for overturning the rational boundaries of space and time. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century novel, paradoxical space requires a different interpretation of "spaces that would be mutually exclusive if shattered on a two-dimensional map—centre and margin, inside and outside—are occupied simultaneously" (Rose 140). Eighteenth century gothic is set within foreign, often romanticized locations, generally described in the same terms which characterize Burke's sublime landscape. Horace Walpole calls this paradigm into question when he suggests that the foreign, romanticized ancestral castle is actual space, the one "real" element of the narrative he discovered. Walpole suggests a way of re-reading the castle. For all its displacement from the eighteenth century norm, Walpole's castle still possesses material reality, an actual locus, albeit in ruins, which could be visited and observed by those who are reading the text. Ann Radcliffe's use of space is most often read as depictions of exotic, foreign locations. Closer study of Radcliffe's gothic settings reveals a material and domestic emphasis which reflects and expands that found in Walpole. Despite Radcliffe's use of sublime and exotic locations, I want to

privilege Radcliffe's domestic spaces which also participate in a paradoxical, "gothic" identity. An analysis of Radcliffe's setting is hardly new; plenty of attention has been spent on landscape in Radcliffe, especially her use of Burke's sublime<sup>12</sup>. However, I am interested in using Radcliffe in order to point out a common language of space—a series of topologies that correlate and complicate the notions of domestic and sublime.

*A Sicilian Romance*, published in 1790, is Radcliffe's second novel, but one that marks a critical shift in focus: Radcliffe features a beleaguered and victimized heroine instead of the masculine point of view which characterized her first novel (Milbank xi). *A Sicilian Romance* begins with a familiar device: a framing narrative offers us a contemporary interpreter attempting to make sense of a historicized locus. In this case, "the magnificent remains of a castle" are "still to be seen" in "the center of a small bay" in Sicily (1). The castle is happily situated: "on one side [it] slopes towards the sea, and on the other [it] rises into an eminence crowned by dark woods" (1). The narrative begins as the unnamed narrator discovers this "beautiful and picturesque" ruin and begins to interpret her surroundings with a strong dose of Gilpin and Burke (1). The "awe and curiosity" of Radcliffe's narrator is intensified by a helpful friar who appears at precisely the right moment to offer a "solemn history" of the site (1). Several items are of interest here. As in Walpole's introduction to *The Castle of Otranto*, Radcliffe's setting is realistic enough that Alison Milbank, editor of the Oxford Edition, remarks on its veracity in her apparatus. Radcliffe follows Walpole in that setting remains a fixed point

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<sup>12</sup> *A New Companion to the Gothic* makes the point as recently as 2012 (101); however, this argument is hardly a new one.

of potential veracity against which an unrealistic narrative will coalesce. Again, following Walpole, Radcliffe displaces her authorial agency on an imaginary figure—the helpful friar and a manuscript he has composed about the family in the castle. However, this displacement is quite distinct from Walpole’s assertion that *The Castle of Otranto* derives from a specific manuscript found in a particular monastery or his later formulation of *Otranto* as product of amorphous dream. In each case, there is only one text for Walpole. In contrast, Radcliffe’s monastic manuscript is itself an assemblage: the brother “collected” and “recorded” the “most striking incidents relating to his family” (2). Furthermore, the narrator will alter both of these texts to create his own pastiche: she will “take abstracts of the history before me” combined with an additional oral history “obtained in conversation with the abate” (2). The narrator’s role is telling; he has “arranged” the narrative, not composed it. Neither author nor translator, Radcliffe prioritizes the role of “arranger,” a move which both empowers the storyteller (arrangers have even more control over what is left in or taken out than translators have) but further distances the narrator from any notion of authorial voice or control. Multiple narratives mean multiple actors and multiple authors, all, or any, of which Radcliffe can choose to activate. Of course, Radcliffe’s narrator is also a fiction, but the degrees of separation between the text and the author who produced it is far greater than in Walpole.

Radcliffe juxtaposes Walpole’s mononarrative with polyvocality, assemblage and the primacy of interpersonal communication. This move allows Radcliffe to call into question certain specific epistemologies, most fundamentally the roles of verbal and written communication. While Walpole stresses the authenticity of his narrative, one

manuscript, one story, Radcliffe stresses the power of her pastiche. Radcliffe suggests that the arrangement of a story is as meaningful as its facts. Linking gothic to epistemology naturally invokes Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Convention*. Sedgwick argues that gothic narratives always contain a series of easily identifiable tropes; however, her interest really lies in moments where epistemologies become uncertain. Sedgwick calls attention to scenes of incarceration and haunting where characters question fundamental truths about reality. In light of Sedgwick's later work, her interest is obviously in the potential these moments have for characters to interact in ways outside of normative societal mores. While Sedgwick's link between location and communication is important, I wish to focus more on how Radcliffe's approach to rhetoric; specifically, how she uses to particular spaces to encourage communication between women.

The trajectory I have outlined moves from a description of gothic space, to an articulation of a particular kind of narrative agency, to an interest in revising certain popular epistemological trends. Radcliffe chooses as her primary setting the slightly shabby Castle Mazzini, inhabited by the abandoned daughters of Baron Mazzini: Julia and Emilia and their caretaker, Madame de Menon. As the initial description of Castle Mazzini will be key to our argument about gothic space, I have quoted it in full.

The Castle of Mazzini was a large irregular fabric, and seemed suited to receive a numerous train of followers, such as, in those days, served the nobility, either in the splendor of peace, or the turbulence of war. Its present family inhabited only a small part of it; and even this part appeared forlorn and almost desolate from the spaciousness of the apartments, and the length of the galleries which led to them. A melancholy stillness reigned through the halls, and the silence of the courts,

which were shaded by high turrets, was for many hours together undisturbed by the sound of any foot-step. Julia, who discovered an early taste for books, loved to retire in the evening to a small closet in which she had collected her favorite authors. This room formed the western angle of the castle: one of its windows looked upon the sea, beyond which was faintly seen, skirting the horizon, the dark rocky coast of Calabria; the other opened towards a part of the castle, and afforded a prospect of the neighbouring woods. Her musical instruments were here deposited, with whatever assisted her favorite amusements. This spot, which was at once elegant, pleasant, and retired, was embellished with many little ornaments of her own invention, and with some drawings executed by her sister. The closet was adjoining her chamber, and was separated from the apartments of Madame only by a short gallery. This gallery opened into another, long and winding, which led to the grand staircase, termination in the north hall, with which the chief apartments of the north side of the edifice communicated. (5)

At first Castle Mazzini appears in much the same tradition as other gothic spaces. Emphasis is given to the deserted character of the space, the “melancholy stillness” and echoing chambers. The castle is characterized by its liminality, situated against the “dark rocky coast” and the “neighbouring woods.” However, Radcliffe’s description of Castle Mazzini fluctuates uneasily between these scenic details and a description of Juila’s chamber. Consider the Castle Mazzini passage without Julia’s closet:

Its present family inhabited only a small part of it; and even this part appeared forlorn and almost desolate from the spaciousness of the apartments, and the length of the galleries which led to them. A melancholy stillness reigned through the halls, and the silence of the courts, which were shaded by high turrets, was for many hours together undisturbed by the sound of any foot-step [...] one of its windows looked upon the sea, beyond which was faintly seen, skirting the horizon, the dark rocky coast of Calabria; the other opened towards a part of the castle, and afforded a prospect of the neighbouring wood. (Radcliffe 5)

Julia’s domestic arrangements strike a problematic note within the larger description. If Radcliffe was only attempting to create an appropriately gothic scene, she

could have maintained the mood of the passage without the sentences describing Julia's chamber and behavior. Radcliffe's decision to include the description of Julia's chamber signifies its importance within the spatial scheme of the text. Julia's closet, associated with the "west," "looked upon the sea, beyond which was faintly seen, skirting the horizon, the dark rocky coast of Calabria, the other opened towards a part of the castle, and afforded a prospect of the neighbouring woods" (5). Disposed between sea and forest, Radcliffe characterizes this interior space in the same way she describes the greater body of the castle. This parallel allows Julia's closet to function as a microcosm of the castle as a whole. However, Radcliffe's program is greater than creating a sense of narrative unity through parallels in exterior and interior scene. Julia's closet contains specific characteristics which the general description of Castle Mazzini lacks.

When we examine the description of Julia's closet without the overtly gothic sentences that surround it, we are surprised by another, more familiar, register sitting under the gothic landscape:

Julia, who discovered an early taste for books, loved to retire in the evening to a small closet in which she had collected her favorite authors [...] Her musical instruments were here deposited, with whatever assisted her favorite amusements. This spot, which was at once elegant, pleasant, and retired, was embellished with many little ornaments of her own invention, and with some drawings executed by her sister. (Radcliffe 5)

Taken outside of its gothic context, Radcliffe's description of Julia's room contains two striking elements. First, Radcliffe's description of the space as "elegant" "pleasant" "retired," populated by "little ornaments" is a radical departure from the gothic passages

which stress “desolate” “spaciousness.” Characterized by both descriptive and linguistic restraint, Radcliffe proves that that she can produce narrative perfectly in keeping with a realistic, rather than gothic, aesthetic. Second, Julia’s activities and “amusements” reflect an eighteenth century notion of feminine domesticity. Consider for comparison Fanny Price’s attic room in *Mansfield Park*, which is also marked by its privacy, its presence of beloved books and paintings. Julia has created a small haven of order and propriety, one which promotes her own intellectual and artistic growth. Notably, this space lacks any specific features of a sixteenth century Italian woman’s domestic experience. A more historically accurate Julia might have engaged in religious devotion, lacked even basic literacy, and shunned privacy; however, Radcliffe breaks her historical frame to introduce a feminine experience that relates more directly to her readers’ experiences.

Juxtaposed against the domestic character of the closet are a series of supernatural intrusions which allow the closet to function as a paradoxical space. Radcliffe’s first supernatural event occurs as Julia relaxes in her chamber. Safety is threatened as Julia notices “a figure, bearing a lamp, proceeded from an obscure door belonging to the south tower” (9). The supernatural aspects of this locus are intensified by Radcliffe’s descriptions of Julia’s room as the “palace of a fairy,” where “music, touched by unseen hands, breathed around,” and “Julia seemed the magic queen of the place” (17-18). By introducing these fairy-tale elements, Radcliffe connects Julia’s closet with the supernatural, although Radcliffe is to attribute the fairy music to the work of unseen servants (18). Although Radcliffe ultimately dismisses the supernatural elements of her gothic, Julia’s closet remains a paradoxical space. Radcliffe stresses how Julia’s room

“formed a part of these buildings [...] according to the mode of building in old times, there might formerly have been a communication between them” (38). Radcliffe adds the possibility of a “concealed door” to her description of the closet, simultaneously characterizing the space as both enclosed, domestic closet and permeable, haunted hallway (38). While this description continues to destabilize Julia’s room, Radcliffe’s choice of language also suggests the potential for rhetorical power. Julia’s closet is linked to a “communication,” a term which not only suggests interconnected physical space, but mental and emotional intercourse through the exchange of language.

Within the closet itself, Julia is often able to increase her own knowledge and agency. Due to “a door which opened into it from the apartment where this conversation was held” Julia is able to overhear important information (50-51). This interruption can be positive, in the case of Hippolitus’s declaration of love, or negative as when Julia tries to read in her closet but is interrupted. Psychoanalytic critics might point to this moment as evidence that Julia’s closet ultimately functions as a place Julia must abandon in order to develop. Certainly, Julia’s chamber is a problematic space, one which mediates its nurturing solitude with notions of penetration and threat. Similarly, sexual desire seems to threaten the potential for the closet to encourage Julia’s agency. After meeting Hippolitus, her lover, Julia grew tired of her chamber; her “thoughts wandered from the subject. Her lute and favorite airs lost half their power to please” (21). Julia suffers from time which “seemed to stand still—she became melancholy, and thought the breakfast-hour would never arrive” (21). Julia is also silenced; she found it “impossible to support a conversation” and talk with her sister became “uninteresting and tiresome” (21). This

problematic trend culminates when Julia faints and her brother and lover drag her back to her closet. Traditionally, the movement of brother and lover into female space would mark the start of Julia's journey toward codependence and sexual maturity; however, Radcliffe quickly turns this moment into a paean for lost female speech. Hippolitus begs Julia to "relieve me from this dreadful suspense!—speak to me—explain this silence." (62). Hippolitus's plea is significant, privileging communication over a pseudo-sexual tableau of unconscious woman and dominating man Radcliffe seems driven to return Julia's voice. Even when invaded, Julia's closet is a place where the silent, fainting female body is replaced by an active speaking one.

Radcliffe's interest in feminine speech is reflected in the conclusion of this descriptive passage. Radcliffe deemphasizes the sublime aesthetics which so occupied her narrator in favor of a more domestic series of spatial relationships. Connecting closet to edifice, Radcliffe describes how the closet:

was separated from the apartments of madame only by a short gallery. This gallery opened into another, long and winding, which led to the grand staircase, termination in the north hall, with which the chief apartments of the north side of the edifice communicated (Radcliffe 5)

Radcliffe calls attention to the orientation of Julia's closet with respect to the girls' bedrooms and the "apartments of the madame" which is "open into both galleries" (5). The emphasis is on connection. Julia's rooms, her sister on one side, her foster mother on the other, allow for ease of movement and the exchange of ideas and information: conversation. In contrast to the "forlorn" and "spacious" vastness of the castle,

characterized by silence, the domestic quarters of Julia and Emilia are identified with descriptions of a cozy and productive feminine domesticity. From the first metaphor which links the house's "Large irregular fabric" with the feminine work of weaving, Castle Mazzini seems a productive site for women's speech (5). Radcliffe is especially fond of the textile metaphor. She uses fabric to describe the south wing in general as is "part of the fabric" (27) as well as its door (76); characters can "quit this part of the fabric" (80) the monastery is described as a "large and gloomy fabric" (89). Fabric includes individuals; Ferdinand, Julia's brother, is also "part of the fabric" (37) as is plot, where one must collect "each various and uncommon circumstance attendant on this part of the fabric" (76) Radcliffe's emphasis is on fabric as the art of making—fabrication, a word which links edifice to epistemology: the act of creating both textile and text.

Setting then, the fabric of the story, is linked to fabrication, the art of making narrative. Radcliffe continues the trend established in her depiction of Julia's closet when she uses her description of the castle's space to point to feminine modes of narration. Radcliffe makes a strong case for women's voice in the castle: "the refined conversation of the madam, the poetry of Tasso, the lute of Julia, and the friendship of Emilia, combined to form a species of happiness, such as elevated and highly susceptible minds are alone capable of receiving or communicating" (7). Where Emilia paints and Julia sings, Madame de Menon speaks; echoing her earlier transformation of Walpole's found narrative into a narrative composed of both speech and writing, Radcliffe never allows her readers to forget the importance of speech. Radcliffe explicitly depicts conversation as a unique and significant art. This rhetorical work puts feminine

conversation on a level of authority equal to that of written narrative, generally a masculine preserve. The paradoxical space is also a rhetorical one, facilitating productive conversation between female locutors.

Narrative is always tied back to space and dislocation carries with it parallel threats of misinformation and silence. The first major threat to speech in the novel is when the girls' wicked stepmother arrives. The marchioness displaces the girls into new quarters which provocatively, have, "no means of communication" with the southern building, where, naturally, their missing biological mother lies imprisoned (27). Female community is threatened in the new space; however, the marchionesses's attempts to destroy female communication are unsuccessful. The text is careful to both hint at the missing mother's presence (Julia finds her mother's miniature in her new rooms) and undermine the gothic novel's traditional trajectory toward separation. Despite their separate spaces, the girls retreat to the library and reestablish their familiar habits. They were "induced, by the easy conversation of the madame," to spend the night talking (35).

Radcliffe consistently turns what would normally be a narrative of separation into a one of communion. Julia is forced to flee Castle Mazzini in order to escape a loveless marriage and her pseudo-mother, and Madame de Menon is also expelled to a convent. Radcliffe increases the pathos through poor abandoned Emilia who mounds the "loss of her last remaining comfort—the advice and consolation of Madame de Menon" (101). However, volume two of the novel quickly reestablishes community and conversation in lieu of absence and dislocation. Wandering through a sublime landscape, Madame de Menon hears singing, a "distant murmur" whose "melancholy expression awakened all

her attention and captivated her heart” (104). The singer turns out to be Julia. The exotic Italian landscape quickly fades back into the domestic interior of the cottage where the reunion of foster-mother and daughter is marked by communication, Julia “receives answers to her enquiries” and “commenced her narrative” which informs both the reader and the Madame of the “means” of her escape (104-5). Madame returns narration for narration: “she acquainted Julia with the pursuit which the duke had undertaken” and proposes the monastery as refuge (105).

Radcliffe continues to depict traditionally ominous spaces in terms of domesticity and community. In this case, the monastery, traditionally a site of imprisonment and torture, becomes another alternative home. Julia was “received by the abbot with a sort of paternal affection, and by the nuns with officious kindness, ”the convent is characterized by “holy calm,” and Julia is once again given agency and encouraged to speech through “the conversation of the nuns” who are described as “amiable” and “irresistibly attractive” (113). Radcliffe’s description of the abbey mirrors her transformation of gothic castle into a domestic space. The convent not only continues the intercourse between Julia and her foster-mother Madame de Menon, it promotes a new bond between Julia and her friend, the nun Cornelia. Once again, intimacy is marked by the act of communication or narration. Friendship is defined by Julia as the moment when Cornelia finally communicates the “history of her [Cornelia’s] sorrows,” a history “so long and so earnestly wished for” by Julia (118). With Cornelia and Madame de Menon, Julia is able

to recreate the happy family of Castle Mazzini within the new locus of the monastery.<sup>13</sup> Radcliffe's depiction of these relationships has interesting consequences for readers of female gothic. Julia is drawn to Cornelia's story: her "heart expanded towards her and it was now inviolably attached by the fine ties of sympathetic sorrow" (124). Female community is then furthered by "similarity of sentiment and suffering" but is expressed via "reciprocation of thought and feeling" particularly "the mournful pleasure of conversing" (124).

Both the Castle Mazzini and the monastery of St. Augustin are paradoxical spaces: lavish yet mysterious, these unlikely homes nurture female community. Julia is expelled from both of the spaces by "father" figures, one of whom threatens marriage, the other the veil. Julia then passes through a number of sublime landscapes including caverns, fierce mountains, a tumultuous storm at sea and subsequent shipwreck, and finally, an underworld "vault strewn with the dead bodies of the murdered" (166). At this point, Radcliffe has presented us with a version of Williams's "female plot" as Julia, rescued from this underworld tomb by her lover Hippolitus, seems very likely to live happily ever after in a world freed from paternal and maternal influence. What happens next is quite unlikely given the mythic frame Williams seems to be working from. Julia rejects Hippolitus's offer of lawful marriage because of her concern over her brother and the lovers are again separated. Julia enters another cave, this time alone and finds herself "in a highly vaulted cavern" (172). Finally Julia finds a "door" "firmly fastened" which

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<sup>13</sup> For those unfamiliar with these kinds of gothic coincidences, Cornelia is the sister of Julia's beloved Hippolitus. Julia considers Cornelia a sister, even though she is, as yet, unable to marry Hippolitus. We are also reminded of Julia and Emilia's mother who was in love with Madame de Menon's brother.

leads to a “dark passage” filled with “winding walls” and “obstructed” entrances (172). Once again Radcliffe gives us a fairly standard gothic location, filled with menace; however, Julia travels through a gothic landscape only to discover a highly domestic space. This time it is her mother who has been locked in a “small room, which received its feeble light from a window above” (174).<sup>14</sup> This room has been underneath Castle Mazzini throughout the whole narrative, and Julia’s story ends where it begins: at home.

Radcliffe’s revision of gothic locations into domestic spaces transforms ominous landscapes into comfortable homes. These locations are marked by their ability to promote feminine conversation. Tellingly, as soon as Julia rediscovers her mother they exchange stories, the culmination of which is a paean to female friendship, as Julia’s mother wonders “How can I ever sufficiently acknowledge the obligations I owe to my dear and invaluable friend Madame de Menon! Oh! That it might be permitted me to testify my gratitude” (181). Radcliffe keeps the final chapters of her novel focused on domestic interactions, primarily between women. Packing the death of the marquise and his evil wife, the escape of Ferdinand, and the reunion with Julia, Hippolitus and mother in two breathless final chapters, Radcliffe ignores many potential sources of drama. Hippolitus and Julia’s reunion is narrated second-hand, rather than shown, as is the marquis’s poisoning at the hands of his wife. The final paragraphs focus on the fate of brother, foster-mother and sister: the romance between the main characters remains a footnote to the larger communal and domestic concerns. These concerns are explicitly

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<sup>14</sup> As in her closet, Julia’s position in the cavern is one of listener—this time her eavesdropping allows her to avoid pursuit.

normative. Radcliffe has attempted to transform the frightening and problematic aspects of her novel into a comfortable picture of domestic felicity. While plenty of attention could be paid to the relative success of this program, our argument is more concerned with Radcliffe's continued focus on communication, especially on the oral communication between women as they relate their respective histories. Radcliffe's concern with feminine conversation, however, is not a simplistic one. Further analysis reveals that Radcliffe has a fairly sophisticated rhetorical agenda in place, the purpose of which is to reevaluate what would constitute appropriate modes of narration.

In her treatment of speech, Radcliffe reflects directly upon the larger aesthetic and philosophical values of the Enlightenment. Tellingly, Radcliffe situates her most overt treatment of these epistemologies in a description of setting. Radcliffe pauses in her description of Julia's flight to devote some narrative attention to the monastery of "St Augustin," a "large magnificent mass of Gothic architecture, whose gloomy battlements, and majestic towers arose in proud sublimity from amid the darkness of the surrounding shades" (116). From this typical description predicated on the characteristics of Burke's sublime, Radcliffe historicizes the location, remarking how the structure "revived in the mind of the beholder the memory of past ages" (116). Radcliffe characterizes Julia's era to her contemporary audience, "the dark clouds of prejudice" have just begun to "break away before the sun of science" (116). Radcliffe's treatment is sophisticated. Readers are forced to consider not only Julia's epistemological struggle within the monastery to understand Cornelia's history, but their own experience as enlightened eighteenth century English speakers reflecting on Julia's historicized narrative. Provocatively, what

characterizes the presence of enlightenment and science is once again, “the charms of refined conversation” (116). Radcliffe fuses scientific rationalism with feminine conversation in order to validate speaking as an act of productive communication.

The description of the abbey also transitions from a catalogue of sublime characteristics to a specific conversation about narrative: “The manners and characters” of the abbey’s inhabitants “arose” to the unnamed observer’s “fancy” (116). Fancy promotes narrative, allowing the observer to imagine “those customs and manners which formed so striking a contrast to the modes of his own times” (116). The word Radcliffe uses for this action is “discriminate” which carries with it ideas of seeing and separating fantasy from reality. Fancy is both foregrounded and validated as an interpretative mode. Radcliffe’s description of the monastery outlines a specific progression found throughout this novel: from a discussion of space to a privileging of conversation as an epistemological and discursive modality, to a validation of fancy as the mechanism through which this interpretation and communication can productively occur.

A particular conversation will serve to reveal this trend. Madame de Menon relates a factual account of Castle Mazzini’s nightly disturbances, the strange lights and sounds Emilia, Julia and Ferdinand have all witnessed in order to convince the marchioness to return the girls to their old rooms. While Madame de Menon’s description is perfectly accurate given the events of the novel, the marchioness accuses her of fancy; she is “reproved for encouraging superstitious belief in the minds of her young charge” (47). The accusation is a provocative one; the Marchionesses’s critique of de Menon’s narrative, “fanciful,” was one often leveled against writers of the gothic.

However, Radcliffe explicitly interrogates the role of conversation within *A Sicilian Romance* and draws her own conclusions concerning the power of fancy. Specifically, Radcliffe devotes a whole paragraph of exposition to describing the “two classes” of conversation: “familiar and the sentimental” (8). Radcliffe makes special note of Madame de Menon’s excellence in sentimental conversation; the “irresistibly attractive” nature of her speech is an “expansion of mind” where “a knowledge of the world is requisite” “subjects interesting to the heart, and to the imagination, [...] are discussed in a kind of sportive way, with animation and refinement, and are never continued longer than politeness allows” (8). Radcliffe ties her description of Madame de Menon’s conversation to larger aesthetic concerns. She claims that conversation is where “fancy flourishes,—the sensibilities expand—and wit, guided by delicacy and embellished by taste—points to the heart” (8). Radcliffe’s terminology is provocative: fancy is seen as a positive force that expands the sensibilities of the reader in order to enforce a strongly moral program—wit points to the heart to expand it in positive and moral directions.

Radcliffe has a specific purpose in forging a connection between fancy, wit and rhetoric. Nineteenth-century rhetorician George Campbell makes a connection between conversation and rhetorical effect. Specifically, Campbell links wit, residing in the imagination, to sublimity based upon its effect to surprise and excite the mind (Walzer 44). While Campbell claims that wit’s rhetorical purpose is to “debase,” Radcliffe reads the connection between wit and sublimity differently. Sublime conversation, as in sublime landscape, is a positive, moral force. In her conclusion, Radcliffe informs her reader that her novel has shown an instance of “singular and striking instance of moral

retribution” where virtue is rewarded with “the surest claim to the protection of heaven” (199). Fancy, then, is in service to a highly moral purpose; the novel serves as moral education for its readers.

In comparison, Samuel Richardson’s famous preface to *Pamela* situates the novel as moral entertainment in order to emphasize “parental, the filial and the social duties” by making vice “odious” and virtue “lovely.” Novels can accomplish this work by depicting material in “so probable, so natural, so lively a manner, as shall engage the passions of every sensible reader, and attach their regard to the story” (31). Similarly, Samuel Fielding claims in his 1749 dedication to *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* that his purpose is to “recommend goodness and Innocence” by using “all the Wit and Humour of which I am Master” in order to “laugh Mankind out of their favourite Follies and Vices” (6). Radcliffe links Madame de Menon’s sentimental conversation with the values of these more realistic novels; however, her claim is unique. Radcliffe contends that “fancy” can function along with the “probable” as a force of moral suasion. Her depiction of conversation, specifically the narration of Madame de Menon, continues to suggest that narratives which seem most “fanciful” contain the most accurate information.

While we hear much of Madame de Menon’s skill as a storyteller, the only tale we hear her narrate is the family romance of the Mazzinis. Madame de Menon provides a melodramatic narrative of love between Julia and Emilia’s mother and her brother, Orlando. Her story features an exploding volcano, a heroine rejected by her family, a pair of young lovers and the inevitable tragedy: Orlando is slaughtered at the hands of

Madame de Menon's suicidal husband, and the girls' mother marries their father in despair. Several features of this narrative are relevant to our purposes. The first is that Madame de Menon accurately marks Marquise Mazzini as the villain of the piece. As gothic narrators go, Madame de Menon is trustworthy; her fancy does not lead her to inaccurate or inappropriate judgments. Secondly, despite the highly dramatic nature of her plot, Madame de Menon, like Radcliffe herself, is more concerned with describing domestic relationships. Although the volcano erupts with "a flood of fire," Madame focuses her narrative attention upon the complex interrelationships between characters: "there was some degree of relationship between your grandfather and myself; and your mother was attached to me by the ties of sentiment" (28). Specifically, Madame de Menon focuses on the relationships between the girls' mother and her brother in much the same way Radcliffe focuses the ending of her novel on the relationship of Ferdinand, Julia and their missing mother. Although the marchionesse dismisses Madame de Menon's narrative power, Radcliffe forces her readers to revise their interpretation of Madame de Menon's narrative. While sentimental, florid, and highly improbable, this narrative is also within the world of Radcliffe's text the absolute truth. Radcliffe connects women's speaking to the larger critical conversation between fancy and reason in the novel. Radcliffe suggests a productive approach: by inverting the hierarchy of fancy and reason, fanciful narratives have greater value in the service of moral truth. Under this lens, conversations and texts traditionally dismissed as fanciful, the speaking and writing of women, can be legitimized.

Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* suggests that the paradoxical domestic is ultimately a more productive site for occulted rhetoric than the Burkian sublime. In order to further interrogate this concept, I would like to turn to novel often associated with sublime landscape: *Frankenstein*. While Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has long been established as a key text in the tradition of female gothic, Eileen Moers's discussion of Shelley's problematic status as mother and author also establishes a tradition of reading *Frankenstein* as a directly material force—capable of provoking a physical reaction in its reader's unwary body (Moers Norton 214). Moers argues that gothic's physicality reflects Shelley's meditation on her own body: her pregnancies, miscarriages and the loss of her infant daughter. Moers's trajectory from physical body to textual power to authorial production has long marked a standard of both psychoanalytic and feminist interpretation. Ostensibly removed from this field of interpretation is the study of *Frankenstein's* sublime spaces, where a great deal of attention has been paid to the pivotal moment on Mont Blanc's "sublime and magnificent scene," the "troubled" "sea of ice" and the "bare perpendicular rock" of the mountain where Frankenstein finally encounters his creature (63-65). However, for Victor Frankenstein, the power of landscape transcends aesthetic appreciation. Sublime landscapes provoke physical responses; they arrest the soul in "astonishment" "with some degree of horror" (Burke 53). Frankenstein, seized by "melancholy," seeks the tractless glacial waste in order to produce a "sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul" and allow Victor to "forget the passing cares of life" (63-64). Physiologically, Frankenstein achieves exactly the release he was seeking; his "heart, which was before sorrowful, now swelled with something like

joy” (65). The appearance of the creature complicates Frankenstein’s response; his body is seized by shock; his reactions are “faintness,” a “mist” clouds his vision and he “trembled with rage and horror” (65). Frankenstein’s reaction to the power of gothic landscape connects to Moers’s characteristic description of female “physiological” gothic, which “get[s] to the body itself, its glands, epidermis, muscles, and circulatory system” (Moers 214). Both sublime landscape and gothic text have the power to provoke specific reactions in the bodies of their spectators.

The reaction for Victor and his creature, however, is one distinctly tied to narrative. Upon the glacier, his soul moved by the paradoxical space he inhabits, Victor, “for the first time [...] felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were” and seeks to “render him happy before I complained of his wickedness” (67). Indeed, it is possible to imagine a very different novel had Victor acted so in Ingolstadt, offering his creature the love and guidance that the creature so desperately craves. Unlike the Ingolstadt laboratory or the hills outside of the Frankenstein’s Geneva home, Victor’s physical reaction to the sublime space he inhabits and the profound sensations of terror and horror which seize him allows for productive discourse.

Sublimity opens Victor to the possibility for productive communication. It is, however, a domestic space that actually serves as the site for the creature’s life story. As with Madame de Menon, Victor and his creature soon retreat from glacial expanse to domestic cottage, another “hut upon the mountain” (67). While Shelley devotes much less textual space to the Creature’s hut than she does to the sublime glacier, she does note the “fire” which contrasts with the “cold” air and falling “rain” (67). Shelley suggests a

connection between the sublime space of the glacier and the domestic space of the hut. While both spaces participate in a paradoxical modality, the glacier through its sense of geological transformation and change, the hut through its contrast between internal and external environments, the paradoxical nature of the hut is more interesting considering Radcliffe's emphasis on the domestic.

Atop the glacial expanse, the creature shares with his creator his experience; Victor responds emotionally and intellectually to his creation's need for family and contact. Gothic sublimity leads both Victor and the creature to compromise and connection through the medium of language, starkly opposed to the divisions present in the rest of the novel, which are expressed in violence and silence. While Longinus located the sublime in beautiful discourse, Shelley's creature's narrative argues for a different definition. The power of the creature's narrative, exquisitely arranged though it may be, does not lie in the metaphors or images composed by the creature, though those figures of speech are, indeed, present. In fact, the creature's narrative reads more like a journal or diary, genres associated with women's writing in the early nineteenth century. While Shelley seems to activate the rhetorical power of the sublime as characterized by Longinus, rather than the sublime as presented in Burke, she does so by revising the basis of rhetorical sublimity to suggest that a more loosely structured, "natural" style contains greater narrative power. This trend is reflected by a specific stylistic and generical hierarchy Shelley establishes within the creature's narrative.

Most formal studies of *Frankenstein* have noted the parallel structure of the novel's multiple narratives, with plenty of attention paid to the creature's narration at the

novel's heart. Within studies of the creature's story, two different strands of critique emerge. Some critics focus on the creature's physical and moral development, specifically, the creature's relationship to a developing child. Another strand of criticism focuses on the creature's education; specifically, Shelley's detailed description of the creature's reading material. However, theorizing gothic spaces as loci for productive communication suggests a third possible lens through which to view the creature's education—the influence of gothic texts upon the creature's development. Gothic narratives should act on the creature in the same productive manner as gothic locations did within the external narrative frame.

As Gilbert and Gubar claim, “any theorist of the novel's femaleness and of its significance as, in Moers's phrase, a ‘birth myth’ must therefore confront this self-conscious literariness”; however, their own study of *Frankenstein* limits itself to an exploration of the three specifically named texts within the narrative: *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, *Plutarch's Lives*, and, inevitably, *Paradise Lost* (Gilbert and Gubar 222). It is the Miltonic connection that fascinates Gilbert and Gubar; unfortunately, their search for a feminist poetics neglects the other key texts cited by the creature when he describes his unusual education. Notably, the first text the creature cites is neither Werther, Plutarch, or Milton. In order for the creature to learn to read, he recites his interaction with Safie, a Turkish woman who has come to the cottage where he hides. Safie's story of escape from a tyrannical father and the threat of an oriental harem is a journey of danger and despair from Turkey to Germany culminating in the “Arabian [...] left alone, unacquainted with the language of the country, and utterly ignorant of the customs of the

world” (85). Safie’s flight from her father’s home and her wanderings across the lush and foreign landscapes of continental Europe more closely resembles the Gothic narratives of Ann Radcliffe or an alternative, female perspective for Byron’s *Giaour* than texts of masculine discovery and Faustian tragedy. The creature also reads Safie’s story as narrative, validating the DeLacey account as a “history” and claiming that it taught him “to admire” man’s “virtues, and to depreciate the vices of mankind” (85).

The creature’s claim that Safie’s gothic narrative promoted virtue over vice is reminiscent of the moral project of early gothic novels. Consider, as just one example, the original preface to *The Castle of Otranto* which claims that the “piety that reigns throughout, the lessons of virtue that are inculcated, and the rigid purity of the sentiments, exempt this work from the censure to which romances are but too liable” (7). Walpole situates gothic within a positive moral program which places its physical appeal within a strongly moral frame. Likewise, Safie’s story inspires both physical and moral reactions within the creature; it “excited [...] such various feelings of indignation, delight, and wonder” which “all terminated in additional love and reverence for my protectors” (81). Gothic narrative promotes both physical response and social harmony.

It is worth noting that all three of the “literary” texts which the creature encounters disconnect him from the human community. From Werther the creature is troubled by the glorification of “death and suicide” and sensitive to the differences “the beings concerning whom I read, and to whose conversation I was a listener” (86). The creature’s sense of alienation might well resemble that of Werther’s female readers who could only partially connect to the romantic narrative they encountered. Plutarch

certainly generated “the greatest ardour for virtue” and “abhorrence for vice” but the creature notes that he applied these concepts to “pleasure and pain alone” and questions that, had he encountered a “young soldier, burning for glory and slaughter” instead of the domestic De Laceys, his reactions to Plutarch would have been less amiable (87).

Finally, Milton provoked the problematic connection to Satan, an analogy the monster raises time and time again as he performs his most evil acts. Equally problematic is the creature’s discovery of Frankenstein’s “journal of the four months that preceded my creation,” the final text which exposes his own alienation from his creator/father (87). In order to counteract the power of this final text, the creature reflects once again on “the virtues of the cottagers, their amiable and benevolent dispositions” (88); Safie’s story saves the creature from despair, suggesting the power gothic holds as an alternative to both patriarchal (Frankenstein’s journal) and canonical (Werther, Plutarch and Milton) narratives.

As in Radcliffe, Shelley’s gothic spaces lead to communication; in this case the one moment of productive discourse between Frankenstein and his creature. Radcliffe suggests that traditionally undervalued models of communication: the oral, the fanciful actually contain to the most moral and ethical force. Shelley reinforces Radcliffe’s scheme through her use of Safie’s gothic narrative, juxtaposed against the other, traditionally masculine texts, the creature encounters. Both Shelley and Radcliffe trace a locopoetics of gothic, where domestic spaces, made paradoxical, provoke discourse and improve relations between auditors. Clearly women writing female gothic have found

ways to blend the paradoxical within the domestic. The question remains if this locopoetics also occurs within the works of more realistic female novelists.

## CHAPTER IV

### “THIS GLOOMY CHAMBER:” PARADOXICAL SPACE AND GOTHIC RHETORIC IN THE NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN

While traditionally read as antagonistic, Jane Austen’s relationship with the gothic has been complicated by recent critical readings which uncover latent gothic motifs and strategies underneath her biting satires of domestic life. Much of this criticism points directly to landscape and edifice as sites where the realistic and domestic terrain of Austen’s fiction and the sublime and uncanny worlds of the gothic collide. Ann Banfield discusses Austen’s engagement with the gothic, pointing specifically to “setting” as a mechanism for this engagement, although she clearly feels that Austen wants to distance herself from Radcliffe (“Influence” 35). Nina Auerbach also sees a closer connection between Austen’s domesticated landscape and the gothic novel. For Auerbach, Austen’s domestic corridors function as site of “romantic imprisonment,” a concept Paul Morrison expands but does not directly reference in his formulation of the “domestic carceral.” Morrison theorizes that that visibility and openness become sites of imprisonment within *Northanger Abbey* (Morrison 3).

While Morrison confines his argument to *Northanger Abbey*, his reading of Austen’s space points to a central irony in her work as a whole. Morrison sees *Northanger Abbey* as a “through-the-looking-glass form of the gothic,” where traditional gothic conventions are reversed or restaged in paradoxical modes (12). Austen

“discredit[s] the gothic by adopting an ethics of the positional (here, not there; now, not then) that is itself an ideological staple of the gothic” (9). Austen’s mirror-gothic is reflected in her landscapes. The well-lit parlors and open rooms of the Tilney home become a far more oppressive space than the mysterious staircase of *Northanger Abbey*, what Morrison terms a “reinscription” of “gothic clausturation in the mode of light or visibility” (11). Specifically, the “realm of manners, the domestic parlor, reinscribes gothic incarceration in and as a generalized economy of surveillance” (Morrison 11). Morrison equates physical openness with “legibility,” physical surveillance with the reading of text, and concludes that for Catherine Morland, “visibility or, better, legibility is a gender specific trap” (14). By exposing a heroine to notice, you are capable of trapping her even more closely than if you hid her away in darkness. While Morrison makes an excellent point that the most domestic spaces actually become the most restrictive, he neglects to note the role *Northanger Abbey*’s gothic spaces play with respect to Catherine Morland’s development as a heroine. If Morrison’s domestic carceral revises the traditional paradigm, so that the most ostensibly open of Austen’s spaces are actually the most limiting, then the most overtly gothic spaces present the most potential for freedom. Within the well-lighted spaces of *Northanger Abbey* both metatext, the Gothic novels Catherine has read, and subtext, the very real horrors of “parental tyranny” are both interrogated and implemented (235). In order to examine this nexus of gothic space, epistemology and narrative this chapter will focus on the three works which Jane Austen titled for locations: her first novel and most overt satire, *Northanger Abbey*, her most maligned romance, *Mansfield Park*, and the final,

fragmentary *Sanditon*. This analysis will reveal that even when gothic modalities are interrogated within ostensibly realistic texts, the rhetorical power of paradoxical space remains a constant.

*Northanger Abbey* follows *Love and Friendship* as a fairly straightforward satire of the dangers of romantic reading. Its heroine, Catherine Morland, devours the novels of Ann Radcliffe and sees gothic horrors inside the well lit houses of normal English families. Despite its rousing parody of improbable gothic plots, Austen's text contains its own, quite delightful gothic narrative. Austen's hero Henry Tilney offers to describe "all the horrors that a building such as 'what one reads about' may produce" in order to poke fun at Catherine's naivety (149). However, as many critics have noted, Henry's gothic narrative contains actual foreshadowing hidden under all the playful pastiche.<sup>15</sup> Henry's version of what will happen to Catherine at *Northanger Abbey* carefully mediates between an amalgamation of Ann Radcliffe's best plot elements and some specific details indigenous to its particular setting. Specifically, Henry's description centers on: "a large, old fashioned cabinet of ebony and gold, which, though narrowly examining the furniture before, you had passed unnoticed" (151). In Henry's gothic, this "unnoticed" cabinet sits within "a secret subterraneous communication between your apartment and the chapel of St. Anthony" (151). Tilney's language is suggestive: the secret tunnel, as with Julia's closet in *A Sicilian Romance*, is a "communication," simultaneously passage and message. On the one hand, Henry is doing a fine homage to one of Radcliffe's favorite

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<sup>15</sup> For a recent study (2009) see Barbara MacMahon "Metarepresentation and Decoupling in *Northanger Abbey*" for a delightfully inspired linguistic analysis of Austen's gothic modalities; however, shades of this argument have appeared in most studies of Austen and the Gothic.

architectural terms, and, in general, this passage is, as Barbara MacMahon argues, an elegant parody of Radcliffe's word choice and sentence structure. On the other hand, Henry is also invoking a Radcliffian connection between space and language. We saw previously that in Radcliffe communicating chambers foster female conversation and invention. Radcliffe's gothic communications are not only hidden passages between rooms, but interactions between separated women. Henry continues to blur the boundaries between location and composition: the secret passage doesn't lead anywhere except to the cabinet and its contents: a hidden message. The message, when read, turns out to be a manuscript, the "memoirs of wretched Matilda" (Austen 152). Matilda's lost message within Henry's narrative points to another traditional element of gothic fiction, the unauthored manuscript. Both Walpole and Radcliffe displaced their authorial agency onto "found" or "assembled" manuscripts. This tradition indicates that both male and female gothic rely upon anonymity as a narrative device. Virginia Woolf explicitly articulates the power of anonymity in *A Room of One's Own*, arguing that "when one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a very remarkable man who had a mother" we can see "a lost novelist, a suppressed poet" (49). Woolf goes on to claim that "Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them was often a woman" and "the desire to be veiled still possesses" these women writers (49). Woolf uses "veiled" to describe the act of taking a pseudonym, but her language slips into the mode of the gothic, which delights in its veiled nuns, cloaked ghosts, and mournful heroines. As in Radcliffe whose mysterious and ghostly communications facilitate conversation and voice, Henry's narrative

terminates in the discovery of just such a manuscript: a teasing glimpse of a traditionally gothic paradoxical space and the female narratives these spaces contain.

It is telling that while Henry can imagine the presence of Matilda's narrative, he cannot relate it. Henry gives us the first lines of the text: "Oh! Thou—whomsoever thou mayst be, into whose hands these memoirs of the wretched Matilda may fall" when his heroine's lamp suddenly expires (152). Catherine begs Henry to "go on" but Henry is too amused by his parody of Radcliffe's diction and cannot "carry it farther" (152). Instead, Henry "entreats" Catherine to "use her own fancy in the perusal of Matilda's woes" (152). Despite Henry's obvious sarcasm, this moment holds legitimate potential for Catherine as active author. No matter how banal her version of Matilda's struggle might turn out to be, Catherine would generate speech, rather than simply respond to the speeches of others. Catherine's refusal to create a story for Matilda marks the start of a downward trajectory in *Northanger Abbey* toward passivity and silence. Evidenced in Catherine's transformation from young tomboy who "loved nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house" (16), to a character defined by "silence and sadness" sunk into "languor and listlessness" (224-25) this heroine is confined, rather than liberated, by love. Even after Henry proposes marriage, Catherine, while glowing of cheek and bright of eye, "said not a word" (225). In fact, Catherine never has another line of dialogue. Instead we leave Catherine "wrapt in the contemplation of her own unutterable happiness, scarcely open[ing] her lips" (227). While Austen delivers a classic happy ending, Catherine's deliberate silencing within the

text strikes a disturbing note—she has become a heroine after all— no more active or compelling than her gothic precedents.

Any attempt to pose an antithetical relationship between Henry Tilney's aesthetic and feminine composition seems unlikely as Henry confesses early on to a strong attachment to Ann Radcliffe's novels. For once, Henry is not ironic; he admits that he has read Radcliffe's entire canon "with great pleasure" (103). However, Henry's paean to Radcliffe's narrative prowess carries with it some deeply problematic images. Henry claims that he loved *Mysteries of Uldolpho* so much that he stopped reading the book aloud and stole away his sister's copy before she could finish (103). The book is Eleanor's "own, particularly her own" and its theft makes Henry "proud when I reflect on it" (103). While Henry is clearly exaggerating his behavior to make himself a more appealing suitor to Catherine, his narrative of textual appropriation retains a sobering emphasis on violence. Henry, for all his agreeableness, is interested in control.

While *Northanger Abbey* was clearly intended to be a gentle satire of the unrealistic situations characteristic of gothics, its treatment of texts, specifically Catherine's gothic novels, Eleanor's histories and so forth, is a complicated one. Along with its critique of Ann Radcliffe, *Northanger Abbey* features an equally critical discussion of feminine composition. Tilney's first conversation clearly establishes the hierarchies under which women's writing and speech will be judged: under Tilney's dictates of realism and exactness, women's writing is dismissed and silenced. After exchanging some clichés about Bath, Henry worries that he will be "a poor figure" in Catherine's "journal to-morrow" (26). While Tilney seems to empower Catherine as a

writer, his interest is only in dominating that imaginary narrative in order to describe himself as “a very agreeable young man” (26). Tilney is interested in speaking for Catherine; he knows “exactly” what Catherine will say, will, in fact, tell her “what you ought to say” (26). This assumption of narrative agency is followed by an articulation of textual aesthetic. Tilney believes “this delightful habit of journalizing which largely contributes to form the easy style of writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated” and is careful to note that “everybody allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female” (27). We pause here to isolate three ideas that will return in our study of *Mansfield Park*: the notion of proper style, “ease” and “agreeable letters,” and how these elements function as modes of feminine composition.

Henry’s approach to women’s writing, while ostensibly nurturing and productive, hides a program of silence and containment. After Tilney remarks on “the easy style of writing” found in women’s letters (27), Catherine, at sea in a conversation about literary ability, tentatively replies that “ladies do write so much better letters than gentleman” (27). Tilney is quick to suppress her, noting that “letter writing among women is faultless, except in three particulars [...] a general deficiency of subject, a total inattention to stops, and a very frequent ignorance of grammar” (27). Tilney’s objection is telling: he dismisses the daily details and concerns of a woman’s experience as a “deficiency of subject,” and he cites an ignorance of the rules of punctuation and grammar and the provocative “total inattention to stops” as an equally compelling difficulty (27). As Eleanor is quick to inform us, Henry is “for ever finding fault with me, for some incorrectness of language” (103-4). Henry, disciple of “Johnson and Blair,”

is concerned with “utmost propriety of diction” and he chooses his words carefully (104). Tilney’s program, reflected in his constant need to correct both Catherine and Eleanor’s use of improper language, is one of standardization and repression, a program which both Eleanor and Catherine resist. Even in this early conversation, Catherine immediately protests Henry’s attempt to appropriate her discourse, retorting that she “shall say no such thing” and “keep no journal” (26). Her only recourse here, as in the curricle, is silence. Catherine will not keep a journal, nor will she relate Matilda’s story. In both cases, Tilney’s views of women’s writing manage to silence Catherine before she can speak.

Henry Tilney is also careful to characterize the appeal of the gothic novel in quite specific terms: *Uldolpho*’s value as a text lies in plot, which makes it impossible for readers to “lay down again,” and shock value, the reader’s “hair standing on end the whole time” (103). What interests Henry about the gothic, then, is its ability to provoke an emotional reaction, to keep the reader’s interest through terror, not any felicity of style. Henry’s fascination with Radcliffe’s ability to enrapture her reader resonates strangely with his attraction to Catherine, an attraction which “originated in nothing better than gratitude, or in other words, that a persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of giving her a serious thought” (227). Like the novel, Catherine provokes Henry’s interest by expressing her emotions, much as Radcliffe’s imprisoned and betrayed heroines keep the reader’s interest through sympathy. Henry’s praise of the gothic keeps women and women’s writing in equally subjective modes: both figures must keep the attention of their male readers engaged. Through Henry’s critique of women’s letters and praise of the gothic novel, Austen produces a strong contrast between genres

like history, which certainly do not lack for subject and as Catherine notes have “hardly any women at all,” women’s fiction which must attract and seduce its male readers, and a woman’s letters and journals which ignore the “rules” of proper diction and fail to use “stops” (104). While Henry is criticizing a tendency to rely on the dash in informal prose, his critique implicates gothic narratives, which, noted for their overblown and archaized diction, are all about pulling out the stops.

Additionally, gothic as a genre delights in subversion and slippage: supernatural elements generate paradoxical spaces in which normative epistemologies are deconstructed or called into question.<sup>16</sup> Within these complicated spaces, women are empowered to communicate. These paradoxical spaces are also present in *Northanger Abbey*’s gothic edifice. If Catherine cannot speak, let alone compose, in the open curricula and corridors of Morrison’s carceral space, it is necessary to find alternative sites of potential agency. Austen has already hinted that the key to these moments is Catherine’s gothic cabinet, as this is the one detail in Henry’s gothic narrative that does not appear in any of his sources. Catherine believes she sees the antecedent of this cabinet twice during her first night in the abbey. The first time is when she is introduced to her room and spies a cedar chest complete with lock and handles “broken perhaps prematurely by some strange violence” (156). At this point, Catherine could have chosen to speculate on the results of that violence, but her attention is arrested by text. What fascinates Catherine is “a mysterious cipher [... she] bent over it intently, but without being able to distinguish anything with certainty. She could not, in whatever direction

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<sup>16</sup> The classic analysis here is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s within *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*.

she took it, believe the last letter to be a T” (156). Catherine is engaged with the act of reading, her imagination causes her to mistake the monogram on the top of the chest for a cipher and to stand, “forgetting everything else” “gazing on it in motionless wonder” (155). Austen foregrounds Catherine’s agency— she is curious, wondering “what can it hold?” –and her bravery— she “will look into it—cost me what it may” (155). Of course the chest reveals nothing more than “a white cotton counterpane, properly folded” but the benefits of this gothic moment are still worth noting (156). Catherine entered her bedroom deeply concerned with meeting General Tilney’s unreasonable schedule. Taken up by the gothic scene she imagines, Catherine is able to “gaze” for a long period of time, and even think and act for herself. While Catherine has yet to become an actual author, her indulgence in the gothic aesthetic certainly allows her the mental space to speculate and imagine. This is the space where composition begins, the topos and topoi of invention.

After the disappointment with the chest, Austen’s use of gothic trope intensifies, as Catherine is plunged into a violent storm and isolated within the sleeping house. Lest we misunderstand the deliberate use of gothic motifs, Austen explicitly invokes Henry’s aborted gothic narrative: Catherine remembers “Henry’s words, his description of the ebony cabinet which was to escape her observation at first” (159). Another cabinet dutifully appears, this time a “black and yellow Japan of the handsomest kind” (159). Given the counterpane incident, it is obvious that Catherine will only ordinary items amidst the gothic trappings of the abbey. Austen, however, raises the stakes in this new gothic parody, intensifying the storm which now “blew and rained violently” as a

“tempest” and having the cheerful fire “die away” (159). Catherine increases her gothic experience as an attempt to trim the candle to keep it burning results in the “awful effect” of the candle going out (161). Our heroine is horrified as “darkness impenetrable and immoveable filled the room” (161). Austen satisfies her reader’s expectations; no horror reaches out to claim the beleaguered heroine. However, Catherine does find something within the cabinet—a roll of paper. With this discovery, the gothic scene reaches its climax: “A violent gust of wind, rising with sudden fury, added fresh horror” and Catherine stands, immobilized, as “the manuscript fell from her hand” (161). More interesting for our purposes is how Austen has deployed the style of the gothic novels she previously parodies, her normally restrained prose has become as excessive and violent as the “impenetrable and immoveable” darkness it describes. For a moment, as all the lights go out and Catherine cowers in darkness, we are both thematically and stylistically within the space of the gothic novel.

Unfortunately for Catherine, morning reveals the disappointing reality: the lock doesn’t quite stick, the door would have opened easily had Catherine not shot the bolt, and the contents of the mysterious chest are prosaic washing bills and receipts. Gothic space, however, is paradoxical. In the traditional gothic novel, we see this paradox in places like the Mazzini cellars which are both cavern/prison and domesticated home. Austen reflects this theme: a space that is both gothic and not-gothic, home and prison, new and old. Northanger Abbey is a renovated carceral. Although the Abbey has been modernized, Catherine notices the stone cloisters buried just underneath the new carpets. Likewise, her experience mediates between gothic horror at night and domestic dangers

during the day. Austen's mysterious cabinet encapsulates this contrast, while "not absolutely ebony and gold" it can hold a lost manuscript (159). As with the cedar chest, the cabinet is intellectually productive locus for Catherine to encounter. Catherine is activated into independent thought by her discovery and wonders "how as it to be accounted for? —What could it contain—to whom could it relate?" (162) Catherine desires to make herself "mistress of its contents" (162). Her "greedy eye glanced rapidly over a page" (163). While we are tempted to linger on a moment where silenced Catherine can be "mistress" of anything, the way in which Austen uses gothic modalities resists an easy narrative of feminine empowerment. Daylight returns us to the realistic novel where Catherine is disappointed to discover "coarse and modern characters" (163).

If the evidence of sight might be trusted, she held a washing-bill in her hand. She seized another sheet, and saw the same articles with little variation; a third, a fourth, and a fifth presented nothing new. Shirts, stockings, cravats and waistcoats faced her in each. Two others, penned by the same hand, marked an expenditure scarcely more interesting, in letters, hair-powder, shoe-string and breeches-ball. And the larger sheet, which had inclosed the rest, seemed by its first cramp line, 'To poultice chestnut mare,' a farrier's bill (163).

Catherine's missing manuscript contains only the minutiae of daily life, generally the purview of a manservant. Indeed, Catherine might well be right to reject these letters as trifles.<sup>17</sup> However, Austen's language reveals a more complicated agenda. Catherine was expecting a gothic manuscript, gothic here being used to indicate both subject matter and style of type. Instead, she finds "modern characters," a phrase which indicates both

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<sup>17</sup>Austen's text is unclear if the washing bills concern the lover's personal effects or those of his manservant. For purposes of plot, and given Henry's parallel to the device of the gothic portrait, it makes more sense for the bills to be for the lover's toilet rather than the servant's.

the contemporary hand which forms the letters on the page and an invocation of the real individuals who left the receipts behind in the cabinet. Readers of gothic novels that often preface their plots with conversations about manuscript culture would be sensitive to both meanings of the terms “characters.” Austen further problematizes our stance as readers/interpreters by including a conditional phrase before the details of the papers are revealed. Her readers are asked to believe “the evidence of sight” a phrase that echoes Radcliffe and other gothic writers who constantly interrogate and invoke enlightenment epistemology and the trustworthiness of visual evidence. Throughout this moment of ostensible comedy, Austen asks us to consider more carefully what we are looking at and its relationship to the characters in the book.

Traditionally, the cabinet has been read as yet another incident designed to remind Catherine of the perils of gothic epistemologies. However, Susan Zlotnick poses an alternative reading when she describes the bills in the cabinet as “the essence of human interactions in the novel” which “call attention [...] to the asymmetrical relations of power between men and woman in the economy” (278). Zlotnick’s claim implies that Catherine, for all her gothic fancies, has, in fact, stumbled on the central message of the text. While Zlotnick’s discussion of the nineteenth century literary and marriage markets provides a nuanced and deeply illuminating reading of *Northanger Abbey*, I would like to reframe Zlotnick’s emphasis on the washing-bills by reconnecting Catherine’s cabinet to Henry’s gothic narrative. Because of Henry’s narrative Catherine expects a text, if not Matilda’s woes, something like the journal of Mrs. Tilney, which she also looks for, but

does not find.<sup>18</sup> Austen could provide us with any prosaic object, as in the case of the white counterpane, to illustrate Catherine's naiveté.<sup>19</sup> However, Catherine's discovery remains text, in this case a "roll of paper pushed back into the further part of the cavity" (161). Austen's language is careful to intensify the correspondences between Henry's gothic and Catherine's experience. The receipt roll is a "precious manuscript" (161). The emphasis on characters and ciphers in both spaces, the chest and cabinet, return us to a conversation about reading and interpreting text.

It is always worth noting when Austen fractures the indirect discourse of her narration to comment on her own text. In this case, Austen concludes the novel by confessing that she is "aware that the rules of composition forbid the introduction of a character not connected with my fable" (234). Austen's concern with the rules of plot align her with Henry Tilney's critique of women's writing and the gothic novel, both of which break these rules of dramatic unity. That Austen feels her narrative to be at risk of critique suggests a lingering sensitivity to elements which fall outside the principles of realistic fiction. In order to rectify this tension, Austen claims that Eleanor's fiancé was "the very gentleman whose negligent servant left behind him that collection of washing-bills, resulting from a long visit at Northanger" (234). While the age and provenance of these receipts remain prosaic, Austen reveals that they are also an intimate, personal and physical record of Eleanor's lover. This plot twist achieves the basic ends of dramatic unity; however, it also blatantly connects Catherine's discovery in the cabinet with

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<sup>18</sup> Catherine has been searching for "some fragmented journal" of the Tilney's missing mother (181).

<sup>19</sup> It is worth mentioning that Zlotnick does see a relationship between the "white counterpane" and a "blank page" (footnote 12).

Matilda's lost manuscript. The receipts are the only material evidence of Eleanor's lover's stay at Northanger Abbey, and in the lost story of Eleanor and her unnamed suitor we have the seeds of a prototypical gothic romance.

The lover, identified only by his sex and position—a gentleman of inferior situation and admirable character (who, of course, turns out to be a Viscount)—is as much an absent presence as any lost mother buried alive in a convent or handsome hero locked in a cell of the Italian Inquisition.<sup>20</sup> He is kept from Eleanor by her cruel father and his own lack of finances. Eleanor herself suffers at the beck and call of her tyrannical parent, who, while he neither murders her mother nor locks her in a cell, does keep her at his beck and call. Eleanor is quick to remark that her “real power is nothing” (210). At the end of the novel, fate rewards the lover with “title and fortune” resulting in Eleanor's happy marriage.<sup>21</sup> If Eleanor's lover is the gothic mystery which must be solved, the washing bills are the only evidence of his presence at Northanger. Catherine's discovery of this text parallels similar moments in Radcliffe's gothics, for example Julia's discovery of her mother's miniature in *A Sicilian Romance* or Ellena's encounter with the portrait of the villain Schedoni. Radcliffe uses these artifacts to foreshadow occluded aspects of the plot. Catherine's laundry list, with its emphasis on stockings, shoe strings, and breeches-balls, is both more and less personal than the Radcliffian parallel. Ellena's portrait is described as that of, “a young man rather

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<sup>20</sup> Or even Mrs. Tilney.

<sup>21</sup> Compare this to *The Italian*, where Ellena is separated from Vivaldi by his wicked mother and her lack of title and fortune. At the end of the novel, Ellana's noble parentage is revealed and the lovers are able to marry happily. Catherine does, despite herself, uncover the one Gothic mystery in the text: the hidden relationship of Eleanor and her lover.

handsome, of a gay and smiling countenance; yet the smile expressed triumph rather than sweetness, and his whole air and features were distinguished by a consciousness of superiority that rose even to haughtiness” (*Italian* 282). Radcliffe’s descriptions are vague. A reader retains no sense of this lover’s physical reality; he is simply “rather handsome” with a “smiling countenance.” In contrast, Catherine’s washing bills provide us not only with the gentleman’s brand of soap and vest size but with how much he spends on hair-powder. The use of the breeches ball in this carefully detailed list reveals a more subtle purpose to the catalog—these details are intimate. Washing the hero’s trousers puts the focus on his physical and sexual reality, even if we ignore the obvious pun.

This reading is complicated by the absence of what normally constitutes the description of a character within a literary text. While the reality of the lover cannot be debated, we are still unable to picture him. Objectified through this list of objects, the hero remains unnamed, reduced to the assorted parts of his wardrobe. Ironically, either reading allows Catherine to read the body of this man in the way that other men in the text have been reading her—through an economic understanding of his finances (his bills are mounting) and an intimate look at his appearance. Were Catherine actually to read the evidence she has so successfully uncovered, she would be curious as to the identity of a nicely dressed young man, staying in the Abbey’s guest room. This curiosity could lead Catherine to ask Eleanor about his identity, creating an opportunity for Eleanor to reveal her own romantic travails.

Let us consider for a moment a point in the narrative when Eleanor does relate some important biographical information to Catherine. Provocatively, this moment also occurs in a moment of contrast between gothic and domesticated spaces. In this case we move from house to garden, where General Tilney is about to lead Catherine to the “tea house” by a clear route across the open park (169). Eleanor has a different route; her “favourite walk” the “best and nearest way” is a “narrow winding path through a thick grove of old Scotch firs” (169). Again, the Gothic quality of the space is what appeals to the ladies; Catherine is so struck by the “gloomy aspect” of the space that the “General’s disapprobation” could not keep her from “stepping forward” (169). While the open park reflects Morrison’s domestic carceral, Eleanor’s gloomy, dark, and narrow path protects the women. Catherine’s reaction reinforces this interpretation as she “was shocked by to find how much her spirits were relieved by the separation” the hidden path provided from the General (169). Relieved of masculine surveillance, Catherine and Eleanor like Julia, Emilia and Madame de Menon before them can “talk with easy gaiety of the delightful melancholy which such a grove inspired” (169). A conversation on the gothic character of their shared space leads naturally to talk of mothers instead of fathers: repressed Eleanor confesses that this was her mother’s “favourite walk” and, with Catherine’s encouragement, begins to narrate her mother’s history (170). As in Catherine’s encounter with the chest and the cabinet, the garden path is a productive space, especially with respect to verbal communication. As in Radcliffe, conversation between Catherine and Eleanor within the walk becomes narration, the telling of a story. In Eleanor’s case, while her narrative of her mother’s death has to be encouraged, Catherine remains a

willing and helpful auditor. She waits for Eleanor with an “attentive pause” and asks leading questions when Eleanor “continuing silent” threatens to stop their conversation (170). Although the end of the path brings with it the appearance of the General and an end to the talk, while the girls remain trapped in the gloomy path, they are paradoxically freed.

Given Eleanor’s reticence and Catherine’s skill at encouraging her friend, we can assume that, when confronted with the washing bills, honest Eleanor would have confided the history of her lover. However, Catherine is too embarrassed to mention her discovery to Eleanor. Catherine’s lack of confidence in gothic epistemologies means that the true “memoirs of the wretched Eleanor” remain unread and unheard. Despite this failure, there are some positive moments for female community in *Northanger Abbey*. Like Radcliffe’s *Castle Mazzini*, *Northanger Abbey* is eventually evacuated by its male owners. Once General Tilney and Henry vacate the property, Catherine and Eleanor quickly “found themselves so well-sufficient for the time to themselves, that it was eleven o’clock, rather a late hour at the Abbey, before they quitted the supper-room on the day of Henry’s departure” (208). Even when patriarchal power again asserts itself, this time through Catherine’s planned expulsion from the abbey, gothic locations within the novel continue to allow for alternative modes of communication and connection between women.

As Catherine prepares to leave *Northanger Abbey*, Austen returns to a gothic locus, “that room, in which her disturbed imagination had tormented her on her first arrival, was again the scene of agitated spirits and unquiet slumbers” (212). Despite

Catherine's assertion that she will no longer romanticize her surroundings, Austen provides the necessary valence by recalling the most ostensibly Radcliffian moment in the text, Catherine's encounter with the cabinet during her "first arrival." Austen's language "disturbed," "agitated," "tormented," "unquiet slumbers" frames Catherine's suffering in an appropriately gothic register: "heavily passed the night. Sleep, or repose that deserved the name of sleep, was out of the question" (212). As gothic space reappears, so does the friendship between the girls: "Eleanor seemed now impelled into resolution and speech. 'You *must* write to me, Catherine'" (213). Catherine demurs, but her relationship with Eleanor is enough to override her scruples: "'Eleanor, I *will* write to you indeed'" (213). In their last moments together at Northanger Abbey, both girls swear to become writers of those very letters that Henry so thoroughly disdains. Despite their unsuitable subjects, lack of stops, and unruly grammar, both women find the strength to assert communication. It speaks strongly to the potential for gothic rhetoric within the novel that both girls are unable to complete their promise when re-exposed to the cheery carceral of their normal lives. Eleanor never does send Catherine a letter; instead, Henry arrives in person, his presence making further written communication between the girls unnecessary. Similarly, Catherine, returned to her family, finds herself struggling with composition, able to write only a "very brief" note to her friend Eleanor (220). Gothic may have the potential to promote feminine composition; however, it cannot supersede the power of realism and domesticity to stifle it.

As with *Northanger Abbey*, *Mansfield Park* is the only other published Austen novel to take as its title a location integral to its plot rather than a theme or a character's

name. *Mansfield Park* contains two key locations, both homes for its heroine, Fanny Price. The first, rich and open Mansfield Park, reflects Paul Morrison's domestic carceral; the second, dirty and squalid Portsmouth will provide us with another, potentially productive gothic space. This argument will rely upon situating the Price home within a tradition of space that, while threatening, also contains the potential for feminine composition. Fanny's Portsmouth home reconstitutes familiar motifs of clausturation in specifically domestic spaces, thereby participating in modes of both reification and empowerment instantiated by the gothic novel. This connection will continue to explicate the positive role of paradoxical space: amid its noise, squalor and darkness, Portsmouth creates and nurtures female communication.

While a great deal of attention has been paid to Fanny's rooms within and the grounds without Mansfield Park, Fanny's other home, the Prices' Portsmouth residence, has been virtually ignored. John Skinner relegates Portsmouth to the "topographical periphery of the novel" (128), Amanda Himes neglects it entirely, while Melissa Edmundson, Anna Despotopoulou and Barbara Seeber mention the location only in passing. Critics who discuss Portsmouth do so only to stress its vulgarity, disorder and moral bankruptcy. Kenneth Moler and M. Lucy Schneider read Portsmouth as a shabby substitute for Mansfield Park, and Alistair Duckworth depicts Portsmouth as a "Hobbesian state of incivility" a home of squalor, chaos, and turmoil (77). Ann Banfield continues this trend when she claims "the physical disorder of the house and its size parallel the family's moral confusion and the limitations placed upon their lives" ("Moral Landscape" 13). While Fanny herself admits that "Portsmouth was Portsmouth;

Mansfield was home,” a spatial reading of *Mansfield Park* requires us to directly interrogate the uncomfortable, claustrophobic and often disgusting character of what would normally be her natural home (430). Portsmouth deserves recognition as a site of potential power and agency too often neglected in readings which confront Fanny Price’s space.

Fanny characterizes Portsmouth in unabashedly negative terms. The hard-won fire in her Mansfield sitting room forgotten, Fanny cowers in a dark corner while her real father withholds both candlelight and emotional warmth. Fanny’s preference for the darkness, her “bewildered, broken, sorrowful contemplation,” demonstrates the deeply reductive nature of Portsmouth’s space; going home to Portsmouth is, for Fanny, a devolution (384). Nothing at Portsmouth is immune to Fanny’s negativity. Even light, when it finally comes, is “a glare, a stifling, sickly glare, serving but to bring forward stains and dirt that might otherwise have slept” (438). Heat is “oppressive,” rooms are “scantily-furnished” (389) clamor “incessant” (394). Portsmouth is dirty; “half-cleaned plates, and not half-cleaned knives and forks” (413) mingle with the “tea-board never thoroughly cleaned, the cups and saucers wiped in streaks, the milk a mixture of motes floating in thin blue, and the bread and butter growing every minute more greasy” (438). But the most disturbing images of Portsmouth are those of enclosure. Fanny feels physically strangled by the house; “smallness” and “narrowness” (389) combine with the “violence” of footsteps (394) to create an atmosphere where “delicate and nervous” Fanny cowers upstairs like a stunted flower, physically and mentally oppressed by her surroundings (394).

Fanny takes every opportunity to contrast Portsmouth with Mansfield Park. However, this apparently simple dichotomy is complicated by Fanny's linguistic choices: if Portsmouth is so horrible, why does Fanny need to constantly assert its horror? Fanny's extended comparison between Mansfield Park and Portsmouth provides a clear treatment of Mansfield's virtues, silence, order and most of all "good breeding," and Portsmouth's problems, "hallooing servants," "clatter," noise and chaos (394). That the "incessant noise" of Portsmouth should be "the greatest misery of all" is interesting; however, Fanny's claim that Mansfield Park is immune to "raised voice[s]" and "tread[s] of violence" reads strangely in light of the theatrical "raging" of Tom and Yates and Sir Thomas's "heavy step" that fills Fanny with "terror" (317). Fanny's boast, that Mansfield allowed "everybody [...] their due importance" and that "every body's feelings were consulted," is also problematic in light of her own repressed role in the household (394). Fanny Price, "almost as fearful of notice and praise as other women were of neglect," is not often consulted by the inhabitants of Mansfield Park (214). When Fanny is forced to have an opinion, by Edmund about *Lovers Vows*, by Sir Thomas Bertram about Henry Crawford's proposal, she is unequivocally ignored. Any power Fanny possesses seems tied to her silence and her ability, as spectator, to observe and understand the characters that surround her. Therefore, Fanny's longing for a place to "command attention" when she speaks sits uneasily against a text which privileges her silence (394).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Nina Auerbach's contention that Fanny gains power in solitude (*Feeling* 25).

Morrison's theory suggests that the more gothic Austen's space, the less oppressive it actually is. Morrison identifies three characteristics of a gothic environment: "a temporary absence of an authorized male presence or aesthetic principle" (3); a presence of the Freudian *unheimlich*, which "does not function as the symmetrical opposite of the familiar or the congenial" but instead displaces by specifically invoking and corrupting the domestic (6); and, finally, an "epistemological space" that attempts to separate "'male' discourses of the objective and probable from 'female' discourses of the subjective and psychological"(5). While Sir Thomas does leave Mansfield for Antigua, his presence permeates the park, even at a distance. Conversely, Fanny is completely exempt from parental guidance during her stay at Portsmouth. While Fanny's "delicacy to her parents made her careful not to betray such a preference for her uncle's home [...]. She need not have been uneasy" (430). The Prices' do not care about their daughter's preferences or position, "she was as welcome to wish herself there, as to be there" (430). Morrison makes the point that this distance from oppressive ideologies and aesthetics is a liberating one.

Restaging Fanny's original comparison between Portsmouth and Mansfield Park in terms of the domestic carceral reveals that while Portsmouth is a far more gothic landscape, Mansfield is a far more effective prison. If "horror, like charity, begins at home," it is the most "homelike" of Fanny's spaces, which is also the most problematic (Morrison 21). Certainly, Mansfield's space is emphatically open, its "space, light, furniture, and prospect" constantly contrasted with Portsmouth's darkness (399). At Mansfield Park, the visible is always a threat. Fanny wants to escape "notice"; she resists

“being worth looking at” (213). For Fanny, then, the fire Sir Thomas brings to the east room is deeply problematic; not only does Sir Thomas penetrate her space, he brings with him constant exposure disguised as largess. Likewise, Fanny’s fate as sister-wife of Mansfield Park will mean a lifetime of being looked at both by husband Edmund and Sir Thomas. A heroine who longed for power would prefer to be left in darkness: Fanny’s position in the tiny Portsmouth parlor becomes, under this lens, less a regression from but a progression back to a site of potential agency.

Portsmouth is also uncanny. While Mansfield Park is first characterized as strange: “the rooms were too large for her to move in with ease; whatever she touched she expected to injure, and she crept about in constant terror of something or other” (45); this strangeness quickly becomes the norm. In the end, it is Portsmouth’s smallness, closeness, and vulgarity which repels Fanny. Fanny’s return to Portsmouth is the most disruptive form of the uncanny; her birth home is, due to her Mansfield acculturation, a wilderness. However, this uncanny space also has positive implications for its heroine in a novel whose uncomfortable ending renders empowerment deeply problematic. Portsmouth suggests alternatives to the traditional “family” by staging potential sister-sister and sister-brother households. Fanny’s witty revision of Johnson’s “though marriage might have some pains, celibacy could have no pleasures” into “though Mansfield Park might have some pains, Portsmouth could have no pleasures,” explicates the connection between the locations of Mansfield and Portsmouth and issues of marriage and domesticity (394). Mansfield Park’s connection to marriage and Portsmouth’s to celibacy seems an obvious analogy in light of the ending of the novel. Fanny will leave

celibacy for marriage, Portsmouth for Mansfield Park. Banfield gestures toward this reading when she proposes that “Sotherton and Portsmouth present two extremes of which Mansfield becomes the just mean” (“Moral Landscape” 5). While Banfield never addresses this contrast in generative terms, it seems obvious that Sotherton’s “adultery” contrasts with Portsmouth’s celibacy and is mediated by Mansfield Park, the terrain of marriage. However, this metaphor deconstructs within the actual narrative frame. For Fanny is fleeing both marriage and Mansfield Park. Celibacy, specifically a Wordsworthian paradigm featuring either Edmund or William in the role of brother-companion, is what Fanny actually chooses. William’s picture of Fanny’s life as his sister and companion is one that suggests potential sources of power. Fanny will “tell my mother how it all ought to be, and you will be so useful to Susan, and you will teach Betsey, and make the boys love and mind you,” meditates its call for selfless servitude with sites of agency; under Fanny’s regime the Portsmouth house may soon reflect the same neatness, order and civility found at Mansfield Park (374). The crucial distinction is that Fanny will control these elements of life at Portsmouth; dominating even her mother. Fanny’s positive response to William’s offer suggests that a certain kind of Portsmouth celibacy delights, rather than disgusts. Even without William, Fanny still makes her brother’s house “right and comfortable,” mentoring Susan, placating Betsey and managing Tom (374). Fanny’s conversation with William reveals a workable alternative to a traditional marriage: a celibate, brother/sister household.

Often the fantastic space of the gothic prison will serve as a mirror for the domestic realities of the gothic heroine and her female readers. Gothic novels

traditionally critique traditional marriages through their treatment of claustal space. Both Paul Morrison and Nina Auerbach read Jane Austen's marriage plots as participating in an oppressive, gothic, tradition. At the heart of the gothic novel lies a tension between the empowering and transgressive work of the main plot and the conclusion, often an anomalously pat marriage between noble maids and noble sirs combined with chastened or strangely reformed and reintegrated villains. The gothic's incestuous motifs suggest that celibate brother/sister relationships can replace marriages, providing companionship and liberation from the father's household. The brother/sister household also creates a unique space where a woman can still claim domestic (as well as personal, legal and economic) agency without allowing her body to participate in the economic and sexual systems of patriarchy. Portsmouth is therefore the only space where Fanny can reasonably resist: at Mansfield Park even (metaphorical) brothers turn into husbands.

Additionally, spaces traditionally associated with epistemologies of growth and development are also provocatively positioned at Mansfield Park. Fanny's schoolroom seems a likely candidate to develop her agency. Containing the books chosen for her by Edmund, probable and objective Lord Macartney, realistic Crabbe, and sly Johnson, along with the romantic transparencies of "Tintern Abbey" a gothic "cave in Italy" and a "moonlit lake in Cumberland;" a symbolic representation of the objective/subjective gothic divide, Fanny's room, much like Julia's chamber represents a positive locus for its inhabitant (172). However, it is important to recognize that while the gothic articulates a preference for the objective and probable its "economy of secrecy and concealment"

allows for feminine as well as masculine epistemologies (Morrison 6). While Fanny's east room seems, at first, to embody this gothic paradigm, the emphasis at Mansfield is slanted away from the subjective and toward the material. Fanny's feminine epistemologies are consistently undervalued. Sir Thomas, ignoring Fanny's forebodings, preaches the doctrine of practical marriage; Fanny's suspicion of Mary is thwarted by Edmund's attraction to her; and Fanny's disapproval of the play is ignored by both Mary and Edmund. While Fanny's arguments against Henry and the play seem irrational to her audience, her reactions are actually based on insightful, rational observation: Henry did flirt with Maria Bertram, Sir Thomas does indeed disapprove of home theatricals, and Mary Crawford's early conversation hints at a less-than-ideal moral outlook for a preacher's wife. Additionally, Fanny is dominated, physically, intellectually, and emotionally even within the refuge of the east room. Sir Thomas comes to the east room to examine Fanny, Mary to manipulate her, and even Edmund, with the best of intentions, misreads Fanny's wants and desires. Fanny suffers: "no reading, no China, no composure" can be found once the Crawfords arrive (175). Fanny's only solution is flight.

Portsmouth, in contrast, is defined by highly subjective and liberating epistemologies. At Portsmouth, Fanny is free to read as she wishes and fantasize as she chooses. This potential is explicitly invoked when Fanny compares her room at Portsmouth with the east room at Mansfield Park. Although the Portsmouth room is unlike Mansfield in "space, light, furniture, and prospect" (399), Portsmouth's biggest flaw, the lack of "books and boxes," is immediately remedied when Fanny joins a

subscription library and becomes a “chuser of books” (400)<sup>23</sup>. Fanny’s relocation, despite the shabbiness of the Portsmouth chamber, has the positive result of liberating her intellectually. Portsmouth, not Mansfield, allows Fanny some degree of intellectual, personal, and economic freedom. Agency shifts to Fanny when she assumes control over Susan’s education, sharing “her own first pleasures, and “inspire[ing] a taste for the biography and poetry which she delighted in herself” (400). Susan, unlike Sir Thomas, does not interfere with Fanny’s texts, or question her conclusions. Portsmouth also highlights intellectual development of Fanny as a reader; Fanny pours over letter after letter trying to uncover the real thoughts and feelings of the writers: “How Miss Crawford really felt—how she meant to act, or might act without or against her meaning [...] were subjects for endless conjecture” (417). Additionally, Portsmouth reading can “divert her thoughts” and “banish” the “daily terrors” of Edmund’s marriage to Mary, linking it to the subjective and feminine epistemologies of the gothic (400). Fanny’s intellectual liberation re-centers Portsmouth as a site of feminine epistemologies and re-inscribes Mansfield Park as the terrain of traditional, masculine ways of knowing.

More relevant for our purposes is that within her small room at Portsmouth, Fanny allows herself to write. The Portsmouth section of the narrative features the text in part or in full of six letters, four from Mary Crawford, a letter and a postscript from Edmund, and one from Lady Bertram. These letters correspond to a greater or equal number of letters which Fanny sends out at a “rapid rate” from the attic room (395).

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<sup>23</sup> While Golden sees Fanny’s reading as a key to her success, she only discusses Edmund’s mentorship of Fanny—neglecting Fanny’s mentorship of Susan (119).

While we are denied Fanny's text, with the exception of one small fragment, the letters of Fanny Price and her interlocutors provide some tantalizing evidence for Austen's views on female composition and its connection to gothic space. *Northanger Abbey* illustrated the basic dichotomy between open, claustal spaces and the productive gothic terrain through its overt parody, while *Mansfield Park* recast this dialectic in more realistic terms. Fanny Price's Portsmouth gothic, however, points specifically toward the potential for written communication, in this case, the rapid exchange of letters between Fanny and her interlocutors.

Even though Fanny Price and Mary Crawford are deeply divided in both sympathy and character, they still enjoy communicating through writing. Fanny is made "really glad" by Mary's first letter; tellingly, she is attracted to the letters "affection" and its "some degree of elegance" (395). In *Northanger Abbey*, Henry Tilney critiqued women's letters on the basis of "three particulars" "a general deficiency of subject, a total inattention to stops, and a very frequent ignorance of grammar" (27). Certainly, Mary is fond of her dash, using it ten times in the portion that Austen chooses to excerpt. However, Tilney might be surprised by Mary's witty turns of phrase, which, it is worth noting, rely upon knowledge of both literature and grammar: "what a difference a vowel makes! –If his rents were but equal to his rants" (396) and wordplay: "There may be some old woman at Thornton Lacey to be converted. I am unwilling to fancy myself neglected for a *young* one" (396). Fanny not only praises the letter's style, she suggests that its value lies in the very subject matter Henry Tilney disdains. Mary's letter "connected her with the absent, it told her of people and things" (396). Mary's second

letter also engages Tilney's critique of female correspondence. Mary asserts that her new letter is "a mere letter of business, penned for the purpose of conveying necessary information" (415). Mary implies that business, surely the most "sufficient" of "subjects," is insufficient for the purposes of female correspondence. Like Ann Radcliffe's secret passage, the letter is a communication, a way of bridging the distance between minds.

This reading is supported by Fanny's reaction to Lady Bertram's letter. At first, Fanny objects to her aunt's "very creditable, common-place, amplifying style, so that a very little matter was enough for her" (425). Fanny's objection to this style is that it lacks "warm and genuine" feeling. For Fanny the "language of real feeling and alarm" is preferable, and she praises her aunt for writing "as she might have spoken" (426). Lady Bertram's catalog of "daily terrors" reintroduces some very sentimental modes to Austen's realism, as her perceived woes give way to real trauma. It is a tragedy, Tom's near-fatal illness, and the sight of Tom's injured body causes Fanny to "live on letters" (434). Once again, Fanny values the letter as a connection, a way into a larger community of minds.

Women's letters transcend the trivial here; however, they are not always privileged. Mary wishes, in her second letter, that she could "talk" to Fanny rather than write to her. Mary's objection is that the letter makes it "impossible to put a hundredth part of my great mind on paper" (415). While Mary's statement suggests that conversation is seen as superior to written text, *Mansfield Park* offers another interpretation of the relationship between speaking and text. Much earlier in the novel,

Fanny receives a short note from Edmund. Her reaction indicates an intense privileging of the power inherent in text: “She seized the scrap of paper on which Edmund has begun writing to her, as a treasure beyond all her hopes” and views the letter as “the dearest part of the gift” (274). Fanny’s reaction to Edmund’s gift, that it was “so perfectly gratifying in the occasion and the style” hints at some rhetorical aesthetic lurking under her sentimental attachment (274). The words themselves, while prosaic ““My very dear Fanny, you must do me the favour to accept”” are “treasured” and “prized” even “the handwriting” is “a blessedness” (274). Fanny’s reaction to Edmund’s note gives us a different interpretation of Catherine’s roll of washing bills locked away in the Japan cabinet. An outsider stumbling on Edmund’s aborted message might have been equally eager to dismiss it. Certainly, Mary is correct in that speaking would allow her to more fully represent her mind, but her letters also empower Fanny in ways that her speech could not.

Mary’s second letter suggests the potential for androgynous rhetorics. Mary herself confesses that she is forced to write by Henry and that she does “not know what else is to be communicated, except this said visit to Portsmouth, and these two said walks, and his introduction to your family” (415). The second letter becomes an increasingly problematic production as Fanny is forced to wonder who is speaking, Mary or Henry. Narrative unease forces Fanny to become a stronger interpreter. Fanny’s role as an active, interpreting reader is further engaged as Mary retells events already narrated in the preceding chapters, this time from Henry’s point of view. As we already have the plot of those chapters, the only purpose in including this information within Mary’s letter

is to highlight the alternative perspective: Henry's view rather than Fanny's. Mary's communication allows for a certain amount of epistemological androgyny, as we gain some limited access to Henry's point of view; however, these letters also offer the reader additional evidence of Henry's real character—a lingering question given the problematic ending of *Mansfield Park*.

Mary's second letter empowers Fanny to do more than merely speculate. Mary stresses her inability to tell Fanny details of her own relationship with Edmund and, instead, instructs Fanny to "guess" (415). Just as Tilney asked Catherine to use her "fancy" in the curricle, Mary's letter encourages Fanny to invent her own narrative. Mary, helpful muse that she is, provides some clues, calling Edmund "the last-mentioned hero" and mentioning that "If I avoided his name entirely, it would look suspicious" (416). Mary's approach is provocative. She gives us the suggestion of a narrative and provides the name of its subject, Edmund. However, Mary leaves the details to Fanny's imagination. While Henry Tilney's suggestion that Catherine use her fancy to recreate Matilda's missing narrative was ultimately ironic and served to suppress, rather than encourage, feminine composition, Mary's entreaty is more productive.

Fanny does indeed guess at the subtext of Mary's letter. She re-reads the letter "eagerly," giving its contents "much reflection" and proceeds to offer two paragraphs worth of speculation as to its hidden narrative (417). Fanny's frantic imaginings make her wish for more correspondence, she was "yet more impatient for another letter from town" (418) and even "suspended" her "usual readings and conversation with Susan" (418). While female conversation and composition seems again to be stifled, exchanging

letters with Mary has some unforeseen consequences for Fanny as composer. It is only after this frantic speculation that Austen remarks on Fanny's own role as a narrator of history. We remember Catherine's much quoted objection to histories in *Northanger Abbey*, and Henry Tilney's easy equation between women's writing and gothic excess. However, Fanny's position as verbal historian remains a positive one. Allowed to indulge in some narrative speculation of her own, Fanny is now able to tell her sister Susan "of former times" (418). Fanny's narration is actually quite excellent: Susan prefers "her style to that of any printed author" (418).

We only have one example of Fanny's epistolary style, a brief response to Mary's suggestion that Henry bring her back to Mansfield Park. Fanny demurs:

Her uncle, she understood, meant to fetch her; and as her cousin's illness had continued so many weeks without her being thought at all necessary, she must suppose her return would be unwelcome at present, and that she should be felt an encumbrance (434).

A critic of Fanny's text must note that her command of grammar is excellent: there isn't a dash to mar the whole production. Similarly, Fanny's language is quite controlled; she is fond of the conditional and the passive. While we could argue that Fanny's normal felicity of style is hampered by the need to shut down the opportunistic Crawfords, or see Fanny's stilted and elliptical style as evidence of her passive personality, we cannot avoid the presence of this letter. All question of style to the contrary, Fanny's role as locator within the space of Portsmouth indicates its power. This exchange of letters, mostly among women, marks Portsmouth's gothic space as a space of written communication.

For the purposes of her stay in Portsmouth, Fanny becomes a writer, capable of interpreting and constructing her own reality. Fanny, Susan, William and Sam's removal from Portsmouth points to a trend undermining the text's articulated spatial and epistemological paradigm. Portsmouth may be Portsmouth, Mansfield may be home, but Portsmouth contains space for power and agency among its noisy stairs and tiny parlors. In this respect, *Mansfield Park* works in the same way as Radcliffe's gothic: heroines struggle to escape the very locations which offer them the greatest potential for agency.

Fanny's letters also suggest another progression within Austen's use of the gothic. *Northanger Abbey* featured an overt critique of the gothic novel, and landscapes which reflected their gothic predecessors. *Mansfield Park's* domestic carceral creates horror in openness and reinscribes the more "gothic" location as a site for potential intellectual and personal liberty. Mary Crawford's most problematic letter suggests a final gothic turn, into the permeable nature of human identity. In this respect, Austen replicates the power latent in gothic narratives. However, gothic novels call into question the stability of bodies as well as locations. Through engagement with ghostly, unknown, or mistaken figures, readers are left to question the reality of the bodies they encounter. Gothic's preponderance of mistaken and suppressed identities allows the relationships between characters to radically realign throughout the narrative. Jane Austen's final novel, *Sanditon*, seems to suggest a return, not only to problematic and paradoxical spaces, but also a new, and compelling, exploration of bodies.

It is important to acknowledge the difficulty in examining any fragmentary text. Begun as Austen was in the final stages of Addison's disease, *Sanditon* consists of twelve

chapters, each of which represent a very early draft. Margaret Drabble notes in her apparatus that Austen made some revisions to phrasing, but any major reconsideration of the novel's design is lacking, as is any sense of its outcome. These details of composition and revision make interpretation quite problematic; Austen was known for her extensive and comprehensive revisions. While *Love and Friendship* has a kinship to *Sense and Sensibility* with respect to form, characterization, and plot, they remain dramatically different texts. What we have of *Sanditon* may not be in any way definitive; what we point to in *Sanditon* may or may not have been Austen's actual intention. This difficulty has led to a comparative dearth of criticism surrounding the text: most encounters with *Sanditon* focus on themes which move from this text out into Austen's other novels.<sup>24</sup> In this respect my approach is no different, in that I seek to highlight the spaces of *Sanditon* with attention to how they do or do not function in terms of paradoxical space.

*Sanditon* is extremely concerned with space, space which participates in gothic modalities of paradox and displacement. The novel opens with an accident reminiscent of Marianne Dashwood's famous tumble, only this time the romantic heroine is not saved by the Byronic hero. Instead, a happily domesticated couple, the Parkers, are rescued by Mr. Heywood and his family. Austen's initial description of the scene features a somewhat romanticized realism: we see the "rough lane" "half rock" and "half sand" and "the neat-looking cottage" "romantically situated among wood on a high eminence" (155); however, these sureties are quickly dismantled. The first line of dialogue, Mr. Parker's "There is something wrong here" refers not only to his sprained ankle, but also

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<sup>24</sup> Most work on *Sanditon* was prompted by the 1997 issue of *Persuasions* devoted to the fragment.

to the “here” of the setting. Parker seeks a doctor located in this particular spot, the village of Willingden. After a confused exchange, Heywood explicates the misunderstanding “There are two Willingdens in this county” (157). Heywood goes on to detail the local geography, consisting of two “Willingdens”—Great Willingden and the village. Austen’s choice of a place known for geographical confusion is a deliberate one. We are, literally, not where we think we are.

Talk of Willingden leads to talk of Parker’s home village, the up and coming seaside town of Sanditon. Again, Parker’s reading of space seems absolute: Sandition is not-marsh, while the appropriately named Brinshore is “insalubrious” marked by “a stagnant marsh, a bleak moor, and the constant effluvia of a ride of putrefying sea weed” (160). However, this formulation is undermined by the place where Austen chooses to fracture Parker’s narration. Parker’s first description ends with “Sanditon is not a place—” (159), while his second description ends by posing the idea that Heywood may “have heard” Sandition “differently spoke of—” (160). To these problematic pauses Heywood remarks “I did not know there was such a place in the world” (160). While Heywood’s dialogue reveals his disinterest in prospective bathing spots, it also points to a fracture between the actuality and the perception of space. We only have Parker’s word to delineate the scene, and that word is consistently undermined through Austen’s use of the very dash Henry Tilney derides.

*Sanditon* mediates between place and not-placeness through language. Austen repeats this displacement with another provocative case of misunderstanding. Diana Parker and her brother exert themselves to rent two houses at *Sanditon*, the first to a rich

West Indian heiress, the second to a series of girls who wish to establish a seminary. Information about the heiress and the seminary continue to be related to Parker through his sister Diana, until it is revealed that “the family from Surrey and the family from Camberwell were one and the same” (205). Instead of two Willingdons in the place of one location, we have one family in the place of two families. Austen’s move links the landscape to the figures that populate it. In the world of *Sandition*, heiresses and towns are both subject to a peculiar form of slippage, multiplying and reducing through different turns of the narrative. Destabilizing identity also generates paradox, a move also present in gothic novels where prisoners become mothers, fathers mediate between protectors and villains and brothers can end up being lovers.

At *Sandition* nothing is stable, not even the perceptions of sensible young women. Charlotte Heywood, in all likelihood the heroine of the novel, becomes increasingly subject to the problematic perceptions that defined the Parkers. Walking on a “cold misty morning,” Charlotte encounters a carriage, which “appeared at different moments to be everything from the gig to the phaeton—from one horse to four” (210). The mystery of the carriage is resolved by the appearance of Mr. Sidney Parker, Charlotte’s most likely suitor. However, despite the “neat carriage” and the “common enquiries and remarks” exchanged by the parties, Sidney arrives in a distinctly gothic register, not unlike Jane Eyre’s encounter with Mr. Rochester on a misty and cold evening thirty years in the future (210).

Charlotte’s struggle to make out the carriage is reflected by another scene of epistemological threat. This time, Austen begins in the world of the known, Sanditon

House whose “broad, handsome, planted approach” seems as open, and as potentially confining, as Mansfield Park (210). Sanditon House, however, is a marginal space whose “entrance gates” are “so near one of its boundaries” that they seem “almost pressing on the road” (210). The trajectory is toward increasing separation, “a better distance” (210). Charlotte’s path is labyrinthine “an angle here, and a curve there,” and almost fully enclosed, “almost must be stipulated—for there were vacant spaces” (210). As the mist rises, Charlotte glimpses “in spite of the mist” “something white and womanish” between the spaces of a fence (210). The register is strongly gothic: the ghostly female form associated with whiteness and mist, the enclosed spaces that part, suddenly, for the unexpected, shocking view.

What Charlotte witnesses, in the last extant scene of the novel, quite literally the last thing Austen ever wrote, is a problematic interview between “Miss Brereton seated, [...] at the foot of the bank which sloped down from the outside of the paling and which a narrow path seemed to skirt along;—Miss Brereton seated, apparently very composedly—and Sir Edward Denham by her side” (211). Charlotte’s glimpse of Miss Brereton calls much of *Sanditon* into question. First, Austen’s language at this moment is provocative in that she contrasts Charlotte’s “decided” interpretation of the scene, that Clara and Sir Edward are “secret lovers,” with the hazy subjective terrain that surrounds them. Austen has traditionally been concerned with perceptions and social misunderstandings. From Emma’s mistaken faith in Elton, to Lizzy Bennett’s early infatuation with Wickham, Austen often has her heroines revise their most “decided”

perceptions. If we are unable to locate towns, figures and carriages within the space of *Sanditon*, Charlotte's easy assessment of this scene is certainly subject to doubt.

Austen's word choice also relates directly to writing and reading. Upon arriving at Sanditon, Charlotte Heywood encounters the romantic Clara Brereton who she describes in language reminiscent of Catherine Morland. Charlotte sees Clara as "the most perfect representation of whatever heroine might be most beautiful and bewitching, in all the numerous volumes" (179). Austen makes the point again that Charlotte "could not separate the idea of a complete heroine from Clara Brereton" (179). While Charlotte seems to be aligned with Catherine Morland, Austen is careful to explicitly distinguish this text from *Northanger Abbey*. Charlotte's "feelings were not the result of any spirit of romance" (180). Although Charlotte was "sufficiently well-read in novels to supply her imagination with amusement," she was not "unreasonably influenced by them" (180).

While Austen seems to be privileging realism and sound common sense over sentimental excess, she has already hinted that the most outlandish narratives have a habit of coming true at Sanditon. Consider Lady Denham's wish for a "young heiress to be sent here for her health- [...] and, as soon as she got well, have her fall in love with Sir Edward" (188). Despite the coincidence, Austen delivers the "very young lady, sickly and rich, whom she had been asking for" (207). Miss Lambe,<sup>25</sup> "seventeen, half mulatto, chilly and tender," remains a tantalizing character (206). Potentially Austen's first tragic mulatto, Miss Lambe could quite likely fall in love with the attractive, dangerous, and quite silly

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<sup>25</sup> See Elaine Jordan's "Jane Austen Goes to the Seaside: Sanditon, English Identity and the 'West Indian' Schoolgirl" and Sara Saliah "The Silence of Miss Lambe: Sanditon and Fictions of 'Race' in the Abolition Era" for studies of Miss Lambe: "seventeen, half mulatto, chilly and tender" (206).

Edward. Lady Denham's outrageous narrative contains the possibility of truth, a reading that aligns it with Catherine Morland's gothicized treatment of General Tilney's more subtle abuses of his former wife.

Edward is also quick to dismiss the gothic novel, which is most certainly included in the "mere trash of the common circulating library" (190). Instead, Edward reads "more sentimental novels than agreed with him," and praises the "strong spark of woman's captivations" (190). We are reminded that captivating women can also be held captive, and Edward is quite seriously considering the financial implications of abducting Clara and taking her to Timbuctoo and "some solitary house" (192). Edward's alignment with other rapacious heroes has sobering implications for his character (190-91). While we can only speculate, Edward seems a likely choice for the villain of the piece, and Charlotte's glimpse of this encounter between her "heroine" Clara and the man who has sworn to seduce her takes on a strongly negative gloss (192). The implication here is that Charlotte is misreading Clara and Edward as "lovers" and something more sinister is afoot.

The paradoxical nature of *Sanditon*'s terrain, its identification with mysterious, boggy locations and its straightforward rejection of the sentimental, could indicate a return to some of the ideas present in *Northanger Abbey*. Like *Northanger Abbey*, *Sanditon* resists classification. It both is, and is not—a seemingly banal seaside resort, open to sea air and health, and a misty, potentially gothic locus of boggy and dangerous marsh. Austen's potential love triangle, between problematic Edward, Miss Lambe, and Clara suggests an additional site of gothic slippage: the body itself. In the case of both

Miss Lambe and Clara, epistemological uncertainty about these women's true natures promotes speculation on the part of both Charlotte and Lady Denham. In other words, Lady Denham and Charlotte both become narrators. The unknown body, the mistaken identity promotes discourse among women in the same way gothic space promoted speculation for Catherine and written communication for Fanny. Gothic spaces have the power to inspire discourse among women. Jane Austen, even at her most fervently anti-gothic, still participates in the tradition of using and deploying gothic space to generate feminine rhetorical agency. While Austen's gothic spaces are quickly abandoned, they serve the same function as Julia's chamber: they are communications, places for Austen's heroines to assume both personal and rhetorical agency.

However, this rhetorical agency evolves from *Northanger Abbey* to *Mansfield Park* and finally within *Sanditon*. *Northanger Abbey* featured the most overt call to narration: Catherine is taunted to recreate a gothic story following a discussion of Radcliffe's texts. *Mansfield Park* calls upon paradoxical setting to promote authorial agency. Fanny's silence is fractured by both the histories she verbally relates to Susan and the fragmentary letter she writes to Mary Crawford. In *Sanditon*, Charlotte already seems poised to interpret and speculate about those around her. While there are many reasons to wish for a completed *Sanditon*, this argument suggests that Charlotte had the potential to be the first Austen heroine to write something other than letters. In the case of Clara, this impulse to narrate was directly provoked by a gothic body, woman as specter. Clara's amorphous body is held against that of Miss Lambe, whose problematic racial identity also opens the path for speculation and narration. These shifting body

identities reflect Virginia Woolf's androgynous rhetoric which directly invokes hybrid, mysterious, and ultimately, powerful bodies.

If, as Austen's heroines suggest, the only response to patriarchy is silence, the body itself must be undone to enable women to create. Paradoxical space may open the way to feminine communication, but writing requires bringing the paradox closer to home: to the field of the body itself.

## CHAPTER V

### MAGIC LANTERNS: WRITING THE GOTHIC BODY

The nineteenth century continued to provide a welcome home for the traditional thrills of the gothic novel, along with an increasing permeation of the gothic into what we consider “canonical” Victorian texts. The presence of gothic modalities within writers such as Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Charlotte and Emily Brontë has received plenty of scholarly attention. However, there is a subtle, but significant evolution of the gothic locus from nineteenth to twentieth-century women’s writing. In both Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen, gothic space allowed for female communication and composition. However, neither author achieved Woolf’s suggested androgynous mode; feminine communication never evolves into productive discourse between women and men. A reading of Charlotte Brontë’s realistic novel *Shirley* will attempt to uncover a gothic space which can serve as a site for both feminine and masculine composition. The goal of this program is not to diminish the role of androgynous space for female composers; rather, a survey of gothic space in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century will serve, as Woolf suggests, to redefine the impact of gender upon composition. This work will culminate in a return to and expansion of Woolf’s androgynous rhetoric. If both men and women are inspired within androgynous space, then certain ideas traditionally associated with “women’s” writing can be seen as an universalized

alternative to a phallogocentric tradition, rather than as a special parlance that reinforces, not diminishes, gender divisions.

Like Jane Austen's realistic social satires, Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* has often been read as her imperfectly realized attempt to join a group of Victorian texts concerned with the social justice and labor movements of the early nineteenth century. While these readings of *Shirley* are quite productive, reclaiming Brontë's longest novel from accusations of historical inaccuracy or thematic failure, they have unfortunately resulted in a certain amount of critical neglect when studies turn to Brontë's use of gothic conventions of plot, character or setting. Most interest in Brontë's deployment of gothic modalities focuses on *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. Certainly, there is not even the suggestion of a specter in *Shirley* to detract from Brontë's focus on the inhabitants of a Yorkshire town confronted with the beginnings of industrialization and the 1811-1812 depression. In fact, what Brontë has produced in *Shirley* is closer to the social fictions of her friend Elizabeth Gaskell, or the domestic satire of Jane Austen. Gilbert and Gubar allude to this connection between *Shirley* and the fictions of Jane Austen when they claim that the novel's ending, "like Jane Austen [...] never allows us to forget that marriage is a suspect institution based on female subordination" (395). Gisela Argyle also notes this possibility when she describes *Shirley's* plot as partially "comedic, dealing with Jane Austen's prescribed '3 or 4 families in a Country village'" (744).<sup>26</sup> We have already witnessed how Austen used gothic topoi in order to promote an alternative to the domestic prisons

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<sup>26</sup> Argyle's reading is useful to us in defines three different narrative modes, the "comedy of manners" "the historical romance" and "the psychological romance;" to her list I would add the "gothic" both as an actual generic pattern and as a mechanism of generating literary composition (745).

of nineteenth century femininity. Given the androgynous and paradoxical natures of these topoi, Austen's women may assert the horror of these spaces while delighting in their ability to foster literary agency. *Shirley's* attempt to confine itself to social commentary in a realistic mode makes it an ideal place in which to both uncover paradoxical space and interrogate that space's potential to generate rhetorical agency in the women who inhabit it.

Charlotte Brontë did not abandon the gothic when she turned her attention to historical fiction. In fact, *Shirley* is the only one of Brontë's novels to specifically invoke a gothic text, within a critical conversation about reading between her female characters. One of *Shirley's* main characters, angel-in-the-house Caroline Helstone, is pining away for Robert Moore, owner of the local mill. In the midst of her downward spiral, Caroline is invited to visit the Yorke family; specifically, Yorke's precocious daughter Rose, for dinner and conversation. Gilbert and Gubar call attention to this scene, noting that Caroline's "own anger is taken up and expressed in another's voice, Caroline is verbally attacked by Rose Yorke" (389). Rose takes Caroline to task for her self-destructive illness, remarking that "my life shall be a life: not a black trance like the toad's, buried in marble; nor a long, slow death like yours in Briarfield Rectory" (384). Rose's criticism is astute; feminine entombment is achieved through inequality and boredom: "nothing ever changes in Briarfield rectory" and "monotony and death" are "almost the same" (385). There is a strong sympathy between Rose's reading of Caroline, Caroline and Shirley's own statements on the condition of women, and Brontë's other discussions of women's rights, most notably Jane Eyre's famous protest on the battlements. However, what

Gilbert and Gubar do not note is that this outburst is enabled by Rose and Caroline's reading of a gothic novel.

Just as in *Northanger Abbey*, Brontë features an overt discussion between Caroline Helstone and Rose Yorke surrounding “a romance of Mrs. Radcliffe's” (384). Brontë's categorization of the gothic novel as a “romance” simply alludes to Radcliffe's title page for the novel which uses this standard term. However, it is significant that Brontë refrained from categorizing Radcliffe's text as gothic; her use of Radcliffe's own generical marker points to a sympathy between Brontë and Radcliffe ostensibly lacking in Austen. The novel in question, Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*, is the choice of the “unique” child Rose Yorke but is also perused by the angelic heroine, Caroline, who “read on with her” (384).<sup>27</sup> It is Caroline's action, reading the novel, which opens all the discourse to follow between her and Rose. Specifically, Rose asks Caroline quite assertively if she “likes” the gothic novel, to which Caroline responds “long since, when I read it as a child, I was wonderfully taken with it” (384). Caroline is attracted to the “open”-ness of the gothic, “such foreboding of a most strange tale to be unfolded” (384). The strangeness of the tale forms its chief attraction; we are reminded of Jane Eyre's interest in the more exotic of Bewick's *Birds*. In the gothic we see a corollary to Rose's contention that monotony and death are synonymous—the gothic has the potential to break that monotony through strangeness. This strangeness is both spatial and paradoxical in nature, as Rose points out reading Radcliffe makes “you feel as if you

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<sup>27</sup> It seems likely that Rose and Jessie Yorke, frozen in perpetual girlhood, might be an invocation of Maria and Elizabeth Brontë, while both Henry and Martin show echoes of Branwell.

were far away from England” although, of course, the reader remains within their own home (384). Caroline seems surprised that Rose has recognized this feature of Radcliffe; the fact that she and Rose share an aesthetic appreciation of the gothic further reinforces the unity of Brontë’s criticism: Gothic works because it takes the reader away, as Rose imagines herself to be “really in Italy—under another sort of sky” (385). Brontë’s emphasis on the “reality” of Gothic setting echoes Walpole’s famous defense of the gothic, that the Castle of Otranto was, in fact, modeled on a real location. It is also noteworthy that Brontë focuses on gothic landscape and not the “hair raising” or “supernatural” features of plot. The spaces which attract Caroline and Rose are exotic ones; however, these spaces lack the specifically paradoxical characteristics of gothic space. These landscapes are foreign, not haunted.

Although Brontë asserts her attraction to gothic space in the conversation between Caroline Helstone and Rose Yorke, the conversation itself takes place in the comforting domestic parlor of the Yorke home: Briarmains. Brontë’s first description of Briarmains, a straightforward, slightly satirical portrayal of the Yorke family, is situated firmly in the historical present of the novel: 1811. We hear the narrator’s opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Yorke and their daughters, Jessie and Rose Yorke who “will rebel some day”; however, the narrator interrupts the temporal unity of the chapter to offer Mr. Yorke and her readers a “magic mirror,” so that we may see “twenty years from this night” (167). Brontë’s term is compelling, invoking the language of fairy tale and sorcerer. The Oxford English Dictionary also notes the use of the term in Scott, where magic mirror is grouped along with “chrysal,” “pentacle,” and “geomantic figure” as the mechanisms of actual

sorcery. An additional valence could be that of the Victorian magic lantern, which, by projecting light through a slide, casts figures upon the wall. Either use of the term points to themes both supernatural and liminal, the terrain of the gothic. In keeping with this theme, the narrator's magic lantern takes us to series of exotic locations, displaced in time as well as space from the main activity of the narrative. Leaving the parlor of Briamains we see "the cypress, the willow, the yew [...] green sod and a grey marble headstone—Jessy sleeps below" (168). From this "foreign country" we then see Rose in a "still stranger" landscape, some "virgin solitude" filled with "unknown birds" of the "southern hemisphere" (168). Disrupting the narrative in order to introduce elements known only to the narrator in a future time serves to create a paradoxical space inside what seems, ostensibly, to be a static location.

Brontë uses this same technique immediately following Rose and Caroline's conversation about Radcliffe's gothic novel, framing the interlude between Rose, Caroline, Jessie and Mrs. Yorke in gothic spaces. Once again we pass from a fixed time and space, "this" "autumn evening" "wet and wild," to "another evening some years ago" (392). While Brontë's language seems historical, she is again playing a complicated game with time. "Some years ago" is the perspective of Brontë's readers; for Jessie and Rose, this mediation lies in a future distant from their current year of 1811. Brontë describes the "heavy falling rain [...] soaking into the wet earth which covered their lost darling" Jessie, who lay "cold, confined, solitary—only the sod screening her from the storm" (392). Brontë has once again fractured the Yorkes' parlor to take us to a foreign burial some twenty years in the future. In both cases, Brontë's displaced description

generates a paradoxical space surrounding the domestic parlor of Briarhains. Notably, these gothic slippages allow for a strong and productive feminine discourse.

After invoking the gothic expansiveness of Radcliffe, Rose offers Caroline a legitimate critique of her passivity. Rose criticizes Caroline for locking herself up in the parsonage and encourages her to do something with her life. Caroline seems to take Rose's lecture to heart, as she goes on to show unusual fire in "defending myself without apology" to both Rose and Mrs. Yorke (389). She objects to both Mrs. Yorke and her contemporary critics in one nicely structured harangue: if she "happens to be pale, and sometimes to look diffident, is no business of yours." (389). Caroline's outburst earns Mrs. Yorke's approval, who claims that Caroline has "spirit in her, after all" (390). In a dramatic departure from her earlier quiet misery, Caroline closes the scene engaged in a spirited discussion with Jessie Yorke, "first about religion and then about politics" which Caroline's critics had previously deemed her incapable of producing.<sup>28</sup> Brontë calls attention to the active and dynamic nature of this conversation: Jessie's language is "inexpressibly comic" and "racy," while her face gives "piquancy to every phrase" (391). Reading and discussing Radcliffe's gothic allows all its female locutors the space to speak, intelligently, forcefully, and dynamically, escaping, through language, the confines of their life. This positive work is facilitated through Brontë's narrative technique of displacing the norms of place and time in the novel, using authorial interruption to create paradoxical space.

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<sup>28</sup> An early, but by no means limited example of this sort of reading of Caroline Helstone as passive woman is Gilbert and Gubar's "Caroline wishes early in the novel that she could penetrate the business secrets of men, when Shirely reads the newspapers and letters of the civic leaders" (383).

Brontë continues to locate rhetorical agency within gothic spaces. Earlier in the novel we are introduced to Shirley's home, Fieldhead. Brontë notes that this location is "picturesque" with "irregular architecture" (202). Caroline, passing the house on a "still night" describes the setting in gothic terms: "the oaks behind were black; the cedar was blacker; under its dense, raven boughs a glimpse of sky opened gravely blue" (202). Caroline and Shirley commence their friendship in Fieldhead parlor, whose gothic nature is again expressed: a "gothic old barrack" "long, vast and dark," "neither a grand nor a comfortable house: within as well as without it was antique, rambling, and incommodious" (208). Brontë inserts realism into this description by calling attention to the maids who would have to perform a spring cleaning on this space (208) and domesticates it nicely by having Shirley paint the walls of her gothic parlor "a delicate pinky-white" (208). Poised between the antique and the domestic, Fieldhead, a traditionally gothic house, also provides some traditionally gothic opportunities for Caroline to escape both her misery and her silence.

Caroline's first glimpse of the house provokes a significant reaction. Looking at the sky above Fieldhead, Caroline notices "it was full of the moon, which looked solemnly and mildly down" (202). This vision provokes an emotional response in Brontë's repressed and depressed heroine; Caroline felt "this night and prospect mournfully lovely" (202). Caroline's "mournful loveliness" reminds us of Catherine Moreland on the paths of Northanger Abbey. Like Eleanor's favorite walk, the mournful loveliness of Fieldstone leads Caroline to a revelation. She glimpses Robert and his friend Yorke walking out, and contrasts her stolen glimpse of male friendship with

female community (202). Caroline's spying allows her to recognize her emotional dependency on Moore and prompts her to seek an alternative by begging her uncle for a "situation in a family" (203). Caroline's desire to enter the workforce reflects the conversation Caroline and Rose had about female productivity. While a discussion of *The Italian* prompted Rose and Caroline to contemplate physical flight from England, Fieldhead allows Caroline to explore a psychological escape into honest labor. Caroline's psychological growth is not necessarily undermined by the mechanics of plot. While Uncle Helstone forbids Caroline from working outside the home, his cultivation of Shirley and Mrs. Prior as companions provides Caroline with a different mechanism of escape.

Caroline is saved by entering Fieldhead, whose gothic character empowers Caroline in much the same way Thornfield Hall does Jane Eyre. The difference is, however, a significant one. Jane Eyre's liberation is achieved through discourse with Rochester; Caroline replaces Jane's position as governess with that of companion and friend to Shirley, the mistress of the house. Fieldhead is Shirley's home, where she reigns as "master" and "captain" (208). While many critics see Shirley and Caroline as either doubles or opposites, their readings neglect the profound connection between the girls. Gilbert and Gubar make the claim that Shirley acts out Caroline's repressed desires in the same way that Bertha Mason echoes Jane Eyre's hidden rage. This reading, however, allows Gilbert and Gubar to criticize the relationship between the women, arguing that unlike Bertha, "Shirley does not provide the release she first seems to promise Caroline" (383). Gilbert and Gubar claim that Brontë "capitulates to

convention” and marries both girls off to satisfy traditional romantic expectations (394). I would follow the method suggested by Nina Auerbach’s *Communities of Women* in questioning readings which insist on essentializing the relationship between two different characters. Caroline and Shirley share a mutual and complicated friendship, functioning as something more than simply mirrors or rivals. Shirley does not merely emphasize Caroline’s passivity; she also calls attention to Caroline’s hidden strength. Shirley says of Caroline “quiet as you look, there is both a force and a depth somewhere within” (265). Likewise, rather than being tortured by Shirley, Caroline can assert “I am supported and soothed when you—that is, *you only*—are near, Shirley” (265). Shirley’s natural desire to treat Robert as her brother and use him to shield her from obnoxious suitors is complicated by Caroline’s infatuation. Shirley quite rightly calls Robert “a perpetually recurring eclipse of our friendship” (264). However, Shirley is not interested in provoking Caroline’s jealousy. Rather, both Caroline and Shirley suffer when they do not communicate with each other. While Caroline does not reveal her love of Robert Moore, which Shirley is desperate to pry out of her, Shirley only confesses her love of Louis when, in the course of a midnight conversation, Caroline and Shirley “talked the whole night through” and Caroline “inferred something from parts of her discourse” (559).<sup>29</sup>

Communication is the problem between Caroline and Shirley, and moments of productive communication between the heroines cohere, quite expectedly, in gothic

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<sup>29</sup> This reading cannot assert that all is rosy within the girls’ friendship. Shirley is still selfish enough to seek Robert out at the picnic and Caroline cannot ask her friend straightforwardly who she loves and why.

locations. Within Fieldhead, the women once again take to the the oak parlor on a traditionally gothic dark and stormy night “a western wild roared high round the hall, driving wild clouds and stormy rain up from the far-remote ocean [...] the gale [...] plained like restless spirits [...] like some omen, some anticipatory dirge” (231).

Caroline, moved by the scene, recites Cowper’s “The Castaway” which prompts her to remark that poetry “allay[s] emotions when their strength threatens harm” (233). Shirley attempts to distract Caroline by attributing her meditations to Moore, but Caroline demands ““Why should anybody have told me? Have I not an instinct? Can I not divine by analogy?”” (234) Shirley and Caroline digress on the romance of various poets, and later on Robert Moore, but Caroline turns the conversation by remarking on a familiar trope. Claiming that “men and women are so different,” Caroline remembers her

strange certainty of conviction [...] that if a magician or a genius had, at that moment, offered me a Prince Ali’s tube (you remember it in the Arabian Nights?), and if, with its aid, I had been enabled to take a view of Robert—to see where he was, how occupied—I should have learned [...] the width of the chasm which gaped between such as he and such as I (235).

Shirley’s apparent non sequitur—“‘Caroline,’ demanded Miss Keeldar, abruptly, ‘don’t you wish you had a profession—a trade?’”— fits neatly into Brontë’s earlier use of paradoxical space. Prince Ali’s tube, another form of magic lantern, also serves to fracture both space and time (235). Once again it is the paradox, the stretching of space, which allows Shirley to abandon her role as matchmaker and engage Caroline in intellectual terms. Rather than baiting Caroline, Shirley continues to meditate on “labour and learned professions” in a manner reminiscent of a Socratic dialogue (235). At issue

here is both the content of the discourse, the women intelligently and fluidly discuss a significant social issue, and Caroline's role as leader and theorist during the discussion. Shirley does bring the conversation back to Moore, but only to conclude that Caroline's character, while "Weak, certainly" is not weak "in the sense you think" (236). Shirley and Caroline replicate the pattern of productive discourse found in the conversation between Rose, Jesse and Caroline; however, in each case the rhetorical agency is limited to verbal communication. Nothing is ever written down.

While Ann Radcliffe links paradoxical space to the values latent in her own program as a gothic novelist, and Safie's gothic narrative provides the only positive force on the creature's emotional development, both uses of paradoxical space avoid having their feminine locutors become authors. Jane Austen participates in deploying paradoxical spaces among her domestic environments, but Fanny's scrap of a letter is hardly Catherine's lost novel. Brontë seems well within this tradition, as neither Shirley nor Caroline consider themselves to be writers. However, of all the characters who do write in the novel, the frustrated Louis Moore, the decadent Philip Nuneley, even the young Henry who takes authorship as a potential career, Shirley seems most likely to be a poet. Brontë informs us that if only Shirley "were not an indolent, a reckless, an ignorant being, she would take a pen at such moments; or at least while the recollection of such moments was yet fresh on her spirit; she would seize, she would fix the apparition, tell the vision revealed" (374). If Shirley was intended to be thinly disguised portrait of Emily, as the incidents with the dog bite and the poker suggest, there is even more reason to make her a writer. Brontë, however, resists. Although Shirley needs to "take a good-

sized sheet of paper and write plainly out, in her own queer but clear and legible hand, the story that has been narrated, the song that has been sung to her” she does not write (374). Part of the problem, Brontë claims, is ignorance. Shirley “does not know her thoughts were rare” (374). The other check is societal. Consider two pivotal moments in *Shirley*. In the first, Caroline Helstone longs to rush into the riot at the mill in manner taken up by her parallel, Margaret Hale.<sup>30</sup> Caroline’s courageous advance is checked by Shirley who warns her that she will regret such rash exposure later on (339). Shirley’s motivation here seems odd, as Caroline’s headlong rush might have acted on Robert Moore in much the same way Margaret Hale’s heroics inspired desire in John Thornton. Likewise, in the next chapter when Shirley remarks “if I spoke all I think on this point; if I gave my real opinion of some first-rate female characters in first-rate works, where should I be? Dead under a cairn of avenging stones in half an hour,” Caroline quashes rather than encourages her friend: “To be sure: you could not write cleverly enough; you don’t know enough; you are not learned, Shirley” (343). To which Shirley responds “There’s one comfort, however, you are not much better” (343). Shirley’s restraint of Caroline draws attention to notions of proper female behavior and intensifies Caroline’s silence. Likewise, Caroline’s denunciation of Shirley’s literary ambitions stifles Shirley’s suppressed prose. In both cases, the situation at the mill and the conversation at Fieldhead, the spaces are realistic: the real riot at the mill, the daylight of the dressing-room.

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<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell revealed that she named Margaret Hale’s southern home, Helstone parish, after Caroline Helstone in *Shirley*.

In the world of *Shirley*, external spaces carry more rhetorical force. Consider Shirley's moment of aborted composition. She moves from her book, which as "set her brain astir" to "the still parlour, the clean hearth and the window opening on the twilight sky" (374). It is only when Shirley's gaze is directed outside that the "still, deep, inborn delight" makes "life a poem" for Shirley (374). While we do not see a written narrative of Shirley's until the end of the novel, we are presented with a number of spontaneous compositions. Each one occurs in a gothic location outside of the home.

Caroline and Shirley are first eager to express themselves visually, much as Jane Eyre began by painting at Lowood Institution. The chosen location for their artistic endeavors is the Nunwood, home of a ruined convent. The women make their plan for an excursion on the Nunnley Common, overlooking the ruin and the wood which contains it. Brontë's description supplies gothic valence to the domesticated common. Shirley remarks that the space reminds her "of moors" (219). Obviously, the moor is an important location to Charlotte Brontë, one which participates in some of her most poetic descriptions. Both girls wax lyrical about the moor, a space with powerful gothic resonance: Shirley, who has seen the moor remarks on "a sultry but sunless day in summer: they journeyed from noon till sunset over what seemed a boundless waste of deep heath, and nothing had they seen but wild sheep; nothing heard but the cries of wild birds" (219). Shirley's recollection prompts Caroline's imagination: "'I know how the heath would look on such a day' said Caroline; 'purple-black: a deeper shade of the sky-tint'" (219). This conversation prompts the girls to look down at the Nunwood, "deep valley robed in May raiment; on varied meads, some pearly with daisies, and some

golden with king-cups: to-day all this young verdure smiled clear in sunlight; transparent emerald and amber gleams played over it” (220). Like the Briarmains parlor, the Nunwood is paradoxical in nature, outside of normal time; as Caroline reminds us, ““to penetrate into Nunwood, Miss Keeldar, is to go far back into the dim days of eld”” (220). The appeal of Nunwood lies in its ability to fracture the present moment; the girls agree to “see the old trees, the old ruins; to pass a day in old times, surrounded by olden silence, and above all by quietude” (221). Brontë’s repetition of the word “old” suggests the Nunwood as lying beyond, or outside of normal time. The description Brontë offers reflects the paradoxical nature of the wood, which is “the sole remnant of antique British forest in a region whose lowlands were once all sylvan chase, as its highlands were breast-deep heather” (220). Brontë juxtaposes past and present, low and high, cultivation and wilderness. Her description turns both celestial and universal: “the horizon was shaded and tinted like mother-of-pearl; silvery blues, soft purples, evanescent greens and rose-shades, all melting to fleeces of white cloud, pure as azury snow, allured the eye as with a remote glimpse of heaven’s foundations” (220). Nunwood inspires both the girls, who wish to “go—you and I alone, Caroline—to that wood, early some fine summer morning, and spend a long day there” (221). The plan is artistic in nature, since both women will bring “pencils and sketch-books” and will linger in the “all the pleasantest spots” (221). Nunwood presents itself as a haven, one of artistic production, but also a place of sisterhood, reflected by the presence of a former convent. Both Shirley and Caroline agree that any “third person would... spoil our pleasure” and “as to gentleman [...] the presence of gentlemen dispels the last charm” (221). Brontë refrains from

describing the effect of male companionship on feminine artistic production, only remarking that “there is still a change—I can hardly tell what change, one easy to feel, difficult to describe” (221). However, the influence of paradoxical space on feminine communication remains decidedly positive. After Shirley and Caroline make their plan to visit the ruin, Shirley asserts “I have never in my whole life been able to talk to a young lady as I have talked to you this morning” (226). Unlike the pink parlor, where Robert Moore and his brother Louis constantly distract Shirley and Caroline, the Nunnley common provokes productive discourse.

Poetic description and sketching give way to narrative, within a chapter that Brontë subtitles with “the Genteel Reader is Recommended to Skip” (314). Brontë suggests that the “low persons being here introduced” would shock her readership; however, the chapter actually consists of a radical re-reading of Milton, a strikingly contemporary feminist Christian myth of Eve, and a Socratic debate between Shirley, Caroline and a few “low persons” who come wandering through the churchyard on the role of women. Specifically, Shirley and Caroline turn to mythology as they stand outside the “grey church and greyer tombs” which “look divine with this crimson gleam” (314). Shirley persuades Caroline to stay outside, as “round the descending sun the clouds glowed purple: summer tints, rather Indian than English, suffused the horizon” (314). Once again, Brontë’s exterior description melds the English countryside with more exotic locals, the nature which kneels “before those red hills [...] mariners at sea, travelers in deserts, for lambs on moors, and unfledged birds in the woods” (314). As in Nunnley Common, Shirley tells Caroline “we are alone: we may speak what we think”

(314). What Shirley thinks is nothing less than a full-scale revision of patriarchy, a coherently articulated myth invoking a “woman-Titan,” an “Eve” who “is Jehovah’s daughter, as Adam was his son” (316). While Shirley continues to meditate on her Eve, Caroline is drawn to memories of her own lost mother (317). This meditation is interrupted by the “low persons” alluded to in the chapter’s title, William, a servant, his daughters and infant son, and William’s friend Joe Scott. Neither Shirley nor Caroline are the least bit intimidated by William and Joe and enter into a vibrant political and religious debate with real zeal. Joe’s folksy misogyny is quickly undermined by Shirley and Caroline who insist they “read just what the gentleman do” and engage him on political issues (321). Refusing to be baited, Joe claims he “will not argue, where I cannot be comprehended” and roots his dismissal of the woman in “the second chapter of St. Paul’s first Epistle to Timothy” (322). Shirley dismisses Joe’s reading as “blind, besotted superstition” but Caroline retorts that Paul “wrote that chapter for a particular congregation of Christians, under peculiar circumstances; and besides, I dare say, if I could read the original Greek, I should find that many of the words have been wrongly translated, perhaps misapprehended altogether” (323). Brontë clearly reveals her own program as both feminist and preacher’s daughter; but Caroline’s rebuttal, with its insistence on textual instability and the problematic nature of textual translations, is also delightfully contemporary. Although misogynistic Joe is not placated, Brontë’s readers have been treated to a rebellious and powerful feminist critique of patriarchy, one repeated later in the text when Louis Moore repeats Shirley’s myth of Eve. In both cases, Shirley and Caroline connect with their foremothers and express a series of

powerfully articulated critiques of patriarchy. These powerful moments all occur within paradoxical spaces.

Similarly, when Caroline and Shirley plan a trip to the coast, their meditation on the wildness of the ocean “waves—ocean-waves, and to see them as I have imagined them in dreams, like tossing banks of green light, strewed with vanishing and then re-appearing wreaths of foam, whiter than lilies” gives rise to Shirley’s own narrative of the mermaid “temptress-terror! Monstrous likeness of ourselves!” (248-49) It is tempting to imagine the novel we would have read had Shirley and Caroline “instead of musing about remnants of shrouds, and fragments of coffins, and human bones and mould” had actually gone among “seals lying in the sunshine on solitary shores, where neither fisherman nor hunter ever come: of rock-crevices full of pearly eggs bedded in seaweed; of unscared birds covering white sands in happy flocks” (248). It is provocative that Caroline terms this imaginative work “fancy,” which she implies here will lead her to a realistic and lovely series of naturalistic descriptions (248). Caroline’s imagination is contrasted with Shirley’s more gothic impulses. While both Caroline and Shirley admire Cowper’s “The Castaway,” Shirley seems more likely to write that rhyme or another, even more gothic one, in the vein of Coleridge or Keats. Through the description of Caroline and Shirley’s aborted vacation to the sea-coast, Brontë suggests an alternative to gothic expansion, a more naturalistic model of women’s writing. Given Shirley’s sensitivity to nature and Caroline’s sympathetic presence, perhaps this location could have unlocked some of Shirley’s hidden poetry.

Shirley and Caroline never make it to the coast. Instead of Shirley's new poem, we have Louis Moore's recitation of Shirley's childhood composition. Kate Lawson sees the myth of Eva as "neither consoling nor liberating"; instead, she characterizes the story as a "myth which explains the terrible limitations placed on women's roles" (412). Lawson makes the parallel between Eva and "virginal space, the clear page which is always available" (421) and reads the narrative as either a "rape fantasy" (421) or, more positively as a narrative of how femininity "develops in culture through social relations" (422) and that it is "neither optimistic nor consoling (424). Lawson invokes Cixous's theory of bisexuality, actually little more than a restaging of Woolf's theory of the androgynous mind, as other—an example of "defaced and de-centered" femininity whose purpose is merely to expose the dire workings of patriarchy (422). While I am unwilling to suggest that the workings of western patriarchy are anything other than dire, Lawson's reading still suffers on several fronts, not merely that it rests, as she admits, on "slim evidence" (422). Rather, Lawson immediately correlates Eva's bridegroom with a man. Certainly Brontë's language is more open to other interpretations. Her lover is a "something" with which she communicates in "no language, no word, only a tone" (458). Brontë's mysterious force, though he calls himself the "son of God" is distinctly disembodied "no image: and yet a sense" (458). While compared to "seas," "stars," "the energy of colliding elements," "hills," and the "Sun," Eva's bridegroom is never given body or form. Brontë's point is not materiality, but allegory. Shirley's story is of the "bridal hour of Genius and Humanity," concepts rather than individuals. We are reminded here of Anne Williams's reading of Cupid and Psyche, a gothic story often read

as spiritual allegory where Psyche represents the mind or soul and Eros the passionate body. Brontë, however, reverses the allegory, granting corporeality and name to the woman, Eva, and leaving the role of spirit, mind and numen for the unnamed male force. Brontë terms that force genius, an idea which, for the romantics, speaks directly to concepts of artistic agency and inspired composition. Where Eva meets her spirit, then, is the place where composing happens. Shirley narrates Eva's apotheosis, when the goddess, restored to her unearthly lover, was carried through death, "triumphant into his own home—Heaven" (460). Eva's passage through death and into redemption, while quite Judeo-Christian in tone, also resembles Psyche's journey through the underworld. Anne Williams would read this moment as further evidence of a female plot, but neither Apuleius's original version of the myth, nor Brontë's revision, actually tells that story. Instead, Shirley concludes her composition by asking: "Who shall, of all these things, write the chronicle?" (460). The obvious answer is Shirley herself; however, Brontë has already established that Shirley will not write down the poetry within her.

While we can only speculate on why Brontë resists making Shirley an author, her mediation on Shirley's lost poem suggests some possible interpretations. Brontë notes that Shirley would have benefited from writing by her ability to "possess what she was enabled to create" (374). The language here is strangely capitalistic and patriarchal. If the goal of writing is to possess, then in Shirley's thwarted ability to compose we sense some of the same unsettling threads that resound throughout the novel as a whole. *Shirley* is not a comforting novel. Both Lucy Snowe and Jane Eyre ultimately fare better than either Shirley Keeldar or Caroline Helstone. While Shirley will end the novel

married to Louis Moore, their relationship remains problematic. Louis takes great pleasure in criticizing Shirley's faults (489) and sees her as a "natural hill" "whose slope invites ascent" (488). We are also reminded of Robert Moore's mediation on Caroline, that he "had a pleasure in looking at her, as he had in examining rare flowers, or in seeing pleasant landscapes" (318). Shirley ends her novel silent, deferring to Louis so he might master and lead her. Brontë's treatments of Caroline Helstone's love affair and the civil unrest surrounding Robert Moore's mill are similarly unsettling. While the reader is asked to rejoice at the comic union of the participants, we have Robert vow that he has abandoned materialism even as he waits for the repeal of the trade blockade before proposing to Caroline. Even more disturbing is Robert's revelation that he had previously intended to declare himself bankrupt and pack a bag for Canada; his departure, as we are well aware, might have been the death of Caroline Helstone. Finally, and perhaps most disturbing of all, we listens to Robert's plan to "enclose Nunnely Common" turn the "copse" to "firewood" and "the beautiful wild ravine" to a "paved street" (597).

Robert's need to possess the landscape is further complicated by the tension between his vision of future progress and the narrator's own perspective on events. Brontë's narrator sees a strong contrast between "the sky as it now appeared—a muffled, streaming vault, all black, save where, towards the east, the furnaces of Stilbro' iron-works threw a tremulous lurid shimmer on the horizon—with the same sky on an unclouded frosty night" (52). She mourns the ignorance of characters such as the curate Malone, who "did not trouble himself to ask where the constellations and the planets were gone, or to regret the 'black-blue' serenity of the air-ocean which those white islets

study; and which another ocean, of heavier and denser element, now rolled below and concealed” (52). Although Robert’s vision of material progress is limited to speculation, Brontë constantly reminds her reader that this narrative is set in the past. The magic lantern reveals that “Robert Moore’s prophecies were, partially, at least fulfilled” (599). Moore is excited by this bleak prospect of future destruction, and even Caroline offers only a slight protest to rampant industrialization. The only other voice we hear is that of a new character, the nurse Martha, who offers a more subtle version of Brontë’s original lament of the dangers of industrialization. Martha informs her “judicious reader” of what has come to pass with the mill and that the “last farish that was ever seen” passed out of the country years ago taking all the magic with it (599). If the supernatural and the natural have both departed the Hollow, Brontë leaves us with an eerie foreshadowing of an industrial gothic, located in the shadows of urban development.<sup>31</sup> That women’s bodies are linked strongly to landscape and that both of these features are dominated by the brothers Moore (whose very name suggests capitalistic modes of expansion rather than the wild, heather-filled expanse of freedom) paint a dark conclusion, where all voices and all inspiration are silenced.

Brontë only allows one author to actually create a written composition. That figure is Louis, the problematic tutor to Shirley and her brother. Louis Moore is an androgynous figure, who has, as Argyle terms it, “perspectives both of the male gender and the female social position” (750). Argyle also notes that Louis’s position as tutor to

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<sup>31</sup> Gilbert and Gubar read this ending as an articulation of patriarchal sterility (398). In contrast, Gisela Argyle sees this as “Even before the novel’s events the fairies had disappeared from the Hollow. Thus, Robert Moore’s plans for the mill and workers’ tenements do not present a new rupture but a continuation of encroachments on the world of the fairies, the Imagination, and Nature” (752).

Shirley marks a reversal of the governess/master relationship in *Jane Eyre* (751). Louis Moore, as trapped as Caroline Helstone, also seeks a gothic inspiration, longing to see “the ghost of the Earl of Huntingdon [...] under a canopy of the thickest, blackest, oldest oak in Nunnely Forest” or a “tryst with a phantom abbess, or mist-pale nun” (485). Louis’s lament, that he is “sick at heart of this cell,” reflects the lament of both gothic heroines and Brontë’s own, imprisoned, governess characters (485). Louis’s strange mood has an equally strange result, as he takes “from his pocket a small, thick book of blank paper; to produce a pencil; and to begin to write in a cramp, compact hand” (487). Louis’s writing is both realistic, placed in the present moment (“it is nine o’clock”) and yet fanciful, as he imagines “Solitude” as a “fair nymph, an Oread, descending to me from loose mountain-passes,” turned now to “cold abstraction—fleshless skeleton—daughter—mother—and mate of Death” (487). Writing allows Louis liberation: “through this pencil” he can “say what I dare utter to nothing living—say what I dare not *think* aloud” (487). While Louis is feminized, caught, unable to speak due to the constraints of society, he is able, by thinking through a gothic locus, to write. Gothic space has potential for trapped men as well as trapped women.

While Louis’s ability to write does not redeem the novel’s problematic ending, it does suggest that gothic space has potential for masculine as well as feminine composition. Brontë’s treatment of this mode is biblical: she describes composition as a “genii-life” as when “the angels looked down on the dreamer of Beth-el” (374) and a “trance” (374). Contemplation of Nature, specifically a gothic nature, which functions paradoxically across either space or time, seems a fertile mechanism for provoking this

kind of prophetic discourse. It becomes possible through Louis's journal to read this rhetorical approach: an invocation of place as *topoi*, the mechanism of invention, as a potential alternative to phallogocentric modes of composition.

Gothic space in Radcliffe remained displaced, confined to foreign locations and historicized under the guise of recovered narrative. Jane Austen gestured to the power of gothic spaces, but ultimately dismissed gothic power in order to strengthen her satirical program. Austen returned her heroines to domestic incarcerations and problematic marriages. Charlotte Brontë invoked the power of the gothic locus which facilitated feminine conversation and masculine composition. The androgynous status of Louis Moore and his ability to access the gothic locus as a mechanism for composition suggests a more direct connection between gothic space and effective communication. However, Shirley's inability to compose within this space suggests that there are limitations to even the most gothic locations. Previously, Virginia Woolf's rhetorical theory stressed the need for androgyny. Women must cultivate an androgynous mind as they attempt to produce fiction. Woolf first suggested a realist aesthetic, where the female novelist would describe the life of the girl behind the shopcounter or the relationship between Chloe and Olivia. However, a closer examination of Virginia Woolf's rhetorical theory of androgyny will reveal a strong connection to gothic space.

We began our discussion of Woolf's androgynous rhetorical theory by focusing on her use of both actual and symbolic spaces. When a man and a woman come together in a cab, Woolf wants her reader to experience the actuality of London, the intertextual reference to Plato's *Phaedrus* and her earlier experience on the banks of the Oxbridge

stream. Woolf's constantly changing spaces reflect Gillian Rose's theory of paradoxical space, one which defeats fixed and rational notions of linearity. By transforming space, Woolf creates the conditions necessary for composition outside the limits of phallogentric rhetorical norms. However, this transformation remains incomplete. Although Woolf stresses the importance of androgynous minds and paradoxical space, her own process of composition is truncated. Her lecture, a delicious ouroboros, ends where it begins—Woolf's very first line. In order to more clearly understand how Woolf intended gothic loci to promote androgynous rhetoric, we must explore other instances of gothic location and textual composition in the works of Virginia Woolf.

Despite our tendency to situate Virginia Woolf's rhetorical theory within her two longest non-fiction works, *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, Woolf has clearly stated that her fictions are as philosophical and theoretical as her polemic. While most of Woolf's novels and short stories contain numerous scenes of reading, composition and editing, *Orlando* is the only novel to feature a poet as its main character. Orlando, a man who becomes a woman, a person "born" in the sixteenth century who turns 30 in 1928, is a poet who struggles to compose her one poem. Both Orlando's changing body and the landscape she/he inhabits are inherently paradoxical, inherently *gothic* spaces. By reading Woolf's use of these gothic tropes, her theories of androgynous rhetoric can be fully explicated. To Woolf, the personality that informs, the body that occupies, and the space which is occupied are all connected to other spaces, personalities and bodies. A spatio/temporal transformation of setting is, therefore, always enacted within and upon the body in service of mutual understanding and connection. As Orlando struggles to

compose, he confronts many moments of paradoxical space; however, the failure of these spaces to produce writing suggests an evolving articulation of Woolf's theory of androgynous rhetoric. Orlando's struggle to produce text is ultimately realized by a new form of paradox, a gothic performed upon the body itself.

While Virginia Woolf is not normally associated with gothic modalities, there is some precedent for reading gothic elements in her work. Paul K. Saint-Amour identifies "a modernism that receives Gothic with acute ambivalence, aggressively refusing its reliance on abnormal mind-states and the supernatural, resisting the linear drives of its plotting, and curbing its compulsive wish to identify the threat or destiny around which it is organized" (209). Despite Saint-Amour's contention, *Orlando* resists this characterization of Woolf's work. Certainly, text predicated on a character's transformation from man to woman participates in both "abnormal mind-states and the supernatural" (209). Saint-Amour reads "The Mark on the Wall" to suggest that Woolf "links" gothic "to a demystified social stage cluttered with realism's favored props, as if to suggest that the world has caught up with and even overtaken the horrifying sense of untimeliness once captured by Gothic" (219). Saint-Amour's thesis, while compelling, ultimately fails to fully articulate how Woolf mediates gothic influences within the "biography" of Orlando. While the plot of *Orlando* contains Woolf's usual playful interactions with time and space, when reduced to essentials it forms a fairly typical bildungsroman with a reasonably normative temporal trajectory. Orlando, at the center of the evolving plot, moves chronologically through the centuries. At each phase of his/her development, Orlando's evolution as both person and author continues under pressure

from the various characters that s/he encounters. Villains are explicitly identified in *Orlando*, most particularly the harsh literary critics that Orlando encounters as her writing develops and changes. The culmination of the novel is a romantic and whimsical union between Orlando and her soul-mate, a romantic union which echoes the development of Orlando's own poetic project, finally completed in the twentieth century. Where Saint-Amour succeeds in his analysis of Woolf's gothic tendencies is in correctly identifying how gothic "untimeliness" has "overtaken" the material reality of the text; however, Staint-Amour still neglects the primary significance of gothic loci in Woolf's works. Even more powerfully developed than Woolf's use of temporal displacement is her interactions with physical space. Porous, fluid, and capable of instant transformation and change, the locations of Woolf's texts carry specifically paradoxical and gothic force.

Woolf's notes for October 8, 1827, give some context for how both space and textual production was intended to function in *Orlando*. In a note titled, "Suggestions for Short Pieces" she proposes "A Biography" which "is to tell a persons life from the year 1500 to 1928. Changing its sex. taking different aspects of the character in different Centuries. the theory being that character goes on underground before we are born; & leaves something afterwords also" (2). Following that short paragraph, Woolf also proposes "A. poem" which will be "something about an island. landscape. dream. people with canoes. the trees" (2). Woolf's notes reveal two threads which would eventually combine in *Orlando*: a gothic narrative of displaced and transformed gender, and a poem, attempting to express natural beauty.

Woolf's introductory description establishes a particularly gothic locus for *Orlando*, the ancestral attic room marked by its "bars of darkness [...] and the yellow pools which chequered the floor, made by the sun falling through the stained glass of a vast coat of arms in the window" (14). As in Walpole's gothic, Orlando's fictionalized estate is based on an actual location. In this case, Woolf has chosen to set Orlando in Vita Sackville West's contested ancestral estate of Knole. Woolf closely researched this location, making careful note of the history of the estate. Her first draft clearly reflects this original impulse as she specifically identifies "Lady Anne" and "Miss Penelope Stuckley," real individuals who lived at Knole. Lady Anne was the current mistress of Knole in the sixteenth century and Penelope Tutty was her daughter's maid. Woolf later replaced these figures in her final draft with in Orlando's "mother" and "Twitchett" (4-5). Woolf's first draft also places far more emphasis on the patriarchal system of land ownership, stressing how Orlando's estate "was his father's. It would be his" (6). Woolf's decision to cloak these explicit historical glosses point to a highly significant change in focus. Woolf replaces these passages by expanding a short moment in her first draft, when Orlando "began pouring forth in a vast book which he had stolen & secreted his passionate lament" (4) into a long passage on Orlando's writing, specifically his play "Aethelbert: A Tragedy in Five Acts" (16). *Orlando* has become as much about writing as about Vita Sackville-West.

Woolf's decision to make Orlando an author points to a synthesis between her two ideas: the poem and the fictionalized biography. Woolf probably has Shakespeare in mind when she has Orlando compose a five act drama where "Kings and Queens of

impossible territories; horrid plots confounded them; noble sentiments suffused them” and Orlando’s first failure comes as he attempts to master this genre by describing “nature” (16). Material reality defeats Orlando, “green in nature is one thing, green in literature another” (17). Orlando turns away from drama to focus on the natural world: his/her poem “The Oak Tree.” However, poetry proves as frustrating as drama. Woolf remarks on the “natural antipathy” between “nature and letters,” the “thing itself” cannot be written down (17). Orlando’s struggles to describe nature reflect the failed poetry project that Woolf describes in her notes: one which features “landscape” and “the trees” (2).<sup>32</sup> It seems likely that Woolf folded her proposed poem into the novel she was currently imagining, making Orlando the poet and “The Oak Tree” her poem. Orlando’s struggles with composing poetry reflect Woolf’s own evolving theories of androgynous rhetoric.

In order to accomplish this work, Woolf focuses on one poem that Orlando will struggle to compose throughout his/her many transformations. The text in question is, “The Oak Tree” a clever allusion to notions of romantic genius and British cultural identity. As with all the modalities of gothic rhetoric that we have discussed, Orlando’s poem begins by meditation on a real physical location, in this case the “single oak tree” located on his estate between “ferns and hawthorne bushes, startling deer and wild birds” (18). At first, the oak tree seems to instantiate a sublime location, from the oak Orlando

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<sup>32</sup> The missing elements from Woolf’s description “island” “people with canoes” suggests both Lady Bruton’s colonial vision and the exoticized Moorish head, subject of Orlando’s violence. To Woolf, then, ideas about writing can stand in for conversations about land ownership and patriarchy.

could see “nineteen English counties [...] the English Channel [...] galleons [...] armadas [...] forts [...] castles [...] a watch tower [...] and a fortress” (18). However, Orlando’s sublime vision quickly returns to the domestic space of “his father’s house” (19). Orlando’s meditation on the oak tree culminates in a focused description of “the heath,” “the forest,” “the pheasant and the deer, the fox, the badger, and the butterfly” (19). This connection to landscape is enacted upon Orlando’s physical body, much the same way the sublime glacial expanse promotes a physical reaction within Victor Frankenstein. Orlando can feel “the earth’s spine beneath him” and through the oak tree Orlando joins the landscape “as if all the fertility and amorous activity of a summer’s evening were woven web-like about his body” (19). Orlando needs to express this connection by articulating the link between landscape and human. Associating the summer evening with “fertility” and “amorous activity” also hints at Woolf’s evolving play with ideas of gender and identity. Melding with the environment, Orlando’s specific masculinity is also blending with notions of the feminine.

Woolf continues to blur the distance between physical locations, human bodies and poetic project as she returns, again and again, to the problems Orlando confronts when composing. In the first scene, Orlando cannot write his play as he fails to capture nature. The solution here is to go out under the tree itself and experience a deep connection. However, writing still does not occur. Once again Orlando sits down to write his poem, but “he paused” (77).<sup>33</sup> What stops Orlando’s composition is the

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<sup>33</sup> It is noteworthy that while the final draft shows Orlando debating between two manuscripts, the first draft clearly shows Orlando writing only “The Oak Tree” (the only monosyllabic title among the lot) (58).

memory of the woman he loves, but Woolf chooses to present a large digression on Nature and Memory before we come to that point. Part of Woolf's project to connect this scene of drafting with Orlando's moment of failed composition. However, Woolf slips forward into an autobiographical present, mentioning that "even now (the first of November, 1927) we know not why we go upstairs, or why we come down again" (78). Woolf interrupts her narrative to generate paradox in much the same way Brontë's magic lantern functioned in *Shirley*. As in *Shirley*, paradox allows Woolf to articulate some of that general philosophy or theory which she has warned us will intrude upon the fiction. Woolf's approach is most clearly evidenced in her first draft, as her final version dials down her philosophy in favor of more suggestive language.

Nature then, to cut the passage short, for the genius of English prose is a little long winded; has further complicated her task & added to our confusion by providing not only a perfect rag bag of odds & ends within us—a piece of the policemen's [sic] trousers lying cheek by jowl with Queen Alexandra's wedding veil—but has contrived that the whole assortment is stitched together [...] we know not what comes next or why this follows that. Why we Thus the most ordinary movement, like sitting down at the table & dipping one's pen in the ink pot, may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected [bright?] or discoloured pieces hanging on the bobbing/dipping/[shifting?] line (Holograph Draft, 59).

Woolf constellates a series of allusions in this description: Nature as inspirational poetic muse, nature as physical place, and nature as in human nature—that is, the tendency of the mind to produce (and not produce) its ideas upon the page. Woolf gestures toward androgyny, placing the "policemen's trousers" next to the "Queen Alexandra's wedding veil," and invokes the Radcliffian "fabric," the assembled or patched-together approach to narrative which distinguishes this "female gothic" text from

other early gothics written by male authors. Woolf's final draft of *Orlando* reflects this original impulse in the more muted invocation of a Nature which makes "us so unequally of clay and diamonds, of granite and rainbows, and stuffed them into a case" (77). "Granite and Rainbow" is Woolf's most famous metaphor for writing and forms the title of her essay upon that subject. For Woolf, all good writing is composed of equal parts granite and rainbows. In the passage above, however, granite and rainbow is also the natural object and the body, the "case" which contains it. Woolf's language continues the same play with bodies, spaces and texts. Woolf describes the Memory as "seamstress" who stitches together consciousness (78). Woolf's approach is allegorical; her alignment of Nature with the stylistic features of strong prose and Memory with the act of weaving or production of that prose synthesizes aspects of the composing process, the canons of rhetoric, with both landscape and physical body. The fact that these objects all appear simultaneously, in both 1616 and 1927, demonstrate Woolf's continuing practice of situating meditations on the writing process against a particularly paradoxical space.

Meanwhile, paradoxical space continues to both inspire and frustrate Orlando. At this point, Orlando has struggled with life as a man and as an author. He has produced over "forty-seven plays, histories, romances, poems; some in prose, some in verse; some in French, some in Italian; all romantic and all long" (77). Orlando's early compositions are all imitative focused on "some mythological personage at a crisis of his career" (76). Ratcliffe reminds us that Woolf views feminine rhetorics as anti-imitative: "According to Woolf, strict imitation will not help. [...] great men [sic] writers provide very little help for women writers, even if these men's [sic] texts are pleasurable to read" (262).

Orlando's history reflects Ratcliffe's interpretation. Crushed by criticism, frustrated by critical scorn, Orlando finally "burned in a great conflagration fifty-seven poetical works, only retaining 'The Oak Tree' which was his boyish dream and very short" (96).

Orlando constructs in response to his failures a revised poetics "bad, good or indifferent, I'll write, from this day forward, to please myself" (103). The key is a series of familiar phrases "obscurity" which is "dark, ample and free" enable a "merciful suffusion of darkness" (104). Orlando immediately conflates these states with both gothic tropes and androgynous rhetoric: "Shakespeare must have written like that, and the church builders built like that, anonymously, needing no thanking or naming" (105). For Woolf, writing is embodied within the gothic cathedral, anonymous, androgynous, simultaneously sublime and obscure.

Woolf continues to tie her meditations on rhetoric to spatial constructs. In this case, Orlando's attention quickly turns from the failed poem to the gothic cathedral. Moving inward, Orlando links anonymous cathedral to his own castle of Knole, which was "built by workman whose names are unknown" (106). Woolf yokes foreign and domestic, cathedral and castle, servant and master, male and female "all "working together with their spades and their needles, their love-making and their child-bearing, have left this" (106). It is crucial to note that this vision androgyny does not displace individual agency or identity. Woolf combines the spade and the needle, specific objects with specific identities. Her approach here mirrors the pattern seen in *A Room of One's Own*, uncovering the hidden materiality of a location is a productive state. As on the Oxbridge quadrangle, this intellectual stance produces some form of text. In this case,

Orlando launches into an elegant speech. Things are going splendidly until “it came to the peroration” (107). Once again, Orlando is unable to compose, and what catches him is the conclusion. Orlando, ignorant of his topos, unable to express his enthytheme, cannot sum it up.

Woolf deliberately blends both rhetorical and spatial terms. While Orlando would have “liked to have ended with a flourish to the effect that he would follow in their footsteps and add another stone to the building,” he takes his metaphor literally (108). The peroration cannot continue because the building is already built. Orlando wonders whether “could one mention furniture in a peroration? Could one speak of chairs and tables and mats to lie beside people’s beds? For whatever the peroration wanted that was what the house stood in need of” (108). Orlando’s search for his topic, then, is a quest to inhabit his topology. The solution, then is to furnish the physical space, which will, as Woolf’s gentle pun implies, give him “matter” to “fill out his peroration” (111). As Orlando comes ever nearer to his transformation, the terrain of the text and the physical world surrounding that text continue to blur. However, location is not enough to inspire composition; although Orlando now tries to begin his poem over again, he feels the need fill the beds with people (112). Even occupation of the finished house is not enough to generate a finished poem. Orlando is frozen; unable to compose “he scratched out as many lines as he wrote in” so that “in the process of writing the poem would be completely unwritten” (113).

What finally frees Orlando is a movement directly into the narrative techniques of the gothic novel. Woolf begins chapter three, the chapter that features Orlando’s

transformation into a woman, with a dramatically different voice, that of a staid biographer who mourns that “It is, indeed, highly unfortunate, and much to be regretted that at this stage of Orlando’s career, when he played a most important part in the public life of his country, we have least information to go upon” (119). Woolf engages in a distinctly gothic move by displacing her fiction into the world of found documents, in this case “papers from which any trustworthy record could be drawn” (119). This series of fictional documents reflects Radcliffe’s elaboration of Walpole’s authorial displacement. Whereas Walpole created a fictional manuscript as a source for his gothic novel and a fictional translator to interpret it, Radcliffe created several fictional sources for her text including a compiled manuscript and several distinct verbal testimonies. Woolf takes this gothic move a step further and destroys the very fictional manuscripts which she claims as a source of her fiction: “the paper” was “scorched a deep brown in the middle of the most important sentence” and there “was a hole in the manuscript big enough to put your finger through” (119). The closer the chapter moves to Orlando’s metamorphosis, the more Woolf returns to her series of unknowable, incomplete documents, remarking that “we must now describe [the transformation], picking our way among burnt papers and little bits of tape as best we may” (126). As Orlando’s gender becomes more questionable, the number of fragmentary narratives also proliferate. Woolf cites “the diary of John Fenner Brigge, however, an English naval officer [...] full of burns and holes, some sentences being quite illegible” and another manuscript from “Miss Penelope Hartopp” a text once again noted for ellipsis and the dash (126-27). Finally, we have a quote from “the Gazette of the time” (129). Woolf plays with the

concept of biography, claiming that, on the one hand her fictional fragmentary sources comprise the “firm, if rather narrow, ground of ascertained truth” while simultaneously asserting that “nobody has ever known exactly what took place” during Orlando’s transformation (131).

In a gothic novel paradox is generally confined to spatial features: the permeable walls of a dank and moldering dungeon, subject to supernatural visitation; a ghostly laugh echoing from the attic. In *Orlando*, the body itself becomes the site of paradox. Orlando goes to sleep a man. She wakes up a woman. In this most radical destabilization, Woolf echoes her earlier treatment of the medieval cathedral and Oxbridge quadrangle. Identities are combined; they are not occluded. Although Orlando “had become a woman [...] in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been” (138). Orlando’s bodily transformation brings the uncanny nature of gothic space into the most immediate location, that of the skin and marrow and bone. Literally both male and female, Orlando’s physical androgyny finally generates the perspective necessary to produce a great poem. “The Oak Tree” is finally composed by a creature unable to be defined as either male or female. The ultimate hybrid; Orlando’s ability to eclipse gender points toward Woolf’s own continuing interrogation of the ideas expressed four years earlier in *A Room of One’s Own*.

Woolf proposes a union of paradoxical space with a consciousness unbounded by and unlimited to the human body. This union is achieved through a body that is, in and of itself, paradoxical. After her transformation and experiences as both a man and a woman, Orlando is finally able to discover her “key self [...] the whole of her darkened

and settled” and “silent” (310). Woolf’s placement of Orlando within a rhetorical position of silence and darkness points to key ideas in a feminine rhetorical tradition; however, silence poses a difficult problem for a writer who must express herself through language. Rhetorical presence requires more than simply anonymity, marriage or conforming to the spirit of the age. Woolf describes this negotiation as the following:

Was not writing poetry a secret transaction, a voice answering a voice? What could have been more secret, she thought, more slow, and like the intercourse of lovers, than the stammering answer she had made all these years to the old crooning song of the woods, and the farms and the brown horses standing at the gate, neck to neck, and the smithy and the kitchen and the fields, so laboriously bearing what, turnips, grass, and the gardens blowing irises and fritillaries [...] in the far distance Snowdon’s crags broke white among the clouds (325).

Woolf continues to expand Orlando’s vision, allowing her to occupy both the original hill on which he envisioned “The Oak Tree” and to unfetter herself completely from normative space and time. The gothic, androgynous body becomes the ultimate magic lantern. Freed from the constraints of gender, Orlando’s consciousness ranges out into paradox

Here the landscape (it must have been some trick of the fading light) shook itself, heaped itself, let all this encumbrance of houses, castles, and woods slide off its tent-shaped sides. The bare mountains of Turkey were before her [...] the present showered down upon her head once more [...] misty fields, lamps in cottage windows [...] reflections in the dark pool of the mind [shone ...] now Shakespeare, now a girl in Russian trousers (326-27).

Paradoxical in both time, space, and body, Orlando formulates a new poetics: one deeply absent of self and yet connected to and transformed by the specific details of place.

Woolf's emphasis is on combination and attachment, distinctly embodied. When she talks about composition in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf describes the writer as feeling "as if one's friends were attached to one's body" (112). Similarly, Woolf's most complicated novel, *The Waves*, mediates between five different perspectives, both male and female. We are reminded of Radcliffe's fabric which is simultaneously building, story and the narrative itself. Here, Woolf suggests another form of connection and interaction, predicated not on textual violence, but on sympathetic communion derived, ironically, through specific and individualistic story telling: specific memories and locations fuse gendered bodies into dark minds. Woolf's idea is reminiscent of rhetorical theorist Debra Hawhee's reading that any social theory of rhetoric stems from a recognition of the force of real bodies in actual space, i.e. that Hawhee reads "rhetoric, rhetorical theory, and rhetorical pedagogy" as "closely tied to bodies that generate, induce, and respond to rhetoric" (108). In *Orlando*, Woolf takes the issue of interconnectivity further, by blending the different perspectives in one body—the poem is enabled through specific lived experiences, both as a man and as a woman.

Woolf's final investigation of androgynous rhetoric suggests an alternative for those who cannot look through their train windows at passing castles, or stroll through the ruins of the convent. Bodies themselves can be inhabited gothically, darkly, prophetically. In the mind, men and women can do more than step into taxi-cabs; they can blend completely within one another. The fabric of the world can melt away, and writers can experience a freedom outside the western rhetorical tradition.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Susan Gubar, co-author of *Madwomen in the Attic* situated her 2006 meditation on contemporary feminism, *Rooms of Our Own*, within and against the work of Virginia Woolf. While Gubar's struggle to make Woolf relevant to the twenty-first century scholar mirrors my own determination not to lose what Woolf has so luminously and subtly struggled to teach, I was also struck by many links between this text and my own project. Gubar's attention to the very same moments and scenes which so fascinate me in *A Room of One's Own*, further illustrates the importance of these paradoxical spaces for women, even established feminist scholars, attempting to theorize and articulate their ideas. Finally, in Gubar's own mediation with Woolf through writing, I see Woolf's androgynous rhetoric deployed in exciting and productive ways. In order to fully develop these ideas, I want to begin by examining Gubar's own adaptation of *A Room of One's Own*.

Gubar begins her narrative by restaging the paradoxical space of *A Room of One's Own* on the contemporary campus of a modern university:

From where I stood, by the banks of a little stream on the edge of a great expanse of lawn in one of those public institutions of higher education that have sprung up all around the globe, half-dressed young men and women could be seen lolling under trees budding with newly unfurled leaves [...] Once, not very long ago, this prospect with its walkways and massive buildings was prairie too, where corn and where corn and wheat waved or swine rooted and cattle grazed. Teams of

workers must have hauled the stone in trucks[...] Though the campus had its beauties [...] neither the gold of kings and presidents nor the silver of parliamentarians and legislators had poured liberally into the foundations of these plain, serviceable classrooms and offices, some in evident need to renovation (1-2).

Gubar's pastiche simultaneously delights and provokes. We are sensitive both to what she transposed from Woolf, the silver and gold, the swine and grass, and a series of delightful additions and substitutions, scantily clothed undergraduates and Midwestern American prairies. Like Woolf, she finds "swimming [...] in my thoughts" "a baby fish [...that had] something to do with [...] the disentangling of gender from sex, of social roles from biological genitalia, of masculinity from males and femininity from females" (2). Unlike Woolf, who was unable to physically enter the confines of academia, Gubar's thought-fish is silenced by more the more subtle Beadles of university politics, controversies among and between feminist scholars, and the problematic role of contemporary feminism in the technological morass of the first world and women struggling to achieve even nominal parity in the second and third worlds.

As Gubar struggles to make sense of third-wave feminism she turns, as Woolf did before her, to the young women which surround her. In this case, Gubar creates the fictional "Marita Seton," a young woman of indeterminate ethnicity teaching a class on "Women and Fiction." Gubar's narrator, in the role of faculty mentor, observes Marita's class in order to write a recommendation before Marita once again goes on the professional job market. Gubar notes the class discussion, including an insightful comment made by "Harry" an "unkempt, earnest young man grunting with satisfaction

over his notebook” (10). Harry’s significant role in the class is revealed when Marita mentions: “Harry is a girl. I mean, Harry was a girl; actually, Harry might be a girl [...] When I first knew Harry [...] he, I mean she, was Harriet” (34). Harry’s indeterminate gender inspires and provokes Gubar’s narrator, who concludes her chapter by reconstructing the pivotal moment at the end of *A Room of One’s Own*. The narrator waits on a Midwestern street corner, thinking “Was Harry gay [...] and would that mean he loved the woman he had been or the man she had become?” and sees “the couple getting into the taxicab at the corner waving at me—the girl (was she a girl?) opening one door, the man (was he a man?) reaching for the other—“(36). Gubar chooses to have her narrator experience Woolf’s paradoxical space—both the failed historicization of the Oxbridge quadrangle and the luminous recapitulation of Oreithuia’s taxi cab. Unfortunately, while Woolf was inspired by the androgynous potential symbolized by the figures in the cab and goes on to compose her text, Gubar’s narrator remains frustrated. She concludes only by paraphrasing Stevie Smith: “I was waving, not drowning, I thought, but I was awfully far out” (36).

Gubar’s decision to condense the pivotal paradoxical spaces of *A Room of One’s Own* in the first chapter of her text suggests an elaboration, rather than a mere recapitulation, of Woolf’s original project. In Gubar, we can hope to find an evolution of Woolf’s rhetoric appropriate for millennial feminism and contemporary writers and locutors seeking an alternative rhetorical tradition. Indeed, Gubar mirrors Woolf’s structure in a *Room of One’s Own*, going on to survey a number of foundational feminist scholars and meditate on the role of gender studies at her university, with special

attention to the current conversation regarding women of color, third-world feminisms, queer feminisms and current economic and social disparities surrounding both the humanities as academic field and the role of women within the contemporary university. However, Gubar also suggests many of Woolf's novels, with each additional chapter restaging both language and scenes from *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Between the Acts* and *The Waves*.

Gubar returns to *A Room of One's Own*'s significant scene in her final chapter.

Nothing in the garden stirred; nothing came near. A single leaf detached itself from the cascading plant beside me, and in that pause fell. Somehow it was like a signal pointing to a force in things that one had overlooked, a river that flowed invisibly through nature, and brought from the lawn or the driveway or the meadow two speckled butterflies (or were they moths?) circling higher and higher around the garden until one alighted, poised on the purple tip of a drooping spray of flowers on the branch at my eyes' level [...] at my right foot—as if at another signal- a high-stepping angular insect, bright green, progressed toward the definite goal of crossing crumbs of loose earth (188-89).

Unlike Woolf's image of androgynous humans, Gubar expands this vision to include the entire "rhythmical sequence" which "seemed to communicate something about the mysteries of the unity of nature" (189-90) by speaking "about odd couplings of marvelously dissimilar, even unlikely forms of life" (193). Gubar focuses on her friend Evie, who is co-parenting her adopted infant with Harry. Evie, evoking a lost and returned Mrs. Ramsay and Shirley's lost myth of Eve, seems to instantiate a remarkable new form of feminine potential, both in her non-traditional family group and in her daughter, May Sophia.

In this respect, Gubar reaches beyond Woolf's depiction of androgyny as the melding of male and female selves. For Gubar, the significant scene isn't Oreithuia joining Plato in the taxi-cab. Instead, Gubar's vision encompasses two moths, a grasshopper, the diversity of hyacinth and oak tree. While Gubar is obviously referencing Woolf's original title for *The Waves*, her focus on three figures, all of which lack a distinct gender, gestures toward an expansion and translation of Woolf's "dark pool of the mind;" a multiplicity of consciousness's all connected through relationships outside of generative sexuality. Gubar's narrator privileges alternative forms of family and interpersonal relationships suggested by the natural world: "insects and many animals survive because of caretaking undertaken by those not directly involved in birthing," moths themselves can "reproduce without sexual unions" and "mighty oak trees" may, or may not, have gender or sex (194). Gubar's expansion of Woolf's pivotal scene suggests a more contemporary vision for Oreithuia and her lost tradition. My reading of Oreithuia's myth focused on her role as a source of feminine power, a lost Athenian Eve. However, Oreithuia also participates in another, equally provocative, mythological tradition. Her father, king Erectheus, is often equated with Erichthonius, a compelling mythological figure. Erichthonius is another child of rape, this time it is the goddess Athena who is attacked by Hephaestus; however, the story of his conception and birth takes a rather radical turn. Hephaestus failed, "spilling his seed on her [Athena's] thigh; she [Athena] wiped it off with a piece of wool (erion), and dropped it on the ground, whereupon the Earth conceived Erichthonius" (*Oxford Classical Dictionary* 555). The product of artificial insemination, Erichthonius is engendered between woman

and woman, Athena and Gaia, woman and Earth. Erichthonius's story suggests an alternative to both the powerlessness of rape and patriarchal cultures which normalize genetic masculinity and femininity on the basis of sexual reproduction. Athena's self-determinative fertility places Oreithuia directly within a history that liberates women from heteronormative definitions of the feminine (Gubar 194).

As in her model, Gubar's conversation on feminism does not neglect the role of written communication. First remarking that "Mona Beaton and those in her thrall write as men have been taught to write, not as women write" in order to understand the current reliance of feminist scholars on post-structuralist critics (48) and then concurring that a junior colleague, Marta Wheaton's scholarship did possess legitimacy despite its dismissal of literary texts written by women, Gubar tries to understand the place of aesthetics in contemporary feminism(s) (174-75). Mirroring some of Woolf's insights in *Orlando*, Gubar wonders if the artist's "susceptibility to multiple by incongruous actualities that sometimes allows her to endow the real with immediacy or to reconcile opposing entities?" (141) and decides that poetry still has a place in articulating the transcendent links that allow us to empathize with those outside of our immediate experience. At this moment, Gubar seems to connect with the rhetorical principles set forth in both *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando*, producing the same liberated, expanded, dark consciousness that Woolf posits for her own hypothetical poet.

Gubar finally turns to an ostensibly prosaic postlude (one wonders if her editor objected to the original ending) to articulate more forcefully what her most luminous echo of Woolf's prose previously implied. In order to clarify her project, which she

acknowledges might be “a narrative about stock types in settings all too obviously inflected by one woman writer’s oeuvre [...] without the footnotes and judicious specificity necessary for proper academic investigations,” she cites her need to “grasp hold of the larger picture so as to map the contours of its shapes” (217). Gubar’s geographic language points to the space of her own text, which both embraces and embellishes that of Virginia Woolf. Gubar’s foray into a more structured, and critically acceptable conclusion, carries with it some surprising insights. Despite her articulated desire to break away from the artistic and aesthetic model of Woolf’s argument, Gubar’s own writing returns itself, again and again, to the style and model of Woolf’s fictions.

Gubar admits that, although she intended a pastiche of Woolf’s non-fiction, she was “surprise[d]; however, that I was also drawn to the plots and characters of Woolf’s magnificent novels” (218). Citing the “mystic capacity of her [Woolf’s] sentences to float within consciousness and between or among centers of sentient being,” Gubar reveals her own impulse to write criticism as narrative (218). Although Gubar claims that her paean to Woolf is only the work of her narrator, Mary Beton, whose “typical hyperbole” would, by “flaunting its artifice” “rescue us from universalizing claims (that have historically erased women)” (219), Gubar ends her text with a familiar call: “if we work, even in poverty and obscurity, [...] to see human beings in relation to their rooms but also to each other [...] the dormant mathematician or political visionary, scientist or composer will put on the body that was so often laid down [...] she is coming—to be born not again, but for the first time, and to dwell among us” (222-23). Despite her claim to return to more traditional forms of academic argument, Gubar returns again to embody

Woolf's voice—fracturing her prose into paradox, pastiche, novel, memoir, fiction and prayer. Her text, Woolf and not-Woolf, criticism and memoir, fiction and non-fiction, like Orlando before it, remains a rough beast: monstrous, disorganized, suggestive, furious, digressive, subtle, gentle and, always—strikingly—heartbreakingly, lovely.

Gubar has done what we all do when we take off our glasses, rub our tired eyes, turn toward the grey sky, snow brushing brown grass, settling into the muddy ridges of the driveway—let this language which loves and holds and rends us with its beauty whisper across our fingers— We have been taught to fear this moment, the Chimera roaring across the page, the uneasy swish of fang against level rows of black and white, logic and order, introduction and conclusion. You will probably make me take it out. But here, now, you are with me, in this cold room—a rush of sharp air from the windows, water stilling to ice in the teacup, my daughter sighing as she turns in her sleep. You are thinking of that poem you love, the song you once heard, the book with the red cover, your hands hesitating on the faded spine, a curl of tape covering the place where the pages met. You had to put it down again; your eyes full of each sentence, your heart beating out nouns, your tears a verb. Remember. Let it pass over you like a snowflake, hang on the lips of the brown grass—and somewhere, at the crossroads, the bones of Judith Shakespeare will take on their lost flesh, assume our hands and faces and wild hearts—she has called us forth from that darkness. She has made us forget the rules. These are the dark matters—the wordsbodiessongssnowflakes. The you and me. The moths and grasshoppers.

This is the other way.

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