

ABSTRACT

Restricted Political Ability: How Nineteenth-Century British Women Novelists Worked to Influence Their Societies

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There is a pattern in nineteenth-century Britain that only exists within novels written by women. Throughout the century, the topical scopes women writers chose from grow smaller as the popularity of the novel increases. The topical scopes shrink from conversations encompassing Britain's international empire, to the effects of the Industrial Revolution on the working class, to the importance of morality in the home, each topic is approached by the authors with the same intent of including women in the overarching socio-political conversation of the day. This thesis seeks to fill in the nineteenth-century women's political perspective through a discussion of the works and writing styles by Frances Burney, Mary Shelley, the anonymous author of *The Woman of Colour*, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, and Charlotte Yonge. Their works are put in conversation with the politics surrounding their publication, and it is possible to see how they impacted their contemporary societies.

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RESTRICTED POLITICAL ABILITY:
HOW NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH WOMEN NOVELISTS WORKED
TO INFLUENCE THEIR SOCIETIES THROUGH THEIR NOVELS

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INTRODUCTION

“To think of the part one little woman can play in the life of a man, so that to renounce her may be a very good imitation of heroism, and to win her may be a discipline” (Middlemarch 676). This quote comes from George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Eliot was a well-known and prolific author of the nineteenth century whose works primarily focused on the lives of rural workers and their relationships to those who owned the tenant farms. This quote encapsulates this project well because it states outright the influence women have in the lives of men, whether or not their society wishes to admit it. Renouncing a woman means giving up the comfort and stability she brings, as well as the morality she imposes upon one's behavior. Eliot shows through her writing that it is an imitation of heroism because it is not heroic to send away something that is for one's own good, no matter how much independence is valued in a culture.

In nineteenth-century Great Britain, it can broadly be said that women were not independent. This fact is truer in the upper classes than the working class, because women often did work jobs just as much as men out of necessity. However, socially, politically, and economically, women were not independent at this time and, according to this quote, that made them unheroic. They could not renounce the man in their lives because they held the keys to their lives, and their independence would look more like desperation and vulnerability rather than strength and heroism. Therefore, when Eliot says that winning a woman "may be

a discipline," she talks about the trust that must be built up between the parties, for it is difficult to sign one's life away to be under the protection of a stranger. To gain the positive effects of having a woman in one's life, a man must show himself ready to be placed under her moral authority just as she shows herself ready to be placed under his physical, political, economic, and social authorities. Eliot's *Middlemarch* shows examples of relationships across all social classes, and while the freedom of the women appears to grow the lower the class, there is the consistency of the men providing for the women under their care physically, while the women provide for the men spiritually. There is a heroism in trusting on both ends that the other will provide what one's society dictates one cannot provide for oneself. Anne Mellor writes that it is "not the poet but the novelist, and a female novelist at that, here becomes the unacknowledged legislator of the world" (101). Hence, there is an importance in shedding light on the perspective of the heroine, and that is where women writers come in. They can show the world in a new light, the light of one expected to be subservient and often invisible. Women writers, like Eliot, give a new perspective on a world that up until this point, had mainly been recorded through men's eyes.

There is a population that has often been overlooked, underappreciated, and even outright ignored throughout historical surveys and discussions on previous time periods. Over half of the world's population consists of women, and yet women's voices are difficult to come by in history. This hole in the narrative is often explained by pointing to a lack of first-person accounts and written evidence from these overlooked perspectives, but this is simply not true. Women

have always been present and sharing their voices despite the legal, social, and sometimes physical restraints placed upon them. Because of these restraints, women had to be more creative in their political participation, and that often led to them sneaking their thoughts, opinions, observations, and solutions into the minds of the general public through more covert mediums rather than just shouting them outright. At the beginning of the nineteenth century women had no political rights, and very few autonomous rights, all depending upon the class one happened to find herself in. Socially, a woman could be ruined by a single slanderous word, even if she were not at fault for an altercation. If a woman did something that her relatives deemed too much for their family, a woman could be sent to a mental institution to live out the rest of her days without even notifying a judge, nor the police. It is because of these restrictions that there are several good reasons why there are hardly any historical accounts of women speaking out against any parts of the system that bound them, and for decades historians took this lack of obvious evidence to mean that there was no worthwhile evidence at all. There are many examples of methods women used to contribute to and influence the societies they lived in, but in the early to mid-nineteenth century there was one medium better than the rest, the novel.

This project will mainly be addressing the works of seven nineteenth-century British female authors, although more will be brought in for reference. Through putting sources in conversation with each other, this project will show common themes both in writing styles and content throughout the century. The relationships and connections shown in each chapter are used to explore greater

political trends that were sweeping the nation at the time of each book's publication. None of these women were only writing to try something new, to create a diverting story, to pass the time, or to make money. Instead, they were writing because they had things to say and they did not have any substantial outlets to get them across. These women identified issues and knew that they had the knowledge to solve them. However, they also correctly realized that they did not have the political or social capital to make the changes that they believed needed to occur. Instead, subliminal messaging by introducing the public to seemingly harmless stories written by silly women not to be taken seriously, was the main method of attack. These stories brought to light true problems without saying them outright, and subtly were able to put readers in the author's own shoes by allowing them to witness new perspectives without putting them on their guards.

While the secondary texts this project is in conversation with are diverse in content, and span back to the nineteenth century, a majority of the articles were written more recently, as the study of women's writing has become much more mainstream and nuanced in recent decades. While authors such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar practically began the modern study of women's writings, their original publication back in 1979 means that there has been over forty years of scholarship building upon and refining their originally very revolutionary text, *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Gilbert and Gubar identify an “anxiety of authorship” as one of the innate struggles a majority of these early female novelists went through, where they not only had to define the genre of the novel,

but they had to redefine the terms of their socialization. Their project worked to recover female voices and show them in the context of important literary works. This book is a great basis for this project because it brings to light novels that otherwise may have been overlooked, however they are less critical than later works because their primary purpose was the recovery of these works, not their critique.

Along with Gilbert and Gubar, there is another author who has provided a strong base for this project. Linda Colley's two books, *Britons* (1992) and *Captives* (2002), give a general picture of the various political facets of the world during this time. While Gilbert and Gubar specifically address the topic of women, Colley provides contextual information with which it is possible to create a stronger understanding of what the world was like when these women were living and writing. Therefore, Colley is useful for providing context to the ideas discussed and argued upon by the novelists, while Gilbert and Gubar provide the societal expectations of the women authors and the general reactions to their writings. These texts are the oldest secondary sources used and this is important because they are all referenced within a majority of the more recent texts. Gilbert and Gubar, and Colley provide the basis of this discussion on women authors' involvement in British politics, and therefore their voices are essential to understanding the more recent scholarship.

While recovery work is still necessary, later works have been able to become more critical. While the broad picture is important, each novelist is working to accomplish a different goal, and it is important to understand the

intentions of each novel. Julien Fung in his "Frances Burney as a Satirist" (2011), goes into detail on how Burney is a satirist, and aids in making the point of her novel, *The Wanderer*, being a satirical project used to reflect an image back onto her society so ridiculous that no one would want to claim it as their own. because the two are each addressing the image the British nation wishes to put forth, and both are looking at it in a critical way. Patricia McKee in her "Racial Strategies in *Jane Eyre*" (2009) and Kirsten Parkinson in her article "Mrs. Rochester's Story" (2015), address the negatives of nationalism, and Fung takes this point further by addressing specific points where Great Britain begins to look ridiculous as its nationalism has been taken to the point of creating mass ignorance on the subject of the rest of the world. This point is then taken up by all three authors in the first chapter and continued in the third chapter.

Burney, Shelley, and the anonymous author both have an overlap with Katharina Rennhak. This author discusses in her article "Tropes of Exile in the 1790s" (2006), the nineteenth-century British point of view of immigrants arriving on their shores. Colley is used in conversation with Rennhak to round out her more historical perspective and create a comparison between the historical evidence of British animosity toward immigrants and the hostility shown in the novels. Rennhak has France as a primary example of the differing views of the non-British world and its perceived inferiority, which meshes well with Burney's *The Wanderer*, but also with *The Woman of Colour* which also has an immigrant as a protagonist who receives mixed reactions upon journeying into England. Colley discusses wars, trade, slavery, close-by revolutions, and everything else

that politically could relate to the British public turning inward and focusing solely upon their own culture, and Rennhak explains the unfortunate results of this behavior upon immigrants.

As the century progresses, the context in which the novels were written changes and therefore it is important to have historical sources to ensure that the background is correct. This is where texts such as Gregory Clark's "The Condition of the Working Class in England" (2005) and Charles Feinstein's "Pessimism Perpetuated" (1998) are in conversation, in order to provide the broad facts of life in industrial Britain. These articles study populations that were largely ignored during their time, and therefore there was not a large amount of first-person literature on them. Thus reports, newspaper articles, studies, and the occasional text from people like Gaskell and Eliot, are brought together to create a general picture of the time and make it easier to understand the period. These authors have done a majority of the work, and therefore it is essential to have them as the basis of this chapter by placing the novels in historical perspective.

The question of equality was one held even by men during the nineteenth century. a fact that Elena Rossi in her "Universal Manhood Suffrage" (2018) brings back into the conversation. Her article takes the social classist problems outside of gender and places them into the hands of wealth, race, and systemic inequality. Rossi widens the gaze to include many issues within politics, something it is important to notice whether the authors took a stance on, or not. David Patterson's "The Radical Candidature" (2016) narrows back down Rossi's widened perspective to show which issue Eliot took a hold of and put as the meat

of her novel. Through a conversation between Rossi and Patterson, it is also possible to see which issues Eliot discarded in favor of her giving so much space and thought to the political processes of rural areas and the place of the Radical Party within England's politics. By comparing the texts that cover broader issues with the texts that explain the detailed aspects of the texts, it is possible to discover the priorities of the novelists and understand how their perspectives differ and come together.

Then later writers, like Penelope Corfield in her "Business Leaders and Town Gentry in Industrial Britain" (2012) and John Paul Kanwit's "Mere Outward Appearances" (2009) are able to be added to the discussion as they study the effects of the industrial revolution on classism within industrial cities. This conversation is incredibly important in Gaskell's writings, and both Corfield and Kanwit are essential to understanding what the mindset was of the newly rich generation of factory owners. There had to be a reason why these characters were written the way that they were in the novels and discussing the real life personalities they were based off of is instrumental in understanding just how much these novelists sought to perfectly reflect the world they saw around them.

Realism is the key with Gaskell and Eliot, and this is shown in their ability to portray the populations around them more accurately than most. Lynn Shakinovsky in his "Christianity and Class" (2018) and Jane Humphries in her "Lure of Aggregates and the Pitfalls of the Patriarchal Perspective" (2013), each show through their critiques of the time period, how the novelists were not perfect in their adaptations of the world. Both Gaskell and Eliot were middle-class

women, living above the working-class and imbued with the social ideals they grew up in, and both Shakinovsky and Humphries give analyses that show the importance of the novelists bringing to light the lives of the working class and their suffering, but also reminding readers that neither novelist was perfect, nor could they not be improved upon. Richard Horton uses his "Mr. Thornton's Experiments" (2006) to give an example of how good can be done, even from a biased perspective. He explains how Mr. Thornton in Gaskell's *North and South*, was not wrong in his perspective, but it was important for him to set aside his assumptions and learn more from the source: the impoverished. Horton's article makes it possible to connect the novelists with the fictional characters and show the overlap of their thoughts over the portrayals of certain classes.

It is important to show that the novelists discussed in this project, while all forward thinking in one respect or another, they also all had their own hang-ups, biases, and aspects of their writings that remind the readers they are not the total authority on all socio-political, economic, and moral issues. Parkinson shows how one character who was villainized by the heroine had no reason to be villainized, for she was a victim of her society and the heroine. When put in conversation with Melissa Shaub in her "Worthy Ambition" (2007), both authors make it clear that the perspectives of the novelists were not universally shared by the world. Both Charlotte Yonge and Charlotte Bronte worked to create worlds in their novels where the role of a woman could be filled by a perfect example, giving the women of their societies an image to aspire to. These images are ripped apart by Shaub and Parkinson as they each take the characters outside of their novels and

show how confining, demeaning, and needlessly competitive those portrayals of women are in these novels.

Leslee Thorne-Murphy then enters into the conversation with her article, "The Charity Bazaar" (2007) and gives a concrete example of how Yonge's picture of morality and understanding of a woman's role in a society was actually confining women when it was attempting to raise them up. Martha Stoddard Holmes' "Victorian Fictions of Interdependency" (2007) plays the devil's advocate and shows the necessity of Yonge's explicit portrayal of the ideal woman. When paired with Thorne-Murphy, an image is given of what Yonge's intended purpose could have been when she wrote her work, as well as the literal result of her work, and how the two differ so entirely. This opens up a discussion on intention versus result, and with both authors it is possible to show the differing perspectives within academia, as well as within the interpretation of a novel.

Each chapter of this project is organized based upon the general topics the authors discussed in their writings, as well as what part of the century the novels were first printed in. This organizational structure is used to illustrate how the topical spheres that female writers chose from for their novel ideas, shrank throughout the century as the novel became more prevalent in the main-stream public consciousness. The more respectable the novel became, the more difficult it was for women writers to contribute to the genre that they helped to create. Therefore, while the beginning of the century was flush with female authors — especially after Jane Austen's introduction and subsequent inspiration to her public — talent, skill, marketability, and ability in general all became key factors

in what books were taken for publication in this new market. However, each chapter will highlight how the reach of female authors — and eventually showing how the reach of women in general — is further and stronger than expected. This is shown through the reach of female characters, the authors' opinions shared in the texts and how they were accepted by the public. Additionally, the ability of these authors to comment on important topical issues, no matter what the overt storyline of their books was, meant that no matter the constraints, rules, social expectations, women were the backbone of the novel industry and in their world's eyes, the backbone of their society's morality as well.

The project begins with a chapter discussing Great Britain's international empire as it is at the height of its power at the start of the nineteenth century, through texts by authors Frances Burney, Mary Shelley, and the anonymous author of *The Woman of Colour*. Each author seeks to show a different side and impact of Great Britain's international empire upon England's own society. They do this through employing tactics such as Burney's tale of love told through a voice of satiric British nationalism. Shelley creates a new genre and uses it to build an entirely new world onto which she can place her overt criticisms of her own country's government. *The Woman of Colour* author chooses to show a world that most everyone in England grew up within, from the perspective of an outsider: from a character who did not wish to enter England and who was not enamored with the life of an English citizen. Each method is used to show harmful the strong nationalistic sentiments are on a people who would otherwise be the most learned in the world living in an empire that has access to so many

diverse cultures. Each author shows the ignorance of the English populace of the world outside of England's borders through discussions within the book about other cultures where it is made clear that those who most touted England's virtues, knew none for anyone else. Therefore, this first chapter is used to set the scene and explain what the British Empire was, the defects of this powerful entity on its populace despite its clear capabilities to do otherwise, and how it had incredible amounts of power to change the world. Each author had opinions on how that power should have been used and this is shown in their writings by the various treatments of characters and the given perspectives. The world was big, and England held so much under its control because it believed itself to be the best leader for those under its power. England saw itself as the world's moral authority, so these authors create worlds that show exactly what their view of England's morality is: what it is and who contributes most to its creation.

The second chapter of this project decreases the viewing scope from an international perspective to a domestic look at England through texts by authors George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. Both authors use similar character tropes to show the different classes that together create the type of society necessary for industrialism. As the nineteenth century progresses, England is in the throes of industrialization and this came with an entire population isolated, demeaned, and dying, right in its own backyard. Both Eliot and Gaskell were women who lived in upper-class circumstances, and therefore, unlike the authors of the first chapter, they did not live in the lives of the characters they were writing. Often, because they were writing from an upper-class perspective, some nuances of the lifestyle

get lost in their writings, but it is good that anything is being written about this population at all. The common worker was either not educated or motivated enough to write their own history down on paper to share with others. With a push towards urban living, the industrial lifestyles could not be ignored as easily living only a few blocks away from the upper classes, unlike the international empire where the subjugated populations could be all the way across the Atlantic Ocean. Eliot and Gaskell have between them three main interdependent populations without whom the industrial world would not be able to continue at this time. First, the politicians and gentry who make the rules and decide how much power industrial companies will have in their societies. This group comes from the old money, titled class of citizens from the old style of England where an entire class could sit idle all day and live off of their inheritances. This group is dwindling at this time because of industrialization and the rise of individual fortunes due to trade and capitalism, but at this stage this group still does have power thanks to tradition. The next group are the leaders in the industry, those who own the factories and the mills, and in Eliot and Gaskell's books are called the "masters." These men and their families are the new money elite that, to those in classes below them, are not distinguishable from the landed gentry. Finally, there is the class of workers, those who work in the factories, live in the slums, and without whom this entire new system of living would not be possible. This workforce lives in slums from paycheck to paycheck and often dies when unable to work due to a disease or an injury, often caused on the job. There is a clear call for reform made in both authors' texts, and this call is supplemented by heartbreaking

imagery written out in such intimate detail that it cannot be thought of as anything, but stories based upon the truth.

Finally, the third chapter's scope of focus is shrunk to just the home as seen in Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Both books focus on female protagonists who lead a family and a home as the traditional "Angel in the House." This concept is one that arose in the nineteenth century and put women firmly within the home with the clear message that the world depends upon them staying home, raising the next generation, and making sure they acted in a way that matched up with their society's conception of morality, or else their society would fall apart. Being tasked with the upkeep of the world's morality is a big task, and both Yonge and Bronte show how that charge completely wipes out a person's own individual life, wants, needs, and no matter how successful a woman is in this role, it completely dehumanizes her into whatever person their household needs most. Both the home's practical tasks and moral ones must be filled in order to truly be successful, and Yonge shows through this revolving cast of characters that without personal sacrifice the Angel cannot really be successful. Yonge shows the importance of women within the society of nineteenth-century England, but she also diminishes their freedom. Because a majority of women marry and/or run their own households, by necessity they must become an Angel in the House and reading Yonge's work gives the impression that she believes that means women must sacrifice every aspect of themselves in order to be successful in that role, lest society fall. So, while she makes the great point of creating a system that shows how influential

women are, both nationally and internationally, they are still trapped in the image they must portray to the world. Likewise, Bronte creates for her protagonist a role and a happy ending that she can only reach once she has given everything of herself over to the power of a household. Bronte also shows her bias by pitting two women against each other throughout *Jane Eyre* and instead of commenting on how not every woman should be expected to fill the role of the Angel, instead she condemns those who cannot hold up to the rigorous standards of her society. Both authors show that they understand the roles women are expected to play at the time in their worlds, and they write their novels to show the importance of those roles and how much work goes into them, in order to gain recognition by society. However, they are not advocating for an expansion of women's roles beyond these, just recognition for what they are now. This recognition is important, but the lack of change or forward-thinking shows how stuck some of these authors were in their worlds, and how it is possible to be extremely open-minded about some ideas and completely closed off about others.

This project seeks to show a connection between the fictional texts written by women in nineteenth-century Britain and the world these authors were witnessing but legally had no way of altering. It is important to show that women did have voices and when they lived in a world that would not give them a place to speak, they created and built up a medium — the novel — in which they could share their thoughts and opinions without a public uprising. The rise of the novel was a perfect occasion of which to take advantage, and even when the rest of the world became privy to the goals of this population, their efforts to silence these

women were not successful. Women writers built up the genre of the novel, helped it to gain respectability and create the standards we use to define it today. The novel was chosen as the specific medium to study because it is so new and diverse during this time period. While other genres, such as poetry, were very popular and well-respected, those genres were overwhelmed by male voices. The novel was so new that it allowed women authors to have a part in its creation as a genre, and through this they were able to find their individual and collective voices. This project works to show the diversity in female voices during the nineteenth century and create a broad layout over the general ideas in public discourse, or the ideas that women believed needed to be in the public discourse. Even though they are seen as background characters, even in their own novels, British women played an important role in the shaping of their nation and the writers sought to not only call attention to that fact, but to continue the tradition in the public light.

CHAPTER ONE

How Great Britain's International Empire Led to a Greater Ignorance Within its Society

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were several large cultural shifts that affected the internal culture of Great Britain. This change in attitude came from reshaping foreign policy, an increase in military presence throughout the world, and a general belief within Great Britain of the superiority of British culture over that of the rest of the world. This began a cycle of isolation from, and ignorance of, any of the cultures that Great Britain was subjugating, or just interacting with, as their Empire extended across the entire world. Authors at this time noticed this large disconnect between the amount of access to new cultural knowledge the British Empire had and how much of this information was accurately consumed by the British public. Because the early nineteenth century was a time of increased British nationalism, these authors could not overtly state their observations and critiques of the Empire without isolating their target audiences, and therefore different rhetorical methods had to be employed in order to add their own opinions into the political discourse. Frances Burney, Mary Shelley, and the anonymous author of *The Woman of Colour* all sought to share their thoughts on political movements related to international policies with the general public. They accomplished this through satire, by creating a dystopian world against which to mirror their society, and by introducing a new voice into the conversation in order to share a traditionally silent perspective.

The trend of nationalism is clearly noted in Oliver Goldsmith's *Reflection on National Prejudices* (1760), as this work provides the base observations onto which the subsequent authors built their own ideas. In this essay, Goldsmith describes a conversation between himself and a "pseudo-patriot," in which the latter makes the claim that "the English excelled all the world" (307). This blanket statement of English excellence is found, stated much more subtly, within Burney's *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties* (1814), Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), and *The Woman of Colour* (1808), however Goldsmith's essay was written close to fifty years before the publication of any of these novels. Because this statement is said outright in a large group to applause in Goldsmith's narrative but whispered into polite speech in the later authors' books, it is possible to see the evolution of the British nationalist sentiment from a political ideology to a natural part of the society. Goldsmith pushes back against this sentiment in a similar way to how the other authors in this chapter fight against the innate nationalistic prejudice. He makes an argument favoring the gathering of information prior to making such a strong statement. Evidence is required to form such a large opinion, and only after having "made the tour of Europe and examined the manners of the several nations with great care and accuracy" (Goldsmith 307), could a fair decision be rendered. Goldsmith's companions in this conversation were not appreciative of his use of reason over feeling when deciding which country was best to support. The argument of emotion being a necessary part of patriotism is isolating and can lead to violence as people stop forming their loyalties off of reason.

*Outsiders, Satire, and Superiority Exhibiting the Cultural Failings of a War-Focused
Imperial Empire*

Frances Burney addresses the harmful cultural isolation into which the British Empire's sense of superiority brought its citizens. Linda Colley, in her *Britons* (1992), gives background to how Great Britain's international empire was a very large topic of discussion at the beginning of the nineteenth century, due to various international issues such as the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic Wars (150). The appearance of French emigrants in England forced the English to take note of the effects of internationalism on their own societies, while leeching onto their desperation to feed their feelings of superiority, without offering aid to sustain their survival. Katharina Rennhak explains how women writers became involved in this issue. Because they were now within the British citizens' home territory, "the emigrants' fate of exile and homelessness provided eighteenth-century women writers with a particularly suitable opportunity to get involved in the political discourse of the day" (Rennhak 575). Burney addresses the overpowering view of superiority within the country by showing not only France from the perspective of English citizens, but vice versa. Through satire, this author is able to exaggerate the two worlds that she personally inhabited, France and England, and show the audience, through their own eyes, just how ridiculous certain prized aspects of their culture truly are. *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties*, addresses English nationalism and the stereotypes that were held against the French and in reality show their complete ignorance of the culture, while often inadvertently landing English citizens in danger. Her exaggeration of the upper-class English society and educated single women within it, allows Burney to share some of her more radical thoughts

through the mouth of someone generally overlooked due to national prejudices. She exaggerates her characters enough that they are cartoon versions of those whom she actually based them upon in real life, but she keeps them realistic enough so that her audience would still be able to recognize certain characteristics in their own societies and hopefully change them.

Burney was a writer who used her novels to comment on her surrounding world and the class structures, rules, and people which made it up. She used satire in her novels as a tool to share her own thoughts and opinions without anyone in her society fully realizing the true social critiques hidden behind her humor. Julien Fung argues that this period at the turn of the nineteenth century was one of transition, and while satire was present in many works, those who worked with it at the time "[did] not offer a consensus on what satire should be" (939). While Burney makes ample use of satire in her works, it was still growing into its modern connotation, and therefore Fung proposes that "In [Burney's] works, satire is employed not to reprimand the wicked but to warn her readers about social dangers and to express pessimism about the possibility that her society can be reformed" (940). Through Burney's careful exaggeration of social classes, social customs, and socialites, her stories are full of misdirection and problems that appear to be easily rectifiable to the outside observer while her commentary holds an accurate mirror up to her audience. Her characters, just like her early audience, are generally members of the middle and upper-classes, and while they boast the most wealth and social clout in her tales, they are also the people who are under the tightest social constraints. She shows that the higher up one is in the world, the more it is possible to lose. This means that any changes they would push to enact in her systems — such as those pushed by her character

Eleanor in Burney's novel, *The Wanderer* — then the social order would be challenged, and it would be likely to reflect badly upon the freedom and autonomy of that person. This is especially due to the fact that Great Britain was a country filled to the brim with nationalism. Her contemporaries could truly appreciate how painfully accurate her social commentary was because she drew from her own experiences, resulting in many of her characters becoming caricatures of real persons within Burney's social circles. This lends a large amount of realism to Burney's tales, as she creates a world that is parallel to her own, and that makes it irresistible to her readers as they can see themselves within her writing. This attention was important to grasp because Burney's novels were not written simply to entertain, but they were made to open up a discourse over aspects of her society that she deemed in need of change. It was through her humorous and satiric observations that Burney was able to attract attention to aspects of the world toward which her society had grown numb.

Burney mainly discusses the nationalistic fanaticism found in England as an after-effect of imperialism. Linda Colley explains how the origins of what grew into the exclusionary culture of the English elite, came from the consolidation of British culture (*Britons* 156). The British Empire grew into its power due to its hold on colonies all across the world, but "In the wake of the loss of the American colonies," the country had to look inward to complete the process of "reinvigorating the power structure of the British Empire and forging a unified and genuinely British ruling class" (*Britons* 156). This ruling class led the nation into embodying a sense of superiority over all other cultures. The common attitude of the day was to not interact with any international cultures, even if they could benefit one's understanding or one's self in general. In order

to show off this harmful self-isolation in the most obvious light, Burney wrote from the perspective of the most vulnerable members of nineteenth-century British aristocratic society: young women who grew up in wealthy circumstances, but who enter into the world without any male family members to protect them. These women had a naive view of the world. In her final published work, *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties*, Burney contrasts her heroine, a vulnerable upper-class woman, with an antagonist who is in a similar position in all aspects but socially, and through this contrast she is able to share her own thoughts on England's classism, ignorance of other cultures, and reliance on its navy to keep the country insulated from the problems of the rest of the world.

Frances Burney creates a clear view of the levels of worldly ignorance within the British social classes, and how the country's sense of international superiority greatly hindered its inhabitants when they dared to leave the world of blissful ignorance that was England. Burney's *The Wanderer* begins by introducing a group of individuals who have nothing in common besides their goal: escaping Robespierre's Reign of Terror in France before they become its next victims. The story begins on a very serious note, but that does not last long as Burney introduces her main cast of characters, all caricatures of those within her own society. Upon hearing the voice of the heroine, Juliet, cry out in the night, begging "Oh, leave me not to be massacred!" (Burney 2), there are several different reactions to her pleas that depend entirely upon the character. The pilot, a young gentleman, and an old sea officer all vouch for the mysterious woman, saying "A woman, a child, and a fallen enemy are three persons that every true Briton should scorn to misuse" (Burney 3). This gallant view shows the mercy British citizens expect themselves to hold, but which is only really present in those who are trained by virtue of

their working or social positions, to act in a more chivalrous manner than the general public. Contrastingly, an elderly man, a young lady, and an elderly lady — all persons of rank and fortune — greatly dislike the idea of bringing aboard their ship an unknown person from the same country from which they are fleeing. This group is full of those who put self-preservation above all else, and they can be seen as selfish, but at this point in the tale when Juliet is nothing more than a voice in the night, it is perfectly reasonable to put one's own safety above those of a mysterious stranger.

Once Juliet is allowed onto the boat and she is moved away from her French home, everything about who this mysterious stranger is as a person is discovered before her name and backstory are revealed. The audience has to take this woman on her own merits and actions throughout the story and decide how they feel about her before class, race, background, or wealth can cloud their judgments. This heroine is thus introduced as someone that both everyone and no one can identify with. She is fleeing France but claims to be English, her skin is dark but underneath it's pale white, her manners are cold and reserved but her speech and intellect are impeccable. She both has a purse that can sustain her and is robbed of that security and forced upon charity to survive. She is young and old, hideous and beautiful, a conniving criminal and an innocent damsel cursed with poor fortune. Described as both a "black insect buzzing around" (Burney 40), and someone who possesses the elements "of gay intelligence, of well bred animation, and of lively variety" (Burney 204), she appears to practically shapeshift throughout the story. In fact, the only consistent character trait of this anonymous woman is that she never compromises her principles throughout the story, and by extension, never compromises her own virtue and purity. This strength of character is what carries Juliet through

countless dangerous and unfair situations, as her innate goodness shines through to confirm to other truly good people that she is worthy of aid and protection. Burney's creation of a character this unknown, yet relatable, was not to show any positive possibilities for change in the future of her society, but instead to exemplify the negative aspects of her world that would eventually destroy it. Fung argues that in comparison to Burney's previous novels, this final piece of writing is different not just as a "subversive and feminist social critique," but instead by viewing how "far the work is from envisaging any sort of positive change" (949) it is possible to see just how little change she believes that she can bring to her society. Her world has locked themselves away behind their navy and fed into their sense of superiority over any other nation in the world. The elite English group's initial reactions to the unknown stranger are perfect examples of England's approach to the unknown and non-British aspects of the world they lived in. Most of the characters are disgusted by her different looks and behavior, some are intrigued for the wrong reasons, and others are helpful on the condition that they were recognized to be superior because of it.

English Nationalism Deciding the Morality of Burney's Characters

At the start of this tale, neither the perspective of the outsider, nor the perspective of the group of British elite should be supported without learning more information, but, the nationalistic pride of England decides the loyalties of Burney's readers from the very first line.

"During the dire reign of the terrific Robespierre, and in the dead of night, braving the cold, the darkness, and the damps of December, some English passengers, in a small vessel, were preparing to glide silently from the

coast of France, when a voice of keen distress resounded from the shore, imploring, in the French language, pity and admission" (Burney 1).

Here the English are written as warriors, beaten back and gloriously fighting to escape under the worst possible circumstances from the clutches of evil that made up France. They are begged for pity, and these warriors, pitiable themselves for their situation, have the opportunity to become bigger than the fight they are running away from. Juliet's backstory is as unknown to the audience at this point in the tale as it is to the other characters, and therefore it is difficult to decide which side is correct in their thinking. This character-building which is occurring right in front of the audience's eyes can be seen through the lens of Fung's argument that "satire [is] not only the parts of Burney's work that employ humour or ridicule but also those which evoke negative attitudes towards her targets in other ways" (940). The story opens with the audience having no loyalties except their natural nationalism felt toward the escaping Brits. The audience learns later that each of these escapees had made the choice to enter post-revolutionary France because they did not believe the reports of the Terror they had received back home in England. Ignorant of their own lack of influence outside of England, and the realities of war — due to their cushioned English lifestyles — these people saw Robespierrian France as an excellent time to vacation and view the French acting 'inferior' to themselves.

The world of the upper-class British citizens was so isolated that its inhabitants did not understand how the wealth and power that allowed them the freedom to visit a country at war — France — would be the same reasons they would not be allowed to leave. They reveal that their release, though entirely based upon luck, also required "enormous bribes, successful stratagems, and humane, though concealed assistance from

some compassionate inhabitants of the town" (Burney 107). This is another point of satire in the work. It was only through wealth and connections that these people were able to escape France, and these were the exact reasons why they were imprisoned in the first place. Burney's heroine is the one exception to this selfish bunch, for she did not stay in France by choice, nor was she leaving it to go to a safe home where she was sure to be welcomed. The side that Burney's British readers were naturally going to take, that of the British elites, is the side of those with whom no one would wish to align themselves. Selfish, ignorant, and annoying, this group of persons are examples of people within Burney's own society, just exaggerated to make a point. As the book progresses, the readers see Juliet's position as a homeless wanderer allows her to move between social classes and groups. Fung argues that "the effect of Burney's innovations in terms of satiric targets is to make the whole of society seem vicious and dangerous at all levels" (949). Nationalism is a virus that takes hold of a nation and holds no prisoners and adds to the greater ignorance that comes from the less educated, poorer classes, those who appear as an "other" are in greater danger. Despite these very real dangers, Juliet joins the pack of elites while they escape the shores of France in the dead of night because she still is an Englishwoman at heart and should be accepted back home on that principle. However, she could not have appeared to be any less of a British citizen, and take up the position of the "other" anymore. Dressed in rags, covered in what appeared to be injuries, and with skin darker than anyone else, her escape from France lands Juliet on the exclusive boat gained through bribery and subterfuge, much to the horror of its inhabitants. It was because of this image of the outsider that she almost was not allowed on board. However, as the story continues, the mysterious heroine both evolves and

devolves in the characters' and the audience's eyes as more information is exposed throughout the tale.

Introducing her heroine piece by piece to the audience was a strategic choice by Burney. Her work simultaneously shows her characters' true selves while allowing her audience to see where their own prejudices lie. A mix of reactions meet the anonymous woman when she first steps into the escaping boat, ranging from a disdainful question of "what could put into such a body's mind as that, to want to come over to England," to it being a "compliment" the heroine is making to England, because her choice "in coming to it, is that of preferring good people to bad" (Burney 8). In both cases the speakers are prejudiced in favor of their English nationalism, but they differ in how those feelings are applied to international strangers. The first speaker, an upper-class wealthy society wife, does not believe the heroine to be good enough to hold the same title of English citizen as herself. On the other hand, the second speaker, an admiral in the English Navy, loves England so much that he appreciates anyone else seeing it as preferable to France. Neither of these judgments help the audience to understand much about the mysterious heroine, but we see the innate bigotry that Burney exhibits in her companions. The two characters mentioned here are representatives of these groups within Burney's society, and their own prejudices. Colley describes the creation of nationalism, like that seen here, to have evolved out of patriotism, more specifically "it was an invention forged above all by war" (*Britons* 5). At this period, the British Empire had just lost the American Revolution and was essentially always at war in order to keep its hold on the colonies that made up its empire across the globe. Being a nation at war changes the internal structure of its citizens as they are isolated from the rest of the world by their extensive military

presence. Burney's audience was caught up with the nationalistic fervor of a nation at war, and this led to two different responses to the idea of foreigners landing on English shores. Either there was derision and discomfort, or pride and security in one's own military might for protection.

Global Ignorance Comes from Isolation

This last, more complicated, feeling comes from the imperialistic attitude that has evolved within the British Empire at this time and resulted in a lack of self-awareness within England's population. Burney's cast of characters exemplifies not only the variety of individuals found within her society, but also the depth of ignorance of the world outside of England that permeates down to the meanest of social classes. Their love of their country is what unites the warring characters at the end of this first section of the story. When, upon seeing the English shores, the entire ship has the same feeling of "the near approach of land seeming to fill every bosom, for the instant, with feelings equally enthusiastic" (Burney 27). This group that had been battling the entire trip, comes together with an equal love of their country. Burney is again satiric with this image of unlikely friends being united through a shared experience, an image that is immediately dissolved when the party reaches the shore and immediately all go their own ways. When the characters are first introduced, fleeing from Robespierre's France, they are, understandably, incredibly shaken up. However, once they reach the comfort of their native shores, each individual becomes focused on their own worldly and trivial pursuits, and the attachment to those who still suffer in France, or even a focus on the world outside of England, is severed. Once the characters return to England the story changes

completely in tone from one of war and physical danger, to that of country society life, and social danger. The united feeling that brought together the entire ship of escapees is over with the minute their feet touch the British shore. Classes, rank, and the sense of British superiority again take hold of the group, and their adventures in France are as quickly forgotten as the troubles of those still left to the mercy of Robespierre. However, Rennhak makes the point that "the emigrants. . .are, obviously, far from being fervent nationalists." This is because, "As emigrants, they would hardly extol the merits of a country they have just had to flee" (Rennhak 577). This creates a wider gap between the emigrants and those born in England. In the face of such strong nationalism, those who have been betrayed by their own country will feel lost and alone. This attitude is shown in the character of Juliet who jumps from place to place and encounters English citizens of all social classes, genders, and professions, and yet without fail, each one of these characters worked hard to remind the wanderer that she did not belong, nor that they cared about the fate of her previous home.

It takes first person accounts, from who had witnessed the atrocities and not turned them into parlor jokes, brought up throughout the story to remind the audience that a world does exist outside of a petty country society. Outside characters must be transported in to draw attention back to the death march that friends and family of these characters may be experiencing across the English Channel. The heroine witnesses several conversations of this kind from various characters throughout the novel, rich and poor alike. The only difference between the ignorance and absurdity of the claims being that the rich would talk with an unearned authority on the subject of international politics, and the poor would be very honest that they do not fully understand what they are talking

about, but both work to perpetuate many misconceptions. An example of this comes when Juliet is asked if she is a good actress because she is French, and continues with the thought that "they say all the French are actors or dancers, except just them that go to the wars" (Burney 250). Coming from a simple shop owner in a country town, Burney shows how national prejudices start and turn into the disrespect and hatred formed in higher society. If most of England assumes that the French are only artists, then they may not respect them as fighters. This conversation continues with his question concerning Robespierre's Terror and "whether they pop off them players and fiddlers at the same rate they do the rest? for, if they do, it's a wonder how they can get 'em to go on acting and piping, and jiggetting about, and such like, if they know they are so soon to have their heads off, all the same" (Burney 250). This question is asked with the innocence of someone who is so far removed from this tragedy, that the horror of Robespierre's France can be understood but not felt.

The insulated nature of every socio-economic level of the population is underscored by ostensibly silly questions asked by lower-class members of Burney's cast of characters. Their ignorance can be laughed off by her higher-class audience of readers who wrongly perceive themselves to know more than those they read about, and miss Burney's message entirely. England is active in every corner of the world, and yet its population has no knowledge of what is happening in the country next door, and it is that kind of ignorance Burney attributes to every single English character, even the most uneducated and minute, in order to drive home her point. Fung uses circumstances like these to drive home her view that "*The Wanderer* is not a reformative satire" because "the ending of the novel suggests that change is not possible" (951). However, because satire

was a new writing style at the turn of the century and not possible to be defined, Burney cannot be put outside of the box of reformative satire. Just her placing this mirror up to her society can be expected to produce a great impact on their mindsets and points of view. Therefore, while it is not confirmed why Burney wrote *The Wanderer*, the impacts of this type of literature are profound in opening up a conversation led, and dictated by, women.

Frances Burney uses her protagonist — Juliet — to show her audience how deep-set and habitual their prejudices are against the "other" and international communities in general. She uses a person who begins the tale with no real identity, or even consistent facial features, in order to create a person that her readers relate to without any effort. This is to combat the clear divisions being made between an "us" and a "them" within the British culture at the time due to their imperial Empire keeping the nation in a constant state of war. The fervent nationalism that then arose became a toxic way for British citizens to separate themselves from international cultures, despite the nineteenth century being the time when Great Britain had access to the greatest amount of cultural knowledge. The satirical writing style allowed Burney to make cutting social commentaries through depicting a society just like her own, populated with people just like those she encountered in her daily life, and exaggerate everything just enough that avoid hurt feelings, or public outrage. Burney's satiric voice cuts through her stories as each character is undoubtedly made to ridicule a different aspect of British society. She attempts to cut through the prejudices that have sunk into her society's way of thinking, and like Goldsmith, she seeks to show the world the importance of reason over loyalties formed out of social structures or emotional decisions.

The Use of Dystopian Fiction to Reflect on British Politics

Mary Shelley creates an entire dystopian world almost three hundred years removed from her own society to draw any obvious attention away from the fact that issues in this world mirror those present in her own society. This intentional reflection in *The Last Man* is a method of reaction to, and reflection on, the imperialistic and war-driven society that Shelley was living in. She creates a world that lifts the veil of ignorance and explicitly shows humanity that the aspects of life they believed themselves to have control over — politics, war, systems of government and law — are miniscule in relation to the powers outside of their control, such as life and death. Anne Mellor, in her book, *Mothers of the Nation*, explains that "by the end of the Romantic era, the novel had become the site of intense political debate" (103). Works such as Shelley's "used their fiction to promote radical changes in Britain's legal system of governance, both at home and abroad" (Mellor 104), and thus the newer way to access a large audience was under review. *The Last Man* uses a global plague as a catalyst to show the downsides to England's imperialistic push to become a dominant world power, and how Shelley's own society would fare if faced with a crisis of this magnitude: the country that insisted on becoming a global leader for the wealth and power could not successfully handle the responsibility that comes with that additional power.

The Genius of Shelley's Worldbuilding

Shelley, in her novel, *The Last Man*, chooses to create an entirely new world where she has complete creative control. While Burney constructed caricatures of her subjects in order to share her honest thoughts about them without backlash, Shelley

simply took her own society and moved it to a new point in time and that was enough to distract her audience from her social and political commentary. Science fiction, like satire, is an effective way to write a story where the author can put the audience at ease because they are reading a story that is not claiming to be realistic at all. Shelley hides her political ideas behind male characters and within a futuristic society because, as Mellor explains, "women writers of the Romantic era, whether radical or conservative, more often celebrated the workings of the rational mind. . .in the female body" (87). She is able to speak through the mouth of her hero, Lionel Verney, who participates in this futuristic England's political sphere. She introduces Verney, and her audience, to a world that "at first appeared on the eve of a civil war; each party was violent, acrimonious, and unyielding" (37). This greatly resembles Shelley's own British Parliament, but her harsh judgments make it necessary to shroud these strong opinions in the guise of another society, just as she hides her opinions in the mouth of a man.

By making the audience believe a creation is a commentary on a futuristic society, the audience is not on their guard and the critiqued elements of a political system that mirrors their own become subliminal thoughts that go practically unnoticed. While the characters and physical settings may be identical to those of her own contemporary society, by changing small aspects, such as the year, the places where Britain is at war, and the lineage of the previous rulers, many more obvious commentaries on the socio-political systems are hidden within this worldbuilding. The first half of this novel is filled with discussions of "the Greek cause" (Shelley 211) against the Turks and "the election of the Lord Proctor" (133). These worldly, upper-class and purely English issues take up the book, instead of calling notice to hints of disaster on the horizon. Of,

"PLAGUE. This enemy to the human race had begun early in June to raise its serpent-head on the shores of the Nile; parts of Asia, not usually subject to this evil, were infected. It was in Constantinople; but as each year that city experienced a like visitation, small attention was paid to those accounts which declared more people to have died there already, than usually made up the accustomed prey of the whole of the hotter months" (Shelley 228).

This is the first instance that Verney, the narrator and mouth for Shelley's ideas, even mentions the fact that there is a plague ravaging the Earth. Even when death is being reported, the tone tells the reader that those deaths are not important because they do not occur on English soil. She allows her readers to fall into their natural predispositions — in this case an inattention to the rest of the world — and then eventually shows them the fault in their thinking by killing off every character in the book while still hinting at how this circumstance could have been prevented. Her audience will be shaken, but not offended because while the story is terrifying, it is not about their society, but instead a future world far away from their own.

Fiction-writing at the turn of the nineteenth century was not under as much scrutiny as it gained later on because the novel was such a new genre, many did not know what to think of it. Unlike poetry, there was not a long tradition of writers in this genre to draw from and build upon, especially for women. Mellor argues that "the women writers of the Romantic era forswore their male peers' concern with the capacities and value of the creative imagination, with the limitations of language, with . . . the development of an autonomous self and the nature of self-consciousness, and with political (as opposed to social) revolution" (86). Writers like Shelley were forced by necessity to either look upon the few male novelists that were precursors to themselves, or decide to blindly build their own tradition, wholly through creative ingenuity. This latter choice is argued to be what helped the genre of the novel to grow and become popular and respected with a place in

literature when originally they were seen as "silly" and a "waste of time." Shelley not only excels in creating her own genres of fictional writing, she also portrays her own society with a vivid accuracy. She creates the connection that no matter how far humanity progresses, it stays the same at its core.

Britain's Lack of Leadership in an Imaginary Crisis Does Not Bode Well

A big mistake that Great Britain makes, as shown through Shelley's hints throughout *The Last Man*, is the fact that they were unable to take effective and decisive leadership against the plague, despite them having the resources to do so. A mirror of the nineteenth-century British Empire, Shelley's dystopian government claims its role as a world power makes it capable of handling the leadership and responsibility of that position up through the early days of the crisis. *The Last Man* is in its most simple form an example of what happens when those claims are cashed in and the results that were promised are now expected. Refugees stream into the country, armies die by the thousands in tropical climates, and resources are hoarded among the wealthy who then die surrounded by their wealth in their isolated country manors. Shelley's describes the total chaos that comes when

"the plague is in London; the air of England is tainted, and her sons and daughters strew the unwholesome earth. And now, the sea, late our defence, seems our prison bound; hemmed in by its gulphs, we shall dow like the famished inhabitants of a besieged town. Other nations have fellowship in death; but we, shut out from all neighbourhood, must bury our own dead, and little England become a wide, wide, tomb" (Shelley 198).

Her characters reek of desperation in this moment, when just chapters before they carelessly discussed other countries who were fighting the exact same battle. Shelley was showing the public exactly what would happen if anything close to a crisis were to

happen in England, and how those in the government who claimed to always know what was in the empire's best interest, were actually just out for themselves. Mellor identifies that "women critics claimed the highest cultural authority" and those who chose to critique their own nation, such as Shelley, "assumed full citizenship in that cultural arena or social sphere that mediates between state institutions and private domestic practices" (101). Shelley's original characters are held up as the shining standard of comparison against those collapsing systems just to show how far they have fallen from the ideal. This warning is hidden in her dystopian world so as not to draw any obvious criticism, but there are enough similarities between her fictional government and the one that her audience lives under that even if her audience doesn't realize it, they are drawing comparisons between them.

Many will see the plague as the great equalizer when in fact the only thing it did was exacerbate the problems that were already present in the society. England is seemingly the last place that the plague reaches, due to it being an island, and it is not until this point that any of the main characters or politicians give up any of their peace of mind over this issue. Only once it is too late to enact any preventative measures does the British Parliament attempt to solve the issue of the global pandemic. She has Lionel muse that

"it is a strange fact, but incontestable, that the philanthropist, who ardent in his desire to do good, who patient, reasonable and gentle, yet disdains to use other argument than truth, has less influence over men's minds, than he who, grasping and selfish, refuses not to adopt any means, nor awaken any passion, nor diffuse any falsehood, for the advancement of his cause." (Shelley 508).

This reflection shows her thoughts on the durable predatory will of mankind. Even if a pandemic hits and Britain's leadership fails the entire world that depends upon it, and

even if traditional religion is abandoned, loved ones die, and it is impossible to live as humanity once did, it still will endure. This is a theme that she focuses on as a silver-lining after it is proven, within her book, that no singular country could lead the world through a crisis of this magnitude, most especially Britain at this time when they are obsessed with nationalism. Humanity will endure through all of the failed political institutions, religious fads, or deadly plagues. Mellor describes women writers with broad blanket statements, but she describes the message in Shelley's writing well when she says that "most women writers of the Romantic era opposed violent military revolutions, especially the French Revolution, in favor of gradual or evolutionary reform under the guidance of benevolent parental instruction" (87). Her characters work from the very beginning of *The Last Man* to create positive changes in their society. It is clear that while the leadership styles may not always be desirable, there will always be someone trying to save the world, and that is the aspect of mankind that needs to stay strong: that enduring spirit. Shelley emphasizes the ridiculousness of creating conflict between groups when there is a much larger enemy that could be defeated with a united effort. The struggle for power is meaningless, for even when a person, or nation, possesses control they are not invincible, and often they cannot live up to the bold claims made in their ascension to that power.

The Use of a Novel to Deconstruct Racial Prejudices in Britain

The last, but, arguably, the most important voice from this era comes from a person who is not a member of the upper class, not white, not from England, and not a man. *The Woman of Colour* takes every single possible personal attribute that was subjugated during this time, and places them all on the protagonist in the form of a young woman from Jamaica who self-identifies as "a mulatto West Indian" (*The Woman* 92). Olivia Fairfield is a protagonist unlike any other written at, or prior, to this time at the turn of the nineteenth century, and this is largely due to the detailed and realistic rendering of her life in this novel.

Looking at how she self-identifies, it is easy to see the position of an in-between character that the author assigns to Olivia. The author's intricate portrayal of her protagonist is so unlike those typically drawn up by the other English authors in this section because she does not hide from the discussion of race or from the effects of colonialism on the world. She has well-constructed rebuttals to various arguments and dismantles many racially driven arguments that are in favor of racially structured societies and economies. Additionally, *The Woman of Colour* has the quality of having an anonymous author, and it is because of this and the detailed worldbuilding that, in the introduction to the novel's 2008 edition, Lyndon Dominique explains how many academics conclude that the heroine is at least partly autobiographical (32). A perspective is given that comes from two worlds, Jamaica and England, slavery and upper-class privileges, dehumanization, and the dehumanizers; however, the heroine cannot categorize herself on one side or the other because she is a part of both worlds. Olivia's manners, confidence, education, inheritance, and white blood relations all place her in the

ranks of upper-class Englishwomen, but her skin and facial features never let anyone forget that she also shares a bloodline with those still enslaved. Using an outside perspective, in *The Woman of Colour*, the anonymous author critiques British prejudices, both racial and gendered, and uses her novel to deconstruct the social discourse of race within that society that came from the British Empire's use of imperialism across the globe influencing a feeling of superiority within English citizens.

England as the Ideal Place of Safety, and How Limited that View Really Is

Similar to Burney's *The Wanderer*, *The Woman of Colour* begins with a dark-skinned foreigner sailing to England out of necessity, not out of want. Like Burney's heroine, Olivia is reluctant to leave her home, for even her "dear father, doatingly fond as he was of his Olivia" recognized before he died that "the illegitimate offspring of his *slave* could never be considered in the light of equality by the English planters." He wished to have her marry an English cousin and therefore not only legitimize her claim to her inheritance, but also save her from a place — Jamaica — where people of color are treated as "but little removed from the brutes" (*The Woman* 53). Olivia makes a connection here between herself and those enslaved in her home. Whether or not her father believed that his daughter was inferior to himself due to the color of her skin, he understood the reality of her life. He is called "dotingly fond" of his daughter, but this is not the language of equality. Oliver Goldsmith's essay, "Reflections on National Prejudices," gives light to this phenomena of a man choosing the pride of his country over the respect of a loved one, and this is because "we are no longer citizens of the world. . .we no longer consider ourselves as the general inhabitants of the globe, or

members of that grand society which comprehends the whole humankind" (308). Using Goldsmith's reasoning, it is possible to understand why Olivia's father, just like Juliet's rescuers and Shelley's entire English society, saw England as the best place with the best people. Olivia may have grown up in Jamaica and feel completely comfortable there, but her father was always an Englishman, and the audience sees this when he uses his will to ship his only child off to a strange land to marry a strange man. Nationalism drew him to remember his country fondly, and to see his current residence as full of danger.

This novel was published during a time of change in international rule, and that is reflected within the story. The slave trade was officially outlawed in Great Britain in 1807, and *The Woman of Colour* was published on the heels of this legislation in 1808 (*Britons* 351). Dominique discusses how some academics assume that the book's author decided to publish her writing anonymously in order to avoid any public backlash during this highly politicized period. This was like a double-edged sword because the large amount of international issues drawing the public's attention outside of England's borders, meant it was also the most auspicious time to publish a story on this topic. The public's attention was more focused on the slave trade and imperialism than usual, and this would be an opportunity to educate the English masses on a reality they normally could not see. Kristina Huang, in her article, "Ameliorating the Situation," acknowledges the groundbreaking attention that Olivia's character was able to bring to the anonymous author's public about the true nature of slavery. However, Huang draws focus to Dido, Olivia's companion who travels to England with her from Jamaica and is presumed to be a slave. She is never outright called a slave by anyone but Dido herself, and instead she is compared to "the structure of English domestic labor" and "this analogy flattens the

particular expressions of violence and exercises of power and, in effect, creates a metaphorical gap that distances Olivia from the horrors and brutalities of enslavement" (Huang 173). This statement is interesting, because Olivia herself claims that her sensibility "was daily wounded, at witnessing the wrongs of [her] fellow beings," (*The Woman* 55), and yet she does own slaves. Olivia holds a position of power and prestige in Jamaica, regardless of her skin color, and while she is persecuted for that difference in England, within the colonies she did grow up a wealthy heiress. She becomes a representative of empire, of imperialism, and of slavery, despite her being a free citizen of the British Empire.

How "The Woman of Colour" Addresses Racism Outright

The author of this book wrote *A Woman of Colour* to achieve political goals, or at least get her perspective out to the general public, just the same as Burney and Shelley, and they did it through the victimization of their heroine. Upon her arrival in England and entrance into the home of her English uncle and cousins, Olivia is thrown into an ignominious situation, out of which she exits free of disgrace, and having given her family a better understanding of a world outside of their purview. She is given "a large plate of boiled rice" because her English hostess claims "I understood that people of your—I thought that you almost *lived* upon rice." She "was blending [Olivia] with the poor negro slaves of West Indies. . .[and] was meant to show her that . . .there was no distinction between us" (*The Woman* 77). This open act of racial ignorance is written to exhibit a situation into which many English citizens may have found themselves. According to Victoria Barnett-Woods, "The as yet undefined educated woman of color

was an experimental subject of moral reform in New World ideological writing" (614), meaning that this method of showing the English public the flaws in their way of thinking had rarely, if at all, been done. The anonymous author, along with Burney and Shelley, understood that the best way to mirror a society's worst characteristics back in its face was to show them being enacted against a wholly sympathetic and blameless character (Dominique 27). Olivia is seen as a woman who is forced out of her home and into a country where her relatives seek to alienate her just on the basis of the color of her skin, and the author does not take away from this reality with jokes, ameliorating characters, or even an English hero, but instead she simply creates a situation and shows exactly why it is wrong.

When there is not a reliable authority to confirm or contradict the validity of stereotypes they flourish and are taught as facts to the youth. This flaw in British imperialism is exhibited in Olivia's young second-cousin, George. When he first meets Olivia, he shies away from both her and her darker-skinned servant because they appear to be "dirty," although he does admit that Olivia's face "is not so very *very* dirty" because she is lighter-skinned (*Woman* 78). Instead of isolating the boy with anger or resentment, Olivia confronts this illustration of ignorance head-on in order to help him unlearn a harmful stereotype. Taking the child up in her arms she allows him to use a handkerchief to try and rub what he thought to be dirt off of her hand. While he does this she explains to him that "the same God that made *you* made me. . . and we cannot make *our* skins white, any more than you can make yours black" (*Woman* 79). Barnett-Woods explains this conversation as "a distinct appropriation of religious discourse in order to achieve a moral zenith in each character's subjectivity" (618). It is in this moment that the

anonymous author clearly states a concept that many found hard to understand: difference in skin color does not make anyone more or less of a person or more or less worthy of being treated like a person. The concept of race and equality is explained to a child and the child accepts it all, moving on completely unchanged in all except his newly expanded worldview. It is this easy rejection of a stereotypical worldview that shows the author's intent in this conversation. They advocate teaching the children these difficult subjects because those are their formative years and what they learn when they are younger will shape them as adults. The author is advocating for their society to teach and learn the basics of human kindness with the simplicity and ease it is taught to children.

One Can Be Both Oppressed and an Oppressor

The unique perspective of one who is subjugated also doing the subjugating comes from her holding positions of both power in subjugation in both worlds. Olivia believes that if she was left in Jamaica, she "could have placed [her]self in some tranquil nook of [her] native island and have been happily and usefully employed in meliorating the sorrows of the poor slaves who came within [her] reach, and in pouring into their bruised souls the sweet consolations of religious hope" (*The Woman* 56). The protagonist cannot end the system of slavery on her own, and while she often discusses how she finds certain treatments of enslaved persons to be inane and barbaric, she does not overtly make any claims about working to end the practice. She is a leader at home, and far superior to practically everyone else there, both in riches and in education. Huang marries these attributes into the description of Olivia as "a figure of imperial tutelage" (169). The protagonist grew up in a world saturated with human rights violations, and those

violations supported her way of life, no matter her personal feelings about their continuance. She explains how Olivia's character was not unique in accepting slavery to be an inevitable practice in her way of life. With passages like the one quoted above referencing the idea of "ameliorating the situation" of enslavement, Huang shows how deep the practice of slavery goes to the point that even the author, who is most likely negatively affected by the practice, does not condemn "ameliorative politics [that] centered on paternalistic "improvement" — not the total destruction — of governing colonial labour and imperial rule (Huang 170). While Olivia does voice critiques of her father's own paternalistic way of dealing with enslaved persons, she also gives herself a passive voice and portrays her will to not be her own. Whether or not Olivia has agency over her own life is a question whose answer wavers and changes throughout the text, ultimately making the reader's choice. It is the decision to that question which changes both the text's tone and purpose and decides whether or not the text's heroine shows off the ridiculousness of a country's nationalism having been taken too far, through England.

Conclusion

Power generally isn't just given away to whoever says they want it; there is a reason why certain individuals, organizations, or countries have a tighter grip on a person's free will and rights than they do. People are put in positions of power because they are believed to be the best and Burney, Shelley, and the anonymous author of *A Woman of Colour* go down the line of power in their own society to show the fault in this reasoning. Each of these women understood at least some of the inequity that was

occurring in her society and they worked to share their prevalent thoughts on political subjects through the median of the novel. This method was successfully used by implementing different methods of fiction-writing to share revolutionary, or at least, personal thoughts on a world in which these women lived, but were constrained by social conventions from participating.

Ignorance is shown to be the perpetuator of many of the harmful and exclusionary views found within these novels. Britain is a country that in the nineteenth century boasts to have the most advanced and well-educated populace, and yet shows its ignorance time and again through its lack of use of alternative perspectives in education. This contradiction, though ridiculous, can be understandable, although it should not be perpetuated. When a country has conquered others, they appear to be less powerful and therefore less worthy of notice by the conquering country's citizens. It is in this way that stereotypes are perpetuated and built upon. The fact that these concerns are acknowledged in *The Woman of Colour* and *The Wanderer*, just as their consequences are illustrated in *The Last Man*, shows the importance of including outside perspectives within a conversation about one's society. It is easy to become blind to one's faults, and that can lead a society to slowly regress, just as it is possible to see happening in England through the ignorance found within characters in Burney, Shelley, and the anonymous author's books. The evils one knows can be seen as comforting in comparison to those unknown, for war, Robespierre, and slavery were terrible periods in global history, however that does not mean England, in comparison, was a sanctuary from persecution and condemnation.

CHAPTER TWO

How Eliot and Gaskell Redirect and Explore a Public Conversation on the Effects of an Industrialized England

As the century progresses and Great Britain has greater access to raw material than ever before, thanks to their international empire, the literature of the time begins to look inwards at the country as it fully shifts into an economy led by internal industrialization of the raw goods grown in the international empire. Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot decrease the sphere of topics from the previous decades' discussion on the impacts of internationalism and Great Britain's imperial empire, to discussing what is happening in the very towns they inhabit. The impacts of the Industrial Revolution are very strong and far-reaching, and, because of a surge of movement from the countryside into the cities, the various socio-economic classes are closer than ever. It is less easy to ignore those who are living in poverty, and this is part of the reason why there is a sudden humanitarian interest in the members of the working class who live in poverty. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their text *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), explain that it was important to have authors, such as Eliot, chime in on this discourse because "It is, in other words, a compensatory and conservative aspect of Eliot's fiction that associates women with precisely the traits she felt industrial urbanized England in danger of losing: a commitment to others, a sense of community, an appreciation of nature, and a belief in nurturing love" (Gilbert and Gubar 499). While male authors such as Charles Dickens

also used the English industrial poor as subject matter for their novels, female authors provided a more unique perspective because they did not create outright critiques of their societies due to the lack of political autonomy English women held throughout the nineteenth century. Instead, because they daily were exposed to different views of life, they were able to record these differing views and create a more whole record of the human experience.

Additionally, female authors showed the public a very important perspective of otherwise underrepresented English communities. George Eliot places her novels, *Middlemarch* (1871) and *Felix Holt: the Radical* (1866) in the countryside where she creates a discourse between the landed gentry who make up a majority of Parliament, and the poor tenant farmers and factory workers who mostly go unnoticed within their worlds. Because her novels are set between 1829 and 1832, Eliot is able to give a more holistic perspective due to her knowledge of the four decades that follow. It is an interesting juxtaposition that shows the true character of each class without wholly blaming one or the other for the antiquated system of governance and the harsh economic system that both rule the entirety of England. Elizabeth Gaskell, in her novels *North and South* (1854), and *Mary Barton* (1848), creates a discourse between the industrial leaders, or "masters," and the urban working poor. Like Eliot, she does not place complete blame for the unfair situation with any one individual or class, but instead she looks to make improvements within the system as a whole through discourse between the two groups. Through their works, both Eliot and Gaskell seek to define the three major groups that made up the economic model during the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain — the gentry and politicians, the industrial factory owners, and the working poor — in order to

show a new way to approach the harsh economic model that would benefit all three classes: recognizing people as individuals rather than just members of their social class and an increased amount of communication between social classes.

Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot both auspiciously display the three different groups within a society — politicians, masters, and workers — and how they all are required to work together in order to be successfully productive. Gaskell highlights the different perspectives within an industrialized society's struggle for control, and Eliot focuses on the relationship between the governors and the governed. Because neither woman is a member of this lower working class, it is incredibly difficult for either of them to accurately portray what life was like for those who never had the time nor the ability to speak up for themselves. It is clear in both author's works that they sympathize with the plight of the common worker who is underpaid, living in squalor, and plagued by starvation and disease, but this sympathy does not blind them to their purpose of creating an equal conversation between each socio-economic class. Both authors understand that in order to make the workers' lives more humane, they must be able to understand the mindsets and backgrounds of those whose economy they rely upon, the masters, those who create the rules that govern their society, the gentry and politicians, as well as giving a voice to the hardships faced by those who were socially the lowest of the low.

How Eliot Saw Those Running the Country Were Losing Control

The English Industrial Revolution created a middle class within its society, consisting of the leaders of industry, the factory owners, who worked to earn their fortunes. This new class did not fit with either the generational wealth of the landed gentry, or the hand-to-mouth existence of the working poor. A divide between new and old money formed, and George Eliot puts this division into sharp focus in her novels, *Middlemarch* and *Felix Holt, the Radical*. From a modern-day perspective, these two groups appear to be incredibly similar because they are on the same economic level. However, Robert Allen's article, "Class Structure and Inequality During the Industrial Revolution" (2019), measures the differences in income and size of class for the two groups, and using his study it is possible to see how different the two groups really were during the nineteenth century. Allen shows through his compilation of reports and censuses that "landed classes were never more than 2 per cent of the population, and the proportion stayed roughly constant over time." This number appears inconsequential until he continues, reporting that "the bourgeoisie, which included large-scale capitalists, bankers, merchants, lawyers, high officials, and investors. . . Their share of the population increased from 3 per cent to about 8-9 per cent over the industrial revolution" (Allen 104). This study explains that those who had generational wealth, often overlapping with titles of nobility and who were the top members of society, were quickly being outnumbered by the newly rich. Eliot's Mr. Arthur Brooke and Mr. Harold Transome are members of the old elite who are slowly being ousted, but still hold the political and social power, while the new industrialists slowly take over through their new wealth and control over industry.

Harold Transome as Eliot's Radical Hope

Changes in how her political system is run is an important goal that Eliot pushes for with her novels, however, she also cautions that this change cannot be accomplished quickly. The English political landscape changed quickly in the 1830s, when Eliot's *Felix Holt the Radical* takes place, and David Paterson, in his article "The Radical Candidature" (2016) explains this change to be because "Radical advocacy of substantial parliamentary reform suddenly became very popular" (31). This ousted the Tory party, who was majorly made up of the country's landed elite, and changed the narrative within English politics, for change was no longer seen as unpatriotic. In 1832, when this book takes place, the Radical Party was fast-growing because of their cause to expand suffrage to all social classes. The increase of hourly industrial jobs meant that more and more members of the working class had more leisure time than ever before, and therefore had the luxury to sit down and get involved in politics (Rossi 2018). They may not have had the capital, freedom, or education to run as candidates, but as proven in *Felix Holt*, the working class were far from uninvolved in their local politics, leading to the rise of the Radical Party's popularity.

Eliot uses Harold Transome, from her book *Felix Holt*, in order to show how the landed gentry could be a big part in creating that change. This man was raised to be a candidate for the Tory Party, but instead who leaves the country for years in order to make his own fortune and comes back as a candidate for the Radical Party, this is someone that can make a change in the British political system because he has spent time outside of it. He can see that "the Radical sticks are growing. . .and half the Tory oaks are rotting" (*Felix Holt* 11), and because he was able to witness this change from a more

objective position than most of his social class, he is more ready to change his political allegiance. This character is a man who left England to gain his fortune in Turkey rather than rely on an inheritance would just fall into his lap, but in doing this, while it is more independent than the life of a landowner, it is still unclear how ethical his fortune-making truly was. Because he is wealthy and from a line of gentry, Eliot shows her bias in favor of the upper-class — she herself being an upper-class woman — by writing Transome in a much more agreeable light than he may deserve. His upper-class status and his choice to run as a Radical rather than as a Tory makes him Eliot's blueprint for change in the English political system. Paterson explains how Transome's decision to join the Radical Party is based upon his likelihood of success as their candidate. The Tory Party that had been in power for so long and had been represented by the social and political elite was falling to pieces "by clinging on to their opposition to any kind of political reform they had lost many of their former supporters and potential new ones" (Paterson 32). Therefore, it was important for Eliot to show the downfall of this political party, even if the Radicals did not quite achieve their political goals just yet. She only provides a snapshot of a long political battle, but through this book it is possible to feel the hope she is creating, that the change will continue, and the growth will not stall.

Transome's mother, an older member of the landed gentry class, and whom Eliot personifies as the keeper of any family traditions and history, clearly explains the seeming madness of her son's choice to become a member of the Radical Party. She explains that in her mind, "it seems to me that a man owes something to his birth and station and has no right to take up this notion or the other, just as it suits his fancy; still less to work at the overthrow of his class." She goes on to even claim her son was not

"true to [his] colours as a gentleman" (*Felix Holt* 17). Again, Eliot is not making her characters easy to fully love or hate. Mrs. Transome is a mother who has remained unchanged in her political attitudes for her entire life. She wants the best for her son, and his moving away from the way of thinking that she knows and understands scares her because she thinks it is changing him for the worse. Paterson explains that this distress comes from a place of ignorance in Mrs. Transome, because "her awareness of Radicalism is limited to the old-fashioned Radical" candidates (28). Paterson makes it possible to see how the upper-class were just as trapped in their political system as the poor tenant workers. Someone of Mrs. Transome's age, stature, and sex at this time would not have had a large amount of experience with any members of the Radical Party, let alone ones she would have deemed respectable. Therefore, her being scandalized comes from both fear that her son is about to ruin his life that she worked so hard to perfect, and fear that her own comfortable life is about to be tilted on its side. This is also why Eliot uses a young landowner who spent a good deal of time living outside of the English legal system, allowing him to provide a fresh perspective. She gives the benefit of the doubt to the landowners, showing examples, like Mrs. Transome, who do not realize they can make changes to the systems in which they live, until an outside force comes and does it first.

Although Transome's originality in breaking away from the political party he was raised to join and campaign in gives him a sense of heroism, it does not mean he is a character without fault. He states early on in his campaign that he is "a Radical only in rooting out abuses" (*Felix Holt* 19), and he never becomes any clearer in his political assertions beyond that statement. This changes the narrative within Transome's

candidacy. While he is making a difference by being one of the few landed elites to join a political party so far away from the ideals he grew up with, Transome still does not have many of his own ideals besides understanding that he does not align with Tory ideals. Paterson writes that some call Transome "a bogus radical" who joins the Radical Party in order "to show he is not tied to class conservatisms" (30). He may have separated himself geographically from his English class, but he still succumbs to English ideals when he decides to run for a political office, and it is clear that his motivation comes from the general understanding of that being what is expected of a member of the economic and social elite. Transome is an interesting character because he both succumbs to these ideals while also fighting against them. He uses the advantages of his class, rank, fortune, and generally has an attitude of expectancy in winning the position. Eliot does not write Transome as a bad candidate, in fact he is a mostly upstanding person, but it is made clear that he is one of the better options out of a terrible crop of candidates. Just because he looks good compared to his competition does not mean that he is himself a good option, but he is a step in the right direction to creating change in Eliot's society.

Arthur Brooke as Eliot's Compromise

As British politics at this time were becoming more inclusive across social classes due to the expansion of the middle-to-upper-classes, some people within those classes changed, and others worked to hold up the older ways of the world. Arthur Brooke from Eliot's *Middlemarch* is one such person who is a member of the older gentry and is having a difficult time keeping up with the world that is changing around him. Early on, he is described by his own niece as someone who "would act with benevolent intentions. .

.and spend as little money as possible in carrying them out." Brooke is a person who likes "letting things be" (*Middlemarch* 8) if they work well on their own, instead of being proactive and making improvements that would increase the quality of his tenants' lives further down the road. Eliot uses Brooke as an embodiment of what she believes to be the issue with the landed gentry of her time: their lack of tangible contribution within their societies. As a member of the group who inherit large generational fortunes from their predecessors and earn a living through their estate's tenant farmers, Brooke is able to earn an above-average living without lifting a single finger, and for a majority of this book he makes sure to give no more effort than was absolutely necessary. Eliot hints at how this attitude is not enduring in an industrialized world, a hint that Allen supports by explaining how "the landed classes consumed at a high level across the industrial revolution, but their relative position slowly eroded as agriculture declined in comparison to industry" (107). His study ends in 1867, right around the time that Eliot was presumably writing her 1871 novel, *Middlemarch* and her bumbling Arthur Brooke. These men have grown up with property and privilege, but in a time where wealth can be earned easier than it can be inherited, the old social orders are being questioned.

Eliot is commenting on the decline of the landowning class that she has partially witnessed, and her characters can be read as warnings or examples for the gentry who are left at this time. She shows how they can change their ways to fit in with this new world that clearly is not going anywhere. One large change is the accountability to which the public now holds the upper classes. Eliot exemplifies this change with the presence of a political newspaper, *The Trumpet*, who does not hesitate to publish "tremendous sarcasms against a landlord not a hundred miles from Middlemarch, who receives his own rents,

and makes no returns" (*Middlemarch* 357). The principle characters all can identify this as a critique of Brooke and his deficiencies as a landlord and leader in his local society. As someone who has obviously received all of the privileges and advantages a person could have at this time — wealth, education, connections, familial stability, and a guaranteed place in society — he is on paper the one in his community most qualified to be a leader. Alan DiGaetano, in his article "Creating the Public Domain" (2006), that the "rural gentry ruled as much on the basis of local custom as by the precepts of Parliamentary laws" (433). Eliot records this unofficial ruling of the gentry across the countryside through her examination of Brooke and shows the deficiencies in this way of governance. He, and all those in his same position, are chosen to rule because of their familial legacies and fortunes. Because of their social statuses, these men are not held accountable by the government, or even private institutions, to any type of standard in the treatment of their tenants, workers, or staff. Therefore, the existence of local publications, like *The Trumpet* in *Middlemarch*, who create a public discourse on the defects in their leaders, is an example of how Eliot shows the eventual political changes that sweep across England. By the 1870s, England was a great deal more democratic, partly due to the rise of capitalism.

Eliot is critiquing the English landed gentry within *Middlemarch*, but she also shows them ways in which they can alter their behavior and not fall behind in this new society. While it takes Brooke most of *Middlemarch* to understand the importance of his taking on an active role in the community, Eliot does redeem him with his response to his tenants' criticisms. Once Brooke sees his neighbor making alterations to his estate in order to improve his tenants' lives, Eliot hints that he will follow suit, because that good

neighbor "feels confident that [Brooke] will do it. . .because [Brooke] mean[s] to enter Parliament as a member who cares for the improvement of the people, and one of the first things to be made better is the state of the land and the laborers" (*Middlemarch* 366). This testimony is the embodiment of Eliot's hopes for how the gentry could evolve and become contributing members of a society that, due to the Industrial Revolution, is growing to value and reward hard work over inherited titles and social rankings. DiGaetano puts this situation into context by explaining how the "process of local state formation was not guided by a theory of government intervention or a grand plan for social management, but instead by a consequence of discrete responses to growing urban social and economic dislocations. The unintended consequence of local state formation, in turn, was the creation and expansion of a clearly defined public domain" (DiGaetano 428). England was changing, and it was going to change little by little based upon whatever needs that the non-landed population were not having met by their local leaders. Their leadership positions were chosen by their local societies, and if that gentry, like Brooke, was not meeting their needs, then the country would take those deficiencies and put that power into someone else's hands.

Change is something that Eliot sees to be necessary for the continued growth and survival of a nation, and it is clear that at this time change has become the nation's mission. The Slavery Abolition Act was passed in 1833, and the Great Reform Act was passed in 1832, both giving proof to the idea that all people are humans and should be treated with dignity and respect, but the 1832 Act did not extend voting past those who owned property (Rossi 2018). It was passed in response to pressures from members of the merchant class despite ironically still not allowing them the right to vote. This led to the

formation of the Chartist Movement, giving a formal voice and movement to join behind to air their grievances (Rossi 2018). While this book was not published until almost forty years after it takes place, and therefore is not a completely accurate depiction of life during this time, Eliot is able to capture the uncertainty and electricity of the times from her bird's eye view resulting from being a few decades removed from the event and being able to see the bigger picture. The elements she focuses on in both *Felix Holt* and *Middlemarch* are those that have big parts in the changes that occur in the decades following the action in these novels. The rise of the middle class, the distinction between and subsequent merging of the various groups within the upper class, the greater freedom an industrialized England allowed its working poor, and their subsequent political involvement, all of these things are central elements in her novels because she sees them as being incredibly important to nineteenth-century British politics.

How Gaskell Shows the Potential Good and the Potential Downfalls of the New Middle Class

While George Eliot focuses on setting her characters within the complex and isolated communities in the English countryside, Elizabeth Gaskell has her readers experience life directly in the middle of an industrialized English town. Both authors work to create well-rounded characters who are more than just the class of which they are a part. This results in characters that could easily be demonized instead creating connections with the audience as they see the nuances within a world that does not have a black-and-white morality. Like Eliot's Harold Transome and Arthur Brooke, Gaskell

creates antagonists who grow throughout her novels; ultimately her characters Henry Carson, and John Thornton, learn how to improve with feedback from their societies. In Gaskell's *North and South* and *Mary Barton*, she creates characters who show the behavior and standards she sees possible to enact in her own society. This model of the potential for change is then compared to those characters she creates to personify and represent her actual society. Through a comparison between Gaskell's utopia — shown through how her characters handle situations and resolve the stories — and the reality of her society — shown through those who do not receive happy endings, but instead become victims of their systems, Gaskell is able to show how nineteenth-century British society is failing its working poor, and how she would have the working class and the masters work to enact changes for the better.

The presence of an emerging middle class calls into question the importance of tradition, inheritance, education, and anything else previously held to be the markings of a social elite. England is split in its priorities between old cultural standards and the changing social standards that come with the power of generational wealth being diluted through the presence of industry changing England's economy. This change is shown in her novel *Mary Barton* with the Carson family, who are considered elite within their own manufacturing community due to their wealth, but whose parents grew up as poor industrial workers. The Carson children are the beginning of their legacy of generational wealth, as they grow up with all the advantages that wealth can buy, putting them on an equal ground with the landed elite Eliot discusses in her novels. Gaskell is sure to create a distinction between her manufacturing families and those that live in a legacy of wealth. This comes from the geographic distances that are created in the increased specialization

of industry, and the distance created between urban and rural ways of life. Penelope Corfield, in her article "Business Leaders and Town Gentry in Early Industrial Britain" (2012), conducted a study that compared the commercial makeup of sixteen English towns. She found that "the leading towns and cities [in her study] had their own specialist roles" (Corfield 36) in manufacturing. Because of this separation of individuals, it is possible for some citizens, or members of different social classes, to live with completely different understandings of the world. This is shown in *North and South* as Gaskell mirrors two families — the Hales and the Thorntons — each well-known and respected as clerical and industrial families respectively in their own communities. They are completely ignorant of each other's worlds, and this exemplifies the class clashes that occurred due to the creation of a middle class who is economically equal, or even superior, to the traditional elite, but who are new to the social leadership role that the landed gentry have held for generations.

Henry Carson is Not an Ideal Leader because He Hides from His Past

Henry Carson is a factory owner who grew up as a poor industrial worker and who was able to gain a fortune through working his way up in the industry. He and his wife both experienced life in the dirt, starvation, and destitution Gaskell establishes as the world her characters inhabit. However, it is this exact background that gives him the role of the antagonist in Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. Her narrator makes the claim that it is "well known, that there is no religionist so zealous as a convert; no masters so stern, and regardless of the interests of their workpeople, as those who have risen from such a station themselves" (*Mary Barton* 161). Gaskell's portrayal of Carson shows just how

much money and changing social statuses can affect a person. His treatment of his workers does not reflect his background as an industrial worker, and but instead is used as an excuse to push his workers harder than he himself would have liked because he can justify his reasons by being "one of them." Lynn Shakinovsky, in her article, "Christianity and class in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*" (2018) argues that Gaskell is condemning Carson for his lack of empathy for his workers. She says that "Gaskell finally betrays her tragic purpose and abandons her political concerns for her Christian ones" (Shakinovsky 907), but in fact this is just Gaskell's way of reflecting her own society back upon itself, and how not every person is ready to take up the leadership position in their society. She shows Carson to be self-centered in his choices, and because of this he is held up as an example of how industrial leaders should not act.

Carson still holds the identity of a poor factory worker even when he moves into all of his luxury. He keeps this belief so that he can justify year after year that his business practices are good for his workers because he understands their needs. An example of this occurs one night when his mill catches on fire and several men almost die. However, Carson "would not be over-much grieved for the consequences of the fire" and instead saw it as "an excellent opportunity. . .for refitting their factory with first-rate improvements, for which the insurance money would amply pay" (*Mary Barton* 54). The well-being of his workers does not even cross Carson's mind, but instead they are seen as only expenditures and machinery needing to be upgraded like those the insurance money would replace. Shakinovsky, argues that this book is "a revolutionary novel for its time, is a powerful and hard-hitting indictment of state violence, human cruelty, and institutional Christianity" (914). Carson perpetuates the system of violence that he grew

up in, in order to increase his personal wealth and ensure that his family would move up social classes. Carson is no longer a member of his old social class, and this fact cannot be ignored in the presence of his spoiled, dissipated, and materialistic children. Unlike their father and his workers, none of the Carson offspring could fend for themselves if need be. They have become isolated from their parents' world but are also still too rough to be accepted into the refined society of the gentry. They are the embodiment of the new middle class, and they are trapped in this limbo completely alone.

For the majority of *Mary Barton*, Carson does not appear to understand the dehumanizing perspective he takes of the working poor, and Gaskell juxtaposes this perspective with detailed descriptions of filth and squalor in which the poor existed. This image creates a feeling of revulsion in her reader; both at the squalor and Carson's intentional ignorance toward it. While he made sure that on his children's "education no money had been spared" (*Mary Barton* 55), and likewise other advantages were sought-after with Carson's wealth, his efforts appear ridiculous in a town where many starve to death because of their low wages. His generosity does not extend to the treatment of his workers. When one man is so sick that Carson is begged for help, he responds "Davenport—Davenport; who is the fellow? I don't know the name" to which he is informed that "He's worked in your factory better nor three years, sir" (*Mary Barton* 66). This man's work has led to Carson's great wealth, and yet Carson does not even blink when told that his worker, and his worker's wife and young children, are dying. Through Henry Carson, "Gaskell explains the full effects of alienation on all mankind, what happens to all men when they can no longer identify as human" (Shakinovsky 914). Gaskell's text shows her audience that a lack of humanity naturally will come with

isolation. They do not have the legacy of the older gentry, but they also are living in a condition far above those with whom they used to associate. Because of this, the Carsons choose to separate themselves as much as possible from the class they came from, but because the landed gentry do not accept industrial wealth as a class equalizer, the Carsons have no friends to turn to once they choose to leave the social strata in which they began. Not having any friends or equals can become disheartening and cause someone to harden their heart without even realizing it. Therefore, this separation leads Carson to no longer see his workers as individuals, but instead picture them as cogs in his machines and paychecks he must hand out, rather than those in the same position he used to hold, and where he could still be if his fortunes had taken a different turn. Gaskell creates this image to show her public how she does not want them to act and gives examples of opportunities for them to change their ways.

John Thornton is an Example of How to Grow into an Ideal Leader

Gaskell's John Thornton, from *North and South* is a reply to Henry Carson's cautionary tale; she uses him to create a space to discuss the relationship between masters and workers because the issue is not black-and-white. *North and South* is a novel that Gaskell uses as a medium to show that neither side in contention is clearly good or clearly evil. The masters and workers are portrayed as two groups of confused individuals whose lack of proper communication creates a toxic environment of disgust and disrespect built upon stereotypes. Richard Horton, in his article "Mr. Thornton's Experiments" (2007), describes *North and South* to be a "manifesto for social change, based. . .on the acquisition of reliable knowledge through more or less scientific

methods" (206), and it is this exact method that opens Thornton's mind to the idea that not every human being has the exact same experience as himself. Thornton — like Carson — grew up as a poor child and ended up working in a factory at a young age. He worked hard and gained his fortune, but unlike Carson, Thornton does not attempt to distance himself from his past and join the upper-class, but he does have difficulty understanding that not every individual has the exact same life story, and this is what creates tension between himself and his workers. Henry Carson was created by Gaskell to show the other ways new wealth could influence an individual and John Thornton was created to show the redeemable qualities of a master and the potential of the industrialized world, for both are men that hold considerable influence in their societies and can enact much good if they only know how to use it. Gaskell spends the entirety of *North and South* changing John's mind through humanizing his own workers right in front of his eyes, just as she leads her readers to understand the world is not as objectively clear as it appears in a book.

As a factor owner who is basically a king within his urban society, it is incredibly important that Gaskell wrote Thornton in a realistic way that reflects his power, wealth, and prestige, but also that she wrote him to be capable of change. He begins the novel as a fair individual when one uses his own perspective as a lens. Thornton would preach that "every one who rules himself to decency and sobriety of conduct, and attention to his duties, comes over to our ranks" (*North and South* 79). Because he was able to become successful, he assumes that everyone is at fault for their poverty if they do not partake of the exact same method. This is an understandable, but harmful, perspective, because it does not take into account the variability of circumstances that come with individual

human lives. If Thornton never expanded his worldview by entering into conversations with poor workers like Nicholas Higgins, or morally inclined Margaret Hale, then he may have ended up just like Carson: isolated from the world. This example is taken further by Horton, who explains that Gaskell used the public platform her novels provided "to give a voice to poor families who were silently starving, to women forced to take up prostitution to buy food for their children, and to factory workers who saw their wages cut, their hours reduced, and their resistance brutally put down by military intervention" (198). Thornton is written to be the saving grace of the industrial class because he redeems them through his change. He achieves the working-man's dream of working hard and eventually becoming successful, but he also achieves Gaskell's dream of creating a world where masters and workers can have an equal and respectful relationship; he unlearns his warped perspective that places the blame of poverty on the heads of the poor.

Two people have a large impact on Thornton's expansion in attitude, Margaret Hale and Nicholas Higgins. These two would traditionally have been ignored by an industrial leader at this time because as a woman and a poor worker respectively, neither would appear to have any beneficial input. Nicholas Higgins is the beginning of Thornton's alteration of thinking that eventually allows him to have an honest relationship with his workers built upon mutual respect. Unafraid, Higgins will tell and retell his own perspective to remind the world that the viewpoint of the worker is equally as important as that of the master. He, frustratedly, exclaims that "they'd tell us to mind our own business, and they'd mind theirs. Our business being, yo' understand, to take the bated' wage, and be thankful, and their business to bate us down to clemming point, to swell their profits"(*North and South* 126). Higgins shows Thornton the life of someone

who was equally determined to provide for his family and exit the cycle of poverty but could not for reasons other than laziness or indulgence. He provides the shades of gray to the previously unrelenting perspective, and Thornton is willing to admit to his error in judgment, a key characteristic in a good master that Gaskell makes sure to highlight. John Paul Kanwit, in his article "Mere Outward Appearances?" gives credit to Margaret Hale, the daughter of a former Anglican preacher, and the novel's heroine, for being the catalyst for "Thornton's newfound ability to see people in both his public and private life. . .as more than mere stereotypes" (191). This argument takes shape by reading Gaskell through the lens of natural beauty, and when Margaret's focus on beauty over utility is adopted by Thornton, he too begins to see the humanity in his workers, not just their potential for output. Horton agrees with Kanwit in giving Margaret credit because she "serves as the catalyst for a meeting between the opposing forces of masters and workmen" (205), however, it is important to note that without Higgins, Margaret, like Thornton, would never have been shown firsthand the suffering of those she was attempting to aid and protect.

Thornton does not scorn these perspectives, and because of this Gaskell makes his character growth a cause for celebration. His growth begins by shedding the belief that "suffering. . .is but the natural punishment of dishonestly-enjoyed pleasure. I do not look on self-indulgent, sensual people as worthy of my hatred; I simply look upon them with contempt for their poorness of character" (*North and South* 80). Eventually he grows to become someone who his workers "received. . .with sympathy for the care they saw pressing upon him, than with the suppressed antagonism which had formerly been smouldering" (*North and South* 389). Thornton's character growth is caught up in

Gaskell's images of the chaotic state of the world when the old values meet those newly raised up by the virtue of capitalism, as he serves her purpose in breaking away from the idea that all people in the same socio-economic class are one homogenous group. Instead, each individual needs to be approached as unlike any other person, and in this way, Gaskell shows how her society could become more unified and successful in the face of mass industrialization. Horton makes the claim that "we need individuals who can create a new cohort of Mr. Thorntons, characters who are willing to take calculated risks, experimenting with ideas and practices in the hope of discovering some small new fact to strengthen the tissue of our collective human body" (212). He is celebrated for the change that he shows is slow, possibly uncomfortable, but still possible. Thornton is not some incredible person who can alter his entire personality to fit the storyline of Gaskell's novel, he is a realistic man providing a realistic path to altering oneself for the betterment of one's society. This is why he is Gaskell's blueprint for the industrialists she sees within her own society: because his progress is not incredible, nor is it impossible, it is just difficult.

Those Who Were Not Given a Voice but Without Whom Society Would Crumble

In Gaskell's books, *North and South* and *Mary Barton*, her large industrial settings give her the freedom to create discourses between the various economic classes, just as Eliot's isolated rural settings give her the ability to show her characters' stagnation of mind in *Middlemarch* and *Felix Holt*. Because workers and masters lived just streets apart in urban areas, and spent their days employed in the same factories, it was possible

to give a voice to a group that otherwise was left mute. The poverty that Gaskell's poorer characters live in is shown through their own eyes and therefore is seen as completely normal. However, because both Gaskell and her audience are not members of that socio-economic class, she uses her wealthy characters to channel external perspectives into the natural shock of those witnessing poverty on this level for the first time. Many of her peers would not have seen firsthand the real "grinding squalid misery" that contrasts with the common notion of "honest, decent poverty." She used this comparison between the romanticized ideals and the harsh reality to create "the reflection of the different lots of the brethren of mankind" (*Mary Barton* 344). Margaret Hale's initial views on poverty in Gaskell's *North and South* are quickly discarded when she is introduced to Higgins and his daughter Bessy. She is forced to look at her own dresses, home life, and family in relation to the unhealthy squalor in which the Higgins family lives, and this shock is characteristic of that upper-class mentality that both Gaskell and Eliot write from.

Poverty was not an unknown aspect of life at this time, and it was difficult to ignore in an industrial town where the rich and poor lived closely together, but it was a difficult reality to understand from an outside perspective. Charles Feinstein, in his article "Pessimism Perpetuated" (1998), studies trends in wages, rent, and cost of consumable goods from the 1770s to the 1880s, and he finds that "it was only from the late 1850s that the average British worker enjoyed substantial and sustained advances in real wages" (642). This gives strong evidence to support the idea that when Gaskell was writing *North and South* and *Mary Barton*, workers were living below a level of subsistence, and it was only when public attention was drawn to their squalid circumstances that the industrial world was forced to change. Gregory Clark, in his article "The Condition of the

Working Class of England" (2005), explains this change of mindset came, in part, because "By 1867, when Karl Marx published the first volume of *Kapital*, his subsistence doctrine of wages was increasingly remote from English reality" (1319). This is why both Gaskell and Eliot's novels are so important. Despite the limitations of these perspectives, they give a voice to those who, unlike the gentry and masters, did not have the time, education, or opportunity to share their own perspectives with the world. Without these attempts at sharing the voices of society's unseen workforce, it is possible that change may have taken even longer than Clark reports. Through their novels, Gaskell and Eliot did not make it easy to ignore, overlook, or silence those who were being harmed by the growth of capitalism: those whose backs the new economic model were built upon.

John Thornton's original belief that poverty is a moral flaw in the worker and not a responsibility of the masters and the politicians to change the system by which an entire class is being subjugated, is turned completely on its head by this reality. Gaskell uses her own poor characters to create a conversation with Thornton and show him that goodness of character is not enough to raise a person up socio-economically. This dialogue is intricate and does not enact change in her character all at once, but instead change results from an inner struggle within Thornton, as much as outside influences contribute.

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John Barton Has the Right Ideas, but No Way to Have Them Implemented

John Barton, from Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, throws himself into a life of radical politics fighting for workers' rights, and he is a character for whom the audience can feel sympathy. After his infant son dies because he could not provide the "good nourishment . . . generous living, to keep up the little fellow's strength" that the doctor prescribed, he is fully awakened to the lack of legal protection for workers and works to try and change that. The wages he, and many others in the book, could not provide a nourishing diet, often finding that "the commonest food in the house would not furnish one little meal" (*Mary Barton* 23). Gaskell describes a plight that was not uncommon in a town where the cramped, dark, and dirty living conditions led to sickness, and sickness led to weak health unable to be recovered on the food within a worker's budget. Many of the ideas of workers' rights and the need for increased wages became popularized after the ideas had already been present in society for decades. An example of this is Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, which was first published in 1848. Their ideas of workers' rights, the exploitation of the poor, and the importance of a high-wage economy for the benefit of an entire society are shown within *Mary Barton*, which was also originally published in 1848. Therefore, it can be concluded that while Marx and Engels were often called radical for their ideas of increased wages being used to aid an economy, others who were outside of the system could also see the need for change.

Barton joins a worker's union soon after the tragic loss of both his wife and infant son, and while it touts a worthy cause, Gaskell makes it clear that the industrial workforce has no real political or social power in the eighteen-thirties. An example of this is when "a petition was framed, and signed by thousands in the bright spring days of 1839, imploring Parliament to hear witnesses who could testify to the unparalleled destitution of the manufacturing districts" (*Mary Barton* 81). This moment fills the entirety of the book with hope. The poor workers are standing up for themselves in an organized, nonviolent, and lawful way in the positive hope that no legal protections had previously been provided only because their government did not know about their situation. Unfortunately, this moment of hope is short-lived when

"Parliament had refused to listen to the working-men, when they petitioned, with all the force of their rough, untutored words, to be heard concerning the distress which was. . .crushing their lives out of them, and stamping woe-marks over the land" (*Mary Barton* 92).

One large issue within this system, that halted even discussions of progress, was the alteration of viewing workers as humans to just cogs in a machine and an expense that needed to be lowered in order to increase profits. Barton's experience with Parliament shows how far this bias truly goes within British society, and that the general workforce were not seen as equal, or even human, in the same way as the wealthy. Clark explains that the *Manifesto* "asserted that the wages of the new industrial proletariat were determined by 'the means of subsistence that he requires for maintenance, and for the propagation of his race'" (1319). Workers were given enough wages to buy food enough to support their bodies' needs until they were paid again. This cycle of poverty was perpetuated in order to keep a consistent workforce that was completely dependent upon

the masters for their livelihood, despite being the reason why they were able to continue production.

A Minor Character that Makes a Large Impact

Like Gaskell, George Eliot creates conversations between her characters on the different socio-economic issues of their society, but she does not as often mix her differing social classes in everyday conversation, especially between the very rich and the very poor. Therefore, one interaction within her book, *Middlemarch*, stands out in importance because it occurs between the rich landowner, Arthur Brooke, and one of his generational poor tenant farmers, and Brooke hardly gets a word in edgewise. Eliot's minor character Dagley is used to confirm the responsibility of taking care of those who are left to the mercy of the economic and political systems that comes with wealth, power, and prestige. An uneducated tenant farmer was placed in front of his wealthy landlord, and threatened that "there's to be a Rinform, and them landlords as never done the right thing by their tenants 'ull be treated i' that way as they'll hev to scuttle off" (373). Eliot uses this insignificant side character to explicitly say the truth that many workers are thinking. They are unhappy, they are unwell, and they are completely dependent upon those who take advantage of their workers without attempting to help them in the slightest. This is an example of the poor tenant farmers waking up to the reality of their situations, as Dagley explains the obvious truth that his generational poor tenant status has made it so that he does not own the house he lives in or even the land he stands on because he has "lived upo' [Garth's] ground from my father and grandfather afore me, an' hev dropped our money into't an' me an' my children might lie an' rot on the

ground for top-dressin' as we can't find the money to buy" (372). If his family had been able to save their money from generation to generation, then it would have been possible for them to own the land they are standing on and be able to work themselves up from that point to live a more comfortable life. Eliot uses an intoxicated character that is only seen once within the entire book to offset the magnitude of what he says. He speaks in such a different dialect because Eliot is again attempting to underscore the very real, and very scary, truths that Dagley speaks. If he is barely understandable and speaks in a way that shows he does not have a lot of education, it is easier for the reader to dismiss his speech by writing him off as a poor farmer who does not understand the system in which he inhabits. However, he understands the system better than Brooke, better than Eliot even, and that is why his character is so important. He opens the door to this conversation on workers being treated as equal persons, but in order to do this she portrays her worker as a comical background figure.

Jane Humphries, in her article, "The Lure of Aggregates and the Pitfalls of the Patriarchal Perspective" (2013), fights against the insinuation that workers do not need to exist above the most basic style of living because their purpose is to continue production. She explains that traditional nutritional studies are "particularly insufficient with respect to women's energy needs" (Humphries 698) in addition to children. Both women and children were measured to require less energy than men, despite all three groups often doing the same work. This is the exact reality that Clark and Feinstein — in addition to Humphries — are attempting to underscore with their analyses of the real wages of the nineteenth century versus the amount of money necessary to live on comfortably. Clark identifies in his study that "wages in the 1840s exceeded the highest level they attained in

any earlier decade" (1319) which upsets England's trends that stayed consistent for over half a millenia. In fact there were often declines in the average wage leading right up to the Industrial Revolution. This sudden increase in wages occurs right after the period in which Eliot's novels take place. Dagley's sentiments will be validated with an increase in urban wages in the following decade as the English economy begins to recognize its workers as more than just cogs in machines.

Barton's fight for better treatment is also validated by Feinstein's own study of wage trends support this perspective, for he finds that "Wage earners' average real incomes were broadly stagnant for 50 years until the early 1830s, despite the fact that in many parts of the country they were starting from a very low level." While this is a broad categorization of wage, what makes his findings important in the context of Gaskell is that while "some slight progress was made in the mid-1830s" with the increase of wages, "earnings then fell back again in the cyclical depression during 1838/42" (Feinstein 649). These were the exact years when both Gaskell and the duo Marx and Engels were writing their influential works discussing this very problem. Therefore, both Clark and Feinstein support the perspective Gaskell brought to her works, showing evidence in the historical trends of the necessity for someone to speak up about these issues. No matter if a person lived as a tenant farmer like Dagley, or as a factory worker like Barton, there was not an easy way out of their circumstances when wages were seen as excessive if they allowed a poor man a more comfortable living situation.

Bessy Higgins Does Much with Her Short Life

Higgins and his daughter Bessy are both factory workers in Gaskell's *North and South*, and both Thornton and Margaret only are able to expand their perspectives through witnessing Bessy's suffering. Gaskell writes her novels with incredibly realistic depictions of poverty in order to allow her audience to step as fully into the perspective of a poor worker as possible. Bessy is an invalid when the audience meets her, having become poisoned by "the fluff" in cotton production that would

"fill the air till it looks all fine white dust. They say it winds round the lungs, and tightens them up. Anyhow, there's many a one as works in a carding-room, that falls into a waste, coughing and spitting blood, because they're just poisoned by the fluff" (North and South 96).

Bessy dies at age eighteen because of the poor working conditions she was forced to endure to help support her family. Allen explains that the poor workers "was the largest group in the English economy" and while reports show a "decline in the number of poor. . .between 1798 and 1846 [this] was the consequence of reforms to the poor law, which made it harder to get relief" (106). Situations like Bessy's are just consequences of the cycle of poverty. Because she is an invalid and unable to work, Higgins, like Barton, is unable to provide a standard of living that can cure Bessy, or even allow her to live comfortably. He cannot afford medicines, nutritional food, or even enough food to feed them both. In the context of Allen's explanation that the poor law during this period made it more difficult to get aid from the state, their situation is even more dire. Bessy is introduced by Gaskell as a very real example of how her world's laws and social aids are not enough, no matter how hard someone tries to survive.

Bessy's tragic history is a plight that many workers share in a society that dehumanizes workers in order to earn greater profits. The fact that she relates her story without anger or resentment clearly shows the systemic issues and why they are not being fixed. Those who are hurt by the working conditions die because they are unable to afford the healthcare or food to save their lives, and thus the working conditions rarely get reported or changed. Her father, Higgins, is a union leader who leads a strike that takes up most of the book and ultimately ends in violence due to starvation. His attempts to change the world he is forced by necessity to live in do not work until he is given help by those in a higher socio-economic bracket. Elizabeth Gaskell makes it clear that no change can ever be made only by the workers, for they will be shouting into a void. It is the responsibility of those whose voices are heard by those in power — the masters — and those who make the rules — the gentry — to look below themselves and speak for those whose bodies and lives are given up in the rich's pursuit of wealth.

Both Eliot and Gaskell take the opportunity they have to share an ignored perspective of the world with their audiences, and they do this in hope that it will open their audience's eyes to the need for socio-economic and political changes in their society. It is through their imagined discourses between characters of various classes that they are able to create the necessary conversations that are not present within their real lives. Their characters show images of the world that many wish to ignore, but none can look away from once they have been made aware of the absolute poverty and hardship some people are forced to live in, just by virtue of where they were born.

Conclusion

Both Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot give a voice to the voiceless while creating an open conversation between all the sides of their society. Gaskell wrote her novels during the same era in which they take place, whereas Eliot wrote her novels several decades removed from the events she portrays. This difference of perspective is shown within their writing styles and how each of the classes are portrayed. The level of detail within Gaskell's novels creates realistic and emotional images of poverty that her readers cannot easily ignore. This level of detail forces Gaskell's readers to look into the eyes of a class of people they might otherwise never notice, as well as look into a mirror at how they themselves are portrayed in her novels as perpetuating the cyclical suffering of the poor. Eliot instead shows a greater perspective in her books and writes them as a sort of guideline for the upper and middle-classes to change their ways, for she sees how those who refuse to change slowly lose socio-economic and political power. Likewise, Gaskell places a specific notice on the emerging middle-class and its influence on her society. Originally consisting of the socially lowest of the low, Gaskell's focus on the specific group of people who jumped up socio-economic classes thanks to the newer industrialized British society highlights the class's new power to make changes in their world, and how the system is instead perpetuated by a lack of effort or notice taken of the suffering poor.

Each author takes a different route to the conclusion that changes need to be made within their societies in order to help the helpless working class. Gaskell focuses on the responsibility of the masters to create safe working conditions for their workers. Whereas Eliot focuses on the responsibility of the gentry and politicians to lead in their societies

and create laws protecting those who have no legal rights to even vote for their government. In Gaskell's discourse, she focuses on creating interactions between various classes and groups in order to clearly show that despite prejudices, everyone is at fault for the system of economics that they are trapped within because there are no real black-and-white solutions in her society. It is evident from her works, and the very detailed conversations over difficult topics that she puts her characters through, that she believes open communication to be the most important step forward in creating a safer and more successful industrial society. She makes up for Eliot's deficiencies, who paints her workers in a happier light than Gaskell and shows the lack of accuracy that can come from a writer not being a part of the social class they portray. Hard work is depicted as character building, and yet rich or poor, hard-working or not, all of Eliot's characters are a morally mixed bag across the different social classes. Inheritance is a large theme within her books, and while it greatly impacts her characters, wealth, like poverty, does not define them. Neither Gaskell, nor Eliot, writes their characters as better or worse than they actually are, morally or education-wise, but instead they create them to represent real people who have a right to be listened to, and only then judged. Both Gaskell and Eliot share the opinion that the working class must be protected, and both are adamant that a large change must be made in order for it to be successful.

CHAPTER THREE

Morality in the Household and How the “Angel in the House” Role Limits Women’s Mobility

Throughout this work there is a noticeable trend about the freedom with which nineteenth-century women writers took on their literary topics. The topical spheres that women writers participated in and chose from to write their novels about have shrunk throughout the century. First, there were discussions about the British Imperial Empire and the role of its navy in keeping colonies subjugated and the British identity higher than it should have been, considering how uneducated its general populace was about basic international affairs. Mary Shelley, Francis Burney, and the anonymous writer of *The Woman of Color*, all placed their settings across the entire Western World. Their characters travel and learn and experience other cultures because internationalism was an appropriate topic for women to discuss at this time. Novels were new and exciting and because the literary public did not know how popular or influential the genre would become; it did not matter who chose to occupy her time with it.

As Britain's focus moved from its international empire inwards, the topics shrank from discussing issues across the globe, to just discussing issues in Britain's own backyard. This occurs despite the fact that Britain's presence in the world has not altered, or lessened, but instead because women's literature suggests that the political focus for women has shrunk to projects within the nation. These projects are ones in which they

can more actively participate, and thus they have more authority on the subject. As the century progresses, the economic elements of the world shift, and money can be made quicker with advancements that were created back in England. The Industrial Revolution, although very important to the progression of England's economy, did influence other countries than just England, but that would not be known from the books by George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. The raw materials necessary for Britain's new epicenters of production still came from those areas around the world under British rule, but they are forgotten in the light of these more newly documented social issues. Gaskell's and Eliot's characters still have the freedom to jump between social classes and move around within their cities, but no longer is the world outside of Great Britain mentioned as relevant to the plot, or even as important within their characters' lives.

Finally, the overt political messages of books like Gaskell's and Eliot's, while creating accurate and effective depictions of their public in order to enact social changes, became a thing of the past as the female novelist's subject matter shifted to the more personal topic of feminine morality, and the more personal setting of the home. This chapter focuses on how the setting has shrunk and how this likewise has led to authors like Charlotte Brontë and Charlotte Yonge to create visions of femininity that ultimately constrain women into a singular role within their societies. While these women do ultimately appear to surrender to societal pressures and create female characters who play into the role of quiet domesticity, subservience, and sacrifice, they write constrained female protagonists for a reason. It is important that at this stage in the century, when women authors are dwindling, that women writers are present at all. They are writing books that focus on the importance of women in local, national, and international

communities, and while the ideal woman is written to be a cookie cutter "Angel in the House," they are still helping to bring light to just how much influence women had at this time, and how integral they really are to a society, lest it collapse. Both Brontë and Yonge show the trials that their characters must go through to ultimately fulfill this part, but while Yonge shows the role as one that is dynamic and easily filled, Brontë's protagonist spends the entire novel preparing for a role that only she can fulfill.

The "Angel in the House" is a term from the Victorian Era, which was used to describe the perfect woman in the eyes of her society. As the British Empire had come to a climax of power under Queen Victoria's rule, the empire attempted to present an image of morality for the rest of the world to imitate, or at least those subjugated within the Empire. This is why it is possible to see a shift in Victorian literature after the middle of the century up through its end. The subject matter of novels, at this point in time one of the most popular and widely disseminated genres, became more focused on morality and presented images of how the British society should be acting in order to hold onto its sense of superiority. In order to accomplish this goal, there needed to be persons assigned with keeping the rest of the society in check, and this task of "morality police" fell upon the women. Writers push into the traditionally "feminine" topics of emotion, morality, domesticity, and religion, while all of their characters consistently show a humanity not often paralleled, if shown at all, in male writing. These characters, which embody all of the "weaknesses" of femininity, are shown to be stronger, more resilient, and more impactful on the world around them than any previous character written to be strong and impervious to their surroundings. Both authors exhibit the key components of writing that are unique to the women writers across the nineteenth century that have been discussed

here. These women take their topics and use them to truly show their thoughts and opinions about the world in which they live.

This chapter will discuss the Angel figures in both Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* (1856), and how important their roles are within their homes, but they also exhibit how much the role alters the women forced into it. While the Angel in the House was a necessary figure for the times, it left its victims practically consumed by the amount of pressure and work put upon her by her own society. The women must change themselves a good deal in order to truly be useful in the role of an Angel, and that forced alteration is something that both authors have noticed, and on which both have commented. Therefore, while the topical sphere open to women from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century includes the topic of women's role in the home, in raising a family and taking care of her life partner, and the upkeep of morality within all who she comes into contact with, as the Angel in the House figure, this does not limit women writers, but instead allows them to push the bounds of traditional femininity, and come out showing how truly impactful women are, even when placed in a box.

Twisted Morality in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre is a tale written by Charlotte Brontë that follows the progress of a poor orphan, named *Jane Eyre*, as she grows up through tragedy, hardship, and heartbreak, until finally reaching her happy ending and becoming Mrs. Rochester. The narrator of this novel is not Jane Eyre, but in fact it is Mrs. Jane Rochester who is writing down her

story ten years after its conclusion. This realization, which does not come to the readers until late in the novel, completely alters how it must be read. This retelling is most likely not a faithful account because Mrs. Rochester is looking back on her life and seeing how everything has led her to the role she is in now. Jane is telling her life story through the lens of someone who already knows its ending, and therefore justifies all of her behavior, seeks to create sympathy with the audience early on, and creates a villain out of a helpless woman in order to draw sins away from her love interest.

Careful scrutiny over heroic interactions and the treatment of supposed villains must be done as these aspects can have been exaggerated in order to make sure the audience sides with Jane. An example of the blindness her bias causes is her treatment of Bertha Mason, Mr. Rochester's first wife and Jane's main obstacle to her goal of being his wife and the mother to his children. Bertha is a woman who Rochester was arranged to marry in order that he could use her fortune to live in luxury. As someone who grew up in Jamaica, and who is heavily implied to be at the very least only half white, she is seen as an "other" in this book and that impacts Jane's view of her. This one bias shows how Jane is not a perfect heroine in modern standards, which is an important distinction to make because in *Jane Eyre*, she is held up to be the model of moral perfection in Brontë's society. Charlotte Brontë attempts to show the ideal "Angel in the House" through her character Jane in *Jane Eyre*, and she does this through creating a character based upon how she views the standards her society holds for women. This position contributes to the idea that women were being confined into a single role in society at this point in the nineteenth century, the role of the Angel in the House.

Brontë's Interpretation of English Morality is Not Necessarily Correct

Brontë created Jane to be a person who could easily jump between social classes, and this trait is what gives her freedom in both mobility and manners. From the beginning of the novel, she had nothing to lose, no inheritance or looks, but instead everything to gain. She was mistreated and the audience feared her for her response because Gilbert and Gubar explain that this fear came from the fact that repressed rage was even more terrifying to the society than repressed sexuality (338). This feeling opens up an untapped potential of strength within women, and it can result in one happening "to strike a young gentleman" (Brontë 5), just as Jane did, even if he was her social superior. Classes, rank, wealth, and prestige all go away in the face of anger, the great equalizer. Therefore, Jane's anger and predilection for revenge, while prominent in her childhood, her forceful strength is seen only in bits and pieces, as the novel continues on. By the end it is not seen at all. Kirsten Parkinson explains in her analysis that Jane is given her class mobility, as well as her eventual "happy ending" because "if Jane represents the challenge of women in a man's world, then acknowledging too openly the limitations of her experience forces us to admit the remaining limits for all women" (29). Jane chips away at herself throughout the entirety of the book because she must alter herself to become worthy of her happy ending, or so is the moral Brontë writes into her story. Jane is rewarded with fortune and love in return for quieting her loud angry nature in favor of becoming the Angel in the House for Mr. Rochester through becoming Brontë's ideal image of a Victorian woman.

To be the Angel in the House, and thus the moral example in her society, Jane can not be furious about the injustices she has previously suffered. Annika Mizel, in her

article, "Righteous Restraint in *Hard Times* and *Jane Eyre*" (2016), explains that the highest reward to be found in novels focusing on the domestic sphere and female morality, like *Jane Eyre*, are "reconciled and intimate relationships" (190). Jane has conflicts with many characters throughout her story, and whenever a conflict is left unresolved, she can be seen to be miserable and alone. The earliest instance of this was when Jane still lived with her aunt and cousins, the Reeds. As a child, Jane was too young to understand the serious implications of being thought a nuisance to her family, who were the embodiment of her entire society, and therefore it was not until she was forcefully ejected from her relatives' home that she began to see how alone she was in the world. There was no one to protect Jane Eyre, but there were a lot of people ready to tear her down at a moment's notice, with, thanks to her behavior, her family at the very front of the line. A pattern can be seen throughout the novel that lines up with Mizel's thinking: Jane is only content or happy when she is surrounded by people who value her for herself, or when she recognizes that she is better than a relationship she is forcing to work, and instead lets it go. Her abusive relationship with her cousins, the Reeds, versus her supportive and loving relationship with her other cousins, the Rivers, show the two halves of Jane's self that have to be reconciled before she can move on to her final destination as a wife and begin her own family.

Jane's Early Development: Why She Cannot Immediately Become the Angel in the House

The story of *Jane Eyre* is helpful in understanding some of the discourse about women in mid-nineteenth-century English society because it begins with an orphaned little girl who is a clean slate upon which to create Brontë's image of what she interprets

to be her society's ideal female figure. Jane begins her tale alone and angry, standing up against the abuse she suffers at the hands of her relatives, and later her schoolmaster. Her entire childhood has her living in dependence to those who remind her daily that "it is [her] place to be humble and to try to make [her]self agreeable to them" while she is treated as "less than a servant, for [she] does nothing for [her] keep" (Brontë 6). This Jane grew up fighting against the system she was born into, and thought of by all of her authority figures, to be possessed by the devil, or at the very least, mad. This response comes from every character who sees Jane express any frustration or anger over her situation. Gilbert and Gubar explain that "what horrified the Victorians was Jane's anger (338), because in Victorian society feminine rage was mythologized the exact same way that feminine sexuality was repressed. The sweet Mrs. Rochester, who is narrating the novel, is not a manifestation that came about easily. She had to be imbued with Brontë's belief of acceptance and forgiveness superseding the pleasure of quick revenge. Jane had to first learn to put aside her own suffering and hardships in favor of being the moral example for all those around her. Brontë strips down Jane's character until she fits the role of the Angel in the House perfectly for Rochester. While she shows the importance of strength in Jane's character, Brontë also makes it clear through Jane's character development, that she is not allowed to have her happy ending until she fits Brontë's interpretation of the perfect Victorian woman.

Brontë works to develop Jane's character, and thus shows the qualities she determines as necessary in an ideal woman Victorian woman, through the presence of self-discipline. Brontë begins *Jane Eyre* by describing her ten-year-old protagonist as "the most wicked and abandoned child ever reared under a roof" (Brontë 16), with "a

tendency to deceit" (19). These words come from her guardian and are meant to show the start of Jane's journey into eventually becoming Mrs. Rochester. Mizel clarifies why Jane is perceived to be so wicked in her early years. She explains that "since authority figures were often believed to have been instituted by God, disobeying authority meant disobeying the Creator." This led to "an understanding of virtue as the product of self-denial" (Mizel 177), and Brontë shows the cultural pigeonholing of women by exclusively holding her female characters up to this standard of virtue. Jane is "wicked" because she is not quiet and a paragon of virtue. She is not a member of a high social class, nor does she have any fortune. Therefore, she has no agency or autonomy. She is expected to obey every authority figure in her life, even the servants, because she is less than even them. Because of Brontë's clear development of Jane into an overtly quiet and subservient woman, her audience is given an image of virtuous womanhood coming from self-denial and penance. She may have written a flawed character, but she also has written about her living in miserable circumstances until she loses those flaws.

The main change that is seen in Jane from her childhood self to her adult self is her ability to appear calm and under control, but like Yonge, Brontë is not content with just the image of perfection. Jane is still unhappy at this stage in her life, and this is because she has yet to fully submit to her expected role in society. Her self-description shows her understanding of where she has fallen short from her schooling. "I had given in allegiance to duty and order; I was quiet; I believe I was content: to the eyes of others, usually even to my own, I appeared a disciplined and subdued character" (Brontë 50). Jane's key word: "appeared," displays how her mind is still independent from her learned actions. Brontë gives her audience a protagonist who is perfect on paper — an image of

perfect docility — however, the language is loose enough to show that Jane does not truly believe in the maxims she follows. To be subdued and to not question one's path, is the image Brontë gives of perfection in a Victorian woman. It is because Jane has not reached this level of subservience that the story continues, and she is given greater hardship to overcome: to solidify her character growth. Mizel explains the societal training that validate Brontë's constrained ideals for female characters, for it "is this passive *self-denial*, as opposed to active *self-discipline* or *self-mastery*, which characterized female virtue in Victorian England" (177). The key difference in vocabulary in this statement makes all of the difference. Mizel shows that it was not enough for women to take control of themselves and any qualities that did not fit with the societal ideal of a woman. Instead, women could not hold onto those qualities that deviated from the norm at all. Women had to give up and chip away at themselves in order to chase the societal standards, and because this can be seen in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë is continuing to perpetrate this confining view of women. The rewards and punishments given to Jane are how it is possible to see the standard of perfection Brontë is holding up to her contemporary audience. Jane is unable to live in a comfortable home and be given the marriage-plot until she submits to this standard.

Socially driven confinement was not a new idea during Brontë's time, and it was shown in women's novels starting in the middle of the century, as Charlotte Brontë herself evidenced. The household becomes the main setting in a narrative, and even in *Jane Eyre*, an isolated home is Brontë's romantic ending that she creates to reward her protagonist's struggles. Jane shows her internal unease that separates her from Brontë's shallow ideal in passages such as the following:

"Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, to absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex" (Brontë 65).

Jane is stuck between her more natural instincts and the learned behaviors she has developed through schooling and exposure to the world. Here, she gives voice to struggles that are not unique within this novel. There is confusion over how both men and women share these aspects of humanity, and yet are expected to respond to these changes in different ways. The separation of the sexes on this most fundamental level is questioned, and while it is not answered, the presence of the question is important. Brontë does choose to give an imperfect Jane these thoughts, and therefore they will hold less weight with her audience, but this does not make them any less from Brontë's own mind. Mizel gives voice to nineteenth-century English society, who believed that "Ultimately, it was this perceived need and capacity for self-denial in women, be it real or imagined, that fed the idea of woman as the "Angel in the House"" (178). Through the eyes of Mizel's description of a Victorian society, it is possible to see why, when Jane is speaking truths about the reality of being a woman in Victorian England, she is punished by Brontë, despite a modern viewpoint agreeing with every word. Jane is only nineteen years old and without a strong female presence to guide her actions. While she has been taught how a girl her age is supposed to act, she is not taught how to be the Angel in the House. She is lost and adrift at this early point in her story, and this is why Brontë puts her through

all of her trials. Despite her formal schooling, Jane has a character that can be superficially molded to a society's ideals, but internally her spirit refuses to be shaken.

Two Mrs. Rochesters

Brontë differs from Yonge specifically because she leaves her Angel role unfilled throughout most of *Jane Eyre*. Yonge stresses the presence of an Angel in a household as a higher priority than the Angel being prepared to undertake the role. She places her female characters into the space and has them get molded into the Angel through working in the position. Brontë instead values quality in her role and shows this through keeping the position empty even to the household's detriment. While she does push Jane into becoming the Angel in the House, Jane is not allowed to take up that position until she is worthy of becoming the Angel in Mr. Rochester's household. One of the large issues blocking Jane's way into becoming the perfect Angel is the presence of Mrs. Bertha Rochester (née Mason). As the mistress of the house in name and law, Bertha should be the one fulfilling this role, but as Jane's presence suggests, she is not filling this role well. Jane is compared against Bertha to show the two extreme roles Brontë saw possible to fill in her society. Like the Madonna versus the Whore comparison that often comes up in classical literature — *The Odyssey's* Persephone versus Circe — in *Jane Eyre*, to be a leading lady one must be either angelic Jane or mad Bertha. This comparison does not leave room for more gradient views of womanhood, but instead seeks to villainize a woman who is actually a victim of colonization and this societal view of women that Brontë is attempting to perpetuate with this text.

This comparison between Jane and Bertha has sparked debates among modern scholars about Jane's true role in *Jane Eyre*. Jane's descriptions of, and interactions with, Bertha, show a colonialist bias, and pit two women — both victimized by their societies — against each other. From the moment Jane is told by her almost-husband, Rochester, that his current wife "is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations. . .her mother, the Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard" (Brontë 176), she immediately adopts this language in all of her later descriptions of the woman. Rather than questioning the person — Mr. Rochester — who had almost tricked her into an unlawful marriage, Jane chooses to trust his word in relation to a woman she had never met. Because Bertha is not from England, and because she does not look like an Englishwoman, Jane is prejudiced against her in a way completely different than she is prejudiced against her other rival, the English society woman, Miss Ingram. This interpretation of the text does not show Jane in the best light, especially for someone who is written as a standard of female excellence. Parkinson explores a perspective more nuanced than the more broadly focused texts of scholars like Gilbert and Gubar. She explains that "scholars have long debated Jane's position as feminist vanguard" (18) because her eventual fate as the final Mrs. Rochester, "how Jane's independent womanhood comes at the expense of the colonized female, Bertha Mason" (19). While Gilbert and Gubar are correct in identifying Jane as a strong, independent, and incredibly nuanced female character who is not afraid to question the various unfair qualities of her society, she still is hindered by her English biases. Jane is a hypocrite. Even when she claims to have mastered her self-denial and become a woman content to live quietly and to be of use to others, Jane still wishes to leave all of her chosen confinements, however

she does not think twice about the effect Bertha's unwanted decade-long confinement would have on her mental health.

This bias is manifested in how Brontë sets up Jane's relationship with Bertha. Jane is the heroine of her tale because she is the narrator and is telling the story from the position of the triumphant Mrs. Rochester. Bertha is described by Jane as a figure that "grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face" (Brontë 176). Brontë sought to dehumanize Bertha so much that she is not even allowed pronouns outside of "it," which separates the character as far as possible from sympathy. If she is not human, not a "she," then Bertha cannot be understood or cared about. Parkinson pushes this thought process further by saying how Jane's "hypocritical lip service to compassion masks her ruthlessness, and Jane's narration urges us to see her, not Bertha, as victim of Rochester's duplicity and the patriarchal power structures of Victorian society" (18). Jane holds Rochester culpable for his crimes against herself but does not once question his holding a grown woman captive in his home for years. This is a clear example of how Brontë views men and women being held to completely unrelated standards in her society. Bertha is crazed because she is fighting for her physical freedom, and Rochester is angry because he wishes for his lawful freedom. Rochester is allowed to make speeches claiming how "MY WIFE! . . .cheated into espousing. . .a defrauded wretch already bound to a bad, mad, and embruted partner" (Brontë 176). Despite his control over the entire situation, despite his role as Bertha's jailor, despite his attempt at tricking Jane into bigamy, Rochester is able to paint himself as the victim. His partner is not able to reach the English standards for the Angel of the

House, and thus Rochester perpetrates himself as the victim of his circumstances, and Jane follows suit.

In order to show Jane's necessary progression into the Angel role, Brontë sets Jane opposite the current Mrs. Rochester, Bertha, in order to give a strong image of what could happen to Jane if she does not alter her character. He explains that after he made his conquest of marriage to Bertha,

"I found her nature wholly alien to mine, her tastes obnoxious to me, her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger—when I found that I could not pass a single evening, nor even a single hour of the day with her in comfort. . .because whatever topic I started, immediately received from her a turn at once coarse and trite, perverse and imbecile. . .even then I restrained myself: I eschewed upbraiding, I curtailed remonstrance; I tried to devour my repentance and disgust in secret; I repressed the deep antipathy I felt" (Brontë 184).

This woman was someone who Rochester chose to marry, no matter what the outside forces may have been — money, familial pressures, beauty — he still chose to bind his life to Bertha just as he chooses to bind his life to Jane's. He describes here a hatred that grew from having different interests than Bertha; most likely these differences came from them being raised in different cultures. While a large part of Rochester's dislike comes from a colonialist bias, he finally decides to lock her up when she becomes inconvenient to his life. However, Gilbert and Gubar explain that this dehumanization could just as easily occur to Jane, if she does not practice self-denial, but instead is ruled by her passions. Her connection with Bertha is explained, "Bertha, in other words, is Jane's truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress ever since her days at Gateshead" (360). Bertha can be read as the whore character to Jane's Madonna, the evil woman character created to

show how righteous the protagonist truly is, but the comparison goes so much deeper than that. Both Jane and Bertha are ruled by an internal struggle between two halves of themselves. Parkinson explains that "scholars have suggested that the displacement and suppression of Jane's anger are signs of her necessary maturation" (29), and while this is true, it also divorces her from her connection with Bertha. This change is important in creating the difference between Brontë's heroine and antagonist, for while Jane started out very similarly to Bertha, and if she had not been trained to keep a lid on her temper, she may have achieved the same fate as the original Mrs. Rochester.

To reach her happy ending, Jane is required to show her superiority over the current Mrs. Rochester in order to prove that the displacement of this lady would lead to a beneficial change for the household as Jane takes on the role of the Angel in the House. There is a moment when Bertha attempts to burn her captor — Mr. Rochester — alive in his bed. In this moment, Jane is within her employer's bedroom without a thought to her own well-being while "tongues of flame darted around the bed" and she worked completely by herself "succeeded in extinguishing the flames which were devouring it" (Brontë 89). However, this heroine is but a fleeting image. When Mr. Rochester wakes up, he takes charge of the situation, this girl who had been fighting fire meekly agrees to "sit down in the arm-chair" as he tells her to "remain where you are till I return; be as still as a mouse" (Brontë 90). She becomes compliant and meek. Jane has shifted, in Parkinson's words, "from strong proto-feminist to passive tool of the patriarchy" (28). The wilder Bertha acts, the meeker Jane is, as if to prove, even subconsciously at this point, that she is ready to take over the position of the Angel. Gilbert and Gubar describe this novel as "a story of enclosure and escape" (339), but what they fail to point out is

that it still finishes in enclosure. Jane ends her adventure with newly found family, friends, and fortune. She now has options and is not forced to accept the suffocating embrace of a controlling older man who is disrespectful, unpleasant to look at, and with a history of domestic abuse. And yet she still returns to him, gives up all of her newly found autonomy, and provides him the exact life he wanted: a young wife to manipulate who gives birth to a son as their firstborn, and who happily cloisters herself up with him for the rest of her days, putting herself completely into his power. So while Jane has been given the marriage-plot and appears to be content, Brontë hints that this ending is not all a woman could wish for. She puts Jane through all of this sacrifice and hardship in order to mold her into the ideal Victorian woman, but the lack of perfection in return for her reward is a sign that this path is not for every woman. Perhaps even an alteration to the expectations for each gender could become a topic of discussion.

How Yonge Shows the World Falling Apart Without the Angel in the House

The Angel in the House figure is an old concept that has influenced, and been influenced by, both the internalized and externalized misogyny and sexism in a society. A woman is expected to run her household and raise her family and, in the process, make sure that society's morality stays in the right place. This figure can be anyone, from a caretaker to a wife to a mother, just as long as she is the head of her household, she is expected to uphold the morality of her people and therefore the rest of her society at large. It is possible to see where this character appears in books such as Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, for whenever the role is left unfilled, total chaos ensues. The

Angel in the House is more than a moral guide or enforcer of good behavior, she is also one who solidifies and unites the house to make it a home.

The most common Angel figure was seen in the role of a mother. As the second most authoritative figure in a household, mothers would run their homes, raise their children, and keep their husbands' lives in order while keeping everyone's morality in check. She is an often overlooked figure, but impossible to do without. In Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, the essentiality of the mother-figure role is shown by Yonge through the household falling apart whenever this position is left unfilled. This book is a story about a father who is left alone to raise eleven children after the death of his wife in an accident that also critically injures both himself and his eldest daughter Margaret. Throughout the book, as their lives progress and change, it is possible to see different members of the May family rising up to take the place of their dead mother, both the sons and the daughters. Each child fulfills the role differently, and Yonge is sure to show how each one is not able to fully fill the role perfectly, but she emphasizes the importance of having this role fulfilled for the moral development of the children. It is a take on the popular Victorian image of the "Angel in the House," or the ideal wife and mother expected in this society at the time of Yonge's writing. Like Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Yonge's image of a perfect Victorian woman greatly minimizes the role of women in her society and places a burden on them to become this model of perfection and moral standard fit for the rest of the world to follow.

The Necessary Role of Morality in a Household

Yonge has various members of the May household fill the mother role in order to show that no matter how different each individual is, the position will mold them into who the household requires them to be. Martha Stoddard Holmes writes about the interdependency that arises in the May household because of the lifelong injuries both Dr. May and Margaret sustain that disable them from being proper heads of the household. Their injuries are what lead to an interdependent family lifestyle where each child takes up a different responsibility to make up for the loss of both the mother and father and the secondary mother-figure. Yonge shows this interdependency while also focusing on the importance of the mother-role in the moral development of children, and how that is an essential task for the "Angel in the House." The development of the three eldest daughters — Margaret, Flora, and Ethel — in *The Daisy Chain's* May family as they each prepare for, take on, and eventually evolve from the role of the Angel exhibit the qualities Yonge deems most important for a woman to have in Victorian England.

The Angel is written as essential to the success of a family and the running of a household from the moment that the mother has passed. Despite the grief the May family goes through, an earthly guiding force is sought out in addition to a spiritual leader. The father — Dr. May — is the natural leader of the family, but even he tells his daughters, "Girls, we must learn carefulness and thoughtfulness. We have no one to take thought for us now" (Yonge 1:42). Dr. May's household position should not have changed with the death of his wife, he is still the legal and economical head of the household, but those positions are nothing without its moral core. Despite Yonge's writing making it clear that the necessity of a presence of an Angel outweighs any personal considerations for who is

ready or not ready to take on the role, authors like Martha Stoddard Holmes voice the validity of arguments that condemn actions like Dr. May's. He takes his hands off the reins and pushes the responsibilities of raising a family onto his young daughters. This, Holmes agrees, is unfair to women, for Yonge is "directing [her] messages of self-sacrifice and other directness more emphatically to women than to men" (Holmes 37). This pattern can be seen within Yonge's work as the mother role is solely filled by the daughters throughout the text, and none of the daughters really leave the home without being villainized and punished throughout the story. However, Yonge is not writing with an agenda against women, pushing them back into the home as a Christian view of that being a woman's rightful place. Instead, and Holmes agrees on this point, Yonge is showing that self-sacrifice is not an inherently feminine trait, nor should it be expected solely of women, but instead that is a necessary mindset for entire families in the Victorian period who are dependent upon each other. Being raised in small communities and living in large families meant that roles of responsibility had to be taken up by every family member as a means of survival, and Yonge shows that relationship of interdependence extremely well within the May family.

While Yonge perpetuates the idea that the moral fabric of a family is held together by one person, her characters subvert this ideal even when they are confirming it. The family Yonge creates is stronger than this stereotype because every single person in the home steps up to the task of the moral upbringing of themselves, their siblings, and the rest of the world. They always push each other to their best, even when it is proven that "some people are angry with those whose example would show that there is a higher standard" (Yonge 2:158). Throughout their youth, the May children are villainized by

jealous townspeople because of their good acts and willingness to work hard. Instead of falling to the level of those living at a lower standard, they banded together and kept working hard to improve themselves and their surrounding community. These efforts were begun by the children's mother and continued by their eldest sisters in her absence. Valerie Sanders writes about this sibling bond that is very prominent in nineteenth-century literature and claims that "this unavoidable, lifelong sibling tie, which persists through estrangement, death, or disguised identity, constantly challenges definitions of the Victorian nuclear family in an unresolved interrogation of its shifting boundaries" (55). This is the exact tie that binds the May family together. No one is expected to go through tough circumstances on their own, and this equality of responsibility is what makes the Mays so successful. Yonge shows the versatility of the role of the Angel in the House, and how it does not always have to be held by a maternal figure. One's father, brothers, or sisters could take on the role one at a time or even all at once. This chapter delves into just the three eldest May daughters and how they each embody the Angel, but Yonge leaves her text open to interpretations of any family member being allowed to take up the position of keeper of the family's morality.

However, despite the May's strong bond and loving interdependency, the family is not impervious to those around them. Yonge explains their doubts, styles of thought, and resiliency to struggles from the outside world through creating open and honest conversations with the readers through her characters. At one point two of the Angel figures converse, asking "which is best. . . a high standard not acted up to, or a lower one fulfilled?" (Yonge 2:158). One daughter pushes for a sense of understanding and says that as long as a person acts better than they could, it does not matter if they reach their

standards. The other thinks less of the overall good a person can do to society and sees one's standards as impacting oneself first and others second. If it is possible to be better, then it is wrong to not push oneself to her absolute limit to achieve that goal. The May family, for the most part, attempt to live by the latter standard, and by the end of the book, this method is proven to work well, and it only does because of their tight familial bond. Sanders explains that while the "early to mid-Victorian novels swarm with surplus brothers and sisters" (54), they do not always have their interdependent relationship shown. This is where we see cracks in the families within those novels, and there are no incurable difficulties or cracks in the foundation of the May family because each member understands the role of self-sacrifice for the whole, regardless of gender or their future occupations. However, Margaret, Flora, and Ethel are singled out in this narrative because they most obviously take on the role of the Angel and mother-figure in the May household when it is required of them.

The Mobility of Women Even in the Role of the "Angel"

It would naturally be expected for Margaret, as the eldest May daughter, to become the new mother-figure, and the story begins exactly as predicted: with her taking up this office even when bedridden. But it is immediately evident that due to her physical limitations, she cannot fulfill all the necessary duties of the role, showing early on how truly all-encompassing an Angel's responsibilities are. Early on, when she voices her hesitations about taking on the role, she is told that "you must do the best you can, and try to trust that while you work in the right spirit, your failures will be compensated" (Yonge 1:144). As the first pseudo mother-figure in the household, Margaret's reign is one of

trial-and-error that needs much outside help. Margaret does not stay the physical leader of the home, that falls to Flora, the next eldest daughter, fairly quickly, and Holmes discusses how it is purely Margaret's limited mobility that causes Yonge to make the change in authority. Her dependent lifestyle requires her to need a caretaker for the rest of her life, and the family all step up to become that parental figure and protector of the eldest sibling, who had helped to raise most of them (Holmes 33). This is a radical shift that opens the May family to being able to truly rely on, and respect each other no matter the age or gender of the sibling who takes on the role of leader. Margaret, the surrogate mother figure, is gone to for advice on the moral and internal issues, but she cannot hold any authority over the household because of her disability. Holmes explicitly states that Margaret's "disability experience seems mostly to diversify the kind of leadership she offers to the rest of the family" (33). This is shown best through the fact that close to every May child steps into the role of familial leader and protector at one point or another throughout the book, while still going to her for advice every step of the way. Here is when both the characters and the audience are reminded of the importance of a moral core within the household, and how important it is to not be caught up in the trivialities of earthly life. While Margaret does not stay the physical leader of the May household, she does hold an authority that every member of the family respects throughout the entire story.

The Angel is a key person in any home, but she can have a strong influence on her local community as well. Flora explores how large a woman's mobility and impact is within her community. Her character evolution is a strong response to Margaret's immobilization and is characterized to almost be more focused about the world outside of

the home. Flora understands the importance of one's community in the development of youths and their moral compasses and works to undertake these issues practically. Flora is critiqued by her more plain-spoken family members because she does not speak "straightforward and simple" but instead "she tells a little, and makes that go a long way, as if she were keeping back a great deal" (Yonge 2:4). Instead of isolating herself from her local community and looking inward to her family for help, Flora makes alliances with the town's Ladies' Committee and other families within or above the Mays' social class. She is the politician of the family, smoothing the way with a town that they previously had been a little bit isolated from, due to their own interdependence within their home. However, her successes are cut short because Yonge does not approve of her reaching outside of the home for fulfillment. Leslee Thorne-Murphy explains Flora's success while still within the May family as her trying to "study the useful" in the same way that Yonge meant to "perfect her aesthetic and literary expertise" (889). Both women were pragmatic and understood the importance of rationality to work within a society, but while Yonge had no issue with her own industry, she faults Flora's valuing useful skills and her mobility over moral teachings.

Therefore, when Flora officially takes on the position as the head of household, in the absence of her mother and Margaret, the reviews are positive, saying that she was "too useful to be spared" (Yonge 1:33). This description again shows the necessity of there being a presence of an Angel, for the disruption of the role being left open is stressful for everyone around, even if they are unsure as to why. Without a person to turn to with questions, news, worries, and for comforting, the very heart of a home is missing, and "the most trying time was at eight in the evening. . .forlorn and silent" (Yonge 1:49).

Flora is prized for being able to step in and be the practical side of the role through running the household and making sure the two disabled persons were adequately taken care of. However, she becomes so wrapped up in the practical matters of her position that she completely neglects the familial and spiritual side of being a guide and educator to the younger members of the household. Melissa Schaub explains "Flora's worldly pragmatism" to be "a trait the narrator disapproves" (78), and her focus on the physical aspects of her life to be the reason why she is unable to fully connect with her family, or fully succeed to become the Angel in the House. While the house is taken care of, tidy, and running smoothly, it can hardly be felt of as a home without a focus on those immaterial aspects of love and community and companionship. This is why she is only called "useful" and not given more recognition for her role, despite her obvious moments spent seeking out gratitude for her sacrifices. Here is where Yonge's depiction of her ideal women's role in society is limiting. She writes a strong, intelligent, and successful female character in Flora, but the entire novel Flora is punished, faulted for, and talked of derisively by the narrator because of her interest in a world outside of her home. Flora is a good example of how Yonge does not write her female characters in shades of gray. While she is not perfect, Flora does a lot of good for her community, a trait that both Gaskell and Eliot put at the forefront of their heroines, she is written as immoral and unfit to be a moral guardian of a household, and this is one way that Yonge limits her depictions of women.

Ethel — the third eldest daughter — is the most religious member of her family, with the strongest set of morals, but like Flora and Margaret, she is not wholly able to be the Angel without some changes. It is possible to see the type of person Ethel is early on,

for she acknowledges her lack of perfection before she makes any large mistakes, and while "she was struggling with her faults, humbled by them" she was also "watching them, and overcoming them" (Yonge 1:98). She understands that she is not ready to take on the role of the Angel in the House and instead sets her sights on a project that she sees as her personal mission, the taming and education of Cocksmoor, a local poor community without even a church. Her large goal is to build a church for the community, and she is able to involve all of her siblings in her work, thus bringing them into contact with poor members of their community and widening their sympathetic gazes. This leadership role required a large amount of character growth for Ethel to fit into. The sacrifices she had to make to achieve her goals has some scholars, like Holmes, agree that she is the character who most embodies the ideals of sacrifice identified as being so poignant and so critiqued within Yonge's works (37). This project is something that takes her outside of her home and forces her to choose between priorities, eventually giving up her Greek studies in order to focus on her spiritual mission and her responsibilities toward her family. Her obvious sacrifices and broad character changes show Ethel to be the most sympathetic character because "Her ambitious visions lead her to impetuous enthusiasms and uncontrolled outbursts of speech and emotion, and also to spending more time on scholarship and romances than on homely pursuits such as sewing" (Schaub 71). Yonge pits Ethel against Flora in order to highlight the image she sees in her society of women being the most successful in their Angel in the House role, when they are in the house. She takes Brontë's ending image of Jane one step further by saying how a woman does not need to leave the home at all in order to learn how to be an Angel. While Brontë's

heroine ends her story in confinement, Yonge keeps her heroines in confinement the entire story, and villainizes them the minute they step out of her box.

Yonge does not confine her female characters out of spite, but rather she has a pragmatic view of the world and shows this through her treatment of Ethel. This young woman becomes Yonge's standard for feminine behavior because she has the most character development throughout the novel. Ethel is one of the most intelligent members of her family, but instead of pursuing knowledge like her less smart brothers, Ethel gives up her studies in order to follow other pursuits within the home. This is because she was asked if an education was worth "[giving] up being a useful, steady daughter and sister at home? The sort of woman that dear mamma wished to make you, and a comfort to papa" (Yonge 1:171). This sort of question is one that appears to be an unfair guilt trip when seen through a modern-day lens, but at Yonge's time, while it still unfairly targets Ethel because she is a woman, it also highlights the interdependency that characterized families at this time. She must first submit to the home and her expected role within it before she can pursue activities that will lead to self-fulfillment. Melissa Schaub explains that Ethel has a lot to lose, "Yet Yonge allows Ethel to achieve her goal only after she has learned how to sacrifice herself to her family in every other conceivable way" (Schaub 66). By modern standards, giving up what can be seen as potential to be great out in the world in favor of burying herself in her childhood home taking care of her family and poor people who may or may not improve from her teachings, sounds like a waste. However, "Ethel finds purely spiritual satisfaction in sacrificing herself for her family" (Schaub 67). Yonge is not arguing against the education of women, but she makes a valid point when Ethel is told to give up her pursuits because there is no reason to continue education at such a

high level. Women "can't take a first-class" (Yonge 1:171), meaning that women cannot gain a degree at this time even if they were allowed to study at Oxford. There is an ideal of playing to one's strengths, and Yonge makes sure each of the May children find their niche and that it allows them to bloom into the individual that, perhaps, they did not dream to be, but that is the best use for their society. A woman who started as a girl obsessed with learning just for the sake of knowledge, Ethel grows into the permanent Angel of the House and is rewarded with the greater responsibility of being able to enact influence on a greater scale.

One instance of this was when Flora worked hard to have the town host a charity bazaar to raise money to benefit Cocks Moor. This plan would not have occurred if Ethel had not pushed her family into helping those around them, but this plan is outside of her comfort zone and instead it is an instance where Flora is able to shine, even if Ethel's reasons are purer, Flora gains greater material results. This festival is detested by Ethel because it is a "field for vanity" (Yonge 2:240) with which Ethel, "grave, earnest, and annoyed. . .of the hubbub of clacking tongues" (Yonge 2:34) does not fit in well. Both of these girls need the other in order to truly be able to accomplish their goals, as they restrain and push each other to hide their flaws and excel in their goals through their unlikely teamwork. Ethel fights against the conventions that are sometimes necessary to work within, and Flora thrives within the seemingly vapid society. Sanders points out the necessity of moral development being honed in the home through her argument that "emotionally independent siblings, such as Flora May in *The Daisy Chain* (1856) . . . often fall prey to the temptations of worliness and self-sufficiency, unprotected by a special understanding with a sibling counterpart" (55). This project is something that

Flora takes extreme pride in, as do all of the members of the Ladies' Committee, and it is only Ethel's constant reminder of the real stakes of the charity that the entire fundraiser is anything more than a fun festival. Thorne-Murphy interprets Yonge's use of a charity bazaar in the novel to show "how a young woman successfully satisfies her own aspirations through charity work" (882). While this idea does not hold up to modern standards, the push for women to be involved in activities outside of their household is incredibly important in itself. Not everyone can be an Ethel May, and in fact many of Yonge's readers would relate more to Flora, and therefore the inclusion of the charity bazaar is important. This is the type of activity that her contemporaries would be doing in order to have an occupation outside of the home. The amount of satisfaction that Flora and the other ladies have at the conclusion of the bazaar is an incentive to Yonge's own audience to try their hands at charity work that is almost like a festival.

The Far-Reaching Influence of the "Angel"

The May family's influence did not end at Cocksmoor, or even in England, but instead Yonge writes with an intent to create a global presence of the May family and the Christian ideals they exhibit. Because Yonge has made it clear that her interpretation of English womanly perfection is to be content in one's home, the May sisters spread their influence through their brothers, Harry and Norman. Margaret, as the original and eldest Angel in the House, is to whom her brother Harry first goes to talk when he realizes that he wishes to become a sailor in order to escape the temptations of sinful behavior in his own backyard. Margaret reproves Harry for this way of thinking, for she asks him "if you let yourself be drawn into mischief here. . . what would you do at sea?" (Yonge 1:88). It is

clear that Harry has good intentions, but Yonge shows how much his moral development needs to improve at this stage in his life before he can join a profession that will lead to influence over the rest of the world. Holmes names Yonge "the most famous 'Christian lady novelist'" and explains situations like Margaret and Harry's to be "framed in terms of an overall culture of Christian interdependency" (36). Harry is not ready to become a sailor and influence all of these cultures across the world because he has yet to master his own evils at home, and Margaret's only way to influence the rest of the world is through her little brother. These siblings are interdependent because Harry needs Margaret to teach him how to become a beneficial member of society, and Margaret needs Harry so that she can fulfill her purpose, in Yonge's eyes, of spreading her moral goodness to the rest of the world. Yonge redefines the Angel in the House as a specifically Christian role.

Norman's decision to become a missionary at the end of Yonge's novel is a more direct example of how she views her Christianity impacting the rest of the world through the role of the Angel in the House. While Harry does intend, and succeeds, in becoming a sailor who improves those around him, Norman's desire to become a religious leader in a non-Christian country goes a step further. Upon telling his sister, Ethel cries "O Norman, it is the most glorious thing man can do!" (Yonge 2:169). Ethel takes the place of the Angel when Norman voices this desire to her, and it is only her approbation that truly pushes him on the path ahead. Ethel represents Sanders' idea of "the sibling bond as the means to both extending a family and reining in its reach" (56). Because she pushes her brother to take on this incredible task with her support, it is easy to imagine that if Ethel had responded negatively, Norman's goal would have ended in that very moment. The May family's sibling bond is incredibly strong in *The Daisy Chain*, and when Yonge adds

onto some of her characters the responsibility of morally guiding other members of their family, she both limits and expands the role of the Angel in the House.

Conclusion

From the middle to the end of the nineteenth century, there was a large shift in the direction of the novel and women's participation in its creation. The amount of women authors in the field had lessened significantly. Evidence for this claim can be found just from the lack of well-known British female author names that begin from the 1860's to the 1900's. The authors chosen in this project were meant to represent women writers from across the century, but after Charlotte Yonge, the amount of authors that was once incredibly plentiful, at this point has dried up into those who write about the self as seen through visions of domesticity. Yonge and Charlotte Brontë are examples of authors who wrote about domestic scenes in order to convey ideas about the morals they saw and wished to see in their societies, and who are resultantly discussed in this chapter. A possible reason for why women authors were dwindling during the latter half of the nineteenth century is that the novel was finally being seen as a real genre of writing to be taken seriously and male writers were swarming to contribute. Despite women authors having an undeniably important role in the development of the genre, now there were less opportunities for women because of the sudden influx of men. Many women writers no longer participated in the literary circuit, and many possibly great writers were not given the chance to showcase their genius.

Both Brontë and Yonge portray their heroines as the ideal Angel in the House because that was the morality of their societies, and like Frances Burney, Mary Shelley, the anonymous author of *The Woman of Colour*, George Eliot, and Elizabeth Gaskell, they were creating reflections of their societies in their novels. Brontë creates a heroine who does eventually become the perfect standard of her society, but she also shows the difficult road that she had to first take in order to become that standard. Through Jane Eyre's character development, readers can see how much she had to sacrifice in order to become this ideal, and how even in her happy ending, there is now something integral missing from Mrs. Rochester that was present in Miss Eyre. Likewise, Yonge's multiple Angels all had to sacrifice a part of themselves in order to best fit into the role. She shows the complexities expected by her society for the Angel to fulfill, and how they could stunt, depress, or isolate a woman very easily. While both authors were not perfect, either in their colonialist views or in their perpetuating the societal standard that only one role was available for women, they also continued the tradition of questioning their societies. Both women chose to write their novels and get their voices out into the world, and above all else, that is the most important thing they could do.

CONCLUSION

This project was undertaken to explore the reasoning behind, and effects of, novels written by women in nineteenth-century Britain. It continued and altered once it became apparent that a majority of the well-known nineteenth-century British female authors published their writings almost entirely in the first half of the century. There is a gap of practically fifty years where there is a large dip in the number of female authors, practically eradicating the species. This phenomena was curious, especially when the presence of so many women authors is what created the genre of the novel and made it respectable at an academic level. This gap is noticeable enough to raise questions as to the reasons why the amount of women authors, so prolific in the first half of the century, is practically nonexistent in the latter half of the century.

This project is organized the way that it is because of this pattern of decreasing the amount of women writers. It can be seen that the more popular and respected the novel became, the more tightly kept was the discipline, shutting out those who were instrumental in its original success. This could be because male writers were intimidated by the skill and popularity of women writers, and that is partly true. It could be because women submitted to the role expected of them by society and decided to give up creative pursuits in favor of raising a family and taking care of their homes. No matter the reason, this project is examining the results, and that is why with each chapter, the scopes of discussion the women novelists take on, grow smaller and smaller.

Each chapter jumps to a different topic because that is what was broadly happening during the nineteenth century. It opened up with the novel an open genre for anyone to take and make whatever they wished. The authors in the first chapter — Frances Burney, Mary Shelley, and the anonymous author of *The Woman of Colour* — had the intellectual freedom to discuss any and all topics in the world, so they did. Their storylines draw across multiple cultures, countries, languages, and ethnicities. These women used the entire world as their setting because they knew it was open to them and when there are no constraints, it appears most writers will take up as much space as they possibly can. English societal biases are shown right alongside examples of formal learning. Not all of the world is spoken of correctly or fairly, but each author gives a good understanding of what the world entails, and even hints at their knowledge of the British Empire's role in subjugating a large amount of it. England is still the centerpiece and main setting for the novels of this era, and it shows the societal bias of the English citizen. These authors poke at the idea of English society being internally harmed from its feeling of superiority. Characters are shown to be deficient in worldly knowledge because they know Great Britain is the most powerful empire during this period, and it can be inferred that it was thought that any country under British rule must be subservient, weaker, and not important enough to know. While the authors acknowledge this bias in their societies through their characters, they are not without this bias either. Each story has people fleeing to England out of safety, whether of their own volition or coerced, with the intention of reaching the English shore to the resolution of their problems. The immigrant characters do meet some bias from the collective English nation, but they themselves often also categorize persons based on whether or not they belong on the

English isle as well. There is a definite presence of "us vs. them" mentality no matter how hard the authors attempt to divest or hide this mindset through the use of an international setting and cast of characters.

The presence of the navy is additionally shown to be a blind spot for the authors in every chapter of this project. Historically, the world has been made aware of the presence of the British Navy during the nineteenth century around the globe. These men were integral to the control and continued rule of the British Empire, and this meant that they were the ones enforcing colonization, seizing land, subjugating nationalities, and exploiting this land far away from the British shores to make a profit. All of the sailors and navy men that return to England throughout these stories are shown to be the most pleasant, intelligent, sensitive, and caring people in each novel. This is one aspect of the international empire that sneaks through even to Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, whose setting takes place almost entirely in a single house. The sailors and navy men are the richest ones, the heroes, and in general the people most welcome in any home in any person's presence. Because of the brutality of the British Empire during this time, it can be inferred that these men were treated like heroes by even the open-minded authors because they were important in the upkeep of the British lifestyle. This is a blind spot across all groups within the English society and is a good example of how deeply placed this opinion of the English military was throughout the nineteenth century. This bias is not mentioned in any book within this project, and that is not a coincidence. Either all of the authors refuse to touch the issue of the military, or they do not see it as an issue at all. Despite the several blind spots, it was clearly still important to all of these authors to pass along a message to their public, subtly, in order to enact a change in behavior and make

the world a place better aligned with their own standards of decency and morality. No matter the method the author uses, they are employing the genre of the novel to convey their socio-political messages to their public. The female voice was not as prolific in the ears of the public before the nineteenth century. While it did exist, it was more novel to come across a highly acclaimed work written by a woman rather than find one written by a man. Therefore, the emerging genre of the novel came with not just an increase in great women writers who had finally found a genre in which they could be successful, but it came with an increase in women writers in general. This changed the public voice because a previously overlooked demographic was sharing their perspective, and it was different from the male-dominated mainstream. Women hold a different place in society, and therefore their opinions, thoughts, and points of view expand the public eye when they are shared.

The expansion of the public eye led to the era of novels pushing for reform within British society after the Industrial Revolution. Women were put into close contact with an uglier side of life, due to increased urbanization, and this meant that they were seeing a way of life that may have been normalized to the male eye. Authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot pushed for reform and an alteration of the world to a more humane lifestyle because they were practically looking at the results of urbanization from the outside. This is why Charlotte Yonge, in *The Daisy Chain*, creates characters who specifically go out of their way to enact charitable work. Gaskell and Burney set up the premise of how a society should act, and Yonge creates a world where this example has been followed, while showing exactly how it should be employed into one's society. Yonge took the examples of Gaskell and Burney and employed them by limiting the

possible roles of women in a society, while drawing attention to the necessity of women in a society. She comes full circle and agrees that women cannot be ignored, but also pulls them back to the beginning and says that they should be silent in all other aspects of society. Every novel in this project is the work of a woman attempting to make a change in her society through her work, due to it being the easiest and fastest way of getting her ideas across to her public and accepted by them. What both Yonge and Charlotte Bronte's works suggest is that the fight by women to have their voices publicly heard is not the best way to make changes in her society. They say that each woman has a duty to her household to create a standard of morality in the home, and that standard will be carried out throughout the rest of the world thanks to their influence. This perspective is not an uncommon one, but it is one of retreat.

This project is intended to show connections between female authors throughout nineteenth-century Britain and how the intentions of the works explored within this project have stayed consistent throughout the century. Each author used her novel(s) for more than just a form of entertainment for the public and a way to earn a living. They worked to expand the public perception of women's thoughts, abilities, and participation in the English socio-political world. The ingenuity of these women in changing the overt topics they wrote about, their writing styles, and the methods they used to publish their works, all show their fortitude and success in this endeavor. Now that this gap in literature is shown, rediscovery projects, like the one completed by Gilbert and Gubar, can be useful in continuing this conversation. There is a reason why women authors practically disappeared in the period after this thesis, and there is a reason why they returned in the twentieth century. The conversation does not end here, but instead it can

and should continue as more voices that were previously ignored and buried can be found to increase knowledge of this time period and gain a greater insight into the larger human experience. Women authors are incredibly important because they were not privileged like male authors. They provide a perspective that is more often silenced, and it is only through rediscovering their voices can an accurate depiction of the past, and therefore the present, be created.

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