UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

From Chawton to Oakland: Configuring the Nineteenth-Century Domestic in Catherine Hubback's Writing

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Abstract

This thesis engages the ideological ambivalence about the nineteenth-century middle-class domestic that emerged at mid-century by focusing on the non-canonical British and Californian writing of a fairly unknown but prolific author, Catherine Hubback, Jane Austen's niece. It explores the tension between ideology and practice in Hubback's writing, and argues that her work simultaneously challenges and endorses the ideal of domesticity. To the extent that it challenges this ideal, Hubback's fiction, in its representation of domestic practice, negotiates class and gender ideologies that play out in the middle-class home. The thesis also traces how her endorsement of middle-class domesticity became more pronounced in the story and letters she wrote after her emigration to California, taking the form of overt criticism of American femininity and domesticity.

Hubback's concern with women's position in relation to law and marriage is read within the context of developments in the genre of domestic fiction. My close reading of four novels – *The Younger Sister*, *May and December: A Tale of Wedded Life*, *The Wife's Sister; or, The Forbidden Marriage* and *Malvern; or, The Three Marriages* – examines Hubback's representation of marital and domestic configurations that are consistently viewed in relation to the social and legal position of women. The novels explore alternative options for women's lives illustrated by their negotiation of the constraints of middle-class womanhood on their own terms; in marriage, or by choosing not to marry. Similarly, my discussion of Victorian masculinity in Hubback's fiction focuses on the concern with moral and industrious middle-class manhood that establishes middle-class values as the definition of proper Englishness. As part of this discussion, I demonstrate how Hubback's fiction reworks middle-class masculinity in order to establish a model for marriage that ensures domestic stability and ultimately the order of the English nation.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I continue my exploration of Englishness and domestic ideology by reading Hubback's short story and letters from California. In contrast to the ideological ambivalence registered in the novels, these texts more overtly subscribe to middle-class English values. My reading of Hubback's work for this thesis thus aims to contribute to an understanding of the complex interrelation between ideology, domestic practice and literature in the nineteenth-century.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die ideologiese ambivalensie aangaande die negentiende eeuse middelklashuishouding wat teen die middel van die eeu te voorskyn getree het deur te fokus op die nie-kanonieke Britse en Kaliforniese skryfwerk van ’n redelik onbekende,dog produktiewe,skrywer, Catherine Hubback, Jane Austen se niggie. Dit ondersoek die verhouding tussen ideologie en praktyk in Hubback se skryfwerk en voer aan dat haar werk die ideaal van huishoudelikheid gelyktydig uitdaag en goedkeur.In soverre dit hierdie ideal uitdaag, baan Hubback se fiksie, deur middle van die voorstelling van huishoudelike praktyke,’n weg deur die klas-en geslagsideologieë wat in die middelklaswoning afspeel.Die tesis ondersoek ook hoe haar ondersteuning van middelklashuishoudelikheid meer prominent geword het in die verhale en briewe wat sy na haar emigrasie na Kalifornieë geskryf het, en wat die vorm aangeneem het van openlike kritiek teenoor Amerikaanse vroulikheid en huishoudelikheid.

Hubback se belangstelling in die posisie van vroue ten opsigte van die wet en die huwelik word gesien in die konteks van ontwikkelinge in die genre van huishoudelikefiksie. My bestudering van vier romans – *The Younger Sister, May and December: A Tale of Wedded Life, The Wife’s Sister; or, The Forbidden Marriage* en *Malvern; or, The Three Marriages* – ondersoek Hubback se voorstelling van konfigurasies in die huwelik en in die huishouding wat deurgaans beskou word ten opsigte van die sosiale en wetlike posisie van vroue. Die romans ondersoek alternatiewe opsies vir vroue se lewens wat geïllustreer word deur die wyse waarop hulle hul weg baan deur die beperkings wat op hulle geplaas is as vroue van die middelklas; in die huwelik, of deur te verkies om nie te trou nie.My bespreking van Viktoriaanse manlikheid in Hubback se fiksie focus ook op die belangstelling in morele en hardwerkende middelklasmanlikheid wat middelklaswaardes as die definisie van ware Engelsheid bepaal. As deel van hierdie bespreking demonstreer ek hoe Hubback se fiksie middelklasmanlikheid hersien om ’n model vir die huwelik te skep wat huishoudelike stabiliteit en uiteindelik ook die orde van die Engelse nasie verseker.

In die laaste hoofstuk van die tesis sit ek my ondersoek van Engelsheid en die huishoudelike ideologie voort deur Hubback se kortverhaal en briewe van Kalifornieë te lees. In teenstelling met die ideologiese ambivalensie wat in die romans geregistreer word, onderskryf hierdie tekste meer openlik die waardes van die Engelse middelklas. My lees van Hubback se werk

vir hierdie tesis poog dus om by te dra tot ’n begrip van die komplekse onderlinge verhouding tussen ideologie, huishoudelike praktyk en die letterkunde in die negentiende eeu.

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Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Nineteenth-Century Domestic Configured as Home, Nation and Genre in Catherine Hubback's writing

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This thesis focuses on the fiction and letters written by Jane Austen's niece Catherine Hubback in the latter half of the nineteenth-century. In England, Hubback published ten novels between 1850 and 1863, while after emigration to California in 1871 she published only one short story and devoted her writing efforts in her last years, from 1871 to 1876, to maintaining a correspondence with her son and daughter-in-law in England. Although she was a minor domestic writer whose novels went out of circulation by the 1880s, her novels deserve revisiting because of the insight they offer into both the literary and historical context within which she wrote. Published in the typical three-decker form, the novels, with their rambling chapters, reflect a competent writing style interspersed with sardonic wit and insight into human behaviour that becomes more pronounced when characters are criticised. Hubback began writing to support her family, contrary to the domestic ideal of womanhood that informed her position as woman, wife and mother at mid-century. She accomplished this by using the work of her aunt Jane Austen as a starting point, learning from its exploration of gender roles to write novels that can be read as social documents revealing these roles at work within domestic ideology. That Hubback learns from her aunt, a canonical writer, is not to claim that she should be included in the canon of renowned Victorian novelists. Rather, the claim of this thesis is that her works should be recovered and studied for their at times critical or questioning stance concerning prevailing social concerns and conventions in relation to middle-class women and men. Further, they deserve recovery for what they reveal about the social and historical milieu of the middle-class woman and man prescribed by domestic doctrine. The thesis primarily focuses on four of Hubback's early novels, *The Younger Sister* (1850), *May and December* (1854), *The Wife's Sister* (1851), and *Malvern* (1855), which I have chosen as representative of the themes I wish to explore, such as marriage, marriage law, the middle-class home, middle-class femininity and masculinity and Englishness. The thesis argues that these novels both challenge and endorse domestic ideology, demonstrating Mary Poovey's argument that ideology was simultaneously "constructed and contested," with particular attention paid to those social concerns of the period that affected women's lives, like the redundancy that threatens the spinster or the ambiguity of a marriage statute (3).

Poovey's explanation that "middle-class ideology" was "always in the making, […] always open to revision, dispute, and the emergence of oppositional formulations" (3) allows me to approach Hubback's novels as challenging middle-class domesticity as the ideal while attempting to redefine some tenets of domestic practice that prescribe middle-class identity. I aim to show in my exploration of these novels that their ambivalent approach to the mid-nineteenth-century ideal of home and woman negotiates the status quo to work towards a redefinition of domestic precepts like 'absolute duty' that define middle-class womanhood. In the first four chapters, I follow a trajectory from one novel to another in which I aim to show that, whereas *The Younger Sister* portrays middle-class marriage as the ideal, *May and December* can be seen to question the validity of this ideal in its exploration of different matches and the effect of these on the stability of the home, followed by *The Wife's Sister*, which focuses on the woman and home in relation to marriage laws and the precepts of domestic doctrine, and culminating in *Malvern*, in which middle-class values are re-established as the definition of ideal femininity, masculinity and the embodiment of English marriage and identity. Since this thesis does not attempt an overview of Hubback's work, I exclude those novels not immediately pertinent to its concerns. These are *Life and Its Lessons* (1851), *Agnes Milbourne; or, 'Foy pour devoir'* (1856), *The Old Vicarage*(1856), *The Rival Suitors* (1857), *The Stage and the Company* (1858) and *The Mistakes of a Life* (1863).

In Chapter 5 of the thesis, I consider Hubback's short story "The Stewardess's Story", and her letters written in California from 1871-1876 for their observations of American domesticity and its domestic affairs. I approach the short story as a transitional piece influenced by her initial encounter with Californian life, written in her first few months of settling in the New World. The letters are explored as life-writing from an English middle-class woman's point of view that is informed by her context as immigrant, former writer of domestic fiction and manager of her home. The central argument in exploration of the short story and letters is that Hubback's criticism of America, the American woman, and domesticity reinforces the domestic codes examined in her fiction even as she adapts to Californian life, loves travelling in the state and adopts some Americanisms. Her letters provide insight into Californian history from the 1870s onwards when discrimination against Chinese immigrants escalated. Hubback employed Chinese as domestic servants, and her descriptions of her interactions with them in her domestic space can be read as providing a private, sympathetic perspective on their contested presence in California that resonates with her treatment of national, domestic issues in the novels.

'Domestic' and 'domesticity' are key terms in this study. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "domestic" dually refers to "the home or family" and "of or inside a particular country; not foreign or international" (434). Rosemary George captures this double meaning of the term as both "home and of home-country"; thus "domestic" refers to the household and references the nation (1).John Tosh's ground breaking work on masculinity and domesticity in the Victorian period offers this subsequent classification of domesticity:

> It denotes not just a pattern of residence or a web of obligations, but a profound attachment: a state of mind as well as a physical orientation. Its defining attributes are privacy and comfort, separation from the workplace and the merging of domestic space and family members into a single commanding concept (in English, 'home'). (4)

Tosh's explanation invests the Victorian perception of home with an emotional connection that moves beyond the idea of home as merely a structure. Not only was the home thought of in terms of family ties and as an exclusive space separate from the outside world, but it came to be viewed as an ideal way of life. "Domestic" and "domesticity" as defined in the above terms of home, family and country became the centripetal force for an emergent ideology of order and morality, which in the Victorian context came to be specifically associated with the middle-class home, woman and man. As Tosh puts it, "[p]racticed first and most intensively by the bourgeoisie, domesticity became the talisman of bourgeois culture, particularly in painting and novels" (4). The middle-classes practised virtues of propriety, economy, duty, industry and morality to distinguish them from what came to be perceived as the immoral and dissipated aristocracy and the crude working class. The home was the domain of the middle-class woman as the marketplace was the man's. As marriage was the only respectable option for most middle-class women, managing the home was seen as her only vocation. The middle-class woman managed it by exercising moral order over herself and ensuring her husband's, and overseeing the requirements of running a household with prudence. Her administration of the home included supervising domestic servants and keeping a strict account of household expenses. The woman was perceived as falling short of this ideal of order and her feminine duty of regulating others if she failed to manage her servants and home. The middle-class man contributed to this order through his economic provision that preserved the respectability and station of the home and the family, and through his protection of the reputation of his wife and marriage. Money was therefore crucial to the maintenance of the middle-class home and pecuniary difficulties were fearfully conceived of as a threat to status stability. A descent in status was considered an unbearable mortification and prompted desperate actions such as emigration. As A. James Hammerton states in one of

the most comprehensive studies on female emigration to date, "emigration, like murder, was an extreme reaction to deep-rooted social problems [...]. For many it was a response to the fearful experience of downward social mobility" (13).

In addition, although the gendered demarcation of the private and public spheres explained above was geared towards the promotion of order, it was essentially also about harmony, comfort and the luxury of privacy, where the home was perceived as a sanctuary from the competitive outside world. Accord in family life was highly prized and involved the cultivation of familial relationships, in which the companionate relationship between husband and wife took centre stage. However, while companionate matches – that is, marriage based on love and mutual dependence – may have "stood at the heart of the Victorian ideal of domesticity" as Tosh argues, there was "no doubt that the husband should be master" in the home (27, 28). Eventually, Victorian life became primarily defined by proper, organised homes and gender relations that instilled a belief that the "household [was] a microcosm of the state: disorder in one boded ill for the stability of the other" (Tosh 3). In other words, the home as an ordered space inhabited by morally upright men and women was perceived as integral to England's view of itself as a moral nation.

Domestic fiction at mid-century participated in this nationalist claim to respectability and morality. These narratives reinforced the ideal of women in their proper place and function in the home by valorising the woman as a domestic angel and showing her counterpart, the fallen woman, to be deserving of punishment, sometimes in the form of exile or death, for transgressing the virtues of female duty, self-sacrifice, piety and propriety. They also concluded in conventional marriage that served in most instances as a reward for the heroine's adherence to the ideal. Marriage was used in a similar way in connection with the hero, with the addition that it was his reward if he had reformed into a responsible, industrious middle-class man. More importantly, marriage at the novel's denouement fulfilled domestic ideology because it placed the man and woman in their expected roles, vouchsafing the propagation of an ordered household.

The home, marriage and the domestic woman were of interest to Austen and Hubback, the one a well-established novelist concerned with the domestic, the other an admirer of her aunt who began her writing career by completing her aunt's unfinished fragment *The Watsons* (1804) and publishing her first domestic novel, *The Younger Sister*. I begin this chapter with a brief overview of Hubback's biography and literary context, pointing to other women writers who also wrote to support themselves and their families, like Frances Trollope and Fanny Kemble. My framing of her novels as examples of domestic

fiction, informed by gender and class ideology prevalent at the time, serves to clarify my use of the term 'domestic' as a sub-genre of the Victorian novel in relation to previous definitions of it given above. Furthermore, this chapter explores the differences and similarities between Austen's and Hubback's narrative concerns, be it the fact that they have a shared interest in the moral rectitude of their characters or that their novels conclude in the conventional marriage. A close analysis of both *The Watsons* and *The Younger Sister* will serve here as a point of departure to examine Hubback's other novels like *The Wife's Sister* and *Malvern* later in this thesis. After establishing the middle-class home and marriage as the ideal in *The Younger Sister*, Hubback proceeds to explore and unpack the complexities of domestic ideology in the novels that follow. The novels present at their endings a less stultified middle-class womanhood that has negotiated the strictures of the ideology of the home and marriage.

At mid-century, when the cult of domesticity was at its most pronounced, Catherine Hubback began writing domestic fiction to support her family after her husband suffered a mental breakdown in 1848. Her life from this point onwards would become almost an inversion of the domestic doctrine validated in her novels as she became the provider, was compelled to live a frugal life, no longer moved in the professional middle-class circles she was accustomed to and came close to sinking into genteel poverty. Hubback's biographical background was recently brought to light in Zoë Klippert's transcription of Hubback's letters *An Englishwoman in California* (2010). Before Klippert's edition, interest in Hubback and her writing had slowly begun to emerge in academic scholarship. Victorian scholar Tamara Wagner, Austen critic Kathryn Sutherland and Austen scholar Alice Villaseñor introduced Hubback as a writer worth studying in their focus on her life and novel, *The Younger Sister*. Despite her remarkable literary output and her connection to one of the foremost canonical novelists, her work is markedly unknown in literary studies and would have remained in relative obscurity if not for Wagner's articles on the Victorian Web from 2002 onward that led the way for cultivating interest in Hubback's writing. Wagner's articles call for the recovery of Hubback's work, which she contends has been undeservedly neglected, while Klippert's transcription of the letters grants some access to Hubback's life in the wake of her career as author. Their publication has given Hubback a new level of visibility. Klippert provides some brief but insightful biographical detail along with her edition and leaves the letters which relate her hardships and assimilation into Californian society open for interpretation. I will isolate some aspects of Hubback's life that are of interest to this chapter.

Klippert relates that Hubback was born on the 7th of July 1818 in the Great House, Chawton, England, nearly a year after Jane Austen's death. Hubback was the eighth child of

Francis Austen, a captain in the Royal Navy, and his wife, Mary Gibson. Her father named her Catherine Anne, after the protagonists in Jane Austen's two posthumously published novels, *Northanger Abbey* (1818)and *Persuasion* (1818) (Klippert 3). Hubback studied subjects like geography and arithmetic under her father's tuition but it appears her imagination was fed by her aunt Cassandra, who also utilised her visits to share Jane Austen's narratives with her and her siblings, "carr[ying] on the family practice of reading aloud from Jane's novels," including the incomplete fragments *Sanditon* and *The Watsons* (7). With three older brothers entering college and preparing to take up professions, Hubback and her sisters were perhaps the only avid listeners. Both Hubback and her sister Fanny were able to recite long passages of their aunt's writings even in their later years, with Hubback's son John as a witness to their conversations. It was Catherine who was considered by her father to "be most like his sister Jane," with her forthright and outspoken nature that made her less "inclined" to "hide her intellect in order to attract a husband" (11).

Klippert contends that Catherine's marriage in 1842 to John Hubback, a tradesman's son, may have contravened the class boundary between two families from "vastly different backgrounds," but Frank Austen deemed her disposition to be "the very quality that might be deemed an asset in a barrister's wife" (11). Their married life was comfortable and financially stable. They resided in London where John Hubback grew increasingly successful in his profession, enabling him to "support a full household staff," whilst his wife hosted dinner parties for his colleagues and expanded their social circle amongst members of the professional class (12).

Klippert relates that from 1848 onwards, Hubback watched the deterioration of her husband's mental faculties and "moved the family to Malvern, a popular spa town in Worcestershire" (12). Whilst on a desperate holiday in 1849 to restore her husband's health, Hubback, perhaps having foresight that their family would soon face financial strain, began to re-write her aunt's unfinished fragment. After her husband was admitted to a mental institution, Hubback relocated to her father's home in Portsdown with her three small boys and spent the next twelve years writing to provide for herself and her family. Hubback's sons entered fine schools because of their grandfather's noteworthy position in society, but Hubback watched them struggle to attain professions. Deeply attached to her children, she in later years made the decision to set up home for her son Edward in distant California. However, it also appears that Hubback was sensible that her presence in what had been her home (but was now her son John's) was cause for friction (19). Klippert cites one of John's letters that discloses that he and his new bride's domestic felicity was threatened by

Hubback's somewhat overbearing disposition (19). Klippert argues, at any rate, that there are no letters that reveal if Hubback "felt resentment at being displaced" and suggests that Hubback's transatlantic emigration was not only a necessity but also an "opportunity to redefine herself" (19). The promise of a fresh start might well have fuelled Hubback's salient desire for emigration, considering that once in Californian society she renounced her marital status and listed herself as a widow. I explore her reasons for leaving in greater detail in Chapter 5. In all probability she wanted to place her failed marriage behind her. Perhaps this need to "redefine" herself extended to her writing; she may have ceased to write novels because novel writing reminded her of a difficult period in her life. In England those in her social circles knew she was married in name only. She did not quite fit the domestic ideal in her home nation. In California, however, she was the genteel widow at liberty not to disclose details about her past life in England.

Villaseñor and Sutherland both highlight some of the intricacies of Hubback's English past, based on evidence drawn from Austen's and Hubback's family letters. According to Sutherland, Hubback's writing for financial means did not meet with the approval of members of the Austen family like James Edward Austen-Leigh and his half-sister Anna Lefroy (*A Memoir* xxvi). Sutherland notes that, according to evidence in family correspondence between James and Anna, their disapproval stemmed largely from Anna's viewpoint that as Jane Austen's closest niece, who had received critical guidance from her concerning her own writing endeavours, she was entitled to complete any of Austen's writing. Sutherland states that Anna's resentment of "this appropriation by the lesser novelist of Aunt Jane's voice" was deepened by her fear that Hubback was "ready to do with 'Sanditon' [another Austen fragment]" what she accomplished with *The Watsons* (*A Memoir* xxvi). Also noting the family conflict between Hubback and Anna Lefroy, Villaseñor states that another point of contention was that Hubback did not "announce that the first few chapters of [*The Younger Sister*] were written by the aunt Jane to whom she dedicated the work" (6). When compared, remarks Villaseñor, the first five chapters of *The Younger Sister* vary little in detail from Austen's fragment.

According to Sutherland, Hubback's version of *The Watsons* presents a view of Austen's life the family did not want exposed. She remarks that the entire purpose of James Austen-Leigh's publication of *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870) was to facilitate the "production of a particular family view of Jane Austen" (*Textual Lives* 77). This was partially defeated by Austen herself in her fragment *The Watsons.* As Austen scholars like Paul Pickrel have argued, the fragment was too closely based on her own situation at the time: her mother,

Cassandra and herself faced the possibility of genteel poverty if her father passed away (449). Emma Watson and her sisters face a similar dread in a home that is already lower middle-class and ill-managed well before the death of their father. Hubback remains faithful to this depiction but exacerbates their situation with Robert Watson, who carelessly neglects his brotherly duty to provide for his sisters' needs, treating them as burdens. Villaseñor notes that "Austen's nieces and nephews – all children of Jane Austen's brothers – did not wish to portray the men in Austen's life as unwilling to provide much-needed financial assistance to Jane, Cassandra, and their widowed mother" (7).

Hubback's supposed exposure of some truths concerning Austen's life extended to an inclusion of family scandals as content for her novels. For example, her novel *The Wife's Sister*, which focuses on the marriage of Cecil Mansfield to his deceased wife's sister, Fanny Ellis, may point to Jane Austen's younger brother Charles who married Harriet Palmer, sister of his deceased wife, Frances Palmer. Hubback's treatment of this affined marriage in her novel is both sympathetic and censuring, but Cecil Mansfield is dealt with harshly; he dies at the novel's conclusion. In Sutherland's view the Austen branch of the family perceived Hubback's incorporation of family in her texts as a worrying sign that "their cousin Catherine Anne Hubback might be poised to break the family silence" on other secrets or facets of Austen's life and possibly their own lives (*Textual Lives* 72). It is possible to argue that Hubback was interested in a realistic presentation of her aunt's life that edged away from, as Sutherland puts it, "Austen-Leigh's idealized portrait" in his memoir of "a selfless spinster aunt, grateful sister, and uncomplaining daughter," which he gleaned from contrived etchings by his father and uncle of who their sister was (*A Memoir* xxxv). It may be that Hubback drew her inspiration from her aunt's life as it really was to demonstrate in her narratives that the Victorian ideal of domestic womanhood was unattainable and had to be negotiated and revised for less rigid and more realistic middle-class femininity.

Hubback's life, as briefly outlined above, points to the fact that women who began to write to alleviate pecuniary difficulties revealed the real circumstances as opposed to the ideological practice of what women's lives were like in the nineteenth-century. Hubback had been living her domestic role as wife and supporter of her husband's career, hosting regular and expensive dinner parties (Hubback admitted to the expense in a letter to John dated April 1872 in which she recalled that "[s]mall dinners run away with a great deal of money" [*Letters* 47]). Hubback and her husband clearly lived according to their station and social expectations that their lifestyle reflect their rank. Her husband's sudden illness catapulted her from this ideal of professional middle-class prosperity and her position as subservient,

supportive wife with perhaps little knowledge of financial matters and the business world into a situation that compelled her to deal more directly with monetary matters and to decide what was best for her family's future. Hubback immediately acted in a practical manner by shutting up their city home (12). Next, she sought medical assistance for her husband by removing to Malvern, the health resort and spa (12).Whilst here, Hubback began to re-write Austen's unfinished piece (12-13). It is quite possible to envisage Hubback still sanguinely expecting that his health would improve and that it would not be necessary for any life-changing decisions on her part. This is evident in her removing the family in 1850 to "Aberystwyth" with hopes, as Klippert relays, that "the sea air would do John good" (13). Significantly, Hubback had already completed *The Younger Sister* by this time, a remarkable feat considering the upheavals she was facing, uppermost of which would have been her having to come to grips with the reality of her husband's illness. When it became clear that there were no medical cures and after John risked his life "climbing a cliff from which he had to be rescued," Hubback arranged for him to be admitted to an asylum (on their return train journey) before she moved on with her children to her father's home in Portsdown and settled down to commit herself to writing as a career (13).

She published her last novel in 1863 and ceased to write for eight years before immigrating to California in 1871 to help her son Edward set up home in the West (18). These eight years of literary non-productivity saw a further decline in Hubback's living conditions; before emigration she was living in a lower-middle class neighbourhood, separated from an affluent neighbourhood of "larger dwellings" by "a field and railway cutting"(17). Chapter 5 looks at this period in her life more closely but it is noteworthy that Hubback turned to writing immediately once in California, and published the short story, "The Stewardess's Story." It may be that, once again, Hubback began writing to support herself, this time in circumstances that were slightly better than those she had left behind in England. Although there is no incontrovertible evidence to explain why Hubback did not continue to publish more short stories, it can be assumed that it was not financially rewarding, given that she writes in a letter dated September 24th 1871 that she will not write if she is not paid well for her efforts (*Letters* 31).

In writing for financial provision, Hubback joined the ranks of those nineteenth-century women who, according to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "didn't just attempt the pen, [but] lived by the fruits of their labours" (xxix). It was not completely atypical for women to turn to writing as a source of income; as early as the seventeenth century, Aphra Behn, English dramatist and "first of her gender to earn a living as a writer in the English

language" turned to writing after her husband's death and having spent time in a debtor's prison ("Behn, Aphra" n.pag.). However, writing for financial stability was contrary to the ideal of middle-class femininity as passive and confined to the home, performing the traditional roles of wife and mother. Another woman compelled by circumstances to circumnavigate the constraints of her class and gender was fellow novelist Frances Trollope, best known for her book *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832). As Susan Kissel explains, Trollope's "husband's financial and emotional problems came to affect the daily round of her social and domestic activities," eventually causing a massive financial crisis because of her husband's misuse of his finances (14). Like Hubback, Trollope took matters into her own hands and travelled to America for better financial opportunities in 1831, but instead continued to struggle economically after three to four years of attempting her hand at one business venture after another. Hubback's life parallels Trollope's in that both women turned to writing after their husbands' failure to provide for the family. Trollope took up writing immediately after her forced return to England and, as Hubback would do in her short story and letters, she wrote disparagingly about her observations of America and its citizens. Trollope became a prolific writer, and her son Anthony Trollope would follow suit, becoming a well-known novelist.

Not only was Hubback's and Trollope's reality of being their family's breadwinners contrary to the middle-class feminine ideal, but writing, publishing and earning an income brought them into contact with the masculine, public marketplace. In the case of Hubback, the marketplace was a space she was only peripherally connected to in playing hostess to her husband's associates. Beginning to write from financial motivation already detracted from the home and its ideology of separate spheres and strict demarcation of gender roles. And women writers who focused on marriage as constrictive and damaging and addressed the detrimental effects of social norms on women in their novels showed that the ideal could not be maintained and that it was impossible to attain.

Hubback's novels show a preoccupation on her part as novelist with topical concerns that influence the real condition of women's lives. This is addressed early on in her first novel, in which the female protagonist, Emma, suffers mistreatment at the hands of her brother and sister-in-law who overwork her because she is an incumbent spinster in their home. As I show in Chapter 2, in *May and December*, Hubback pursues this concern by featuring three spinsters with limited options and explores how the threat of becoming redundant or how the mistreatment in a brother's home influences the trajectory of their lives. It is possible to view Hubback as writing novels that, as Mary Keeley puts it, featured the

woman's position within the home coupled with her own viewpoints that reveal her personal "worries and obsessions" as a woman writing about women within the home (ix).

Hubback's ten novels gradually went out of circulation from the 1870s onwards, long before those of other popular women writers of the genre like Margaret Oliphant, Anne Marsh and Anne Manning. These novelists wrote for a middle-class readership that saw reflected in these fashionable novels the validation of precepts and values central to their existence. Monica Fryckstedt notes that the domestic writer stressed "submission to the will of God, fulfilment of duty, self-sacrifice and endurance" (9). She states that domestic fiction was "centered on home and family," underpinned by the "inculcat[ion] of moral values" (9, 11). Noting the deluge of "wholesome" female writers that dominated the market, Fryckstedt argues that their moral focus and "main principles governing this new genre" were modelled on the preface to Marsh's *Emilia Wyndham* (1846), in which she wrote that the aim of domestic fiction was to emphasise to women readers "how beautiful duties are conscientiously performed" and "how widespread the influence for good" (qtd. in Fryckstedt 9). Marriage was the only avenue for women to carry out their "beautiful duties," and thus, as Fryckstedt asserts, "the object of the domestic novel was usually love ending in marriage" (13).

The conventional ending of marriage underscored the domestic novel's popularity but restricted women writers to a certain extent as to what social or political issues they could address in their novels without deviating from the archetypal ending. As part of the fiction market, Hubback wrote for the approval of a discerning and commanding owner of a popular circulating library, mogul Charles Mudie. Fryckstedt states that Mudie "virtually came to dictate the norms to which novelists, aspiring to success, must conform" and shows that Mudie's catalogues and the titles they list of authors' works attest to the demand for minor domestic fiction at mid-century (11). "Minor domestic fiction," according to Fryckstedt, was "minor" because it was not written by "major domestic fiction" authors like Dickens, Gaskell and Trollope (10). Written by a slew of women writers for the "growing number of women readers" frequenting Mudie's, these novels were in demand because of their commitment to upholding a high moral standard and conforming to the ideology of marriage as "the only profession which society opens" to a woman by concluding their novels with matrimony (10, 14). Hubback had the fewest listed titles in Mudie's catalogues over the years, but given that Mudie was highly selective of the works he featured in his library, one can deduce that Hubback's novels must have conformed to his standards because he published several of her novels.

Domestic fiction largely supported domestic ideology by showing women in homes being self-sacrificing and passive. These novels usually focus on the ideal domestic angel whose sense of duty and virtue is tested by various situations like impending poverty, neglectful and abusive relatives or an adulterous husband, all of which she endures. The female protagonist is presented at the novel's end as successfully exercising the ideals of prudence, propriety and rectitude. Such a woman is rewarded with a felicitous marriage or an unexpected inheritance. Conversely, domestic writing might also feature a wayward, transgressive woman who, through hardship and suffering, perhaps a loss in station or reputation, acquires angelic qualities and is the domestic angel at the novel's denouement. Constitutionally home-centred, these narratives explore family relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and between siblings while also paying attention to fashionable thematic concerns of the period. Earlier examples of the genre include Samuel Richardson's pioneering domestic novel *Pamela* (1740) which turns on the theme of the rake transformed into a gentleman through virtuous love. Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) tells the story of an amoral character reaching for self-reformation. These novels incorporate an early exploration of the woman in control of the private sphere and of herself. Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, a ground breaking work on the political history of domesticity and the domestic novel, demonstrates that novels like *Pamela* and *The Vicar of Wakefield* initiated the "rise of the domestic woman" by giving to her the "authority of the household" (3). This feminising of the home ushered in a change in gender relations through the allocation of a separate sphere for the woman to manage and was, according to Armstrong, an acknowledgment of her ability to think and act rationally. The acknowledgement took this particular form because the woman became valued for her mind rather than only her body. In *Pamela* this transition is evident by Mr. B's main interest in knowing what Pamela thinks rather than knowing the erotic pleasure of her body. Armstrong argues that this shift in power relations and the new definition of desirable womanhood it engendered gave rise to a new female ideal "inseparable from the rise of the new middle-classes in England" (8). In other words, the woman as an authority in the home became associated with a class whose values of industriousness and stable family life required this model of desirable, new womanhood.

The identity of the middle-class woman was shaped by doctrines of household regulation and proper etiquette that came to be salient to domestic fiction. Earlier conduct books of the eighteenth century were, as Armstrong explains, "devoted to representing the male of the dominant class" and "exalted the attributes of the aristocratic woman" (61). But a

political transition occurred in the nineteenth-century when writers like Hannah More and Sarah Stickney Ellis were followed by a readership who, according to Armstrong, "distinguished themselves from the aristocracy on the one hand, and the labouring poor on the other" (63). The emerging middle-class was desperate to distinguish itself from either class in its rise to prominence. Middle-class virtues appeared to replace the normative aristocratic standard, a transition that *The Younger Sister* conveys by Emma Watson's extensive criticism of Lady Osborne's demeanour and dress. This acts in part to render the aristocratic woman as the embodiment of a fading standard for behaviour, dress and comportment. This figure is of lesser import because a new standard is established through the middle-class woman who is shown here to possess her own sense of taste and model of behaviour. Lady Osborne's influence and power appears diminished, much like Lady Catherine de Bourgh's in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), when she is unable to compel genteel middle-class Elizabeth Bennett to relinquish the idea of marrying Mr. Darcy. To a certain extent the aristocracy is rendered as a class nearing the end of its power, clearing the way in the novel for middle-class dominance.

Moreover, the middling classes' interest in propriety, household management and marriage guidance bolstered the popularity of advice manuals, like Stickney Ellis's *The Women of England, Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits* (1839), while the manuals gradually 'established' these matters of etiquette as a middle-class criterion. These manuals also glorified middle-class womanhood. The forging of middle-class identity with the ideal of femininity outlined above was a particular agenda of Stickney Ellis. She and writers like her were concerned with defining female respectability in a time of rapid industrial expansion that increased the female working-class, and more clearly separating the emerging middle-classes from both the aristocracy and the class below them. The burgeoning cities facilitated the partition of the work from the home, an occurrence viewed by nineteenth-century scholars as entrenching the middle-class ideology of the woman in the home with her position within it more vital as the man left this sphere to occupy his own in the public marketplace. Stickney Ellis argued that "women's aim should be to become better wives and mothers" and should regard "good domestic management not as degrading but as a moral task," rejecting "false notions of refinement" (qtd. in Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall 183). Stickney Ellis's discourse of duty, morality and refinement came to define middle-class womanhood. In particular, as Lynda Nead argues, it was the middle-class home and the middle-class woman that came to embody Stickney Ellis's ideals because of "the formation of shared notions of morality and respectability" that underpinned middle-class beliefs (5). By mid-century the

woman within the intimate, ordered sanctuary of the home came to be viewed as the "Angel in the House" (Elizabeth Langland 290). Angelic domesticity was an ideal intricately connected to the view of the domestic space as separate from the potentially corrupting outside sphere.

Domestic fiction also explored the home as representative of national ideals. These narratives stipulated the preservation of class and gender boundaries within the home as crucial to the overall stability of the nation. The expectation that the household would maintain the conventional class hierarchy of the English nation became more pronounced at mid-century with industrial expansion and the spread of the empire. In their study of the nineteenth-century novel, Alison Case and Harry Shaw point out that this economic and cultural progress generated a diverse and increasingly intricate social system with hierarchies within hierarchies that threatened to unseat "traditional political forms" such as class hegemony (3). As a counter to these social changes, the domestic space gradually became coded as a stable, ordered and moral sphere defined by the bourgeoisie's watchword, respectability. Case and Shaw state that "the nineteenth century was an age of codification – of the rules of games and sports, for example, and only slightly less formally, of codes of behaviour, especially for women" (4). They argue that this marked emphasis on strict regulations for women occurred because "values are most vehemently insisted on when they are under threat" (5).

Thus, matrimony became the key to the stability of the middle-class home. As Davidoff and Hall explain, "[i]f home was the physical location of domesticity, marriage was at its emotional heart. Marriage provided security and order" not only for the relationship between the sexes but as a means to secure the order of the home (179). This ideal of marriage is explored in Hubback's novels, which, with the exception of *The Younger Sister* and *Malvern*, do not conclude with a fairy tale ending that sets all to rights. Her female characters sometimes make early matches which prove a testing ground for their conduct. When they stumble in their marriages through flirtatious conduct or by allowing immorality to occur within the home, they are punished through the loss of their reputations or husbands, despite realising their error. *May and December* develops this argument when May Luttrell's husband dies soon after their reconciliation and she is not remarried by the tale's conclusion. However, in *The Wife's Sister*, the focus of Chapter 3, Fanny Mansfield remarries despite the annulment of her first marriage and shares with her new husband the custody of her ex-husband's lovechild. Women like Fanny are accorded second chances once they have reformed or have protractedly endured much suffering. They may also be accorded

ownership of the middle-class home in which they are shown to practise selflessness. The reformed men, those who have triumphed over their self-centredness and indolence, are first 'rewarded' with financial gain and then with marriage. The argument that both genders should first develop a moral standard fitting middle-class domesticity before they enter marriage or remarry is salient to all the novels in this study. Marriage is as much a reward as it is a confirmation of the centripetal power of morality in the middle-class home.

This conventional perspective of marriage and the fixed role assigned to woman based on her biological characteristics, as well as the marriage law, gave rise to specific gender constructions in literary works and social spheres. For example, as Nead states, the husband was "the oak" around which the wife as "the ivy" entwines herself, for "just as the ivy needs the support of the tree in order to grow, so the wife depended on her husband, and in the same way that the ivy may hold up the tree when it is weakened, so the wife was able to assist her husband when he was afflicted" (13). This popular Victorian metaphor relays what occurred in practice in the middle-class home: the married woman both depended on and served her husband, promulgating a doctrine of self-effacement and self-sacrifice. Langland claims that it was an ideal of marriage that perpetuated a "gendered politics of power [where] Victorian middle-class women were subservient to men" (294). But, as she continues to argue, women were also active in the management of class hierarchy, within their domain, the home, and accomplished this "through the management of the lower classes," their household servants (294). Langland suggests that this exercise of order was not only from a supervisory standpoint in overseeing that the servants carry out their duties, but that the middle-class woman asserted her dominance through distinctive social practices, like "increasingly complex rules of etiquette and dress to the growing formalisation of 'Society' and 'the Season'" that maintained the class hegemony and set her apart from the lower classes (290). Langland argues that this participation in class management by the middle-class woman was a fulfilment of her prescribed duties to maintain order in the home, but also showed her in control and thus in power of class formation. Langland suggests that one reads the position of the woman in the home as both inscribed by ideology and "reproduc[ing]" it to maintain and "consolidate middle-class control" (291).

According to Davidoff and Hall, "marriage lay at the heart of notions of masculinity and femininity," and determined the demarcation of the home as a feminised space and the marketplace as a masculine sphere because young women were seen as the producers and establishers of families (xxviii). Nead states that this ideology that comes to be expressed in middle-class practice and lifestyle reveals that the separation of home and work "had

profound effects on the constructions of gender identities; increasingly, women were defined as domestic beings, 'naturally' suited to duties in the home and with children" (32). Women were perceived to be inherently demure, morally sensitive and nurturing, qualities that fit the private realm of the home and family. Martha Vicinus argues that the "[t]he cornerstone of Victorian society was the family" and it was the woman's lot to establish the family through procreation (*Suffer* xi). Men were viewed as naturally suited for the marketplace, possessing those innate qualities like ambition and the will to achieve which fitted them for, as Amy King argues, "striving in the public world to advance themselves and their families" (Introduction xxiv).

As the above makes clear, the binary between genders based on biological differences emphasised the home as the woman's sphere and the marketplace as the man's. The separate spheres debate that first emerged in Davidoff and Hall's landmark study has since been revised by Linda Kerber, Amanda Vickery and Simon Morgan. Pertinent to both earlier and revised scholarship is the argument that there is an ongoing tension between the home and the commercial arena. The tension arises between the ideological expectation that the outside, political world and competitive marketplace must never cross the threshold of the home and the reality that the home was daily a part of the outside world. As examples of the latter, domestic servants entered the middle-class home daily and dutiful wives held dinners in support of a family friend or member who was involved in government. If, by the mid-nineteenth-century, as Morgan argues, "a small number of women were able to make public addresses," this was allowed only if their speeches were geared towards women and were moral and educational in tone and content (50). Despite being outside their homes, they were not removed from its ideology of moral and proper femininity. They were expected to practice respectable middle-class womanhood that demanded that their engagement with the public sphere would be, according to Morgan, a "natural extension of their domestic responsibilities and virtues, with the emphasis on selflessness and care for others" (51). Women were therefore not to compete with men by addressing ostensibly masculine concerns like politics and industry, although, as Vickery demonstrates, this did not prevent them from doing so within their drawing rooms.

According to Vickery, the middle-class injunction of the strict separation between the spheres and the "stress on the proper female sphere" instead "signalled a growing concern that more women were seen to be active *outside* the home rather than proof that they were so confined" within it (400, emphasis in original). Approaching *May and December* in Chapter 2 from Vickery's perspective enables me to explore the novel's concern with the principle

that the division between the commercial world and the home must be maintained, but that a symbiosis between the two spheres should exist for both to be managed successfully. In other words, despite apparently concurring with the doctrine that it is the female figure that must preserve the boundary between the interior of the home and the outside, the novel also implies that it cannot be sustained without a husband teaching his wife about his business affairs so as to make her a part of that arena and being willing to listen to her advice. This idea of mutual influence of one gender on the sphere of the other is a way of maintaining stability within the home and presents this as a crucial component of companionship between husband and wife. The novel carefully shows that the woman remains contained within the home but suggests that the boundary between the spheres can be flexible without complete transgression.

The 'natural' roles of men and women were furthermore shaped by the doctrine of coveture which stipulated that upon marrying the woman and all she owned became the property of her husband, conceding all rights to him. In other words, the identity of a married woman was subsumed under that of her husband's. As Poovey puts it in her discussion of the law of coveture, the married woman became "legally represented or 'covered' by [her] husband because the interests of husband and wife were assumed to be the same" (51). A husband was deemed responsible and therefore accountable for his wife's actions. Any property that she may have inherited before or during their marriage became his. Divorce was virtually impossible if applied for by a woman, but was possible if the husband desired it on grounds of adultery. Divorce was an expensive procedure and her husband controlled the finances. She could only gain a divorce if she could prove aggravated adultery, this being incest or rape, but adultery alone was not grounds for separation. The introduction of the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Bill in Parliament in 1854 by Lord Chancellor Cranworth signalled recognition, according to Poovey, of "married women's anomalous position" in a Victorian society that stipulated that women's only true vocation in life was marriage but rendered them powerless and insignificant through the law of coveture (52).

The power of marriage law to render women insignificant and the issue of divorce are explored in Chapter 3, which focuses on *The Wife's Sister*. In the novel, Fanny Ellis loses home, rank and her position as wife in part because of an ambiguous clause in a marriage law concerning the legality of marrying one's deceased sister's husband. Hubback uses the precarious position of women in relation to marriage law to problematise the domestic tenets of duty and virtue as ideal feminine traits. In this, the novel allows one to examine these nineteenth-century tenets that present the home as a moral space of "restraint, duty and self-

denial," as Josephine Guy and Ian Small argue (13). This chapter also explores the consequences when the sanctity of the home degenerates through avarice, lust and the failure of the female protagonist to preserve morality. It is possible to argue that Fanny is punished for her failure through the loss of her station. As Armstrong proposes, "[f]iction written after the mid-century mark severely punishes women if they resist the established forms of political authority, no matter how ineffectual their resistance turns out to be" (*Desire* 55). However, the punishment is not sustained because Fanny is accorded a reprieve. She subsequently lives a life of rectitude and is rewarded with financial stability and a felicitous second marriage that restores the order and moral code of the home.

And yet, in *May and December*, the focus of Chapter 2, the protagonist, although she becomes a model of decorum, is not rewarded with a second marriage, breaking with convention and suggesting for the first time in Hubback's writing that perhaps marriage, the female figure in her proper place, is not central to the stability of the home. It must be noted that domestic stability remains the definitive aim of the novel, while the deferral of marriage as the stock happy ending could also be a form of sustained castigation. Adhering to domestic ideology, the protagonist embraces the precept of self-denial through community work, but she remains unmarried and relatively 'independent'.

Masculinity came under scrutiny as well in society and literary works at mid-century, although this was unmatched by the intensity applied to defining proper female behaviour. As Valerie Sanders argues, "sons addicted to the leisured life of a gentleman" and young men with inheritance expectations "unmotivated to work at a career" were a "pervasive concern throughout the mid-to-late Victorian period" (49). Hubback's novels not only suggest a particular middle-class and morally-coded femininity but also a self-governed masculinity apposite to the middle-class ideal of home. This concern forms part of the discussion on middle-class masculinity as an assertion of what it means to be English in *Malvern*, the focus of Chapter 4. Astley Boyle eventually represents the ideal of the moral, fully domesticated gentleman in the home at the novel's end after initially epitomising the young man who preferred to idly wait upon the patronage of family members. Some of Hubback's novels present a male protagonist who becomes morally rehabilitated. At times, the male figure's moral development parallels that of the female's but a second chance at a happy, fulfilled life after dissipation and lassitude is either completely negated or hard-won. In *Malvern* Robert Masters is exiled to Australia after posing as an English gentleman and nearly swindling another of his rightful inheritance. He is disposed of because he is unrepentant at the novel's end. In the later *The Rival Suitors*, Nora's husband dies even though he repents of his

grievous actions towards her and others, and they at last seem to have a chance at a contented union. Hubback's dual treatment of errant males, in that they either have to endure great hardship before they can access domesticity or are completely barred from it, signifies that their conventional position as masters of the hearth is not a given but must be earned. This suggests an exploration of middle-class masculinity that is both resistant to and observant of the period's dominant ideology.

In Hubback's novels that follow *The Younger Sister* we also see a shift from the country scenes of domesticity to the city. Like other women writers of domestic fiction, Hubback also explores the home in the urban, commercial environment. It appears that the novels are meant to test the effects of the public, mercantile world on the ideal of the home as haven, as sanctuary from the competitive economic forces outside its door. In other words, though they never deviate from the focus of domestic realism on "the individual within the domestic scene," according to Vineta Colby, the novels explore the possibility that this insulation or seclusion within the domestic cannot be absolute (259). This exploration of the permeability of the boundary between the home and the public arena creates a tension in her narratives that threatens to collapse the stability of the domestic space. As her characters move between these spaces, it is only their moral values that can stabilise the home.

As I have mentioned earlier, Hubback's narratives show that it is the female figure in the middle-class home that can either stabilise or collapse its sanctity and order through her conduct. Her novels appear to uphold the domestic maxim, as explained by Davidoff and Hall, that "[t]he home [was] the one place where moral order could be maintained" (89).When they transgress, both her male and female characters are punished for their rebellion. But the women featured in the main plot of her novels are not rebuked by death or banishment, regardless of how dangerously close they come to fitting the Victorian type of the sexually transgressive fallen woman. Hubback negotiates the boundary between fallible and fallen in her female protagonists. In other words, although Hubback's central female characters have flaws they do not become morally corrupt and eventually practise middle-class values. Hubback's less stringent treatment of Victorian womanhood differs from that of Charles Dickens, whose novel *David Copperfield* (1849-50) features definitive stock types of womanhood in Agnes as "The Angel in the House" and little Emily as the fallen woman who is exiled to Australia. Hubback's female figure is rather the fallible woman-in-the-home who must reform to avoid the fall or exclusion from middle-class domesticity.

Towards Refinement: Austen and *The Watsons*

When Austen in 1804 began working on the fragment she was to abandon after writing forty pages, she was facing a personal crisis just like Hubback was when she began writing *The Younger Sister*. Her father, with whom she shared a close bond, was ill and her novel then entitled *Susan* was not going to be published. Sutherland suggests that although Austen may have felt discouraged at the rejection of her work, this was not the main reason for her shelving *The Watsons*, and argues that despite relatives like Austen's biographer James Austen-Leigh citing "artistic failure" as a probable cause for her not completing the story, the narrative was perhaps too closely modelled on Austen's circumstances at the time (*Textual* 130). Her father's death would leave Austen, her mother and sister to confront dire financial circumstances, a fate similar to that which threatens the already frugal living of Emma and Elizabeth Watson in their father's house. Pickrel points out that "probably what was defeating about the low estate of the characters was the fact that it reflected the author's feelings about her own estate at the time" (449). Sutherland similarly argues that the fragment was uncomfortably "based in the real harsh circumstances of women's material existence" and "came unexpectedly closer to the events of her own life than Austen was perhaps able to bear" (131). The narrative begins with the Watsons already sunk into lower middle-class poverty which, as Sutherland points out, threatens "their precarious grasp on respectability" (130). A possible life of impropriety for her characters would not be in keeping with the ideal of a morally coded home.

It was after settling in the cottage at Chawton around 1809 that Austen, according to Janet Todd, "began turning herself into a professional writer," following a quiet period of revising her earlier novels after she ceased working on *The Watsons* (9). Austen's novels were published at a time when the literary market favoured women novelists after privileging the talent of Sir Walter Scott and Samuel Richardson. Though Austen at first wrote for her family's entertainment, she later wrote to advance her financial and social security; a purpose that also informed Hubback's writing. For Austen, publishing her novels became a means of gaining economic security and avoiding, in Sutherland's view, "the meanest degree of gentrified provincial life," which Austen introduces as Emma Watson's reality "in [the fragment's] opening pages" (129). It is a reality detested by her heroine Emma in the novel of the same name. Austen became part of the commercial world dominated by men through her publications and unconventional earning of an income from her endeavours. Despite her later literary success, she occupied a social context disapproving of women writing and generating

money from it, because, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, "writing, reading and thinking are not only alien but also inimical to female characteristics" (8). In her own immediate social circle she was not perceived as a writer of import, despite the support of her father. One family acquaintance disparagingly viewed her as the "prettiest, silliest, most affected husband-hunting butterfly" (qtd. in Todd 10). Following the success of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Mansfield Park* (1814), Austen's reputation as a writer of merit however superseded such dismissive opinions of her.

Her novels appealed to an audience that favoured narratives set in provincial towns or small villages inhabited by country gentry of varied rank. Colby points out that they "deal almost exclusively with human relationships within small social communities" and are home and family-centred (4). They detail scenes of domestic life foregrounded with the key elements of love and duty in the home. Austen's narratives display a leisured society: characters visit each other's homes and organise evenings of entertainment where whist is played and a young lady sings and plays the piano. Gentlemen and ladies in Austen's novel should not be seen working, for then they would be no better than the labouring class of tenants that lived on their land. This would present a distinct deviation from the domestic ideal of respectable leisure. Balls or dances are frequent and are opportunities for courtship, social networking and the display of etiquette that mark one's rank. In addition, trade is often treated ironically in the few novels that feature characters that have made their money in industry. On the one hand, people in trade are considered crude and are associated with the corruptible force of the city, while on the other they are presented as upright and noteworthy characters, like the Gardiners in *Pride and Prejudice* "who lived by trade ... [but were] so well-bred and agreeable" and who, through their proper advice and attention to decorum, are more fitting as parents to Elizabeth Bennet (255).

Love is part of the ideal and Austen's novels turn on the happy-ever-after theme that would have pleased the reading audience of the day. Her narratives privilege love but of the prudent and moral kind that faces the institution of marriage with a balanced sensibility. But as in most narratives of love, the designated pair must first overcome obstacles, be it in the form of a love triangle, much needed character development, misunderstandings, or unrequited affection between the heroine and her hero. Austen's heroines are fallible creatures presented with aspects to their dispositions that require attention or reworking, like Emma Woodhouse and Elizabeth Bennet. Her heroes, from the fumbling Edward Ferrars to the proud Mr. Darcy, are also not without fault. On the other hand, male characters like Mr. Knightley and Edmund Bertram are meant to mentor the heroine. According to Davidoff and

Hall, this lover-mentor construction answers the "early eighteenth century ideal where the more matured husband would care for, guide and advise his young wife" (*Family Fortunes* 327).

The absence of a mother in the home is largely typical of novels by nineteenth-century women. Austen's narratives and her texts feature a substitute mother, one who is meant to guide and counsel the heroine, although some are shown to fail at it. We recall Miss Taylor in *Emma* not only being Emma Woodhouse's governess but also her friend, though she allows Emma to "do just what she liked" (613). Lady Russell in *Persuasion* is the substitute mother for Anne Elliot. While she perhaps misguides Anne into terminating her engagement with Captain Wentworth, Anne at the novel's end acknowledges that she was "perfectly right in being guided by the friend [Lady Russell]" despite her suffering because, "[t]o me she was in the place of a parent" (1095). Here, the point is that the substitute mother still qualifies as a parent irrespective of whether her actions were not in the best interests of the heroine. In *Mansfield Park*, Lady Bertram is perceived as a substitute mother of sorts for Fanny Price, even though she proves ineffectual by always languishing on the couch and treating her dog, "poor pug," infinitely better than she does Fanny (383).

The narratives also interestingly incorporate transgressive characters who serve as foils to the dispositions of the protagonists. For example, in *Mansfield Park*, Mary and Henry Crawford are the fitting antagonists to Fanny Price and Edmund Bertram. Miss Crawford is city-bred and over-indulged and neglected by her guardian uncle. Despite the fact that she possesses a vivacity that is quite appealing, she appears to lack a refined deportment. Henry Crawford is presented as a heartless, roguish flirt but he is for a while cast as a suitor to the heroine. Their presence defines the qualities that constitute a lady and gentleman, such as prudence and morality, and without them one would perhaps not be so readily appreciative of the ideal female and male identity held up by the narratives. The idea of transgressive or fallen antagonists as a foil for the more ideal protagonists is emphasised in *The Watsons*, in the characters of Emma Watson and her antagonist Jane Watson, her sister-in-law, Mr. Howard and his antagonists, Lord Osborne and Tom Musgrave. Austen offsets the deviant qualities in the antagonists early in the fragment as a move towards presenting Emma and Mr. Howard as representative of an ideal of "refined" femininity and masculinity.

Establishing Refinement: *The Watsons*

In *The Watsons*, the maintenance of middle-class domesticity is a central concern. It focuses on the lives of four sisters, Elizabeth, Penelope, Margaret and Emma, who rejoins her family after a lengthy absence. She re-enters a family home that has fallen into lower class disrepair through the neglect of her father; it is no longer the "secure and moral shelter from economic and political storms," as Langland characterises the ideal middle-class home (290). Emma is penniless because she has not received the expected inheritance from the uncle with whom she has been staying for most of her childhood. She is also about to become an orphan and a dependent upon her uncouth brother and his simpering wife. In her afterword to *The Watsons*, Margaret Drabble includes an excerpt from James Austen-Leigh's *Memoir* which shows that Austen intended Emma to marry the middle-class clergyman Mr. Howard eventually (152). In it, Austen-Leigh writes that Emma was "to decline an offer of marriage from Lord Osborne, and much of the interest of the tale was to arise from Lady Osborne's love for Mr. Howard and his counter affection for Emma, whom he was finally to marry" (152).

In Drabble's view, the fragment turns on the theme of "false and true refinement" which is pivotal to domestic narratives (22). The reader is immediately made aware of the centrality of refinement in the opening lines that indicate the prospect of a ball to be attended by the Osbornes. A ball called for a display of etiquette, decorum, unimpeachable conduct before others; at a ball a person's lack of refinement would be open to ridicule. It is therefore significant that Emma, who is meant to embody the fragment's model of refinement, is the one to attend in Elizabeth's stead. She is shown throughout the fragment to possess an elegance superior to her sisters as well as to the aristocratic Osbornes, conventionally associated with fine breeding. Having elucidated from the outset that Emma had occupied an upper middle-class home whereas her sisters did not, it is apparent that the narrative poses refinement as class-specific – in this case, the comfortably established middle-class.

Refinement is an indicator of class and social standing. We are told that the Watsons "inhabited a village" and "were poor and had no close carriage" (107). If there was a ball, one of the sisters would be invited to overnight at the Edwards', who were "people of fortune, who lived in the town and kept their coach" (107). The contrast between poor and wealthy is embodied in the contrast between "village" and "town," and between those who have "no close carriage" and those who have a "coach," or between lower middle-class and upper middle-class. The contrast is further embellished with the image of Emma, sitting in the "old chair" the family's one-horse carriage driven by her sister Elizabeth in "all her finery," while

they "splashed along the dirty lane" (107). Emma, "in all her finery" – a reminder of her privileged childhood – is exposed to the lowering elements of the "old chair" and the filth "along the dirty lane" (107). The uncovered carriage further emphasises the image of Emma 'bared' to the change in her situation and also suggests that she is vulnerable to it. There is also the underlying threat of Emma being in danger of tainting her refinement in such conditions, a fear that echoes an earlier assertion that Austen feared that a heroine who inhabited such poverty would fall into "vulgarity" according to Todd (8).

The fragment holds the one instance of a total loss of refinement as a moral warning to the other women in the narrative and also exemplifies domestic ideology. Emma's return to her home is precipitated by her aunt's indecorous behaviour and hasty marriage to an Irishman not long after the death of Emma's uncle. English intolerance of the Irish is shown in Mr. Edwards's conversation with Emma regarding her aunt's actions and abode. In an admonishing tone he says, "Irish! Ah! I remember – and she [Emma's aunt] is gone to settle in Ireland. –I do not wonder that you should not wish to go with her into *that* country" (117, emphasis in original). Mr. Edwards's tone is judgemental in *"that* country." The ideological implication is that Emma's aunt is now considered "*that*" woman, a woman who has failed to uphold the purity of home and nation. She has also transgressed the boundary between classes. Austen banishes her to Ireland. This displacement of transgressive women in literature suggests the English home and nation could not tolerate their failure to "ensure middle-class hegemony in mid-Victorian England" (Langland 291).

Still, the home of Emma's aunt and uncle is held up as the ideal of middle-class domesticity before it falls short of it. As Emma reminisces about the home she has lost, the idea that her own family home does not fit this ideal is reinforced. Her uncle's home was "all comfort and elegance," whereas her family home was "very humble [in] style" (151,135). Her position within it had been one of an "expect[ant] heiress of an easy independence" but in contrast she was now "a burden, an addition in [a] house already overstocked" (151). The description of the house as "overstocked" suggests that there was no room for Emma within it and Emma is displaced within her own family. Its connotation of excess points as well to the threatening possibility of Emma becoming a redundant figure in her father's household if she cannot marry or find a respectable position as governess. "[O]verstocked" is also ironic in the sense that it suggests plenty, but we know that the Watson home is patterned by economic and moral lack. Emma views herself as "surrounded by inferior minds" that would lend her "little chance of domestic comfort and as little hope of future support" (151). It is easy to perceive Emma as a snob here; she appears to elevate herself and her previous social circles

above that of her own family. She bases this preferment on degrees of intelligence and sophisticated thought which her family lacks because they have "inferior minds." It is also implied that the ability to converse with reason and sensibility makes for a comfortable and secure home, as her uncle's and aunt's was. In other words, Emma equates reasonable common sense with the ability to govern a house, which in turn would ensure "domestic comfort" (151). For Emma, the Watson home is a hopeless space without the promise of "future support." The word "future" also directs one to picture Emma's 'future' as having "little hope." Although she is invited to leave it for a stay in her brother Robert's home at the close of the fragment, Emma's refusal is influenced by the fact that her brother and his wife "thought too highly of their own kindness and situation, to suppose the offer could appear in a less advantageous light to anybody else" (151). The ideal domestic space privileged by Emma is therefore not an ostentatious space occupied by people with false ideas of refinement and who "thought too highly" of themselves. Neither is it her father's home in which the domestic values of regulation and stability erode. It is a space that is comfortably ordered and refined, without the threat of pecuniary difficulty and where the roles of both male and female characters are clearly defined and adhered to.

Refinement and Self-Government: *The Younger Sister*

Focusing on *The Younger Sister* in a chapter of her dissertation, Villaseñor delivers an insightful comparative analysis of Hubback's version of her aunt's fragment with Austen's *The Watsons*. Villaseñor regards Hubback as "the forerunner of the contemporary Austen sequel genre," preceding subsequent completions by other Austen family members like Edith Brown's *The Watsons* (1928) and David Hopkinson's *The Watsons: A Novel by Jane Austen and Another* (1977) (56). In other words, Hubback's novel facilitated a 'continuance' of Austen's writing thirty-three years following her death. Villaseñor argues that Hubback wrote *The Younger Sister* with the "Victorian governess-plot novel genre in mind" (38). She suggests that Hubback was concerned with portraying the inevitable humiliation and degradation that awaited Emma if she did not marry and was forced to become a governess to earn a living. It is an existence, as Pickrel and Sutherland have also noted, that threatened Austen following her father's death. Like Emma and her sisters, Austen, her mother and Cassandra also became dependent on the patronage of a brother to survive, and the other possibility open to them besides marriage would have been to become governesses. Villaseñor adds that Hubback prefigured the harrowing existence that awaited Emma by

magnifying her abusive position in her brother's home as caretaker of and "unpaid governess" to his daughter (49). Ultimately, argues Villaseñor, Hubback's central aim was to confirm marriage as the only option for women at mid-century and that most married to evade destitution. Thus, "Hubback never portrays Emma as a paid governess" (42). Villaseñor remarks that "[u]nlike many of Austen's heroines, who must reject a marriage proposal in the hopes that a more attractive offer will come along at some point in the future, Emma does not have to linger long over the question of marrying for survival" (44). She notes that the love plot of Mr. Howard and Emma and the fact that *The Younger Sister* is essentially also a love story is secondary to the novel's emphasis on the centrality of marriage to young women with uncertain futures.

Offering an alternative view of *The Younger Sister*, Wagner in a recent article, "A Strange Chronicle of the Olden Time," explores *The Younger Sister* as a mid-Victorian novel that emphasises certain elements from the silver-fork genre that dominated the literary market in the 1820s to the middle of the 1840s. Wagner argues that silver-fork novelists set out to criticise the aristocratic class for their supposed degeneracy and immoral approach to life even while describing these lifestyles in great detail for a willing readership that were "alternately fascinated and repulsed by the decadence" featured in the narratives (446). Wagner suggests that the rebuke of aristocratic profligacy is echoed in Hubback's criticism of the aristocracy as redundant and immoral in her first novel. She states that one can view Hubback's novel as a "'Victorianization'" of silver-fork fiction and that it represents a "layering of retrospective representations" of moral order featured in Austen's writing, re-surfacing in silver-fork novels and present in what she calls "second wave" writing like Hubback's *The Younger Sister* (444). Wagner contends that Hubback "traded on new interest in the demise of the aristocratic hero, a theme tentatively hinted at in [*The Watsons*]" (444). But, she notes, Hubback took this idea further than her aunt by drawing its aristocrat, Lord Osborne, as a socially inept, unrefined and at times laughable character in order to privilege middle-class manhood and in doing so, to assert "bourgeois domesticity" as the "new value system" (445).

Villaseñor's and Wagner's arguments are both relevant because they unearth the social concerns in Hubback's novels, such as the vulnerable position of unprovided-for spinsters and the assertion of the legitimacy of the emerging middle-class. Villaseñor's exploration of the novel in terms of the governess plot is, however, limiting because it tends to overlook the issue of class implicit in the position of the governess in society, hereby not quite engaging with the narrative's central theme of middle-class identity. Perhaps to do so

would have been beyond the scope of her engagement given that the novel is only part of her greater discussion of Victorian women writers and their re-writing and re-envisioning of Austen's novels. It is here that my overall argument is closer to Wagner's concerning the novel, in that I contend that *The Younger Sister* presents the aristocracy as a superfluous class by establishing middle-class practice as the status quo. In the close analysis of the novel that is to follow, I extend Wagner's contention to argue that the narrative asserts the middle-class woman, man and home as the ideal by denigrating the aristocratic woman, man and home. Mr. Howard is meant to embody the middle-class gentleman who replaces the aristocratic male, Lord Osborne, and, similarly, Emma represents prudent, moral womanhood that challenges aristocratic power in Lady Osborne and eventually displaces her, because she dismisses Lady Osborne as role model and she is Mr. Howard's choice as wife in his middle-class home, which takes precedence over all domestic spaces featured in the narrative because it is an ordered space governed by a principled man.

The title *The Younger Sister* shifts from the inclusiveness of *The Watsons* to signify the centrality of Emma in this version of the story. This is significant because of what the novel attempts to achieve through Emma Watson as the focal character: she represents a middle-class femininity that sets her apart from her sisters and the aristocratic Lady and Miss Osborne. In addition, the title points to a specific familial connection and an identity defined by her relation to siblings and parents. Austen herself was a younger sister and so was Hubback. "Younger" implies naivety, an expected ignorance as the younger member in the family and the assumption that the younger sister is superseded by older, more mature and wiser siblings. It also conveys vulnerability and evokes the idea of someone requiring protection and care. More importantly, it implies there would be, among the rest of her family, someone she could emulate because she requires guidance. When it comes to being formally presented to society, the rules for the younger sister are quite stringent: she cannot attend a public ball unless she herself had had her 'coming out' in society at a special ball for that very purpose. It was also considered improper for a young woman to marry before her eldest sisters. Austen addresses both of these social rules in relation to the younger sister in *Pride and Prejudice*. Lydia and Mary's attendance at an assembly without being formally introduced to society as young ladies is severely frowned upon by Lady Catherine de Bourgh. And Lydia's elopement with George Wickham is doubly scandalous because she marries before her eldest sisters Jane and Elizabeth.

The lower middle-class home of the Watsons is where Hubback chooses to begin the story of *The Younger Sister*, a deviation from Austen's opening that implies a bold attempt at

making the narrative her own while adhering to its central focus. We are at first given a description of what the home had been before the death of Mrs. Watson. It had once possessed the "esteem and respect" of the neighbourhood (2; vol. I, ch. 1). The favourable position that the Watsons occupied was solely due to the management of Mrs. Watson who, "with good judgement, and influence with her husband," established their home and her husband's reputation as a "highly respectable" Reverend (2; vol. I, ch. 1). Implicit in these opening lines is the correlation between the "good judgement" of Mrs. Watson ensuring the "respectable" position of their home and her husband in society. Mrs. Watson's position in her home is emblematic of what Langland describes as "the domestic sanctuary overseen by its attending angel staging a family's position depend[ant] on prescribed practices" (290). The qualities of "esteem and respect" are ideologically associated with the female figure of Mrs. Watson, "the attending angel" who "practices" sound management of her home and family (2; vol. I, ch. 1, Langland 290). The Watson home, with everything in its rightful place, is presented as the standard for middle-class domesticity.

The deterioration of this standard is due to the absence of the regulating figure of Mrs. Watson. Her death catapults the Reverend Watson into "indolence" and "self-indulgence" (2; vol. I, ch. 1). He ceases to be an icon of respectability when he no longer practises "restraint and self-denial," two attributes that Guy and Small state are cardinal middle-class values (13). The consequences of Reverend Watson's 'fall' is that

> his family grew up with almost every disadvantage that could attend them. Motherless, and unchecked by their father, his girls – at least the three eldest – were left entirely to their own guidance [...] and the sons were early sent out, to fight their own way in the world without the softening influence of domestic ties, or the memory of a happy home to warm their hearts and strengthen their principles.(2-3; vol. I, ch. 1)

Mr. Watson's children are not at a "disadvantage" because of their lack in material wealth but because their dispositions are "unchecked" (2; vol. I, ch. 1). The home lacks regulation, but it is the loss of Mr. Watson's self-regulation that produces his children's unprincipled conduct. Clearly, the male figure is held responsible for moral order because there is no mother. Without the mother, the home is no longer a space of succour and moral persuasion. This is indicated by the harsh tone of "fight" that stresses the competitive aspect of the marketplace and that they enter it without the comfort of home to depend on. The ideology of the home as a haven and the woman's sole function as a ministering angel separate from the business arena is implied here as well. Again, the female figure privileged as a regulating authority in the home is embodied in "softening" and "warm" (3; vol. I, ch. 1). Without female guidance

and the lack of positive male influence, the Watson children are without "principles" (3; vol. I, ch. 1). Emma is excluded from this description because, as we recall, she is her uncle's ward for most of her childhood. Her exclusion from her family home and its moral unravelling suggests from the outset that, unlike her sisters who grow up "unchecked," Emma could be a model of principle.

Even so, she does not enter her father's home 'untainted' by circumstance. Disappointed in her expectations of inheritance, Emma returns to her father's home penniless and dependant after her uncle, Mr. Pearson, leaves his entire estate to his wife. Although Emma's aunt is referred to as part of Emma's past and would seem insignificant to the narrative, she is held up as an early warning for the women in the novel. Her actions also suggest that the ideal of the contained, moral middle-class home is fallible, and that, true to the domestic stereotype, women are the offenders because they are easily led by their emotions. We are also aware that Emma's models of domesticity are now no longer a part of her life and can no longer positively shape her. Mrs. Pearson was no longer an example of the ideal of older womanhood that, as stated by Davidoff and Hall, stipulated that "[a]dult women [must] act as gatekeepers for admissible behaviour" (399).We also know, from the description of her family, that there was little chance of them being examples of honourable propriety. There is also the implication that without any role-models, Emma might also degenerate into immorality or cease to practise self-governance.

Mrs. Pearson is also presented as a transgressor of virtuous middle-class womanhood, which was ideologically conceived to be "the antithesis of unbridled sexuality of the 'others' both in the empire and 'at home'," as Janet Myers argues in her discussion of female emigration in the Victorian period (xxxv). The 'others' are the English working class, prostitutes and, as defined by Davidoff and Hall, the "debauched gentry," whose "speciality [of] seduction and adultery were severely censured" (402). Mrs. Pearson's marriage to an Irishman is a shocking alliance with the 'other'. The period's prejudice against the Irish is highlighted in this negative implication of a "young, poor" Irishman 'preying' on the vulnerability of an older widow (5; vol. I, ch. 1). Hubback uses Emma and not Mr. Edwards as the discerning voice that passes moral judgement on Mrs. Pearson's conduct. Emma is burdened by her aunt's "injudicious choice," which "renders her an object of contempt or ridicule" (6-7; vol. I, ch. 1). The threat of Emma falling into an imprudent way of life is dispelled because she is able to assert her own ethical view, even though she dishonours her previous relationship with her aunt in her admission that her aunt acted imprudently by re-marrying a penniless Irishman. This is noteworthy as she represents a female voice that

becomes the story's ubiquitous moral conscience. Her disapprobation of her aunt's unconsidered marriage almost immediately figures her as a model of middle-class womanhood and invests her with what Langland sees as the responsibility to "actively deploy [middle] class power" by upholding moral standards and policing the boundary of the home throughout the narrative (290).

When Emma does 'police' the home, it is to reinstate the class boundary between her and the Osbornes. Lord Osborne and the novel's rogue, Tom Musgrove, conduct an unscheduled visit to her home after the ball. Emma deems this visit an "intrusion" and considers Lord Osborne to be "extremely impertinent and ill-bred,"

> having no excuse calling in this way; there [having] never been any acquaintance previously between the families, her father [having] never been noticed [or] invited by the inhabitants of the Castle as many of the neighbouring gentry were [...] she was indignant that they should thus force themselves on her sister and herself.(64-65; vol. I, ch. 3)

Emma's censure of aristocratic presence in her home is not wholly out of mortification at the drabness of their abode but because Lord Osborne deliberately flouted the crucial rules of etiquette in crossing the threshold without having being formally introduced to Emma's father. This action on Lord Osborne's part is an inexcusable "presumption," a word Davidoff and Hall uses for transgressions of middle-class rules of etiquette regarding matters of introduction (401). Lord Osborne also arrives at their dinner hour, which perturbs Emma and Elizabeth because dining in the afternoon was considered unfashionable amongst the affluent, but necessary for economising in the lower middle-class home. It is implied that Lord Osborne would have known this if he had been of their class or had demonstrated any interest in their family.

His "impertinence" also conveys a lack of respect for their home and by extension their class, while simultaneously asserting his superiority. Emma appears to experience this as more than an "intrusion," and perceives it as a violation of her home and her values, as the word "force" suggests. Later, her sister Elizabeth expresses the hope that Lord Osborne had not "notice[ed] the table-cloth or the steel forks," because she knows them to have "silver ones every day at Osborne Castle" (71; vol. I, ch. 3). Emma's exclamation of "what right has he to intrude on us?" overrides her sister's embarrassment (70; vol. I, ch. 3). With the play on "right" it can also be deduced that the narrative establishes at this early juncture that Lord Osborne not only does not possess the "right" to transgress the boundary of class, but he does not have the "right" to Emma's time and company.

The narrative poses that Lord Osborne's foil, Mr. Howard, does have the "right" to Emma. His middle-class status casts him as her ideal, but he also embodies and practises its tenets. Just like Austen would have done, Hubback distinguishes Mr. Howard as a gentleman of etiquette and refinement, re-defining gentility in the narrative following the scene explored above. We read in the opening pages that he had introduced himself to Emma's father following the ball. Therefore, his request that Emma "allow his sister the honour of calling on [her]" is not viewed as a breach of decorum as Lord Osborne's similar request is (145; vol. I, ch. 6). To Lord Osborne's request that she be introduced to his sister, Emma replies, "Your lordship must be perfectly aware that what you propose is impossible [...]. I have no claim to intrude on Miss Osborne's notice" (139; vol. I, ch. 6). Again, Emma rebukes his disregard of protocol.

Her words challenge the traditional belief that all people of noble rank were undoubtedly respectable. Austen would have called this "false refinement" as Drabble points out (22). It is also reinforced that just as Emma has "no claim" to "Miss Osborne's notice," so do Miss Osborne and by affiliation Lord Osborne have "no claim," no "right" to enter Emma's social circle and home (139,70; vol. I, ch. 6 and ch. 3). Later, when Elizabeth questions her refusal of Lord Osborne's appeal but acceptance of Mr. Howard's, Emma states, "[s]urely Elizabeth, you must see the difference [...]. Mr. Howard and his sister are in our rank of life" (153; vol. I, ch. 7). Emma's exclamation reinstates the class boundary within her home. Her statement also resounds with her choosing a middle-class existence above the noble one she could have with Lord Osborne. It privileges Mr. Howard as her middle-class suitor and presents them as the novel's continuing advocates of middle-class norms.

For Hubback, the 'proper place' for her protagonists is the virtuous middle-class home in which respectability and etiquette are practised. This ideal is exemplified in the figure of a mother in the home, but we know this is short-lived because Mrs. Watson dies. Mrs. Willis, Mr. Howard's sister, is presented as a possible substitute mother for Emma. Mrs. Willis, through her "fine" management of her brother's home, typifies a middle-class domesticity which Emma admires and ascribes to (173; vol. I, ch.8). She is also the foil to Lady Osborne, who would be Emma's substitute parent if she chose to marry her other suitor, Lord Osborne. Through Emma's interaction and observation of them both, Mrs. Willis and Lady Osborne are held up for comparison. Mrs. Willis conducts herself with decorum and attends to propriety on any occasion. Upon meeting the disagreeable Margaret and Penelope, Emma's sisters, Mrs. Willis "was good humoured and agreeable as ever, receiving the two strangers cordially, for the sake of their sisters and immediately proposing that she should act

as their chaperone at the ball" (7; vol. II, ch. 1). Her offer is a tactful exercise in etiquette which saves Emma and her sisters from the embarrassment of not being able to approach or be approached by anyone because they had not being introduced. Without her stepping in and acting as a parent, they would have been social pariahs at the ball. Through her, they could be introduced to those she knew, thereby widening their social circle. By parenting Emma and her sisters, Mrs. Willis also does not remind them of their lower middle-class status, which everyone else was doing by "bestow[ing] a stare, put[ting] up their eye-glasses, and some their lips [at] the sisters unattended by any gentleman" (5; vol. II, ch. 1). Mrs. Willis is shown to endeavour to restore their 'reputations' at the ball.

Lady Osborne, by contrast, delights in their lowly status because it serves to bolster her own sense of superiority. When she is informed that her daughter had invited Emma and her sister (who were guests of Mr. Howard) to dinner,

> her pride did not stand in the way [...] she considered every individual not belonging to the peerage to be so much beneath her, that the gradations amongst themselves were invisible to her exalted sight [...] she had not the smallest inclination to oppose the admission of new spectators to her glory.(214-215; vol. I, ch. 8)

Lady Osborne's derogatory view of Emma and Elizabeth is encapsulated in her view of them as mere "spectators" to be overpowered by her "glory." We read that she "rejoiced in the idea of the envy and admiration her general style of grandeur would give rise" (215; vol. I, ch. 8). Instead of preserving Emma's dignity and reputation like Mrs. Willis does, Lady Osborne is inclined to belittle it. Later, she will be brought low through Emma's rejection of her son's pursuit. The fact that Emma does not choose Lord Osborne discounts the potential influence of his mother as Emma's substitute parent. Emma's rejection of an aristocratic way of life also renders the older aristocratic female ineffectual. By aligning herself with Mrs. Willis, Emma places herself in the role of modelling the ideal of middle-class womanhood that Mrs. Willis represents.

If Mrs. Willis fits the ideal, then Mr. Howard's middle-class home is meant to represent the ideal of domesticity. This is emphasised when Emma and Elizabeth return the visit paid to them by Mrs. Willis, as propriety dictates. A "neat and pretty looking maid" opens the door, indicating their middle-class status in keeping two or more servants (172; vol. I, ch. 8). Emma was

> struck with the air of comfort and tidiness in all she saw [...] at home she had observed so many things which appeared to require a master's eye. The gate swinging on one hinge, the trees straggling over the paths [...] and a hundred other examples of neglect and disorder had met her eyes at home. (173; vol. I, ch. 8)

The description of her own lower middle-class home is brought into sharp relief in its comparison with the one she sees before her. Emma is the observer, just as she is the novel's moral conscience. Through her gaze, the middle-class home of Mr. Howard is valued and her own is diminished. Her abode lacks government, "a master's eye," which also points to her father's inability to master himself and his home. By implication, Mr. Howard's home reflects the ideology of self-government and domestic regulation. This excerpt stresses that desolation and poverty is the result of the "neglect" of the ideal. The image of the gate powerfully reinforces that lack of ownership and class pride. The dominant forlorn image of the Watson home, far removed from the "air of comfort" of Howard's home, is further accentuated by "the trees straggling over the paths" that seem to cast shadows over it. The word "straggling," emphasises the degeneration of the Watson home. It is an ungovernable space, a "disorder[ly]" space (173; vol. I, ch. 8).

In contrast, "the porch and steps" of Mr. Howard's home "were clean and white" (173; vol. I, ch. 8). "[W]hite" opposes the 'gloomy' visage of Emma's home. Its connotations of "purity" and "sanctity" reiterate the ideology of the home as a haven and a sanctuary. It also emphasises the neat and "clean" appearance of the dwelling. The expectation is raised that the interior of the home will match the outside and points to the idea that with the Watson residence, one can only expect an unruly and chaotic interior based on its façade. Mr. Howard's parlour was

> [o]rnamented by some fine myrtles and geraniums in pots, which combined with the well-arranged guns, fishing rods, and similar objects to give an air at once elegant and pleasing to the eye, but not too studied for the daily habits of domestic life. The useful and the ornamental were happily blended. (173; vol. I, ch. 8)

The "fine myrtles and geraniums in pots" are decidedly feminine and indicate a female presence in Howard's home, who we know to be his sister, Mrs. Willis. One can infer that it is to her that one can credit the "happy blend" of "domestic life." Alongside the suggestion of harmony is the awareness of gender boundaries, like the feminine touches of the flowers complimenting the masculine "well-arranged guns [and] fishing rods." Order and symmetry characterise the space and imply that the owner himself is "well-arranged" or self-governed. It is significant as well that "fine" describes the "myrtles" because it suggests that one can also view the home as being refined. Put together, the parlour, and by extension the home and its inhabitants, are "fine" and "well-arranged." "[C]ombined" completes this harmonious tableau.

It is perhaps in this tableau that the novel exemplifies what Drabble describes as Austen's "true refinement" (22). The home is "truly refine[d]" because it suggests a unity, a working together between the male and female within it, signified by the dual placing of both male and female objects in the parlour. It also exudes an "elegan[ce]" without the stiff formality which would have doubtlessly framed an aristocratic dwelling. In contrast, the Watson home is disharmonious. It lacks the working relationship between male and female, evident not only in Mrs. Watson's absence but also notable by the fact that the daughters have not managed the home. The deteriorated state of the home prefigures Mr. Watson's death and the consequent position of dependence on their brother that Emma and her sisters must face. Though Emma traverses other domestic spaces like her brother's home, the Osborne Castle, where she stays for a period following Miss Osborne's marriage, and the quiet seclusion of the home of a spinster, Miss Bridge, she returns at the novel's end to Mr. Howard's middle-class home as his wife. She typifies what Vickery identifies as the "cult of true domestic womanhood, presented as both a consequence of the rise of the middle-class, and vital in the reproduction of middle-class collective identity" (348).

The Younger Sister, like Austen's narratives, features matrimony as essential to the establishment of a middle-class identity and the cult of domesticity. The union between Mr. Howard and Emma suggests a perpetuation of middle-class values; their home would be a regulated space governed by the self-managed figures of Emma and her husband. In a telling scene in which Mr. Howard rejects the advances of Lady Osborne, he is depicted as emphatically choosing love over money, middle-class values over aristocratic standards and rectitude and propriety over improper conduct. To Lady Osborne's insinuation that she is the "woman of rank and wealth and influence" who "wished to devote [it] all" to him, Mr. Howard replies, "I would say [...] my love was not to be the purchase of either wealth or influence" (104; vol. III, ch. 5). Interestingly, his words and sentiments echo Emma's emphatic declaration at the beginning of the novel that she would never marry without love (18; vol. I, ch. 1). Mr. Howard's choice of love over wealth is magnified by the risk he runs of losing Lady Osborne's patronage, and thus his livelihood in spurning her. The narrative's specific rendering of the ineffectual aristocratic woman is amplified in his rejection and stresses the middle-class woman as the new standard of femininity. Lady Osborne's lack of prudence is criticised in a vehement way that solidifies the dominant perception in society at the time, and the novel's argument, that the aristocracy is dissolute. Mr. Howard is described as "disgust[ed] at "[Lady Osborne's] proceedings [...] she, the mother of a married daughter and grown up son, to be making proposals to a man so much her junior [...] and in every way

unsuited for her" (106; vol. III, ch. 5). Emma and Mr. Howard's home is the antithesis to the Watson home, Osborne Castle, and her brother Robert's home (and the values practised in each). Their home is the narrative's icon of middle-class power.

The Younger Sister privileges the woman in her proper place within the home, practising household management and maintaining it as a sanctuary for her husband. Mrs. Watson was apposite for this ideal. Later, it is Mrs. Willis who embodies the ideal middle-class womanhood to which Emma subscribes in her admiration of the Howard home and Mrs. Willis's regulation of it. Both Mrs. Watson and Mrs. Willis are also contained within the home even as they successfully manage it. They are "limited and domesticated, not spilling out into the spheres in which [they] d[o] not belong," as Davidoff and Hall describe the confined middle-class woman (192). For Emma, marriage secures a home and a husband and enables her to access a refined middle-class way of life. Her rejection of aristocratic unscrupulousness embodied by Lady Osborne and her son is an avowal of self-government for emergent middle-class womanhood.

Overview

The home as woman's allotted sphere and her containment within it is the focus of the chapters that follow. The ideological boundary between the home and male, public spaces like the counting house is challenged in my reading of *May and December* and shown to be permeable, temporarily refiguring the perception of the domestic space and gender relations shaped within it. Chapter 2 offers a close analysis of the novel that focuses on its questioning of the validity of middle-class marriage as the only option for young women. I argue that the novel sifts through what middle-class marriage entails and attempts to re-work some aspects of it while remaining within its ideological boundaries, a recognisable shift from *The Younger Sister*'s complete support of middle-class marriage. In its exploration of different unions like the love match of Grace Ashton and Harry Dunsford and the marriage of convenience between Ann Wildey and Mr. Arnold, *May and December* shows the instabilities of middle-class marriage and the fallibility of middle-class women in their struggles with various circumstances that test marriage and the ideal of the domestic angel. I propose that the novel's overarching argument may be that domestic ideology and angelic domesticity cannot be maintained. At the novel's end, though the woman remains the figure in the home, it is with a sense that she has undergone a development of the self not exclusively determined by domestic expectation.

In Chapter 3, this idea of negotiated middle-class womanhood is revisited in *The Wife's Sister; or, The Forbidden Marriage*. The novel explores the ambiguity of the Henrican statute of 1831 that stipulates that men may marry their deceased wife's sister but that if any family member protests, these affined marriages can be annulled at any time. The novel places its female protagonist in this ambiguous situation in order to show the vulnerability of woman's position in relation to marriage law and domestic ideology. I argue that addressing this social concern allows for a criticism of feminine domestic principles of duty, virtue and morality as entrenching the female protagonist in suffering and hardship. Through her hardships that entail her husband's infidelity and losing her status as landed gentry, the female protagonist learns, for example, that proper duty is duty that is not overwhelmed by excessive emotion and neither is it the unquestionable, self-sacrificial duty of domestic ideology. In showing that the protagonist comes to define these tenets by living, as far as possible, according to her own understanding and experience of what they mean, the novel attempts to rework these precepts. It presents a middle-class femininity that does not wholly conform to the ideal whilst still privileging morality, virtue and prudence as markers for its validation of middle-class marriage and identity at its end.

Middle-class precepts and marriage as a model for proper Englishness form the crux of my argument in Chapter 4, which explores and analyses *Malvern; or, The Three Marriages*. The narrative focuses on three women – heiress, desperate spinster, and foreigner – who must undergo a process of self-realisation before they can access middle-class values and be considered the ideal of middle-class femininity at the novel's conclusion. I argue that the novel not only addresses female identity but male identity too, holding both men and women accountable for the morality of the home, and by extension, the nation. The men in the narrative must also conform to the precepts of middle-class manhood. As I have mentioned earlier in the chapter, middle-class values of industry and self-help are held up as defining markers of the middle-class gentleman. The novel features transgressive, flawed women who must learn through suffering and humiliation how to practise proper middle-class femininity. The narrative works at defining what it means to be the ideal English woman and man in its overall equation of Englishness with middle-class values. It shows that characters that do not conform do not belong to the English nation and must be exiled. I argue that the foreign figure of Annie Carden is rehabilitated and reformed into the acceptable English wife. In doing this, the novel affirms England as home and 'proper' Englishness is encapsulated by middle-class values.

Chapter 4 brings my focus on Hubback's writing in Britain to a conclusion, after which Chapter 5 explores her Californian short story, "The Stewardess's Story," as a transitional piece and her letters as life writing. Although Chapter 5 departs from the discussion and analysis of domestic fiction in the first four chapters, it retains the focus of the previous chapters on domesticity, the home and the woman in the home, albeit from Hubback's perspective as an English middle-class immigrant in California. The short story is read as criticism of America and American women that becomes more pronounced in the letters (and which *Malvern* fictionally anticipates in its dismissal of Annie Carden's identification with American standards). The short story's assertion of English femininity as superior to American womanhood resonates with the validation of prudent and principled English womanhood in the novels. Hubback's letters are explored for their observations and daily experience of a society she never really became a part of. I show that even as she appears to adapt to making a home in California, she is at once an outsider and an insider. I assert that her ambivalent perspective is informed by ideology, being a household manager and previous writer of domestic fiction. Her observations emphasise her English middle-class judgement of her female neighbours and the broader American society. The chapter's framing argument is that Hubback's writing criticises American practises of domesticity and femininity, hereby supporting English domestic ideology in relation to home and woman.

Chapter 2:

Plotting Marriage in *May and December: A Tale of Wedded Life*

Middle-class Victorians greatly invested their time and energy in the preservation of their perception of home as a source of "comfort" and "privacy" and "as a means to realising a domestic vision" (Tosh 27).The home was accurately distinguished as a sanctuary, and the woman the ministering angel, when compared with the pressurised and morally tainted public market. For him, the home was a haven from the deleterious effects of the workplace; the home shielded her from the contamination of the marketplace. The association of the middle-class woman with purity and self-sacrifice delineated her role as help-meet quite clearly: her duty was to pander to her husband's needs after a day's labour and to support him since he was the provider and protector. His duty as her companion was to devote his time to her and be present in the home. The ideology of the moral, pious wife was magnified by the expectation that she sustain the moral order of the home to ensure that her husband could return to the public sphere sufficiently inured against its corruptive influence. This was a mutual agreement that functioned as long as the boundary between the private and the public was maintained and husband and wife adhered to their given roles. The companionate marriage was believed to be, as Tosh argues, "at the heart of the Victorian ideal of domesticity" because it ensured domestic felicity in the home (27). Domestic felicity was perceived as integral to the maintenance of order and morality in the home that depended on happy, devoted couples. In an attempt to explain this companionate system of domestic ideology, Tosh observes that although there is substantial evidence of "harmonious cooperation" in households, it was "misleading" (77). The public/private framework was so "dogmatic" and widely accepted as mutually beneficial to both genders that it obscured the inequities: the middle-class wife was expected to support a sphere she was not permitted to have knowledge of or participate in while the middle-class husband freely traversed both and possessed ultimate authority over each sphere (77). Most wives knew little of their husbands' business matters and, because of the demarcation of the spheres, "were inhibited by social conventions of female propriety from exploring them" (77). Hubback's fourth novel, *May and December: A Tale of Wedded Life* (1854), explores the complexities of the companionate marriage – the ideal of domestic perfection – by dealing with various examples of marriage made from the outset by its female protagonists, May Luttrell, Grace Ashton and Ann Wildey. It is a model of marriage prefigured in *The Younger Sister*, with its emphasis that

domestic happiness and stability awaits Emma if she is to become the wife and help-meet in Mr. Howard's middle-class home, with its intimacy, comfort and harmonious order. Although the later novel initially revisits the idea of marriage as an escape from the threatening discomfiture of spinsterhood, its main aim is to challenge the validity of the companionate model as a project of domesticity.

May and December's exploration of marriage involves having the female protagonists experience different matches: May Luttrell marries an older, moneyed business man, Grace Ashton marries for love and Ann Wildey's marriage can best be termed a marriage of convenience. My approach to Hubback's novel is two-fold: firstly, I focus on the novel's concern with the limited choices available to young unmarried middle-class women not adequately educated to support themselves financially if they did not marry. This was a complex issue in the Victorian period which became a prominent concern as the ratio of men to women significantly decreased due to male emigration and more and more women were still unmarried at the age of thirty. It was a situation exacerbated by the restricted choices of either becoming governesses or remaining as incumbents in the homes of families. Both options were, as the novel shows in Ann's case, open for exploitation and abuse. Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* (1847) shows that the position of the governess was both precarious and oppressive and they were predominantly perceived as being lower than the servants in the home. Young women were considered 'fortunate' if they fell into the roles of nannies and governesses of their siblings' children or became part of the household help to earn their keep. Hubback addresses this in *The Younger Sister*, with Jane Watson's view that Emma should be especially gratified to be her daughter's nanny since Emma is penniless and dependent. With May and Grace in *May and December*, the exploitation is less explicit than Ann's "complete slavery" in her brother's home, but is implicit in the constraints of their situations: May, an orphan, is doomed to live a secluded life in the lower middle-class rural home of her uncle, caring for him as he ages, while Grace, caretaker of her widowed father, his home and her younger siblings, is fated to execute this duty of surrogate mother and household manager until her brothers marry and her father dies, unless she marries or becomes a governess (172; vol. I, ch. 6). Their marriages, then, which occur early in the narrative, may be viewed as rescuing them from their desperate situations, although the novel presents the argument that this ideal of marriage as the solution to young women's lives is flawed. As I demonstrate, the narrative premises this argument on popular middle-class author William Cowper's four-line moral maxim that concludes his poem "Pairing Time Anticipated" which Hubback uses as an epigraph at the beginning of the novel. I argue that

the novel circumvents the ideal marriage that the moral points to in order to focus on the challenging reality of diverse marriages. Then I focus on the novel's exploration of the domestic ideal of separate spheres as a crucial practice of middle-class marriage and an ordered home. The separation of the domestic space from the work place was considered central to the establishment of an ordered middle-class way of life, and was, as Vicinus has suggested, "an ideal of domesticity [that] masked the exclusion of middle-class women from political, economic and social power" (*Independent* 2). I argue that the novel demonstrates that the spheres significantly influence each other but stipulates that home and business must remain separate. Specifically, it is suggested that the wife should have knowledge of her husband's business affairs, and that he should educate her about the public world even though she cannot enter it herself. It is a notion that reflects the shift in Victorian attitude to marriage and the boundary between private and public, at least in some quarters.

Hubback's utilisation of Cowper's moral attests to her connecting with her aunt's taste in reading and emphasises Cowper's popularity. Cowper was, according to Davidoff and Hall, "reputed to be Jane Austen's favourite author" (157). He believed, as Davidoff and Hall explain, in "private prayer and a quiet home-centred life" (163). His moral maxim begins with, "Misses! The tale that I relate, / This lesson seems to carry – / Choose not alone a proper mate, / But proper time to marry" (*Poetical Works* 243). The gravity of the speaker's injunction to marry the appropriate person at the correct time is emphasised by the exclamation point following "Misses!" The instructive tone is magnified by the word "lesson." The speaker's moralising stance toward unmarried ladies suggests that they require proper guidance and fair warning before they make their own choice of marriage partner. The specific address to young unmarried women is in keeping with the targeted audience of conduct and etiquette books, promulgating the dominant belief that they required guidance and teaching concerning matrimony.

Hubback's version of the moral message differs slightly from the original as it appears above. Her version is: "Readers, the tale that I relate, / This lesson seems to carry, / Choose not alone a proper mate, / But proper time to marry" (n.pag.). Hubback acknowledges that the moral tale is Cowper's but changes the "Misses" to "Readers." The gender neutral address of "Readers" indicates a shift in focus and audience from only young women in Cowper's version to an inclusion of men in Hubback's. This alteration suggests that the novel holds both men and women accountable for selecting a suitable partner at the right time, and that both sexes can learn from the "tale" to follow.

The rest of the quote is identical to Cowper's with its warning against injudicious choice of partner by suggesting that the story to follow will present a "lesson" aimed at deterring the reader from making an improper union. It implies that marrying the right person at the right time in one's life guarantees a happy union. However, one can argue differently as well. After all, Hubback utilises Cowper's moral as a prelude to her narrative, whereas he uses it as a conclusion to his poem. His version in that form reads almost as a final word on the subject of marriage. Hubback's employment of the moral as a point of departure may be read more broadly, because we are told that the story to follow "seems" to comply with the afore-mentioned equation. The placement of the moral turns on the qualifying effect of "seems," and in a sense asks the reader to examine the merit of the moral in the course of reading the novel. One can say that the novel tests Cowper's assertion through its marriages and tests it specifically as a piece of received wisdom from a staunch male authority on domestic doctrine. The novel engages with the epigraph by unpacking its meaning through the different marriages and leaves the questions it raises as open-ended, seeming to offer no set ideal for a happy marriage.

Hubback sets *May and December* in the rural setting of Littlemere, Lincolnshire, but also shifts to the city, oscillating between fashionable Hyde Park and the city's backstreets. This transition in setting is class-driven, for unlike the earlier focus on the genteel middle-class in *The Younger Sister*, *May and December* is centrally concerned with the professional middle-class. This is an interest to explore and plot marriage by working through domestic practices akin to the professional middle-class like the separation between home and the marketplace. May's scheming cousin from the city, James Wildey, the novel's Janus figure, convinces her to marry his much older employer, Mr. Cameron, a recent widower. For James this is an opportunity to gain power over his employer and his counting house through May. She is to assist him in distracting Mr. Cameron from his work, to leave him at liberty to defraud Mr. Cameron's business. Desperate to escape the boredom and frayed gentility of her uncle's country house, May at first complies with James's plan and seduces Mr. Cameron into declaring his attachment. But once she has secured it, she comes to resent the power James attempts to assert over her. She tries to thwart his efforts to control her by shunning him from her new society. James's subsequent railway speculations are funded by robbing Mr. Cameron's counting house, and his fear of being discovered and losing his hold over May changes his interest in her into a driving obsession. James and May's complicated power-struggle is a dramatic sub-plot that increases the tension in the home and the relationship between husband and wife.

Although narratively speaking May and Mr. Cameron's marriage takes centre stage, the novel does not begin with them but with the courtship and marriage of middle-class Grace Ashton to a lowly clerk, Harry Dunsford. Although it is plain that Grace marries for love, she is defined by others' expectation of her as the embodiment of dutiful womanhood. Manager of her father's home, she fits the middle-class ideal that a woman's vocation is to govern the home. Grace's marriage of conventional domesticity is intermittently returned to throughout the novel as though to highlight the shortcomings of May's mercenary marriage.

The novel's third marriage, between Ann Wildey and Mr. Arnold, "bosom friend and old companion in arms" of Mr. Luttrell, happens as a complete surprise, as though an after-thought by the author, but significantly removes Ann from the ill-treatment she suffers from her brother, James (132; vol. I, ch. 5). Ann is relieved from the obscurity and abuse that characterises her life as an unmarried, unattractive woman dependent on her brother's provision. At the conclusion of *May and December*, Ann Arnold is given the management of her own home after initially having no prospects as an unattractive, penniless spinster and is able to "hold her station creditably as [her husband's] companion" (106; vol. III, ch. 3). Grace Dunsford has her first child, fulfilling her role as wife and mother after falling in station. May Cameron is a widow and wealthy heiress of a hundred thousand pounds and declares, "I can live without love; I can live alone; neither conjugal, nor maternal affection is necessary for my well being" (270; vol. III, ch. 8). Her wealth saves her from retreating into a life of dependency upon her uncle again but she remains within the home, committed to philanthropic work in the improvement of her community. The novel shows, in May, that women could not move out of the private sphere yet, despite pushing the boundaries with May's ownership of property and her choice not to marry. May's wealth, like Dorothea Brooke's in *Middlemarch*, offers her a degree of independence. There is a chance that Hubback concludes her novel with a widowed woman who does not remarry as punishment for May's misconduct in her marriage, as though she is deemed unworthy of entering matrimony again, or even that she deems herself as unworthy of remarrying. Yet, I would argue that the novel's closure challenges the stereotype of superfluous widowhood because May finds fulfilment in her friends and community.

The title *May and December* is fitting, with its reference to the month of spring that connotes renewal and revival. December is associated with winter and implies the death of things, a dull season in which the old must die before spring can usher in new life. At twenty-one, beautiful May embodies the connotations of her name while her sedentary sixty-year-old husband, Mr. Cameron, is representative of the month of December. Mr. Cameron highlights

their differences as a couple through metaphor: "You are too pretty to be the companion of an old, wrinkled, wintry-looking being like myself, May; you, with all your summer-bloom upon your bright cheek" (145; vol. II, ch. 5). Though negatively represented here, it must be noted that May and Mr. Cameron potentially fit Davidoff and Hall's view of the ideal of marriage where the older man advises his younger and inexperienced wife (327). But the novel tests this ideal by pairing May, who is free-spirited and inadvertently imprudent at times, with a man who "could not bear to vex her with grave lectures, or suggestive hints" (107; vol. II, ch. 4). This ideal is further tested by the fact that she marries Mr. Cameron solely for his money. The implications for the marriage is that without love, May takes Mr. Cameron for granted and risks her reputation with her flirtatious relationship with a much younger man, Captain Mountsteven. May rebels against Mr. Cameron for most of their marriage, rather than fulfil his wishes for quiet and prudent domesticity.

"May and December" couples were common in literature of the period. The marriage of Dorothea and Mr. Casaubon in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2) is condoned but vehemently questioned by some like Sir James Chettam, who asks, "[w]hat business has an old bachelor like that to marry? He has one foot in the grave" (58). In *May and December* Harry Dunsford, when informed of May's impending marriage to Mr. Cameron, reacts in a similar fashion: "She, that pretty young girl, engaged to a man old enough to be her grandfather! How very disgusting!" (138; vol. I, ch. 5). "May and December" is also the catch-phrase scornfully used by those in social circles to gossip and jest about them as a couple and the nature of their relationship; specifically, that Mr. Cameron's old age allows his young wife to rule and cuckold him. Lord Marcus, who is first to use the phrase, claims that "[t]hese sort of May and December marriages never really answer in England, because when the young wife amuses herself with a young lover, a great scandal is raised; the husband is forced to rouse himself and the lady's character pays the penalty" (88; vol. II, ch. 3). Lord Marcus implies that older men easily ignore their younger wives' frivolity because it is considered a boon that they were able to acquire a pretty young wife. This ends when his wife's behaviour elicits gossip, calling into question his masculinity and ability to govern her.

In his discussion of why order in the home was a crucial marker of masculinity, Tosh argues that a man was as much responsible for a woman's faithfulness and morality as she was for his. He notes that "[e]arly modern society was merciless in pillorying men who appeared to have surrendered their mastery in this area, and an immense amount of litigation stemmed from the need to defend the sexual reputation of husbands (and wives also) from imputations of cuckoldry" (3). Lord Marcus's statement that such unions "never answer in

England" indicates that anything that threatens the stability of the home cannot be perceived of as English, as belonging to the English nation. Lord Marcus's viewpoint also underlines the double standard of domestic ideology: whereas the man must now merely "rouse" himself to action against his wife for appearance sake because the private aspect of their relationship has been contravened, it is the woman's reputation that is permanently sullied. It is further implied that once a woman's reputation is tarnished, she forfeits her claim to belong to England, hence the conventional exile of the fallen woman in Victorian novels that is treated differently in *May and December*.

Although the private is associated with the domestic, a separate world hidden behind the doors and walls of homes, the novel moves beyond these connotations of the word to explore its prescriptive meaning. In the narrative, 'private' references marriage and domesticity and shows that neglecting it has a deleterious effect on the order and purity of the home. The novel does not argue for wedded couples to remove themselves from leisured society, but rather that the private aspects of marriage should not spill over into the public, making it vulnerable to scandal and gossip. Mr. Cameron's first words on hearing James say that he doubts the propriety of May's behaviour with Captain Mountsteven is, "[y]ou do not mean to say that you heard the matter publickly spoke of? [...] that anyone dared to call her conduct in question?" (104; vol. II, ch. 4). As Mr. Cameron's words indicate, 'public' is the opinion of others. 'Public' involves the social practice of attending balls, dinners and the opera. It is also a physical space like the social site of the park, a place, Mr. Cameron scathingly notes, "where gay flatteries [are] poured into her [May's] ears in public!" and which May daily frequents to display her dress and keep abreast of the latest gossip (182; vol. II, ch.6).When James informs May that he is about to duel with Captain Mountsteven for her sake, she expostulates, "James what do you mean? [...] what has my name got to do with your quarrels; and what will it do for my character, that you should drag it before the public in this way?" (164; vol. II, ch. 6). The novel ends with May being completely removed from the social circles she frequented when she moves to her house in the country. Here, the seclusion that May lives in re-establishes a boundary between the public and private, a return to domestic sequestration which her home in the city lacked.

Vickery argues that literary texts of the period which tended to be didactic and domestic in content differ markedly from women's personal documents like journals and letters which relate that they were active in their husband's business affairs and widened their own sphere in their committees and public canvassing (391). She does not dismiss outright "the familiar account of nineteenth-century women languishing or raging within an

upholstered cage," but suggests that one consider that "women's sphere" could be "the ambivalent arena of both constraint and opportunity" as well as "the safe haven of a loving female subculture" (388, 386). Ann and May in *May and December* are fitting examples of this ambivalence Vickery refers to, occupying homes that contain them and whose boundaries they are able to negotiate at the end of the novel. Ann manages their home and depends on her husband's instruction and tutelage but she also exercises power over the home in the efficient way she governs it. Even though her husband largely prescribes her 'education', she gains in knowledge and understanding of his business affairs and is an asset to him because he values her opinion. Self-improvement is key to May's negotiations of the restrictions inherent to her widowed position, as she is shown at the novel's end to spend her time not in reading for leisure but, as noted by Grace, in "devot[ing] hours to philosophy and science" (272; vol. III, ch. 8). May and Ann subtly redefine their parameters without overtly transgressing domestic doctrine.

Furthermore, Vickery argues that the everyday experience of most middle-and upper-class women in England in the nineteenth-century demonstrates that the idea of separate spheres was an ideological construction not necessarily practised in reality. Davidoff and Hall argue that these spheres overlap, having permeable boundaries negotiated by middle-class families. This point is similarly argued by Simon Morgan, but all these viewpoints focus on the woman as a public figure, the public being more associated with the masculine world of politics. Hubback's novel turns its attention more to the public as an extension of the domestic and the woman's role in perpetuating the private rules and regulations in the spaces outside the home. The novel emphasises through its focus on May and Mr. Cameron's marriage that a definitive, necessary boundary exists between the spheres of business and the home, but appears to argue for a symbiosis between the two spheres to ensure the success of both. In other words, if one sphere suffers so will the other. This symbiosis is dependent on the husband allowing his wife to 'enter' the public world of his business affairs by taking her into his confidence and seeking her opinion. The novel is careful to show that this must be the extent of the woman's 'involvement' in the business sphere. This limitation is a validation of domestic ideology that a woman remains in her proper sphere. But the narrative shows as well a negotiation of the boundaries between marketplace and home by widening the extent of the woman's influence into the business world through the ideas she shares with her husband, even if they have no actual impact outside of the home.

I interpret the characters' marriages as affirmation that wedlock is every woman's destiny and that marriage provides escape from social degradation and stigma produced by

the same creed. For Grace, who is the novel's quintessential example of a surrogate domestic angel– like Anne Elliot in Austen's *Persuasion* (1818) – marriage is an escape from having to manage her father's home and children even though she marries for love. In this environment the spinster is the mother and housekeeper in her care of nephews and nieces or a bachelor brother as a surrogate wife. Although she has a degree of power in that she manages the home, it is unacknowledged and taken for granted by society and family. Spinsters must earn their keep because they do not possess the legal status of wife and they do not possess their own homes. It is a practice of dutiful womanhood that Charlotte Brontë, a spinster herself, called the "greatest sacrifice of self-interest" (qtd. in Pat Jelland 258). Emma's love match in *The Younger Sister* is, like Grace's, also an escape from the threat of impoverishment as a single young woman from a lower middle-class family with limited options available to her. She is rescued from what Elizabeth Watson in *The Watsons* regards as the bane of an unmarried woman's existence: "but you know, we must marry [...] it is very bad to grow old, be poor and laughed at" (109). This description of a mortified life that awaits the spinster is emphasised by Margaret's and Penelope's desperation to get married. Although they appear crude and mercenary, the circumstances of lower middle-class young women are underscored. Their imprudent choices, though distasteful and transgressive of middle-class values, may be understood in terms of their need to secure themselves homes and to gain access to an improved way of life. Emma Watson, who vehemently rejects her sisters' mercenary schemes at the beginning of the novel, devises her own plans to escape her brother's mistreatment and the threat of mean living.

In *May and December* May's pursuit of wealthy, older Mr. Cameron is a rejection of the looming possibility of spinsterhood in her uncle's home and is an act of desperation to secure for herself the stability of middle-class domesticity. Although Grace and May are young and do not fully fit the spinster mould as Ann does, the novel introduces them as women who are, to quote Pickrel, under the "shadow" of spinsterhood (451). Pickrel uses this word in his argument that Austen's novels unvaryingly hint at the ever-present "shadow of Miss Bates" – the sympathetically drawn middle-aged spinster who has always cared for her invalid mother and lives in frugal economy in Austen's *Emma* (1816) – that "hangs all over" her heroines if "rescue fails" in the form of a proper union (451). Austen emphasises Miss Bates as a product of spinsterhood: there is a degree of gloom and futility that hovers over her as a woman who has known nothing else but to care for her mother. This threat is at the periphery of Emma's life as well; for one could say that if she had not married Mr. Knightley she would have had to continue to care for her fretful father without the comfort of a

sympathetic partner. Indeed, had she not married, Emma would have lived a life desperate for lively interest and constant amusement. Hubback first conveys the plight of the spinster in *The Younger Sister* with Emma Watson who is shown to experience similar mistreatment at the hands of her brother and his wife Jane after she becomes a dependent member of their household following her father's death. When Emma serves her brother at a dinner for his friends in *The Younger Sister*, he asks her to cut some bacon. He reprimands her efforts and belittles her as though she is an errant servant: "I cannot eat it so thick as that! You are not helping a Winston plough boy remember!" (74; vol. II, ch. 7). The exploited spinster is manifested in the expectation that Emma be a governess to their child. When the little girl shows scant progress, Jane accuses Emma of being ungrateful: "I must say, considering the circumstances, and the liberality with which your brother has received you, it is not asking such a very wonderful favour [that] you attend a little to this child [...] but I have observed, constantly, where most gratitude is due, least is paid" (76; vol. II, ch.7). Here Emma's functionality in the home is reduced, as with Ann, to others' perception of who she must be. More notably, the novel reveals the exploitation that occurs within the middle-class homes of those who are financially dependent, not only servants or governesses but destitute family members, specifically women rendered powerless by lack of opportunity or insufficient education.

In *May and December*, May is a potential "Miss Bates" because the shadow of a poor, limited womanhood sacrificed on the altar of duty threatens her. As spinsters, May and Ann's limited life epitomises the self-sacrifice that Brontë speaks of. Ann in particular is defined, like Grace, through her relation to her brother. We are first introduced to her when James thinks about the possibility of Ann making a good match and concludes, "[w]hat a stupid thing it is of my sister to be so plain and silly" (7; vol. I, ch. 1). James's degrading words fault Ann for her "plain" appearance that bars her from matrimony and impedes class mobility. It is inversely suggested that only middle-class women who are attractive and appear accomplished are marriageable. Ann's complete financial dependence on James is indicated by the fact that she "superintends his domestic arrangements" (7; vol. I, ch. 1). Unlike Grace, whose supervision of her father's home appears to be valued by her family, Ann's efforts are ridiculed. Whereas Grace's father "trust[ed] everything to her discretion" in running the home, James views Ann as "having not much more discernment than the chair she sat on" (8, 20; vol. I, ch. 1). A chair is an object of necessity, pointing to her containment within the domestic with a practical function whilst amplifying that she is indivisible from it. But James is also a deceiver, having contrived the plan for May to marry Mr. Cameron to

further his career and to give him access to Mr. Cameron's business. James is therefore not to be trusted and his view of Ann cannot be trusted either.

She is barely referred to and when she is focused on, it is to highlight her inferiority. This possible elision of identity through others' perspective of her is salient in Ann's circumstances. On the occasion when May first meets with Mr. Cameron,

> of the party, Miss Wildey alone was tranquil and self-possessed, and entirely unoccupied by speculative dreams or ambitious hopes. She had not the imagination enough to indulge in idle fancies or brilliant castles in the air: so she quietly ate her dinner, and tried to discover how the dishes which her brother praised were cooked, in the hope of giving him satisfaction on some future occasion. (67; vol. I, ch. 3)

First, it appears that her calm demeanour lacking in those around her is a positive attribute. She "had not imagination enough" to dream, which suggests a realistic perspective of her circumstances in that it would have been ridiculous for her to harbour any dreams of marrying or of acting upon any desire to do so. Her sensible outlook protects her from appearing foolish. This implied comparison with May, Mr. Cameron and James, who are also of the company, serves to elevate her. The image of her quietly eating amidst everyone else who is fawning (Mr. Cameron), coquetting (May) or scheming (James) is one of passive femininity.

Secondly, we are aware that the narrator appears subtly abusive of Ann in the above extract. The narrator at first praises Ann for her serenity then appears to sarcastically ridicule her by suggesting that she is vacuous and thus incapable of picturing a different reality for herself. It is also conveyed that she has relinquished her "speculative dreams" and "ambitious hopes." The descriptive "speculative" and "ambitious" are conventionally masculine words associated with the competitive marketplace so it is interesting that the narrator employs these words in relation to Ann. What are we to make of all this? On the one hand, it is implied that women possess the power to change their circumstances and have the right just like men to strive for self-betterment. On the other hand, it appears that the narrator criticises spinsters like Ann for their reticence and seeming inability to think independently. Both seem applicable and one is left with the idea that the narrator holds society accountable for women like Ann, but that these women need not accept their demeaning situations as Ann does. Despite the narrator appearing to side with James's view of his sister as "silly," it is Ann's lack of agency that draws the narrator's criticism, whereas James is shown to be dismissive of every facet of his sister's character. The overall narrative stance is a sympathetic one, amplified when James loses the button on the wristband of his shirt. He blames Ann, bringing

"down on her a vehement storm of indignation" (81; vol. I, ch. 4). Ann's reaction is to "quietly look about for a button to replace the terrible loss" (82; vol. I, ch. 4). Ann is shown to practise stoic pragmatism that reiterates the earlier argument that she is practical and does not "indulge" in "fancies" (67; vol. I, ch. 3). The narrator's tone is ironic; James is the one who is not in control for all his appearance and assertion of being master of his home and sister. Later, when James becomes increasingly immersed in his plans to gain control of the counting house and is consumed with lust for May, the narrator shows that Ann bears the brunt of his anger and "capricious" behaviour: "Her situation had never been a secure one, but now it was complete slavery" (172; vol. I, ch. 6). The insertion of "but" registers a new objective set of circumstances for Ann, indicating a shift from an uncertain position in James' home with its measure of mistreatment to far worse circumstances as his slave. "Complete" further underpins this transition from servant to slave and resounds with finality. It is exacerbated by the knowledge that she has no other option available to her. Through Ann's plight, the novel appears to argue for mercenary marriage, if the alternative is a life like Ann's.

Although Ann appears to typify passivity, the novel emphasises through her that it is possible for women to manipulate their circumstances in small ways. We can view her failure to manage her brother's home successfully as a resistance against his mistreatment and, by extension, society's demeaning view of her. Her seeming passivity and dedication to please her brother is belied by her inept attention to his demands that could be her refusal to serve him as his vassal. For example, one could interpret the above show of penitence at neglecting to sew James's button on his shirt as a deliberate attempt to infuriate him. The narrator relates that this is not the first occurrence of this particular episode as a missing button was "one which always brought down on her" her brother's ferocious anger (81; vol. I, ch. 4). The frequency of this transgression conveyed by "always" not only emphasises her constant incapability but allows one to view Ann as resisting his authority by provoking him. The narrator poses James in this scene as ridiculous and laughable. Secondly, she does not have her work basket with her and leaves the room to find James a button but never returns to attend to his shirt. This is contrary to what one would expect from her, especially because she had excessively angered him. When Ann unexpectedly and almost hastily marries Mr. Arnold she does so without informing or inviting James. In one move, she deprives him of a household manager and slave and acquires for herself a home and a husband. Although she exchanges one domestic space for another with its own attendant ideology concerning the middle-class wife, in marrying Mr. Arnold, Ann proves her ambition and speculation.

Unlike Ann, who does not fit the image of the ideal domestic woman because she fails at managing the home, Grace is the angel in the home. She governs her father's home and cares for her brothers and sisters in the absence of a mother. I suggest that the "shadow of Miss Bates" that Pickrel argues looms over Austen's unmarried heroines can be applied here because Grace's fate is Miss Bates's. We are first introduced to her through Mr. Cameron, who wants to attend her birthday celebration to "see what sort of a housekeeper she contrives to make; I've a notion that she is a good girl, and manages very well that way; and someday she will make somebody very happy as a wife" (3; vol. I, ch. 1). By implication, Grace is "good" because she manages the domestic space and this would make her an ideal wife. Her role as woman is clearly defined: she exists to make someone else "happy' and she will do so in fulfilment of her expected role as "wife." She is at once validated and narrowly defined by Mr. Cameron's ideological language. Her proficiency in domestic management suggests that she possesses the attendant principles of restraint, morality and decorum required to instil order in the home. She is defined by her relation to others, like Fanny Ellis in *The Wife's Sister* whose identity at the beginning of the novel is shaped by caring for her brother-in-law as though she is his wife and for his children as though she is their mother, managing his home as her own.

This apprenticeship and surrogacy defines the existence of the spinster. Grace is an apprentice manager of her father's household and surrogate mother in her care for her siblings. In her father's house, "she cheerfully undertook that all should go well; and helping her father to brush his coat and hat, and giving him the farewell kiss, she saw him depart, and herself returned to her household duties" (9; vol. I, ch. 1). The transition from attending to her father to immediately turning to the management of the house is noteworthy here. Grace is portrayed as efficient and capable as she moves from one action to another: she brushes his coat and hat, waves farewell, watches him leave, and turns to perform the rest of her duties. But the narrative elides her identity at this point. There is no sense of who she is as a person because her actions are not interspersed with her thoughts; Grace is defined here according to her function, echoing Mr. Cameron's above-mentioned wish to attend her birthday party to see how proficient she is at her task as domestic manager. The transition from duty to her father to duty to his home prefigures the seamless shift she makes from serving her father and brothers to serving her husband. The Ashton home is a happy place because she manages it. She is portrayed as being "cheerful" because she performs a role for others, true to the ideal of self-sacrifice. Having a purpose fuels Grace's 'desperation' to have a home of her own, to secure for herself her own domestic space because it is the only thing she knows and what

she has been prepared for. Grace might not be a mistreated to the extent Ann is, but she is threatened with redundancy in her father's home as a surrogate, and in a sense, illegitimate manager of the home. Marriage legitimates her purpose and rescues her from possible failure to perpetuate domesticity.

May's dismissal of angelic domesticity is evident in Littlemere's perpetual state of disrepair: its buildings are "half-dilapidated" and the water in the pond looks "leaden and stagnant" (146; vol. I, ch. 6). Part of her domestic failure is that she does not manage the servants. Nanny, the servant, is viewed as an "imperious housekeeper" and a "domestic tyrant" (149,156; vol. I, ch. 6). When May arrives home, she finds her room "all in disorder" and "the bed not made-up" (151; vol. I, ch. 6). She has to manipulate Nanny into doing her chores. In addition, May rebels against the "honourable poverty and quiet seclusion" expected from penniless, lower middle-class orphans like herself (155; vol. I, ch. 6). Imagining "damask curtains" and "Brussels carpets" whilst looking at the "shabby chintz-bed-curtains" and "carpetless floor" of her room highlights her future as lacklustre and limited because of the sparse furnishings (155;vol. I, ch. 6). Her superimposition of "lovely woods" and "verdant parks" onto the "dull flatness" and "dreary desolation" as she surveys her surrounds at Littlemere indicates that she is haunted by the spectre of poverty both inside and outside the home (155; vol. I, ch. 6). Her choice to marry a man purely for his money offers her another way of life. For young women, who are all essentially potential spinsters, marriage is an escape from the threat of exploitation and redundancy and, in May's case, poverty. Yet if middle-class marriage is set up as an ideal it is set up so as to be unpacked and challenged in relation to Cowper's moral maxim and the separate spheres doctrine.

Testing Cowper's Moral: The Three Marriages

For Cowper, whom Davidoff and Hall describe as a "lay-writer on domesticity," the ideal middle-class marriage and an ordered home were guaranteed by the simple equation of marrying the correct person at the correct time (155). He drew his maxims from his everyday experience of country life and "established himself as the most beloved writer of the period" because of his veneration of domesticity (158). In showcasing variations on Cowper's moral by having Grace marry the right man at the wrong time, May marry the 'wrong' man at the wrong time, and Ann marry the right man at the right time, the novel argues that complete domestic felicity is unattainable, questioning the validity of Cowper's moral. May's and Grace's marriages assist them to find their own fulfilment which undercuts the model of the

perfect marriage exemplified by the axiom. Hubback also criticises the formulaic, narrow approach to marriage in the maxim by adding to it the values of mutual compromise and a measure of selflessness from both marriage partners.

The novel features the first marriage of Mr. Cameron as an example of the validity of Cowper's caution. Mr. Cameron's wife "passed her sleepy life on a sofa" (25; vol. I, ch.1). One can immediately imply that she was not much of a companion to Mr. Cameron and she was probably not a good manager of their home. The narrator continues that Mr. Cameron "was captivated by her fair complexion" but soon realised "her quietness was the result of her indolence [...] she accepted him because she wished to be married, not from any dreams of domestic felicity, but because she was weary of a home where she was worried by an active, managing mother" (25-26; vol. I, ch. 1). We note that Mrs. Cameron rejected her mother's domestic management. She coveted marriage as an escape, like May. Mrs. Cameron and Mr. Cameron were ill-matched because their motives for marriage differed.

Furthermore, Mrs. Cameron showed no interest in her husband's attempts at including her in his business affairs, a facet of marriage which is reiterated in the novel as a prerequisite for mutual understanding and happiness. She had knowledge of "as little of his thoughts and feelings as of his mercantile engagements, and [was] equally indifferent to all that concerned him" (28; vol. I, ch. 1). As a result, Mr. Cameron, "[h]opeless of her improvement, found his pleasures and his companions elsewhere" (27; vol. I, ch.1). The novel asserts from the outset that their lack of companionship negates a happy home. Mrs. Cameron's death suggests the novel's criticism of the destabilising effect of ill-matched unions on the household. But then, ironically, the narrative returns to a marriage of convenience when Ann and Mr. Arnold marry and their home is depicted as harmonious. The novel suggests that Ann's domestic management and Mr. Arnold's steadfast commitment to sharing his knowledge with her redefines a marriage that should have disintegrated as the Camerons' did.

Grace and Harry Dunsford's marriage contrasts the above marriage between Mr. Cameron and his first wife. It is significant that theirs is the marriage that follows this failed model because subsequent relationships, like May and Mr. Cameron's, are measured against their union. Their marriage appears endorsed by the novel because Grace and Harry bring to their marriage principles like prudence and mutual respect which the narrative argues must be in place before marriage occurs. Harry is an orphan like May but, even though his uncle "never afforded him a congenial home," Harry is a man of "cheerful temper, and of steady principles; somehow in his early troubles he had acquired a degree of firmness, self-reliance, and hopefulness which supported him wonderfully" (7, 8; vol. I, ch. 1). When Grace becomes

Harry's wife and manager of his home, she moves from one household to another and this is the limit of her experience and also the limit of who she is as daughter, then wife and eventually mother. About her marriage to Harry she says: "[W]ere I asked, I could on my conscience aver, that I have been as his wife, one of the happiest in the world" (251; vol. II, ch. 8). Living according to a script written by others is of course the lot of many women in the nineteenth-century but, unlike Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*, who longs to be of use outside of the home, Grace appears fulfilled in these roles ascribed to her by the men in her life.

Even so, there is a moment towards the end of the novel when Grace is shown to question this ordering of her life and her given role as wife and mother. It is one of the novel's defining moments in terms of commenting on femininity and marriage. Conversing with May about whether she will remarry, Grace notes that their discussion "has led into an abstruse metaphysical disquisition, not much connected with it" (272; vol. III, ch. 8). May replies that marriage is a subject she has not given much thought to, but "women's weakness and women's strength of mind, is one, which of course occupies me much" (272; vol. III, ch. 8). Grace answers wistfully: "Ah, there you have the advantage over me; you have so much more leisure to improve and educate your mind, you can devote hours to philosophy and science; whilst I, what with housekeeping, and baby, and Harry, my father, Ellen Hume, and the children, seldom find time to sit down to a book" (272; vol. III, ch. 8). The improvement of a woman's mind is viewed as an "advantage"; Grace becomes cognisant of the possibility of bettering her mind. Significantly, Grace's lack of leisure exposes her class position, implying that they cannot afford servants. At issue here is that Grace's marriage has not accorded her middle-class stability and that Harry is not able to keep her in the leisured style that marks a middle-class marriage. The earlier image of Grace moving uninterruptedly from attending to her father's needs to those of the home is reiterated here in the movement from "housekeeping" to "baby" to "Harry" and so on. The categorisation of Grace's roles and the extension of her duties re-state that she is defined by her function in others' lives.

Then again, one must recognise that she has purpose to her life. As wife, housekeeper and mother she has influence over others, albeit within the narrow sphere of the home. Interestingly, Grace's words imply that an "advantage[ous]" alternative to angelic domesticity is the improvement of the female mind, a suggestion that echoes arguments for female education made by Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). May's widowed status and her financial wherewithal frees her to be "occupie[d] much" with the subject of the female mind that involves the pursuit of learning beyond just

mere fine accomplishments. What is also implicit here is the suggestion that a woman cannot pursue both ends of learning and self-improvement and managing a home and family. To pursue either, the novel suggests, would be to relinquish one.

Since marriage for May means an escape from poverty, it is no coincidence that she is critical of Grace and Harry's marriage prospects. For May, it is a travesty that Grace and Harry were to marry at all because Grace was "going to be very poor" (31; vol. I, ch. 2). May finds the idea of Grace entering married life with limited financial means "such a dreadful bore" (31; vol. I, ch.2). May's language appears unfeeling and superficial, and becomes more so when compared with Mr. Cameron's description of Grace. To Harry's reply that he hoped that when she married she would be rich, May answers: "I will take care of that [...] a large fortune that is happiness. Jewels and fine dresses, carriages and thousands a year – oh, the delight that it must be to have money at my command! Gold gives so much lustre to beauty, so much respect to the meanest origin. Give me gold, gold, gold, and happiness will be sure to follow" (31-32; vol. I, ch. 2). May's language is hyperbolic and stresses her material perspective on marriage and the home. Despite May's witness of the "sincere and devoted affection with which the young husband regarded his young bride," and realising in that moment that "so amiable a girl, and so much beloved, though poor, could not fail of being happy," it does not alter her equating "gold" with "happiness" (40-41; vol. I, ch. 2).

But it is also possible to view May's disparagement of Grace and Harry's marriage as something else entirely. It could be validating the wisdom in marrying at the proper time: in their case, when one is financially able to do so. Her emphasis on the material can be a reminder to Grace and Harry that one's pecuniary position and the timeliness of entering matrimony is just as important as love. It is a viewpoint that affirms the validity of Cowper's moral. Although Harry was given a promotion by Mr. Cameron to enable him to marry, this had not come into effect yet. Mr. Cameron's opinion that "it was imprudent of [Harry] to marry so young" affirms that their marriage was unduly precipitant (11; vol. II, ch. 1).

Their limited means is evident in the "simple gown" Grace wears to her wedding and the "quiet party" of their reception (40; vol. I, ch. 2). May notes that their new home is "small" and "very plain and simple," though one is aware that her point of view is biased (96; vol. I, ch. 4). It is possible to argue that, even though allowances must be made for May's bias, her observation echoes other perspectives in the novel and thus contributes to the censure of the timing of Grace and Harry's union. Earlier, the narrator notes that it is only with the assistance of Harry's aunt that they are able to obtain a home and "commence housekeeping at such an early age" (41; vol. I, ch. 2). In short, the narrative stresses that

Harry and Grace entered into marriage at the improper time. Furthermore, it is possible to argue that May's view of marriage which is essentially about upward mobility is fitting for her. May's 'elevation' is still within her class, but her marriage to an older, wealthy man gains her access to the professional middle-classes and to a kind of life she would otherwise not have had as a governess. May's opportunistic approach to marriage may not be a drawback, considering the limited options women had for their lives.

It is in Grace's new home that May first apprises her of her decision to marry Mr. Cameron. This is a crucial scene because it emphasises the components necessary for domestic felicity that the novel adds to Cowper's moral. The veneration of Grace's love match is highlighted when she rejects a model of marriage that does not resemble hers in principle and affection. She exclaims, "Oh, May! May! How can you think of such a thing; to sell your hand in gold! [...] Mr. Cameron is very good but the disparity of years is too great; you cannot love him as a wife should" (100; vol. I, ch. 4). Grace's words carry a warning that echoes that of the epigraph. Her words indicate that May's decision breaches propriety and good judgement in marrying a good man at the wrong time of life. She appears to liken May's decision to marry an older man for his wealth to a form of prostitution. Later, she appeals to May's "high sense of honour in some things," which she asserts is "not consistent with this, to engage to love a man for whom you cannot feel a true affection" (102-103; vol. I, ch.4). To the establishment of honour as a prerequisite for domestic joy, Grace adds "if you only knew the happiness of the delight of feeling honest pride in your husband's worth, reliance on his love, you would not forfeit such felicity for the world" (103 vol. I, ch. 4).

The worth placed on Harry's reputation here is extended to Grace's protection of it and the reputation of their home when they fall into abject poverty and Harry is unemployed. Although Harry is wrongfully dismissed from Mr. Cameron's counting house, she does not turn to May for help or to complain of her suspicions that James purposefully blackened Harry's name. When May visits her home in the backstreets of London after months of absence and implores Grace to "let me know how I can be of use to you. I owe you much – I have much to repair – tell me, then, what can I do?" she finds Grace's view of her husband and their marriage unchanged (245; vol. II, ch. 8). Grace replies: "I do not know that you can do anything, dear May; we shall, no doubt, struggle on; there are some privations we must endure, but we have youth and love for each other [...] We are not unhappy, although we have difficulties" (245; vol. II, ch. 8). Grace's repetition of "we" connotes marital unity. She appears to testify to Harry's worth because she stresses that she is not discontented. There is an assertion here as well that she would not love a man who was not worthy of her love. In

this way she protects her husband's reputation which James ruined when he blamed Harry for incompetence. Here, a model of marriage, one that remains constant in affection despite life's trials, is put forward. May, as she sits there in the "low room without much furniture; and such as there was, was of the commonest kind," is really the poor one because she is unable to claim, like Grace, that she and her husband are "not unhappy" (240; vol. II, ch. 8).

Domestic felicity is negated in May and Mr. Cameron's relationship from the outset, before they are even married, because of May's unprincipled disposition. Unbeknownst to James, she is already engaged to Mr. Cameron but is obliged to keep it secret until his mourning period is over. The concealment works in her favour for another reason: she plans to take revenge on James for his presumption that she must love him by "secur[ing] a hold on his heart" (228; vol. I, ch. 8). The narrator assumes a moral tone in describing her actions: "intending to bestow her hand upon one man, for the sake of the wealth she should thus secure, she deliberately resolve[s] to win the heart of another, for the gratification of her revenge [...] whether it was worthy of herself, whether it was becoming in a woman [...] [o]n all this she thought not at all" (86; vol. I, ch. 4). Her unscrupulous character is magnified by her hoodwinking James into thinking she has acquired a new lover, her uncle's friend Mr. Arnold. Although the ensuing confusion that she creates in James has a distinctly comic angle, it also highlights her flagrant disregard for propriety. When he finally learns that she is not engaged to Mr. Arnold but to Mr. Cameron, it is too late, for he has already made a declaration of his love for her, which she coldly rejects. James reacts violently and May realises that she was "wrong, undoubtedly wrong [...] for she had offended the man in whose power to a great extent, she had unfortunately placed herself; she should probably find in him an enemy instead of a friend, a tyrant, instead of a slave" (230-231; vol. I, ch. 8).

The novel accentuates May's injudicious choice of partner in Mr. Cameron by showing that she transgresses the proper behaviour suited to a wife. This occurs because May lacks the emotional and mental preparedness required to fulfil her new role. Days into her marriage with Mr. Cameron, May meets Captain Mountsteven, who rescues her book from the rock in the sea where she carelessly left it. She transgresses the expected decorum of a young wife and thereby brings disorder into the home. Firstly, she expresses excessive admiration of Captain Mountsteven as "so graceful and elegant a person [...] I always like handsome men, and he is the best looking I ever saw," even after her husband declares "I don't like your fine gentleman, May!" (268-269; vol. I, ch. 10). Secondly, she unfeelingly highlights her husband's age by saying, "[p]erhaps you are afraid that I should find the contrast too agreeable" (270; vol. I, ch. 10). When Captain Mountsteven comes to visit her in

her room in the absence of Mr. Cameron she does not act with propriety by sending him away. The narrator softens her actions by stating that her "ignorance as to what good manners allowed, kept her silent," (276; vol. I, ch. 10).

The novel takes pains to qualify the sense of May as someone who cannot help her own folly because of her naivety. One such occasion of import is Mountsteven's attempt to make her feel ashamed or self-conscious about being married to an older man:

> Captain Mountsteven, who was perfectly aware that she was Mr. Cameron's wife, replied with great suavity, that gentlemen of the age of her respected father, always enjoyed a chat with old friends.
> "My father!" repeated May, colouring a good deal; "Mr. Cameron is not my father."
> "I beg your pardon – [t]hen he is, I presume, your guardian or uncle?"
> "He is my husband." said she, composedly, and looking full in her visitor's face. (277; vol. I, ch. 10)

Significantly, May is shown to first struggle with Mountsteven's implication, "colouring" as she denies that Mr. Cameron is her father. We are aware that this is her first test, being exposed to society's opinion of her mercenary marriage, and it coming from a man she earlier expressed great admiration for. Yet she rallies, and Mountsteven does not need to pry the words "he is my husband" from her. Instead, as "composedly" suggests, May assumes control of the situation. Her words are not an admission but a claim. She takes ownership of her marriage to a man far older than she, and her assertive body language dares Mountsteven to push the boundaries of proper behaviour.

Still, May's imprudence and the unsteadiness of their marriage cause her husband to "look fagged, worn and unhappy and in a state of great mental disquiet" a few months later (34; vol. II, ch. 2). The order in their home is gradually eroded by May's full engagement with fashionable society and by the constant presence of Mountsteven at her side. We also note that their home is devoid of felicity. As far as Mr. Cameron is concerned, "[t]he pursuit of Mountsteven, although carried on with much decorum, reserve and present appearance of propriety, alarmed him on many accounts" (49; vol. II, ch. 2). The idea that Mountsteven's practise of propriety is a mere veneer echoes the earlier assertion that May's decorum is largely a performance. Following a succession of unconsidered decisions on her part, Mr. Cameron encourages May to base her future conduct on "[h]onour, reputation, virtue, [for] these we have to lose or keep, according as we value or care for them. Do not let us forfeit these," to which she replies: "I will be prudent, cautious" (147, 149; vol. II, ch. 5). It is an agreement that May must make again and again throughout the novel as she constantly falters in doing right.

The novel's perspective on the proper way for a husband and wife to relate to each other through the exercise of mutual respect and consideration also comes into play in connection with Cowper's moral. It is a concern which is complicated through the vast age difference between May and Mr. Cameron. On hearing that May is to attend yet another ball and dinner that evening, Mr. Cameron murmurs, "I cannot stand it [...] it would kill anyone. I detest this dissipation. Never one evening's quiet!" to which May replies, "I delight in it all; I could not live without it; I would not give up society for anything" (40; vol. II, ch. 2). Clearly, May's and Mr. Cameron's needs conflict; each harbour different perspectives on what domestic life entails. Mr. Cameron's thoughts further emphasise the stark difference in their approach to their marriage and their home: "it was very different indeed from the domestic life, the calm fire-side-enjoyments which he had imagined he should secure in marrying again" (40; vol. II, ch. 2). The image conveyed by his words contains the important elements of a typical painting of domesticity with husband and wife in "calm" repose around the hearth or "fire-side," she employed in sewing and he perhaps reading. There is also the suggestion of companionship in the plural of "enjoyments" and the idea that these elements together order the home and "secure" the middle-class ideal of marriage.

In its focus on separate spheres, the novel appears to argue that one of the contributing factors to an unhappy marriage is that husbands do not share their business affairs with their wives. The first Mrs. Cameron knew little of Mr. Cameron's business affairs because she had no desire to be part of it. The consequence of her disinterest is that Mr. Cameron finds "his pleasures and companions elsewhere" (27; vol. I, ch. 1). This argument is made in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, where Helen Huntingdon is kept in ignorance of her husband's affairs in London which assists in him using it as an excuse to extend his stay and indulge in dissipation. In George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Dorothea is engaged by her husband to assist him in his work, but he does not offer her insight into his vision for the "*Key to all Mythologies*" (85). The ignorance he keeps her in allows him to shut himself in his library and is the main deterrent to intimacy in their marriage. In *May and December*, Mr. Cameron does not share his concerns about the counting-house with May. Her lack of knowledge contributes to her impudence and her struggle to ensure his happiness, illustrated by her careless remark that he should "give it [his business] up altogether" (37; vol. II, ch. 2).

Unlike the first Mrs. Cameron, May attempts to acquaint herself with her husband's sphere of business but it is rebuffed. Mr. Cameron's rejection of her advice enables the first calamity in his business to occur: James's unfair dismissal of Harry Dunsford and Mr. Ashton, two of Mr. Cameron's key workers. When Mr. Cameron informs May that Harry will

have to be dismissed because James advises him to do so, she replies, "I do not believe that Harry is unsteady [...] [h]e is a very excellent, well-principled young man, and I am quite sure there is some mistake" (11; vol. II, ch. 1). Mr. Cameron disregards her guidance, saying: "My dear May, do not pretend to talk of what you do not understand [...] I do not expect you to understand about business-matters [...] but in consequence of your ignorance, you must be satisfied to trust my judgement, and not interfere in what you do not understand" (11-12, vol. II, ch. 1). The tone of Mr. Cameron's words is condescending, amplified by the repetition of "do not understand." He elevates his ability to discern above May's first-hand experience of Harry's sagaciousness and principled disposition. His words convey the stereotype that women do not possess the training or experience to understand the business arena. He maintains the boundary between the spheres. May's defence of Harry's character, spoken from the heart, juxtaposes sharply with Mr. Cameron's cold business-like tone. It is possible to have another view of this: that May's justification of Harry's good conduct does appear as though she is interfering because of her ignorance that there are internal procedures that must be followed.

May retaliates by saying that she does not "want to be treated only like a child, allowed to chatter, and not be listened to" (12-13; vol. II, ch. 1). This, the novel appears to argue, is in essence what women are perceived to be when men do not take them into their confidence. Does the novel suggest that in educating his wife about his business affairs, a man assists in her coming to maturity? Mr. Cameron's view of a woman's inexperience to understand the workplace is echoed in Mr. Casaubon's caustic treatment of Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, in the memorable scene when she attempts to advise him on his work. It is Dorothea and women in general that are referenced when he says that "the true subject-matter lies entirely beyond their reach, from those of which the elements may be encompassed by a narrow and superficial survey" (201). In other words, her advice to him stems from ignorance natural to her sex. An understanding of his work will always be "beyond [her] reach" because she lacks the ability to grasp the "true subject-matter."

May's flirtation with a younger man compromises the sanctity of her marriage. The public flirtation between May and Captain Mountsteven is presented initially as a habitual and accepted mode of rapport between ladies and gentlemen in fashionable London circles. We are aware that May's flirtatious behaviour is not overtly transgressive, since young ladies are taught to use flirtation to attract suitors, as May does with Mr. Cameron during their courtship. Likewise, for Rosamond in *Middlemarch*, "[f]lirtation was not necessarily a singeing process," because it allows her to be "sure of being admired by someone worth

captivating" (267). In *May and December* May's transgression is that her flirtation with another man ignites gossip, makes Mr. Cameron a laughingstock and brings ridicule upon their marriage. Although May and Mountsteven mutually indulge in a flirtation, the narrative appears to subscribe to domestic ideology that the woman is solely responsible for preserving the purity of her home and her marriage in its censure of May only.

Mountsteven's admiration for May might have begun from a desire to corrupt her but develops into a type of courtly or chivalric love of a knight towards the Lady of the court, who bestows her favour on him as an acknowledgement of his admiration. It is an admiration from a distance and Mountsteven never strives to obtain her because of the knowledge that it can go no further. It is a safe kind of admiration in this sense. Cassio's esteem from afar for Desdemona in *Othello* is another example. Mountsteven

> liked May very much, and it flattered his vanity to be acknowledged as her favourite [...] but he did not carry his views farther. His flirtation with her was intended to be a strictly correct and decorous one, which the disposition of her husband rendered particularly easy. Of the danger of such a course of conduct he knew nothing and she knew nothing. (80; vol. II, ch. 3)

Key to this delineation of the kind of flirtation that is permissible and within the bounds of decorum is the implication that it will cease to be "strictly correct" if Mr. Cameron voices his disapprobation. Conversely, the narrator ironically points out that, however "strictly correct and decorous" the flirtation, it courts the danger of excess. Here a social practice that is acceptable in fashionable circles where ironically reputation is prized so highly, but can be easily trifled with by having degrees of indiscretion, is criticised. In other words, if flirtation within marriage was such an anathema and danger it should have been declared and understood by all as unacceptable.

It is May, through her flirtation with Mountsteven, who pushes the boundary of his admiration for her. The novel holds the same view for married women explained above; that as long as her husband does not disapprove and society sees this, she has licence to engage in light flirtation. In *Middlemarch,* Rosamond's flirtation with Will Ladislaw could be perceived in the same light for a while until she crosses the boundary and 'offers' herself to him. In *May and December* it is May's excessive flirtation, in public, in front of her husband and others and without restraint, that is viewed as transgressive because she embarrasses her husband before others. In her bid to treat Lord Marcus with scorn because of his previous insulting treatment of her before she married (he propositions her as though she is a prostitute), she "allowed and encouraged a style of address from Mountsteven which she had never tolerated before [...]. May's feelings were in a flutter which made her hardly conscious

of the lengths to which they carried her" (56; vol. II, ch. 2). May's behaviour demonstrates a want of moderation and self-control. Her actions cause "Mr. Cameron to be more than usually uncomfortable" (56; vol. II, ch. 2). Her enemy Lord Marcus "surveyed them with an air of curiosity and amusement provokingly impertinent," while James "was frantic at the extraordinary excess to which his cousin was permitting the devotions of the man [Mountsteven]" (56; vol. II, ch. 2). The reactions of the three men are equally significant for each implied censure discloses their dispositions and amplifies May's transgression. Her undignified conduct opens her and her marriage to public ridicule.

Mr. Cameron's reaction is noteworthy, for it reveals that May's flirtation with Mountsteven has always bothered him. Secondly, it underscores the "extraordinary excess" of her behaviour, since Mr. Cameron is "*more* than usually uncomfortable" (emphasis added). Lord Marcus's "amusement" is perhaps worst of all in its import that May's imprudent behaviour (that hints of licentiousness) confirms the low view he has had of her all along. It mocks her earlier rejection of his advances and reduces the moral indignation she displayed on that occasion to an act of coquetry. In this moment of his "provoking impertinen[ce]" she is bared to his gaze and she is cheapened. James's appalled reaction at May's conduct is significant because even he, an unprincipled and scheming thief and the narrative's villain, perceives her conduct as improper. He is also motivated by jealousy. One is also aware that the censure heaped on May is dominantly male and that Mountsteven's conduct appears excused. Perhaps the narrative hints here at the hypocrisy and double-standard of a society that does not frown upon flirtation but holds only women accountable if any scandal is raised.

The novel creates an in-between space for consideration in its exploration of the separate spheres doctrine; the 'public' outside spaces women enter daily in their walks and in the round of visitations. The 'public' refers to the acquaintances outside of the home as well. The novel does not assert that the 'public' does not spill over into the private of the home and marriage relationship. The rules of social etiquette, like paying social calls, meeting in the park to mingle with society and attending balls, place married couples in the public eye for their marriage to be scrutinised and commented on. Scandal threatens the stability of the home and taints the reputation of the marriage.

Certainly, the scene where May returns to Littlemere after Mr. Cameron ejects her from their home is a pivotal argument for the preservation of the boundary between private and public. On seating herself on the train, May "draws her thick veil closely over her face" and surveys the new passengers boarding with a "very lively fear of meeting some

acquaintance (79; vol. III, ch. 3). Ironically, after ignoring the public/private divide in her marriage with Mr. Cameron, her action of veiling herself is an attempt to erect a barrier between her and the public. Her reluctance to meet with familiar people appears to consume her as suggested by the exaggeration in "very lively fear." In another sense, the veil functions as a disguise but suggests an attempt on her part at covering her mortification; drawing the veil over her face signifies her awareness of the taint on her reputation. The veil itself acts to efface her identity, making her unrecognisable whilst symbolising that she has been stripped of her home and her position as Mr. Cameron's wife, and the protection it afforded her. On her own with only her waiting-woman accompanying her, she also cuts a vulnerable figure, exposed to unfamiliar society in the public space of the train. Lowering her thick veil around her can also be read as a protective action in an unknown situation. As she travels, she moves further away from the known stability of her home and her marriage, towards an uncertain future. A similar scene occurs in *The Wife's Sister* when Fanny, exiled from her home and stripped, like May, of her position as wife and the respectability that came with it, travels in a carriage, vulnerable to the gossip of others because she travels alone with her child. Both scenes emphasise exile from the domestic haven and the institute of marriage as a form of punishment for their folly. In addition, their exile from their homes suggests that they failed in their role of wife and that they do not fit the ideal of angelic domesticity. The gender double-standard is pointed to as well, since Mountsteven is not exiled from society (just like Cecil Mansfield is not in *The Wife's Sister*).

Furthermore, the collapsed boundary between private and public and May's improper conduct brings her respectability into disrepute through the gossip that ensues between the other passengers about her and her marriage. The image of May, disguised and "shr[inking] farther into her corner, dr[awing] her veil closer still" whilst passengers in the carriage boldly demonstrate that they are scandalised by her, is a powerful one (79; vol. III, ch. 3). To an enquiry by a gentleman whether any of the ladies knew "the beautiful Mrs. Cameron," one of the ladies replies, "She was not in *our set* [...] and I confess I was unwilling that my daughters should associate with one whose conduct as a flirt made her so notorious" (82; vol. III, ch. 3, emphasis in original). May's "conduct as a flirt" has brought disgrace upon her name. The italicised "*our set*" is derisive in tone, erecting a barrier between May and the social circle referred to as though she is a pariah which in turn underscores her exiled position. May's flirtation has caused her to be an object of scorn, unfit as a model of middle-class femininity for younger unmarried women.

A disparagement of mercenary marriage and the middle-class is also made when the lady says of Mr. Cameron, "I understand he was a wealthy man, and in these mercenary days, money, you know, is reckoned by a certain class as a passport to place; and *wealth*, you know, is *worth*" (83; vol. III, ch. 3, emphasis in original). The "certain class" she refers to is Mr. Cameron's and her prejudice is directed at the fact that he obtained his fortune in trade. The lady's words are derisive in tone and underpin her main critique of the professional classes in her reference to Mr. Cameron as a "wealthy man." Her words criticise middle-class wealth that came to redefine "worth," seeming to replace the old aristocratic order of birth and ancestry being the only measure and qualifier of a person's worth. There is an argument being made here as well for class boundaries to be upheld, which is essentially an argument for class purity. Implied here is the idea that if boundaries between classes were preserved then the purity of the domestic space would not be compromised.

As a final argument for the sanctity of marriage and home, the narrative gives voice to the younger generation of unmarried women. I suggest here that the daughter's words to her mother reads as a pledge that is meant to reinstate the middle-class ideal of domestic purity. The lady exclaims, "I only hope that I shall never see my daughters like that Mrs. Cameron, it would break my heart, I know, could I think it possible," to which her daughter cries, "Law, mamma, what an idea! I am sure, if I were married, I should never think of flirting again; I think it is so wicked!" (84; vol. III, ch. 3). The stigma attached to May as a disgraced and shamed woman is stressed in "that Mrs. Cameron." It is an irremovable stain on her character, as though, whenever people would call her or refer to her as Mrs. Cameron, her improper behaviour is all that would be seen. One could say that it is a harsh treatment of the issue of her flirtation that did not even lead to infidelity but it is demonstrative of the importance of reputation and respectability to the middle-class identity.

Significantly, in *May and December*, Mr. Cameron teaches May about his business affairs after they have become reconciled. The narrative poses this shift in his attitude to the happiness they experience in their marriage. His decision to teach her about his business affairs is accompanied by wisdom imparted to married couples. When May speaks in error about a business matter, Mr. Cameron, "laughing," says, "I must give you a lesson in business-matters, I think, to teach you the difference between such things; or what will you do when I am dead, and you are obliged to look after your own property?" (230; vol. III, ch. 7). Mr. Cameron's words suggest the importance of a husband teaching his wife about business and property matters to empower her. It raises awareness that women are left vulnerable to manipulation of their wealth as widows. I suggest that his preparation enables

May to have a "rational plan of future life" which "she gradually detail[s]" to Mr. Arnold following Mr. Cameron's death (238; vol. III, ch. 7). His lessons allow her to carry out the instructions of her husband's will, and to make the correct decisions concerning his counting house. The plan she devises for James is proof of Mr. Cameron's "lesson in business-matters": James was to "devote himself to business [...] prove himself industrious, honourable, active; he must win Arnold's good opinion, and earn a right to May's; in short, he must work for a character for the next six months" (253; vol. III, ch. 8). It is noteworthy that May is capable of engaging with business matters. In doing this, she appears part of this arena, even though she never enters it. We are also aware that May's impudent nature is curtailed by this new focus to her life. Interestingly, her business plan for James works far more effectively to change his character. Because he proves himself to her, she signs the counting house over to him. I would suggest as well that her business knowledge enables her to manage her new home: "there was nothing of the extravagance of her London habits, in the domestic arrangements of her new residence" (259; vol. III, ch. 8). That she is able to manage her home brings order to it and contributes to her fulfilment as a widow. The order of her home restores middle-class femininity to her.

It is perhaps the form of self-reflexivity concerning their marriage and their actions in the midst of rumours of May's injudicious manner with Mountsteven that communicates the novel's strongest arguments for what constitutes a happy marriage. The novel presents that both May and Mr. Cameron gain new insight into their marriage that hold both genders responsible for the success of matrimony and which link back to the epigraph's emphasis on "Readers" instead of only "Misses." Mr. Cameron reflects that

> it had been a foolish fancy on his part, to expect a young and beautiful woman, like May, to suit an old man, or agree to his tastes and habits; it had been an unwise action, and naturally brought evils and inconveniences in its train; well then, so be it – the folly had been his [...] if his wife's disposition was unsuitable [...] he must make the more allowances for her, and exercise the greater forbearance [...] it was not her fault that she was admired, in fact, he liked it; and if he himself was ridiculed [...] he must try and bear that, too. (142; vol. II, ch. 5)

Mr. Cameron's resolve to exercise greater tolerance of May's foibles does not answer to the domestic ideal where the older, more mature husband is meant to advise and guide his younger wife. His realisation is limited, for he merely commits to "greater forbearance," which would only serve to cover May's shortcomings, even though it is notable that part of his reflections, like his absurd expectation that May complies with his retired way of life, do ring true. It is also observable that his stance on marriage echoes the decision he makes

concerning his first marriage; to "[p]atiently b[ear] the burden" of his wife's "indolence and selfishness," which he considered he "had brought on himself" (28; vol. I, ch. 1). He comes across as being more an indulgent father than a husband. In addition, one can argue that, because May's disposition is frivolous and she tends to be impudent, had she married a wealthy, younger man, the result would have been the same. What is significant here then is that, because Mr. Cameron is the focaliser, it is possible to argue that the novel suggests that it is convenient for him to ascribe their marital difficulties to a matter of age difference rather than deal with his reluctance to guide her.

May's realisation about her marriage is described as a "consciousness that she had neglected her duty" (215; vol. II, ch. 7). In comparison with Mr. Cameron's resolve to forbear, May's clarity concerning her behaviour is activated by the awareness that change is required on her part:

> [i]n a marriage between individuals of an age so disproportioned, great sacrifices of habits and tastes must be made to preserve conjugal peace; but when she asked herself who made these sacrifices, conscience answered faithfully, her husband. From him had come the indulgence, the forbearance, the consideration which alone had prevented discord and dissension. (216; vol. II, ch. 7)

It is noteworthy that where Mr. Cameron's view of their age difference pose it as a stumbling block, May's view accepts it is a reality, but not an obstacle, in their marriage that can be dealt with through mutual compromise. Her words acknowledge her faults and that Mr. Cameron alone kept "discord" at bay. But even as she recognises his "forbearance and indulgence," we are aware that Mr. Cameron treats her as a child whose faults are to be overlooked, not addressed. On the other hand, his former attempts at addressing her flaws resulted in deepening the tension in their marriage. This is a facet to their relationship that the narrative highlights again in connection with its argument concerning separate spheres. It is Mr. Cameron's weak point, his "susceptibility to ridicule and [his] great consternation at the notion that he was suddenly become the butt of all the world," that likewise contributes to the collapse in their relationship (139; vol. II, ch. 5). It is a weak point which James plays on with his insinuations that May is being unfaithful with Captain Mountsteven and that they were the subjects of gossip in society.

Mr. Cameron's suspicions and his susceptibility to James's insinuations of his wife's misconduct recall Shakespeare's Othello, who allows Iago to toy with him. The narrative makes this connection between play and novel: "the scene between Othello and Iago, flashed on his [Mr. Cameron's] memory with no flattering application to his companion and himself"

(103; vol. II, ch. 4). Despite his awareness here that James may be manipulating him for his own ends, Mr. Cameron still suspects May of unfaithfulness. He appears torn between his suspicions of her and the need to believe in her goodness. On finding a letter which he believes May to have written to her lover, Captain Mountsteven, he declares, "Oh, lost, lost – all was lost – honour, happiness, self-respect, wife, home, everything!" (182; vol. II, ch. 6). The dramatic tone of his words is emphasised by the repetition of "lost." His exclamation magnifies the ideal of the woman as the guardian of domesticity and the preserver of her husband's social standing and self-worth. The placement of "wife" before "home" and "everything" is significant: without a wife there is no home and therefore as "everything" implies, the loss is total. His words also encapsulate the ruinous effect of May's imprudent conduct in writing a letter addressed to another man and leaving it for her husband, or anyone else, to find. This occurrence produces a significant shift in the relationship between husband and wife; it causes Mr. Cameron to write a letter of his own, demanding May leave his home.

Although May and Mr. Cameron are ultimately reconciled, it is brief, because he dies. His death is the novel's tragic event and May is the only woman in this novel who loses her husband. I have explored the possible reasons for this conclusion to their marriage, so I will not revisit them here. Their age difference contributes to the difficulties which arise in their marriage but it is not the sole reason for their marital discord. The conduct of both May and Mr. Cameron appears to be of consequence. Mr. Cameron tends at times to handle May as a simpleton, excessively admiring her beauty but dismissing her opinion as inconsequential, which demonstrates his view that a wife should be angelic and childlike. Mr. Cameron allows their age to become problematic because of his susceptibility to social opinion. His initial belief that his wife might be of assistance in his business was discarded in the course of his first marriage, quite possibly because his first wife was vehemently dismissive of his attempts at educating her about his work.

This transition in May's outlook on marriage is further evident in the conversation between her and Grace regarding money, following Mr. Cameron's death and her acquirement of a secluded country residence. May is shown to no longer covet money as before but sees it in its proper perspective as been put to use for the good of others. She says, "I shall sign away ten thousand pounds, to-morrow, as the endowment of my new church, and what with the school and other trifles, I shall soon have 'run through' twenty thousand of my burden, this helps to make me cheerful" (274, vol. III, ch. 8). Grace replies: "[h]ow differently you talk now, from what you did when we first discussed marriage together" (274; vol. III, ch. 8). Both May and Mr. Cameron had to learn that marriage was about compromise

and a certain degree of selflessness. The Cameron marriage both affirms and discounts that marrying the proper person at the proper time guarantees domestic bliss.

The novel's third marriage, between Ann and Mr. Arnold, does not come under the same intense scrutiny as the other two do, but it does emphasise another model of marriage, a marriage of convenience as an answer to a social problem that was part of Victorian society at the time: the marginalised and unmarried older woman. As a married woman, Ann is the opposite of what she was in her brother's home. May, on her return to Littlemere following her exile from her home, sees Ann's transformation. This is significant because we are aware that, out of the two women who entered marriage on the same day, Ann is successfully married. Her conjugal felicity manifests in terms of an alteration in her appearance and demeanour in the domestic space of Littlemere. Even the surrounds outside the house were "no longer out of repair or untidy" and displayed a feminine touch with "cut flower borders now looking lovely with young flowers" (101; vol. III, ch. 3). Ann

> had grown plumper, fresher, brighter; she looked cheerful and happy [...] [t]he magic light of love brought qualities hitherto undreamt of in her mind. Highly informed, extremely talented, witty or beautiful she could not be, nor did anyone expect it from her. But so far as was in her power, she entered into her husband's pursuits, identified with his tastes, followed out his plans, and devoted herself to assist his numerous improvements. She even read the books he introduced [...] to hold her station credibly as his companion. (106; vol. III, ch. 4)

The "undreamt of [qualities] in her mind" recalls the earlier "speculative dreams" that she relinquished as a spinster in her brother's home (67; vol. I, ch. 3). Here, Ann is able to dream and view the world differently from when she was merely James's persecuted and overlooked sister, because her marriage is based on love even though she initially married for convenience. Could the novel be advocating Ann and Mr. Arnold's marriage as the ideal or as containing the answers to what makes a happy marriage? Ann embodies a feminine domesticity that she shares with Grace, but it is implied that she does not quite reach this "highly informed" version of domesticity that Grace, proficient in the way she manages her father's home, appears to exude. The narrator interestingly remarks that "no one expect[ed] it from her," which suggests that Ann is accepted for who she is by her husband. It is also noteworthy that these qualities of beauty and wit which made women like May and Grace marriageable are absent in her, yet she was able to marry, be loved and accepted. The narrator credits love with adding value to a mind that was dull to others before her marriage. Marriage and love are depicted here as transformative powers. Again, great value is placed on female self-betterment: we recall May in her widowhood having the leisure to "improve and educate

[her] mind" and Grace, in her full roles of wife and mother, articulating that she feels she is "go[ing] sadly back in point of information" (272; vol. III, ch. 8). Is Ann, who is married and who is given the opportunity for strengthening her mind, in a more desirable position for women than her female counterparts?

It is possible to argue that she is, because her marriage and the domestic space are emblematic of Vickery's viewpoint that the domestic space ambivalently contains women and allows them to negotiate its constraints (386). Ann conforms to domestic expectation of her to serve her husband's interests by subsuming her own, which could be viewed as a restriction even as it exposes her to new things. Mr. Arnold is depicted as her teacher and guide, a role he successfully performs and which Mr. Cameron fails at with May. Although Ann's world is expanding, it is shaped by her husband's choice of what she learns. Ann's ambivalent position is further emphasised by the fact that she has purpose as a knowledgeable companion to her husband; yet again her knowledge is filtered through him. Her position is such an interesting one because she is able to negotiate and remain within the strictures of domesticity. One can argue that Ann's companionable marriage (begun as a marriage of convenience) is the most realistic of the three marriages. Her happiness is in her natural role as her husband's helper as "far as it was in her power," but it is also suggested it is an admirable thing that she "holds her station" as his wife.

One can conclude that of the three marriages Ann's is suggested as the happiest because she appears the most fulfilled. On the other hand, May and Grace also claim fulfilment and happiness as widow and as busy mother and wife. The novel concludes with Grace and Harry's marriage as the quintessential Victorian nuclear family. They embody the kind of domesticity espoused in marriage manuals as the cornerstone of order in the English nation. May's widowed status affords her a degree of independence which Grace does not have in her immersion in her family, but one can argue that May's philanthropic adoption of the surrounding community will make her a part of many families. Grace is happy as mother and wife, but she acknowledges that self-improvement is wanting because she is consumed in the identities of others. Ann's self is being nourished and improved with knowledge but it is a growth ordered by her husband which suggests restriction. Cowper's moral that asserts domestic felicity requires marrying the right partner at the proper time has been thoroughly explored through variations of his equation. The narrative featured the ideal love match in Grace and Harry as the best model to test the validity of the maxim but extended this in the mercenary marriage between May and Mr. Cameron and Ann and Mr. Arnold's union of convenience to show that Cowper's maxim is ineffectual. On the other hand, the argument in

the novel may be that the characters encounter hardships and unhappiness in their marriages because they did not marry suitable people at the proper time. The ambivalent positions that Ann, May and Grace occupy seem to suggest that there is no perfect or ideal solution for them and that domestic felicity is more an on-going negotiation between husband and wife of the domestic ideal and its precepts than a guarantee, contrary to Cowper's moral.

Chapter 3:

Reason, Morality and Virtue in *The Wife's Sister; or, The Forbidden Marriage*

In middle-class marriage the ideal of men and women in their separate spheres went beyond associating the private with woman's management of the home and caring for her husband and children, and the public with man's duties of making money and providing for his family. As *May and December* illustrates in the character of May Luttrell, a woman's allocation to the domestic space was closely tied to the perception that she required containment because of the tendency, natural to her sex, for immoderate feeling, which in May took the form of excessive flirtation that threatened the stability and moral order of the domestic space and the ideal of companionate marriage. Tosh argues that the "separation of home from work entailed a very clear-cut notion of sexual roles" that "went much further than the practical distinction between breadwinner and home-maker" to distinguishing the "natural endowments" of men and women that classified men as the "superior sex" because of their 'natural' ability to reason (43). If reason was 'natural' to men and thus a quality essential to the marketplace, then women were 'naturally' excluded from the commercial arena. They were considered, as Tosh argues, "not just a few notches lower on the scale of rationality and resolution," and thus inferior, but were distinguished from men because of their 'natural' capacity for fine feeling that made them creatures of emotion more suited to the roles of wife, mother and homemaker (43). Although necessary for domestic duties and for maintaining moral order in themselves and others, it was perceived that women's emotions made them less able to practise restraint over their sexual passions, presenting a danger to proper, angelic domesticity, whereas men were able to govern their passions because they could apply reason and think before merely reacting to feeling. Thus, women, according to the ideal of middle-class womanhood, had to "conform," to use Tosh's word, their "sexual natures" by practising diffidence as an outward declaration of an inward "lack of sexual desire" (44). The ideal of reserved, restrained womanhood enhanced the home as moral but expelled sexual intimacy as pleasurable, relegating it to the endorsement of sex for procreation only and promoting the "passionless moral mother as the epitome of femininity" (Tosh 45). Equally notable, middle-class women were held accountable for curbing men's fervour to preserve their own virtue, conforming to the ideal of what Tosh calls "the good wife," who "deployed her purity as a

means of cooling her husband's ardour" (45). This ideal produced a double-standard, in that some men, complicit in upholding the domestic woman as "passionless," sought outside the sanctified boundaries of home an outlet for their passions in mistresses and prostitution. The already inferior position of the woman became more entrenched within marriage laws that assumed the double-standard towards adultery and stipulated that a woman could not seek divorce solely on grounds of adultery but had to prove incest, bigamy and abuse, that is, "aggravated adultery," as explained by Poovey (56). Men could procure immediate divorce for adultery even if only on suspicion. Prostitution and adultery both highlighted the double-standard of marriage law that found it allowable for a man to acquire an array of sexual partners, but which a woman was forbidden from doing.

This discordant state of domestic relations between men and women and its effect on the already marginalised position of women comes to bear on the marriage between Cecil Mansfield and Fanny Ellis in Hubback's second novel, *The Wife's Sister; or, The Forbidden Marriage* (1851). Set in 1831, the novel captures some elements of conventionally constructed marital roles in relation to the dated "Henrican statute of 1533," discussed in depth by Nancy Anderson, that in itself threatened the stability and order of the home with its ambiguous decree concerning marriages of "consanguinity and affinity" (67). The novel engages with the ambiguous marriage law to highlight the vulnerable position of women in marriage that is exacerbated by the domestic ideal of rigid duty and the belief that women are less able to reason. The novel explores how this scenario influences marriage as an ideal, how it affects the position of the woman in relation to the debate that ensued from the ambiguous law, and its consequences for home and hearth. Fanny is presented as an example of how this marriage law affects real women who are already defenceless and, as Poovey points out, virtually "nonexistent in the eyes of the law" because of the law of coveture (52). Utilising the particular circumstances of the impact of marriage law on Fanny's life, the novel attempts to re-work precepts like duty, morality and virtue appointed by conduct books and marriage manuals as pertinent qualities of womanhood. I argue that the narrative criticises these precepts as excessive and stultifying, showing that the woman is vulnerable to exploitation. The dissolution of Fanny's marriage can therefore be read not only as a consequence of the ambiguous marriage law and her husband Cecil's infidelity, but as a criticism of angelic domesticity. In featuring adultery, a threat to the ideal of domesticity in relation to household sanctity, order and individual morality, I argue that the novel uses ungovernable passion, immorality and dishonour to reinstate reason, morality and virtue as key principles of the middle-class womanhood Fanny represents at the end of the novel. The novel hereby

challenges the conventional bifurcation of men with reason and women with feeling. In its insistence on reason as an integral attribute of middle-class femininity, I show that the novel re-works the prescribed practice of absolute female duty as less rigid, tempering it with reason. Through hardship and suffering, the femininity that Fanny represents at the novel's conclusion is less rigid and legitimates a newly-ordered, middle-class home. The middle-class home is further legitimated by her second marriage to Frank Linwood, the novel's representative of middle-class manhood.

The novel begins by looking at a marriage that is seemingly legitimate, then declared illegitimate while the husband becomes entangled in what would be adultery if the marriage were to be considered legal. Adultery occurs again later in the narrative, this time in a lawful union between Cecil and his cousin Laura Mansfield after his marriage to Fanny is annulled. The effect of adultery, registered in Fanny losing her station and retreating into seclusion while Cecil goes on to remarry his cousin Laura, emphasises the novel's overall criticism of the woman's defenceless position. Conversely, the second scenario of adultery – this time when Laura elopes with another man – can be understood as a punishment of Cecil's infidelity in his marriage to Fanny, but also challenges the double-standard of marriage law. The novel begins and concludes with marriage but its ending sets in place a completely different model of marriage in class and value system. Not only does this reinstate middle-class marriage as the ideal, as the ending of *The Younger Sister* does, but is an attempt to bring clarity to the marriage law debate that had been under the purview of the aristocracy and landed gentry ever since the bill was first introduced in the House of Lords. Furthermore, there is a chance that the novel specifically criticises the way in which the ambiguity of the law allows Cecil Mansfield to leave his scrupulous wife with such ease; an occurrence that highlights the powerless position of women because they are not protected or represented by law.

Writing on the "Wife's Sister Bill," Anderson explains that the legality of marriage to one's deceased wife's sister was a matter of ceaseless debate in Victorian England. The "existing" marriage law which was "based on the Henrican statute [of] 1533" stipulated that marriage to one's cousin or in-law was permissible but "could be annulled at any time within the lifetime of both spouses by the Ecclesiastical Court" (67). This equivocal law came under review in 1835 with the introduction of Lord Lyndhurst's bill in the House of Lords, which stipulated that the time in which consanguine or affined marriages could be annulled should be reduced to two years after such unions were made (67). This was a bid on his part to prevent children from these unions "be declared illegitimate" (67). The bill was revised in

parliament and decreed in August 1835 that all intra-familial unions before 1835 were ratified and could not be annulled but declared invalid all such unions after the date. By 1842 a second bill, called the "The Wife's Sister Bill," was introduced to counter the bill by arguing for the legality of affined unions (68). The law remained unchanged and in 1851, the year Hubback wrote *The Wife's Sister*, a "Marriage Law Reform Association" was founded to campaign and petition for the law to be revoked (68). This petition was not officially endorsed until 1907.

Hubback sets *The Wife's Sister* in 1831, before the introduction of Lord Lyndhurst's bill in 1835, to explore the effects of what Anderson calls "the ambiguity in the law" concerning consanguine and affined marriages on the home, marriage and the woman (67). Hubback's preface to *The Wife's Sister* provides some context for her interest in the Henrican marriage law and the date in which the novel is set. She writes:

> The events which my tale records cannot again occur. No individuals can now be placed in similar situations. It is a tale of days that are past. It was written previously to the great agitation on the question of the Law of Marriage; and is now laid before the public, neither at the solicitations of admiring friends, nor with the ambitious intention of settling a much debated point; but purely from private and personal considerations, the nature of which my readers are at liberty to guess for themselves. (n.pag.)

Hubback's uncle, Charles Austen, married his sister-in-law and this could be the root of the "private considerations" referred to. Hubback sets her novel deliberately before Lord Lyndhurst's bill to explore the effect of the law before it was revised and its ambiguity resolved. She is careful to assert that the novel does not wish to "settle" the debate; that is, we are told from the outset that the novel takes no definitive stance against or for consanguine and affined marriages. But the claim that "the events [...] cannot again occur" suggests that Lord Lyndhurst's bill negated this reality for women by resolving the ambiguity in a marriage law that placed women in jeopardy. Conversely, it also suggests that the bill addressed and uncovered an issue that had existed since 1533 without much social contention but still left women unprotected.

In Fanny, Hubback returns to the subjugated position of Victorian women in the figure of the single woman as a surrogate mother and manager of the home, this time because her sister is deceased. Although it does not set Fanny's spinsterhood as a central interest, the novel does present her as an unmarried woman vulnerable to the moral danger of living in her brother-in-law's home while performing her substitute role. When Cecil Mansfield, squire of Brookensha and her brother-in-law, convinces her to marry him against her better judgement and without her father's consent, the novel shows how situations like Fanny's are open to

exploitation. The initial happiness of their marriage, despite the questionable way it occurred, imbues the domestic space with stability and order because Fanny is a domestic angel. Their marriage deteriorates because of Cecil Mansfield's unprincipled nature that results in his adultery with his deceitful and corrupt cousin, Laura. He allows his uncle, Henry Mansfield, to have his marriage to Fanny annulled because of the ambiguity of the Henrican law. Fanny is left destitute, stripped of her former status as a lady because she is now labelled as Cecil's former mistress and their daughter is consequently seen as illegitimate. As further testimony to the upheaval caused in the home as an effect of ambiguous marriage law, Cecil and Laura marry and Fanny is exiled from Brookensha, a shamed and disgraced figure in society. She eventually establishes a new home for herself and her daughter but must live in seclusion, allowing only her close childhood friend and barrister Frank Linwood and the Comptons in her life. In the novel's continued criticism of ungovernable passion and impropriety, Laura has an adulterous affair with another man and elopes, leaving Cecil with their child. Laura dies and Cecil dies soon after, but not before he entreats Fanny to adopt and raise their daughter. The novel concludes with Fanny's marriage to Frank Linwood and we are told that "there is no happier family than Fanny's home presents" (298; vol. III, ch. 9).

The double-title *The Wife's Sister; or, The Forbidden Marriage* points to Hubback's interest in marriage and family affected by the debates raging around Victorian England at the time concerning marriage to a deceased wife's sister. Linked with "forbidden marriage," "the wife's sister" draws attention to the operation of censure implied in "forbidden." The "or" suggests that the two foci are synonymous and thus can be read as a declaration, from the outset, that marriage to one's deceased wife's sister is forbidden. This is an attempt at establishing a moral stance from the beginning. On the one hand, Hubback appears to be definitively clear about the ambiguity in the law concerning marriage to one's deceased wife's sister in the title. On the other hand, it can also be argued that "forbidden" points to the act of proscription in such a way as to call its legitimacy into question that becomes evident with the novel's engagement with the law.

The novel's female protagonist, Fanny Ellis, is prefigured in the title as the "wife's sister." On its own, "*The Wife's Sister*" sounds benign. It emphasises the unthreatening biological connection between two women. Elizabeth Gruner, in her essay on how the debates surrounding the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill (1835-1907) elevated the brother and sister relationship in Victorian novels, states that "the deceased wife's sister mediates between two important roles in the family. In her family of origin, she is her sister's sister, her boon companion and closest female friend. In her sister's new family she is cast as the

husband's sister as well; thus becoming the brother's sister, a figure of vital importance" (426). In the title, Fanny's legal connection to her sister's husband as his sister-in-law is obscured in the accentuation of her biological connection to her sister. "The deceased wife's sister," according to Gruner, "has no single self-identity but is always (potentially and actually) a sister, a wife, a mother" (425). Gruner's point is that someone in this position has a kind of ambiguous status. Fanny's status is ambiguous in the sense that when she is first introduced, she is in her deceased sister's home, performing the role of a surrogate mother in caring for her sister's children and acting as manager of her brother-in-law's home.

The Wife's Sister emphasises themes and concerns in Austen's *Mansfield Park*, yet it is not so much a rewrite as it is a kind of sequel to the earlier work of Austen. *The Wife's Sister* looks beyond *Mansfield Park*'s conclusion (with the inter-family marriage between Edmund Bertram and Fanny Price) by beginning with the marriage between Cecil and Fanny and exploring the consequences of it. The story of two blood relations (although not technically in Fanny and Cecil's case) falling in love while living under the same roof is presented as questionable at the outset in *The Wife's Sister*. In *Mansfield Park*, it is not a moral issue because marriage between cousins was not taboo at the time the novel was written. Instead, it is a class concern: Sir Bertram is bent on preventing the possibility of one of their sons marrying their lower-class relation, in this instance, Fanny Price. To Sir Thomas's expression of concern about "cousins in love, etc," Mrs. Norris exclaims,

> "You are thinking of your sons; but do you not know that of all things upon earth *that* is the least likely to happen, brought up as they would be, always together like brothers and sisters? [...] It is, in fact, the only sure way of providing against the connection. Suppose her a pretty girl, and seen by Tom and Edmund for the first time seven years hence, and I dare say there would be mischief. The very idea of her having suffered to grow up at a distance from us all in poverty and neglect would be enough to make either of the dear, sweet-tempered boys in love with her. But breed her up with them from this time, and suppose her to have the beauty of an angel, and she will never be more to either than a sister." (380, 381; emphasis in original)

Sir Thomas's agreement with Mrs. Norris's logic shows his view that taking Fanny Price into his home and providing for her as one of his own would obviate any inter-marriage between the families.

Hubback's adoption of names from *Mansfield Park* is a deliberate attempt at transposing their meaning to *The Wife's Sister*. The name of Fanny Price as synonymous with passivity and silent duty is recalled in Hubback naming her female protagonist Fanny as well. Fanny Price's function as the novel's moral conscience also informs the character of Fanny Ellis, whose moral constancy restores the domestic space. Their different surnames are of

interest as well: Fanny pays the 'price' for her seeming passivity by being cruelly treated by Mrs. Norris and suffers painful jealousy when the more active Mary Crawford wins Edmund's esteem. On the other hand, while Hubback may or may not have read the precepts on etiquette and marriage for young women by the popular conduct book author Mrs. Sarah Stickney Ellis, her doctrine of sacrificial duty certainly does feature as a defining aspect of Fanny's disposition as she shares the surname, "Ellis." Her sense of duty also causes her to suffer, like Fanny Price, although her pain is doubled by the loss of her reputation and station, something that Austen never allows her heroines to experience.

In *The Wife's Sister*, Cecil's surname, Mansfield, is taken from the name of Sir Thomas's estate. Cecil Mansfield shares some aspects of Sir Thomas's disposition: he too is arrogant and believes in a stultified model of domesticity for women. Henry Crawford's name is used to name Cecil's unprincipled uncle, Henry Mansfield, who could be a hardened older version of Austen's archetypal rogue. Henry Mansfield is a man of loose morals who confesses towards the end of the novel that he deceived society into believing that his daughter, Laura, was legitimate. He had an affair with her mother "of low birth [who] tempted [him] and [he] tempted her – [their] passions were strong and unchecked – but none knew [they] were not married" (153-154; vol. III, ch. 5). Austen's Henry Crawford, we recall, has an affair with the married Maria Rushworth and for a time makes Julia Bertram believe that he has formed an attachment to her.

The love triangle between Edmund Bertram, Fanny Price and Mary Crawford is transposed in *The Wife's Sister* as a love triangle between Cecil Mansfield, Fanny Ellis and Laura Mansfield. The insertion in *Mansfield Park* of Henry Crawford as a suitor to Fanny Price is not sustained but does point to the novel's other love triangle between Henry Crawford, Mr. Rushworth and Maria Bertram. Frank Linwood's love for Fanny Ellis in *The Wife's Sister* is its other love triangle, Frank having furtively loved Fanny since their childhood as Fanny Price has loved Edmund Bertram. Fanny Ellis's eventual marriage to Frank Linwood after she at first rejects his proposal is a reversal of Fanny Price's prolonged waiting for Edmund to finally be "as anxious to marry Fanny as Fanny herself could desire" (609). It is noteworthy that in *The Wife's Sister* it is a man who must remain constant in love and morality as a way of obtaining his heart's desire. This inversion of Austen's basis for marriage disqualifies the idea of a complacent woman waiting patiently for the man she loves and replaces it with a more assertive woman who acts according to her own prerogative in relation to marriage. Marriage itself is presented more as a woman's choice than her only lot.

The Wife's Sister emphasises the themes of morality and reason. The 'immoral' desire of Cecil Mansfield for his sister-in-law Fanny Ellis, which in a sense makes Fanny guilty of reciprocal "immoral" desire in her love for him, is the first of many fissures that occur in the narrative. These fissures produce insecurity in the household. This is countered in the novel through the assertion of the middle-class ideal of 'virtuous' woman and 'rational' man. Fanny's virtue comes under threat after she is effectively declared Cecil Mansfield's mistress even though she was married to him, and again when she lives in seclusion as a divorced, single woman. But she comes through this period with her virtue unscathed, because Fanny carries domesticity with her. Fanny is represented as rational *and* virtuous. Frank Linwood, in overcoming the testing of his patience and reason in waiting for Fanny's hand in marriage, is the novel's rational middle-class man. It is ultimately Fanny's rationality and virtue expressed in the novel as a reworking of their ideological conceptions that inscribe the middle-class marriage and home at the novel's end.

The tradition of female duty, as Vicinus documents in her exploration of the ideology of the "perfect lady," shifted to become a model for femininity taken up by the middle-classes and ascribed to, over time, by some in the upper and working classes as well (ix). Women's duty, Vicinus explains, included the suppression of their emotions and any knowledge they might have acquired; for example, they were not to possess any sexual feelings or knowledge of it but had to enter marriage ready to fulfil their reproductive role, resonating with Tosh's idea of the "passionless" woman (44). For the period's writers of etiquette books and marriage manuals the ideal dutiful woman was, as Vicinus puts it, "morally untested," yet had to be morally strong for herself as well as her husband and family (ix). She was expected to uphold her husband's reputation even when he had neglected his own. She was to accept her proper sphere even if her marriage was dismal.

In the novel's re-working of these rigid categories of duty, virtue and morality expounded in conduct books, it adopts Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas concerning them in her radical feminist tract, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Wollstonecraft argues that virtue, duty, morality and reason are inter-dependent, and explains that "the more understanding women acquire, the more they will be attached to their duty – comprehending it – for unless they comprehend it, unless their morals are fixed on the same immutable principles as those of man, no authority can make them discharge it [their duty] in a virtuous manner" (88). In other words, a woman's exercise of reason, to "comprehend" her duty without being indoctrinated by society about what her duty entails induces a ready acceptance of it and she exercises it in a "virtuous manner." Wollstonecraft is careful to argue that a

married woman's duty is to her husband and children, but must not be overrun by "increased sensibility at the expense of reason" which would make it misplaced duty (156). In similar fashion, in *The Wife's Sister*, Fanny must learn that her exercise of duty must be tempered by reason and not ruled by excessive feeling. I will later demonstrate that she eventually comes to redefine, in part, the doctrine of duty on her own terms. One can say that reason is, in Wollstonecraft's view, the foundation of morality, duty and virtue. Reason and 'proper' duty – that is, duty not guided by excessive feeling – are central to the formation of middle-class femininity in the novel.

Fanny acquires virtues not subjected by social opinion of her as a woman living on her own with her illegitimate child, thus challenging the idea that marriage secures a woman's reputation. The novel postulates that virtue is relative and demonstrates this through the various opinions of people from different social backgrounds. It also features what one can call 'false' virtue as a way of defining what true virtue means. For example, Henry Mansfield, Fanny's greatest accuser, argues that her marriage to Cecil is immoral, but he never married Laura's mother. Fanny, like Helen Graham in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, hopes to convince those in her immediate social circle and environs that she embodies another legitimate and thus acceptable model of virtue. This is manifested in her choice of living on her own in seclusion with her child, even though she was offered a place, and hereby a kind of defence against society's questioning of her virtue, in the home of her friends, the Comptons. Similarly, like Helen, Fanny is under constant surveillance, both intentionally and unintentionally, by her few close friends and the neighbourhood in which she resides. A scene that best illustrates society's ubiquitous practise of surveillance is when Fanny and her daughter stay for a few days in a town where they are unknown. She is befriended by the gentleman she had met on the carriage that brought her there. Unbeknownst to Fanny, "[i]t soon became known that Mr. Grant, the most popular bachelor of the town, was a visitor at Miss Harris's lodgings; it was circulated – how no one knew – that they had had some previous acquaintance. His extraordinary partiality for the little girl was commented on with surprise" (271; vol. II, ch. 9). A rumour is quickly spread that Fanny's daughter is Mr. Grant's illegitimate offspring and she his kept woman. Fanny 'attracts' gossip and presents the possibility of scandal because of her unmarried status. Yet, as shown by the scandal her previous marriage provoked, marriage and the containment in the home that it produces is not the ennobling guarantee of a woman's reputation. The emerging argument in the novel is that a woman's virtue can be self-determined if she remains true to her principles.

Fanny's virtue maintains the sanctity of the domestic space, but for herself and her daughter and not for a man.

Re-imagining the "Good Wife"

In the novel's first scenes, the doctrine of duty as championed by conservative conduct books underscores the womanhood that Fanny Ellis is meant to represent and which her deceased sister, Mary, embodied. It also suggests that Fanny's initial sense of duty was a performance commanded of her as woman, daughter and sister. It was an obligation as "the wife's sister" but she was yet to live it with conviction and as an attribute of her own making.

Fanny, living in her sister's home and caring for her children as though they are her own, is a surrogate mother and temporarily supervises the domestic space. She performs her 'inherited' duty from her sister. One can say as well that Fanny performs a duty that is expected by society and thus it is a duty she gives little thought to. I argue that the femininity espoused in Fanny at the novel's end both conforms to the ideal of "passionless" womanhood but adds reason as a key attribute to temper absolute duty, challenging the stereotype that women are inferior creatures of feeling (Tosh 44).

The novel begins with presenting Fanny as the domestic angel. Fanny manages her brother-in-law's home until his return from the city, where he is visiting his cousin Laura Mansfield. In Laura's home, while everyone else socialises, Cecil stands within "a small recess," pondering Raphael's painting of the Madonna and Child "which hung [...] as if in a temple devoted to itself alone" (2; vol. I, ch.1). Laura seeks him out and asks him whether he contemplates it with such gravity because it reminds him of her late cousin, Cecil's deceased wife. Cecil replies, "[y]ou guess rightly Laura, those loving eyes, that pure and delicate expression – yes, such was my Mary – and such is still –" (4; vol. I, ch. 1). The ideal of the domestic angel that Cecil perceives Mary to have been is visually characterised in the painting of the Virgin Mary with her child. Mary even shares a name with the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus. Cecil ascribes these qualities of fragility and vulnerability to the painting in order to explain why it reminds him of his deceased wife. The religious overtones of the Madonna and Child and its "temple" location conveys the image of Cecil as a worshipper before it. Laura's question, "Are you come to worship in this quiet little sanctum?" accentuates this image but also suggests that the woman he idealises will be modelled on the virtuous qualities of the Virgin and will be subjected to fit his viewpoint(4; vol. I, ch. 1). By implication, Cecil's marriage to Mary was idyllic, and their home was indeed a sanctuary.

But his sentence is incomplete as the pause following "still" indicates. This is significant because it appears to suggest, as one reads further, that Cecil was thinking of Mary's sister, Fanny, as the one who is "pure and delicate" to him now, indicated by the switch in tense from "was" to "is" and the implication of continuance in "still." Already, Fanny is represented in the novel as the epitome of the domestic ideal, a replacement 'Madonna' as seen through Cecil's eyes. This is amplified by Cecil's subsequent references to Fanny as his "pure, angel-minded Fanny" and "angel Fanny" (56, 57; vol. I, ch. 2).

Fanny is set in opposition to Laura and Cecil as the novel's argument for reason rather than passion, morality rather than sexual deviance. The excerpt below in which Fanny plays with Cecil's children in the garden of his country estate is pregnant with tones of angelic domesticity. Fanny, as she plays with her nephew and niece, "might have served a painter for the model of a Grace sporting with a pair of Cupids, or a Saint caressed by a couple of cherubs, according as his taste led him to dwell on the poetical images of ancient Greece or modern Rome" (21; vol. I, ch. 1). Significantly, "Grace," "Cupids" and "Saint" are capitalised because by implication, Fanny is meant to embody the angelic ideal. "Cupids" also intimate love, indicative of her relationship with Cecil's children. It is an image of domestic felicity, with the woman in her proper place within the home, attending lovingly to her children. Fanny performs a duty in her care of her nephew and niece; absent from this scene is the ambition of Laura or the self-indulgence of Cecil.

It is posed from the outset that Cecil's disposition is fashioned by self-gratification. He was raised without moral advice or guidance by a guardian whose "habits were so indolent, and his pursuits so confined to the library that he and Cecil never interfered with one another in the least" (8; vol. I, ch. 1). The consequence of parental neglect in Cecil manifests as "habits of self-indulgence and luxurious refinement" which, the narrator informs us, "were but a bad preparation for the struggle with difficulties and sorrows which in some shape or the other assail every individual" (10; vol. I, ch. 1). His decadence created a "custom of always following his own will" that would, if morally tested, give rise to a "contest between inclination and principle" (10; vol. I, ch. 1). We are invited to have some sympathy for him because of the lack of responsible guardianship in his life. It is implied that Cecil's "habits" ill-prepare him for the realities of life. His egocentric view of the world is his shortcoming if he met with a situation he could not manipulate to suit his will. It is further asserted that "principle" and propriety are alien to him. His lack of principle is evident in his manipulative attempt to persuade Fanny to delay her departure from Brookensha which must occur on his return as stipulated by her father. Not only does he flout propriety through his

request but betrays her father's trust in him. Cecil's interest is only in himself. By emphasising his unprincipled nature, the novel shows how a woman's sense of duty needs to be tempered by a sense of reason and propriety. Cecil appears at first to express his appreciation for Fanny's care of his children:

> "I know I can never thank you enough [...] for all the sacrifices of the past – all that you have done and undergone for those who cannot repay you in any way; but my gratitude will only be extinct with my life, and the first words which my children will learn to lisp, shall be a prayer for blessings on their aunt: they shall never forget her, though she may quit them, and cease to care at all about them." (34; vol. I, ch. 1)

Cecil's language is hyperbolic and echoes Fanny's own exaggerated emotions in the words, "agony of her grief" that describes her feelings at parting from her sister's children (31-32; vol. I, ch. 1). The religious implication in his children "lisp[ing] a prayer for blessings on their aunt" and the pathos of them praying for her hearken back to the religious overtones of the painting of the Virgin Mary, the innocence of her child, and its ideal of the domestic angel. The warm feeling conveyed by the words "they shall never forget her" is negated by the accusing tone of "though she may quit them, and cease to care."

Although Fanny has dreaded the separation because of her deep love for her sister's children and because she has feelings for Cecil, her first response is a refusal. She "endeavoured to compose herself, to fortify her heart by prayer and reflection to what seemed her inevitable duty" (32; vol. I, ch. 1). The novel's first reference to "duty" is in keeping with the practise of a single woman's "inevitable" duty being her obedience to her father. Her effort to assume control over her feelings is also indicative of their excess; she experiences the thought of separation as an "agony of grief" (32; vol. I, ch. 1). Again, Fanny's weakness here is not that she feels but that her emotions are excessive when observance of her duty, to practise restraint, is supposed to curtail it. Cecil "was determined not to be conquered, but he knew the way to persuade Fanny was to touch her heart, not work against her reason" (31; vol. I, ch. 1). These words acknowledge Fanny's ability to reason, and that it is viewed as an impediment to Cecil's plans. In the second place, it is acknowledged that a woman's exercise of reason can protect her from misplaced sense of duty and manipulation from others.

Fanny's reaction to Cecil's emotional manoeuvring must be included here because it manifests the nature of the relationship between them, and foreshadows the erosion of their home even before they marry. She sobs: "Oh! How can you talk so? [...] How can you be so cruel and unjust? You know I cannot help it – I must leave you; but you cannot know how it breaks my heart to do so – and then to hear you talk this way –" (34; vol. I, ch. 1).Although Fanny is aware that Cecil is being "cruel and unjust," she also bares her feelings to him by

declaring that it "breaks [her] heart" to leave. Her emotional excess is evident in her incomplete sentences, her oscillation from one extreme feeling to another. Here, Fanny fails to regulate her feelings and disregards her duty to rein in Cecil's ardour. This makes her complicit in his manipulation of the situation, and when Cecil coldly "remonstrate[s] [...] how can I imagine that you really care for me Fanny?" it appears that she experiences his accusation as an added cruelty because she had demonstrated her "care" for him "by all [her] sacrifices of the past" (35, 34; vol. I, ch. 1). In his excessive passion, Cecil focuses Fanny on himself, on his desires, and speaks a language of duty to him only. His manipulation of her is re-emphasised in "he had conquered [...] and it was with an inexpressible feeling of inward triumph and hope that he seated himself by her side" (36; vol. I, ch. 1).

The argument concerning duty at this juncture appears to be that immoderate sensibility could override a woman's sense of right, affirming the conventional perception of women as creatures dominated by feeling. In addition, duty could be misplaced. The scene where Cecil attempts to persuade Fanny to marry him in secret despite the law and without her father's blessing is a long one. At first Fanny rejects Cecil's proposal of marriage by speaking the language of duty twice. Fanny exclaims, "Duty calls, and passion and every other voice must give way. I must leave you!"and adds, "[i]t is my duty, – we cannot, must not marry, Cecil, we are brother and sister, you know" (52, 55; vol. I, ch. 2). Fanny's discourse is traditional in its hierarchical placing of duty above "passion and every other voice," and here she asserts the ideal of femininity which is, to use Tosh's words, "to deploy her purity as a means of cooling her husband's ardour" (45). The tone of her language is assertive and, through the assertion of duty, she imparts the ambiguous legality of their situation, as defined by the Henrican statute, in "we must not marry, Cecil, we are brother and sister" (55; vol. I, ch. 2). One can also suggest that she instructs Cecil that they also have a duty to the law.

Cecil also speaks the language of duty, but we are struck by its contrast with Fanny's. Cecil's value system is an inversion of Fanny's. He says, "I know your delicacy would shrink from such precipitate measures; but there are cases, dear Fanny, when the ordinary decorums of life yield to higher duties. This is one" (52; vol. I, ch. 2). Cecil reduces Fanny's emphasis on duty and propriety to "ordinary decorums" and invokes higher duties of passion and love. And although it leads Fanny to "question this indecorous haste, this appearance of clandestine proceedings," like Jane Eyre does before she is to marry Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, it results in "the eagerness of his arguments [bearing] down her scruples" (58, 59; vol. I, ch. 3).Although Cecil "triumph[s]," he appears degenerate in his vanquishing of what is

'right' within Fanny (58; vol. I, ch. 3). It suggests that Fanny is made to fit his ideal but the fact that Fanny must still embody "prudence, decorum and principles" to be his dutiful wife and his angel in the home contradicts his victory and highlights the double-standard at the heart of angelic domesticity that leaves woman vulnerable to manipulation (58; vol. I, ch. 3).

Fanny brings this idealised moral purity to the domestic space of Brookensha when she marries Cecil, but Cecil is already a man of loose principles and unregulated passions before he marries Fanny. The dissolution of their home is partly due to his unprincipled disposition and also due the fact that their union was not legally secure from the outset. His lack of circumspection is further evident when a prominent and politically influential family in the village no longer associates with him because of his questionable marriage to Fanny. Cecil is "galled" by their rejection and turns spiteful:

> On learning that a son of this family was canvassing for the vacant seat, and that no opposition was expected, he determined to come forward immediately, and spare neither time, trouble, nor money to secure his own election, and disappoint the wishes of one whose family had so deeply offended him. Little do men foresee, when indulging their inclinations or their passions, the consequences which they draw upon themselves: this step of Mr. Mansfield's was the first in that downward course which was destined to terminate so fatally for all concerned. (118-119; vol. I; ch. 3)

The above intimates that Cecil is a passionate man who cannot regulate these "passions." He "indulg[es]" them, signifying excess and lack of self-regulation. He has "inclinations" instead of a sense of dedication and responsibility fitting his station as a landed gentleman with duties to his family and tenants. Fanny's commitment to her duties that garner the love and admiration of the tenants and wider neighbourhood contrasts with Cecil's neglect and recklessness.

As a married woman, Fanny is redeemed through her dutiful devotion to her home, her husband, and the neighbourhood. This is significant because when the domestic space collapses, she appears as an exonerated figure because she is "devoted with all her heart to the duties of her station" and Cecil, in contrast, is a deviant figure because he transgresses his duties as father, husband and village patron(111; vol. I, ch. 3). She also possesses the admiration of the tenants and most of the gentry in the neighbourhood, which elevates her. She is

> [m]ost adored by her husband's dependents and tenants, and universally recognized as the best and sweetest lady that ever reigned over Brookensha Hall. No petitioner was too humble for her ear; no form of poverty too revolting for her care [...]. She had compassion for the suffering, for the weak, and even for the wicked; forbearance for the dull, the ignorant and the obstinate. (111; vol. I, ch. 3)

Fanny is valued for her "forbearance" and "compassion" that speaks of self-sacrifice. She is recognised as "the best and sweetest lady that ever reigned over Brookensha" because she serves the needs of others. This idealised view held by those in the neighbourhood may be deliberate, perhaps to argue that such an ideal of duty is not sustainable. Conversely, one could also suggest that the argument is that even though all the criteria of domestic ideology are met in Fanny, it does not obviate Cecil's infidelity to her and the home; especially since his disposition was already flawed.

Cecil's increasing absences from Brookensha catapults him into profligacy and immorality. He "indulg[es]" his "passions" and "inclinations" through his affair with Laura and his compliance with Henry Mansfield's plans to annul his union with Fanny. In the city, Cecil has become defeated and disempowered. When Frank Linwood comes to inform him in the home where he resides with Laura that Fanny is near death after receiving the suit from Henry Mansfield to have her marriage declared void, his reaction at first reveals that he is perhaps a victim of Laura's manipulation. Cecil "turned deadly pale, and his emotion was evident: he trembled, or rather shuddered, at these words" (169; vol. I, ch. 4). The strength of his reaction implies that he still cares for his wife. His resolve to leave Laura is firmly declared: "Linwood, I will go to her [...] for she is my wife. Angel that she is, she may yet forgive me! I will kneel for pardon; I will give up anything but her" (175; vol. II, ch. 4). The tone of his declaration is passionate. On the other hand, it is too easily said that he will "give up anything but her," suggesting that a man given to being controlled by his passions is fickle. Laura is reduced to the "anything" that he would relinquish in order to regain Fanny's esteem, showing that Cecil is either easily swayed from one feeling to another or that Fanny still retains some influence over him.

When Laura enters the room after Frank departs, "the resolution of Cecil died away within him as she laid her hand on his in a playful manner" (180; vol. I, ch. 4). Cecil is powerless, stripped of his resolve as soon as Laura touches him. The narrator's viewpoint emphasises Laura's dominance over Cecil: "The inextricable entanglement in which his want of principle had involved him; the conflicting nature of his hopes and fears, wishes and feelings, silenced him before her: he stood subdued and humiliated" (180; vol. I, ch. 4). The idea that Cecil caused his own moral demise and not Fanny is reiterated here. The point is that the influence of a woman on a man can either be destructive, as Laura's on Cecil, or edifying, as Fanny's on Frank. Significantly, Cecil is "silenced" because it stresses that he has lost Fanny who once listened to him and allowed his wishes to overcome her sense of right. Inversely, it is Cecil's show of principle that is overridden. Cecil, "subdued and

humiliated," has relinquished his 'natural' masculine power to a woman. He opposes middle-class values. In addition, it is striking that Laura wields this total control over him without uttering a word. Despite her deviance, she is an example of what women's role could be in influencing their men in a period of prescribed femininity.

And yet, Laura's power over Cecil is like a death sentence for Fanny and Brookensha. It is an end to the valorisation of the domestic angel. Fanny is no longer the privileged upper-class wife but she is, as she describes herself soon after the annulment of their marriage, "disgraced and discarded as a mistress of whom Cecil had grown tired!" (163; vol. I, ch. 4). She views herself as no longer vital and useful to her husband who "had grown tired" of her. An object of disgrace as a divorced woman, she sees herself as bared, in her fallen status, to society's "scornful pity [...] to be despised by those who once envied her lot" (163; vol. I, ch. 4). The narrator intimated earlier in the novel that Cecil's unprincipled life would affect others, and this has bearing on Fanny's exclamation that her "innocent child share[s] her mother's disgrace [...].Lose[s] her station, her name, her inheritance, her father! [she is] the nameless offspring of an illegal connection!" (163; vol. I, ch. 4). The use of strong language to describe the lot of Fanny and her child underline the consequences of excessive passion both in her and Cecil. The effects of the ambiguous Henrican statute are encapsulated here in Fanny's "disgrace," in the loss of her reputation and rank and her daughter's illegitimacy that robs her of her inheritance. Arguably, circumstances like Fanny's is why Lord Lyndhurst's bill of 1835 was instituted and the novel appears to ratify it being instituted in its delineation of Fanny's suffering.

The domestic space of Brookensha exemplifies the loss of Fanny's angelic qualities and the impact of Cecil's imprudence and passion. Cecil enters it after Fanny's exodus from its halls and he is struck by

> [h]ow desolate it looked! The windows on the ground-floor, so far as he could see, were mostly closed; the great bell pealed almost mournfully in his ear, and the echo of hurried footsteps, with the slamming of the doors within, had a strange, hollow, unnatural sound, as they rang through the otherwise silent house.(269; vol. II, ch. 9)

"Mournfully," underpins the idea that death has come to Brookensha, brought about by Cecil's "passions" and Laura's devastating influence. Fanny's absence from its centre signifies the absence of moral influence. The word "hollow" emphasises the dearth in principle and reserve within the home. Later,

> there was not a bird or distant sound to break the silence, except the deep, jarring voice of the night-hawk, which uttered his unmusical tones. They fell on Cecil's ears as a

> boding voice, which foretold misery and desolation to him, as if some messenger of evil had been sent to haunt him for his unprincipled conduct. (281-282; vol. II, ch. 9)

The hawk's "unmusical tones" suggest the absence of harmony and tranquillity, two distinct aspects of the ideal home. Here, the domestic space has ceased to be a sanctuary because Fanny carries the domesticity with her wherever she goes. Thus, the domestic is not a place, or a building. Instead, 'home' is the rational, reserved woman who embodies the ideal of domesticity. Cecil is "haunt[ed]" by his transgressions, the effects of Laura's unprincipled persuasion.

Laura's occupation of Brookensha upon her marriage to Cecil after meeting with him in Germany emphasises that a deceitful, passionate woman cannot be domestic or instil domesticity. Although it is the same house that Fanny and Cecil lived in, it is fissured:

> Brookensha House did indeed, under the government of Laura Mansfield, present a very different aspect from what it had assumed under the rule of her predecessors. Instead of quiet elegance which seemed to unite domestic enjoyment to rational hospitality; all was now fashion, dissipation, extravagance, and heartless show. (48; vol. III, ch. 2)

By implication, under Fanny's management, Brookensha had been tranquil, happy and ordered. This affirms that she brought moral order to Brookensha despite the immoral disposition of Cecil and despite their questionable union. In contrast, Laura cannot produce its former domestic tranquillity because she is devoid of morality and has no restraint, while her lack of purity means that she cannot restrain her husband's passions. As a mistress, uncontrollable passion assisted her endeavours and ensnared Cecil; as a wife, she cannot fit the ideal.

The point emphasised in the above is that there is no governance of Brookensha with Laura and Cecil's marriage, reaffirming middle-class values of reason and restraint as the ideal for middle-class femininity and masculinity. Accordingly, it is argued that without these values, a woman will not be dutiful. This is evident in Cecil's attempt to encourage Laura in her duties to his tenants and their neighbours in order to secure their ongoing votes for him in the next selection: "I trust you will spend the interval as the wife of a man of property should do: in getting acquainted with your neighbours, studying the interests of our poor tenantry, and making yourself and me popular amongst the electors of our country" (209; vol. II, ch. 8). Cecil's language is instructive in its attempt to fashion Laura into his view of a woman's proper duty and place in his home. Although he had a preconceived view of woman's duty as

wife and mother before he married Fanny, Fanny was already performing the role of domestic angel.

Significantly, Cecil expects Laura's passionate nature to give way to prudence and duty now that he has married her and she is ensconced within the domestic space. But Laura spurns this domestication by calling the neighbourhood gentry "the greatest bores of all" and travelling "twenty miles to see a dear friend of the last London season," unwilling to exert herself in the exercise of her duties, for Cecil's sake (208; vol. II, ch. 8). Instead, the "constituents on whose votes her husband depended for his next election she despised and insulted" (49; vol. III, ch. 2). Laura's rejection of her wifely duties is encapsulated in her not wanting to remain within the domestic space, to be regulated by the expectations of being a wife and manager of the home. Notably, she rejects the ideal of womanhood, guided solely by her passion and inclinations. It is a progressive approach to the fallen woman, conventionally shown in Victorian novels as suffering for her deviance.

However, Laura is not to be guided by her husband. Her neglect of her domestic duties causes

> The whole country [to be] in a ferment; the errors and failings of her predecessor were obliterated in one single autumn; 'the unfortunate Mrs. Mansfield' as Fanny was generally designated, however she might have sinned in assuming that name, had never transgressed so unpardonably as the present lady [who] filled the hall for three months every autumn with fine people, like herself, from London, who had private theatricals, dances, charades, tableaux and all sorts of fashionable amusements, from which the whole neighbourhood being excluded, they voted these entertainments to be frivolous or indecorous; and as all the charities which had been originated by the twin-sisters were now abolished, there could be no doubt but that complete ruin would speedily fall upon the fair estate which had long held so prominent a place in the admiration of beholders, and given so aristocratic a rank to its possessors. (49, 50, 51; vol. III, ch. 2)

It is implied here that the disorder of the home has repercussions within the wider society. Laura's "unpardonabl[e] transgress[ions]" invites sympathy for Fanny as the "unfortunate Mrs. Mansfield."Even though Laura is Brookensha's new mistress, it is Fanny who retains the title of "Mrs. Mansfield."Later, Brookensha's moral deterioration is final with Laura's affair with Arthur Temple within its walls. Significantly, the infidelity that Cecil practised with Laura is transplanted to Brookensha when he arrives home and finds that she has eloped. Cecil set its moral decline in motion with his passion and unprincipled disposition. Laura invades Brookensha with immorality and vice and fails to regulate the passion of her husband and thus, it is argued that becoming a wife and occupying the home, her 'natural' domain would never have transformed her into a "good wife."

Her Own Perception: The Virtuous "Good Wife"

Recent scholarship on the Victorian woman question by Jeannette King discusses the influence of religious prescriptions in defining the role of the middle-class woman. King argues that middle-class women were "revered not only as the embodiment of virtue themselves, but as the guardians of male virtue" (11). The novel presents a different model of middle-class womanhood that negotiates the conventional perspective of women "as superintendants of the domestic sphere" who "were represented as protecting and, increasingly, incarnating virtue" because of the ideal of the home as morally ordered (Poovey 10). What Poovey's and King's explanation of virtue implies is that women, for as long as they inhabited and were contained within the home, embodied virtue and, equally important, were custodians of male virtue. But the novel shows Fanny embodying these virtues and taking them with her to her new home. Her failure to guard the virtue of her husband is a question to be considered, even though the novel endorses her role as a guardian of male virtue in her relationship with Frank, when she reminds him to regulate his passions. Fanny's virtue rests in her perception of herself as proper.

Fanny as the domestic angel in Brookensha at first embodies a 'given' virtue, that is, the virtue of her as angelic wife and mother. But her subsequent loss of her home and station through divorce leaves Fanny a scorned woman, stripped of the virtue her married status accorded her:

> What she had been, what she was, and what she should become, were considerations to which she was acutely alive. She had been a beloved wife — a happy mother — holding an honoured position amongst the matrons of the land, with a host of respectful and attached dependents, who trusted to her influence, support, or protection, sought her bounty in distress, her sympathy in happiness, her smile and good word at all times. To the utmost of her power she had used the influence which she had possessed to suppress vice, and encourage virtue [...]. As a wife, too, her name had been unsullied: no whisper had ever thrown a doubt upon her purity nor cast a shade of dishonour on her husband. (215; vol. I, ch. 5)

As wife and "happy mother" Fanny had epitomised "purity" and could "encourage virtue" in others because she herself was deemed the epitome of virtue. Notably, in this moment of Fanny's introspection, she exempts herself from any immoral action. The underlying argument here is that her disgraced reputation is a result then not of her own fall in purity, but of the gossip of the "matrons of the land" who at first "honoured" her as Cecil's wife. On hearing that Cecil had gone abroad and that Fanny was soon to leave Brookensha, the matrons discuss Fanny:

> "But what has she done now?" inquired Mrs. Reeves, anxiously. "I heard the marriage was irregular, and I thought — why can they not marry over again? It would do no harm, and might set all right."
> "It is something much worse than that", whispered Mrs. Cole, with a very meaning look. "There's to be a divorce — you know what that means!"
> "Good heavens! You don't say so!" exclaimed several ladies with looks of virtuous horror, whilst one added in a compassionate tone: "Poor Mrs. Mansfield! How sorry I am to hear it!"
> "Keep your compassion, Miss Prendergast, for those who deserve it!" exclaimed Mrs. Cole, sharply; "I think it looks quite unbecoming in a single lady to be sympathizing with the lost and degraded of her sex [...]. Indeed I do though – why even you, Mrs. Forster, must allow that to be divorced is a disgrace, and implies that the past conduct is very bad. Women are not divorced in England for trifles — incompatibility of temper, for instance, or any such nonsense." (97-98; vol. II, ch. 4)

This passage suggests that the neighbourhood women do not quite understand what has occurred between Cecil and Fanny. Their lack of clarity accounts for Mrs. Cole's use of the word "divorced" instead of the legally correct "annulled." The important issue that their conversation highlights is the fact that divorce immediately implies that either partner had transgressed in some way. Here, the attention appears to shift from the "irregular" circumstances of Fanny's marriage to her possible dishonour. It is noteworthy that Fanny is the sole focus of this possible disgrace and not Cecil, and that it is the "woman" who is being divorced. Thus on one level the extract demonstrates that, in an uncertain situation regarding marital disharmony, it is only the woman who will be held accountable. A woman's virtue is thus devalued without credible proof of any immoral action on her part. This affirms that a woman's virtue is easily discounted by public opinion and underscores her vulnerable position in society.

The "virtuous horror" of the ladies at the mention of divorce implies that it is a subject polluting to young ladies and their virtue as future wives and propagators of the domestic ideal, even more so if they sympathise with the lot of the divorced woman, as Miss Prendergast does. Mrs. Cole's remonstrance translates as a compulsion to maintain the 'purity' of England's young women from the corrupting influence of fallen women. Fanny's circumstances reveal that the domestic ideal is flawed, something that a woman is meant to guard out of duty to her husband and their marriage. In the above, Fanny's shame is summarised in "lost and degraded of her sex." Not only are the women scandalised by her "divorce," but about the likely reason for it. Mrs. Cole's words – "[w]omen are not divorced in England for trifles" and "to be divorced is a disgrace, and implies that the past conduct is very bad" – holds Fanny solely responsible for the disintegration of her marriage while

implying that she must have gravely transgressed for her husband to desire a dissolution. The viewpoint is emblematic as well of the double standard of Victorian morality which condoned adulterous relationships of married men but condemned their wives if divorce occurred because of the husband's unfaithfulness, and out rightly censured a woman's infidelity.

Mrs. Cole's blaming of Fanny is similar to the vicar's in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, upon hearing the truth concerning Helen leaving her debased husband. The vicar "still maintained that she had done wrong to leave her husband: it was a violation of her sacred duties as a wife [...] and nothing short of bodily ill-usage (and that of no trifling nature) could excuse such a step" (448). Helen is not a divorced woman like Fanny. She has run away from her abusive and adulterous husband, Arthur Huntington, in order to protect her child from his unwholesome influence, but her leaving her husband, according to Kelly Hager, "[was] an act that was both illegal and unacceptable" in society and places under greater condemnation a marriage annulment like Fanny's (8). Mrs. Cole's opinion evokes the idea that all women in England live by a domestic code which Fanny has deviated from. Ironically, her words also enunciate that divorce does occur among the women of England, despite the "disgrace." This scene vocalises the blanketing opinion of women concerning divorce: the collapse of the domestic space is the woman's fault and the divorced woman is a pariah, a woman without virtue.

With this social censure and stripping of her virtue, Fanny must assert her own sense of virtue. The scene when Fanny travels by post chaise for the first time as a single woman underpins the necessity of this. She embodies the stereotype, to use Vicinus' words, that the "women who broke the family circle, be she prostitute, adulterer or divorcée, threatened society's very fabric" (xiv). It shows her first experience with and exposure to the wider society's interrogation of her virtue and censure following the loss of her home. Social condemnation occurs when she is in transit; it is stressed here that Fanny's departure from her home and marriage is a removal from the known protection that marriage afforded her even though she was mistreated.

This scene imparts as well Fanny's vulnerability to constant speculation and surveillance from others as an unaccompanied single mother. Her female neighbour in the chaise, a Mrs. Tomkins, embodies the interrogating and judgemental view of society. She scrutinises her and her child for a long time "with dull, black eyes with a sort of heavy, snake-like look about them that were expressive of a restless, insatiable curiosity" (238; vol. II, ch. 9). The reptilian character that Fanny sees in the woman's features makes her repulsive

and imparts that Fanny feels preyed upon. Indeed, Fanny is essentially a victim to Mrs. Tomkins's "insatiable curiosity," exposed to her intention to make "herself accurately acquainted with every detail connected with Fanny's countenance and dress" (238; vol. II, ch. 9). She then asks Fanny, "And that's your child. Ma'am?" (239; vol. II, ch. 9). The separation of "Ma'am" from the rest of her words, as though an after-thought, conveys that Mrs. Tomkins questions whether the child is Fanny's and whether she should be addressed with this respectable title. The question mark that follows underscores Mrs. Tomkins's doubt of Fanny's decency. Ignoring Fanny's brief reply, she asks if the child's father is standing outside the post chaise. To Fanny's "No," she immediately asks, "Where is he then?"(239; vol. II, ch. 9). Fanny is forced to say that "[s]he has lost her father" but the woman does not respond with the sympathy that such a response would evoke. Instead, she interrogates the validity of Fanny's statement in "Ah! Indeed — some time back, I suppose, as you do not wear weeds. When did he die?" (240; vol. II, ch. 9). It is apparent that Mrs. Tomkins attempts to ascertain whether Fanny is someone's mistress and whether Mary, her daughter, is illegitimate. When Fanny rejects the offer to "relieve [her] mind and express [her]self" to Mrs. Tomkins, she snidely insinuates that Fanny must have married "very young" because Mary looked "four years old at least" and she supposed Mary "was born since you married" (240; vol. II, ch. 9). Mrs. Tomkins cross-examination is relentless and Fanny, because she is not accompanied by a man, is open to the woman's demeaning jibes. Fanny is spared any further interrogation by a gentleman passenger, Mr. Grant, who engages Mrs. Tomkins in conversation to turn her focus from Fanny. On the one hand, it is as though Fanny allows herself to be defined by Mrs. Tomkins opinion of her as a woman without virtue by not defending herself. On the other hand, Fanny's defencelessness is of course an effect of women's socially and legally unprotected status.

But Fanny is shown to refute Mrs. Tomkins opinion through her courage. Fanny is temporarily housed in lodgings with Mrs. Tomkins en route to Devonshire. Mr. Grant is of the neighbourhood and regularly visits Fanny at the lodgings and forms a friendship with her daughter. Mrs. Tomkins offers Fanny a place in her boarding-house in Devonshire and, having no other option as yet, Fanny is tempted to accept her offer. Fanny's delay in acceptance of Mrs. Tomkins offer, together with the fact that Mr. Grant visits her often, provokes Mrs. Tomkins into spreading a rumour that Fanny is Mr. Grant's mistress. Fanny becomes "the subject for curiosity amidst every circle," especially because "Mr. Grant [is] the most popular bachelor of the town" (271; vol. II, ch. 9). Mrs. Tomkins then tells Fanny that she

> was rais[ing] the terms on which she had offered her lodgings [...].She could not, in consequence of all the circumstances, and of what was due to herself and her own character, think of receiving her into her most respectable and well-conducted lodging-house, without a remuneration nearly double what she had previously named. "And I am sure, Mrs. Ellis, you must see the reasonableness of this, if I am to accommodate you under the circumstances!" said she. (275; vol. II, ch. 9)

Mrs. Tomkins was "rais[ing] the terms on which she had offered her lodgings" because she believes Fanny to be a kept woman. What she is explicitly saying is that Fanny must pay more for her lodging because Mrs. Tomkins is willing to accommodate her. We are aware that even as Mrs. Tomkins asserts her "respectab[ility]" and "what was due to her own character," the virtue she practises is false. She is willing to lodge a woman with a tainted reputation who would continue with the impropriety of receiving her lover under her roof, for the sake of more money. Fanny's ability to reason is appealed to but it is a skewed "reasonableness" because Mrs. Tomkins presumes that she is a fallen woman, a woman devoid of virtue. The impertinence of Mrs. Tomkins is stressed in this scene because she dares to approach and accuse Fanny of the most demeaning attributes a woman could be accused of, even though Fanny is a complete stranger. Her scandal-mongering affects Fanny's stay in a neighbourhood where she should have enjoyed anonymity. We are meant to perceive that Fanny has been constantly harassed and her character besmirched ever since leaving Brookensha.

Facing her accuser, Fanny replies, "Indeed I do not [...]. I can see no reason which can account for your demanding such immoderate remuneration; it is quite out of the question for me to agree to it" (275; vol. II, ch. 9). Fanny's courage is exemplified in her not acknowledging Mrs. Tomkins accusation of her being Mr. Grant's mistress implied by her words, "in consequence of all the circumstances" (275 vol. II, ch. 9). It can be implied that not only is it impossible for Fanny to comply with Mrs. Tomkins's increase in price, but that it is "out of the question" for her to accept Mrs. Tomkins's assessment of her character. Whereas before Fanny allowed Mrs. Tomkins to continuously undermine her virtue, she now asserts it. She also displays courage in standing up for herself, because it is not only Mrs. Tomkins's opinion of her that she rejects, but the wider society's. Her assertion of her virtue compels Mrs. Tomkins to rethink her strategy: "But you must know very well, Mrs. Ellis, that when I named that sum, I thought I was speaking to — I considered everything was quite right — but now I know better; and that alters the face of things, you see" (276; vol. II, ch. 9). Mrs. Tomkins's tone of voice is apologetic but continues to justify the higher amount. It also sounds simpering, as though she is attempting to ingratiate herself into Fanny's good opinion.

In this moment, Fanny embodies what Wollstonecraft calls "the dignity of conscious virtue," because she asserts a consciousness of her virtue in the absence of society's validation that she is a virtuous woman (109). This is further emphasised by her reply to Mrs. Tomkins's insistence: "It is a matter of indifference to me [...] whether I use your lodgings or not [...] I am quite willing to go elsewhere [...] surely you do not wish to extort money from me because I am a stranger" (276-277; vol. II, ch. 9). Fanny appears dignified in her demeanour and in the "calm" way she speaks (276; vol. II, ch. 9). She asserts her self-reliance. She invokes moral rectitude which serves to remind Mrs. Tomkins that she was the one being immoral. Mrs. Tomkins "instantly fl[ies] into a furious passion" and exits the room screaming that "I, a poor widow, gaining my hard-earned bread by honest industry, to be accused by such a one as you of extortion! Look to yourself, Mistress Ellis, and mind how you insult me; for you will find you have got the wrong sow by the ear, I can tell you!" (277; vol. II, ch. 9). Mrs. Tomkins's immoderate response demonstrates that Fanny's words have effectively robbed her of any power she may have exercised over her and puts an end to her manipulation of the conversation and of herself. Fanny assumes control not only of the situation, but her life.

In her Devonshire home, her courage and self-reliance is reinforced by the circumstance of old and sickly Henry Mansfield becoming a temporary guest of her home as an invalid. She meets him on a walk and sees him fall. Although she does not recognise him at first, her care of him does not abate when she does. Fanny's realisation that her enemy is an inhabitant of her home and that he wished to speak with her "required no small exertion to bring her own mind into a state of sufficient firmness to be ready to undergo such an ordeal [...]. But it must be done" (142; vol. III, ch. 5). Her determined courage is underpinned by the resolute tone of her words. Despite her resolve and her bravery,

> she paused for a minute at the staircase window whilst trying to fortify her mind for the interview. Had she not known, or at least strongly suspected who he really was, her feelings of repugnance would have been much softened; but as it was [...] she had to encounter the additional trial of meeting once more face to face the individual whose machinations had blighted her happiness, and blasted her child's worldly prospects and hopes. (143-144; vol. III, ch. 5)

We note the transparency of Fanny's feelings, that even though she is determined to do what is right, she cannot still her disgust. Fanny is not self-sacrificing here, nor is there any attempt made in the narrative to cast this meeting between her and Henry Mansfield in a romanticised light of martyr-like acceptance on her part. She is willing to perform her duty as mistress of the home in which Henry Mansfield is a convalescent, but she is not overwhelmed by

feelings of pity. It is obvious that she is conscious of the truth of the situation between her and Henry Mansfield, that he is her enemy, the man who "blasted her child's worldly prospects." The word "blasted" jars and suggests, with its connotation of obliteration, the enormity of the injury done to her and her child. This makes her courage more palpable. We note that her bravery allows her to act out of a duty "to show him the way of peace and hope" when she realises that he is also a "dying man, whose own hopes had withered beneath the invasions of remorse" (143; vol. III, ch. 5).

Fanny's virtue is exemplified when Henry Mansfield offers her and Mary his estate and money; she asserts her autonomy and sense of right:

> "No," said Fanny, firmly. "No, keep your wealth for those who have a juster claim on it. I do not want gold for her. I know only too well that money cannot give happiness; and as she will, I trust, be preserved from want, I am equally desirous she should be secured from riches. She shall not have your fortune; give it to your grand-daughter. It is hers by right." (152; vol. III)

Fanny's moral discourse reminds Henry Mansfield that he has a duty to his grandchild, whom we know to be Cecil and Laura's daughter. Fanny's language also speaks of moderation and balance in her declaration that her daughter will live a comfortable life. One can suggest that this is because she has learnt to live a life of economy as a middle-class woman. She exercises reason by reminding Henry Mansfield of the law that stipulates that his fortune is Laura's "by right." Fanny's invocation of a law to protect another woman's rights emphasises that she was not represented or protected by Henrican statute. It is ironic that Henry Mansfield now wants to evade the law because he wants nothing to do with Laura and her offspring, given the disgrace she has brought upon his name by eloping with another man and leaving her two-month old baby behind. Even though Henry Mansfield bequeaths his estate to her despite her rejection of it, Fanny uses the money for charity, which reads as an assertion of her self-reliance, resonating with May Cameron's own good works in using her money to improve her community.

It is also here in the middle-class space governed by a virtuous, reserved Fanny that her past is resolved when Cecil returns to visit her after Laura's infidelity. Cecil's past definition of her and her present definition of herself come into play as a way of emphasising her virtues. Instead of greeting or welcoming him, her first words to him are, "Mr. Mansfield [...] why this intrusion? I cannot bid you enter, and be welcome" (262; vol. III, ch. 9). Her words, cold and distant in tone, also reject him. The formal tone of "Mr. Mansfield" discounts any previous intimacy between them. It functions to raise a barrier between her and

Cecil even though he has transgressed the boundary of her home and propriety in approaching her. To his entreaty that she "forgive, and listen to [him]," she replies, "I will not — you may rest here until you have recovered your strength, but I will not remain in the room with you" (263; vol. III, ch. 9). It is ironic that with Laura, Cecil was silenced but here he asks Fanny, whom he has deeply injured, to "listen" and "forgive" him. Fanny's reply, though vehement in tone, does not show a rejection of his plea for forgiveness. Fanny, in this middle-class space, is in control even when faced with the onslaught of her past in Cecil.

When he attempts to manipulate her as he was able to do in the past, Fanny's deflection of his machinations cements her triumph over her previous shortcomings, her trials and suffering. He accuses Fanny of being "inconsistent, so unfeeling" when he "cannot forget the affection which was so dear to [him]" (264; vol. III, ch. 9). Cecil remains self-centred even as he faces death. Although he asks Fanny's forgiveness he does not apologise to her. His patriarchal expectation is that she should have remained "constant" even if he was not. His arrogance, salient to his class, is also strikingly apparent here. However, Fanny's reply collapses his arrogance: "Mr. Mansfield [...] you insult me by such language; you, the husband of another woman, to dare in my own house to address me thus, to speak as if in the past you too had been an involuntary sufferer" (264-265; vol. III, ch. 9). Fanny reminds Cecil of his unscrupulous actions. This is a crucial moment, because it manifests a shift in Fanny's perception of the role she played in their illicit union. She finally absolves herself, while for most of the novel she had shouldered the blame and accepted society's opinion that she too was culpable. Fanny holds him responsible for the moral disintegration of their home. The words, "to dare in my own house to address me thus," express a security in her sense of place.

Fanny's guardianship of Cecil and Laura's daughter is the affirmation of her reserved and modest femininity and that she exemplifies the ideal of the "passionless moral mother" to use Tosh's words (45). Through Fanny's mothering, the little girl would have access to moral governance

> under the tuition of such a preceptress and guardian, and surrounded by all that watchful love can suggest, it is to be hoped that the heiress will grow up with the virtues of her companions and that the memory of her mother whom she had never seen may not be recalled by the disposition or the spirit of the daughter. (298; vol. III, ch. 9)

It is intimated, in the references to Fanny's "virtues", that Fanny's conduct and nurturing supersedes the harsh and neglectful nature of Laura. Her moral regulation banishes the "curse" of Laura's immorality and that of her grandmother, who never married Henry

Mansfield. This child can be the "real heiress of Brookensha" not because of a document that declares it so but because her real legacy is "virtue" and a principled life.

The novel's final engagement with its theme of duty and reason affirms the ideal of "the good wife" as outlined by Tosh but adds the recognition that women can exercise reason (46). It is suggested that duty should be guided by a sense of what is rational and morally right by inwardly reflecting on the situation and not merely reacting to it. The moral order is restored in Fanny's home in Devonshire, where she moves following the annulment of her marriage: Fanny is a woman "resolved to do whatever duty required or conscience prompted as right," and this is manifested in her decision when Frank Linwood finally expresses his love for her (196; vol. I, ch. 5). To his question whether she can ever return his love she answers, "I cannot try; my heart is sick" (31; vol. III, ch. 2). We know that Fanny means her heart has suffered and that Frank, who has witnessed her suffering, should know this. His reply –"[t]hen I will be satisfied without it: only give me your hand" – sounds flippant in tone and arguably shows a disregard for her feelings in the assertion of his own (31; vol. III, ch. 2). Her exclamation, "No, never!" is resolute in tone, a far cry from the outpouring of emotion and wavering principles she displayed with Cecil (31; vol. III, ch. 2). Frank, like Cecil, attempts to manipulate her feelings by reminding her that his constancy had been "sufficiently tried," insinuating that she should reward him with marriage (31; vol. III, ch. 2). One could go further and say that Frank's words imply that it was her duty to reward his constant love for her.

But Fanny deflects his apparent manoeuvring with a rational argument: "constancy in pursuit, Frank, is different from constancy in possession; it is better to be denied an object than to be disappointed in it" (31; vol. III, ch. 2). Fanny is, of course, referring to the lesson she learned through her marriage to Cecil: he pursued her relentlessly but once they were married, it was easy for him to forget how much he once coveted her presence in his life. It is also implied that, in hindsight, she would rather have lived with the feelings of loss in not marrying Cecil than the pain and consequences of being married to him. Her rational voice is meant to remind Frank of his own ability to reason, which he battles against and which he is currently incapable of because of his excess of feeling. He resorts to appealing to her empathy by exclaiming, "[h]ave you no pity, Fanny, no compassion for my long, long, sufferings?" which echoes Cecil's similar pleas (32; vol. III, ch. 2).

Fanny's language of duty is constant and coherent. She acknowledges her weakness, saying, "Frank, I esteem you so highly, that the impulse of my feelings would be to yield to your entreaties, and try to make you happy as your wife; but reason and reflection point out a

very different line of duty" (32; vol. III, ch. 2). We are struck by how far Fanny has come. Implied in her words is the acknowledgement that she allowed her admiration of Cecil to overwhelm her reason. The word "but" signifies her progression in overcoming her immoderate sensibility, so that the words "reason and reflection" assume greater emphasis. The result is that for Fanny and the womanhood that she comes to represent, the concept of duty is "very different." She reminds Frank that even though he claims he will not marry because he cannot have her, he "will still have duties to perform to mankind, charities to your fellow-creatures, duties to your God" (35; vol. III, ch. 2). Fanny speaks her own discourse of duty. She also assumes the role of instructor; it is Frank who must listen to her. Although we read that her "heart quailed" at the sight of "such pleading, passionate love in his dark eyes," she recalls "all her reason and fortitude to the task [...] gratitude, esteem, pity, were all contending with a sense of duty [...] but duty conquered" (36, 37; vol. III, ch. 2). The word "conquered" recalls that it was Cecil who once "conquered" the "prudence, decorum and principles of Fanny" (58; vol. I, ch. 2). But here, it is Fanny who triumphs.

The ending to Frank and Fanny's encounter explored above, with Fanny's assertion of rationality, sets the tone for the delineation of middle-class marriage in the subsequent section and a domestic space inhabited by rational discourse accessible to woman and man. As they walk towards her home, Frank asks Fanny if she can "forgive [his] petulance – [his] impatience just now? [Can] [she], who [is] so near an angel, make allowance for the weakness of a mortal like [himself]?" (41; vol. III, ch. 2). Frank's language mirrors Cecil's pervasive angel-in-the-home discourse. It is meant to form Fanny to this ideal, idealising her, but also subjecting her to it. Her answer is "quietly" scathing, criticising and rejecting his discourse: "Frank, leave off this foolish way of talking, and speak to me as one rational being should do to another [...] that is, if you expect me to talk to you at all" (41; vol. III, ch. 2). Fanny demands that Frank speak to her as a "rational being." She sets the parameters of the way they relate to each other from now on. She will not "talk to [him] at all," in other words, if his is the language of tradition in expecting her merely to feel and be led by her feelings rather than exercise reason.

Significantly, Fanny functions according to the ideal of modesty in women, which is to remind the man of his rationality when his passion, as in his sexual desire for her, exerts itself. As Tosh explains, the woman's propensity for "fine sensibility [...] and their quickness in reading the feelings of others gave them special qualities in the moral sphere" but they had to be "passionless" and "modest" in order to regulate the more powerful sexual feelings of men, adhering to the principle that women were responsible for the morality of the home and

their families (44). In her exercise of reason and in this instance, her regulation of his excessive passion, Frank is now the one who surrenders to Fanny. He replies, "Well Fanny, I will own that in the excess of my own pained feelings I forgot yours [...] I have been selfish and unreasonable" (41, vol. III, ch. 2). It is a man in this instance who admits that his "feelings [are] in excess" and "unreasonable," when women are conventionally associated with the tendency for immoderate feeling.

Given Fanny's assertive womanhood and that she is financially stable because she inherits money from Henry Mansfield, it does not seem necessary that she marry. Her marriage to Frank also means that everything she owns becomes his possession, as Poovey explains concerning the law of coveture (52). Although we are aware of the limitations brought about by marriage, Frank has had to conform to an espousal of a doctrine vital to the ideal of middle-class femininity, which is the language of restraint and diffidence, as the above discussion demonstrates, in order to be acceptable as a mate for Fanny. In addition, he had to acknowledge Fanny as a "rational being" (41; vol. III, ch. 2). It is this acknowledgement, one can argue, that persuades Fanny to marry him and not only that "she was pleased at last to reward his constancy by installing him as master of her elegant mansion (296; vol. III, ch. 9). Fanny represents a womanhood that fits the ideal of reserved femininity but asserts that a woman is able to reason, thus challenging ideology. In Fanny, the "good wife" is re-imagined as rational and reserved. The emphasis on restraint instils moral order in their household. Therefore their moral middle-class home presents a different model of domesticity, one that must answer to the ideal but also deviates from it.

Furthermore, Fanny's marriage to Frank Linwood and their subsequent move to a "pleasant house and beautiful garden not many miles from London" are pivotal to the narrative's closing engagement with moral governance of the home(295; vol. III, ch. 9). Significantly, this transition to the outskirts of the city establishes a separation between home and work. Fanny and Frank's home is invested with order because, as Davidoff and Hall put it in relation to the middle-classes, "the segregation [of home and work] was a sign of a well-ordered life" (360). Though they have moved closer to the city, they remain on its periphery. It was not just the aesthetic qualities like the "beautiful garden" and "pleasant house" that informed the middle-class choice of proximity to the city, but also a matter of propriety: Frank Linwood would come home after working in London. He would be morally regulated, unlike Cecil, who absented himself from home when he was at parliament. He is within reach of home and within reach of the moral guidance of Fanny and thus, he is the middle-class domesticated man. It is also emphasised that Cecil's error is obviated because Frank Linwood

is a domesticated middle-class man; fitting Wollstonecraft's opinion that the "middle ranks contain the most virtues and abilities" (147-148). The transition is possible because the home contains a moral, virtuous woman. This assertion of moral order based on middle-class principles of propriety and restraint is emphasised in Laura and Cecil who exemplify the novel's censure of sexual immorality and lack of responsibility. Their deaths at the novel's end are a culmination of their moral deterioration rooted in uncontrolled passion.

In conclusion, the novel shows that Fanny's virtue comes to be self-defined. The stereotype of the disenfranchised divorced woman is countered in Fanny's establishment of an ideal middle-class household and her remarriage. However, it is Fanny's self-government that qualifies her to be mistress of a middle-class home and not her marriage into the professional class. Her duty to her home and nation cannot be exercised without duty to her own self-government first. This redefinition of virtue and duty informs the middle-class home but does not radically deviate from its ideal that woman is its moral guide. Rather, it adds that men are responsible for the moral maintenance of the home alongside women even as they are to be guided by her.

The novel's engagement with the marriage law debate is in part an exploration and unpicking of a statute that defines English marriage and assists in the subjugation of the English wife. The end of Fanny's marriage with Cecil Mansfield symbolises the end of an aspect of old English marriage law. Fanny's emergence as a courageous and independent middle-class woman can be viewed as a response to the conventional passive and reticent femininity that lies at the centre of the Henrican law and which is similarly espoused by conduct books and marriage manuals. The middle-class womanhood she represents that complies with and negotiates the domestic ideal gestures towards a different perspective of what constitutes an English wife.

Chapter 4:
Proper Englishness in *Malvern; or, The Three Marriages*

The global perception of Englishness and being English began to change due to emigration and imperialism at mid-century. In England, the effects of emigration, the fragmented and increased scattering of English-born citizens across the world intermingling and cohabiting with people from other countries raised fears within England of the disintegration of national unity and racial purity. Literature produced in the 1850s reacted to these changes on the domestic front and the perception of the changing face of Englishness. These novels incorporated foreign figures, usually exotically different but inevitably deviant so as to enhance and affirm the ideal of domesticity and middle-class masculinity and femininity promoted by marriages like Fanny and Frank's at the conclusion of *The Wife's Sister* as a way of maintaining the perception of ordered homes and an ordered nation. Writing in her introductory chapter about the role Victorian texts play in affirming the superiority of England over the rest of the world by "shor[ing] up their own ideologies," Diane Archibald takes the view that "in its most basic form, a virtuous, noble, moral, respectable, comfortable, trustworthy Old England is contrasted with a savage, rough, wicked, vulgar, indecent and hypocritical New World" (4). "Home," observes Archibald, "remains fundamentally English" and the only wife is "an English angel-wife" (6, 7) whilst "the American woman is a monstrosity created by the country itself" (142). The ideological construction of the faultless English wife is of course unattainable for English women themselves, as Hubback's novels often demonstrate with their flawed female protagonists who acquire middle-class values yet are not perfect domestic angels at the end of the novels. Nevertheless, this ideal remained the yardstick for non-English women. Archibald asserts that "fictional New World women" are usually depicted as home-making failures if they are married to English men (6). Discussing the imbrications of domesticity, imperialism and emigration in Victorian novels, Archibald explains that Englishness is ineradicably bound up with domesticity as part of England's 'civilizing' imperial project. She argues that imperialism and domesticity are "complementary ideologies" and that England is "the righteous centre of a powerful empire whose mission is to 'civilize' the rest of the world" (7). In the same way that the English wife remains in the home and connected to the ideology of domesticity, wherever that home may be, so the notion of Englishness remains associated with England. Archibald notes that even

though this ideal was acknowledged as an "imaginary construct" which could not be sustained, it was believed that it "should be desired" and lived anyway (10).

Malvern; or, The Three Marriages (1855), Hubback's fifth novel, introduces the idea of Englishness by asserting middle-class values, such as self-improvement, prudence and hard-work, as prerequisites for English masculinity and femininity, and as essential for domestic felicity and the stability of any marriage, regardless of class distinctions. In other words, *Malvern* shifts from the consistent endorsement of middle-class marriage as the ideal in Hubback's earlier novels to advocating middle-class values for marriages of all ranks. In its central female protagonist, the novel consolidates middle-class values with its presentation of her as the ideal English wife, even though she is from the landed gentry. I argue that this approach presents middle-class values as the defining criteria for the 'proper' Englishness that the novel reinforces by its presentation of what is considered not English in the figure of a foreign woman, thus "shoring up" its own ideology of the English wife as representative of home and nation (Archibald 4). I aim to show that the English-born characters also come to represent middle-class values, once they are "cured" of their shortcomings and transgressive inclinations. Since this is a prerequisite before they can enter matrimony, the novel perpetuates domestic ideology and affirms the English home as constructed on middle-class values. At a time when, in reality, Englishness was being redefined globally due to emigration and imperialism, and when the middle-classes themselves were becoming fissured, *Malvern* asserts England as homogenous and being English as ascribing to middle-class values, hereby reinforcing England as "the domestic nation *par excellence*" (Tosh 5).

The novel is set in Malvern, a hydropathic spa in England frequented by the middle-classes and aristocracy alike for its restorative waters and treatments. In the novel, Flora Denys, Louisa Grant and Annie Carden marry during and as a result of their stay at Malvern. In standard fashion, they need to overcome their weaknesses and flaws before they can marry. Flora is initially a self-willed, over-indulged heiress who appears destined to marry her cousin, Astley Boyle, a respectable young man with great expectations of being adopted by his uncle, Mr. Boyle, when he returns to England a wealthy man after making his fortune in Australia. He fervently hopes to be able to be an heir first so that he can marry Flora in acquiescence with his step-father's wishes and to dispel the appearance of mercenary motives on his part. As the novel's ideal, although they are both landed gentry, Astley and Flora must acquire middle-class values before they can marry. In other words, in Astley and Flora, the point is made that middle-class values with the addition of good breeding is the best one might hope for. Astley must cease to be an idle son waiting on an inheritance to establish

himself and must become a responsible middle-class professional. Flora must cease to live in ignorance of her household and financial affairs in preparation for when she becomes an heiress and when she marries. Flora and Astley are the novel's ideal of Englishness and theirs is the ideal English marriage at the novel's close that is invested with middle-class values of self-improvement and industry.

Louisa is a disillusioned hardened spinster whose sole aim is to marry a wealthy man. She is jealous of Flora who has led a comfortably wealthy life in comparison with her frugal dependence on her aunt's provision. She desires and schemes to become Astley's wife, knowing that he is a future heir. When he rebuffs her, she devises a vengeful scheme to marry his aged uncle instead to rob Astley of his inheritance and make it quite impossible for him to marry Flora by also attempting to besmirch his reputation; she spreads rumours about him being a fortune hunter and a rake. Eventually her machinations rob her of her reputation and any future chance of marrying again when it is discovered by Astley that his uncle is actually an imposter, Robert Masters, his uncle's domestic servant, who assumed Mr. Boyle's identity when he died. Louisa is a disgraced spinster at the annulment of her marriage to a criminal, who is exiled to Australia's penal colony. Despite their English nationality, Louisa and Robert are debarred from middle-class marriage and Englishness. Robert's criminal nature coupled with his previous immigration to Australia disqualifies him from any claim to proper Englishness. He displays no remorse for his deceit and fraud. His arrest on his wedding day and speedy exile are fitting examples of England's treatment of its swindlers who are, as Archibald states, "hanged, jailed, or at the very least excluded from society" (145). Louisa remains in England following her husband's exile, but Hubback shows that her non-rehabilitated demeanour towards the novel's end, even after her public disgrace when family and friends were told she had married a fraudster, makes her barely acceptable. Her mercenary marriage to the false Mr. Boyle comes to a dramatic end precisely because she has not undergone any transformation in her conduct. The improved environment she occupies at the novel's end as companion to Flora's mother exploits the stigma of spinsterhood because this is now her allotted role.

Whereas Louisa is excluded from the narrative's ideal of proper Englishness, Jamaican-born Annie Carden must first conform to middle-class womanhood through marriage before she can access Englishness. Annie is of English descent: her father was an Englishman but she also strongly identifies with America's creed of equality for all. Annie is forced to return to England and inhabit a country she has never seen because she is a penniless orphan and her sister is an invalid. Dependent on her relatives for her livelihood,

she is nevertheless strongly critical of the conduct of English women. She slowly changes her perspective as she grows closer to Mr. Clarke, an Englishman, who is attracted by her foreignness. Annie's connections with America, Spain and Jamaica bring the fraught past that England has with these countries to bear on the novel's assertion of Englishness. Britain colonised the Americas in 1607 and Jamaica in 1655, usurping Spanish rule (Tim Lambert n.pag.). Towards the last half of the eighteenth century, thirteen colonies in North America combined to sever themselves from British rule. The American War of Independence ensued with the French allying with the Americans in the fight against Britain. America was declared independent in 1776 (their independence fuelled the French Revolution in 1789 which was to cause fear in British hearts of a similar revolution on English soil). At the point when Hubback wrote *Malvern*, Jamaica was still Britain's colony and America was a threat to British domination in the Caribbean. Despite Jamaica's flourishing conditions under British rule, the decrease in sugar prices in 1846 caused riots and disgruntlement towards Britain. Furthermore, as Lambert explains, America's interest in Jamaica was perceived as one of many signs that it was in competition with the Crown for global supremacy. Relations between America and Britain shifted from identifying with each other to a suspicious distancing. Archibald notes that novelists discussing the dissenting nation would invariably depict Americans as unscrupulous and ruthless. American women received the brunt of English disapproval; they were often cast as unfeminine, wild and sexually unscrupulous. In Chapter 5, I explore how this view emerges in Hubback's criticism of the American woman in her bid to claim English superiority and domestic femininity. In *Malvern* Annie functions as the novel's argument for middle-class femininity because she is not properly feminine. Annie's marriage to Mr. Clarke, once she learns to conform to Englishness, perpetuates the novel's valorisation of the angel-wife as the epitome of English femininity. With Annie, middle-class marriage is the only entrance to Englishness, but her marriage to an English middle-class man suggests that the foreign woman is suitable to become an English wife after all. This is a contradictory element to Annie which the novel ignores, quite possibly because of its overall affirmation of Englishness in the text; I draw on Robert Young's work on Englishness later in the chapter for a more complete discussion of her position.

As part of the novel's assertion of Englishness through its characters, Malvern as a place is equally important because it formed part of the actual lives of English people in this period. Malvern's pure curative waters were still bathed in and consumed by its numerous visitors at the time Hubback wrote the novel. It was frequented by the middle and aristocratic class: "Queen Elizabeth I made a point of drinking it in public in the 16th century, and Queen

Victoria refused to travel without it" ("Malvern" n.pag.). According to Andy Dolan, Queen Elizabeth I set a trend because subsequent royals followed her example. Malvern mineral water became "enjoyed by royalty for centuries," established as "the only brand served at the Queen's castles and palaces" (n.pag.). Significantly, as Dolan notes, "the current Queen is said to take it with her when she travels" (n.pag.). Other famous figures like Charles Dickens and Charles Darwin also visited Malvern. Hubback herself accompanied her husband to Malvern in 1848 hoping that the waters would cure his mental illness. Thus Malvern can be seen as a symbol of Englishness because of its renown then and now. It may be that Hubback drew upon her experiences at Malvern and the people she became acquainted with during her stay there for the novel. In her letter to her son, John, she refers to "a Mr. Hepburn at Malvern, whom I liked very much, and who was the original of Mr. Hamilton in *Malvern*" (*Letters* 79). Mr. Hamilton is described by another character in the novel as "a first-rate cicerone, an archaeologist, a geologist, [and] knows all about medieval history" in short, "a great naturalist" as Hubback describes Mr. Hepburn (95; vol. I, ch. 4, *The Letters* 79). Although there is no documentary evidence for this, it is possible that another central character, Mrs. Newton, a young, caring mother of two children with a sickly husband, could be modelled on Hubback, herself a mother of three small children. Hubback was still quite young at the onset of her husband's mental illness.

Hubback's previous novels validate middle-class values, but Hubback uses Malvern as a curative establishment to assert and validate being middle-class as definitive of proper Englishness. I argue that since Malvern's curative waters are meant to cure people's physical ailments, the novel equally asserts that characters must be cured of their shortcomings in order to access and belong to the body politic asserted as middle-class in the novel. Queen Victoria's subscription to the restorative powers of Malvern's water endorses its Englishness, because, as Tosh points out, "[w]hen the Victorians sang 'Home Sweet Home' [...] they warmly commended the home life of their own dear Queen," who was considered by most in the nation as an icon of domesticity and a champion of middle-class values (27). This idea of restoring Englishness is relevant to Annie, who must be "purged" of her foreignness and criticism of England by becoming an English wife. Flora, Astley, Louisa and Robert all have to overcome facets of their dispositions and adopt middle-class values such as prudence and industriousness to be firmly established as properly English. When they do not reform, they are exiled as Robert is or consigned to the fringes of middle-class life, like Louisa.

Malvern is outside of the domestic proper but it is also an expansion of the domestic with a more public dimension. This has implications for domestic ideology because it

presents the possibility of transgression which the novel points to with Flora's imprudent flirtation with Mr. Malone, Louisa's scheming seduction of Robert and his duplicity by posing as Astley's uncle. It is also established early on that for some characters Malvern presents the temptation of escaping from domestic duties. Louisa exclaims, "it is the place to enjoy oneself, if one only knows how. Variety, amusement, idleness, all encouraged as virtues — cardinal virtues; told to dance, and play, and make merry, and plenty of opportunity for it. Oh! it is famous" (10; vol. I, ch. 1). Flora's expectations of her time at Malvern are "to live entirely free from household cares, with no trouble about dinners or cooks — nothing to do but to obey directions, and submit to the system" (2; vol. I, ch. 1). Both women are keen to leave their homes and the claims upon their conduct and time. Their words portray Malvern as less restrictive and conducive to "merry-mak[ing]" (10; vol. I, ch. 1). Their viewpoints suggest that the conventions governing their conduct inside their homes would be relaxed at Malvern, the relocation also presenting the possibility of lessened ideological constraints.

Malvern thus represents a different kind of freedom outside of the private sphere, because, as Mike Huggins argues in an article on leisure and the respectable middle-classes, places of leisure like Malvern provided "legitimised escape" from "the more irksome constraints of respectability" (592). He further points out that it was away from home that "the more frivolous side of even the mid-Victorian middle classes" emerged, "even the lower-middle-class male could put on airs, masquerading a new identity" (592-593). The reaction of Louisa's relatives to the annulment of her marriage to Robert and the discovery of his duplicity stress the danger of residing at Malvern: "how she could ever have ventured to trust to the word of an acquaintance, picked up at a watering-place; how she could have been so deceived as to imagine a poor lawyer's clerk to be a gentleman; were questions asked again and again" (324-325; vol. III, ch. 12). The novel warns against the danger and imprudence of attachments such as Louisa's and Robert's because Louisa has no idea that the man she insistently pursues is an imposter. Locations like Malvern therefore make it possible for characters to dissimulate.

The second part of the title, *Malvern; or, The Three Marriages*, refers to three models of marriage, motivated by either love, as in Flora's case, mercenary intentions, as in Louisa's, or convenience, as in Annie's. *May and December*'s various marriages test and challenge domestic ideology, to conclude without specifically presenting any marriage as living up to the ideal. In *Malvern* these variations of marriage are utilised to affirm middle-class values and the novel's introduction of Englishness as fundamentally middle-class. The novel's

promotion of Englishness is accomplished by purifying its characters, both English and foreign, of what it deems as non-English attributes. The characters are shown to adopt and exercise virtues like propriety, service to others, industry and domesticity. Thus English marriage is defined as the marriage prescribed by middle-class values and is not the quintessential ending of the novel as in *The Younger Sister*.

This insistence of middle-class values is in keeping with Archibald's argument that Victorian literature continued to promulgate the ideal of the English wife and home and accomplished this by casting women from the New World as unrefined and repulsive to entrench the ideal of domesticity and the icon of the angel in the home. The ideal was more firmly entrenched because it was, in all probability, under threat by the changing view of what Englishness meant due to emigration and imperialism that caused mass exits and entrances in England. Robert Young argues that equating an English identity exclusively with Saxonism came to an end with the "progressive diffusion" of English people across the world (xi). Thus emigration and imperialism introduced a new understanding of what it meant to be English. "Englishness," argues Young, was hardly "about England" or "its national character" (1). Adopting a more "global" approach, Englishness in Young's view did not centrally recall those born in England but "included Americans and the English everywhere" (xi). Young's account here makes room for Annie's Englishness prior to any rehabilitation. He states that the idea of being English was not developed for English-born people but for those in other countries, the "diaspora" which he defines as being those who are not "precisely English" but are of "English descent," as Annie is (1). In suggesting that Englishness was "constructed as a translatable identity," Englishness became accessible to all who desired to claim a "common identification" with a "homeland they had often never seen" (2).

He states further that by the late nineteenth-century identification with England was ambivalent, a permutation of "attachment" and "distance," "continuity" and "rupture," "similarity" and "difference," and was specifically the experience of colonials and "diasporic" communities (6-7). His argument suggests that, by comparison, those living within the borders of England experienced a homogenous culture because "being English already" they "hardly needed" a definition for Englishness (1). One could go so far as to say that even as Englishness was consistently in the making elsewhere, it was imagined as stable in the homeland and thus established with reference to the metropolitan centre. *Malvern* is the example of this imagined homogeneity. It can be inferred that in leaving its imagined stability, one engages with the wider on-going perception of Englishness as belonging and

not belonging to the centre. Young's elucidation of the evolving and dynamic perception of Englishness encourages a view of Annie, the novel's foreigner of "English descent," as ambivalently English (1).

However, the novel's overall depiction of her as a foreigner and outsider makes it difficult to apply Young's idea of Englishness as a "translatable identity" to her position in Malvern (2). With Annie's ignorance of English codes of behaviour and class domesticity, it is debatable whether Englishness is more affirmed or identifiable at the edges of England. The implications for my argument is that the novel's depiction of Annie as needing to be cured of her foreignness complies with the ideological, civilising intent of Victorian novels explained by Archibald. Thus, despite the reality of the changing perceptions of Englishness clarified by Young, *Malvern* adheres to the ideal of Englishness as predominantly exclusive and homogenous. Even though Annie is foreign and marries Mr. Clarke, which in itself suggests her suitability to be an English wife precisely because she is of English descent, she is treated in the novel as needing absolute reformation into an English wife.

"Self-Help" and Domesticity

According to Lynda Nead, the "domestic unit was the basis for social stability" and "regulation, control and peace in the home ensured national security and prosperity" (33). Importantly, from marriage came the nuclear family, "defined," as Nead explains, "as the nucleus of the state," to the extent that any collapse in the family and home was "understood in terms of a total social disintegration" (33). Astley and Flora, the novel's ideal pair, initially represent the conventional mentor-pupil relationship which the novel shows is detrimental to the ideal of marriage and stability in the home and which would consequently not contribute to a well-governed nation. The nature of their relationship is based on what Julie Shaffer terms the "lover-mentor convention," with Astley's regular attempts to guide Flora's conduct and thoughts reminiscent of Mr. Knightley's relationship with Emma Woodhouse in Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816) (79). Like Emma, Flora at first treats Astley's attempts at improving her with light derision but gradually comes to value his opinion after committing some grave errors. Flora and Astley's relationship progresses towards marital love. Although the novel shows this convention to be a good basis for marital love, this aspect of Astley's masculinity must however be adjusted to one where he no longer tries to govern her, in the sense that he appears less assertive and certain of being right. Flora, on the other hand, must govern herself.

Flora and Astley's master and pupil relationship is delineated from the outset in her journal entry:

> Astley may say what he likes; but I will not yield the point, nor admit that it is merely selfishness or love of variety which makes me wish to go to Malvern. I am sure it is the best thing for mamma! It is so provoking of him to be always finding wrong motives for my conduct; the more so, because, although I never own it to him, the wrong motives are very often the right ones. How he guesses what I am thinking of, and turns my actions inside out! and yet I would not be without him for the world. (1-3; vol. I, ch. 1)

Flora sees Astley as assuming a master-pupil relationship because he constantly attempts to improve her. The question must be asked whether Flora's conduct merits his correction. Her tone here is slightly petulant because she is shown to be an over-indulged young woman. She also appears resistant to Astley's guidance; the obdurate tone of "I will not yield" and "Astley may say what he likes" implies that she could be stubborn and high spirited. Conversely, her admission that she would not be "without him for the world" does not point to her requiring Astley's instruction in how to think and act, but is rather rooted in her affection for him as her childhood friend. She also shows some insight into Astley's lack of faith in her and that despite what he deemed as right and proper at times she had experienced otherwise in following through with her own ideas.

Flora subsequently questions Astley's objection to their removal to Malvern, to which he responds:"You know it is your overbearing, domineering way to your mother, which made me remonstrate; your self-will, and resolution to seek your own gratification at her expense" (6; vol. I, ch. 1). On account of Astley's view of Flora as intractable, their mentor-pupil relationship appears necessary. The tone of his words may be considered harsh but his opinion is accurate since Flora does appear selfish. Yet there is also a degree of familiarity and honesty in the way he treats her. There is also another side to Astley's assertion of Flora as self-willed. It could be that his disapproval of her plans to reside at Malvern stems from his fear that once there, and because he is not accompanying her, she may meet someone and be lost to him. Warned by his uncle against declaring his love, he admits that "[it] would be rather hard on [him] [...]. [Flora] would be sure to have admirers at any public place, and why must not [he] try [his] chance?" (32-33; vol. I, ch. 1).

Flora's shortcomings are also addressed by others in their social circles, confirming that she is a flawed character. Mrs. Hunter, Louisa's aunt, tells Astley, "I should almost fear for our dear Flora's high spirits though, at such a place [Malvern] [...] she is perhaps a little giddy, a trifle volatile" (11; vol. I, ch. 1). Soon after she utters her criticism of Flora to

Astley, Mrs. Hunter informs Louisa that Astley "will probably have a large fortune [...]. And I really do not think Flora does like him very much; I am sure they often quarrel. You might easily cut her out; and it would be worth trying, with his prospects" (14; vol. I, ch. 1). It appears, then, that Mrs. Hunter wishes to discredit Flora to Astley to better pave the way for Louisa's prospects. Can we then trust her opinion of Flora?

This does not mean that Flora is not over-indulged or wilfully indecorous at times. The narrator states that "Flora Denys, considering that she was an only child, and an heiress, was not more spoilt than might naturally be expected. She had been always accustomed to have her own way with her mother, and, excepting Astley Boyle himself, few people took the trouble to find fault with her" (30-31; vol. I, ch. 1). Despite this evidence that Flora requires Astley's instruction, I assert that his sudden removal from Malvern signifies that she is capable of self-regulation and that it is in his absence that Flora is able to discover herself. This separation from Astley and his constant instruction is therefore a necessary element in her achievement of middle-class values. In her subsequent decisions about how to behave, she initially defers to Astley's dictates, but it becomes apparent that she begins to regulate her behaviour independent of his influence. The first instance of this self-regulation is her decision to cease her flirtation with Mr. Malone.

It is a fundamental shift from her initial rapport with him when, in Astley's presence, and "in a fit of perverseness, [she] gave the latter [Mr. Malone] more smiles and pleasant words, than the former [Astley] could easily tolerate" (70; vol. I, ch. 3). Later, when Mr. Malone attempts "to detain her in the garden" and "bewails his hard fate in not having met her all the afternoon," Flora makes "a serious resolution against flirting, even with Mr. Malone; and at that moment, she was more inclined to show her concern and regard for Astley's wishes" (127-128; vol. I, ch. 4). The degree of her commitment to self-improvement is emphasised with "even with Mr. Malone," the inclusion of "even" suggesting that to abstain from flirting with him requires greater resolve that one need otherwise exercise. Flora determines not to do so because she is aware of her imprudence. Her behaviour is circumscribed by Astley's injunction for her to be discreet elsewhere in the novel, but Astley is not by her side to instruct her in her responsibilities when she becomes the dutiful daughter in nursing her mother or as a censuring presence when she acts with reserve in connection with Mr. Malone.

Flora becomes less self-centred as shown when her mother falls ill from the effects of extreme anxiety, having thought Flora injured or dead after she and her companion, Mrs.

Woodbridge, lost their way on the hills of Malvern and a search party had to be dispatched to rescue them. Flora

> blamed herself for having been in part the cause, by occasioning her [mother] so much anxiety and trouble the night before. She was so completely engrossed by her wish to secure her mother every possible comfort, that she had hardly eyes or ears for anything else in the world. She would scarcely attend even to Astley, had nothing but hurried words to give him, and barely remained ten minutes at the breakfast-table, in her haste to return up stairs. (22; vol. II, ch. 1)

The young woman described above contradicts Astley's opinion of her as domineering and self-gratifying early in the novel when he chastised her for thinking only of her pleasure in removing to Malvern. Flora's attentive administering to her mother's needs is a necessary adjustment to her sense of priorities and responsibilities, given her almost complete lack of it at the beginning of the novel. The realisation that her reckless and imprudent behaviour has consequences and affects those dear to her induces this turn-about in her perspective.

This narrow escape from serious injury and possible death compels Flora to assume a responsible and an informed femininity, primarily influencing her decision later in the novel to teach herself about monetary matters and household management. Before, she embodied a careless, empty-headed version of femininity, and was reckless with her wealth:

> Flora, with the liberal disregard of wealth which arises from never having known privation, had often amused herself, as heiresses will do, with wishes that she could strip herself of the responsibility which frightened her, and go about a poor and interesting beauty. Not that she had the slightest taste for self-denial, or had any real inclination for economy and hardship; but, simply because she never realised what they would be. (14-15; vol. II, ch. 1)

The image conveyed is of Flora idly daydreaming about an alternative life of poverty because she has never come to value her advantaged one. She also appears overwhelmed with the responsibilities she would have to assume once she comes of age. Flora represents the social dilemma of many wealthy young ladies, educated only in the limited accomplishments that would attract and please a husband. The narrator's sarcastic tone paints her as a silly little girl.

Her decision to educate herself takes precedence over marriage (usually the only thing a young woman pursues). She tells Norman Grant, Louisa's brother who is enamoured with her:

> "I have no present thoughts of marrying [...] my plans are to endeavour to fill the duties of a landholder amongst tenants who, I fear, have been only too much neglected during my minority. All my thoughts, henceforth, I shall devote to study, in preparation for

> this responsible situation, endeavouring to cram into this foolish head as many good ideas and rational principles." (10-11; vol. III, ch. 1)

It is significant that her declaration of her commitment to self-improvement forms part of her rejection of Norman Grant's proposal because at this point in the novel, Flora doubts Astley loves her and she struggles to resolve herself to a life without him by her side. Her rejection of Norman's proposal when she is most vulnerable thus acts as a double affirmation of her self-assertion and vow to transform her mind to achieve this. Her decision to teach herself about household management is an acceptance of her responsibilities. She is shown to seize control of her future. This is a moment of self-realisation for her because she admits that she has been neglectful in the past, an awareness of her flaws that can now be worked at because she is cognisant of them. Flora also embodies the promise of a middle-class woman involved in the business of running a home although her home is an estate. Flora's home is invested with middle-class values of industry and self-management, part of the novel's equating of Englishness with middle-class values. The emphasis on "rational" management of the estate suggests Flora will not be a frivolous spender, ensuring the exercise of that staple of middle-class values: the importance of frugal economy.

Like Flora, Astley must be cured of his shortcomings. His idleness and predilection for leisure are presented as a flaws to be overcome through industrious application and self-improvement in anticipation of the "indomitable spirit of self-help" articulated in Samuel Smiles' *Self Help* (1859) as being a quality of proper Englishness (qtd. in Lauren Goodlad 149). Astley also represents the male figure Huggins describes as "one of the most powerful images and major concerns in mid-Victorian literature," which is "the unmarried young male, enjoying more free time than his elders and applying himself more to play than to business" (589-590). According to Sanders, the social reality of idle young men in England dependent on the promise of living by "private means" and "paternal handouts" was a life of dissipation and varieties of distractions like gambling and brothels, "setting the tone for middle-class young men to be unmotivated to work at a career" (49). Called a "deep-seated cultural anxiety" by Sanders, the "idle son theme" was explored in Austen's *Mansfield Park*, with Tom Bertram recklessly squandering money and adversely affecting his father's financial security and his younger brother's future (59). Charles Dickens's Richard Carstone in *Bleak House* (1853) is the novel's grave portrait of a young man sunk in wretchedness because of his inability to settle in a profession. Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) registers this cultural predicament of young men waiting for an inheritance rather than endeavouring to

establish themselves through hard work and Fred Vincy in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-1872) is a prime example of the idleness and indolence produced by young men's expectations and the dissipation they engender. Astley does not fall into a life of profligacy but it hovers as a threatening possibility for him, pointed to in the conversations of Mrs. Newton and Mrs. Woodbridge who warn against his continued inactivity.

The idle young man was a class concern, for, according to Tosh, middle-class men were compelled by society's expectations to distinguish themselves from the "supposed idleness of the aristocracy" in the respectable way: by acquiring an occupation (33). Tosh explains that young middle-class men had to prove their worth by acquiring a profession and being financially stable before they married, to exhibit their readiness for "form[ing] a household of [their] own" (122). Tosh calls this entering marriage "on the right terms" because it secured entry into middle-class stability and was a sure way of establishing order and governance in the home from the outset (122). Money, if properly managed, was therefore a crucial element to the order of the home, allowing for middle-class display in dress and the interior of homes as the all-important, daily affirmation of rank that set the middle-class apart from the working-class and aristocracy.

Acquiring a profession also defined one's masculinity. Tosh states that the "journey to manhood began in domestic independence and ended in domestic authority" (122). Young men had to prove their masculinity and readiness for marriage by showing that they could live independently from their childhood home and motherly care, and the best manner in which to achieve this was to launch them in a profession and begin earning money. Just as money was central to the establishment of the middle-class home, so it was central to the ideal of industrious, autonomous masculinity. As Tosh argues, the middle-class man "needed to demonstrate manly qualities of energy, resolution and independence, which would secure his masculine reputation" (122). Astley's step-father's advice is contrary to this ideal of manhood, that relays a man must be financially stable in order to marry and live respectably but encourages Astley to wait upon an inheritance instead of seeking an independent living. He says, "[i]f your uncle would come home and settle something on you, Astley [...] you might marry, but you cannot afford it now" (32; vol. I, ch. 1). Astley's expectations leave him bound to his uncle's repeated "objections, both to the army and navy," in his letters and "persisten[ce] that a learned profession would be quite unnecessary" for Astley to pursue (45; vol. II, ch. 2). This causes him to be ineffective in acting on his feelings for Flora because he has no fortune to speak of and bounds him to his step-father's injunction. Although one can say that Astley is further bound by duty to his uncle's wishes because he is his promised heir,

the folly of such a situation is underscored by the deleterious effect it has on Astley's will to gain control of his life. Despite the depth of his feelings for Flora, Astley thinks, "we shall see what my uncle will do" (33; vol. I, ch. 1). His first recourse is to procrastinate, instead of endeavouring to alter his circumstances.

Mrs. Newton, whom I have earlier associated with Hubback, advises Astley through her discourse of self-application and industriousness: "you know man was not made to live alone, nor was he intended to sit down in contented idleness on a moderate income. If your present occupation is not to be making love to Miss Denys, find something else" (104; vol. II, ch. 4). She further declares: "[a]n idle man seems to me so miserable. I am used to see men work so hard; real, actual work. What a pity you have not a profession" (107; vol. II, ch. 4). Her role here is that of what Huggins describes as an "ideological transmitter, uph[olding] local 'standards" (587). Mrs. Newton's advice serves to uphold the respectability of the home and its ideology of the public arena as masculine in her exhortation of Astley to "have a profession," to occupy his given sphere (107; vol. II, ch. 4).

Astley's reply to Mrs. Newton's type of industrious masculinity emphasises middle-class values in terms of respectability and hard work:

> "I think I shall enter into partnership with some great manufacturer, or embark in business of some kind, just to have real duties and tangible claims; some to depend on me — some to look up to me. I shall be much happier, I dare say, when I have not an hour I can call my own, or a day when I am my own master." (107; vol. II, ch. 4)

An occupation is perceived as a "real duty," distinguishing it as the true marker of masculinity. The idea of labour as dignified is conveyed, where manhood is shaped by responsibility to others and the esteem and approbation of family and acquaintances. The kind of masculinity envisioned negates the possibility of indulgence and fecklessness that threatens the idle young man in Victorian society.

Flora and Astley's marriage combines dutiful femininity with industrious masculinity. Significantly, they occupy their proper spheres according to domestic ideology, facilitating an ordered home and by extension their marriage contributes to the imagined order of English society. Transformed into a couple with a strong work ethic and cured of their shortcomings of idleness and imprudence, their marriage epitomises the middle-class value of economy. The assertion of a self-governed femininity shifts the conventional power relations inherent in the master-pupil convention favoured as an apt foundation for a successful marriage. Flora learns to be prudent and self-governed whilst Astley learns that he cannot control her thoughts and conduct; she must act and think for herself. The model of marriage that they

represent at the end of the novel is a version of the companionate marriage where there is an understanding of the woman as autonomous within the bounds of her husband's authority, but it is, in Tosh's view, "an authority [that] rest[s] on reasonableness and shared values, not the exercise of force" (9). There is a contradiction inherent in Flora's self-management that comes into being without Astley's influence: when she marries him he will benefit from a wife who will extend her self-regulation to the regulation of their home. But it is asserted in the novel that it is a far better model for marriage when a woman can master herself instead of being mastered by a man. The novel does not assert that Flora prevailing over her faults casts her as a perfect domestic angel. In their marriage, Astley learns to accept Flora with her imperfections as she does his; both are domesticated by middle-class values.

"A Process of Domestication": The Foreign Woman

Janet Myers points out that "Victorian men are often figured as the weak link in the chain connecting England to the empire" (11), and one can thus consider Annie's lack of angelic femininity is an example of this failure in transplanting British domesticity. Although she was born in Jamaica, Annie regards herself as "very American in some of my tastes and feelings" (108; vol. I, ch. 4). She admires America's "energy, grandeur and intellectual progress" and tells Astley that "your English winds, and dull landscapes, and frigid manners, are sadly chilling after the feelings of my early home" (154, 107; vol. I, ch. 5 and ch. 4). Her lack of etiquette and proper conduct, which supposedly casts her as not properly feminine, enhances Malvern's English women as the ideal of femininity. On the other hand, she could be found desirable, her foreignness an attractive counterpoint, for, as Archibald puts it, "[t]hough certainly forbidden fruit may seem the sweetest, it also appears likely that this 'unsuitable' woman may exhibit qualities in and of themselves that make her enticing [and] so much more true to life than the pasteboard feminine ideal of the 'angel in the house'" (136). This is true in relation to Annie and Mr. Clarke, who appears to find her refreshing and "not the least bit like anybody [he] ever saw [...] she amuse[d] [him] more than any one [he] [had] met these ten years" (156; vol. I, ch. 5). Mr. Clarke's opinion of Annie implies disenchantment with the English women with whom he is in contact. There is an ironic element to their relationship, because Mr. Clarke is attracted to the difference Annie represents here but his marriage to her suggests that she will conform to prescribed English femininity.

It is significant that the first time Annie appears in the novel, she is in the company of Astley, the character who most embodies the novel's definition of an English gentleman. In

this scene, despite Astley's show of acceptance that is also an attempt at understanding Annie's peripheral position, their voices are oppositional: Astley's is patriotic and Annie's is critical of England. Annie describes herself and her sister to Astley as "strangers in their own family, foreigners in their native land" who are "utterly ignorant of English habits, English prices, and English house-keeping" (105-106; vol. I, ch. 4). Annie's periphery to England is stressed in the reiteration of "English," emphasising Annie's distance from all things "English" with each utterance. Annie and Mary's marginalisation may be rooted in their unawareness of English etiquette. Since matters of etiquette are perceived to be the supreme regulator of female and male behaviour, Annie would be considered not yet properly feminine in her ignorance of them.

Her exclusion is further highlighted when she tells Astley that she "should have died, but for Mary, of horror and despair" because she "was always doing, or proposing to do, or wishing to do wrong things; and shocking [her] aunt; such bad wrong things; sins against etiquette, and propriety, and decorum. [She] found England anything but free! At last, [she] grew afraid to speak at all!" (111; vol. I, ch. 4). Her words show that she is being provocative, perhaps to elicit Astley's sympathy. It is noteworthy that it is Annie's aunt who is "shock[ed]" and who considers her as "sin[ning] against etiquette" (111; vol. I, ch. 4). It was a woman's duty, as Langland puts it, to "constantly police and maintain their social borders" through the adherence to etiquette and the rejection of anyone who deviated from these codes of behaviour (33). The aunt's disapprobation of Annie's behaviour functions to police the borders of her own home. This particular view of English women performing a regulating, exclusionary function as part of the nationalist ideal is further emphasised when Astley asks Annie whether she has not met with anyone who has shown her kindness. She answers, "I don't know; nobody tried — nobody cared for me. Why should they? They were not like Americans — they were only English women" (111; vol. I, ch. 4). Annie's tone diminishes the value of English women and the ideology that they are caretakers of nation and home, moral guides and domestic managers to "only English women," who are insignificant in her opinion. Again, her words not only dismiss English women but they also criticise the nation. Here, her elevation of American women above English women emphasises America's superiority over England in her view.

Astley's response is a balanced defence of his homeland, as opposed to a stock patriotic defence, because it includes recognition of England's flaws:

> "I can easily understand that the difference in our manners would strike you. I mean the difference between us and foreigners. Everybody acknowledges that we are nationally

> stiff and formal; but I do not think we are nationally cold or unkind. We say fewer obliging things than our neighbours, but are as substantially charitable, perhaps." (111; vol. I, ch. 4)

His patient tone of voice contrasts with Annie's tone of derision, but simultaneously emphasises their opposite positions in relation to England. Significantly, Astley is not critical of Jamaican customs, which fractionally shifts the view of Annie as a suffering immigrant with valid complaints towards a consideration that her protestations are fuelled by her prejudices. Of interest as well is Astley's assertion that England is "substantially charitable," an allusion to England's philanthropic interests in other countries in the forms of missions and the range of societies and charities that existed in England for such purposes. One could say that Astley's argument is that England's economic investment in other countries is more than enough proof of its consideration of difference, and based on this, its "stiff and formal" manner could be overlooked, even accepted. Annie discounts this by defining what "charitable" in England means and negating Astley's view: "Charitable! well, if you mean in feeding the hungry and nursing the sick, yes; but charitable in thinking well of others, and judging kindly of strangers, strange customs and strange opinions, certainly no — as a nation, I should say no" (111-112; vol. I, ch. 4). For Annie, true charity is accepting difference in others. She criticises English civilising and missionary efforts as hypocritical and severely judges English philanthropy.

Yet Annie is also implicated in distancing herself from the difference that England represents to her as someone from the periphery. On an excursion to watch the moon appear from the top of a hill, its appearance awes everyone except Annie. What follows is a lengthy scenic description where Annie superimposes the Jamaican landscape onto the English one before her. Annie asks, "[i]s that the moon?" in "a tone of disappointment" (240; vol. I, ch. 8). She describes it as "[f]aint and dim," and vastly unlike the Jamaican moon:

> "The glorious moon on which I have so often gazed in childhood— the moon of more southern skies. Oh, the enchantment of a Jamaica scene by moonlight! from some spot high up among the mountains, from whence you look down on green valleys, rich in tropical vegetation [...] the atmosphere loaded with perfume [...] glittering stars, glowing with light, not coldly bright, like yours of a northern clime." (241; vol. I, ch. 8)

In this moment, Annie's identification with Jamaica's scenery exemplifies what Myers, in her discussion of national identity as an imagined construct, argues is "like domesticity, defined as much by a state of mind as it is by physical space" (11). Here, her homelessness is highlighted by her calling up the rural scenes of her previous home-country because she is

incapable of identifying with the English one before her. Annie's position inverts that of the English immigrant to the colonies, for whom, to use Inderpal Grewal's words, "the representations of the English landscape continued to be idyllic for it was believed that such domestic beauty could not be found anywhere else" (35). She transposes her idealised view of Jamaica as her homeland onto the English landscape and the English view of home, a point underlined in the non-reaction (which is a reaction in itself) of her audience. Annie "compared it with moons of former times; but nobody else would agree to finding fault with the Queen of Night; and Mrs. Woodbridge declared she felt relieved from a great responsibility on finding that, having dragged them all out so far, she had, at least, found them something worth looking at" (246; vol. I, ch. 8).

Despite the lack of receptiveness, Annie is given a platform to voice her feeling among strongly patriotic people. There is a chance that this exclamation of hers portrays her as a youthful, silly girl in the eyes of the other characters. They cannot take her seriously because of her naivety and inexperience. They thus indulge her rather than ignore her. This indulgent tolerance is conveyed in Mr. Hamilton's remark following her vigorous attack on English values: "Her theories regarding England and America are crude and wild enough," he says to Mr. Clarke, "[and] womanly, highly womanly, and as such, she may entertain them without much harm at present; time, acquaintance with life, and experience will clear up her half-formed views, and give her truth as well as warmth" (297; vol. III, ch. 11).It is implied that because she is a woman her opinions are unthreatening, "without harm" because influenced by her "highly womanly" capacity for excessive emotion. It is insinuated that men ought to be patiently indulgent with these ill-informed expressions that will be tempered by time and, quite possibly, through the regulating effects of becoming wives and mothers. In the opinion of Malvern's residents, Annie's marginality may be purely of her own imagining, a mark of her inexperience of life and undeveloped view of the world.

On the other hand, Annie's marginality enables her to censure aspects of English society and in these moments she becomes the novel's mouthpiece for criticising Englishness. It is a censure which is not sustained for long, as though Annie is allowed to make these criticisms which are rendered unthreatening because they do not change her audience's perspective. When Annie's input is requested in a conversation amongst the Malvern residents about which birds best embody English characteristics and why, she replies, "I am too completely a foreigner to furnish you with a fair illustration [...]. The English birds I know best are those black, busy frequenters of the vanes on the church tower, which are always trying to be the highest, and jostling one another for the upper perch"(229;

vol. I, ch. 8). Her implicit criticism is of English gradations of rank which she views as a competitive system. The response to her comment is amusement: "They all laughed, and declared she was terribly severe, though perhaps true also" (229; vol. I, ch. 8). Of interest here is the attempt, as with Astley's earlier indulgence of Annie's complaints, to gloss over the harshness of Annie's words with polite English reserve as if to highlight that the very conduct and behaviour Annie criticises assists them in treating her respectfully, even when she does not respect them. Even the qualified admission that there is some truth in Annie's view of their nation emphasises English tolerance of difference, while Annie appears unyielding and rigid.

When it is discovered that Robert is an imposter, Annie sees it as an indication that "no Englishman could henceforth be trusted," an extreme and nonsensical remark that shows her immaturity (289; vol. III, ch. 11). Mr. Clarke vehemently opposes this by saying that Robert "did not, in my opinion, belong to *my* circle" (293; vol. III, ch. 11; emphasis in original), which, in turn, shows his assertion of rank when it suits him, in this instance to disassociate himself from the immorality of Robert. His argument is also that Robert could not be of his circle if he could act immorally, hence insinuating that his class is morally superior. Annie replies:

> "I think little of your classes and castes, they are purely artificial distinctions [...]. The distinctions between nations I can comprehend; an American, and Englishman, a Spaniard, these are all wide and evident divisions [...] but beyond those, arbitrary differences are invisible in my eyes; and if you cannot see that every Englishman who hears such a tale should blush for this miserable criminal, I can only say I do not comprehend either your nationality, or your sense of honour." (291-292; vol. III, ch. 11)

Annie protests against his claim of superiority because he is not of Robert's class and asserts that Robert remains English and that Mr. Clarke should therefore feel a degree of shame at his fellow-Englishman's transgressions. One can argue that her words contain an underlying criticism of England's practise of exiling its criminals, in effect severing citizens from their homeland because they are deemed no longer worthy of citizenship. Her high-handedness inadvertently adds some humour; as a proper English gentleman Mr. Clarke has to receive her abuse stoically.

Such a disavowal of Englishness and the class system it turns on appears to recede as though Annie never harboured any reservations about the English nation or its representative, Mr. Clarke. Even though she admits that "there are some things [she] like[s] in England" and that she is not "quite such a republican as [she] was," she still "like[s] to be allowed to abuse

[the] climate, or [the] customs" (51; vol. III, ch. 2). Her transition to a realisation that she has come to care for Mr. Clarke, although it does not surprise the reader, is almost rushed because it happens in the last pages of the novel, especially since after their disagreement above, Annie says to her sister Mary, "[l]et him go, the cold, proud, unfeeling Englishman, dressed in the stiff panoply of castes, and grades, and circles, and classes. Let him console himself by the reflection that the woman who has rejected him has not the honour of moving in the same circle as himself" (294; vol. III, ch. 11). Despite her asseveration that she is not "such a republican" as she once was, she attacks the English pecking order and distances herself from it by sarcastically saying that she does not have the "honour" of belonging to it, as Mr. Clarke does (51, 294; vol. III, ch. 2 and ch. 11).

Here, it is possible to argue that her vehement reaction to Mr. Clarke's disassociation from Robert was in part influenced by a fear that if he could easily separate himself from his fellow Englishman, then he could easily discard her with her many faults and non-English femininity that exclude her from his class. She is also obviously stung by what he said and takes it personally. Her response suggests sensitivity to his opinion, an indication that she may already have feelings for him at this point. Her value of his judgement is a further clue that she feels attracted to him, even if it is against her will. The above prepares us for their marriage as the novel's way of showing that her capitulation to Englishness is not solely influenced by desperation for a home for her and her sister. But the idea that she is made to conform to an accepted ideal of English femininity persists nonetheless and is returned to in the second last chapter. The epigraph to this chapter in which Annie accepts his proposal, is from a poem by Hartley Coleridge:

> Rich is the sky where thou wert born,/ And gorgeous are the flowers,/ But yet I hope thou wilt not scorn / This cold blue sky of ours/ So mays't thou keep the tropic glow,/ And the full joy of life;/ Yet tame thy current to the flow/ Of a cheerful English wife. (285; vol. III, ch. 11)

This excerpt implies an acceptance of difference referred to here as the "tropic glow" of the foreign woman. An empathetic connection with the homeland of the foreign woman is registered in the scenic references to her birthplace. The explicit plea for an answering empathy on her part for his homeland suggests that the speaker views matrimony as a mutual give and take and acceptance of each other's difference. A subtle shift occurs in this offer of acceptance with the word "yet" which introduces a break in the harmonious sentimental flow of the preceding lines. It suggests that everything following after "yet" might be a set of conditions. "Tame" echoes the labelling of Annie as a "wild republican" and that she requires

taming (158; vol. I, ch. 5). In her exploration of the "cultural work of domesticity," in which she equates "the domestic in intimate opposition to the foreign" with a category like separate spheres that is produced by domestic ideology, Amy Kaplan argues that "taming the wild, the natural, and the alien [was not] a static condition but a process of domestication" (582). She argues that the idea of home and a sense of belonging are strengthened by the foreign (that which does not belong to the nation).

The foreign as an opposing category is necessary to conceive of the nation as home and to have a sense of belonging, but once the foreign comes into contact with the domestic by crossing the nation's borders, "the home would contain the foreign within itself" and "tame" the foreign through "domestication" (Kaplan 582). In the epigraph, the transition from the "full joy" of a foreign woman to the "cheerful" temperament of an English wife manifests the "process of domestication" Kaplan speaks of (582). The woman from the peripheries is meant to replace her "full joy" with "cheerful[ness]" just as she is meant to modulate her identity for an English one. "Cheerfulness" is a more tempered feeling than the exuberance of "full joy," and becoming an English wife therefore requires having to exude "cheerful complacency" that would make the home felicitous (Tosh 54), a transition into the domestic that consolidates Annie's Englishness. The implication that Annie is now an English patriot through her marriage can be viewed as the novel's civilising project because she is presented as successfully domesticated. Cured of her prejudices towards England and her patriotic alignment with America as the land of freedom and equality, Annie is presented as a victory of sorts of England over America. Likewise, her marriage to Mr. Clarke after her initial rejection may be viewed as a triumph for Englishness because, despite her preliminary dislike of all things English, she must conform to survive, to belong and to have a home.

However, she is not altogether powerless. She captures the attention of an Englishman she may otherwise not have met outside of Malvern, given that she is a penniless dependant of her aunt. She is also able to set a condition for marrying Mr. Clarke: her sister must be a part of their home which makes her his financial responsibility. He obtains an 'English' wife and Annie obtains a home and financial security for herself and her beloved sister. She has also secured herself a space, albeit it confined to the private, which she is able to manage and be in control of under her husband's authority. Her access to an English home has gained her access to the nation which can be seen as her crossing its boundaries and its construction of femininity even as she becomes bounded herself to the home and Englishness through her marriage.

Improper Subjects: Excluded from the Domestic

Louisa embodies a type of femininity antithetical to the domestic model of propriety, decorum and unselfish duty, but, although she is the novel's female villain and ultimately deserves her lot with her return to the spinster state she fought hard to escape, it must be noted that the novel initially attempts to cultivate an understanding of her situation. As with Margaret and Penelope in *The Younger Sister*, it is possible to view Louisa's misconduct with some sympathy which the novel enables by describing her life as limited and unhappy. The narrative suggests that spinsters like Louisa are a product of society where they have "little resource but to marry," with marriage functioning as "the only asylum" from the "weariness, scorn and contempt" they continuously meet with (84; vol. III, ch. 3). Marriage is her exit from this "wear[y]" existence. Thus her mercenary motive for marriage is linked to her need to enter respectable society as a married woman instead of occupying its periphery as an embodiment of failed womanhood. But despite the ridicule she experiences from her family and friends who view her as a woman duped by a man because of her avarice following the annulment of her marriage, she remains an unrepentant figure who has learned little from her trials. As the narrator states: "[w]hether anything more than a superficial amendment had been affected in her character, it would not be easy to say" (326; vol. III, ch. 12). This suggests that society is partially to blame for Louisa's predicament.

As her counterpart Robert's criminal acts separate him from a nation that valorises morality. His surname "Masters" is ironically utilised as a reminder of his status as a servant and his rebellion against it. It points to his foiled attempt at being master of Mr. Boyle's estate and his lack of-self-mastery, which the reader is alerted to as a possibility when he first arrives at Malvern early on in the first volume, but which is not confirmed until Astley's investigations uncover the truth in the middle of volume three. Astley discovers that Robert steals another man's identity not out of desperation to be in his homeland once again, but so that he can continue his robbery in a country he despises and to depart from it once he has accomplished his aims. His anti-English sentiment expressed in a confrontation with Astley is clear and echoes Annie's own criticism of English etiquette and its class system: "I am not going to settle in this detestable England of yours, amongst all your sneering gentlemen, and fine upstart lords and baronets. I shall go to a free country, where no one can say that he is grander than me. I shall go to America, and establish myself there" (80; vol. II, ch. 3).

Like Annie, Robert associates America with freedom. The implied irony here is that he is a criminal and yet thinks he will be accepted in America, an ironic jab at America's lack

of social discernment that Hubback emphasises in the short story and letters. Robert was a "poor lawyer's clerk" before he left England and his invective against England probably stems from his financial struggle whilst in England and his failed speculations in Australia (324; vol. III, ch. 12). He experiences a double-failure and sinks even lower in the class stratum when he becomes Mr. Boyle's domestic servant. In a way, he is a pitiful figure but he cannot be viewed as a product of his society as the novel in part views Louisa. Like Louisa he cannot be cured of his shortcomings but because he is a villainous criminal his treatment in the novel is straightforward: an undesirable figure who has no place in England.

It is asserted at the outset that Louisa's conduct may be a product of society in the shape of her aunt, Mrs. Hunter, who, as I have pointed out earlier in this chapter, plants the idea that Louisa should set her sights on Astley and "cut out" Flora Denys (14; vol. I, ch. 1). She is also the woman who encourages Flora to remove to Malvern, ostensibly for Mrs. Denys's sake but she, in all likelihood, proposes it to ensure Flora would be out of the way and thus not a hindrance when Louisa attempts to insinuate herself into Astley's affections. She points out to Astley that Flora is renowned for being a flirt and discounts his defence of Flora with, "Well! well, perhaps not before you; I know you have great influence; keep her in order — manage her completely; but spirits will break out — will not always be cramped down, and in your absence, my dear Mr. Boyle –" (12; vol. I, ch. 1). Specifically, Mrs. Hunter's words are sly and falsely flatter Astley in order to paint Flora as a wild and uncontrollable young woman. Mrs. Hunter is probably acting out of desperation as well; it is a strong possibility that she wants to rid herself of Louisa's financial dependence on her which her niece's marriage would release her from, and that Louisa has been made painfully aware that she is a burden to her aunt. Ann Wildey in *May and December* (1854) is also a spinster abused by the degraded position society places spinsters in but she is a good person who is rewarded with marriage and a home. This does not happen with Louisa and suggests that her mistreatment of others overrides (but does not discount) her circumstances. This is emphasised by the fact that once at Malvern, Louisa, unaccompanied by her aunt, maliciously plots and schemes her way to marriage.

The facets of Louisa's disposition that the novel poses as incurable justify the middle-class values Flora and Annie embody at its conclusion. For one thing, Louisa is hypocritical. When Robert informs her that Astley is to leave Malvern and that he has no intention of finding a bride for himself there, Louisa replies that "she was glad of it; she hated mercenary speculations, and money-hunters; but if that was the case he had better go, for his presence might give rise to expectation, which would be injurious to the heiress [Flora]" (85; vol. II,

ch. 3). She overlooks her own mercenary motives in seducing Robert into proposing to her, and, whereas Flora becomes aware of her faults, Louisa ignores her own. She pretends that she is interested in Flora's well-being and wishes her to be spared any injury to her reputation or emotions when she herself wishes Flora harm. She has damaged Astley's prospects by pursuing his uncle (though this was never in danger because Astley became the rightful heir of his uncle's estate on his death).

When Astley is apprised of his uncle's intentions not to adopt him and make him his heir, Louisa experiences this as a victory over both Flora and Astley. She is shown to be vindictive and vengeful in the following description of the pleasure she takes in his disappointment:

> [T]o see the fortune he had been so long expecting, slipping from his grasp; and the more his vexation was apparent, the greater was her pleasure in the triumph. That she should secure what he had wished for, was an addition to the satisfaction of riches which doubled the value of possession. He had been cold and ungracious; he had slighted her and preferred another; now she had her revenge; she was not only leaving him to comparative poverty, but she began to see that his prospects were otherwise darkening. (90-91; vol. II, ch. 3)

We can see here that Louisa's plot to marry Astley's uncle was in part fuelled by her greed for wealth, but that Astley's outright rejection of her as a potential wife also plays its part because it registers for her at the level of class, since he represents for her the ideal of the English gentleman. Astley is also young, and his rebuff of her charms in part forces her to turn to his much older uncle, a man "of whose manners she was ashamed, of whose disposition she was ignorant, and whose principles, she had too much reason to know, were set no higher a standard than her own" (85; vol. II, ch. 3).

Her schemes for Flora to marry her brother, although typical of family match-making, transgress the bounds of propriety because they are grounded in a self-serving wish to access Flora's wealth even in a tangential way. She views Astley's disappointment in his expectations and his exit from Malvern as "leav[ing] Flora in uncertainty, and perplexity, to struggle with wounded feelings which maidenly pride would lead her to conceal at any risk. This was the state of mind most favourable to [her] plans, and by this she prepared to profit, so soon as all minor circumstances could be arranged in the way she desired" (91-92; vol. II, ch. 3). It is intimated here that Louisa believes she can manipulate Flora and circumstances to serve her purposes. The word "profit" with its connotations of gain encapsulates Louisa's parasitic approach to life. At this juncture in the narrative, any sympathy for her marginalised position as a spinster has been eclipsed. Flora is cast as her prey and sympathy shifts to her.

The narrator notes that "[Louisa's] motives were not entirely malicious, although tolerably selfish. She wished Flora, at least, no harm; she only wished her to marry her brother" (123; vol. II, ch. 4). One is unsure as to the exact tone of these words: they seem ironic, sarcastic and humorous. There is nothing "tolerable" about Louisa's machinations. The statement that Louisa does not mean to "harm" Flora inversely implies that marriage to Louisa's brother *would* damage Flora.

Perhaps the most telling event that compounds the idea that Louisa cannot be reformed or cured is the day her marriage is annulled. Informed that her husband of a few hours was a criminal, her first reaction is to turn on Astley: "[t]his is some miserable plot of yours, Mr. Astley Boyle, some vile trick to cheat me of your coveted fortune. It is false, absurd, scandalous, a plot hatched by you and Flora Denys" (255; vol. III, ch. 9). One is aware that she accuses them of something she has been guilty of doing to them throughout the novel. The accusations she shouts at them are a fitting judgment of her own actions and her disposition; she herself has been "false, absurd, scandalous." She also displays an inability to accept that her plans have failed by shifting the blame onto others.

Her central concern is that "they will all mock and laugh at [her]," and when Flora attempts to comfort her, she reproves her, "[y]ou know nothing of the world, Flora [...] those men may not laugh openly; but they, and every one, will laugh in private, and scorn me for my disappointment" (262, 263; vol. III, ch. 10). Her dismissal of Flora's advice reveals that she views Flora as a pampered, naïve heiress. What she has endured as a spinster is hinted at as well in the insinuation that she has full knowledge of how harsh and unforgiving the world can be. Louisa is now excluded from these men's homes as a disgraced unmarried woman. It is at once pitiful and yet something she deserves. Even after Astley "assist[s]" her in the tedious and expensive business of getting her marriage set aside in Doctors' Commons," the narrator notes that her mind was "incapable of comprehending his higher motives; she had never learnt to return good for evil as a duty" (323; vol. III, ch. 12). It is suggested that Louisa is destined to repeat her mistakes, despite the mortification she experiences.

Robert becomes doubly irredeemable through his lack of contrition. The deception he practised on Louisa is turned into outrage against her. He "reserves [all] his ill will for his wife, against whom his anger and malevolence were so extreme as almost to amount to insanity" and he "set no bounds to his resolute determination to be revenged on her" (321; vol. III, ch. 12). The capacity for "insanity" makes one aware that Louisa escaped what would have been a disastrous marriage that no amount of money would have spared her from. His revenge involves informing Astley "how far all the plots against his character, and the

attempts to entrap Flora into an engagement with Norman, were the invention and work of his wife" (322; vol. III, ch. 12). However, despite Astley knowing the extent of Louisa's transgressions, he still "treated her with conciliatory kindness and generous trust" (326; vol. III, ch. 12). And even though Robert repeatedly sends Norman damning letters of his sister's conduct from Australia, Norman "put[s] down much of the truth which really reached him, to the falsehood and vindictive feelings of the angry culprit who sent him the information" (325; vol. III, ch. 12).

Louisa's marriage to Robert and its subsequent annulment is a criticism of mercenary marriages and a warning against the improper femininity Louisa represents with her selfish and deceitful conduct. On the other hand, it appears that Louisa cannot be cured of her greed, her jealousy of Flora and Astley's relationship and her malicious disposition. The extreme mortification she experiences when her family and friends turn on her and ridicule her for being deceived by Robert's supposed wealth and gentlemanlike appearance is insufficient to reform her character. She does not admit to having a part in Robert's plans to discredit Astley and to taint his reputation. Neither does she admit to her jealousy of Flora and Astley's relationship that drives her to create a division between them. Yet, she is given a reprieve by Astley and Flora. Flora persuades her mother of Louisa's merit as a companion and she is given a home in the family of the woman she most despises. Although Louisa is not a fully-fledged criminal as her counterpart Robert is, she has the makings of one. She is not exiled along with her husband but is instead treated with circumspection and consideration by those she was determined to injure. One can even say that, because of Flora and Astley's sympathetic treatment of her, she is offered a sense of belonging previously denied to her in her aunt's home. But her transgressions place her in the position she most wanted to avoid: she is an old lady's companion with no prospects of ever re-marrying and becoming a proper English wife.

I conclude this chapter by looking back to a scene in the novel in which the narrator delineates the dispositions of Louisa, Flora and Annie by describing their individual circumstances and shortcomings, presented as infirmities requiring a cure. Louisa "had set herself diligently to seek admiration and envy, at the expense of delicacy, truth, and rectitude, and she now seemed in a fair way of attaining her object, whilst the prospect of wealth and worldly enjoyment filled in the future, completely to her own satisfaction" (82; vol. III, ch. 3).The narrator criticises Louisa's avaricious nature and shows her disregard for feminine qualities like "rectitude" and "delicacy" for material gain. Louisa is shown to be unfeminine: she does not access wealth through honest industry and subverts the Victorian ideal of

femininity. The narrator notes that Flora "was sitting in her room [...] trying to banish painful and unpleasant thoughts, by schemes for the good of others, and resolving to repair the neglect of a somewhat wasted girlhood, by earnest application to business and duty hereafter" (83; vol. III, ch. 3). She has embraced a culture of duty that stems from her awakened social conscience and her cognisance of her own failures. There is a suggestion here that, in her resolve to fix an unproductive and ignorant "girlhood," Flora enters womanhood informed by the practise of duty to others and the exercise of self-management. She is not perfect. She embodies the woman outlined in the epigraph of the novel's opening chapter: "Let other bards of angels sing/ Bright suns without a spot; /But thou art no such perfect thing" (1; vol. I, ch. 3). She remains so at the novel's end but is transformed in the areas of her disposition that would have barred her from acquiring the middle-class attributes valorised by the novel. The ideal woman and the ideal marriage can be said to be a work in progress as suggested by Flora's "schemes for the good of others" and her commitment to self-improvement. With Annie, "who had refused the man she could not love" and rejected Mr. Clarke's proposal even though "he offered what she so much needed and longed for – protection, and a home; a kind and sheltering home to her herself, and to her sister," the reality of her position in England is epitomised by loss and displacement (83; vol. III, ch. 3). Marriage to an Englishman is outlined as her only hope to belong, to have a home, and to be financially secure. If not for her English marriage, Annie would have inhabited the life of a spinster in her aunt's home, like Louisa does. Her marriage to Mr. Clarke presents a different model to Flora's and Astley's because she marries into a fixed model of femininity, the angelic domesticity of the "cheerful English wife" (285; vol. III, ch. 3). Flora, Annie and Astley are cured of their shortcomings and restored to middle-class Englishness. They are the novel's strongest argument for middle-class ideology as a centripetal force in the English nation and for the English wife as the epitome of middle-class principles.

Home and the woman in the home continue to inform the focus of the next chapter in my study of Hubback's letters and short story. Following a period of eight years in which Hubback ceased to write novels in England, she immigrated to California, where she published a short story and wrote letters back home to her family in England from 1871-1876. I approach her short story as a transitional text, written during Hubback's own period of transitioning from one nation to another. The short story's criticism of the American woman and the New World is informed by Hubback's first impressions of the country and its people. From the fictional representation of the domestic space discussed in the previous chapters, I shift to Hubback's letters, which reveal her attempts at creating a new home in a

foreign country. I explore her letters as examples of life writing, seen by theorists of autobiography like Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson as "highly stylised in terms of conventions of politeness and modes of conveying information that are implicated in ideologies of gender, ethnicity, class, and nationality" (273).

Chapter 5:
Transatlantic Observations and Lived Experience in "The Stewardess's Story" and Catherine Hubback's Letters from California

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Hubback's emigration to Oakland, California at the beginning of 1871 was precipitated by various migrations in England during her childhood and adult years. She left her childhood home at Chawton at the age of five because her father moved the family to Gosport where her mother died after childbirth; at age twelve she moved again, this time to Portsdown Lodge when her father made a second match to Jane Austen's close friend, Martha Lloyd. A period of stability followed until her marriage in 1842 to John Hubback that brought about another change in dwelling. The couple moved to an upper middle-class neighbourhood in the city to be close to John's work. Following her husband's incarceration in a mental asylum in 1850, she returned to her father's home in Portsdown. Here she remained, writing and publishing her novels for twelve years, until the necessity arose for acquiring a home to reunite with her sons who were working and studying away from Portsdown. She settled in Birkenhead and a year later moved again to a less affluent neighbourhood, an indication of financial strain. Hubback would move home again, this time to a smaller, humble abode in Rock Ferry from where she immigrated to California. The period before and following her emigration would not have been readily accessible to scholars interested in Hubback if not for Zoë Klippert's research in the archives of the Bodleian Library where the letters written to her son John and his wife Mary from 1871 to 1876 had been held as part of a collection for more than twenty years before she came across them. Klippert's transcription of Hubback's letters in *An Englishwoman in California* (2010) is accompanied by biographical details of her life, on which I rely. Hubback's short story "The Stewardess's Story" and her letters allow for an exploration of domestic ideology, the home and the domestic as nation from Hubback's observations and experiences as an English middle-class immigrant. I argue that Hubback's Californian writing validates English domestic ideology in her criticism of American domesticity and femininity. Despite her ambivalent position as both outsider and insider, adapting to her new context and yet critical of it, her transatlantic writing makes a persuasive argument for the pre-eminence of English domesticity that is more straightforward than that found in her fiction.

In Hubback's only published short story and her first foray into writing for an American readership, her interest in the domestic affairs of the American nation and in the New World woman is evident. Hubback's short story resonates with writing by other English authors like Frances Trollope who, like Hubback after her, travelled to America for its promise of a better way of life (despite the fact that in a complete reversal of the trajectory of Hubback's writing career, Trollope was compelled to leave America and on her return to England began writing to support herself and her family). *The Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) was her first success, chronicling her travels and experiences in America. I return to Trollope's work throughout the chapter because Hubback's observations regarding American women and Californian society, begun in the short story and predominantly featured in her letters, are similar to Trollope's. The letters are fascinating for what they reveal about Hubback's own lived experiences as an English middle-class immigrant in California, as a middle-aged woman, as a household manager, and as a former writer of domestic fiction. She is at once an observer of the society she lives in and she becomes part of it as she adapts to her new environment. The letters feature a facet of the domestic space which Hubback's novels do not explicitly address, namely the domestic servant, particularly the Chinese men she employed as servants in her home, which reveals their position in American society at a time when they were demonised and ostracised. I argue that the letters show Hubback's ambivalent connection to the society she lived in and observed, because, despite making California her home and distancing herself from her homeland, Hubback continued to propagate the English domestic ideology validated in her novels, as is evident in her criticism of her female Californian neighbours and the American nation.

The letters transcribed by Klippert do not cover the entire six years of correspondence between Hubback and John and Mary, her son and daughter-in-law. Klippert notes that they only represent "perhaps a fifth" of Hubback's writings and that John's and Mary's "side of the correspondence has not come to light" (xviii). Klippert argues that this does not detract from their overall coherence and it is possible to garner sufficient insight about Hubback's attitudes and general experience. Liz Stanley in her work on the epistolary form states that these gaps and absences are typical of the "archived" letter, because:

> most published collections of letters, indeed most archived letters, will have originated as part of a correspondence, but with one side remaining: because of the presumed importance of one of the letter writers (because a public figure or having personal significance for either the addressee or the person who kept the letters); or perhaps because of the content of these letters (such as concerning a momentous time in someone's life, or the circumstances of writing, for example, wartime or emigration). In all cases, the loss of the 'other side' of the correspondence influences readers'

> understandings of the remaining letters, for these were a part of something, and not the whole. (210)

Stanley explains that "[l]etters disturb binary distinctions: between speaking and writing and private and public" and in their negotiation of the private and public "occupy a 'middle space' in which 'private' letters may be both written and read in public situations" (209). She refers here to the boundary between letters as a record of private, intimate thoughts and observations which become public property when circulated.

Marlene Kadar defines life writing as "the most flexible and open term available for autobiographical fragments [...] a less exclusive genre of personal kinds of writing that includes *both* biography and autobiography, but also the less 'objective' [...] genres such as letters and diaries" (1, 4, emphasis in original). Smith and Watson similarly define life writing as "written forms of the autobiographical," the "autobiographical" being "self-referential writing" salient to letters, memoirs and diaries (4). They note, however, in *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, that despite the inclusion of letters in the genre of life writing, letters had "a secondary or marginal status as literature" up until the twentieth century because of the mode's gendered associations with women writers and the private, female domestic space (32-33). Since then, new theories have emerged which they delineate as "theories of the everyday constructions of experience" (32). Smith and Watson establish that "everyday" expressions of female lives are conceptualised by, amongst others, theories of the body, identity and female subjectivity, like Patricia Spacks's "Female Rhetorics," theories of space and place and theories of experience engaged in most recently by Joan Scott in "Experience" (*Reading Autobiography* 232; 57).

My use of the term "lived experience" in the title of this chapter and in connection with the letters derives from Antoinette Burton's employment of the term in her influential work *Dwelling in the Archive* on the home as domestic archive (6). "Lived experience" can be viewed as synonymous with what Smith and Watson call "women's inscriptions of dailiness" in reference to letters, diaries and memoirs (*Women, Autobiography*32). This chapter considers "inscriptions" of "lived experience" that provide a degree of access to the experience. Looking at three Indian women's "lived experience" of home in particular, Burton explains that these women utilised their memories of home in colonial India as an archival source from which to write and "construct their own histories," hereby inscribing their memories of home in India onto a colonial history they were excluded from (5). For Burton, these women's postcolonial texts are not only valuable for their insight into a female

colonial experience but are archival documents in which "a variety of counterhistories of colonial modernity can be discerned" (5). Burton notes that the uneasy relationship between history and the home that challenges traditional constructions of the past invokes the argument whether stories grounded in memory, experience and "house[d]" in domestic spaces can be viewed as equally viable and as valid as historical discourse (4). In Burton's view, the solution to this problem is to "understand discourse and reality not as opposing domains, but as a vast, interdependent archive" (5). In other words, documents not considered mainstream literature such as oral testimony, recipe books, comic books, unpublished journals and letters are legitimated by the archive, and should be perceived, alongside critical discourse, as vital to the ongoing examination of the imbrications between history and "archival evidence" (139).In contrast to conventional historical accounts which focus on 'great' historical events accepted as authoritative, memoirs, journals and letters written by women like Hubback whose letters recount her domestic experiences and concerns form the type of domestic archive Burton writes about. Hubback's criticism of the New World and Californian women, her home-making endeavours and her gradual introspection may therefore be seen to invite a reading of her lived experience of the society she inhabited.

Writing on English emigration to America in the nineteenth-century, Charlotte Erickson claims that "[e]migration was a familiar means of escape from unwanted legal ties" (245). She notes that "although most Englishwomen throughout the century emigrated with male relatives," they were more involved in the resolution to leave and "clearly had many decisions to make for themselves" (242). Women left for better financial prospects that new countries like America and Australia appeared to offer and, in Janet Myers's view, to escape the threat of a drop in status if they remained in their distressed circumstances in England (48). As Erickson points out, some women and families returned to England if they found adaptation difficult or if they failed to succeed financially in their business endeavours (248, 249). An example of successful adaptation to California's business sector, Hubback's son Edward was already established as a clerk in the merchant house of Dickson, De Wolf, & Company for two and a half years and was quite possibly doing well in his independence (Klippert 16). Klippert suggests that Hubback's reasons for emigrating are because of the change in "family dynamics" between her and her newly married John (18). A snippet of an unpublished typescript of John's autobiography in Klippert's introduction shows that he was "less ready to accept" his mother's opinion and that it was a tacit agreement between him and her that once he married, she would leave England to live with Edward, with whom she had a more agreeable relationship (18).The move abroad was also to be a business opportunity for

her youngest son Charles who accompanied her to America and stayed behind in Virginia to establish himself in farming.

Her transatlantic crossing was just one in a series of transitions from one home to another that began in her childhood and extended into her marriage, deferring the idea of domestic stability as Hubback aged. Upon her marriage when she was twenty-four years old, Hubback moved from her father's family home to a prosperous middle-class home in Bloomsbury in the city (Klippert 12). This home was a hive of social activity, with Hubback as the supportive wife hosting many dinner parties for her husband's colleagues (Klippert 12). After her husband was admitted to an asylum in 1850, the subsequent loss of income this caused brought about a change in dwelling again when she was compelled to return to her father's home. She resided at Portsdown Lodge for twelve years as she wrote her novels to provide for her sons, John, Edward and Charles, and herself. Klippert notes that Hubback's decision to leave Portsdown Lodge is influenced by John's entry into an apprenticeship at a grain brokerage in Liverpool, Edward obtaining an apprenticeship in the same area and Charles's imminent graduation from school (14). Hubback settled in lodgings in Birkenhead, reunited the family, and a "year later the family moved again," this time a few streets away (Klippert 14).

Birkenhead did not have the comforts of Portsdown and Hubback's house was "modest" and "uninspiring," according to Klippert (15). Significantly, Hubback had ceased to write novels by the time she moved to Birkenhead. An indication that this caused an immediate financial strain is evident in Hubback's "brother-in-law Joseph Hubback contribut[ing] to her support, enabling her to be mistress of her own household for the first time in fourteen years" (Klippert15). Added to this decline in living standards, Hubback also no longer moved in the same social circles that her marriage and her father's naval connections once afforded her. This gradual dislocation from familiar surroundings and social circles was exacerbated when Hubback moved again, in 1868, to a smaller, lower middle-class area in Rock Ferry with Charles, while they waited for John to return to England from California (Klippert 17). Edward, in the meantime, had left for California. What these migrations reveal is that Hubback's last years in England represented a period of unsettlement and that her middle-class status had become steadily unstable. Following her move from her father's home she had little family connection, evident in her not returning to Portsdown Lodge for her father's funeral and leaving the arrangements and settling of the estate to her brothers and sisters. Her life centred on her sons, and her movements as well as her domestic circumstances were influenced by their work.

Remarkably, Hubback was already in her fifties, past what was considered the prime of her life and facing old age, when she left her husband behind in an asylum and what little family connection she still had. She left England with her youngest son Charles with the "intention to foster Edward's career" and to establish and manage his home until he married (Klippert 1). Once in California, she published only one short story, "The Stewardess's Story" (1871), and from 1871 to 1876 wrote letters filled with observations of American society and her varied experiences of living in Oakland to her son John and his wife Mary in England. The question is why Hubback, having tried her hand at the genre of the short story, failed to publish anything else. In a letter dated September 1871, Hubback writes that after publishing her short story in the *Overland Monthly*, she has "two more ready" (31). She was, however, not prepared to "write for nothing" (31). Clearly, having two more stories in hand demonstrates that she considered continuing writing and publishing. The fact that she wanted "in future" to have her stories printed with "Mrs. C. Austen Hubback and make believe the A. stands for that" affirms her intentions of continuing to write and to capitalise on her aunt's name that was gaining wider recognition in literary circles following the publication of the first edition of James Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1869) (31). Significantly, Hubback's intention to print her short stories with the claim that the "A" in her name stands for "Austen" recalls her 'apprenticeship' as a novelist in the appropriation of her aunt's work that likewise indicated a monopolising of her aunt's emerging fame as an author in order to secure a good reception for her own work. She also writes that she has "to keep [her] *Californianica* aired, for use in [her] stories" (32). In this same letter, Hubback tells John that she "sent 2 painted photos for sale to the City" on the assurance of a friend, "Mr Watkins", that she will "most likely sell them" (33). Nine months passed with no reference to whether the paintings were sold or not before Hubback wrote of another avenue of generating money by teaching lace-making to American girls.

Hubback was one of many English women who travelled to and settled in America for better prospects during the nineteenth-century but her letters are certainly rare, because, as Charlotte Erickson states, "[s]urviving emigrant letters were not often written by women" (239). She explains that despite the "wealth of emigrant guides and travel accounts" that inundated "British and European presses in the nineteenth century, few were written by women" (239). As I mentioned earlier, one of the few and well-known female travel writers Frances Trollope travelled to America for the financial opportunity the New World promised since her husband struggled with financial misfortune (Kissel 14). Her travelogue, *The Domestic Manners of the Americans*, castigates facets of American society like the justice

system, the relations between genders and the particular constructions of femininity and masculinity she witnessed. She followed this with the novel *The Refugee in America* (1832), which is similarly critical of the continent. Her travels in America initiated a prolific writing period which produced a long list of other travel works and novels.

Trollope arrived in America in 1827 with three of her children, including Anthony, who would later become a celebrated novelist. In her *Domestic Manners*, Trollope writes that she remained for a while in Cincinnati, Ohio, while she waited for her husband and eldest son to join them because it was believed to be a better place for a young man to "settle" and she "intend[ed] to continue with him till he should feel himself sufficiently established" (n.pag; ch.5). She also tried to foster her own business but was unsuccessful. They left Cincinnati in 1830; the stay there was clearly a regrettable experience as Trollope writes that they had "wasted health, time and money there" (n.pag; ch.17). After an unsuccessful four-year stay, she returned to England thoroughly persuaded that English emigration to America was undesirable because it did not serve them well nor alleviated their poverty (n.pag; ch. 27). Her son Anthony Trollope also wrote of his travels in America from 1861-2 in *North America* (1862), part travelogue, part description of American culture that attempted to soften the mordant approach his mother took in her *Domestic Manners*. His popular *The Way We Live Now* (1875), however, engages with the stereotype of American women in British novels by featuring a determined, passionate American woman, Mrs. Hurtle, as the foil to angelic, refined English woman Henrietta Carbury. Another English writer who wrote of America was Charles Dickens who travelled to the continent with his wife. He wrote the dismissive *American Notes* (1842) that records his experiences and, once in England, he wrote an indictment of American culture in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4). Hubback's short story and letters can be read alongside these British writings for their vilification of America's materialistic outlook, dollar fetish, immorality and, as Diane Archibald puts it in her analysis of Dickens's novel, for "the American woman" as "a monstrosity created by the country itself" (142). Hubback's short story appears drawn from Dickens's portrayal of the American woman as a product of an unscrupulous nation, with Mrs. Seaton as the American villainess who aims to corrupt an unsuspecting English stewardess. Hubback's letter in 1872 to her son John adds to this disparagement of American femininity based on her everyday experience:

> American 'women's rights' women seem to me like a fisherman's wife who was not satisfied with anything short of the sun and the moon. In this country they seem to have their own way from babyhood [...] the law allows them not only to hold property independent of their husbands, but to devise it to anyone they please *in spite of him* –

> whilst they have a share in all his, and he cannot leave it or settle it without his wife's consent. (80-81; emphasis in original)

The reference to the fairy tale's greedy "fisherman's wife" and to American women "hav[ing] their own way from babyhood" attest to Hubback's censure of the femininity she observed. The right of the American woman to disregard her husband in her will is emphasised in the italicised "*in spite of him*" that similarly expresses Hubback's disapproval.

Hubback's letters show that her spirit of adventure and openness to the society she entered gradually receded, shifting from an optimistic and embracing outlook to a retreat into English conservatism. Possibly, there is a connection between Hubback's withdrawal into conventionality and the fact that she discontinued her writing and began teaching the domestic art of lace-making from within her own home. Lace-making, regarded as a distinctive English skill in California, symbolised her Englishness and her connection to her native soil, but it also represented a shift from a more public role as writer to a private, domestic on. This retreat seems to have entrenched the conservatism that underpins her prejudice against American women. In her letter dated September 1871, Hubback speaks of having published her short story and relates in passing that Charlie was to marry an English girl (31). She notes that she is "glad it is not an American girl," citing the reason that if Charlie would one day return to England, an American girl "would [not] be happy there" (33). Her first reference to American women is not critical but rather considers whether a union between an English man and American woman would be practical, and there is an implied doubt of the capacity of American girls to adapt to living in England. A few months later, with no reference to her writing or publishing another story, her letter contains a direct criticism of American women's deportment and style of dress. She writes deprecatingly that "American girls carry themselves so badly, owing to the exaggerated Grecian bend that they all look humpbacked [...] when they curtsey the girls here look like ducks waddling into the water [...] and when they dance they are about as graceful as so many cows" (36).Also, the short story's criticism of Mrs. Seaton can be taken as evidence for an immediate disparagement of American femininity. The point is thus that her increased irritation by American culture, femininity and domesticity was not only informed by her preconceived prejudices but by her own disappointments and struggles evident in the section on the letters.

When Hubback arrived in Oakland she entered a state that historians Robert Cherny, Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo and Richard Griswold del Castillo note was "often at the forefront of rapid and far-reaching change" in industry, the expansion of cities, changing

gender roles and political developments (162). It was the period in Californian history from 1870-1900 that they call the "Gilded Age" (159). California's arable land was favourable for the growth of wheat which became the new gold after the discovery of the yellow metal in 1848. Britain was California's largest importer of wheat due to its increasing industrial workforce. John and Edward were part of this expanding labour market, with John working for a grain import company in Liverpool and Edward working in California's wheat trade.

Cherny, Lemke-Santangelo and Griswold del Castillo state that despite broader economic enfranchisement, changes in gender roles were gradual, more visible in California's cities than in its rural areas. They note that by 1880 more women were becoming part of the public arena as "wage earners, professionals, and self-employed entrepreneurs," but that "[t]he majority of women did not work outside of the home" (175). This is also an issue of class and race since most women who worked outside of the domestic space were "African American women and daughters of immigrants," employed as "servants and waitresses" (175). They note further that "the social values of domesticity and separate spheres prevailed in many places," as an ideological practice of California's "white middle-class" (175). In her introduction to the letters, Klippert argues that Hubback as an English female immigrant became "part of a new wave of Californians" who were "older, family-oriented, and increasingly female" (2). Moreover, Oakland was deemed more stable than San Francisco and offered a sustainable middle-class way of life conducive to English domesticity (Klippert 2).

Although California offered, as Klippert suggests, an easy assimilation into American culture and a sense of English community, antagonism between America and England was still palpable at the time of Hubback settling there. Archibald, in her comparison of American and English women in nineteenth-century literature, notes that England viewed the "United States" as the "'Prodigal Son,' who rebelled against his parent [England] to stand in direct competition with her" (137). America in turn believed itself to be superior and far more progressive than England. In Trollope's *Domestic Manners*, following her conversation with an American gentleman in which he expresses his disgust with English gradations of rank, she notes "how soothing the idea seems [to them], that they are more modern, more advanced than England. Our classic literatures, our princely dignities, our noble institutions, are all gone-by relics of the dark ages (n.pag; ch.14). On other occasions, Trollope encountered what she calls "the national feeling of [...] unconquerable dislike" which "lives at the bottom of every truly American heart against the English" that eclipsed the "kindness" she received from some Americans she came into contact with (n.pag; ch.14). Some forty years later,

Hubback's 1872 letter in which she writes in reference to American citizens that "[t]here is lots of talk and boast[s] about the size and power of their country" resonates with Trollope's personal experience of what she perceived as American superciliousness (69).

Newspapers and journals of this period reveal the strained relations between the two countries. In an article in the 1878 September edition of the *Los Angeles Herald*, the late Prime Minister of Great Britain, Right Hon. Gladstone notes that "[t]ime was, and not so long ago, when the Englishman was supercilious to the American" ("An Englishman's Recognition" n.pag.). Gladstone goes on to state that "[e]verything on this side of the Atlantic was thought by self-sufficient English prigs who filled the columns of English magazines and newspapers to be *bizarre* and crude" (n.pag; emphasis in original). Another article in the *Los Angeles Herald* shows that the tensions between the two countries had not abated ten years later despite Gladstone's intimation that relations between the two countries had seen improvement. Following a political scandal in the American government, the journalist laments that the English press had published "insulting and menacing articles" concerning the dismissal of one of its senators ("Untitled" n.pag.). The article quotes a member of the American Senate, Lord J. Randolph, imploring England to "maintain an imperturbable and friendly attitude" because "war between" the two countries "would be more atrocious and dangerous than any war since God created the earth" (n.pag.).

It must be noted, however, that the animosity between the two countries was limited to inflammatory remarks such as Lord Randolph's within the pages of newspapers and journals. As John Whitley and Arnold Goldman argue in their introduction to Dickens's *American Notes*, "in the field of humanitarianism there was close cooperation and rapport" between America and England in the nineteenth-century over crucial social issues like "peace, anti-slavery and temperance movements" (13). This mutual influence across the Atlantic extended to "ideas of reform [...] in education and public institutions [...] hospitals" and mental institutions that "promoted changes in comparable British institutions" (13). Whitley and Goldman note that the dissemination of knowledge between the two countries was facilitated by travellers and writers like Dickens who "gave much of their time in America to visiting and describing" these institutions (13).

Discord was far more palpable and immediate on the American domestic front from 1870 onwards between Chinese immigrants, Californian citizens and other European immigrants. Chinese immigrants exceeded other immigrants in number and their increasing presence was cause for alarm amongst Californian citizens. The Californian census, as Heizer and Almqu show, listed 35,000 Chinese in the state in 1860 and by 1880 their numbers were

75,000 (154). Hubback writes in 1872 that "at present there is no lack of Chinese – as they come over in shiploads" (*Letters* 57). Most Chinese immigrants were male and had begun their emigration to the New World because of the gold-rush. Daniels asserts that "most Chinese were motivated" to emigrate because of the marked unravelling of living standards in China but had "no intention of emigrating permanently" (6, 12). Chinese men were the major contributing work force that completed the "Union-Central Pacific Railroad" in May 1869 (Daniels 37). Because of the completion of the railroad that left "10,000 Chinese workmen" unemployed, they looked for labour elsewhere as domestic servants in middle-class homes such as Hubback's (Daniels 38). Chinese workers were in competition with Irish and English immigrants in the unskilled labour sector because, as Daniels points out, the Chinese "worked more cheaply than did white labour" (19). In addition, they occupied a space and performed a function conventionally female. Daniels explains that protest marches in San Francisco against Chinese immigration had slogans that read "Women's Rights And No More Chinese Chambermaids" (38). Despite rapid expansion in business and cities, there was a notable rise in unemployment amongst the wider working class. This, as Daniels points out, caused the lower classes in California to blame "the Chinese workman and those who employed him" (38).

Hubback, as a middle-class employer of Chinese domestics, would have been viewed as being complicit with this perceived colonisation of the labour market. Her letters, however, make no mention of her position as an employer in relation to the wider, public anti-Chinese agitation that was quite pronounced in her time. Hubback's letters show her private, lived experience of Chinese domestic servants that included the fears she had concerning their welfare and safety as persecution against them increased. The letters also reveal the regular disruption they caused in her home with their sudden departures, her amusement at what she perceived to be their quirky mannerisms, and her interaction with them. As the following section on the short story demonstrates, her interaction with the Chinese and her sentiments concerning them contrasts with her engagement with American women that was an early point of contention and irritation for her.

Contentious Contact: Narrating the Emigrant View

The "Stewardess's Story" is a transitional text which Hubback wrote in the months following her arrival in Oakland. I use the word 'transitional' because the short story contains transitional elements aptly reflected in its setting: the story is set on a ship during its

transatlantic crossing from London to New York. The ship's interstitial position on the Atlantic Ocean presents this idea of the people on board being between two spaces. Hubback represents the idea of transition and being in transit, in her move from one country to another. She is also not at home in either country as she attempts to make a home in California in those first few months of settling there. As her early letters show, she is a transitional figure because she is an outsider even as she adapts to California.

"The Stewardess's Story" contends that a woman from an inferior class in England is superior in morals and decorum in comparison to a wealthy American woman. Its plot of mystery and fraud is developed through Mrs. Ford, a respectable English head-stewardess, and the antagonist Mrs. Seaton, an American traveller onboard a transatlantic steamer bound for New York. The title indicates the stewardess's centrality to the story; and that her perspective supersedes the perspective of the other characters in the story. Mrs. Seaton travels frequently with her husband and son, Freddy, and is well-acquainted with Mrs. Ford because she had been their stewardess on many of their journeys. But, unbeknownst to the stewardess, Mrs. Seaton's husband is a member of a gang of forgers. Intent on exploiting the stewardess's ignorance, Mrs. Seaton requests her assistance in hiding a wrapped parcel in her luggage on the eve of the ship's arrival. The parcel is a copper plate for counterfeiting money. Mrs. Seaton's plan is to have it smuggled through customs in the stewardess's luggage because as ship's employee it is unlikely that her luggage would be searched. After her initial reticence, Mrs. Ford accepts the package because Mrs. Seaton convinces her that it is "just the most innocent little machine in the world" (338). As an extension of her trickery, Mrs. Seaton asks Mrs. Ford to accompany her ashore and to carry Freddy for whom the stewardess has developed a deep fondness. This serves as a cover for her intention to have others think that Mrs. Ford is she once they disembark. She also gives the stewardess two letters to keep for her, letters that, if found on her, would implicate the stewardess in being involved in the crime of smuggling the forging plate in her luggage. Once ashore, the two women are accosted by a custom-house official who escorts them to a room where two female searchers await them. Treated like smugglers, they are violently stripped of their clothes. Soon after her ordeal, Mrs. Ford discovers that Mr. Seaton is imprisoned for forgery. The stewardess finds that the parcel is a forging plate and throws it overboard. Despite his guilt, Mr. Seaton is released. Mrs. Ford re-encounters Mrs. Seaton a while later. The showdown between them is dramatic, with an unapologetic Mrs. Seaton confronted by an accusatory Mrs. Ford. The story culminates with each woman's declaration of their different values and beliefs and the two women part as enemies.

The secrecy and duplicity that the forging plate represents is pointed to in the opening paragraph. Mrs. Seaton disturbs Mrs. Ford at "night [...] by a low tap at her cabin-door" when "all the lady passengers" have "retired to their berths" (336). Mrs. Seaton's reasons for approaching Mrs. Ford at night are covert. It is also significant that the other female travellers were all in bed, implying that Mrs. Seaton is unladylike for being outside of her room. Mrs. Seaton's respectability is thus brought into question. Her "low" knock on the door implies furtiveness and suggests that she does not want to draw undue attention to herself. It is posited, when Mrs. Ford thinks it is the "steward [come to] warn" her that "it was time to put the lights out," that the ship is also a controlled space and has rules and regulations which must be adhered to (336). The stewardess is therefore introduced as someone who is expected to practise regulation and be obedient.

The implication of transgression on Mrs. Seaton's part is supported by the repetition of "low," this time to describe the pitch of her voice when she addresses Mrs. Ford with the package (337). When she "carefully clos[es] the door" behind her, the deliberate caution in her action illustrates that she is there for a clandestine purpose (337). Mrs. Ford's reaction to Mrs. Seaton's request to hide the parcel is to "hesitate," because "of course it was not her business to disoblige passengers; but, then, smuggling was dangerous, and this looked uncommonly like it" (337). Notably, her first reaction is moral discretion encapsulated in "hesitate," despite the fact that she is duty-bound to serve Mrs. Seaton and that her instinct tells her it is an illegal request. The narrator notes that "[s]till, the lady who made the request was well known to the stewardess, and seemed particularly friendly to her" (337). The word "still' is telling because it indicates a transition from Mrs. Ford's misgivings to her ignoring them in favour of focusing on her familiarity with Mrs. Seaton. It hereby implicates the stewardess as well by the suggestion that because of her desire to be looked upon favourably by Mrs. Seaton, she cannot be conceived of as completely innocent. It is possible to argue as well that the stewardess discards caution because Mrs. Seaton is "particularly" attentive to her, implying that this is a shortcoming that is open for manipulation.

Furthermore, not only is Mrs. Ford appeased by her familiarity with Mrs. Seaton, but appears to identify with Mrs. Seaton's supposed language of motherly love. Mrs. Seaton manipulates the stewardess's affection for her son by telling her that she hopes the package "would make quite a fortune for little Freddy" (338). Mrs. Ford appears deceived by this show of affection for her son, despite the fact that her motherly devotion is questionable since Mrs. Ford had to "nurse" Mrs. Seaton's son during the voyage while the American woman "kept to her berth, on plea of sickness" (338). The stewardess "fulfilled" this role "with care,"

acting as a surrogate mother, suggesting that the American woman is self-serving and neglectful of her duty (338).

This contrast between ideal and transgressive womanhood extends to Mrs. Seaton's support and assistance of her husband's crime mocks the ideal of English companionate marriage, that husband and wife should mutually support each other's spheres. It is she who executes the entire smuggling plan on-board ship even though her husband is a gang member. When her husband is arrested after they disembark, she calmly tells Mrs. Ford that "'of course, we had rather it should not happen [...] but what's the use of thinking that? The real thing is to get out of it as quickly as possible'" (339). American pragmatism countermands conventional morality with Mrs. Seaton assisting her husband's immoral dealings and prizing his escape from punishment.

According to Archibald, American women were perceived as "indelicate," and "unfeminine – displaying too much raw physicality and assertiveness (supposedly male qualities) to fit the domestic ideal" (136). In Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*, American women are stereotypically regarded by the novel's quintessential English gentleman, Roger Carbury, as "loud, masculine, and atheistical" (667). Mrs. Seaton is certainly "masculinised," to borrow Archibald's term in her reference to America's perceived corrupting effect on "its women" (146). Mrs. Seaton is "far more composed" than Mrs. Ford who is "too much frightened and puzzled" when officers search their luggage (339). While the stewardess is overcome emotionally, Mrs. Seaton continues with the steps necessary to fulfil their fraudulent aims. The American is shown to be solely concerned with securing the letters in Mrs. Ford's jacket: even as Mrs. Ford is stripped of her jacket, "Mrs. Seaton, with affected carelessness, immediately laid over it a large railway rug" (340). Mrs. Ford on the other hand "could not understand why she should now be subjected to this degradation" and "pushed away the coarse hands" pulling at her clothes (340). Her disconnection from Mrs. Ford's predicament places a distance between her and the stewardess that brings her capacity for softer, vulnerable feeling into question, posing her as more masculine than feminine.

This scene conveys that Mrs. Seaton would not be affected by the humiliation of the search because she has no feminine modesty to speak of. It also implies that as an American Mrs. Seaton is accustomed to rough and crude behaviour. In contrast, Mrs. Ford's dignity, as well as identity as a respectable English woman, is threatened whilst she is searched. The invasive examination is a culmination of Mrs. Seaton's continuous intimidation and reversal of Mrs. Ford's good intentions. The search insinuates that American society poses a certain danger to Englishness, and that English citizens are vulnerable in the New World. It is

possible to argue that the stewardess is disabused of her inclination to pander to Mrs. Seaton because of her upper-class status. In addition, one may argue that she is disabused of the notion that an upper-class rank guarantees morality and proper conduct. The jarring and invasive way the search is conducted marks her with the truth that America is a country where devious and unscrupulous acts are committed and criminals are excused. It may be a form of punishment as well because the stewardess ignored her intuition that Mrs. Seaton was involved in smuggling.

The stereotype of American greed for wealth is also highlighted in this scene, as is the supposed predilection for acquiring it by any means necessary. Mrs. Seaton and her husband's smuggling of a forging plate to produce counterfeit money points to this stereotype and emphasises that they are willing to transgress the law in order to be rich. Furthermore, Mrs. Seaton uses the examination of her luggage mainly as an opportunity to boast of her luxurious belongings. She "paraded rather ostentatiously certain new articles of apparel, and drew the officer's attention to her silks and gloves" (339). Commenting on this facet of Americans, Hubback in one of her letters dated 1872 comments that her son Edward fears he is "growing dreadfully American and caring for nothing but money" (*Letters* 73). Trollope similarly observes how "the low tone of morality is generated by this universal pursuit of money" in America, and that an English gentleman friend of hers once vowed that he had "never overheard Americans conversing without the word DOLLAR being pronounced between them" (n.pag; ch. 28). In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the narrator appears to agree on this aspect of Americans: "Dollars. All their cares, hopes, joys, affections, virtues, and associations, seemed to be melted down into dollars. Men were weighed by their dollars [...] life was auctioneered [...] and knocked down for its dollars" (336).

The short story echoes the judgemental assertions above. This judgement is conveyed by Mrs. Ford's opinion that Mr. Seaton is "set at liberty" despite the charges laid against him (343). It is implied that this occurs because of a lack of evidence but mainly because, as Mrs. Seaton explains, her husband has "friends who will come forward right away, just as soon as they know" of his arrest (339). In other words, Mr. Seaton's criminal connections are powerful enough to circumvent the law. The end of the story is a statement on this distortion of morality and justice. Mrs. Ford rejects Mrs. Seaton's offer of profit and informs her that had she assisted them she would have "deserved" imprisonment "as much as" Mrs. Seaton does (343). But Mrs. Seaton scoffs "impertinently" at Mrs Ford's "indignant and outraged honesty," and thus dismisses that she is a criminal and should be incarcerated (343). Mrs. Seaton has the last say and she merely "walk[s]" away (343). The image of Mrs. Seaton

freely walking away after being accused of a serious felony emphasises their escape of punishment and implies that they will probably continue their life of crime in a nation that makes it easy to do so. Significantly, their freedom does not diminish the stewardess's marked disapproval of American ways. In addition, Mrs. Ford comes away from this encounter less naïve and decidedly marked by her distressing contact with American deceit and improper womanhood. She takes this image of unprincipled womanhood and nation with her to a far more moral and ordered nation by comparison. This tarnished perspective of America and its citizens resonates with the portrayal of Dickens's Major Pawkins who, although he had a "genius for swindling" was nevertheless considered to be "an admirable man of business" in his American social circles (*Martin Chuzzlewit* 331). In a letter written in 1876 in which she wrote of the "bad times" experienced by businesses, Hubback observed that " at least in America [...] the only people who seem to be rich here are those who cheat or steal in some way" (155). Hubback's critical view of American society evident here in her judgmental tone and her undoubtedly unfair equation of all Americans with dishonest and unprincipled conduct permeates her letters. It is a dismissive stance that may have been influenced by earlier English perceptions of American society like those written by Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens, although there is no proof of this. As the next section on her letters will demonstrate, it is also a perspective influenced by her own economic struggles in California and the ambivalent position she occupied there.

Writing Home: Ambivalent Observations of the New World

Much of the content of Hubback's letters is based on her observations of American society. This is evident in her acute descriptions of American modes of dress or Californian weather and landscape but also in her drawings that accompanies the letters. On one occasion, she adds drawings of the French style of dress adopted by American girls in her letter to Mary (36). In another instance, she illustrates the size of the insects that plague her when she walks in the garden in the evening and in later letters she includes illustrations of the countryside in her travels (30, 44). She remains an outsider even as she appears to integrate herself into American life through church attendance and teaching Sunday school, instructing young American girls to sew and earning money for it and travelling to other Californian towns.

Although Hubback was determined to honour her original intention to manage Edward's home, it is possible that she may have attempted on several occasions to forestall visiting England. For example, in a letter written in October 1873, Hubback writes that she

and Edward "contemplated starting for England [...] next February if the roads are open" (99). The following January, she states: "I am so glad we are not going" because it freed her to receive Charlie and his wife Bernhardine into her home (102). Charlie and Bernhardine did not come to stay. In April 1874 she acknowledges she is "quite resolved not to think of going to England this year" because she is not prepared to "desert Edward until he marrie[d]" (112, 113). A couple of months later she declares to Mary that, "[i]f I could arrange to pay you a visit next year, I certainly will, but it is impossible to say how things may go – and it would require a good deal of consideration to *leave* Edward comfortably" (121; emphasis in original). The frequent references to a possible visit in her letters point to the fact that John and Mary regularly ask her when she will visit them. In all of her allusions to a possible visit, it appears that Hubback may be using her sons as an excuse not to travel to England. Her words suggests Edward dependence on her, a questionable portrayal when one recalls that Edward resided and survived in California on his own for two years before Hubback joined him.

Her apparent reluctance to see her homeland again is first articulated in an early 1871 letter: "If I do reach England again I am sure I shall never like living there" (22). She continues by declaring her love of San Francisco's "climate" and concludes that "nothing but necessity would make me *settle* in the neighbourhood of Liverpool [...] I never knew how much I hated it until I got away" (22; emphasis in original). Hubback's sentiment conveys that, aside from her practical and familial reasons for doing so, emigration was also a means of escape from England. Her relief in leaving England is underscored in her appeal to John before she eventually departs for England to visit him in 1875: "I hope you are not going to worry me about remaining in England" and reminds him that he will "spoil [her] visit" if he did (136). Arguably, one could also suggest that Hubback, in her complete commitment to Edward's well-being and to residing in California, did not want to be weakened by a request from John for her to return to England. Of course, this insinuates that a part of her would perhaps have been tempted to do so and that, what she may be doing is convincing herself that she is where she desires to be. However, the emotive language encapsulated in "hated" and the fact that she views herself as having "got away" from England diminishes the idea of warm feeling for her native home (22).

Hubback's adaptation to Californian life with the above disavowal of England as home connects to her social circle of mainly other English women. From the evidence in her letters, she rarely befriends an American woman, but forms a good, enduring friendship with one American woman, Miss Leila Kirkham, who later becomes Mrs. Blair. Their friendship

is however strengthened by the fact that Miss Kirkham appears more English than American in her taste and perspective. "She is a little odd and wild," writes Hubback to John, "but [is] very clever, and has been in England – and likes English things and people" (30). Leila Kirkham is "odd and wild" because she has been engaged a number of times and is only nineteen years old. But Hubback pities her because Miss Kirkham was "obliged to break off" her last engagement because of the disapproval of her fiancé's father (64). Once married she consults Hubback about "housekeeping matters [...] once a week at least" (74). In a way, Hubback replaces the role of Leila Blair's mother as guide to her daughter in her new role as wife.

It is possible that her disfavour of American women and their want, in her opinion, of proper domestic skills relates to her significant relationships with other English women. This exclusivity may have germinated with Hubback's exclusion from the parties hosted by her Western neighbours during her first experience of the Fourth of July celebrations: "I was not asked" she writes, "so I stayed away" (25). A month after this event she mentions a friend for the first time, a Mrs. Hudson whom she notably describes as "English, and very nice" and who she is "very fond of" (26). Their companionship is short-lived because Mrs. Hudson moves away and Hubback is grateful for another English woman Miss MacCann's company. Hubback declares that she does not "know what [she] should do if Miss MacCann went home, it is such a comfort to have one English friend on whose word one can rely" (50). Part of Hubback's affection and reliance on Miss MacCann stems from their mutual concurrence "that the women here are all gossiping, scandal-loving, ill-natured smiling hypocrites, not one of whom can one believe nor trust" (50). Hubback blames this apparent duplicity, "back-biting – jealousies and feuds" on excessive leisure and living in a "public way" in "boarding-houses" (50). It is possible that Hubback's opinion of her female neighbours as untrustworthy gossips is determined by her own sense of alienation and minimal identification with them. It is an alienation intensified by her first-hand experience of gossip in connection with her close friend, Leila Kirkham. Hubback writes that because of Leila Kirkham's numerous engagements, her actions draw much "ill-natured scandal" (64). Hubback is also older and set in her ways, which makes her less accommodating of the differences she observes in her nearby residents.

Commenting on her neighbour's "brusque unfinished ways" to her daughter-in-law Mary, she adds that she knows Mary will not allow her "little daughter when she is seven years old to be lolling around neighbour's gates, and dawdling about on the streets as [the neighbour's] children [do] in dirty pinafores and rough heads" (54). She notes that American

women "marry early, and turn into domestic drudges" (65). Frances Trollope observes this of American women as well, although her tone is sympathetic. She states that

> [t]hey marry very young; in fact, in no rank of life do you meet with young women in that delightful period of existence between childhood and marriage, wherein, if only tolerably well spent, so much useful information is gained, and the character takes a sufficient degree of firmness to support with dignity the more important parts of wife and mother. The slender, childish thing, without vigour of mind or body, is made to stem a sea of troubles that dims her young eye and makes her cheek grow pale, even before nature has given it the last beautiful finish of the full-grown woman. (n.pag; ch.11)

Trollope observes that it was the Yankee wife's immaturity "of mind" and "body" that caused her to be incapable of proper domesticity. She notes elsewhere that American daughters are mere "domestic slaves" who in turn raise daughters who meet with a similar fate (n.pag; ch.11). American women, according to Trollope, aged before their time and did not live long because they lived such hard domestic lives. Hubback comments on this as well, noting how wives "make their own bread and dresses, and being their own servants, and working hard, and growing old early and disappearing out of the world" (65). Hubback perceives this as a vicious cycle, observing that the children "steal their neighbours' plums, and tear their own aprons, and get a good scolding for that – and grow up anyhow – to be worse than their mothers" (65). It is worth noting that here her aggravation, devoid of any sympathy, is partly due to her missing Edward who is in England on a business trip that he continues to extend. She acknowledges to John that she is "stupid" and "have proved it by writing all this stupid nonsense," but declares as well that the monotony of "mak[ing] lace" and "be[ing] alone mostly" affects her (65-66).

Even while taking the above into account, Hubback's perspective of American society, marriage and the home is generally pessimistic. Her comment that she wonders "what the next generation will be in America" suggests that she has little hope for the future of the country (65). She further remarks on the absence of genealogical roots in most Western families, noting that "so few people have a grandfather, that it is rather a marked thing to own one" (65). Without sparing American national pride, Hubback notes irreverently that "the only universal creed" is that "the Republic is morally, intellectually, physically and geographically the first in the world" (65). She includes American greed in her disparagement and observes that the slogan to "get on" and "[l]ive for today" produces a reckless and unrealistic approach to money where, according to her example, things are purchased on credit until a limit is reached without any plan to repay it (65). In *American Notes* Dickens, in noting the irresponsible and unscrupulous approach to life in the New World, attributes this

to America's "desire to shake off the absurdities and abuses of the old system" (105). Hubback is of a similar mind when she comments that in priding itself on being superior to all other countries, America appears determined to view "European communities as slaves governed by rotten thrones and bloated aristocracy" (65).

Hubback's irritation with American standards extends to the conduct of young unmarried middle-class women. She notes how three young men, all acquaintances, were unexpectedly visited at "9 o'clock in the evening" by a group of men and women (71). All of them were strangers to the young men except for one lady. In Hubback's opinion this is a complete breach of English etiquette because of the late hour that the visit takes place. The fact that two of the young women had not been previously introduced to Hubback's acquaintances entrenches her disapproval. Hubback declares: "I suppose these are Californian manners – and the result of boarding house living – can you imagine how young women can make themselves so cheap? They should hear what the young men said of the intrusion" (71). Hubback's much earlier comment that American young women are "the wrong side of easy" underlines that she views their general behaviour as "cheap" (54, 71). Curiously, when Hubback is told of the emerging "general 'fastness' of the young women" in England her reaction is to wisely philosophise that "the pendulum will go back again someday as it always does [and] when they are tired of frills and levity they will take to plain dresses and affected stiffness" (60). Her opinion presents English women or the society they inhabit as possessing an elemental resoluteness in their dispositions while American society appears unable to access this steadfastness. Hubback reserves all her criticism for American women only. Her reference in the above to "boarding house living" points to the absence of home-living held liable in some British texts for the American woman's lack of decorum and rectitude. Archibald notes that in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, "the United States has houses, apartments, mansions and boarding-houses, but no 'homes,' for the uncivilized city [...] can neither construct nor maintain such a home" (143).

Yet these young women represent a new type of woman: they are apparently independent and enjoy a liberty barred to young women in England. Significantly, the two young men who disapprove of the young women are both English gentlemen whilst "Mr. Hall, who is a Southerner, thought it good fun" (71). Despite their marked reservations, the two English men "danced, had coffee" and entertain the American women "until eleven" (71). The men's ambivalent response to the American girls seems typical of the reaction by Victorian men towards American women that Archibald refers to: "something about the American woman, in print and in person, was nevertheless undeniably attractive to many

Victorians" (136). One recalls Paul Montague's struggle to overcome his initial feelings for Californian Mrs. Hurtle, despite his love for English woman Henrietta Carbury in Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*: "he was thoroughly in love with Hetta Carbury, and was not in love with Mrs Hurtle [...] And yet he had a delight in her presence" (216). Hubback's perspective suggests that a young woman's reputation and modesty, a key issue in her novels, is trivialised because of the domestic disorder in Californian society.

It is a disorder which Hubback experiences first-hand and which she attributes to a dearth in moral governance. She suggests that "American leather is just like American public morality – got up in a hurry to look fine and attract, but no durability or solid strength in it" (129). Relating current news to John she writes:

> I do not think the morals of California have been making a brilliant figure in the world lately. Mrs. Fair's murder trial and acquittal, the forgeries and escape of the Brothertons [...] have made more conspicuous than creditable figures. Mrs. Fair is living in Oakland now, and the other day was in the same car or boat with the widow and daughter of the man she shot dead before their eyes – and was acquitted of murdering. It is not that people are not indignant – but what is the state of this country when money can procure such a verdict? (81)

Hubback's short story was not far off with its intimation that the actual meaning of America being the land of freedom for all was that criminals were at liberty as well. It is worth noting that the "Brothertons" seem to have been in the forgery business. Mrs. Fair is able to acquire her exoneration through bribery as suggested by Hubback's question, "what is the state of this country when money can procure such a verdict?" (81). This facet of American justice is similarly highlighted in the short story when Mr. Seaton obtains his freedom through the monetary influence of his swindling friends. In the letter, Mrs. Fair's apparent lack of shame when she faced the victims of her crime echoes the moment when Mrs. Seaton in the short story carelessly faces the English stewardess after she nearly succeeds in getting her arrested. Hubback's question, fatalistic in tone, highlights that she perceives life in the New World as unstable, alien and corrupting, and that she struggles to understand the country she lives in at most times.

Her struggle is also influenced by experience, for example when she is directly affected by American greed when Edward's English business partner, Mr. Makin, defrauds the business by siphoning money from it to cover his numerous debts. It causes a scandal in Oakland that reaches England. For a while, Edward is suspected of colluding with Mr. Makin because Edward "had advanced" money to him for what he believes is in payment of "taxes and interest" (120). It is a double blow for Hubback in particular because she had to convince

John in previous letters to release the money to Edward to invest in the business which Mr. Makin subsequently appropriated. John only acquiesces because of Hubback's assurance in one letter dated January 1872 that "[t]here's no risk in investing money here, at reasonable interest" (40). He was probably also swayed by his mother's appeal to his concern for her comfort, with Hubback stating that, "of course I should be glad to have a little time of easy competence, after so many years of economy and struggle – but I would not care about that even, if I could see Edward in a way of independence (40).

Hubback's mortification and disappointment are evident in her censure of her fellow Englishman:

> he says he did not know, and is very sorry! It provokes me more than all the rest [...] all the worry, vexation, denials, and losses of failure have come on us – whilst they were gadding about, and having a good time abroad [...] thanks to Mr. Makin, our life has by no means been all sunshine and prosperity. (120-121)

Hubback and Edward had already been experiencing some financial difficulty before this occurred around October 1874, evident in John sending money whenever possible to his mother from January 1874 onwards. The impact of Mr. Makin's fraudulent actions affect Hubback's household for a few years still. They are compelled to move house, which brings an end to her teaching because subsequent letters do not mention her lace-making or her pupils again. This must have been a hard adjustment for Hubback, severed as she was from her one stable source of income just when it flourished and her work garnered her recognition as far as San Francisco. The loss of money pushes Edward to search for another company to work for, and after her journey back from England in 1875, Hubback and Edward move home again, into a smaller dwelling. This reduction in house size indicates their pecuniary difficulties. Further, Edward's move to a new company dents their finances because it takes a while for the business to achieve a steady work-flow. This is evident in Hubback noting that Edward's company is "going on now very prosperously; it took a little while to start [...] but he says they know now how to do things well and economically" (137-138). What is significant about Hubback's remark is that it does not divulge that she suffers in any way from the uncertain period of Edward's adjustment to a new business. The repetition of "now" merely hints at a period of hardship.

Hubback extends her criticism of New World women as products of an unprincipled American way of life to the domestic affair of the nation concerning the Chinese household servant. Referring to her teaching American boys at a local Church, Hubback writes,

> My school boys today, who last week told me 'their neighbours' meant one who lived next door, today remembered that it meant everyone 'except Chinese' – 'they being

> heathens,' and 'coming here and taking the work from the white man.' You may guess I gave them a sharp lecture – holding up the Chinese for filial duty &c &c. (60)

The boys' stereotypical response to the Chinese presence, which could only originate from adult discussions in their own homes, emphasises the pervasiveness of the belief that Chinese were "cunning, treacherous, vice-ridden" for "competing with decent workingmen by labouring for low wages," as Robert Heizer and Alan Almqu point out (157).

Her observations of the differences between white domestic servants and Chinese labourers challenge the American creed of equality for all. She relates to Mary how a young white girl looking for a domestic position in Hubback's friend's home first wants all her conditions met of having a room where she "could receive her visitors" and "to go out [when] the baby went to bed" before she decides to work there (57). She tells Mary that she will "much rather teach a Chin[ese] boy than an English girl even or an Irish girl certainly – one never gets impertinence in words, and even if they are angry they only slam the door" (96). Another issue at play here is that Chinese male servants are far less demanding than white working-class girls and are thus more manageable. Furthermore, one is less likely to be bothered with the threat of any immoral transgressions with a male servant than with a female servant who wants to come and go as she pleases. Hubback's main point is that, despite their desperation, the majority of young American women behave as though it is beneath them to do domestic work because they believe that they are on equal footing with upper-class ladies and gentlemen. Trollope likewise observes this about American domestic servants in *Domestic Manners*, noting that "the whole class of young women, whose bread depends on their labour, are taught to believe that the most abject poverty is preferable to domestic service" (n.pag; ch.6). Hubback blames this on America's contradictory notions of equality. She comments that "in this country of happy equality young women consider domestic service a disgrace" and adds that "were it not for China boys I don't know what we should do" (57). The reality, as Hubback's remarks reveal, is that the efficiency of Californian homes depended mainly on the cheap and convenient labour of Chinese workers.

Her anxiety concerning the possibility that the Irish may set fire to Chinatown offers insight into what escalated into racial conflict in California. In one letter, she recalls what happened in England when the "Irish volunteers [...] set fire to the barracks at Portsmouth and plundered the offices barracks" and fears that "the Irish may do something of the sort against the Chinese" (148). Hubback's trepidation was not unfounded; Heizer and Almqu's explanation of the legislation that was passed in the 1880s to exclude Chinese from all labour

areas reveals that "California either passed ordinances severely curtailing the civil rights of Chinese, or reacted to Chinese presence by attempting to burn down their housing and business districts" (158).

Heizer and Almqu and Daniels demonstrate the virulent levels of discrimination directed at the Chinese which Hubback's opinion below sheds further light on:

> I do not know what the persecution of the Chinese will end in. They have passed a decree to shave all their heads if committed to prison, and they are constantly committing them for all sorts of things which they don't notice in any other people. Then they lay heavy taxes on their laundries [...] Of course there is danger that the injustice here will be retaliated on Americans in China – and I suppose the other states would not like to give up the Chinese trade, however, the Californians may resolve to drive them out of the country. (147)

The "heavy [laundry] taxes" Hubback refers to were stipulated by the "Laundry Ordinance" which, according to Daniels, compelled Chinese to purchase a licence to do laundry, but with a severe and unfair tax attached (39). Chinese launderers were charged "$15 if [they did not use] horses" and "$ 2 for one delivery horse" (39). As Daniels explains, Chinese launderers could not own horses as they were only allowed living space of "500 cubic feet of air" and occupied "tenements" (39). In addition, they never delivered laundry. As Hubback's account confirms, the Chinese were arrested for trifles to force their exodus from Oakland. Moreover, Hubback correctly foretells that Californians would be the driving force behind the eviction of the Chinese. As explained by Heizer and Almqu, the lobbying for "anti-Chinese feeling reached a peak in the mid-1880s [with] mass demonstrations in Washington and [...] in California" (156). They state that this hostile agenda became "in due course, the attitude of the country, and its first national success came" with the "Exclusion Act" in 1882 that prohibited "any further Chinese entry to the United States" (156).

Hubback's sympathy with the Chinese is not radical or political, but premised on her position as a fellow foreigner and an outside observer. She interacts with her servants but carefully maintains the mistress-servant boundary, negotiating this standard only insofar as she takes it upon herself to teach them proper ways of cooking and cleaning. In a letter to Mary in 1873, after four servants are dismissed and employed in the space of two years, she writes that when she was her daughter-in-law's age she had "little idea [she] should ever be teaching cooking to a Chinaman in California" (91). Hubback also has a young Chinese boy as "housemaid" who "lace[s] [her] boots [for her]" and "who mostly waits on [her]" (140, 141). Later she remarks that her neighbours find her "so brave" that she does not mind "being left with only little Phun in the house" with the escalating violence and break-ins in and

around her neighbourhood that the Chinese are believed to be responsible for (149). She states that she is "not afraid of them" and "[did not] believe they [would] hurt [her]," conveying an intimacy and a connection with her servants not cultivated by her Californian neighbours, who, as far as one can tell, do not employ Chinese workers anyway (149).

However, it is a tentative negotiation which disorders her home at times. The letters reveal that Hubback's domestic rules are not always followed and that the privacy of her home is often trespassed. On one occasion, Hubback enters her kitchen to find another Chinese man there who is a friend of her servant. She "ordered him away" and when her male servant retaliates by saying he will also leave, she says he can go but firmly states that she will "not have other Chinamen here" (68). Her servant immediately departs and she is left to serve dinner which she notes with relief has "luckily [been] cooked" already (68). It is a source of instability and inconvenience that affects her home even a year later in 1873 when Hubback writes that another servant suddenly informs her he is leaving:

> "[Y]ou get other boy tomorrow – I go away." So I had to – and the only boy I could get is a man – Moon, he calls himself [...] he not only knows very little cooking, but still less English. It is not easy to get on with no language in common, as you say – it is a trial. I took him on trial – and I find him such. (91)

Soon after this incident, Hubback arrives home to find another strange Chinese man in her kitchen "who said he was Moon's brother" and who comes to replace his brother as servant (91). What is implied in these instances is that the world outside her home impinges upon her domestic life and she appears not to be able to do much about these irregularities except to decide whether to retain the services of the present servant or to find a replacement. The language difference and the lack of domestic skill are problematic and exacerbated by hiring a stranger without recommendation and employing him in her home. Hubback had to adopt, in this situation, the American attitude of getting by and "to get on – in any way" (65). The array of servants (approximately eight in all) that she employs over a period of five years attests to the transitory nature of employing Chinese domestic help and that Hubback had to adapt to these fluctuations in her home.

Despite her irritations with American women, national greed and their creed of "get[ting]" and "spend[ing]" by any means necessary, letters show that Hubback enjoyed staying in California (65). Her efforts at home-making are proof of this assertion; and her bedroom in her first Californian home can be seen as representative of her identification with California and also in terms of her perpetuation of Englishness and its ideology of home. Hubback writes in a letter to John in January 1872:

> I only wish I could show you both my room. It really is so pretty and full of fancies. Mr. Emerson, our landlord's brother […] rather likes to come in here and pay me a visit, he says he knows nobody who has so much invention – and he wanders about the room admiring all my contrivances –. (41)

Hubback's predilection for Japanese and Chinese ornaments and for swathes of "Japan silk" probably influenced her decoration and formed part of the "fancies" in her room (27, 41). Her creativity is suggested in "contrivances" and may have included the photo frames she made from the many pebbles she avidly collected on her expeditions along California's coastline, the abalone shells she also collected and her own pieces of lace-work (27, 43). What is most striking is the image of her room as an eclectic space filled with oriental pieces, things indigenous to California and English pieces, and that it is a showroom, with people coming to view it. One can argue as well that Hubback's decoration of her room is an active way of making her home her own space in a town she is adapting to. On the other hand, she perpetuates as well the expected duty of a woman to decorate her home because the home and its interior were viewed as extensions of the woman. As Rosemary George argues in her insightful work on "the self at home," in the nineteenth-century "[t]he home was believed to be an expression of the personality of the 'woman of the house,' […] the woman's job was to decorate and maintain her home as she did her mind, personality and body" (19, 23). George states further that it was believed that a woman's identity was constituted by the home and her attention to the interior of the home. Hubback's relation to her room that reflects a blend of Californian and English interests is more complex than a creative display or an adherence to domestic ideology. As I argue throughout this chapter, her letters show that she remains intrinsically English even as she becomes integrated in California.

Edward's provision of a home for her removes the anxiety of the sole responsibility of running a home and caring for her children that had been hers in England. Later in this same letter she paints an idyllic picture to John of riding in an excessively overcrowded "street car [...] along the Alameda to Santa Clara" in which "[e]verybody was as cheerful as possible, chattering and laughing" and even though the car "got off the track" on their return, she notes that the "crowd which scrambled down, and poured out was really wonderful" (24). The warm tone of her description of Americans here (and that she appears to include herself in this camaraderie and display of general goodwill) contrasts with a letter written in 1874, in which she remarks after a pleasant birthday celebration at "Mount Diablo" that "[t]here were some queer amusing people up there – Americans *are* very amusing very often" (115). Here, her amusement appears tinged with ridicule and sarcasm. It is possible to argue that three

years later, the novelty of living in California gave way to her critical perspective and barely tolerant stance that arguably was informed by the financial difficulties her and her family continued to experience.

California's climate was also conducive to Hubback's deep interest and fascination with botany. Her letters contain numerous references to flowers and fruit that grew in her garden and the access she had to "many plants quite unknown in England" (41). She lavishly tended and "crowd[ed]" her "garden with plants, slips, cuttings and roots of all kinds," commenting that she does not know how many she will have to uproot but that she "like[d] filling it" (41). She is able to indulge her fascination by going on frequent "botanising expeditions" to "Berkeley" and "Sausalito" with close acquaintances (111). On another occasion, her delight is evident when she "at last made acquaintance with one lady who understands botany," even when this lady was an American woman (57). She writes that this lady is "a very excitable lively woman" and that they are immediate friends (57). Interestingly, she sends "some seeds" to her granddaughter Carrie in England and requests that Mary sow them for her and calls the flowers that germinate, "Grandmama's flowers" (132). This is a wonderful instance of the exchange between California and England that Hubback writing home accomplishes, but is also a poignant image of a significant facet of Hubback, her love for gardening and flora, making its way onto her home soil even when she is not physically there. Her love for botany is emphasised when, even with the sadness of leaving Oakland for Virginia to live with Charlie and his wife Bernhardine in 1876, one of the first things she hopes to do is to construct a "greenhouse if that is possible, not as a luxury for flowers however but to raise early vegetables and delicacies for the market" (166). Hubback looks to gardening as the next source of income in her new home.

Lace-making was her only source of revenue for an extended period. The few American girls she taught acquired a domestic accomplishment that their own mothers were unable to perform. Lace-making was regarded in California as an English woman's forte. On the sewing ability of American women, Hubback notes, "[s]o few Americans know anything about fancy-work or needlework of any kind" (99). When a Jewish woman sees Hubback's point lace she exclaims that "[i]t was the most beautiful, elegant valuable work!" and that it "could only come from English hands – Americans could not do it!" (56). Hubback's lace-making brought her into contact with the Dutch Consul's daughter, Adèle de Fremery, who became her pupil. It was a beneficial relationship because by mid-1874 Hubback was "making some yards of lace for Mrs de Fremery" and Adèle also wanted "all [Hubback] [could] spare" (116). She also anticipated acquiring another pupil and by that time was

teaching, besides Adèle, two other girls, both American. The quality of her lace-work appeared to have garnered her some recognition beyond Oakland for she also mentions that "an enthusiastic Mrs Walsh in the city talked of coming next month" to begin her lace-making lessons with her (116). Hubback wished to use the teaching money to travel to Sonoma, and for a while teaching was lucrative enough to indulge her fondness for travel and cover household expenses.

However, her lace-making instruction from within her domestic space challenged her middle-class status as an English woman because, as Hubback declares in a letter dated January 4th 1874, it was something that she "certainly should not expect to do in England" and notes "[o]ne does not lose *caste* here by teaching anything" (103; emphasis in original). Her earning an income from it also negotiated the separation between private and public. Hubback is aware of this as she writes that she has "many *orders* for work," and earned "over 20 dollars" the previous month for her work (103; emphasis in original). Ironically, Hubback was able to revitalise what had become an appropriated and mechanised craft in England. According to Elaine Freedgood in her study on Victorian lace-making, the prized manual art of lace-making was solely the "effort of labouring women" requisitioned by men and machines in the 1860s (628). But what Freedgood also points out is that the mechanisation of lace-making engendered publications on this handmade art that appealed to women of all classes to support the dwindling interest in it.

Of course, as Hubback's reference to lace-making and losing one's social standing in England implies, lace-making would not be a means of income for middle and upper-class women but a pastime. "Women," writes Freedgood, "from Queen Edgitha to Victoria are imagined" in these books as "makers and patrons of lace" (628). She adds that it became a matter of "need and duty" as "affluent women" were entreated to "support the efforts of labouring women" (628). It is possible that Hubback offered her patronage but learned the skill for her own interest, which would explain her knowledge of a working class skill. Hubback's utilisation of lace-making to earn a living shows that she benefitted from California's less inflexible boundaries even as it was one more thing that qualified, for her, the American woman's lack of domestic expertise.

Even with Hubback's various attempts at generating money, financial stability certainly eluded her and her children. Money is a recurring topic in her letters, revealing that although she escaped the threat and social stigma of falling into genteel poverty in England, California did not bring the financial reprieve she had hoped for. Hubback remained in California, despite the intermittent hardships she endured, and she adapted to less affluent

living conditions when it was necessary, as she had had to do in England. Of course it is also possible that she remained because their situation never became as dire as what it probably was in England. Hubback remarks in a letter to John in September 1872 that "it [was] good of [him] to want to help his brothers but they [had] to fend for themselves," noting that "poor Charlie ha[d] a hard time of it, and fe[lt] very much the disappointment of not having earned an independence" (67-68). Klippert points out that "Charles [was] struggling in Virginia to support his family" (67). Hubback writes further that she was in a position "at present [to] help him" (68). "[A]t present" suggests that Hubback was aware that there could be a time when she would not be able to help her son. Charlie's financial woes were never quite alleviated. To Mary she remarked in November 1872 that Charlie's wife Bernhardine had "told [her] they had sometimes nothing to eat and drink but bread and water" (76). Things appear to have improved in December of that year. Hubback comments that Charlie had "got into their new house" where "they will have poultry and eggs and milk […] all great helps in housekeeping" (88). But it is clear that later things took a turn for the worse again when Hubback writes in October 1873 that if John loaned Edward money, she could "help Charlie along" with her own and that she "hope[d] his engagement [that] Winter [might] lead to more work" (98). The above also implies that Hubback has already experienced some privations of her own. This is evident in her noting in that same letter of September 1872 that even though her domestic servant had suddenly left, she was grateful that the one who replaced him "save[d] [her] $4 a month" since "$12 [was] quite enough for [her] place" (68). Her concern with domestic economy and saving where she could is not only because it is an intrinsic practice of being middle-class but suggests she endures daily pressure to manage her home with circumspection.

Further evidence of her pecuniary insecurity is that homemaking efforts and complete adaptation to California is deferred by having to move from one house to another due to unforeseen circumstances and the necessity to downsize their home. According to Klippert, in 1873, Hubback and Edward were compelled to move to a house in a "less desirable location" because they were displaced by their landlord's family in the very house where her bedroom and garden had been a source of delight and wonder (98). Later, because of Edward's massive financial loss, he and Hubback moved to a smaller home in 1875. She describes this new home in a letter written in December as "having fewer rooms" (137). Her declaration that "[w]e were rather too big at first – had too many chairs and tables" indicates they were forced to reduce their household comforts and highlights that they were comfortably middle-class before. Hubback had to adapt to this dramatic change by adopting a positive approach,

pointing rather to the advantages of a much smaller domestic space. Having "[f]ewer rooms," she remarks, "makes so much less to look over and find fault about" (137). I suggest that these shifts from one abode to another produced a distancing from things that had become familiar, so that Hubback seldom enjoyed the domestic stability valorised at the end of her novels following a troubled time of instability and conflict.

Significantly, Hubback's criticism of American society and women ceased after Edward informed her in October 1876 that he wanted to marry Florence Bentley, an American girl. Although her letters show no overt evidence of this, it can be implied, from her various comments related to Edward marrying, that Hubback is disappointed in his choice of wife. In a letter written after three years of living in Oakland, Hubback notes to Mary that Edward has become a "desirable *parti* for any young woman" but that she does not "know the young woman *here* who would be so desirable for him" (90; emphasis in original). On another occasion she voices her rejection, ironically, of the possibility of Edward marrying her close friend, Mrs. Blair's sister. She states that she "would much rather Edward should marry an English girl – a well-educated English girl has so many more occupations and ideas than any American [she] ever saw" and that an English woman will "make a better wife" (100). In describing Florence Bentley to John, she writes unenthusiastically that "she was not tall [...] and had an American accent, which I never can like [...] She is young, and I don't think Edward is very badly in love with her" (138). Clearly, Hubback's dislike of American women caused her to see what she wanted to see despite all contrary evidence.

Following Edward's announcement of marriage one sees the emergence in Hubback's letters of a deeper introspection concerning her role as a woman which lends insight into the way she lived her life. One also sees a decline in her health. From being an industrious and forward-thinking woman in attempting to sell her paintings and then teaching lace making to generate an income, and being active by constantly travelling all over California she gradually comes to view herself as she ages in terms of grandmother, mother and manager of the home only. In a letter to Mary before she is to depart forever from Oakland to move to Virginia and stay with Charlie and his family, she states that in his home "there will be plenty of needle-work to do, and the children to teach and play with, and helping Dina in many ways" (169). She comments that she anticipates this period of "having plenty to do for others" because she is no longer of any use to Edward (169). Hubback's need to have a function in terms of motherhood and domesticity is underscored in her description of what she would be able to do in Charlie's home.

Her admission to Mary when she is fifty-six years old that "[s]ometimes [she] long[ed] so for a child again" that she feels "as if [she] could adopt one" attests to her desire to have a purpose (114). But it is perhaps the melancholy tone to her admission that the "dullest sort of life is having nobody but oneself to work for or please" that resounds with her desperation to be useful even as she experiences the limiting effects of old age (169). Hubback lived this need for having a function in writing her ten novels to support her family and then, when they were able to establish themselves in professions, she found her purpose in running Edward's home. With his impending marriage she immediately makes other plans and turns her attention to assisting Charlie and his wife, Berhardine in "put[ting] their farm into *paying* condition" by investing her own money and helping with the children (172; emphasis in original). It is noteworthy that she honours her original intention in moving to California and leaves the home as soon as Edward announces he is to marry. It is possible that she would have preferred staying with Edward and at her age it would have been more convenient not to move again.

The serious cold she had in 1874 that lasted from January to the beginning of March shows that Californian winters adversely affected her. This weakened her together with the anxiety through the years brought about by Edward's economic struggles and Charles's own protracted financial difficulties. When Mr. Makin robs them of their money, Hubback feels the "old pain in [her] heart return" that reminds her of equally stressful times "25 years ago" (101). Hubback refers here to 1849 when her husband was institutionalised, revealing the depth of her anxiety during that uncertain period before she published *The Younger Sister*. In the last letter, Hubback writes to Mary of an "inflammation" in her foot after her "boot hurt her heel" that refuses to heal. Hubback lived longer than most women at that time. But her desire to have a function right until the end of her life shows that she was acutely affected by the English stereotype of the woman to fulfil her natural function as mother and wife and to work hard at keeping at bay the stereotype of the superfluous old woman her own country assigned to women of her age. Her novels show women negotiating these constraints and expectations without losing their respectability and refinement. Yet, as her letters show, in the final years of her life Hubback could only have a purpose by living what was expected of her. Without writing, which gave another dimension to being a nineteenth-century woman as provider for her family and earning an income, she retreated into a conventional female role.

Hubback also experienced a further disconnection from her Austen family members during the last years in California. Klippert notes that she was already distanced from her family members when she was in England following her husband's illness, and that it was not

her move to California that caused what arguably appears to be a palpable sense of alienation experienced by Hubback (15). Hubback no longer receives correspondence from any of her other family members in England. She writes in a letter dated 15th of December 1872 that she does not "get many letters from anybody but [Mary] and John" and continues that her sister Frances has "written once in the last year" and that "[f]rom the rest of [her] kin [she] had not heard a word for [she] [did not] know how long" (85). Another indication of her dislocation from family was when her brother-in-law, Joseph Hubback, who had financially assisted her in England, arrived in California but she made no attempt to meet with him (131).

Even though Hubback gradually adapted to her new environment and detached herself from England, the opinions reflected in her letters show the endurance of domestic ideology and its influence in her home even at a distance from the home nation. They also highlight her real experience with American beliefs, womanhood and domesticity fictionally observed in a tangential way in *Malvern* and other British texts.

Conclusion

This thesis maps the disparities between ideology and practice as represented and negotiated in the writing of Catherine Hubback. Hubback's work challenge the ideology of home, woman and man by exploring social concerns and situations that affect real lives and which the precepts of ideology ill prepares them for. The novels reveal the contradictions within domestic ideology that fetishised order, morality, stability and felicity but which the double-standard of marriage law did not support. Marriage law bared the home to immorality and exploitation and left the woman, on whom the ideal of angelic womanhood turned, vulnerable and expendable. The companionate model of marriage deemed central to the stability of the home could not be fully actualised because of the separate spheres ideal that kept husband and wife 'separate' in knowledge of each other's spheres, contradicting the ideal of intimacy between husband and wife that the model called for. The novels work through these disparities between ideology and practice by arguing for the negotiation of domestic precepts without transgressing ideology and emphasising middle-class values and the middle-class home as the centripetal power for domestic stability. Hubback's own life, in her writing for a living and immigrating, shows that domesticity, though rigid, could be negotiated.

This thesis has shown that Hubback began to write out of financial need and suggested that in re-writing Jane Austen's fragment *The Watsons*, she in effect became her aunt's apprentice, learning from her writing style and incorporating themes like moral order and the conventional marriage as part of the ideal of domesticity in her first novel. Hubback's reworking of *The Watsons* was motivated by the idea of capitalising on her aunt's literary reputation. This idea re-surfaced when she immigrated to California and published her first short story, as she notes in a letter dated 1871 that she intended to adopt her aunt's surname as part of her name, a partial pseudonym for when she published more stories. I suggested that Hubback learned from her aunt's exploration of gender roles in her texts to write novels that can be read as social documents that negotiate these gender roles prescribed by domestic ideology. I claimed that Hubback's works should be recovered for their insight into her social and historical context and, for their interrogation and criticism of prevailing social concerns and conventions in relation to middle-class femininity and masculinity in mid-Victorian England, prescribed by domestic ideology. The novels explore middle-class marriage by featuring flawed women and men who must first prevail over their inadequacies before they can marry; or marry from the outset but must acquire middle-class values to experience a

degree of happiness and domestic stability. Each novel addresses a social concern or problem that affects middle-class women, like their limited options of either becoming governesses or marrying; or the ambiguity of a marriage statute that exacerbates women's marginality in law and society. In working through social concerns and tenets of domestic ideology that affect women, marriage and the home, the novels emphasise domestic stability that ultimately validates the ideal of order and moral governance in the home and nation. The thesis's exploration and close analysis of four of Hubback's novels, *The Younger Sister, May and December, The Wife's Sister* and *Malvern* as domestic fiction, chosen for their representation of the themes of marriage, marriage law, middle-class femininity and masculinity, and Englishness in relation to domestic ideology, demonstrated that they challenge and endorse middle-class domestic ideology, and explore Poovey's argument of the double work of Victorian ideology that constructs and disputes domestic doctrine. In other words, even as they endorse the domestic ideal, the novels challenge its practices. In Chapter 2, the exploration of *May and December* demonstrated through this lens provided by Poovey that the ideal of marrying the proper person at the proper time as a guarantee of domestic felicity created the unrealistic expectation of a perfect formula for marital happiness. The novel tests this ideal to show that marital relationships are dynamic and thus open to contestation. The novel shows that marriages cannot be prescribed by an ideal or remain within its fixed parameters but that domestic felicity depends on the negotiation of domestic practices. But domestic felicity is also argued for as vital to the order of the home through the disintegration of May and Mr. Cameron's marriage, posing that felicity must be attained through the negotiation and not rejection of domestic precepts like the separation between the spheres.

The Wife's Sister supports domestic ideology by concluding with a happy middle-class marriage. Fanny and Frank's happiness was due to the negotiation of precepts like dutiful sacrifice in Fanny, where absolute duty became tempered by reason and the negotiation of Frank's expectation of angelic subservience in a wife, where he had to recognise Fanny's ability to reason and thus her 'freedom' to question and negotiate his expectations. Exchanging the model ending of middle-class marriage for the assertion of middle-class values at its denouement, *Malvern* explored 'proper' Englishness through Flora and Astley, landed gentry, who adopt middle-class virtues of self-improvement through education, prudent and reserved femininity and responsible and dutiful manhood as the best preparation for marriage and a possible guarantee of domestic happiness.

This thesis emerges out of and in response to a growing scholarship on Hubback pioneered by Victorian scholars Tamara Wagner, Kathryn Sutherland and Alice Villaseñor.

Sutherland's and Villaseñor's interest in Hubback stems from their main focus, the life and work of her aunt Jane Austen. Both scholars approach Hubback's first novel, *The Younger Sister*, as a sequel of Austen's unfinished fragment *The Watsons*. Sutherland provides a brief comparison of the two texts, noting the shortcomings of Hubback's version as "annotative [...] rather than revivifying," whilst Villaseñor provides a detailed comparative analysis of Austen's and Hubback's versions, arguing that Hubback develops the governess plot to address it as a Victorian social matter tentatively pointed to by her aunt in *The Watsons* (*Textual* 262). For Wagner, Hubback's novel can be studied as a continuation of the silver-fork genre in the Victorian period because it disparages the aristocracy to assert the dominance of the emergent middle-class, picking up where the silver-fork novel left off in its denigration of aristocratic profligacy. In close alignment with Wagner's argument, I argued that the novel criticises aristocracy in order to elevate the values of emergent middle-class and to emphasise domestic ideology and marriage as replacing the 'old' aristocratic order deemed to be decadent and immoral. My study extended Wagner's central argument of the novel's endorsement of middle-class tastes through the exposure of the faults and foibles of the aristocracy and rendering them repulsive or ridiculous. I included the novel's criticism of domestic spaces representative of different class gradations to assert the superiority of the middle-class home and argued that Emma Watson's identification with and approbation of Mr. Howard's middle-class home precedes and determines her choice of him as a husband.

Middle-class marriage is asserted as the ideal in *The Younger Sister* because of its emphasis on self-government and ordered domesticity, exemplified in Mr. Howard's home. Both Mr. Howard and Emma Watson, in marrying each other, choose love above wealth and middle-class values of prudence and circumspection above aristocratic values. In Chapter 2 I aimed to show that in establishing the middle-class home and marriage as valid, *May and December* questions its legitimacy as the ideal in exploring different marriages and how these affect the order of the home. I contended that the novel questions middle-class domesticity and criticises it as the only option for women by engaging with William Cowper's injunction that women should marry the right partner at the right time to secure happy marriages. *May and December* shows women dependent on marriage to rescue them from the threat of becoming redundant figures and likewise criticises this limited choice for women even as it validates matrimony. It manages to express this criticism of marriage by showing that women approach the idea of marriage plotting and scheming in an effort to secure husbands, homes and financial stability and then are ill-prepared to deal with the consequences or situations that arise from disparate tastes and expectations of marriage, thus producing disorder in the

home, as in the case of May and Mr. Cameron. The criticism of the domestic ordering of women manifests in their marriages falling short of the idealistic expectation that a woman will attain a standard of perfection when she becomes a middle-class wife. The narrative explores variations of Cowper's moral to demonstrate that their struggles and hardships indicate that there is no ideal formula for domestic felicity.

Following *May and December*, Chapter 3 focuses on *The Wife's Sister* and explores the woman and home in relation to marriage laws and the precepts of domestic doctrine. In continuation of my argument that the subsequent novels test the middle-class ideal of marriage and home valorised in *The Younger Sister*, I have argued that *The Wife's Sister* attempts to redefine the conventional precepts of marriage, and in doing so criticises the image of dutiful womanhood for exposing the woman to manipulation and exploitation, exacerbating her already defenceless position because of her non-representation in marriage law. Its criticism of the woman's vulnerable position in marriage also highlights the flaws of domestic ideology, which emphasises household stability but which marriage law cannot support. In instances such as Cecil's adultery that destabilise the domestic space through immorality and misplaced duty, the home is restored to order at the conclusion with a middle-class marriage and a woman within the home who has negotiated its rigid codes of duty and virtue. In *May and December* it is emphasised that the mere performance of and adherence to domestic ideology do not guarantee a successful, well-managed home and felicitous marriage. The novel holds both men and women accountable for the management of themselves which qualifies them to manage the stability and order of the domestic space. This emphasis on an equal responsibility of self-regulation to secure household order transcends conventional marriage doctrine specifying wives as moral agents exclusively burdened with their husband and children's improvement.

In asserting that in practice the ideal of angelic domesticity was unattainable the novels also criticise its tenets, for example dutiful womanhood and the strict boundaries between the private sphere of home and the public marketplace. As part of this criticism, the novels address social concerns of the period and the way these affect women and domestic stability. Relying on theories pertaining to domestic fiction by Elizabeth Langland and Amanda Vickery that accentuate the centrality of prescriptive womanhood to the genre and also contest the view of compliant femininity in the home, I demonstrated that the novels negotiate the boundaries and tenets of domesticity even as they adhere to them. Whereas Langland argues that women were involved in the broader political agenda of maintaining class hegemony through their class management within the home and were thus both

prescribed by ideology and actively prescribing it, I argued that Hubback's novels present middle-class women who negotiate the strictures of the prescribed doctrines preached by conduct books and manuals without transgressing the boundaries of ideology.

The novels negotiate these domestic tenets to present, at their denouements, a middle-class femininity that does not strictly conform to the ideal, whilst consistently validating the importance of the stability of the home. In other words, the middle-class womanhood and home presented at the end of the novels registers that ideology itself evolves. I extended this argument by showing that the novels confirm that the strictures of genre do not allow for 'radical' conclusions while simultaneously asserting that its inherent boundaries can be challenged. *May and December* goes further than the other novels and in fact ends with a propertied widow who denounces the idea of remarrying and chooses to live on her own in relative independence and freedom from the constraints of marriage. But any suggestion of 'new' middle-class womanhood that would signal a radical challenge of every pillar of domestic ideology is tempered by her devotion to philanthropic works and her retirement from society in keeping with the ideal of self-sacrificial and dutiful womanhood.

I argued that as part of criticising the tenets of domestic ideology and the prescription of gender roles, Hubback addresses the separate spheres binary premised on the 'natural' differences between men and women that assigned the home as the woman's domain and the competitive marketplace as the man's. I relied on Vickery's and Simon Morgan's arguments that, although women were confined to their homes, they were becoming involved in the public arena by giving public lectures and showing their support of male relatives or husbands business or political interests by hosting dinners. Morgan and Vickery respectively point out that despite these changes, women could only speak in public if their speeches were geared towards affirming domestic doctrine for women and if, at these dinners, their opinions on business or politics were not overtly expressed.

Their arguments paved the way for my argument that *May and December* calls for a symbiotic relationship between the two spheres by showing, through Mr. Cameron and May's marriage, that the two spheres can mutually influence each other without collapsing the boundaries that are necessary for domestic stability. In Mr. Cameron, the novel establishes that a husband should educate his wife concerning his business affairs and trust her judgement, as a way of empowering her and fostering harmony between the two spheres. In the character of May, it is reiterated that a woman should not meddle in the business affairs of her husband but that her husband's tutelage in business matters is a way of inducting her into prudent and mature middle-class womanhood as part of the ideal of stable companionate

marriage. This negotiation of the boundary between the private and public spheres also 'redefines' conventional professional masculinity as removed from the home and confined to the marketplace and is an area for future research in connection with the separate spheres debate.

The thesis demonstrated that Hubback's novels pay attention to exploring middle-class masculinity and may be viewed as exemplifying John Tosh's argument that "domesticity [was] held to be central to masculinity" (1).The key arguments in the novels have been that men are as accountable for the moral order of the home as women, a shift from the reigning belief that the woman was the gatekeeper of her husband's moral conscience as part of her overall moral governance of the home. Transgressive men are exiled or die. In *The Wife's Sister*, Cecil Mansfield dies from a withering illness because he commits adultery and cold-heartedly abandons his wife and daughter to fend for themselves. His uncle, Henry Mansfield, faces a similar fate because he robbed Fanny of her marriage, and her daughter of her rightful inheritance, by calling for the annulment of her affined marriage to appease his greed for his Cecil's property and to fulfil his daughter's devious ambition to become Cecil's wife and heiress of Brookensha Park. The harsh deaths of both men seem a resounding judgment of male-dominated marriage law and the ambiguities of the Henrican statute concerning affined and consanguine unions that render women insignificant and vulnerable to persecution and abuse. Cecil's death in particular is a castigation of the double-standard of marriage law that allows male infidelity and exacerbates women's defencelessness. Mr. Cameron's untimely death in *May and December* presents a different argument, in that it assists May's improvement, although his death could be a criticism of his inability to guide and assume equal responsibility for May's errant conduct. Overtly transgressive men are undesirable and exiled, as *Malvern* shows with Robert Masters' ejection from his homeland, England to Australia's penal colony for his fraudulent activities.

Furthermore, I argued that the novels privilege middle-class values of hard work, self-establishment and financial independence for its male characters in its validation of domestic stability that rests on each gender fulfilling their given roles in their spheres. Here I have relied on Valerie Sanders's explication that at mid-century, sons of professional middle-class men were given to leisured living, becoming indolent and immoral while waiting on expected inheritances or stipends from their fathers. Idle middle-class men threatened class stability and the continuation of their family's status if they did not exert themselves or practise self-improvement. I contended that these values of self-help and industry are central to the middle-class manhood privileged in the novels, as part of their overarching assertion of

domestic stability. These values are embodied in the professional middle-class man Hubback first delineates as the ideal in *The Younger Sister* with Mr. Howard, the assiduous clergyman whose ordered, refined middle-class home is a reflection of his self-management. Mr. Howard's self-regulated masculinity is contrasted with Robert Watson's pretentious claim to the professional middle-classes; it is shown in the novel that for all his outward trappings of middle-class manhood he represents "false" refinement in his vulgar manner and mistreatment of his younger sister, Emma.

Frank Linwood, lawyer in *The Wife's Sister*, is perhaps the epitome of professional middle-class values of industry in all the novels. He applies himself to his profession, cares for his mother and sister and contributes significantly to the stability of their home. Eventually representing the model of masculinity epitomised by Frank Linwood, Astley Boyle in *Malvern* initially exemplifies the Victorian problem of the idle young man outlined by Sanders. Astley must acquire middle-class virtues of diligence and responsibility, thus the novel's censure of what is also a relevant social concern is part of its assertion of the centrality of middle-class values to the femininity and masculinity espoused at the novel's end as 'proper' Englishness. I argued that the novel endorses middle-class values for any marriage, regardless of class, hereby insisting that Englishness is the practice of middle-class virtues and living according to its ideal of domesticity.

As part of its endorsement of middle-class values and domesticity as central to Englishness the novel introduces a foreign woman, Annie Carden, who is not properly feminine and English in her ways. Her criticism of England and its women in particular also sets her apart. Annie's foreignness reinforces middle-class femininity as the ideal because she conforms to 'proper' Englishness through a marriage that firmly establishes her as middle-class wife. Annie becomes domesticated through her marriage that transforms her difference into acceptable Englishness.

I contended in Chapter 5 that "The Stewardess's Story" and Hubback's letters can be read for their criticism of American domesticity and femininity and validation of English domestic ideology. Chapter 5 continued with the focus of the previous chapters on domesticity, the home and the woman in the home but from Hubback's perspective as an English middle-class immigrant. I relied on Zoë Klippert's transcription of her Californian letters written from 1871 to 1876 for their addition of biographical details of Hubback's early years leading into her marriage and the letters for the insight they provide into Hubback's last six years adapting to making and managing a home in California. Hubback's "lived experience" as an English middle-class immigrant informed her observations and criticism. In

my approach to the short story as a transitional piece, I showed that "transitional" refers to Hubback's in-betweenness as a British national and Californian immigrant informed her first impressions on arriving in California. I was able to demonstrate that the story's criticism of American femininity and elevation of English womanhood is prejudiced by Hubback's early observations and experience of the New World as gratifying in terms of the climate and the freedom she had to indulge her love for travel but disillusioning in relation to American conduct and what she perceived as unscrupulous and unrefined femininity in her Californian neighbours. I suggested that she never continued to publish and write any short stories because "The Stewardess's Story" must not have paid well, since she noted in a letter written in 1872 that she had more stories in hand but that she would not write for pittance.

My reference to Antoinette Burton's argument concerning the domestic archive allowed me to explore Hubback's letters as valuable archival material written from within her home that reveal a middle-class English woman's perspective and criticism of American domesticity. I have shown that Hubback's views of American women and culture echo Frances Trollope's opinions in her travelogue in many respects. Despite adapting to a Californian way of life in most respects, Hubback's own prejudices emerge in her writing as re-assertion of English domestic doctrine. We recall her consistent fears that Edward would marry an American woman because she believed that an English woman, superior in education and elegant in appearance and conduct, would be a far better wife for her son. Yet when her worst fear was realised and Edward married Florence Bentley, Hubback ceased to openly discriminate against American femininity.

In addressing the domestic in relation to the affairs of the nation and the domestic as home in relation to domestic servants, Hubback's letters provide insight into a period of California's past in connection with the state's intolerance of Chinese labourers that engendered the anti-Chinese movement from 1870 onwards. Her letters show the real conditions and challenges experienced by an English middle-class woman in California, challenges like the unreliability of employing Chinese servants and their disruptive presence in her home at times when they broke the rules and invaded the privacy of her home by inviting their friends and relatives. The financial challenges Hubback experienced were hard-hitting; like Hubback and Edward having to deal with the defrauding of the business he partnered with Mr. Makin and the financial setback this caused which Hubback and Edward never seemed to completely recover from. I explored her letters for their insight into Hubback's perspective of her life in relation to her experiences and observations, and arrived at a portrait of a woman who in the last years of her life gradually retreated into a

conservatism at odds with her pioneering spirit, attempting to make the best with what she had and clinging to the ideal of proper, prudent femininity as a true marker of middle-class identity. I showed that Hubback's central desire, even in her twilight years when she faced a decline in health, was to have purpose in being useful to others, a desire prescribed by ideology as a woman's duty in her novels but which she appeared to live by. Even with my attempt at rendering an adequate interpretation of her letters, her life as a middle-class English immigrant remains a rich subject for future research in letters written by female English immigrants in the New World or in relation to female subjectivity and the writing of the self in autobiographical studies. This thesis hopes to make a relevant contribution to studies of the domestic novel and the wider field of nineteenth-century studies on domesticity that produces contemporary research in explorations of gender and class. It hopes that Hubback's early work will generate further academic scholarship inclusive of the rest of her literary output.

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