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Metaphors for Change: the Narrative Power of Domestic Space in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Women's Writing

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Abstract

Domestic spaces carry layers of meaning. They evidence structural changes over time, representing different social and economic ideologies and priorities. Their spatial organisation affects the way that life is conducted within them. They are the physical sites of the complex elements that combine to create 'home'. This thesis draws on theories of architecture, space, place, culture and society to explain how domestic settings reflect the psychological position of women protagonists who, for one reason or another, experience a personal imperative for change. It explores the notion of 'home', how living spaces and their contents are intimately connected with the experiences of the women who inhabit them and provide metaphors that illuminate moments of personal, social, political or economic change. The novels selected for study were written by women authors between the mid-nineteenth to late twentieth centuries, providing a time frame that encompasses major social changes including the Industrial Revolution, two World Wars and first- and second-wave feminist movements. The effect of such events on the positions and aspirations of individual women are reflected in the narratives of the selected novels. The thesis is structured in chapters that categorise the novels according to the conditions under which habitation occurs. This structure also provides a chronology, starting with the ordered spaces of the country house in the mid-nineteenth-century, moving on to consider borrowed spaces in rented accommodation in the interbellum and post-World War Two, serviced spaces accommodating paying guests between the 1930s and the 1970s, and finally the shared spaces of hostels, bedsits, families and communes between 1960 and 1985. The novels discussed in this thesis tell the stories of women who are considered transgressive because they try to break away from conventional living patterns. The domestic spaces they occupy carry meanings that reflect a state of being at a point of uncertainty or change.

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Contents

Abbreviations

Chapter One – Ordered Space
JE   *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë (1847)
NS   *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell (1854)
LAS   *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1862)
RS   *The Return of the Soldier* by Rebecca West (1918)
VR   *Vera* by Elizabeth von Arnim (1921)
NH   *The New House* by Lettice Cooper (1936)

Chapter Two – Borrowed Space
CS   *The Crowded Street* by Winifred Holtby (1924)
BM   *Bricks and Mortar* by Helen Ashton (1932)
IW   *Invitation to the Waltz* by Rosamund Lehmann (1932)
WS   *The Weather in the Streets* by Rosamund Lehmann (1936)
AML   *At Mrs Lippincote's* by Elizabeth Taylor (1945)

Chapter Three – Serviced Space

TH   *The Hotel* by Elizabeth Bowen (1927)
ALM   *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* by Jean Rhys (1930)
TRN   *To Room Nineteen* by Doris Lessing (1963)
BH   *At Bertram's Hotel* by Agatha Christie (1965)
MPC   *Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont* by Elizabeth Taylor (1971)

Chapter Four – Shared Space

LSR   *The L-Shaped Room* by Lynne Reid Banks (1960)
PE   *The Pumpkin Eater* by Penelope Mortimer (1962)
GSM   *The Girls of Slender Means* by Muriel Spark (1963)
WG   *The Wedding Group* by Elizabeth Taylor (1968)
BS   *Benefits* by Zoe Fairbairns (1979)
GT   *The Good Terrorist* by Doris Lessing (1985)

* dates given are of first publication

Introduction

> The importance of fiction […] is that its own intent to
>
> tell a story […] means that its use of architecture is
>
> inevitably *self-consciously* loaded with meaning.
>
> (Shonfield, 2000:379).

In his book *House and Home: Cultural Contexts, Ontological Roles*, Thomas Barrie suggests that 'Architecture, like literature, is a predominant cultural output and, as such, can, does, and has served related cultural purposes of materializing our all too human condition' (Barrie, 2017: xxvii). When the context of a piece of literary fiction includes domestic space, with its connotations of home, family and home-making, the interweaving of layers of meaning in the narrative and the setting has the potential to illuminate and materialize elements of the social structures, relationships, dreams, secrets and realities of those who are contained within its walls. I use the word 'contained' as, although the novels referred to in this thesis include domestic settings of one sort or another, the notions of and assumptions about 'home', and therefore the relationship of each character to those domestic spaces, are subjects for discussion.   Barrie continues: 'One might assume, given the ubiquity of house and home in our lives and language, that the subject would have produced a plethora of architecturally specific scholarly work – but it has not' (Barrie, 2017: xx). Linda McDowell refers to a similar observation, citing Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995) who suggest 'that houses […] have been neglected as a site of study by anthropologists because they are ubiquitous'. McDowell goes on to say that 'the study of the links between house forms and

structures, and the different social relationships contained within, has been split across disciplines, studies in architecture and sociology, for example' and that 'as the home is associated with 'woman' it is doubly taken for granted, and the neglect is partially explicable' (McDowell,1999: 93). This interdisciplinary study examines stories by women writers about women who are, to use Andrew Thacker's phrase, 'uneasily located within an unfolding history' and have reached moments of change in their lives (Thacker, 2018). The thesis uses domestic space, a personal imperative for change, and the concept of home as a framework through which to explore how these three elements interact in the novels to underpin and enrich the narrative.

In considering the way in which architectural setting and fictional narrative produce meaning, I focus on how these two elements work together to amplify states of change, either personally or in the wider perspective of social progress. In exploring this field, I have concentrated on domestic spaces in fictional texts by women authors whose protagonists are female. McDowell's point about the fragmentation and paucity of studies relating to narrative, women and domestic space reflects my interest in exploring their links through stories of women who, in periods of personal transition, exist in a state of discontent, social detachment or liminality. Often their situations are microcosms of wider societal contexts and debates. States of change are not necessarily resolved, but in each case the dilemmas they face are reflected in some way by the spaces they inhabit within the time-frame of the novel. The transactions by which domestic settings are occupied offer further subtleties in interpreting the way they are occupied and the state of those who occupy

them. It is this perspective that has determined the structure of the thesis, which will be discussed later in this introduction.

The choice of domestic architectural space as the context for exploration places the female protagonists in an arena that was viewed from the nineteenth-century until well into the 1970s as the location in which they belonged. Until that time, women were unable to obtain mortgages without the signature of a male guarantor, so, unless they inherited property, they were likely to inhabit homes in which they had no financial stake. In choosing domestic architectural space, I also take note of Tristram Hunt's observation, in his introduction to *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* by Friedrich Engels, of the importance of the property system and the status of property ownership as an indication of social class (Engels, 2010:7-8). As Cara Mertes observes, for women, home was 'alternatively a site of disenfranchisement, abuse and fulfilment' (Mertes, 1992:58). In examining the selected novels, the relationships of women with their domestic roles and with those who share their homes are considered through their living spaces. Some definitions are useful at the outset to clarify the specific roles and understandings assigned to the terms architecture, building, space and home and why these elements of our environment provide meaning in stories of change.

Architect Lebbeus Woods describes the city, an entity encompassing space, buildings and people, as being 'comprised of many systems – economic, technological, social, cultural – that overlay and interact with one another in complex ways' (Woods, 2015:84). The city itself, comprising many different spaces, may be considered as a macrocosm of domestic space,

operating under systems of cultural and economic dominance, of which the home is a microcosm. In his book *Invisible Cities,* Italo Calvino writes about the complexity of meanings of place and space (Calvino, 1972)*.* He notes: 'If a building has no signboard or figure, its very form and the position it occupies […] suffice to indicate its function' (Calvino, 1972:11). Discussing the physical characteristics of a city, he says: 'The city does not consist of this, but of relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past' (Calvino, 1972:9). As Barrie suggests, the built environment could be 'positioned as an essential means used by humans to articulate their understanding of the world and their place in it' (Barrie, 2017:1). Woods ascribes to architects the role of 'handmaidens of politics' and suggests that 'architecture is something different from building' (Woods, 2015:5,8). If building is the process of what David Spurr calls 'tectonic', the process of technical construction (Spurr, 2012:5), then architecture is what Marc Augé describes as 'an expression of the system' (Augé, 2008:xvi). Pavlos Philippou notes that there is an intimate relationship between architecture and politics, determining the way that built space is constructed and inhabited (Borsi et al, 2018:4). Architecture, which determines the ways in which buildings are laid out and function, can often represent cultural, economic and political ideologies. As Woods observes, architects design buildings but financiers usually determine what will be built (Woods, 2015:8). Katharina Borsi claims that 'Architecture is just one part of a much, much broader discursive formation. […] architecture spatializes and rationalises' (Borsi et al., 2018:9). So the complexities of contextual, cultural, social and economic factors encompassed within the decision-making process in the design and

production of buildings could justify what Barrie considers 'the perennial role and capacity of architecture to articulate the human condition' (Barrie, 2017:29).

Discussing definitions of place and space, Augé defines place as 'an assembly of elements coexisting in a certain order' and draws on Michel de Certeau's concept of space as the activity or movement that animates place (Augé, 2008:64-65).   It is useful to bear these definitions in mind when considering the collection of places, spaces and buildings that comprise any grouping of human beings whether within cities, towns, or villages, or the buildings that make up such spatial groupings, including those created as settings for the novels studied in this thesis. Buildings enclose space and determine how that space is used. They are usually the physical manifestation of the architect's synchronisation of perceived need, design knowledge and sensibility, assimilation of cultural and visual context and economic consideration. Barrie comments that 'architecture and the built environment are particularly communicative media with the capacity to embody content'. He also emphasizes 'the ontological and symbolic functions of architecture, and its assignation and capacity to articulate humans' positions in the world – specifically expressed through house and home' (Barrie, 2017:xxiv). Vittorio Aureli and Maria Guidici suggest that the house 'becomes a symbolic device' representing social status (Aureli & Guidici, 2016:115). As I will explore meanings, specifically of changing ideologies and otherness expressed through the living spaces in the selected texts in this thesis, further discussion of ideologies and principles encompassed over time in the creation of the spaces in which we live provides a useful context.

In his book *Home Possessions*, Daniel Miller notes that:
'Archaeologists […] tend to assign the house considerable significance in
understanding long-term change' (Miller, 2001:6). Change is embodied in the
domestic spaces described in the selected texts, relating to gender
expectations, especially the desires of women; to behaviour and family
relations; to work and leisure patterns; and sometimes to regressive attempts
to cling onto elements of the past that seem to represent a better age. The
process by which individuals or families are located in the place they call
home at any one time reflects the complexity of elements contributing to
decision-making. The close interaction of personal, social and economic
factors, and the susceptibility of these elements to changing circumstance,
controls 'sequences of domestic and commercial decision making by which
people live where they live at any one time' (Shove, 1999:131).

So how does the design of living spaces and the ways in which they
are used construct meaning and, particularly, signify change in fictional
narratives? Principles of architectural design change, often reflecting either a
dominant culture or debates about what that dominant culture should be. For
example, classical principles embodied the idea of the fusion of purpose and
form. Leon Battista Alberti considered that architecture is 'born of necessity
and nurtured by use', admitting the importance of the interaction of building
and human being (cited in Wilson, 2007:63). John Ruskin acknowledged that
'All architecture proposes an effect on the human mind, not simply a service
to the human frame'. He described the act of building as being 'to put
together and adjust the several pieces of any edifice or receptacle of
considerable size', while he defined architecture as the more superficial 'art

which, taking up […] the necessities and common uses of the building, impresses on its form certain characters venerable or beautiful, but otherwise unnecessary' (Ruskin, 1897:13). Although acknowledging that, post-Industrial Revolution, new kinds of building materials would call for new systems of construction, Ruskin valued the consistency of style and historical quality of architecture.

Augustus Pugin, however, equated 'architectural beauty' with 'the fitness of the design to the purpose for which it is intended', and suggested that 'the style of a building should so correspond with its use that the spectator may at once perceive the purpose for which it was erected' (Pugin, 1969:14). But Pugin also believed in traditional orders and structures: 'Unless the ancient arrangement be restored, and the true principles carried out, all mouldings, pinnacles, tracery and details be they ever so well executed, are a mere disguise' (Pugin, 1969:57). As much as Ruskin's definition reduces architecture to a superficial art, Christopher Reed considers that the decorative was 'central to Aestheticism and the Arts and Crafts movement during the second half of the nineteenth-century', while William Morris 'embodied the domestic focus of English modernism' and based his 'aesthetic and social reform […] on domestic principles' (Reed, 1996:13).

The ways in which tradition and innovation are invoked to validate changing ideologies are not necessarily linear. As the Bloomsbury Group created a home using the aesthetic of the Arts and Crafts Movement at 46 Gordon Square to symbolise 'the determination of ambitious women to forge a new life', Le Corbusier was defining his vision of modernism, embracing the use of new materials and totally rejecting decorative elements (Reed,

1996:149). Reed states: 'The antagonism between domesticity and modernism remains a defining feature of twentieth-century culture' (Reed, 1996:274). Le Corbusier's vision of modernism rejected the 'rooms too small, a conglomeration of useless and disparate objects […] and absurd bric-a-brac' of the traditional domestic environment (Reed, 1996:9). Instead of 'the cult of the house', Le Corbusier aspired to produce 'a machine for living in' (cited in Reed, 1996:9). The small rooms and decorative clutter of the domestic space were abandoned by Le Corbusier in favour of large, open spaces devoid of collections of personal objects or remnants of the past. He wanted to create a living environment for 'business men, bankers and merchants' that reflected their lives and status in the workplace, instead of the traditional domestic settings where these men seemed 'sheepish and shrivelled' amongst the small rooms and clutter of traditional homes (Le Corbusier, 1978:22-23). Le Corbusier understood the need for freedom from the claustrophobic domestic home environments inherited from the Victorians to reflect the changing ideologies of modern life in the 1920s. He also understood 'the capacity of architecture to structure one's consciousness' (Barrie, 2017:40). However, the consciousness he created denied the traditional role of women in the home and the organisation of family life within enclosed and private spaces. As the Bloomsbury group expressed an 'alienation from the conventional home and the determination to imagine new forms of domesticity' through the Arts and Crafts movement, Le Corbusier's uncompromising modernist designs were changing the physical framework of living, a double negation of traditional family life and home (Reed, 1996:147). The design of buildings is one manifestation of changing social and economic

conditions, ideologies and patterns of living. Woods states: 'We want

architecture to participate in the crucial changes affecting our lives, and not

simply form a backdrop to them' (Woods, 2015:8). This might be because, as

Augé suggests, architecture 'does transmit […] the illusions of the current

ideology' (Augé, 2008:xvi) or because architectural designs embody

innovation and the use of new materials. But the pace of social change, the

rate of its acceptance, its manifestation in new design concepts and technical

processes and the lasting presence of monuments to times past in the form of

its buildings produce what David Spurr describes as 'the tension between

enduring archaic forms and unceasing forces of change' (Spurr, 2012:251).

In attempting to establish a framework to link design of constructed space with

social context, aesthetic principles and technical developments in

construction, it must be acknowledged that this is a complex and, at times,

inconsistent pattern of interaction where references are non-sequential,

borrowing from the past as well as looking to the future. As the connotations

of design principles may be loaded with association, this produces further

layers of meaning when the longevity of traditionally-constructed buildings, or

buildings designed to reference previous traditions, is considered in the

context of changing ideologies. The interdependence of knowledge, beliefs

and culture, expressed through design, literature and other arts, maps the

changes in society. Knowledge and beliefs change over time:

> What knowledge means has varied from one historical
>
> period to another; [...] a given epoch's conception of
>
> knowledge is ultimately grounded in its 'experience of

order' – that is, the fundamental way in which it sees

things connected to one another. (Gutting, 1989:139).

 'Conceptions of order, signs and language' and the body of knowledge within

which they are contained define the episteme of a particular period (Gutting,

1989:140). The epistemological roots of design are therefore inextricable

from the basis of thinking within society. Belief systems are reflected in the

design of spaces within which life is conducted, as much as in the pattern of

that life. Ruskin bemoaned the betrayal of social values as reflected in some

of the architecture of his period (Ruskin, 1897). He considered that

architecture should reflect the moral principles of the society it framed. The

social legacy of seismic events such as war and revolution result in the

remapping of habitation.   This is reflected in the way in which space is

inhabited and constructed and the creation of altered visual landscapes,

mediated by new materials and changing lifestyles.

The seeking or experiencing of change is part of a process that both

Heraclitus and T.S. Eliot note as central to the journey towards finding repose,

which is in itself a shifting state (Wilson, 2007:59,60). It reflects what

Christopher Reed calls 'an impulse to refashion the world in order to enable

new ways of life' (Reed, 1996:158). How does architecture reflect change? It

does so by the memories it holds, the marks of the lives that have inhabited

its spaces, the adaptations it has undergone or the statements of progress it

makes by its materials and design. Architecture encompasses both geometric

space and what Maurice Merleau-Ponty defines as anthropological space,

that is, 'the scene of an experience of relations with the world'(cited in Augé,

2008:64). So while one carries the visible characteristics of a period of time,

signifying cultural or social ideologies, the other carries the invisible presence

of lives contained within.   Buildings, like cities, tell of their present but also

'contain [their past] like the lines of a hand, […] every segment marked with

scratches, indentations' (Calvino, 1997:11). Architecture is both a medium of

control and a medium to be controlled. It does not necessarily remain

appropriate to changing lifestyles, so it may be adapted and renovated,

reflecting new priorities or shifts in power. It is continually reforming.

If architects are indeed 'the handmaidens of politics', as Woods

ascribes, inquiry into the link between power, control and design of buildings

has a long history. In Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, he declaims in

the seventh Lamp, that of Obedience: 'the Principle is not Liberty but Law'

and, referring again to Liberty, 'There is no such thing in the Universe'

(Ruskin,1897:363,362). The principle of liberty is also explored by Foucault.

The relationship between the design and construction of spaces and the

society which they serve is reflected by Foucault's interest in Panopticism as

a method of moderation of behaviour and the control exerted by society over

those in liminal states, including offenders and the mentally ill. It exemplifies

the power of spatial design to apply social control or conditioning. Gordana

Fontana-Giusti states that 'since the emergence of Foucault's discussions on

Panopticism, it has become impossible to see architecture as neutral, simply

aesthetic or merely functional' (Fontana-Giusti, 2013:93).   Prisons and

asylums were spaces constructed to contain and control those who operated

on the edges of conventional social behaviour and morality. Foucault

understood architecture 'as an element of support, to ensure a certain

allocation of people in space, a *canalisation* of their circulation as well as the

coding of their reciprocal relations' (Fontana-Giusti, 2013:15). Issues of the power and control, physical or psychological, exerted by living spaces on their inhabitants is explored in this thesis in relation to several different sorts of domestic space within the narratives of the selected novels.

Foucault believed that architects should be aware that 'freedom was not a property of any architectural object or space' and that constructed spaces inevitably affect social relations and control the way people use and move around in them (Fontana-Giusti, 2013:16). Foucault's work in the field of mental illness provides vivid examples of the links between the design of constructed space and social context. In her paper 'Morphogenesis versus Structuration: on combining structure and action', Margaret Archer states: 'Social structure is ultimately a human product, but [...] this product in turn shapes individuals and influences their interaction' (Archer, 1982:455). As Irene Cieraad suggests: 'The public or social housing policies of governments materialized their often censorious concerns for the well-being of their citizens, making domestic space a locus for primal political reform' (Cieraad, 1999:5). The belief in the power of constructed spaces over those who use them is reinforced by Robin Middleton, writing about the architecture of late eighteenth and nineteenth-century asylums, prisons and hospitals: 'The instrument of reform [...] was to be architecture' (Middleton, 1992:17).

The architecture of 'home' is variously considered as the construction of the benign shelter; Ruskin's vision of a place of peace; what Cieraad defines as a key to 'the structure and functioning of society'; or a site of hard labour, abuse and disenfranchisement for women (Cieraad, 1999:Foreword). Woods suggests that we return home to find 'the familiar and predictable [as]

a frame of reference for considering all we did not know or understand from our experiences elsewhere' (Woods,2015:67). In exploring the way in which domestic spaces give meaning to the fictional narratives studied in this thesis, it is necessary to consider the associations attached to both 'house' and 'home' but also those underlying associations of architecture and buildings with the wider interconnections with sociological and economic ideologies mentioned above. In his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Pierre Bourdieu observes the interplay between physical structures, values and behaviours. (Bourdieu,1984). Gaston Bachelard emphasises the relationship between habitation and self as follows: 'The house image has become the topography of our intimate being' (Bachelard, 1994:xxxvi). According to Bachelard, to adopt the house image and its details provides not only a setting for narrative, but layers of information and meaning relating to those who inhabit the dwelling.

Heidegger's detailed etymological analysis of the concepts of 'building', 'dwelling' and 'home' reveals the complexity of the relationship between these elements of the human condition. His definition of dwelling is to 'remain at peace within […] the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence' (Heidegger, 2011:246). The key site in which such a state might be achieved is the home, the constructed space in which domestic living is conducted, a place with connotations of safety and protection. When it is not possible to experience this state in the home, because of the impact of internal family or external societal pressures, Heidegger's proposal that 'mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling' is explained (Heidegger, 2008:254). In seeking to achieve a state that corresponds with Heidegger's concept of

dwelling, the female protagonists in the novels discussed in this thesis engage in a process of change.

Despite Le Corbusier's promotion of the home as a site of masculinity and demotion of the domestic, the resemblance of their buildings and the similarity of their philosophies, the spiritual quality of the home was reflected to a far greater extent in the domestic buildings of his contemporary Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright's principles in designing the Prairie houses (1900-1901) reflect what his contemporary Bachelard refers to as 'virtues of shelter' that are 'so deeply rooted in our unconscious' (Bachelard, 1994:12). Bachelard's 'lamp that glows in the window' (Bachelard 1958:33) is reflected in the fireplace 'at the core of the Prairie House' (Lym 1980: 73). As though foretelling the influence of Wright's concern for external and internal unity, for the synthesis of landscape and constructed space and for the 'new spatial freedom' which reflects 'freedom for the individual' (Lym,1980:73), Bachelard reflects: 'Sometimes the house of the future is better built, lighter and larger than all the houses of the past, so that the image of *the dream house* is opposed to that of the childhood house' (Bachelard,1994:61).

The following definitions illustrate the complexity of the concept of 'home' and its many functions. In *A Social History of Housing 1815-1835*, John Burnett observes that homes 'are physical structures [and] social, economic and cultural institutions' (Burnett, 1978:3). Putnam & Newton define home as 'both a space we inhabit and a place we imagine. […] When we say that 'homes are made' rather than built, we acknowledge an interweaving of personal imagination, lived relationships and shaped surroundings' (Putnam & Newton, 1990:7). As the site in which 'family relations and gendered and

class identities are negotiated, contested and transformed' and 'the two separate worlds of economics [provider and consumer] meet' (Cieraad 1999: x,8), home is the theatre in which the complex interaction of personal, social and economic relationships are played out and where 'the fragmentation of existing systems of order under the intense pressures of change' becomes visible (Woods, 2015:64).

Smyth & Croft note 'how ubiquitous [the imagery of home] is as an element within narrative' (Smyth & Croft, 2006:15). Each of the novels considered in this thesis tells the story of a woman who is in some way 'other', who does not, or does not want to, conform to social roles and expectations. If we accept the idea explored above, of 'the capacity of architecture to structure one's consciousness' we acknowledge the deeply symbiotic relationship between buildings and those who use them (Barrie, 2017:40). When that building is a domestic setting, the rich layer of meanings attached to 'house' and 'home' add further complex possibilities for interpretation. Barrie notes that '[h]ouse and home are two words that call into question, or illustrate, the roles of architecture. The former is clearly place – material and instrumental – the latter a placeless idea, cultural construct, and historical object' (Barrie, 2017:xxvii). McDowell states 'the term "the home" must be one of the most loaded words in the English language' (McDowell,1999: 71). Home is the site of activity and the interaction of family life which tells the observer so much about the inhabitants and their place in the world. The location and space in which living is conducted, and the details of daily life, provide evidence of what Bourdieu describes as economic, cultural and social capital, a definition of class (Bourdieu, 1984). Barrie defines the difference between 'house' and

'home': 'A house provides shelter and houses people's lives, but a home is what they create in a house, the myriad of elements of living that, though changeable over time, define and represent their lives'. He notes that 'considerably less addressed are the symbolism, meaning, ritual use, cultural significance, and ontological roles of home' (Barrie, 2017:xxi, xxii).

Contents and objects are another component of the map of habitation created by the construction of the home. As Jean Baudrillard observes: 'The style of furniture changes as the individual's relationships to family and society change' (Baudrillard, 2005:15). The presence of these layers of meaning in the locus of home therefore make it a rich context for narrative. Tensions between the physical structure of home, the ideology determining its construction, its current use, social expectations and the individual circumstances of its inhabitants are all embodied in this place called home. Ruskin's view of home as of a 'place of peace – the shelter not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division' (Ruskin, 1977:59) does not reflect the experience of many women for whom the home may be the site of abuse and male domination or, as in some of the novels explored in this thesis, a space where less overt forms of social control operate because the reality is that 'subordinate groups cannot recreate their situation outside or free from the constraints of the dominant culture' (Reed, 1996:149). Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling observe that 'Home is a key site in the oppression of women' (Blunt & Dowling, 2006:15). The home, traditionally the site of a dominant patriarchal, capitalist culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is therefore the prime context in which narratives of the struggles of women to define a self-determined role is played out. As Reed says:

It is primarily in the home that we are constructed as sexual and gendered beings. If the domestic is the main arena for the enforcement of conventional divisions of masculinity and feminity (along with their complement, heterosexuality) however, the modern home has also been a staging for rebellion against these norms. (Reed, 1996:15).

Bachelard extends the structure of the house as a metaphor for the human mind:

Up near the roof, all our thoughts are clear. In the attic it is a pleasure to see the bare rafters of the strong framework. [...] As for the cellar, it is first and foremost the *dark entity* [sic] of the house. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths. (Bachelard, 1994:18).

Barthes equates the structure of narrative, what he describes as 'a hierarchy of instances', with the construction of a building:

To understand a narrative is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognize its construction in 'storeys', to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative 'thread' on to an implicitly vertical axis. (Barthes, 1977:87).

Bachelard quotes Carl Jung, who proposes the house as model for the structure of the human mind:

> We have to describe and to explain a building the upper
> storey of which was erected in the nineteenth-century;
> the ground floor dates from the sixteenth century, and
> a careful examination of the masonry discloses the fact
> that it was reconstructed from a dwelling-tower of the
> eleventh century. In the cellar we discover Roman
> foundation walls, and under the cellar a filled-in cave,
> in the floor of which stone tools are found and remnants
> of glacial fauna in the layers below. That would be a
> sort of picture of our mental structure. [...] But from the
> very fact that it may be easily developed, there is
> ground for taking the house as a *tool for analysis* of the
> human soul.
>
> (Bachelard, 1994:xxxvii).

Baudrillard, meanwhile, considers the house as 'the symbolic equivalent of the human body, whose potent organic schema is later generalized into an ideal design for the integration of social structures' (Baudrillard, 2005:27). Ruth Ronen develops the parallel between constructed space as frame for narrative and the ways in which aspects of space can be navigated by the writer to add meaning. She describes a frame as: 'a data structure for representing a stereotyped situation, a representation of knowledge about the world as chunks or units of concepts denoting certain courses of events or actions' (Ronen, 1986:13).

In framing isolation or exclusion within a narrative, '[t]he inaccessible part of the fictional space forms part of the same spatial continuum as the

setting, yet it consists of closed frames which cannot be entered or about which information is inaccessible to characters in another frame' (Ronen, 1986:426). The interplay between constructed space used as metaphor, the elements of constructed space used to reflect positioning, context and relationships, and narrative structure, will be explored through the key texts considered in this thesis.

Bourdieu links 'conditions of existence, habitus and life-style' as cultural capital, the relationship between social and economic condition, class and choices of life-style elements: 'Taste, the prosperity and capacity to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects or practices, is the generative formula of life-style' (Bourdieu, 1984:173). Social condition is reflected in every element of life, including, therefore, dwelling places and the objects which are part of everyday living. David James comments: 'It now seems commonplace to think of our physical environment as all but saturated in mediatory systems of representation' (James 2008: 20).

As explored above, the design and use of constructed space as portrayed in fiction is intimately bound up with the social context in which fictional characters play out their narratives. James expands on this idea in relation to the use of landscape description in contemporary fiction:

> By looking closely at the craft of landscape
> description, we can also appreciate how
> contemporary writers are extending long-standing
> traditions that point back to late-Victorian and early-
> twentieth century fiction, where the relationship

between physical place and narrative poetics
evolves. (James, 2008:7).

By locating narrative within constructed space, not only are the 'mediatory systems of representation' with which that space is associated brought into play, but the structural exchange between narrative and inhabited spaces adds a further layer of meaning (James, 2008:20).   Fiction creates or reflects the narratives of individuals and communities. Part of those narratives is the way in which human beings construct their world. This in turn reflects the episteme and zeitgeist of a period. Constructed spaces are, therefore, signifiers of the condition of a time, of the beliefs of its society, of its principles of habitation, its priorities and its tastes. Barthes asks: 'Is everything in a narrative functional? Does everything, down to the slightest detail, have a meaning?'. The answer he gives is that: 'a narrative is never made up of anything other than functions: in differing degrees, everything in it signifies' (Barthes, 1977:84). As Ruth Ronen states: 'A personal frame carries a mark or imprint of a character; it carries the concrete physical indication of a private domain' (Ronen, 1986:12). Framing and framed by constructed space, fiction draws on its many manifestations as a rich layer of meaning. Constructed spaces carry the footprints of those who create or inhabit them and, when providing an association for the reader, draw on personal reference and association. Examining the role of landscape in fiction, James uses 'the poetics of place as a lens through which to view a range of connections between apparently distinct writers' (James 2008:7).   This exploration will apply the lens of constructed space to the work of women writers spanning more than a century of change. Taking into account McDowell's proposition

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that the study of the physical structure of home and the social relationships it contains is both fragmented and neglected (McDowell, 1999:93), this thesis brings together a range of theoretical perspectives through which to explore how the stories of women in the selected novels and the domestic settings within which they live interact to reveal the reasons for and results of moments of change. The varying definitions and interpretations of home in the preceding pages signify its complex role in domestic life. It is described as a physical space, (Burnett,1978:3; Putnam & Newton,1990:7) an embodiment of a social and economic model (Burnett, 1978:3), a place of shelter rooted in the unconscious (Bachelard, 1994:12), of peace and safety (Heidegger, 2007:246) and a place of our imagination (Putnam & Newton, 1990:7). However, it is also described as a site of disenfranchisement and oppression for women (Cieraad, 1999: Foreword; Blunt & Dowling, 2006:15). Barrie's proposition that architecture has the capacity to structure consciousness reflects the power of physical space over those who inhabit it (Barrie,2017:xxvii) while Bourdieu proposes that lifestyle and taste, as evidenced in the home, define class and cultural capital. Augé adopts De Certeau's proposition that there is a symbiotic relationship between spaces and the activity that occurs within them. Domestic spaces have the potential to speak of all of the above. By focusing on the details of domestic spaces and the relationships between those who inhabit them, their activities and their relationships with their homes, stories of the tensions between families, individuals and society are underpinned by the complexities of tension between the real and the imagined, and between social models and individual desires.

The domestic settings or habitations in the narratives of the selected

texts provide metaphors that underpin the ambiguous positions of the female

protagonists, and the wider social changes taking place. As Thacker argues

in his book *Moving through Modernity*, early twentieth-century modernist

writing 'is about living and experiencing 'new times' […] in specific spatial

histories: rooms, cities, buildings' (Thacker, 2009:13). Space, objects and

those who inhabit comprise a coded construction of family life. Augé

emphasises how 'anthropological research deals with all forms of other

[within] a system of differences, starting with the division of the sexes but also

defining everyone's situation in political, economic and family terms' (Augé,

2008:16). In setting a narrative within the framework of a dominant ideology

(for example, class structure, social and economic position of women,

society's expectations of family life) descriptions and conditions of domestic

space are able to raise the reader's consciousness of a contra-dominant point

of view. The representation of domestic spaces explains and sometimes

questions the status-quo, reflecting an internal status or state of mind of the

protagonist. Habitation and the codes it represents at any one time present a

background of expectation against which the otherness of the female

protagonist and the scale of change required for her to become *other* than

other can be measured. In seeking to explore how change is reflected in the

domestic settings of selected texts, I have deliberately considered a wide

time-frame, between 1847-1985. This period encompasses periods of major

social, economic and political changes in Britain, from the growth of cities and

reordering of traditional power structures during the Industrial Revolution to

the impact of two World Wars on material structure, society and family life. It also encompasses the first organised movement for feminism in Britain, set up by Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Rayner Parkes in the 1850s, Betty Friedan's 1963 publication, *The Feminine Mystique* and the second-wave feminist movement. The thesis considers periods of personal change in the lives of the women protagonists in the selected novels and how these are illuminated by their living spaces. However, apart from the specific situations of individual women in the novels, the thesis argues that many of the practical, social and emotional barriers encountered by women in their search for fulfilment and empowerment stretch across the entire time frame, remaining unresolved despite the many significant advances in the social, professional and economic status of women. By taking a long view, it is possible to compare what might be perceived as progress against the embedded cultural practices that maintain a dominant patriarchal structure.

This thesis considers stories by women writers of women at points of change in their lives and how their living spaces reflect their circumstances and feelings at a moment in time. My proposition is that domestic spaces have the power to construct narrative about the lives lived within them. In the selected novels, domestic settings provide contextual and background information for the narrative, a setting for the events and interactions between characters and, in many cases, are key to the resolution of the narrative. Domestic spaces are where we create 'home'. They contain indications of the condition of habitation and provide a framework for the interactions and dynamics between inhabitants. They offer signifiers that illuminate the circumstances of their inhabitants. Their physical design directs the way they

are used, and their contents suggest the strength of connection between dwelling and dweller. The financial transaction that determines occupation amplifies the position of the occupant in a society where property ownership is key to economic and social status. Although this thesis does not specifically engage in an historical, political or feminist reading of the selected novels, the different contexts within which they were written provide a background to the lives of the characters and the perceptions of the reader. Rather than adding to the extensive amount of scholarship which has been published relating to the genre and construction of narrative of the most canonical novels in this thesis, or to the cultural identity of their authors, I wanted to re-examine these novels from a fresh perspective of critical literary geography and spatial theory and to draw attention to the richness that domestic location brings to the stories they tell. In addition, I wanted to apply this perspective to a number of novels by authors who have received less critical attention than those included in this thesis who have been the subject of substantial critical consideration, for example, Charlotte Brontë, Jean Rhys and Doris Lessing. Therefore I have included novels by Elizabeth von Arnim, Lettice Cooper, Helen Ashton, Elizabeth Taylor, Rosamund Lehmann, Penelope Mortimer and Zoë Fairbairns.

As mentioned on page two of this introduction, the organisation of the thesis is categorical rather than chronological. Chapters One to Four have been organised according to the transactional status of occupation of spaces, permanent or temporary, called 'home'. As novels are selected by the protagonists' status of occupation of living spaces, the movement of change is not strictly linear through the chapters, but on occasions flows back and forth,

producing links to other chapters or presaging future developments in patterns of habitation.

Chapter One, 'Ordered Space', includes six novels whose representations of home are based on traditional values of class, gender and economic systems of capitalism. Jane Eyre, the eponymous heroine of Charlotte Brontë's novel published in 1847, finds herself living in a series of locations in which she is an outsider because of others' views of her financial status, class or gender. Descriptions of the various domestic spaces she inhabits, including Gateshead Hall, Lowood School and Thornfield, reflect her oppression, often because of their physical appearance and characteristics and, in opposition, the status of her hosts. Her eventual position of power is achieved not only by her adherence to her own principles, but by the economic security provided by inheritance of property.

Margaret Hale, the heroine of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *North and South,* published in 1854*,* moves with her family from the rural south of England to the industrial north. An independently-minded woman, her principles lead her to become involved beyond her class with families living in poverty, suffering poor home conditions and ill-health. Her progress from dutiful vicar's daughter to politically-engaged proponent for the working classes is played out against descriptions of her own home environment and those of working-class families in an industrial northern city. Her future is also secured by inheritance and the purchase of property, as she rescues the mill owned by John Thornton, her future husband, ensuring her power as a dominant female in a patriarchal capitalist society. Helen Talboys, the protagonist in *Lady Audley's Secret*, written by Mary Elizabeth Braddon and

published in 1862, is deserted by her husband and reinvents herself as a governess. She commits bigamy when she marries into the aristocracy, at once raising her own status and economic situation and presenting a challenge to traditional models of ownership and patriarchal hierarchy that mirrors challenges to the existing class hierarchies through the Industrial Revolution. She contravenes class convention by engaging with her servants in a plot to cover up her real identity, played out in the private rooms and labyrinthine corridors of Audley Court, the family seat that represents the system she threatens to destroy. She is silenced by removal to an asylum, a space of confinement and control. Rebecca West's novel *The Return Of The Soldier*, published in 1918, uses the setting of a renovated country house to explore the psychological impact of war and the way in which the physical structure of 'home' reflects the different values of its inhabitants, to expose the emptiness of the marriage of Chris Baldry and his wife Kitty and the bleakness and uncertainty of the future. *Vera*, written by Elizabeth von Arnim and published in 1921, is set in The Willows, the home of newly-married Lucy and her older husband, Everard Wemyss, who uses the renovation of the house to construct an identity for himself as a traditional country gentleman. His oppression of Lucy becomes a psychological imprisonment which is reflected in her physical decline. *The New House* by Lettice Cooper, published in 1936, captures a time of transition in housing, when traditional large country houses became too big and too expensive to maintain, when numbers of servants were neither affordable nor necessary and where the landscape was changing as land was sold off for building. The protagonist is Rhoda, still living in the family home, knowing there is a more exciting life but tied to her

family by lack of confidence and sense of duty. The home she and her family leave at the beginning of the novel, the house they move into and the home belonging to Rhoda's brother and his wife circumscribe the changes for each member of the family. The move to the new family home (itself a symbol of the family's situation) eventually provides a catalyst for change.

Chapter Two, 'Borrowed Space', considers narratives where the space acting as 'home' is owned by someone other than the inhabitants. The novels cover the period of the interbellum and World War Two. Ruth McElroy notes 'a substantial shift in patterns [...] of owner-occupation' during the first half of the twentieth century (cited in Smyth & Croft, 2006:88). Property ownership indicates economic status, previously the territory of wealthy landowners and industrialists. With the increase in availability of mortgages at this time, the potential for property ownership is much greater. As discussed above, buildings are to some extent an expression of the system, so an increase in home ownership indicates a system where owning property is considered aspirational. Those who live in spaces they do not own, therefore, operate to some extent on a lower level of a system where home ownership is at the apex.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, England had become an urban society. The fabric of cities was changing, partly because of the effects of the devastation of war, but also because of changing ideas of design and the use of new building materials. The female protagonists in the five novels included in this chapter are caught between pre-war social and family expectations and their desires for independence and fulfilment. In Winifred Holtby's novel *The Crowded Street,* published in 1924, Muriel makes the slow

and personally painful transition from dutiful daughter to independent woman. Muriel represents one type of woman caught between two worlds. Her more impetuous sister Connie, living with the family of her child's father, represents another. The homes in which they live and the rented spaces occupied by Muriel, signify their progress on a pathway of change and the ways in which their lives are controlled. The family in Helen Ashton's novel *Bricks and Mortar,* published in 1932, are constantly on the move. Stacy, the daughter of the family, wants to become an architect like her father, Martin. This story is told through buildings, their structures and the relationships to those who live in them. Martin's mother-in-law, a member of the upper class who has fallen on hard times, lives in a series of rented houses, mostly in seaside resorts. Martin moves the family from one rented property to another, either because he likes the buildings themselves or because he is looking for the definitive home. This constant movement reflects unresolved issues with Martin's marriage. After a long and fluctuating relationship played out over the drawing board, Stacy marries Oliver, her father's assistant, and they design and build a modernist home which reflects their vision of relationships and family life. Two novels by Rosamund Lehmann, *Invitation to the Waltz* and *The Weather in the Streets,* published in 1932 and 1936, follow the story of Olivia. She represents the many young women who, during war time, had moved beyond their parents' worlds but had not established a place for themselves. Her family home and the houses built by her grandfather signify the established place of the family in local society, which is dominated by Lady Spencer. Olivia moves to London and has an affair with Lady Spencer's married son Rollo. The narrative of Olivia's personal journey, her aspirations, uncertainties

and disappointments, is told through her reflections about the borrowed and rented spaces she inhabits, the homes she observes, and through Lehmann's use of anthropomorphism. Elizabeth Taylor's novel *At Mrs Lippincote's,* published in 1945, is set in a rented house, where the presence of objects belonging to the owner creates a powerful hold over the current inhabitants. The tensions in the marriage of Roddy Davenant and his wife Julia are exposed within a space that holds no affinity for Julia.   Julia's psychological struggles with the house and the invisible presence of Mrs Lippincote embodied in her possessions, are a metaphor for the domestic control and expectations of behaviour that surround her. Her life as an army wife ensures that she will be forever living within a particular social structure and in temporary homes, a reflection of her inability to establish how she wants to live and make the changes necessary to achieve a state of contentment.

Chapter Three, 'Serviced Space', looks at the hotel and boarding house as a site of displacement, retreat or catalyst for change. In providing a place of habitation, usually temporary, hotels offer respite, refuge or an opportunity for objective reflection. Social groupings in narratives set in hotels and boarding houses are usually random, offering either disjunction, interaction, isolation, concealment or revelation. The social interaction of strangers is explored in Elizabeth Bowen's novel *The Hotel,* published in 1927, and allows Bowen to expose the prejudices, social expectations, dynamics and unpredictable decisions made by individuals removed from their normal environments. In *After leaving Mr Mackenzie* by Jean Rhys, published in 1930, Julia Martin's failure to construct a consistent and satisfactory life is emphasized by the way in which she drifts from one hotel to

another. Her relationships are fragmented, her financial situation is insecure and mostly she avoids interaction with people unless she needs money. The hopelessness of her life is reflected in her existence, which has no direction and no permanence. The descriptions of the hotel rooms she inhabits reflect her situation and her lack of identity and hope for the future. She is in a state of perpetual fluctuation. In *To Room Nineteen* by Doris Lessing, published in 1963, a hotel room becomes a refuge for Susan, who progressively and deliberately detaches herself from family life. The anonymity and isolation of the hotel room provides a sense of security and, despite its impersonal environment, seems to belong to Susan more than her family home does. The possibility of conducting a double life undisturbed, makes this sordid hotel room, one cell in a collection of cells, a powerful metaphor for the shrinking horizons of her life on a pathway to self-destruction. Agatha Christie's novel *At Bertram's Hotel,* published in 1965, although ostensibly a crime novel, reflects changing times and the role of coincidence in the shaping of a narrative. Change does not appear to have impinged on Bertram's Hotel. It provides a sanctuary for its guests, who can depend on its old-fashioned values. But on closer inspection, it is a fabricated world of lies, deceit and theft. The corridors and spaces of the hotel building allow lives to be conducted tangentially and secrets and deceits to remain hidden. Although the process of change appears to have been halted, the guests, in trying to hold on to the past, look uneasy and uncomfortable, suggesting that it is impossible to halt progress. *Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont,* Elizabeth Taylor's novel published in 1971, presents a bleak but sympathetic picture of ageing. The hotel is the final place of residence for elderly women who, for one

reason or another, have no family home, but times are changing and such guests are no longer welcome. Although providing a 'home' of sorts for these elderly residents, it is transitory, because of their status as guests and because they are nearing the end of life. The novel examines the relationships and dynamics of groups of people brought together randomly, the pressure of expectations and the dilemmas arising from the obligation to conform.

Chapter Four explores 'Shared Space', mostly involving random groups of people who are brought together to live as a unit. Several of the buildings that provide settings for these narratives, originally constructed to suit the lifestyles of earlier periods, have been adapted for contemporary use. *The L-Shaped Room* by Lynn Reid-Banks, published in 1960, is set in a large Victorian terrace house which is converted into bedsits. The building itself, once an impressive family home, has undergone considerable reshaping to adapt to the economic situation and the demand for cheap accommodation. The lives of its inhabitants are in transition. Their interactions, brought about by the way in which the building has been converted, reveal their personal situations and dilemmas. The relationship between Jane Graham, the protagonist, and her living space, an L-shaped room, becomes integral to the resolution of her situation. Penelope Mortimer's novel *The Pumpkin Eater,* published in 1962, explores the shared space of marriage. The narrator, who is referred to in the novel only as Mrs Armitage, is about to embark on a fourth marriage. She has many children – giving birth seems to be the only way she finds a purpose. She has lived in many different spaces, the structures of which represent the state of her relationships. Once married, her new

husband, Jake Armitage, promises to build a tower for her, a symbolic

structure that will resolve her unhappiness. This is a family who cannot find a

way to share space, but as they occupy the tower at the end of the book, it

becomes the symbol of resolution through compromise. Muriel Spark's novel

The Girls of Slender Means, published in 1963, is set in another converted

building, a large Victorian house which has become a residential club for

working girls. The story is set just after the end of World War Two. The girls

are distributed in dormitories and bedrooms over the floors of the building.

Their situations and ambitions reflect the circumstances of many females in

the period, variously wanting economic security through marriage or to live

independent lives. The structure of the building is disintegrating and the

physical relationships of spaces reflect the status of the occupants. The

attitudes of male characters towards the residents display a range of opinions

of women. Although surviving the bombing during the war, the house is

destroyed by an unexploded bomb at the end of the book, reflecting a society

whose construction is as fragile as the building. Elizabeth Taylor's novel *The*

Wedding Group, published in 1968, explores a different shared space, that of

a family commune dominated by a patriarch. The narrative describes the

buildings inside the family compound and, through the story of Cressy, the

daughter who decides to leave the family, the effect of parental indoctrination

and psychological control. Tracking the spaces she inhabits after leaving the

family, her inability to cope with aspects of her new life, including her

marriage, is explored. The novel also reflects the way in which her mother-in-

law uses domestic routines to retain a relationship with her son David and to

control Cressy, her new daughter-in-law. David is unable to settle in a 'home',

either with his mother or his wife. The privacy of the commune is eventually breached by the advance of new housing, symbolizing the inevitable failure of attempted separation from the world and the progress of change. *Benefits* by Zoë Fairbairns, published in 1979, explores the personal, political and social relationships in a dystopian society where social experimentation and control is engendered by a male-dominated government. A group of women move into the abandoned Collingdeane Tower, an example of a failed social housing project, amidst a community whose economic and social status casts most of its members as outsiders. The exception is Lynn, who resists a move to a more salubrious area on principle and supports the women in their calls for entitlement to child benefit and legal abortion. Collingdeane Tower becomes the physical locus and metaphorical symbol of the women's fight for control over their own lives. The novel follows the complex and intertwined relationships of the women, the personal and moral decisions that confront them and the social, political and economic challenges for women in the 1970s. The final novel, *The Good Terrorist* by Doris Lessing, published in 1985, is set in a large, derelict house which is converted into a living space by a group of political activists. The struggles to make the building habitable, led by the female protagonist Alice, and the conflicting views of domesticity of the inhabitants, create tensions and affiliations, betrayals and friendships. The process of renovation provides rich symbolism for the motivations and ideologies of individuals. The dynamics between the inhabitants reveal their different reasons for occupying the house. As in *The L-Shaped Room*, Alice anthropomorphizes the house, her affection and longing for it demonstrating her search to find 'home'.

McDowell notes that the home is a place whose meanings change over time (McDowell, 1999:93). Chapter Five, ''Makings and *Un*makings': The Role of Domestic Space in Stories of Change', addresses McDowell's observation by pulling together the threads explored throughout the previous four chapters. It identifies common themes running through the various conditions of habitation discussed, pursuing the notion of change and its reflection in the domestic settings and objects that provide contexts for the narratives. It also considers how questions of power, gender relations, boundaries, the signification of domestic space and its contents, and the thresholds between private and public space, are explored through the medium of domestic space in the context of each chapter.

A further point of discussion relates to the reader's role in the interpretation of narratives set within domestic spaces. Calvino refers to the role played by individual experience when he talks of a city as being like 'a honeycomb in whose cells each of us can place the things he wants to remember' (Calvino,1972: 13). One location has myriad meanings depending on individual experience. In thinking about 'home', each of us attaches to the word our own significance, memories and interpretations. Although the question of the role of the reader in the interpretation of text cannot be fully explored within the scope of this thesis, the concept of home as an element in the construction of a narrative creates a connection with the reader that provides an additional depth of meaning. All readers bring to the texts an experience of 'home', but these experiences will be multiple and various. David Walton, discussing Roland Barthes's essay *The Death of the Author*, reminds us of the power of the reader in the transaction between writer,

reader and text, as 'reading is not the uncovering of fixed signifieds'. He suggests that, viewed in this way, reading becomes a 'form of writing' (Walton 2012: 92). In addition to the relationship between the elements of domestic space, its formation, the social context in which it exists and those who inhabit it, the resonance of the reader with a place called 'home' brings one more component to the power of domestic spaces to tell stories.

Chapter One

Ordered Space

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë (1847)
North and South by Elizabeth Gaskell (1854)
Lady Audley's Secret by Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1862)
The Return of the Soldier by Rebecca West (1918)
Vera by Elizabeth von Arnim (1921)
The New House by Lettice Cooper (1936)

> Although the house and the home is one of the most
> strongly gendered spatial locations, it is important not to
> take the associations for granted, nor to see them as
> permanent and unchanging. [They] may be rewritten
> over time as men and women challenge and contest
> conventional associations between, for example, inside
> and outside, the public and the private' (McDowell,
> 1999:93)

In *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space*, James observes that landscapes influence communal prosperity and industrial progress affects the welfare of the land. These factors have become focuses for ecocritical thought (James, 2008:21). The shift of communities from countryside to city following the Industrial Revolution, the impact on lifestyles and the growth of cities, the development of urban dwelling in the nineteenth-century and suburban dwelling in the twentieth century, and the associations which have grown up around these spaces, are embedded in the narratives of

fiction. Lynne Hapgood likewise traces the link between location and narrative: 'The combination of a romance narrative and a realist framework had been a familiar element in the [nineteenth-century] social problem novel'. In suburban fiction, situated between country and city, Hapgood observes 'a deliberate fusion of romance and realism; the realistic is the site where romance is embedded [and] romance and realism negotiate to find a momentary synonymity in the experience of the individual' (Hapgood, 2005:7).

The condition of habitation at any one point in time and the narratives that unfold within particular settings, are therefore linked to the circumstances of time, place and context, while the constructed or other spaces in which narratives are situated bring significance and meaning. For James, 'spatial sensations are always more penetrating than any form of sociological deliberation' (James, 2008:72). Constructed space, then, carries meaning which reflects a response by the maker to the context in which it is created and the way in which it is intended to be used. The life that is embodied in literature is encompassed by private and public buildings, spaces and landscapes. These settings create visual and psychological environments which affect the reader's understanding of the literal and metaphorical elements of narratives.[1]

Before exploring the focus of this chapter through the selected texts, a brief overview of the way in which the house reflects social and economic status and shapes the organisation of the household begins to explain the power of the domestic setting in contributing meaning to narrative. Pier

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[1] Briganti and Mezei discuss interpretations by Freud and Jung of the relationship of the house with the unconscious and cite the work of other writers whose work explores the meaning of home. C. Briganti & K. Mezei. (2016) *Domestic modernism, the interwar novel, and E.H. Young (London: Routledge)* 20

Vittorio Aureli and Maria Guidici argue that the house as a structure responds to the need not only for protection but also 'to settle and to give ritual form to life' (Aureli & Guidici, 2016:105,113). Their definition of architecture as 'a set of devices' that formalize and make explicit 'the ideology of domesticity in communication and action' is helpful in understanding the close relationship between the spaces where life is conducted and the social codes that dictate its pattern. The desire for ritual – 'patterns of behaviour [that] can be established and preserved' – and continuity, explains one of the instincts underpinning the importance of the country house as a symbol of family position and survival. But continuity and stability are set against contexts that are constantly changing socially, politically and economically (Aureli & Guidici 2016:107).

The history of the interior space of the house is shaped by social structures which have been changed by the forces of production and technology. The replacement of the hearth as 'a shared locus of production, exchange and ritual' by segregated domestic realms, where women were confined to 'productive and reproductive activities', the separation of family members from servants, and the advent of privacy as a domestic concept in early modern Europe, were reflected in the changing arrangement of internal space within the house (Aureli & Guidici 2016:107). The tensions between the desire for stability and continuity, the physical permanence of constructed domestic spaces and the need to adapt patterns of life to changing circumstances explain the position of the house as a key indicator of responses to evolving social and economic situations. As Donald Hall observes, the house is, indeed, one of 'those components of daily life related

directly to one's economic existence' that 'not only leave indelible marks on literary [...] texts but also are key to understanding their reception and function' (Hall, 2000:74).

Perhaps more than that of any other architectural structure, the history of the English country house provides a narrative of changing social and political patterns and values. Thomas Barrie observes that 'the country house [symbolizes] the dominance of the upper classes and their essential role in guaranteeing the values of English culture' (Barrie, 2017:30). Muthesius, writing in 1904 and ignoring issues of rural poverty, extols the beauty of the English landscape and describes country houses that reflect 'the wellbeing of the country, the comfortable life-style of a people that has remained close to nature' (Muthesius, 1979:8). The ordering, reordering and uses of the spaces of the English country house over centuries indicate the codes of interrelationships between individuals, classes and genders. Therefore the choice of such a setting for fiction provides a context where such interrelationships and expectations of conduct are implicit and provide a frame for the narrative.

An architectural reading of texts can provide a useful lens through which to examine narrative and context. This chapter explores six novels in which country houses, or houses in the country, are central to the narratives, providing metaphors that add meaning to the writing. Writing within the period of three of the books referenced in this chapter, Hegel propounds that 'it is not enough that the family has property, but as a universal and lasting person, it needs a permanent and sure possession' (Hegel, 1896, 174). Hegel's precept, that property is a point of permanence and a statement of the

individual's 'external sphere […] and embodiment of […] will' is a status which is challenged, threatened or destroyed physically or mentally in the selected narratives (Hegel, 1896, 48). They explore states of personal and social change where the status quo is represented by locations, domestic spaces and structures, while social change is reflected by the destruction or abandonment of those structures and the inhabiting of others, or by the ability of such structures to resist and stifle challenges.

Narratives of power and conflict are central to *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. The living spaces in which these narratives take place offer significant insights into the progress of Jane Eyre's life from a young orphan to a woman of property who is able to control her own life. The novel is set in a manufacturing mill town in the industrial north of England and was written in 1847 at a time of great political and social unrest. The speed of social change in the north of England was accelerated by the development of manufacturing towns following the Industrial Revolution. The draw of these towns is explained by John Burnett: '[u]nder the impetus of industrialization [there was] a decisive shift in the balance of the economy from farming to manufacturing, and a parallel shift in the balance of population from country to town'. Burnett explains further that the pattern of population distribution was changing as people, once scattered over the countryside of England, were beginning to be concentrated in industrial conurbations such as Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham, Bradford, Sheffield and Nottingham (Burnett,1986:7).

Raymond Williams describes the period concisely as one of 'fortunes from trade and colonial and military profit being converted into houses and property and social position' (Williams, 1984:21). The narrative of *Jane Eyre,*

located as it is in the heart of the industrial north, does not deal to any great extent with the pressing concerns of living and working conditions, low wages and the other social issues which are examined, for instance, in the novels of Elizabeth Gaskell. The conditions suffered by the pupils at Lowood School touch upon wider social concerns, eventually addressed by the relocation of the school, made possible by '[s]everal wealthy and benevolent individuals' (*JE*, 99). Jane's attempts to find shelter after she leaves Thornfield Hall demonstrate the privations encountered by a woman with no social position. The physical landscape of the narrative provides many parallels for the circumstances and state of mind of the novel's eponymous protagonist, as will be explored later in this chapter. While the domestic and other spaces that provide the narrative framework are markers of Jane Eyre's journey through her own life, they are also a means of exploring wider issues relating to the position of women. Considering herself 'a discord' at the beginning of the book, Jane is in a liminal position, belonging 'neither to the servants nor to the employing class' (*JE*:19), although she eventually achieves status by inheritance and marriage.

In exploring the relevance of domestic and other architectural space in *Jane Eyre,* it is useful to recognise that Jane's position through much of the narrative is that of an outsider in the various places of habitation through which she moves. These architectural spaces plot the course of Jane's physical and personal journey. They are staging posts on the way to the resolution of the narrative, and their fates play a significant role in establishing Jane Eyre's position at the end of the book. The name of each location signifies its role in Jane Eyre's secular pilgrimage. The narrative begins at

Gateshead Hall, where Jane decribes herself as living as 'a discord' with her aunt, Mrs Reed (*JE*:19). In her introduction to her edition of the novel, Stevie Davies states: 'Gateshead suggests the gate of origins' (*JE*:xvii). It also suggests the Wicket Gate through which Christian departs on his journey in John Bunyon's allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1681:3). There are further parallels between Jane's journey and that of Christian and his family. Jane is sent from Gateshead Hall to Lowood School, where physical setting and institutional ethos contribute to an unhealthy, oppressive and punitive experience for its pupils. Valleys, woods and low-lying land are used as settings for habitations in a number of the novels studied in this thesis, because of negative connotations attached to such locations. Muthesius's principles for the siting of habitations reinforce the inadvisability of building in valleys or near trees as 'prevailing damp necessitates as much movement of air as possible' and trees 'rob […] the house of sunlight and […] always make the ground damp' (Muthesius, 1979: 63). For example, at Lowood School, 'the unhealthy nature of the site; […]; the brackish, fetid water' have parallels with Bunyon's Slough of Despond, as the narrative of *Jane Eyre* charts Jane's progress towards achieving a better life (*JE*: 99). Davies suggests that the name of Thornfield Hall, Edward Rochester's residence, 'refers to the 'thorns' of God's curse on man's crime in Genesis' but, as a secular rather than religious journey, the name is redolent of the struggles of conscience Jane encounters, which cause her to leave the house and Rochester (*JE:*xxvii). Marsh End (also known as Moor House) provides shelter for Jane at the lowest point of her journey, while the name suggests the possibility that she will become enmired in a relationship with St John Rivers. Under its second

name, it also provides a means later in the novel of establishing a secure life for her and the Rivers sisters. Ferndean, the property Rochester's father purchased 'for the sake of the game covers' although set in an 'ineligible and insalubrious site' becomes the refuge for the blind Rochester and the setting for Jane's future life, transformed by wealth and marriage (*JE*:496). The more salubrious Thornfield, where Jane initially believes she will live as Rochester's wife, is destroyed by fire, an act of destruction which frees Jane to pursue her journey towards happiness. As he discusses his intended marriage to Blanche Ingram, Rochester purports to have arranged for Jane to take up a post of governess at the apparently fictitious Bitternut Lodge, the dwelling of Mrs Dionysius O'Gall in Ireland, providing further evidence of the significance of the naming and location of domestic habitations as metaphor for mental state and role in the narrative journey. In *Jane Eyre*, another sort of habitation is used as a staging post or resting place, an interlude between journeys, a place of waiting and uncertainty. In Part II of *The Pilgrim's Progress,* Gaius's Inn offers a resting place between the Valley of the Shadow of Death and Vanity Fair, a town which provides many temptations. The George Inn at Millcote offers a resting place for Jane Eyre on her journey from Lowood School to her new post at Thornfield, which will in turn present Jane with temptations she resists.

A journey through the spaces inhabited by Jane Eyre as the narrative unfolds demonstrates how significant they are in marking her progress from the unwanted child in her aunt's home, the indignities and outrages of her schooling, her liminal role of governess, the loss of her home, employment and her subsequent elevated social position, achieved through her inherited

wealth and marriage. Jane's description of the view from a window-seat in Gateshead Hall at the beginning of the novel sets the tone for her life as an unwanted guest of the Reeds, 'humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John and Georgiana Reed'. Jane, the outsider, sees 'a pale blank of mist and cloud; near, a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long and lamentable blast' (*JE*:10). The description of this hostile environment of containment foreshadows a recurring theme in the novel, dominated by the 'places at which [Jane] alights' all of which 'constitute a kind of Bastille, from which she must escape' (*JE*, xviii). At Gateshead Hall, the red-room is used as an instrument of control by Jane's aunt, Mrs Reed, a confining space which is all the more formidable as it is the chamber in which Mr Reed died. Brontë's description of the red-room creates a space in which the psychological impact on the child imprisoned therein induces a state of terror which far surpasses the impact of the physical act of imprisonment. The colour red, with its connotations of fire and blood, dominates the furnishings in the room, which are used to inflame Jane's psychological state. This is a story of insidious domination. The descriptions underline the associations between mental and social, psychological and real, as defined by Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991). Jane's contrary behaviour, induced by the unkindness of the Reeds, is controlled by her incarceration in the red-room. The deathbed of Mr Reed carries the symbolism of a 'tabernacle' or place of worship, where retribution may be meted out. The furniture colludes as 'spatial incarnations of the permanence of the family group […] in a unity that is not so much spatial as moral in character' (Baudrillard, 2005:13). The reflection of the room in the

looking-glass made all look 'colder and darker than in reality' (*JE*:18). Brontë creates with space, colour and scale a vivid stamp of the psychological impact of the act of imprisonment on Jane.

Ultimately because Jane becomes a 'lady' she finds kin in the world of the gentry and independence in inherited wealth. As Davies suggests, Jane Eyre might be read 'as a feminist manifesto' but Jane's route to independence and happiness is through inherited wealth and marriage (*JE*: xvii). The destruction of Thornfield and the blinding of Mr Rochester at once removes an obstacle and reverses the male/female power relationship. These domestic spaces are key to the completion of the narrative. Raymond Williams notes that in English novels published in 1847 and 1848, 'people became more aware of great social and historical changes which altered not only outward forms – institutions and landscapes – but also inward feelings, experiences, self-definitions' (Williams,1984:11-12). The framing of the narrative within a series of dwellings, whether domestic, social or institutional, provides a means by which the author can control the direction and signify key events relevant to the pathway of individual characters or with much wider implications. This may include the creation of domestic structures, as will be discussed in later chapters, and their roles in containment or their destruction. In *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley's Secret*, containment by and destruction of buildings determine not just the fate of individuals, but become metaphors for social states. Perception is determined by circumstance. '"Don't you think Gateshead Hall a very beautiful house?"' Mr Lloyd, the apothecary, asks Jane Eyre (*JE*, 29). But for Jane it represents the first in a series of imprisonments, either literal or metaphorical. At Lowood school, Jane looks round 'the convent-like garden'

and the 'large building […] which seemed gray and old' and the next chapter of her life is set in the reader's mind as one of institutionalised containment (*JE*:58). Jane's perception of Thornfield is generally in opposition to Mr Rochester's. She describes the 'snow and fire' created by the white carpets and ruby-red glass in the 'very pretty' drawing room (*JE*:123), so different from the connotation of the colour red and the white bed of Mr Reed during her containment at Gateshead Hall. Yet Rochester considers the house as a 'mere dungeon: don't you feel it so?' he asks Jane (*JE*:249). He plans for them to leave Thornfield and bid 'farewell to its miseries and terror forever' (*JE*:348). For Rochester, Thornfield is the place of containment for his wife Bertha, where he 'saw her safely lodged in that third-storey room' on their return from the West Indies, and 'of whose secret inner cabinet she has now for ten years made a wild beast's den' (*JE*:355). The interplay of memory, experience and association between inhabitants and buildings is a symbiotic exchange which distils the symbolic status of constructed space within personal memory. As Nancy Armstrong states, it becomes 'a private and psychological reality' (Armstrong,1987:206).

The attic itself carries a significance which offers layered meaning to the narrative of *Jane Eyre*. Mary Wilson explains how Victorian domestic architecture responded to 'the increase in the population of resident domestic servants' by 'increasing provisions for attics and basements'. These spaces sandwiched family living quarters and provided an element of containment for the servants, a group of 'potentially unruly bodies and voices' (Wilson, 2013:120). The containing of Bertha Rochester in such a location connotes not only her unruliness but her displacement within the household as Rochester's

unwanted wife. The use of location within the Victorian household as a means of classifying position and order is noted by Armstrong. She observes '[t]he Victorian novel's transformation of household space into an instrument that can be used to classify any social group and keep it under observation' (Armstrong, 1987: 201). Barrie refers to Bachelard's attribution of 'different places and vertical layers of the house to a psychic structure' (Barrie, 2017:41). Jane discovers a third floor at Thornfield 'on a level with the crow colony' (*JE*:125), signifying an association with death or murder through the crow symbol. The attic is filled with a collection of displaced objects. Armstrong describes how 'such a space in culture allows change' by providing a site for the relocation of the unwanted (Armstrong,1987:211). The attic also conceals Rochester's wife Bertha Mason and the secret of his marriage, one that was based on material and imperial power. The direction of the narrative and of Jane's relationship with Rochester is thus sent off on another course. In their seminal work of feminist literary criticism, *The Madwoman in the Attic : The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination,* the title of which was inspired by discussions about *Jane Eyre*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest that this confrontation represents Jane's 'encounter […] with her own imprisoned "hunger, rebellion, and rage," a secret dialogue of self and soul' (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000:339). The detailed reading of *Jane Eyre* contained in Part IV of their book, The Spectral Selves of Charlotte Brontë, applies a feminist approach to Charlotte Brontë's novel and to works by other nineteenth-century women writers, seeking 'to describe both the experience that generates metaphor and the metaphor that creates experience' (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000:xiii).

In opposition to the attic as a symbol of control and containment, Charlotte Brontë uses the attic location of Miss Temple's room in Lowood School as a place of restorative power, concurring with W.H. Auden's vision of the attic as a location for retreat and dreams (Auden, 1965,14-15). To reach the room, Jane Eyre and the ailing Helen Burns 'had to thread some intricate passages, and mount a staircase' (*JE*,83). This detached location, provides a refuge that refreshes, reflecting the name of its occupant, where food becomes 'nectar and ambrosia' (*JE*:86) and where the occupants of the room are transformed and touched by beauty.

The representation of the desirable and unattainable is signalled later that evening when Jane 'sketched [her] first cottage' (*JE*:88). The cottage is introduced as a recurrent symbol of the ideal. Charlotte Brontë uses the cottage as a symbol of desire and domestic perfection into which Jane, as the outsider excluded from domestic contentment, gazes longingly. The mid-nineteenth-century cottage represents a simple aspiration, a refuge from impending change wrought by the rise of industry. John Loudon's description in *The Cottager's Manual* depicts the simple ideals of cottage living, including the necessity of 'some hours of leisure every day, for the progress of health, recreation and enjoyment' (Loudon,1839:Chap.1,2). However, according to Mark Girouard, the back-to-nature movement represented by such structures 'had a strong element of artificiality' (Girouard,1978: 228). As Daniel Maudlin explains, upper-class landowners adopted the cottage as a manifestation of the Roman idea of retreat to a quiet country life. It was intended as a sanctuary from 'the social and economic realities of the eighteenth-century: […] the industrial revolution [and] urban expansion', a culturally and economically

desirable vision which has maintained its attraction to the present day. The cottages of the nineteenth-century were not 'traditional or vernacular' cottages, built using traditional techniques, but were designed by architects appropriating the rural dream. There is no longer evidence of 'the multitude of single-room, mud, stone and straw dwellings that much of England's rural poor occupied historically' and viewed by the ruling classes as symbols of poverty. The rustic versions built for the upper classes had, as Maudlin suggests, 'much to do with the […] English literary imagination […] and little to do with the dwellings of the English cottager'. The vision of the hut, the simple rural refuge, maintained its appeal as a place of retreat, manifested in the country cottage (Maudlin, 2017:3).

Jane's first sight of Moor House, looking in through the window, takes in 'a room with sanded floor, clean scoured; […] the redness and radiance of a glowing peat fire' (*JE*:381). When Jane is taken in by the Rivers family, she notes 'the clean bright kitchen' and, when she is well enough to venture downstairs, 'the fragrance of new bread and the warmth of a generous fire.' (*JE*:389,391). Crossing the threshold of Moor House is a symbolic act, the point at which Jane is 'no longer outcast, vagrant' (*JE*:387). Her home in Morton is 'a cottage; a little room with white-washed walls and a sanded floor' (*JE*:413). The act of cleaning and the importance of maintaining cleanliness is a recurring theme in Jane's homemaking and perception of home. McDowell states that in the nineteenth-century, 'women were encouraged […] to reach ever higher standards of cleanliness [and] to decorate and embellish their homes' (McDowell,1999:75). On inheriting Moor House, Jane says: 'My first act will be to *clean down* (do you comprehend the full force of the expression?) – to

clean down Moor House from chamber to cellar' (*JE*:450). Then she describes in detail the new furnishings she purchases to make a welcoming home for the Rivers sisters, including 'old mahogany and crimson upholstery' (*JE*:452), the colour red used with none of the psychological connotations of Jane's earlier encounters. These habitations are the containers of domestic bliss. 'I trust that when the first flush of vivacity is over' says St. John Rivers to Jane, 'you will look a little higher than domestic endearments and household joys'. 'The best things the world has!' replies Jane (*JE*:450). Despite, or maybe because of, the independence of spirit that determines much of Jane Eyre's life as an outsider, a proponent of individual rights, the enduring importance of home underpins much of the narrative. However, this is perhaps a reflection of the Victorian principle of demonstrating 'happy family life' which was 'part of the new image cultivated by both new and old families' by emphasising domesticity (Girouard, 1978:270).

While homemaking is an act of creation, restoration or stability, the destruction of domestic space achieves a sudden or unexpected change in the direction of the narrative. It allows the purging or sweeping away of barriers or may be used metaphorically to signify the destruction of established orders, social, political, historical or economic. The history of clearances provides contexts in which the destruction of homes symbolises the destruction of societies. Thus the Highland Clearances during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries dispersed many Highlanders and undermined the established clan system. Modern warfare results in the destruction of towns and cities and post-war slum clearances, generally carried out with the intention of improving living conditions for many working-

class people, sometimes resulted in conditions that produced unforeseen social issues. The history of destruction or clearance is therefore an established device to effect change. The trope is used in *Jane Eyre* to shape the narrative. The fire that destroys Thornfield is a purging of all that has prevented Jane from accepting Rochester's offer of marriage. The journey on which she embarks after fleeing Thornfield following the revelations of Rochester's marriage to Bertha takes her through several staging posts, marked by the spaces she inhabits, and finally establishes her as a woman of independent means. Rochester suffers and his injuries reverse the power relationship between him and Jane, allowing her to forget the questions about his behaviour to Bertha.

The reunion of Jane and Rochester, and their life together as man and wife, takes place at Ferndean. Their meeting is set up by a long description of the property in which Brontë constructs for the reader an image of a house very different from the imposing Thornfield: 'The manor-house of Ferndean was a building of considerable antiquity, moderate size, and no architectural pretensions, deep buried in a wood' (*JE*:496). In describing its setting in the 'gloomy wood', the 'dense summer foliage', the 'dank and green […] decaying walls', a completely different context is created for the reunion of Jane and Rochester from that of their developing relationship at Thornfield. This setting has all the characteristics that Hermann Muthesius considers unsuitable for the pleasant siting of a home; it is amongst trees and on damp ground (Muthesius,1979:69). The future for Jane and Rochester is thus signposted as self-contained and lacking in material or social dimensions. It is intimate, inward-looking and exclusive, echoing the element of refuge from a changing

world signified by the country cottage. The purchase of the Ferndean Estate by Rochester's father 'for the sake of the game covers' further diminishes the status or value of the property in social or economic terms and underpins the renewed partnership of Jane and Rochester as one rebuilt from a purged and purified foundation with connotations of spiritual, rather than material, values (*JE*:496). Here we witness what Barrie calls 'the silent complicity of architecture' in underpinning a reversal in power relations (Barrie, 2017:38).

Thornfield provides the setting for a vision of possible happiness for Jane Eyre, and the destruction of that vision. The devastation of Thornfield acts as an enabler for her personal happiness by removing the impediment to her marriage to Rochester. Rochester pays with his injuries for his treatment of Bertha and its representation of the colonial abuse of power for financial gain, and for his attempt to coerce Jane into a bigamous marriage. He becomes the dependent partner in his marriage to Jane in a new habitation which, from its description, indicates a different set of values.

Williams states that: '[b]y the end of the 1840s the English were the first predominantly urban people in the long history of human societies' (Williams, 1984:9). This led to a 'new novel of social change' which explored the notion of community and 'the altered and critical relationships between and within social classes' (Williams, 1984:16). *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell explores this landscape with a narrative located first in the south of England, moving to one of the new industrial conurbations, Milton-Northern, modelled on Manchester. Descriptions of landscapes, living spaces and the objects they contain provide insights into living conditions, social order, values and social and economic circumstances in the north and the south of

England.   Although Charlotte Brontë lived in Yorkshire, near the large

manufacturing towns of the north, Jane Eyre explores gender and class

divisions from within an established framework, while signalling disquiet at

political and economic practices of colonialism. However, Elizabeth Gaskell,

born in London and resident in several cities in the north, settled in

Manchester on her marriage. In the 1850s in the large northern conurbations,

'numbers piled up in unprecedented, terrifying proportions' (Burnett, 1986:7).

Williams describes how novels of this period 'came from a pressing and

varied experience which was not yet history', an attempt to understand 'great

social and historical changes which altered not only outward forms –

institutions and landscapes, but also inward feelings, experiences, self-

definitions' (Williams,1984:11-12). Gaskell herself says in her essay 'The Last

Generation in England': 'the phases of society are rapidly changing; and much

will appear strange, which yet occurred only in the generation immediately

preceding ours' (Gaskell,1849).

Through the perspective of Margaret Hale and her removal with her

family from Helstone in the south of England to Milton-Northern, *North and

South* explores not only the social and economic difference of life in these two

parts of England in the 1850s but the personal dilemmas relating to family,

duty, gender and class. The working class had become an historical force in

the course of the Industrial Revolution. However, as noted by E.P. Thompson,

the Reform Act of 1832, while giving the vote to large parts of the middle

classes, did not extend that right to the working classes, fuelling class division

and demands for social justice (Thompson, 2013:888-915). *North and South*

is structured around a number of binary oppositions: geographical (north and

south); gender (male and female); economic (industry and agriculture); social class (working class, manufacturing and established professions). The country house in *North and South* is a house in the country rather than a grand residence built with colonial profits as in *Jane Eyre,* or a family seat as in *Lady Audley's Secret.* The vicarage at Helstone, although a modest residence, represents an ideal in much the same way that the cottage represents a vision of domestic perfection for Jane Eyre. Until the final pages of the novel, Margaret refers to her former home in Helstone as an ideal that encompasses the cherished elements and memories of her life. It represents all that she does not find in Milton-Northern.   Margaret is shaped by the spaces she occupies as much as she shapes them to create a sense of home. Descriptions of such spaces reflect her passage from Harley Street at the beginning of the novel to Marlborough Mills at the end, and the personal journey she travels. As William Mitchell observes: 'A spatial *place* [sic] may correspond to a temporal *phase* [sic] in the unfolding of an ideational schema for the development of a character' (Mitchell, 1980:555).   Although Margaret's immediate family live in modest circumstances in Helstone, she is brought up by her aunt in the grander surroundings of Harley Street, in a society of established class values. Her situation, away from her family home yet not really part of the family with whom she lives, places her, as Jane Eyre says, as a 'discord' within the household, although the intentions of her aunt's family are far more benign than those of Jane Eyre's. The family is underpinned by a principle of social paternalism within an ideology of domesticity, described by Catherine Gallagher as: 'a repository of traditional practices, a place dominated by spontaneous emotional and often irrational responses, a place

where people are accepted […] simply because they are family members'
(Gallagher, 1985:120).

Margaret's externality within this household sets a marker for her
subsequent development as a woman whose interests and character are
more individual and independent than those of, for instance, her cousin Edith:
'a soft ball of muslin and ribbon, and silken curls' (*NS*:1). Margaret's role is of
companion rather than cocooned daughter. As Patsy Stoneman observes,
the 'early chapters serve to dissociate Margaret from the feminine
preoccupations of dress and weddings' (2006:7,8). Although she refers to 'her
gentle aunt and dear cousin', she recalls the dark nursery at the top of the
house and 'the first tea up there – separate from her father and aunt'. So
Margaret's first experience in Harley Street is one of physical and emotional
separation, in contrast to the closeness of family life in Helstone, where she
'had always had her meals with her mother and father' (*NS*:8). In her ten
years at Harley Street, Margaret comes to feel great affection for the house,
which is closed up on Edith's marriage, signalling a change in circumstances
that eventually leads Margaret and her parents to Milton-Northern. But the
image of Helstone as an ideal is set, a place of 'bright holidays […] like a
village in a poem' (*NS*:5,11). Margaret clings onto this idealised vision
throughout most of the novel.

The extent to which individual association and experience determine
the perception of space is exemplified by Mr. Lennox's visit to Helstone. He
has previously pressed Margaret to describe the parsonage and how she
passes her days but she is reluctant, or unable, to do so. She understands
that 'home' is more than a description of physical space: 'It is a home, and I

can't put its charms into words' (*NS*:12). When he visits Helstone, Mr Lennox's perception of the house is of faded furnishings and an apartment which was 'smaller and shabbier than he had expected' (*NS*:22).

Margaret's move to Milton-Northern marks not only a physical upheaval, leaving the rural idyll of Helstone, but the undermining of the structures and beliefs which have underpinned her life. McDowell's description of the nineteenth-century home explains its ethos:

> The home became associated […] with characteristics that were constructed in *opposition* to the developing capitalist economy. […] [T]he home was invested with a spiritual quality […] and the idealization of the home took on religious characteristics. (McDowell, 1999:75).

Margaret's father's crisis of faith, the loss of 'home' at both Helstone and Harley Street, and the challenge to her understanding of social order are embodied by her placement within a social and political economy which is entirely strange to her. The established professions, the services and landed gentry at one end of the social order and 'cottagers and labourers, and people without pretence' at the other are perfectly acceptable to Margaret; those engaged in trade are less desirable (*NS*:18).

How troubling, then, is the move to a physical, social and economic landscape which is determined by manufacturing. The basis for relations becomes 'The Moral Economy of the Factory System' (Armstrong, 1987:175); Margaret's relationships beyond the home in Milton-Northern are all, in one way or another, influenced by the organisational principles of manufacturing. Stoneman suggests that 'class struggle […] is the product of economic

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conflicts of interest which are not resolvable' (Stoneman, 2006:79). From the

chimneys, mills and noise of machinery to the ornament and coloured

wallpapers in the small rented house in the aptly-named Crampton, all is

unfamiliar to Margaret and challenges her understanding of good taste.

Gallagher suggests that the industrial novels of 1850 make the 'connection

between family and society one of their main themes and primary organizing

devices' (Gallagher,1985:114). The narrative of *North and South* is one of

conflicts of interests, actions, ideologies and principles, most of which are

carried out in domestic locations. The visits from one party to another are

highly significant in moving the relationships forward and the observations and

descriptions of locations provide insights into the differences in culture, status

and priorities. As Irene Cieraad observes, 'Domestic borders are not just

materialized in brick and mortar, but are also confirmed and expressed in the

residents' behaviour toward visitors' (Cieraad,1999:4). This is exemplified by

the very different atmospheres in the house at Crampton with its welcoming

homeliness, and the cold and formal interior of the Thornton house. Domestic

settings therefore act as containers, receptacles and crucibles for questions,

actions and resolutions. Although the wider context of social conditions and

questions is clearly signposted, family life is explained by the construction of a

significant space. Mr. Hale's reflections on the differences between the

houses of Manchester and the cottages of Helstone signify different values:

> I see furniture here which our labourers would never
>
> have thought of buying, and food commonly used
>
> which they would consider luxuries; yet […] there
>
> seems no other resource now that their weekly wages

are stopped, but the pawnshop. One had need to learn

a different language, and measure by a different

standard, up here in Milton. (*NS*:148).

In the confusion of such different circumstances, of established family relationships versus the new sociology, the concept of home and the familiarity of objects is an important constant. Therefore Margaret creates in the rented Crampton house a comfortable and welcoming drawing room, simple in decoration and 'well relieved by the dear old Helstone chintz-curtains and chair covers' (*NS*:74). Descriptions of domestic spaces reflect the characters and circumstances of the Hales, the Thorntons and the Higgins families, and sometimes of their views of each other.   Margaret's assumption that 'tall, massive, handsomely dressed Mrs Thornton must live in a house of the same character as herself' is not entirely unfounded, yet the location of the 'handsome stone-coped house' within the boundaries of the mill provides an opposition which reflects the different values of north and south and the pervasiveness of the factory in the lives of the new breed of wealthy manufacturers (*NS*:104105). The function of Mrs Thornton's house is not to provide a comfortable family home but to create an environment which reflects the status of the family by choice of decoration, objects and ornaments. These are not to be enjoyed, but preserved. Margaret observes: 'It seemed as though no one had been in [the drawing room] since the day when the furniture was bagged up with as much care as if the house was to be overwhelmed with lava' (*NS*:105). For her part, Mrs Thornton is equally perplexed by the nature of the drawing room at Crampton.   Her observation reflects her priorities of pragmatism and economic values : 'The room

altogether was full of knick-knacks, which must take a long time to dust; and time to people of limited income was money' (*NS*:90). The house at Crampton also reflects the growing need in industrial cities for the interior of the home to become 'the locus of feminine comfort' (Aureli & Guidici, 2016:126).

However, Mrs Thornton's home is not a place for relaxing. The space she occupies by preference, the dining room, is associated with the masculine rather than the traditionally gendered domestic space of the sitting room at Crampton, conforming to Baudrillard's view of 'the old fashioned dining room […] heavily freighted with moral convention' (Baudrillard, 2005:15). Mrs Thornton's sitting room, on the rare occasions when it is in use, is a place of 'icy, snowy discomfort' (*NS*:105). It denies her femininity, emphasises her reserve and her absorption in the business of her son. Margaret remembers with longing not only the Helstone vicarage, her idealised home, but the 'plentiful luxury' and the 'peaceful, untroubled ease of the visitors' at Harley Street (*NS*:63).

Margaret's first visit to Bessy Higgins's home introduces her to the poor of the north. Engels's description of Manchester in the middle of the nineteenth-century confirms the determination of Margaret to encounter and interact with the working-class poor:

> Manchester […] contains about four hundred thousand inhabitants.[…] a person may live in it for years and go in and out daily without coming into contact with a working-people's quarter or even with workers. […] [T]he working-people's quarters are

sharply separated from the sections of the city

reserved for the middle-class. (Engels,1926:45).

Bessy lives in a 'small court, opening out of a squalid street' (*NS*:84). These

are not people of the forest in Helstone, among whom Margaret wanders,

nursing their babies, reading to their old people and taking 'dainty messes' to

their sick in a sort of idyllic rural image of poverty (*NS*:16). This vision of the

rural south concurs with the idealized picture of life in England described by

Muthesius, which appears to entirely neglect the real circumstances of both

the rural poor and the working class in urban industrial environments

(Muthesius, 1979:7). The northern poor are people suffering from disease,

malnutrition and severe social and economic deprivation caused by a society

based on manufacture, exploitation and the inequalities of wealth. This is a

society of contradictions. On the one hand, there are new opportunities which

enable men to break away from the ties of established social order. Thornton

explains: 'men of the same level, as regarded education and station, took

suddenly the different positions of masters and men' (*NS*:78). But exploitation

of one by the other leads to unrest which devastates families like the

Bouchers. The lives of these families, the Bouchers and the Higgins, become

intertwined economically, politically and socially as their lives are controlled by

the 'Moral Economy of the Factory System'. This economy has shaped the

locations and living spaces of the social strata within the industrial towns of

the North.   Descriptions of the details of these physical spaces and their

contents enables Gaskell to explain social conditions and also the shift in

values. Possessions and habits which have been a paradigm for good

breeding in the South can be purchased by wealthy industrialists in Milton, their acquisition devalued.

Much of the narrative in *North and South* is driven by visits by one party to the home of another. The reasons for these visits vary. Sometimes they are social, for example Mrs Thornton's visits to the invalid Mrs Hale. Sometimes they enable an encounter to take place which marks a direction in the narrative, for example the visit by Margaret and her father to dine at Mr. Thornton's. Margaret's opposition to the conventional female gender role represented by John Thornton's sister Fanny, and the future complexity of her relationship with Thornton, is signposted in the uncomfortable and unfamiliar surroundings of the Thornton house. Mr Thornton's visits to Crampton, their timings and the nature of the encounters with Margaret on those occasions are markers in their relationship. Power shifts backwards and forwards with these visits. Margaret's visit to Marlborough House, the Thorntons' home, on the day of the strike encompasses an incident which sets further complications in the way of the relationship between Margaret and Thornton. Mrs Thornton's visit to Crampton to chastise Margaret for her perceived impropriety when she is observed with her brother Frederick is all the more intrusive as the conversation is conducted in Margaret's home, her own territory. Margaret becomes a frequent visitor to Bessy and the introduction of Bessy's father Nicholas Higgins to the house at Crampton and to Mr Hale signals the development of some sort of connection between these people of different classes and backgrounds. Mr Bell's visit to Mr Hale at Crampton enables him to develop a fondness for Margaret which sets up her inheritance and change of status towards the end of the book and Mr Hale dies while

away from home on a visit to Mr Bell, perhaps conveniently from the point of view of the narrative, which has already encompassed the death of Mrs Hale at Crampton.

There are few significant meetings which take place externally to the domestic locations of the principal characters, but these are major plot devices set in the spaces beyond the thresholds of the home. One is the encounter between Dixon, servant of the Hales, and Leonards, the former sailor who knew Frederick. The recounting of this meeting by Dixon precipitates the departure of Frederick from Crampton and Thornton's observation of Margaret and Frederick near the station (*NS*:234). Thornton's chance meeting with Watson and his subsequent decision not to pursue the case of Leonard's death is another subtle shift in his relationship with Margaret. The final meeting takes place at Harley Street, which by the end of the novel has become neutral territory rather than Margaret's home in any sense. It is here that the knowledge of her inheritance and consequent change of status alters the dynamic of her relationship with Mr Thornton, enabling her to provide the finances to rescue his business. In the same way that Jane Eyre's financial independence is one element of her changed relationship with Rochester, so Margaret's new position as owner of Marlborough Mill gives her the independence and equality in her relationship with Thornton that she desires. The future for Margaret and Thornton, we guess, is in the north of England. It is property that finally brings them together. In a reversal of the pattern of patriarchal ownership of houses and businesses, it is Margaret and Jane Eyre who are placed in positions of power by property ownership. The myth of Helstone as the ideal of home has been

dispelled by Margaret's visit with Mr Bell (*NS*:356-371). She is overpowered

by 'a sense of change, of individual nothingness, of perplexity and

disappointment […] nothing had been the same' (*NS*:370). Her changing

social awareness is already signalled by her response to Nicholas Higgins'

desire to move south for work. Describing the reality of the life of rural

workers, this is no longer the romantic image of the poor people of the forest

in Helstone:

> They labour on, from day to day in the great solitude
>
> of steaming fields – never speaking or lifting up their
>
> poor, bent, downcast heads. The hard spadework
>
> robs their brain of life, the sameness of their toil
>
> deadens their imagination; […] they go home
>
> brutishly tired […]. (*NS*:284).

Nicholas's response, 'North an' South have getten their own troubles'

(*NS*:284) establishes a balance which is nearer the truth than the image of

roses and honeysuckle round the windows of the vicarage at Helstone.

Often it is the importance of small domestic rituals which provides the

security and certainty so essential to the concept of home. This is evident

when such comforts and rituals are lacking, as in the Thorntons' home, but

more so when they represent moments when domestic security is at its most

important.   When Frederick finally arrives in Crampton, Margaret's priorities,

like those of Jane Eyre on inheriting Moor House, are encompassing

domesticity: 'When the fire was bright and crackling – when everything was

ready for breakfast, and the tea-kettle was singing away' (*NS*:233).

It is the shared domestic acts that describe powerfully the love between Frederick and his sister: 'The brother and sister arranged the table together, saying little, but their hands touching, and their eyes speaking the natural language of expression, so intelligible to those of the same blood' (*NS*:227). So powerful is the symbol of home as the creation of all that is desirable for domestic happiness, that when Frederick tells his father and sister about the woman he intends to marry, he describes the life he intends to build with her by using an architectural metaphor: 'No mean brick shall be a specimen of the building of my palace' (*NS*:241). The duality of the need for the constant, the physical, the ordered, and the necessity of the acceptance of the process of social change is layered throughout *North and South,* in the opposition of the ideal and the real, the mental and the physical.

The persistence of middle class Victorian values into the early twentieth century maintained the role of the home as a medium through which its inhabitants were given 'clear guidance on rules of conduct and behaviour'. Whilst providing an oasis of 'relief and privacy from the cares of the world', the home was to be a visible expression of the Christian values and the 'substance, culture and respectability' of its inhabitants (Burnett, 1986:99). Industrialisation, encountered in *North and South*, brought with it social conditions in employment and housing which undermined the established order and unchallenged right of wealthy families to assume a place at the top of the social hierarchy.

The divisions between the north and south of England, explored within Gaskell's *North and South,* created not only different economies, different landscapes and different models of housing, but conditions which, despite the

best attempts of many established families to ignore them, were pushing towards a new order and new belief structures. *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon presents Audley Court, the family seat of the Audley family, as the setting to explore the interplay of tradition, class and a patriarchal society at a time of impending change. According to Girouard, from mediaeval times the organisation of space within country houses adapted to relationships between different elements of the household. Beginning as 'a collection of separate structures' the country house developed as rooms 'grouped around a hall, kitchen and chapel' (Girouard,1978,30). Spaces within the country house were organised over time to separate different elements of the household, to provide privacy or to indicate status. For example, towers added grandeur, raising the inhabitants, literally and metaphorically, above those living at lower levels. By the early seventeenth century, the servant hierarchy was defined by the space in which servants gathered and ate. As embodied by Palladio's principles of design, 'order and proportion in the household should be echoed by order and proportion in the architecture of the house' (Girouard,1978, 87). Audley Court is a reflection of the way the country house society adapted to circumstances over time, but without real change. The buildings within and between which the action takes place act as staging posts in the story, their design and construction providing metaphors for the changing lives of the protagonists and ultimately the strategies used to exert control and maintain a status quo.

As the eighteenth century progressed, there was an increasing gulf between the gentry and professional classes, and 'the impolite world of servants, farmers and smallholders'. Landed classes began to 'plant, drain

and enclose, to run farms themselves and to encourage their tenants to improve the farms that were on lease' (Girouard, 1978, 217). Within the structure of the house, changing patterns of use symbolised the changing relationships of the occupants. This related not only to servants and the families who employed them, but to male and female members of the family. Servants were pushed underground into cellar spaces or outwards into separate wings, while 'the dining room was now recognised as a masculine and the drawing room as a feminine room' (Girouard, 1978, 233). Throughout the nineteenth-century, the country house provided not only a display of wealth and power but a framework for the social hierarchy within its walls.

At the same time, houses became more sympathetic to the landscape, resulting in more organic and less formal design. In such a way had Audley Court grown. The narrative of *Lady Audley's Secret* is situated at the start of the erosion of power of the upper classes. The novel begins with a long description of Audley Court:

> A house in which no one room had any sympathy with
> another, […] a house that could never have been
> planned by any mortal architect, but must have been
> the handiwork of that good old builder – Time.
> (*LAS*,1998:8).

The house is situated in a hollow, a protective casing which sets it slightly apart from the landscape. Within and against the setting of this rambling, incoherent house, full of secret chambers, hiding places and corridors, of arcades, arches and avenues, unravels a narrative of deception, attempted murder and the crossing of class and gender boundaries. It

conforms to Lefebvre's interpretation of the Hegelian view of space: '[i]n the realm of becoming, but standing against the flux of time, every defined form, whether physical, mental or social, struggles to establish and maintain itself' (Lefebvre,1974:22). Audley Court is 'a glorious old place - a place that visitors fell into raptures with', Braddon's narrator tells us, 'a spot in which Peace seemed to have taken up her abode' (*LAS*:8), but its role within the narrative is to symbolise the expectations of class and gender in Victorian society and signal the ways in which these are pulled apart as the story unfolds. Lucy Audley attempts to cross both class and gender boundaries, becoming mistress of a large country house by the reinvention of herself and the cunningly planned manipulation of others.

Girouard contends that the nineteenth-century was 'the golden age of the country house' (Girouard,1978:218). The position of the older landed gentry was challenged by the newly rich, whose wealth was produced by 'mines, factories, mills, railways, ships, warehouses, banks and cities'. He explains that '[t]he elaborate code of behaviour devised by the Victorian upper classes was partly a defensive sieve or initiatory rite, designed to keep out the wrong sort of people '(Girouard,1978:268), whilst Cieraad observes the social hierarchy inherent in the design and structure of nineteenth-century floor plans (Cieraad,1999:2).

The young and beautiful Helen Maldon, also known in the novel as Helen Talboys, Lucy Graham and Lucy Audley, marries Sir Michael Audley, who knows nothing of her background. Although country houses 'had little meaning without the household in them', houses were organised to maintain distinct and private areas for each element of the household (Girouard,

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1978:14). Not only is Lucy Audley an outsider at Audley Court, she also

contravenes the convention of segregation by engaging her servant Phoebe,

who shares a physical resemblance to her, in the machinations to cover up

her bigamy. As Robert Kerr suggests:

> The family constitute [sic] one community: the
>
> servants another. Whatever may be to their mutual
>
> regard and confidence as dwellers under the same
>
> roof, each class is entitled to shut its door on the
>
> other, and be alone […]. On both sides this privacy
>
> is highly valued. (cited in Girouard, 1978:285).

The relationship between servant and mistress in *Lady Audley's Secret*

is complex, each using the other. Lady Audley helps Phoebe and her

husband Luke to buy the Castle Inn, is blackmailed by the couple, then

attempts to cause a fire to kill Luke and Robert Audley, her husband's

nephew. The description of this building earlier in the book signposts its likely

demise:

> There was not an inch of woodwork, or a trowelful of
>
> plaster employed in all the rickety construction, that
>
> did not offer its own peculiar weak point to every
>
> assault of its indefatigable foe. (*LAS*:134).

The burning of the Castle Inn, deliberately started by Lucy Audley, is an

unsuccessful attempt to remove the danger of revelation by Luke Marks, the

innkeeper, that her husband is still alive and that she has a child. As in *Jane

Eyre*, the inn represents a staging post, this time in the journey of Luke and

Phoebe away from life as servants and towards a better future. But from the

beginning of the book, the Castle Inn is represented as a fragile and impermanent structure thrown together with little thought for its survival. Despite establishing Luke as a pub landlord, it does not satisfy his aspirations, and the physical destruction of the Castle Inn also eradicates several narrative lines: the marriage of Phoebe and Luke and likelihood of their improved status; Phoebe's relationship with Lucy Audley; and Lucy Audley's hopes of keeping secret her unsuccessful attempt to murder her husband. The collapse of that insubstantial structure, in fact, signals the disintegration of the challenge that Lucy Audley's ambitions for self-improvement represent to established social status. The Castle Inn is constructed, like Lucy Audley's identity, of the 'frailest and most flimsy material' and is a metaphorical marker of the journey towards the destruction of her constructed life (*LAS*:134). Lucy Audley's struggle for position and security may be seen against a similar social background to Jane Eyre's; the lack of protection of property or the position of women from the law and limiting social expectations. In attempting to secure her future, Lucy Audley violates moral and social codes of behaviour, while Jane Eyre's concerns reflect a strong cry for social justice and individual human rights. Both narratives may be considered to threaten a patriarchal status-quo, but the endings of each signal a different message. The way in which architectural space is used in each novel helps to explain this.

The burning of the Castle Inn also symbolises the destruction of Phoebe's dreams of improving her social and economic position and the eradication of the interdependent relationship between Phoebe and her mistress. If there is a moral here, it is that both of these women, who have

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attempted to gain money and position through dishonest means, have ended up with nothing. Both women lose their hard-won social status. Phoebe loses her husband, the public house they have acquired and her opportunities for social and economic improvement, while Lucy Audley loses the social position for which she has schemed and, finally, loses her freedom. Philippa Levine notes that, as mistress of Audley Court, the expectation of a contemporary audience was that Lady Audley would uphold 'the values of respectability, of social and sexual purity which were deemed the 'natural' preferences of women' (Levine, 1994:129). Muthesius, who noted that household income categorized domestic routine and organization, warned: 'woe to the lady of the house who seeks to change things by one iota' adding in parenthesis 'only foreigners attempt this' (Muthesius,1979:69). Lucy Audley's existence in the household as a transgressive figure is threatening. Yet how well this narrative reflects the characteristics of the novel's generic category of sensation fiction. Winifred Hughes explains that the sensation novel 'was drawn to borderlands; it compulsively blurred and transgressed boundaries and knocked down established barriers' (Hughes, 2010:264). The isolated location and the layout of Audley Court should provide an ideal setting for Lucy Audley to bury her secrets, and yet, as Saverio Tomaiuolo notes, it represents 'the enclosed space in which control and surveillance predominate' (Tomaiuolo, 2010:148). The areas of the house where Lucy Audley could expect some privacy are invaded by her former husband, her maid's husband and her current husband's nephew. As Pamela Gilbert, Aeron Haynie and Marlene Tromp observe:

> Lady Audley's private spaces are curiously

vulnerable to penetration. Ironically the locks and keys, secret passages and drawers that should secure her secrets […] provide no defence against the social expectation of continued and invited visibility. (Gilbert, Haynie & Tromp, 2000:9).

The tenuous state of the established class and gender order is signalled by the fragile and chaotic state of the fabric of Audley Court. Gilbert, Haynie and Tromp observe that the state of the house is a barometer for the security of the Audley family, reflecting the threat to mid-Victorian upper class values by the rise of the middle classes (Gilbert, Haynie & Tromp,2000:64). According to Barrie, 'the established upper class were not insecure about what they had gained, but what they might lose'. As Aureli and Guidici suggest, privacy does not simply protect the household from the outside world, but also safeguards the integrity of its economic property (Aureli & Guidici,2016:109). However, Audley Court will become the responsibility of Sir Michael's nephew Robert, a barrister who has never made any attempts to secure work and who is a 'handsome, lazy, care-for-nothing fellow' and unlikely to apply the vision and care required to maintain the estate (*LAS*:27).

In her survey of Victorian feminism, Levine notes that: 'In a society which did not embrace […]democracy and where welfare provision was limited', Lucy Audley adopts 'tactics and philosophies far removed from our twenty-first century solutions' but which we might begin to understand (Levine,1994:11). However, in 1862, her transgression not only violates expectations of her sex but, more importantly for the time, threatens the social status of the Audley

family, especially her male relations, so in the end, she is moved from Audley Court, which represents 'the ideological embodiment' of the Audley family estate, to an asylum in Belgium (Aureli & Guidici, 2016:113). The narrative of *Lady Audley's Secret* reflects the way in which these two structures, their locations and conventions, mirror each other in their roles in Lucy Audley's story. Tomaiuolo contends that the architecture of such asylums shared the carefully stratified design of the English country house (Tomaiuolo, 2010:28). As Gilbert, Haynie and Tromp observe, the seclusion of both locations offers sanctuary but also strengthens their roles as instruments of confinement (Gilbert, Haynie & Tromp, 2000:8).   Lucy Audley cannot escape the controlling force of patriarchal power, as demonstrated by her confinement in the Belgian asylum.

At the end of the novel, we read that: 'Audley Court is shut up. […] the house is often shown to inquisitive visitors'. Robert Audley, responsible for uncovering Lucy Audley's past and ensuring she is incarcerated in the asylum, settles with his family in a 'fairy cottage, […] a fantastical dwelling-place of rustic woodwork' (*LAS*, 436), another example, as noted in the discussion of *Jane Eyre*, of what Gilbert, Haynie and Tromp describe as an escape to a past vision of rural England (Gilert, Haynie & Tromp,2000:72). As Marc Augé observes: 'the public's interest in obsolete forms […] seem to tell our contemporaries what they are by showing them what they are no longer' (Augé, 2008:21). The constructed spaces within which the narrative of *Lady Audley's Secret* unfolds are not only physical settings for the story. They reflect how, despite the challenge to the stability and status of an upper class family presented by a woman attempting to cross class and gender

boundaries, the dominance of a patriarchal society using mechanisms of containment is still resistant to change. Lady Audley's containment within Audley Court and her incarceration in the asylum reflect the impossibility of escape from the dominance of social and familial control for even the most determined of women. This is an act of imprisonment that Michel Foucault describes as 'a whole technique of human dressage by location, confinement, surveillance, the perpetual supervision of behavior and tasks' (Foucault,1988:105).

The role of the doctor as an instrument of control, incarcerating females who through their transgressions become an inconvenience, is evident in both *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley's Secret*. In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester does not question the justification for the incarceration of Bertha Mason: 'since the medical men had pronounced her mad, she had, of course, been shut up' (*JE*:154). The attic at Thornfield and the asylum in Belgium, modelled on a country house, are locations instrumental in the preservation of patriarchal status by containment of those undesirable female elements which threaten or challenge.

Lady Audley's portrayal as 'the very embodiment of corrupted desire, namely, desire that sought its gratification in economic and political terms' is confirmed at the end of the book (Armstrong, 1987:60). The symbol of the family's place in the world, Audley Court, is closed up, the family dispersed and unable or unwilling to deal with the inevitable tide of social and economic change. Rather than adopting new methods of farming developed during the Industrial Revolution to make the estate financially viable, Audley Court is an abandoned relic of a passing era (Burnett, 1978:7). The Audley family, having

resisted the attack on the established social structure embodied in the ambitions of Lady Audley, fail to heed the unstoppable force of change and retreat to the safety of places that enable them to reinforce familiar social patterns. Sir Michael Audley purchases a house on the edge of his son-in-law's estate while Robert, relieved of the responsibility of the family estate, finds his own niche. He moves with his new wife and her brother George Talboys, Lucy Audley's first husband and Robert's close friend, to his dream cottage 'amid a little forest of foliage' (*LAS*:435) and becomes a successful lawyer.

An architectural reading of *Lady Audley's Secret* presents the centrality of Audley Court as a metaphor for a decaying social structure, the complexity of which was built up over generations but is no longer functional or relevant. As Tomaiuolo concludes, the narrative of *Lady Audley's* Secret, dealing as it does with a socially ambitious but marginal female character within the setting of an established family hierarchy, illustrates the mechanisms of power within nineteenth-century society (Tomaiuolo,2010:148). The fate of Audley Court as a symbol of that power demonstrates the vulnerability of systems and structures that fail to anticipate and adapt to change. In both *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Jane Eyre*, punishment by containment allows a sense of order to be restored, even though that order may be fragile and temporary in the context of wider social change. The use of fire as a trope to reframe and set the narrative on a different path, to clear barriers and permit resolution and to remove or bring about permanent change to characters is an essential element of both books. Apart from shaping the narrative, destruction of domestic spaces symbolises the crumbling of an established social and

personal order and a glimpse of a future reshaped world. The country house, symbol of a social order that is on a course of unstoppable change in the middle of the nineteenth-century, is no longer fit for purpose. Audley Court, despite the many additions and alterations made to keep up with changing needs over the centuries, has reached the end of its journey. The coming changes in social, economic and political order in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century may still be unclear and unwelcome to families embedded in upper class traditions, lifestyles and expectations, but the closing of the Audley family home is, perhaps, the first sign of recognition that things will never be the same again. It remains as an object of curiosity to visitors, maybe because its destruction would be too drastic an acknowledgement of changing times at this point, or maybe because such a symbol of the past is a reminder of why things have to change.

However, physical adaptations to the structure and appearance of buildings do not guarantee the shifts in values and thinking of those who inhabit them that are necessary to achieve meaningful change. In *The Return Of The Soldier* by Rebecca West, set during World War One, the renovation of Baldry Court, the country house owned by the Baldry family, creates a superficially impressive house of the sort that is featured in magazines. The resulting brittleness and spiritual emptiness of the house mirrors the relationship between Chris Baldry and his wife Kitty, who supervised the renovation. Unlike Chris's cousin Jenny, who lives with the couple, Kitty's main priority is a demonstration of wealth and position. Within the first few pages we learn that Chris had to take over the family business on his father's death, that Kitty has extravagant spending habits, that the couple had a child

who died, that Chris is away at war 'somewhere in France' and that Kitty and Jenny have not heard from him for some time (*RS*:5). The gap between Chris's aspirations of finding a free and happy life and the reality imposed by inheritance, marriage and death sets up a tension that contributes to an inability to accept the present. His difficulty in accepting change is evident in his insistence on keeping the nursery after his son's death, when, as Kitty hints, there is no chance of further children (*RS*:7). Chris returns home from war mentally damaged and anchored to the past, suffering from amnesia which eradicates any memory of his current life. His loss of memory is a trope that enables him to recreate a pre-war world and enables the reader to learn about the back-story. As his cousin Jenny observes, '[h]is very loss of memory was a triumph over the limitations of language which prevent the mass of men from making explicit statements about their spiritual relationships' (*RS*:101). The relationship he recalls is not that with his wife, but with his first love Margaret, the daughter of an innkeeper. Margaret and Kitty represent opposites: Kitty is a brittle, beautiful, fashionable spendthrift, while Margaret's life is among people whose faces are 'sour with thrift' (*RS*:68). Kitty's energies focus on maintaining the house as 'matter for innumerable photographs in the illustrated papers' (*RS*:7). Margaret is 'seamed and scored and ravaged by squalid circumstances' but is a caring and dutiful wife (*RS*:68). The social gap between them is emphasised by Jenny's references to Margaret as 'it' and 'not so much a person as an implication of dreary poverty', and yet Chris rekindles his love for Margaret and finds in her presence a peace that eludes him in the home he no longer recognises (*RS*:117,106).

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As Chris tells Jenny the story of his meeting and relationship with Margaret, he withdraws into a world of rural tranquillity. He describes the walk down the Thames valley to the inn on Monkey Island owned by Margaret's father. The path takes him past a '*cottage ornée* called 'The Hut'', recalling Bachelard's vision of the hut as the symbol of bodily and spiritual shelter. (*RS*:53). We are back in the territory of Robert Audley's fairy cottage on the Thames, his escape from the past that enabled him to find a way forward. Chris's journey to acceptance of the present carries an awakening for Jenny, if not for Kitty. A doctor is called in to advise on his treatment, but unlike the doctors in *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley's Secret* who are instruments of control, he agrees that Margaret should be the agent for Chris's return to the present. By helping Chris to recall his son's death, Margaret brings him back to an acknowledgement of the present but also brings their relationship to a close. Kitty simplistically interprets this as a cure, but Jenny has not only been awakened to a deeper understanding of Chris and of her own value system but also is aware that his perceived recovery will mean a return to the trenches. His return to reality will take him away from the family again. The house will remain a façade, a shadow of a real country house and all that it embodied, a representation of social ambition, duty and a constructed life.

For Jenny, Chris's escape to the past 'showed him so much saner than the rest of us, who take life as it comes, loaded with the inessential and the irritating' (*RS*:102). She admits that she and Kitty 'are as we are […]. The whole truth about us lies in our material seeming' and she acknowledges that it had taken someone with a working-class perspective to understand the unwilling burdens and hard work that Chris had undertaken to maintain life at

Baldry Court (*RS*:104). The 'magnificent house' that Chris desired was a spiritual dwelling place, 'a house not built with hands' (*RS*:86). Baldry Court takes on both a literal and metaphorical role. Its physical being represents a privileged space that separates the Baldry family from the rest of the world, where superficial appearance and the status it represents is valued above all else. Its metaphorical being signifies the suppression of the 'essential self' which will, as the doctor explains, eventually take its revenge (*RS*:124). By the end of the novel, Chris Baldry comes to an unwilling but inevitable acceptance of the responsibility and way of life represented by Baldry Court. This is no longer the country house life of his childhood. His desire to escape the conventions of family life and to inhabit a spiritual dwelling place is thwarted not only by his reluctant recognition of family responsibilities but also his inability to resist a political framework that will result in his return to war.

The renovation of The Willows, the country house that is the setting for *Vera* by Elizabeth von Arnim, is as brittle and soulless as that of Baldry Court. However, whereas Chris Baldry detests the emptiness and lack of connection that has resulted in the updating of his home, Everard Wemyss revels in the construction of himself as a country gentleman of property that he believes he has achieved by the creation of this faux country house. Whereas Baldry Court holds memories for Chris that he tries to preserve by psychologically retreating to the past, Wemyss has no past on which to draw and can only create an interpretation of the country house and a way of life that is out of its time. The story of *Vera* encompasses within a domestic setting the tensions set up when life in the present is conducted by the conventions of the past. However, Lucy, Wemyss's new wife, is at heart a dependent rather than a

strong female protagonist who achieves a reversal of the traditional patriarchal dominance. The death of her father, a man whose choices are related to an interest in the world and love of intelligent conversation with his male friends, rather than possessions and social position, removes a beloved protector who cherished his daughter. Weymss, by contrast with her father, is 'not merely incurious as to other people's ideas and opinions, he definitely preferred to be unconscious of them' (*VR*:103). The way of life of Lucy's family is far from the highly structured, masculine and conventional world of Everard Weymss, whom Lucy meets outside the holiday cottage where her father has died. Weymss has also suffered a bereavement. His wife Vera has apparently suffered an accident by falling from an upper window in their country residence, The Willows, although as the narrative unfolds it seems likely that this was a deliberate act of self-destruction.

The Willows appears to be an established family estate, but Wemyss's existence is constructed rather than inherited. Although he claims to have been born in the house, it isn't quite his own. It is 'the home he had looked forward to and worked for and had at last been able to afford on a long lease' (*VR*:67). In much the same way that Chris Baldry hands his family home over to his wife Kitty and architects for renovation, Wemyss hands his over to professionals to deliver a 'package'. But whereas the architects who worked on Baldry Court had been tasked with updating the family home, Wemyss required the recreation of an authentic traditional country house. The books in his library have been assembled not by his own use and preference, but by Whiteley's, the department store. They are books by 'the best modern

writers' whose sizes also fit the shelves. Attitudes to objects represent differing attitudes to life. Weymss keeps the books locked away as he does not want his possessions damaged. Lucy is accustomed to 'books overflowing out of their shelves […] friendly books, books used to being read aloud' (*VR*:105). Likewise, the antlers in the hall are purchased rather than trophies of hunting expeditions. Wemyss has created a house where 'the emphasis is on […] immovability, imposing presence and hierarchical labelling' (Baudrillard, 2005:13). As the site of his wife's death, it is incomprehensible to Lucy 'that The Willows should still be in Everard's life […] evidently prized' (*VR*:65). The Willows is reached by a lane which, after flooding, becomes 'black and oozing for a long time afterwards, with clouds of tiny flies' (*VR*:87). As with Charlotte Brontë's Ferndean, Thornfield and Lowood, the name of the house signifies a setting by water and the connotations of a damp and unhealthy location. The death of Vera is never fully explained although it becomes evident by the end of the book that suicide was her only means of escape from her marriage.

Von Arnim uses the trope of the maiden aunt, a relative who has never married and therefore occupies a liminal place in society, to provide a detached view of the relationship between Wemyss and Lucy. However, unlike the maiden aunt in Lettice Cooper's *The New House* and those in a number of other novels studied in this thesis, the roles between niece and aunt are reversed. Aunt Dot is the sister of Lucy's father. On his death, it seems natural that Aunt Dot and Lucy will take care of each other, but Aunt Dot is not a dependent who moves from one household to another.

She occupies 'a slim little house' in London where there is no room for guests, content in her own company although willing to compromise should Lucy need to move in with her (*VR*:35). Despite her age, Aunt Dot is a more modern woman than Lucy, independent and demonstrating few of the attitudes expected of a woman of her time. She is not interested in religion, one of the mainstays of the early nineteenth-century household, and has little interest in marriage. It is Lucy who passes seamlessly from protected daughter to dominated wife. Despite trying for Lucy's sake to quell her disquiet about Wemyss and wondering whether she is simply displaying the behaviour of 'a conventional spinster' in her mistrust of this domineering man, it is Aunt Dot who stands up to him (*VR*:47). Lucy comments that sometimes her father had to explain the meaning of conversations and writing to her, whereas Weymss's letters 'were so easy to understand' (*VR*:35). This is because he considers 'there was only one point of view about a thing' (his point of view) and that a woman 'didn't want […] endless thinking and examining and dissecting and considering; [she] only wanted her man' (*VR*:57). Wemyss's insistence on his own routines, the flowers picked for his birthday, Christmases spent at The Willows, and his micromanagement of the servants are evidence of a man who is incapable of compromise and is deeply controlling. He creates a role for Lucy, that of 'his little girl', 'my baby', 'Everard's own good little love', and is enraged when she does not conform to that expectation (*VR*:52,104,48).

Although Wemyss's physical presence is overwhelming, it is the inanimate and the absent that dominate the book. The Willows and the

objects within it leave no space for Lucy to grow into. The house and the furniture overwhelm and diminish her, as Wemyss overwhelms and fills Aunt Dot's small house when he visits. Life is one of retreat. Lucy retreats to bed, too ill after her honeymoon to return to London with Wemyss. Aunt Dot, faced with confronting Wemyss when he returns to The Willows, thanks God for bedrooms, 'places of legitimate lockings-in, places even the most indignant host was bound to respect' (*VR*:178). Lucy is surrounded by symbols of Weymss's constructed status and of Vera's presence. Weymss's family portraits in the dining room are in fact photographs enlarged to life-size of his father and his dead wife Vera. Both pictures 'followed one about' with their eyes (*VR*:98) so it seems to Lucy that it is impossible to escape their gaze. The photographs are ciphers, a collection to which Weymss intends to add Lucy's image, a symbol redolent of a butterfly preserved and pinned to the wall.

Vera's presence, her portrait, her possessions in her bedroom, the sitting room from whose window she jumped, initially dreaded by Lucy, become in the end representative of a sort of kinship and complicity between the victims of Wemyss's overbearing and inescapable control. Whereas his possessions, 'his brushes and shaving things' become stifling, Vera's books, accessible at least, provide some sort of escape for Lucy from Wemyss's controlling presence (*VR*:77). With chilling insensitivity, Wemyss replaces one wife with another and begins the process of sucking out Lucy's being in much the same way that he did Vera's. Wemyss's name, Everard, encompassing the name 'Vera' within it, symbolises the way in which he owned, controlled and absorbed his first wife. Aunt Dot observes that 'Lucy […] was every day

disappearing further before her very eyes into Wemyss's personality' (*VR*:72).

There is no redemption at the end of this book. Lucy does not emerge as a

female who reverses a role designated by society, as do Jane Eyre and

Margaret Hale. No unexpected economic circumstance enables her to

escape from Weymss's control. In fact, Lucy, half-asleep, imagining a

reconciliation between Aunt Dot and Wemyss which is the very opposite of

what has taken place, surrenders again to his endearments. In a state of

semi-consciousness, Aunt Dot having been expelled from the house, Lucy is

as much a captive as Lucy Audley in the Belgian asylum. At a time of

women's suffrage in Britain, the setting of this narrative, the tightly-ordered

structure of life at The Willows and the evidence it holds of patriarchal

dominance, demonstrates the complexity of the struggle noted by Briganti and

Mezei, to move on from established patterns of behaviour and the role of

women in the face of post-war government propaganda, conventional social

attitudes and the vulnerable economic position of women (Briganti & Mezei,

2016). Both *Vera* and *The Return Of The Soldier* explore the role of women

as wives through the relationships of Kitty and Lucy with their husbands'

houses. While Kitty takes an active lead in the renovation of Baldry Court, the

circumstances of Chris's homecoming and her inability to understand the

complexity of his illness or provide him with the sort of supportive relationship

he needs leave her without any clear role. Her marriage and the house in

which it is conducted are facades, offering insubstantial frameworks for the

future. Lucy, denied any involvement in the renovation of The Willows, is

mentally and physically overwhelmed by the house and its contents. Its effect

on her is a symbol of her husband's lack of acknowledgement of her as anything other than another of his possessions.

Between the 1890s and the mid-1930s, a number of planning and housing acts attempted to address the acute housing shortages and poor living conditions of the period. The 1890 Housing Act enabled local authorities to clear slum dwellings, thrown up in response to the expansion of towns during the period of rapidly-expanding Victorian industrial development. The 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act provided corporation or council housing and the Housing Act of 1930 resulted in mass slum clearance and a programme of new building. Changes to the physical landscape reflected changes in society, where established patterns of class and family life were shifting. *The New House,* by Lettice Cooper, picks up on this liminal period and builds a narrative around a single day when the Powell family move from the old family home in the north of England to a smaller house on the edge of a modern estate. As Christopher Reed states, 'It is primarily in the home that we are constructed as […] gendered beings […] however, the modern home has also been a staging for rebellion against these norms' (Reed,1996:15). *The New House* tells a story of the reconfiguration of family relationships prompted by the move to a new home and the search by Rhoda Powell, a young, unmarried woman, for a new and independent life. Mrs Powell's husband has died and the family can no longer maintain their large family house. Their new house, the lodge to a big house that has been converted into a convalescent home, reflects their gradual movement from an old to a new family order. The lodge itself, like a small-scale Audley Court, has been added to piecemeal over the years, so that 'the result was without symmetry,

and conformed to no known rules of architecture' (*NH*:169). Its traditional style, its position as an adjunct to the big house and its original purpose, to house the staff who maintained the estate, are symbolic of the reduced state of the Powell family and their reluctance to move forward to a new and unfamiliar future. However, its structure and appearance carry a closer association with familiar values than do the newly-built bungalows surrounding it. The move sets in chain a series of personal recollections, revelations and acknowledgements and becomes a catalyst for a process that will significantly change the lives of most of the characters in the book. There are elements of comparison between this novel and earlier texts discussed in this chapter. Like *North and South,* it considers the difference between those living in the north of England and those in the south. Evelyn, wife of the Powell's son Maurice, has been raised in a town in the south of England. The values of that society become bywords for all that Maurice despises. However, unlike Margaret Hale, Evelyn's move to a northern provincial town does not awaken her to the changing world. Her point of reference is her upbringing, the social aspirations of her economically-challenged mother in the south of England and a conviction that 'importance in a northern provincial town was not importance in the world' (*NH*:224). There are echoes of Margaret Hale's initial dislike of trade and manufacture in Evelyn's belief that: 'Men should, if possible, be in the services; they could be doctors or lawyers or architects or even clergymen. If they were in business, it would be a pity, although useful if they made a lot of money' (*NH*:143). Unlike Margaret Hale, she is unable to empathise with a world beyond her own. She believes that people end up with what they deserve and adopt pre-

determined patterns of behaviour so that even when working class families 'were given four-bedrooms, they all slept together in one' (*NH*:46). This was not, however, a quirk of behaviour in the North, but a pattern of working class practice established through economic deprivation, as recounted by Katharina Borsi, Tarsha Finney & Pavlos Philippou in their 'Conversations on type, architecture and urbanism'. They discuss the example of newly-developed three-bedroomed apartments replacing the slums of Arnold Circus in East London in 1896, where occupants assumed that they occupied one bedroom and rented out the others (Borsi, Finney & Philippou, 2015:1306). Evelyn is unable to understand the reasons for such practices. Evelyn and Maurice live in a new villa, disliked by Maurice's sister Rhoda because it symbolises her sister-in-law's values. Maurice 'had never quite ceased to feel like a visitor in his new, clean, chintzy house' (*NH*:305), reflecting to some extent Chris Baldry's sense of unease in the soulless surroundings of Baldry Court.

In the wider context of changing times, *The New House* tackles several social issues. Through the figures of Aunt Ellen, Rhoda and Lucy Carter, it examines the place of unmarried women and the expectation that their first duty is to stay at home and look after their parents. These three women reflect a fate that may have awaited Margaret Hale had she not married Thornton, although she is a stronger and more driven character than any in *The New House.* However, the expectations of the roles of women are so embedded in family structures that they result in what Aureli and Giudici describe as 'the enforcement of hierarchy [leading] to the complete introjection and acceptance of these hierarchies as natural' (Aureli & Guidici, 2016:126). Aunt Ellen and Rhoda are in the shadow of prettier sisters, in the same way that

Margaret Hale initially fits into the role of companion for her pretty and spoilt

cousin Edith. Aunt Ellen has missed her chance of love and created for

herself a function of service to the rest of the family. Rhoda's stronger-minded

and more adventurous sister Delia persuades her not to throw away her

chances of happiness. Lucy Carter, who lives in the family home and looks

after her father, condemns Rhoda for leaving her mother, while the narrative

also hints that she has not worked through her own sexuality. The plot of *The*

New House is structured to include reflections on marriage, business ethics

and socialism, accomplished by many occasions throughout the book when

one or other character recalls the past, reflects on the present or anticipates

the future.

The Powell family home is called Stone Hall, a traditional, square stone

house, originally surrounded by countryside. Over time the town had 'begun to

spread and grow to their gates, pushing out ring roads [and] throwing up

housing estates' (*NH*:26). Its name and appearance signify the role it has

played in the family history and values, like many country houses where 'no

wind of new ideas had ever blown through them to disturb the settled air'

(*NH*:391). The moving day provides a liminal space between old life and new

life, a 'sort of interlude, quite elastic' (*NH*:187). As Rhoda puts it, 'it's this

queer feeling today of being suspended between two lives' (*NH*:86). The

removal, the packing and unpacking, provides prompts for each of the

characters. Objects and places trigger recollections or pauses for reflection,

often framed by parts of the old house or the new one. The reader is taken

back to the previous century and ahead to the future, not as an historical

narrative but as a series of personal journeys which enable the characters to

make decisions about change. While carrying out routine domestic tasks, dismantling the old house or setting up the new one, Rhoda gradually moves towards her decision to leave her mother and move away, until, 'leaning on the window-sill' of her new bedroom, she knows that 'That is what I really want!' (*NH*:290). Mrs Powell and Aunt Ellen come to a rare moment of closeness while unpacking in the new house that presages Mrs Powell's acceptance of Rhoda's departure, and in turn enables Ellen to move from a suspended state of living in a boarding house to occupy a permanent place in her sister's home (*NH*:270).

Maurice Powell is described as 'the head of a small capitalist firm built up by private enterprise' (*NH*:65), facilitating what Cieraad defines as 'the two separate worlds of economics [that of provider and consumer, that] meet in a joint construction project called 'home' (1999:8). He is also beginning to have an 'unwilling belief in Socialism' (*NH*:65). Discussions between Maurice and other business contacts provide space for his reflections on Socialism and the ethics of pushing ahead at the expense of others. These reflections are again framed within the landscape of the built environment in the unnamed northern city and how this reflects the changing pattern of society:

> It was a city built without design […] added to meet the
> pressing need of the moment. […] one by one the big
> houses were going, turned into flats or institutes, or
> pulled down so that the land could be used for
> building. (*NH*:70).

Maurice, aware of the need for change and with a developing social conscience, is a man of thoughts rather than actions, deeply attached to his

past but acutely aware of the changes all around him which presage the future. He sees how the city is changing, prompted by the increasing involvement of public spending on housing:

> Between the high walls of factories and warehouses, side streets opened off the main street, huddled rows of mean houses. They were moving people out of those houses into better quarters, into clearer air, and clean houses with bathrooms and lavatories. Families gaining air and light and cleanliness, losing perhaps some shred of independence. (*NH*:241).

Maurice's concerns about the living conditions of working class families contrast strongly with the opinions of other characters in the novel. Class prejudice is illuminated by reactions to the building of new homes. Evelyn describes such new homes as 'nasty little red houses, full of common people and screaming children' (*NH*:46). Aunt Ellen considers it 'a pity when "the lower classes" became discontented or tried to do or have things above their station' (*NH*:182). Lucy, who 'lives with her father in a house like Stone Hall' expresses her dislike of the newly-built houses encroaching on her neighbourhood because she considers them 'shoddy and temporary' but really means that she resents the intrusion of families who are not 'our sort of people, the owners of property' (*NH:116,118*).

Like Chris Baldry, Maurice feels the burden of responsibility for the family business and the attraction of a simpler life. As Robert Audley tries to ignore imminent social changes by moving to a cottage with its associations of the simplicity of times past, Maurice uses the enduring symbol of a simpler

way of life where he could shed the increasing burden of sustaining the family business: 'Get an ordinary workman's job and live in a cottage' (*NH*:227).

The theme of destruction or abandonment of homes runs through Lady *Audley's Secret* and *Jane Eyre*. It is also evident in *North and South* in the destruction of Margaret's vision of the Helstone vicarage as a symbol of home. In the abandonment of Stone Hall, this theme is implicit in *The New House* as a symbol of social change. The big houses represent the fabric of the lives of past generations. In lamenting the passing of these structures, Rhoda reflects:

> It was a pity to pull down a house whose beauty was so solid and suitable, so right for its purpose; but perhaps it was not as suitable as it had been for the generation who built it – a generation with more conviction and stability, well on top of life. (*NH*:7)

The fate of Stone Hall is uncertain. The purchaser, Parkinson, a considerably more successful builder than Maurice Powell, is not sure whether he 'might use it for a club' or turn it 'into a block of service flats' (*NH*:159) but for the time being it is closed up, 'a shell, empty of the life that had filled it for a hundred years' (*NH*:308). The Powells are forced to abandon Stone Hall for financial reasons, and along with it all that is solid, known and established about their family, but for the time being, like Audley Court, it remains suspended between the past and the future.

The removal from Stone Hall to the lodge results in subtle shifts in relationships between many of the characters. The design of the house and the placing of rooms has a significant effect in beginning to bring those of

different classes together. Rhoda admits that 'she always felt shy when she penetrated that downstairs world' of the kitchens at Stone Hall, and reflects on how close family and servants lived physically and how far apart socially (*NH*:125). This separation was long enforced by the stratification of both houses and classes living within them. At the new house, 'there would be no unexplored new continent' as the kitchen will be close and accessible (*NH*:126).   Unlike for most members of the Powell family, deeply unsettled by the move from their much-loved family home, the move offers opportunities for Ivy, the remaining servant. Used to inhabiting other people's homes, the move holds no challenges to her security but offers an opportunity to take on a role of increased responsibility. Ivy is happy wherever she settles. She is 'the lineal descendant of the free-spoken, free-spirited girl of English folk-songs' (*NH*:127). Like Lady Audley and Jane Eyre, individuals occupying liminal social positions, the spaces she inhabits hold no personal resonance of the past, position or tradition. She represents the antithesis of the sedimented lives of the families for whom she works. She carries none of the layers of tradition and responsibility with which Maurice Powell is burdened, nor the obligations of unmarried women like Rhoda and Aunt Ellen. Because of her place at the bottom of the hierarchy within the household, change provides an opportunity to climb and progress, clinging on to the family's social framework but using it to improve her position.

The novel makes constant references to the changing urban landscape and the wave of building encroaching on the countryside. Maurice is the only member of the family who acknowledges the social benefits of new housing programmes. For the rest, whose considerations are aesthetic and class-

based, new estates are condemned as 'horrid little houses', 'nasty little red houses, full of common people' and 'nasty little jerry-built houses' (*NH*:137,46,117). The emergence of these homes is a symbol of the irrevocable change taking place in the interbellum and a constant reminder to families like the Powells that an unstoppable tidal wave of change is flowing through England.

As Burnett (1986:3) says: 'Houses are physical structures, homes are social, economic and cultural institutions' so the narrative of *The New House,* constructed around the removal day, offers a rich metaphorical framework. Apart from providing the physical setting for the narrative, it enables Cooper to explore the relationships and issues through home-related metaphors within the dominant metaphor of Stone Hall. Maurice expresses Evelyn metaphorically as 'a neat gravel path in a well-kept suburban garden' and the difficulty in effecting change within family households as the tension between 'people with 1930s minds and 1914 minds and 1890 minds living in the same house' (*NH*:312,335). Evelyn and he are 'two separate people speaking to one another from opposite houses' (*NH*:212). Delia reflects on her friends Hilary and Sally and their lack of concern for life beyond their own intimate circle: 'They lived elegantly and agreeably in the first-floor drawing room of their minds, and never went downstairs' (*NH*:205). The selfish Mrs Powell 'could not bear a closed door in anyone she lived with. She wanted a latch-key to every room in their person' (*NH*:189). And through the wider metaphor of removal, Delia is able to reflect on attempts to ignore major social change: 'There was a removal going on all over England that was turning out that cupboard' (*NH*:171). Rhoda, for whom the move sets in sequence decisions

that will change the direction of her own life, alludes to the strength of the real and imagined meanings of home, the psychological and the physical: 'We do carry our house on our backs wherever we remove to. It's all there with us, packed in layers of pleasure and pain' (*NH*:202).

For those like the appropriately-named Ivy, who can rapidly insinuate herself into different situations, change is easily managed. The move has a positive outcome for Aunt Ellen, whose roots were torn from her mental and physical home many years ago. The domino-effect of Delia's success in convincing Rhoda to leave home opens the way for Ellen to regain hers. She is able to leave her transitory life in the private hotel she has inhabited for years and immediately thinks of those comforting domestic rituals, like making cakes, arranging flowers or mending linen, in the same way that Jane Eyre considers them 'the best things the world has!' or that Margaret Hale uses them to create a welcome for her brother (*JE:450*). Whether in the details of small rituals, the physical and mental structure of personal journeys or the encompassing image of a shifting society, the image of the house reveals layers of meaning through the metaphors contained within the narrative. At this period of uncertainty, the novel uses these extended metaphors to presage events of which the people of England could not be certain. The changes being made on a domestic scale in the name of progress act as a microcosm reflected in *The New House*: 'They were moving people out of those houses […] creeping forward to the millennium, or rushing on to destruction' (*NH*:241).

The six novels studied in this chapter explore the ways in which the challenges of a changing world are reflected in issues of property ownership,

economics and class and how these are dealt with. In all of the novels under discussion here, the country house provides a symbol of order, inherited wealth, social and economic position and a clearly-stratified class structure. In *Jane Eyre* and *North and South*, the female protagonists are able to reverse the dominance of a patriarchal society and advance their own positions and power through inheritance and property ownership. In *Lady Audley's Secret* and *The New House*, the line of family ownership is broken and maintenance of an established way of life, represented by the family estate, is challenged not only by reduced economic circumstances but also because the heirs to the family legacy are reluctant to take on their responsibilities. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, the security of the family is threatened, if unsuccessfully, by the introduction through marriage into the family of an outsider from a lower class, Helen Maldon. Although this threat is ultimately contained by Helen/Lucy's incarceration, the family estate does not survive. The line of inheritance sits with a male member of the family who chooses to retreat to a version of the past embodied in a rustic cottage. Relieved of the responsibility for maintaining a way of life caught up in irrevocable change, the choice made by one of these men, Robert Audley, enables him to find his own place in the world and achieve a simpler way of life that brings happiness and fulfilment.

In *The Return of the Soldier*, Baldry Court, the family home of the Baldry family, has been renovated by young Captain Chris Baldry, now the head of the family. The updating has been strongly influenced by the design choices of Chris's wife Kitty. The new version of Baldry Court, however, represents a brittle cipher of a former life for which Chris Baldry yearns. When he returns from war psychologically damaged, his amnesia allows him to

escape from the present and dwell in the past, until Margaret, the love from his past life, helps to bring him back to the present, enabling a triumph of responsibility over happiness.

In a reversal of this situation, Wemyss, the male protagonist in *Vera,* models his aspirations on all that the country house represents, but does so several years after World War One, when the social structure the country house embodies is beginning to splinter. Wemyss's household at The Willows is based on tradition and a segregated world of servants and master. However, The Willows is as brittle in its recreation of the seat of a country gentleman as Baldry Court is in its updating. The Willows is created as a package that Wemyss imagines provides him with the dignity and the appearance of inheritance. His relationship with the servants and his new wife Lucy is, like the house, a parody of upper-class relations in its determination to exert control. Unlike Jane Eyre and Margaret Hale, Lucy sinks beneath this relentless male dominance and, although her incarceration is less overt than that of her namesake Lucy Audley, it is none the less crushing.

In *The New House*, the family home is sold for redevelopment for economic reasons, while Maurice, taking on his father's mantle as head of the household, moves towards a future in a new villa chosen not by him but by his socially-ambitious wife. Like Robert Audley, Maurice, as the head of a family 'business', would also like to achieve a simpler life and finds that, despite the values and principles with which he was brought up, he is developing a social conscience that questions those very values. He is moving forward, but this is not a comfortable journey. Although these narratives of tradition, male dominance and shifting power have been examined mostly from the

perspective of women protagonists, there is also evidence that responsibility for ownership and the continuation of family legacy weigh heavily on young males in the changing world following World War One.

The landscape of the narratives of the novels in this chapter reveals a power, often based on property ownership, that seesaws between male and female as reactions to change lurch between retreat and advance. At the fulcrum sit country houses, whose histories, physical states and likely futures reflect a society that over a century has changed irrevocably. The response to change is uneven, a tide advancing and withdrawing but wearing steadily away at the traditions, seats of power and layers of order that underpinned country house society. This chapter has dealt with lives lived partly or wholly within domestic spaces that carry the weight of traditional social value. In Chapter Two, novels whose narratives unfold in borrowed spaces will be explored in order to discuss the physical and psychological impact of making 'home' in living spaces belonging to others and the way in which this reflects a state of transience or crisis in the lives of the women protagonists.

Chapter Two

Borrowed Space

The Crowded Street by Winifred Holtby (1924)
Bricks and Mortar by Helen Ashton (1932)
Invitation to the Waltz by Rosamund Lehmann (1932)
The Weather in the Streets by Rosamund Lehmann (1936)
At Mrs Lippincote's by Elizabeth Taylor (1945)

> Material conditions – those components of daily life
>
> related directly to one's economic existence, such as
>
> housing, work environment, and access to education
>
> and health care – not only leave indelible marks on
>
> literary and other cultural texts but also are key to
>
> understanding their reception and function.
>
> (Hall, c2001:74)

In 'Mrs Home: the moral and cultural construction of domesticity and respectability between the wars', Rebecca Leach traces the 'constructed notions of domestic respectability' inherent in the survey conducted by the Institute of Sociology between 1929 and 1933 (Leach, 2017:137-165). From the questions posed and judgments made by the survey, Leach is able to attribute 'the prejudices and cultural attachments' of both the authors and the subjects of this scrutiny of economic and housing conditions of a working-class community in the north of England. The period of the survey crystallises a key moment in the transition from 'lingering Victorian cultures' to the 'emergent formalizing structures of the twentieth century' as it moves towards

modernism (Leach, 2017:138). The survey is conducted through the moral and cultural lenses of hygiene and taste, fundamental elements of Victorian domestic values, which, despite changes in design and decorative choices in the modern home, perpetuate gender and domestic stereotypes.

Against this social paradigm, the architecture of modernism was moving towards a vision of design that would accommodate and encourage a different way of living. There was no longer a rationale for the stratified construction of the country house and the large, layered Victorian dwelling as economic circumstances and technological development removed the inclusion of servants in middle- and upper-class households. In the modern home, walls were removed, open spaces were created and along with them a changing aesthetic where the clutter of the traditional interior was replaced by a new simplicity. The continuity of ownership through the passing down within families of items of furniture was at odds with changing tastes and living spaces, gradually eroding notions of the importance of objects, inheritance and tradition.

However, despite the social upheaval and the resultant realignment of many aspects of life from work to gender roles, and the wholesale destruction and replacement of the physical fabric of towns and cities experienced during World War One, the transition to a modern aesthetic and its significance for domestic life was, as Leach points out, by no means consistent or comprehensive. The inscriptions of a society whose fabric, physical and social, was destroyed by war would need to be rebuilt over time along with its landscape. Adverse financial circumstances and emotional attachment to Victorian tastes prevented some families from modernising their domestic

surroundings in the period between the end of World War One and the end of World War Two. As Leach notes, the 'Romantic Classicism' of the late Victorian period 'continued to be the preferred style of any decoration in poor households until well after World War II' (Leach, 2017:140).

The prevailing social model in the interbellum was similarly retrogressive and inconsistent. Despite roles beyond the home being fulfilled by women during the World Wars, the Victorian view of gender roles and, as Leach suggests, 'the consolidation of a model of women's responsibility for "civilising"' and subscribing to the ideal of domestic cleanliness and good taste prevailed. In the space between two worlds - the Victorian and the modern – women who aspired to exist in the latter, thereby rejecting their prescribed roles within the household even when they were unable to articulate exactly what that meant, became 'the feckless Other' (Leach, 2017:139).

The female protagonists in the five novels explored in this chapter could all be described as 'other', existing to some extent outside accepted social norms. Victorian family values, the influence of which can be traced well into the twentieth century, created a hierarchy which elevated the nuclear family with a focus on home, domesticity and conventional gender roles and demoted single and unmarried women and those who saw a possibility of life beyond the confines of the family and domestic duties. These women, distanced by circumstance or by awareness of the possibility of another sort of life, were often further dislocated by their occupation of domestic spaces which were not their family homes, and with which they had no history. Rebecca Brown asserts that the house is 'the central domain of social, psychic, and private life' (Brown, 2007:9). As the key location in which life is

conducted, the siting of home in borrowed space, that is space owned by someone other than the inhabitant, its implications for homemaking and for eliciting meaning, will be the focus of this chapter.

The transaction between space and inhabitant is complex. Inhabiting space that belongs to another often includes the shedding or packing away of possessions; the removal of that layer of identity of which home and its accoutrements are a part. As Daniel Miller observes in *The Comfort of Things*: 'people sediment possessions, lay them down as foundations, material walls mortared with memory, strong supports that come into their own when times are difficult' (Miller, 2008:91). In using borrowed space as the structure within which the narrative unfolds, the novelists under discussion here establish a nuanced framework of transaction between characters and between characters and living space, removing a layer of identity present in the habitation of permanent or owned family spaces. The siting of a narrative in borrowed space, whatever the practical transaction involved, may also introduce elements of the life of others, known or unknown, into the intimate living space of the protagonists. In cases where the borrowed space in question is designed specifically as the subject of a commercial transaction, the absence of family ownership and layers of personal history provide an anonymous and neutral grounding within which new identities may be created.

Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei suggest that the symbolic relationship between house and novel was consolidated in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century (Briganti & Mezei, 2004). In the early to mid-twentieth century, as patterns of life were reconfigured by war, industrialisation and

shifting class patterns and relationships, domestic context in fiction continued to reflect social changes and uncertainties. According to Nicola Beauman, this is certainly true of the domestic novels written 'by middle-class women about middle-class women' (Beauman, 1983:3). As reflected by Lettice Cooper in *The New House*, discussed in the previous chapter, the removal from domestic settings which embodied a way of life that was no longer sustainable produced a sense of dislocation and need for readjustment. While this process created feelings of loss and nostalgia for some, it did, however, provide the opportunity of a new life for younger unmarried women who traditionally might have been expected to remain at home.

A connecting thread of removal and displacement not only from family but from the symbolic and organic space of home runs through the novels discussed in this chapter. If we consider Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling's definition of home as 'a place/site, a set of feelings/cultural meanings, as well as consisting of the relations between the two' we begin to understand the impact of such dislocation (Blunt & Dowling, 2006:2-3). According to Burnett, by 1911 England had become an urban society within the space of little over half a century (Burnett, 1986:23). In the previous chapter, the role of the country cottage as a site of refuge for male protagonists overwhelmed by the responsibilities of inheritance and changes in society was discussed. However, as Briganti and Mezei observe, it was the metropolis and the home rather than the pastoral idyll that became the site of feminine struggle for identity and independence (Briganti & Mezei, 2004:152). Although the family home persists as a point of reference, as we will see in later chapters, its concept as an expression of status, stability and refuge, as a fixed point in

family history, begins to reframe itself as an expression of middle class rather than upper class values. As Burnett says, the middle class in the last half of the nineteenth-century became 'the most family-conscious and home-centred generation to have emerged in English history' (Burnett,1986:98). Speculative building and suburban growth, reflecting the desire of the middle classes to remove themselves from overcrowded city surroundings, created changed landscapes which encroached on familiar locations. Against a background of social and family expectations, new places of habitation reflect the psychological landscapes to which the protagonists of the five novels remove themselves. As Blunt and Dowling explain, '[h]ome is a material dwelling and it is also an affective space, shaped by emotions and feelings of belonging' (Blunt & Dowling,2006:22).

So how does the relationship between character and space illuminate the novels which form the focus of this chapter? In Chapter One, the move from the family home to the eponymous new house of Cooper's novel provides a catalyst for Rhoda to seek her own life as a working woman and for Aunt Ellen to return to a sort of home – in reality a borrowed or shared space – to fill the gap left in the household. As the chapters of this thesis move through time in consideration of different sorts of living spaces, a flow of connections occur which will be explored as the threads of the argument are pulled together in the final chapter. In moving on to explore the concept of borrowed space, the position of women in relation to the home, family and society is once again a central plank of the narrative structure of the novels explored in this chapter. Further discussion of the symbolism of moving home, of the importance of objects and possessions and how they relate to the

process of change will be included later in the chapter. Although the placing of characters within homes they do not own is a shared characteristic of the novels, specific themes relating to the relationship between dwelling and dweller will be explored through each text.

Miller notes how the house can be used as both an expression of individualism and as an example of how 'structures of patriarchy' become embedded as an ideology within the home (Miller, 2001:6). In *The New House*, *The Crowded Street, Invitation to the Waltz,* and *Weather in the Streets*, family homes embody social structures that cast the single women within them as outsiders, failures when measured against the paradigm of marriage and motherhood, othered by a system that ties them to an expectation of providing domestic support to their married siblings, relations or parents, thereby further reducing their chances of achieving married status. However, as the protagonists in these novels break away from the paths prescribed by a social order clinging to a late-nineteenth-century vision of family, the homes they then create provide an opportunity to build an individual identity that signifies their condition in opposition to existing social expectations.

Winifred Holtby's novel *The Crowded Street* was published in 1924, when a society shaken by World War One was hanging onto a rupturing social model, aware of tides of change but unwilling to acknowledge them and uncertain of how to respond. The weight of inheritance of family property and its wider responsibilities fall upon Godfrey, whose family is established at the top of the social hierarchy in Marshington. Godfrey's decisions about marriage are dominated by his responsibility for his family home, Weare

Grange. Although Godfrey seeks a wife who will fulfil the role required for the continuation of the estate and the family's social position within Marshington, it is the house and the responsibilities that go with it that cause first Clare and then Muriel to reject Godfrey's offer of marriage. Godfrey does not take the escape route to the fairy cottage chosen by Robert Audley, nor does he break the continuity of family ownership as Maurice Powell does by concurring with his wife's desire for life in the suburbs. Muriel's good sense and Clare's good looks provide the combination of elements that Godfrey requires in a wife, but neither embodies both qualities. Each of them is aware that accepting Godfrey's offer of marriage would remove the possibility of freedom that they both, in their different ways, desire.

Mrs Hammond, Muriel's mother, is driven by social aspiration. She works relentlessly to create a household at Miller's Rise that achieves what Alison Clarke calls 'the consolidation and formation of middle-class identity' (Clarke, 2001:24). It is her suffocating home environment within the stifling society of Marshington that feeds Muriel's discomfort and desire to change her life. However, as with Rhoda in *The New House*, it is only through the agency of an outsider that Muriel is able to break away and begin the process of moving on. In *The New House* it is Rhoda's sister Delia, whose life is already established outside the family household, who encourages Rhoda to leave the family home and makes it practically possible for her to do so. In *The Crowded Street*, it is another Delia, the vicar's daughter, who does the same for Muriel. For both Rhoda and Muriel, the move to a rented space is transitional, a first attempt at home-making as a statement of individuality in opposition to the social structures of family homes, a rethinking of ideology

freed from given order and a repositioning of the self. As Reed suggests, '"a room of one's own" came to symbolise the struggle to create the new and more enabling forms of domesticity […] associated with modern life' (Reed, 1996:147). Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Muthesius considered that 'flat-dwelling can only be regarded as an emergency substitute for living in a private house.' His contention that the urban flat could not possibly replace the 'moral and ethical values' of the family home did not take into account that for many single women, it was the urban flat that provided refuge from those very values (Muthesius, 1904:88,9).

As Aunt Ellen embodied the fate of the unmarried daughter in *The New House,* so Aunt Beatrice Bennet passes the time moving between the households of her brothers and sisters, her role being to support their opinions (*CS*:24).   As the move from the family home to the new house at the beginning of Cooper's novel provides a reflection of social changes and creates a catharsis for Rhoda, Muriel's gradual awakening to the stifling family and social expectations in *The Crowded Street* provides a narrative line which propels her to her own borrowed space, and independence of a sort, by the end of the novel.   The structure of the novel contains a number of key constituents that are crucial to Muriel's mental journey and therefore to establishing her own living space. At Miller's Rise, the family home, and in the wider social environment of Marshington, Holtby creates locations that embody a way of life from which Muriel feels increasingly disengaged. Muriel wants more, although she struggles to break with a social convention that she despises:

> The thing that mattered in Marshington was neither
> service nor love but marriage, marriage respectable
> and unequivocal, marriage financially sound,
> eugenically advisable and socially correct. (*CS*:226)

This chilling indictment of the social mores of Marshington represents the plight of many young women in the inter-war years, ensnared by social circumstance but aware that somewhere beyond the physical and mental boundaries within which they were trapped was a 'lovely, rich, full adventurous life, teeming with experience, glowing with beauty' (*CS*:89).

The novel is populated by characters who represent the constituents of Muriel's dilemma. It is useful to examine these in some detail as each has a role to play in Muriel's desire to move on and between them they create the context that eventually leads to her decision to change her life. Aunt Beatrice, like Aunt Ellen in *The New House,* is a cipher for the position of unmarried women. She reflects that '[m]arriage is the – the crown and joy of woman's life – what we were born for – to have a husband and children, and a little home of your own' (*CS*:223). For those women who do not achieve such a status, their role in life is to care for others and end life alone and unwanted. Muriel sees her future mapped out in Aunt Beatrice's life. Beatrice has no space of her own. Once her parents were dead she was displaced and belonged nowhere. Holtby creates other characters whose roles are significant in plotting a narrative which moves towards the moment when Muriel makes the decision to break away from Miller's Rise, Marshington and all that they represent.

Muriel's mother, whose family considered that she had married below her status, is a social climber who has endured problems in her marriage but has worked hard to establish a position for her family (*CS*:222). From the party at the Assembly Rooms at the beginning of the novel to the garden fete at Weare Grange at the end, she hopes endlessly that Muriel will make a good marriage. As in the relationship between mother and daughter in Helen Ashton's *Bricks and Mortar*, discussed later in this chapter, there is an element of competition for the attention of the husband and father. Muriel observes to Aunt Beatrice that her mother dislikes it when her father does things for her (*CS*:222). Mrs Hammond embodies social conventions that Muriel can neither rationalise nor accept. Her ambivalent relationship with her mother means that Muriel's place in her family is as insecure as her place in Marshington society. Connie, Muriel's impulsive sister, disregards social convention but cannot acknowledge, as Muriel does, the necessity for compromise (*CS*:118). Connie's path through the narrative traces her pregnancy and subsequent marriage, her reduced economic and social circumstances and finally her death before the birth of her baby. This is not Muriel's sort of protest – hers is much more measured and her detachment more gradual.

Muriel's school friend Clare represents all that the young Muriel admires. Clare is from an unconventional social background. Her mother is an actress, exotic, fascinating but not entirely respectable. Her physical attractiveness suits her for the marriage market, whilst her unconventional behaviour is partly excused by her background. She represents the element of difference that Muriel admires but only achieves by association. But she is

equally aware of the advice of Mrs Hancock, the headmistress, that she 'must learn to conform to the standards of other, wiser people' (*CS*:36). Both Clare and Connie are misfits. The former has the physical attributes required for marriage material but her background is unconventional. The latter has a suitable background and conventional social views, but is unable to conduct herself in the manner required to be a Marshington wife. Muriel's dilemma, looking towards a different life but constrained by convention and a naturally compliant personality, explains why it is only towards the end of the novel that she finds the resolution to seek life on her own terms.

Godfrey Neale represents the epitome of Marshington's social milieu, where inheritance and continuation of family property and position is most important. On the death of his father, Godfrey becomes head of the family. Consideration of the future shapes his decisions about marriage. Weare Grange, the Neale family home, reinforces the detached and superior position of the family. The 'grey square house' (a motif representing stability and respectability adopted in several of the novels discussed in this chapter) is surrounded by a hedge and tall gates 'as fragile in appearance and as strong in reality as the barrier that enclosed the Neales from Marshington'. Holtby describes how 'the bell of the Weare Grange was one of the most powerful defences of that social fortress' (*CS*: 69-70). Unlike Muriel's mother, who had secured some social position by working hard to encourage Marshington society into her home, the Neales are so firmly established that they prefer to do the opposite. Godfrey is rejected by Clare, who decides not to marry him because the space, both physical and symbolic, that she would have to occupy is not her milieu and would never be her own. When Godfrey realises

towards the end of the book that Muriel would make the ideal wife, Muriel has moved on and cannot contemplate rooting herself in a life to which she no longer belongs. Her feelings of distaste for 'the mixture of ceremony and discomfort, of wealth and squalor' of Weare Grange serve to reinforce her decision to refuse Godfrey's offer and embrace a new life (*CS*:71).

The narrative is shaped by another character of liminal social standing, Delia. As the daughter of Marshington's vicar, Delia is afforded a certain respectability but will never be part of the social establishment of Marshington. This gives her freedom to pursue her academic potential without fear of real approbation and to engage in activities reflecting her social conscience and radical suffragette politics. Able to view Marshington and its society from a detached vantage point, she acts as the mechanism for Muriel's eventual detachment from Marshington by challenging her received thinking. She asks: 'Do you seriously intend to stay here all your life […] trembling at what Mrs Marshall Gurney will say, although you know […] she hasn't got the intelligence to say anything worth saying?' (*CS*:87). She provides the grounding for Muriel to reassess the basis of relationships. Delia becomes engaged to Martin Elliott, warden of a slum settlement, who she has met through her work at the Twentieth Century Reform League. Martin is different in every way from the Marshington ideal, which is mostly about looks, position and money. Despite Connie's propensity for unconventional behaviour, her response to the news of the engagement demonstrates how deeply she is imprinted with Marshington values:

'The warden of a slum settlement,' Connie sneered.

'She's welcome to him. Still, it's surprising really that

she's caught anything. She must be over thirty, and that

skinny figure of hers and then all those stories about her

being a suffragette, and going to prison. It's just the kind

of thing that all nice men hate'. (*CS*:102).

Muriel's detachment from those values is almost reluctant in the face of

Delia's admonitions. She tries to convince herself that she does not have a

choice because of her duty to look after her mother (*CS*:103). But as Muriel

gets to know Martin, she realises that there are men who 'really want to talk to

her about herself […]. She was at home at last, among people who spoke her

own language, even though the things of which they spoke were strange'

(*CS*:105-6).

Muriel's sister Connie, pregnant by the son of a farming family, is thrust

into the chaotic household of the baby's father. In her own family home,

domestic space is clearly controlled by Mrs Hammond. In the space to which

she is removed, William Todd, who should be controlling the household, is

incapacitated while Mrs Meggie, the mother, does her best to keep things

going. But the young couple have no privacy and no control over the space in

which they are living. Muriel tries to negotiate on Connie's behalf for her and

her husband to occupy Fallowdale Farm, owned by Mr Todd. By swapping

one space for another, at least Connie would have some control over her

household. Fallowdale Farm would be borrowed, but not shared. Mr Todd's

obsession with the need for his son's repentance for the sin committed with

Connie keeps the couple imprisoned in domestic circumstances which are a

kind of hell. Connie's attempt to escape leads to her death through illness

before the birth of her baby.

It is Martin's sudden death a few days before his wedding to Delia that eventually offers Muriel an escape from Marshington. In the end Delia's father, the vicar, steers Delia and Muriel towards an arrangement that meets the needs of both. Since Martin's death, Delia has lived 'in the comfortless austerity of Morrison House' (*CS*:239). Her busy public life leaves neither time nor inclination to look after herself and her health is suffering. Muriel has come to the conclusion that she must leave Miller's Rise (*CS*: 226). She has worked out for herself why she feels so misplaced in Marshington Society and finds the strength to articulate her thoughts. 'I might have known that when Muriel really did begin to talk we should hear some surprising things' says Delia (*CS*:234). Muriel has been torn between the expectations of her family and its wider social environment and an awareness that life is changing. Aunt Beatrice and Delia represent the polar extremes of this situation. Muriel also realises that some of the reasons she used to convince herself that she had no choice were based on false premises. Her mother had never really wanted Aunt Beatrice's help, nor does she want Muriel's. She certainly does not want any competition for the attention of her husband. What she does want is for Muriel to make a socially useful marriage.   Aunt Beatrice and Muriel would always live in a space borrowed from, and controlled by, Mrs Hammond. In acknowledging the reality of her situation, Muriel is able to break free from Miller's Rise and Marshington by accepting Delia's invitation to move into a flat with her and take a job at the Twentieth Century Reform Society. Muriel's physical removal from Marshington is necessary to cast off its social construct. In her new home, she immerses herself in practical home-making so that Delia, too busy to bother with domestic comforts, should at last have a

home (*CS*:240-242).   Borrowed space provides a neutral arena in which to reformulate identities and ways of living, although Muriel falls into the traditional role of the female homemaker. Godfrey visits London and observes: 'It's a filthy place, isn't it? What on earth makes you girls choose to live here, I don't know'. Muriel, having taken on Delia's perspective, remarks: 'Our work's here […]. [W]hatever its disadvantages, it is infinitely preferable to Marshington' (*CS*:249).

Despite her decision to move from Marshington, Muriel's convictions and confidence are not thoroughly formed. In acknowledging her debt to Delia, Muriel states: 'If it hadn't been for Delia, I should have died – not with my body, but my mind. She could not give me back the things that I had lost. She took me away instead' (*CS*:269). By the time Muriel returns home for a holiday, she has the clarity of vision and confidence in her view of life to turn down an offer of marriage from Godfrey, realising that she has to take her life into her own hands (*CS*:270).

Much of *The Crowded Street* is about control of domestic space and, more widely, the lives of those who inhabit it. The process of homemaking, those 'domestic endearments and household joys' noted by Jane Eyre as 'The best things the world has!', is inextricably linked with the creation of personal identity (*JE*:450). The making of a neutral domestic space into an expression of being is a key element to 'reobjectifying [the individual] in a new environment' (Miller, 2001:70). To have no element of possession of the space in which one lives, as neither Beatrice, Connie nor Muriel has, is to be under the control of others. For Beatrice and Muriel, this means ultimately conforming to the household of Mrs Hammond and for Connie, to the very

different but no less restrictive household values of the High Farm at Thraile. Muriel makes her move to semi-independence by creating a temporary home for Delia and herself. She adopts the role of home-maker for Delia and lives vicariously through her as she begins the process of defining herself. In so doing, she represents a bigger social shift in which young women were shedding the burden of social expectation and setting up life on their own terms. We do not know what will happen next. It seems unlikely that this situation will be permanent. Delia signposts the potential difficulties: 'I'm an impossible person to live with […]. I'm terrified of taking you out of one environment you know into one equally impossible for you.' Muriel responds: 'But I don't know this environment and it doesn't know me. I'm living like – like a person that I'm not' (*CS*:236-237). Muriel's move from Marshington marks her detachment from the ties of her upbringing, and her creation of a new, if not permanent, home is the first step on her way to discovering who she really is. As she acknowledges, being among people who speak her own language, that is, share her views and interests, is part of the process of finding 'home'.

Miller's description of the home as 'a mode of expression, a means by which people constructed themselves and their ideologies' carries double meaning in relation to the protagonists in Helen Ashton's novel *Bricks and Mortar*, written in 1932 (Miller, 2001:10). Martin Lovell, his daughter Stacy, Oliver Barford and his uncle Nick Barford, are architects. Not only are the homes they choose for themselves signifiers of their individual conditions, but the buildings they design evidence their own positions in relation to each other and society. The outsiders in this novel are not single females, as in the novels already discussed, but Martin's and Oliver's wives, excluded by the

professional connections between the three architects. This in itself suggests a changing society where the role of wife as centre of the domestic sphere is no longer the ideal family model. Oliver's marriage to Stacy after the death of Dorothy, his first wife, is a partnership that provides stability for both of them. Maurice Bloch's argument, cited by Miller, that 'the construction of the home is understood as both a reflection of and a medium for the construction of a marriage' (Miller, 2001:13) is reflected in the marriages of all three protagonists and the narratives provided by their choices of homes, as discussed later in this chapter.

Progress from a nineteenth-century traditionalism to a twentieth-century modernism is also encompassed in the novel. In architectural terms, it is explored through the difference in professional practice between Martin and Oliver, but also indicates changing social attitudes. Oliver, influenced by the potential of new materials and technical advances, embraces the design practices of modernism. The opposition of this approach to Martin's immersion in domestic design is exemplified by Walter Benjamin's observation that the steel and glass aesthetic of modernism practised by Loos and Le Corbusier was antagonistic to the concept of the home as a symbol of family identity (cited in Reed, 1996:10). Le Corbusier's rejection of the traditional western home, its room divisions and collected objects, equally signifies a rejection of late-nineteenth-century social values in both design terms and as an ideology for living (Le Corbusier, 1927). If the structure of the home determines the interaction of those who inhabit it, the lack of dividing walls, the concept of work-living space and the open aspect provided by the

use of glass and concrete in modernist designs signals a rethinking of the way life is lived in such spaces. As Colin St. John Wilson asserts:

> There has never been a moment in the history of architecture so rich in the variety of building forms and so violent in the polarity of ideological affirmations as that which prevailed ten years after the end of the First World War. (St. John Wilson, 2007:24).

The tension between the ideology of design and its success in practice relies on the response of the architect to the way in which the building will be used. Le Corbusier's rejection of the domestic and adherence to a design aesthetic based on an ideology of modernism created demands on ways of living which prospective inhabitants found difficult to accommodate. This was also an issue with post-war open plan developments where, as Reed explains, tenants often closed off the open plan to create divisions between dining, sitting and kitchen areas (Reed, 1996:78). Martin Lovell's obsession with his own designs and his antagonism to the intrusion of the clients who commission him demonstrate a similar tension between design and the realities of living. His obsession with his work is reflected in the condition of his marriage. The marriage of Muriel's parents, Rachel Bennet and Arthur Hammond is not a match of social equals (*CS*). It is a determined search for social position that motivates and shapes Mrs Hammond's actions and alienates her daughter. The marriage of Letty Stapleford and Martin Lovell is not a match of intellectual equals. The novel follows the family from the meeting of Letty and Martin in 1892 to Martin's death in 1931. Martin is absorbed by buildings. His ideal holidays are spent abroad, observing

architectural sites. For Martin, '[b]ricks and mortar are the most fascinating things in the world' (*BM*:6). Letty's ideal holidays are spent in the many English seaside towns where her mother settles temporarily. The couple's son Aubrey, adored and spoilt by Letty, dies at an early age. Their daughter Stacy is a more independent character who shares her father's interest in buildings and eventually trains to be an architect. Like the relationship between Mrs Hammond and Muriel, that between Mrs Lovell and Stacy is uneasy. Letty resents the bond between Stacy and her father and does not really want her at home. Stacy does not conform to the social expectations of Letty and her mother, Lady Stapleford, grounded in Victorian values. She is a very different personality from Muriel Hammond but nonetheless Stacy's path to independence and fulfilment is complicated and sometimes unhappy.

The characters that populate *Bricks and Mortar* are constantly on the move. They present a shifting society that swaps one borrowed space for another for different reasons.   Lady Stapleford, Letty's mother, moves from one property to another. She explains to Martin when they first meet in a pension in Rome: 'Letty and I have no home […]. She and I have been wandering about the continent trying to economise and finish Letty's education' (*BM*:22). Lady Stapleford is displaced socially and economically. During the course of the narrative, she occupies spaces in a South Kensington boarding house, many English south coast resorts including Worthing, Bournemouth, Broadstairs, Felixstowe and Torquay, somewhere in Norfolk and a flat in Baker Street. The reader is given no details of these interiors, unlike other domestic spaces in the book. Lady Stapleford is perpetually itinerant. We know as little about her as about her temporary

habitations, but nonetheless Letty's strong attachment to her mother enables Lady Stapleford to march her off to a succession of seaside towns for holidays instead of accompanying Martin on his travels of architectural discovery on the continent. Lady Stapleford's rootless existence is summed up by Stacy: 'The poor old woman had an unsatisfactory life' (*BM*:188).

Although the details of borrowed spaces in the novel provide a subtext to the narrative, characters are more broadly defined by their architectural tastes. Whereas it is the framework of social convention that separates Letty Stapleford and her mother from Stacy, it is the vocabulary of architecture which defines the differences between Stacy, her father, her father's employer Nick Barford and Oliver. This relates to the buildings they design and the spaces they occupy. In a period when many residential properties were rented rather than owned, these habitations are temporary. They often reflect relationships and tastes and provide layers of unspoken information about their inhabitants. Reference to some examples demonstrates how Ashton uses descriptions of buildings to this effect. Nick Barford, the owner of the architectural practice for which Martin works:

> had been trained in the best traditions of the Gothic
> revival. He had assimilated the dictates of Ruskin, […]
> imitated the ornament […] of Pugin, swore by Sir Gilbert
> Scott […]. His high-water mark had been a peculiarly
> hideous town hall somewhere in Wales. (*BM*:35-36).

Provided with the information that 'he lived by himself in a large, cold, comfortless house', a deft and economical description of Barford is created for the reader (*BM*:36). Ashton infers the professional differences between Nick

Barford and Martin. Barford comments that 'nobody wants to pay for plain bricks and mortar'. But 'plain bricks and mortar […] were just what appealed to Martin and at this particular stage of his existence he detested Gothic architecture'. (*BM*:40) Martin represents changing tastes and by inference changing life styles. Yet by the end of the book, it is Nick's nephew Oliver Barford, who has returned from a trip to the States 'crammed with ideas about new materials' (*BM*:196) who represents the future, while Martin remains in the past. 'I'm afraid you've managed to spoil my crawling, crumbling London for me', Martin tells Oliver (*BM*:297). Stacy, at once headstrong and complex, steers a path through life which is determinedly independent but which contains contradictions. Her first marriage, carried through without her parents' knowledge, is to Captain Philip Giffard, a controlling bully who is stationed at a flying school near Salisbury Plain. Stacy finds a rented cottage 'with cob walls [and] a deep dove-coloured thatch […] and a garden that in summer would be filled with sweet williams and hollyhocks', a rural retreat of traditional design and construction in which to build a domestic family life (*BM*:182). However, its surroundings in the chalk downs show the marks of changes. Many aspects of the location are traditionally rural but the 'barbed-wire ugliness of the neighbouring camps and the constant drone of the aeroplanes overhead' (*BM*:182) are reminders of the intrusion of war and the impact of change. Stacy allows herself to be trapped in a marriage that has undertones of violence and domination, so different from what might be expected of a girl who appears to be strong and independent. She tries to create a domestic ideal but the undercurrent of her involvement with Oliver Barford, hinted at but not clearly stated, creates an unsettling narrative which

reflects unsettled times. After Giffard's death in a flying accident, she reflects: 'I haven't been very clever with my love-affairs, have I? […] I think I'd better stick to bricks and mortar instead' (*BM*:225). As bricks and mortar provide Martin with a retreat from a marriage in which his interests and intellect are not shared, so they provide a point of retreat for Stacy when her personal life is in disarray. When she qualifies as an architect and subsequently marries Oliver following the death of his first wife, she is professionally, if not personally, submissive. She has few aspirations for professional distinction. Her aspirations are for Oliver: 'All this domestic business is very pretty […] and I daresay I shall be fit to carry on with it some day, but Oliver is going to be better than that.' (*BM*:221). She does not resent it when Oliver suggests with condescension that professionally: 'she was sometimes very useful' (*BM*:277). Stacy's energies are, however, invested in seeking properties and in homemaking. She is as obsessive about buildings as her father.

The relationship between Stacy and Oliver is not fully explained initially but their attraction for each other plays out in a complex and often confrontational way. Letty's declaration that she does not want Stacy to marry an architect indicates that she detects a developing relationship. It is not clear whether her objections play any part in the lack of progress of the relationship but the potential effect of her influence is suggested by her statement that 'it's easy enough for a mother to turn a girl against a young man if she chooses' (*BM*:208). Oliver himself does nothing initially to encourage Stacy's intention to work in her father's office, considering working women as competition (*BM*:148). Oliver's preference for non-domestic architecture may indeed indicate what Reed describes as 'anxiety over threatened masculinity' by

association with domestic design (Reed,1996:16). But in 1914 war intercedes and the relationship is unresolved as Oliver enlists in the army. He is wounded and spends some time in hospital, then before he is sent back to the front, marries Dorothy Collins, who has nursed him. The surprise this decision causes is expressed by Martin who reflects on Oliver's new wife: 'I can't help wishing the boy had waited for someone – something – more permanent […]. She seemed so unimportant.' (*BM*:162). Oliver's return to the Bedford Square practice in 1919 is unexpected. His wife has 'left her parents' house in Northampton and come up to a cheap Bloomsbury boarding-house to be with her husband'. This place, full of objects belonging to the past, 'red plush chairs, fly-blown mantel mirrors, immovable old ladies, […] and potted ferns' (*BM*:198) sets the scene for an unhappy and inexplicable marriage which begins to unravel first in an establishment which is firmly stuck in the past and then in rented rooms in 'the lower half of a Victorian house near Crystal Palace' (*BM*:203). The discord between Oliver and his wife is heightened not just because of the dismal and impersonal surroundings they occupy but because Oliver spends most of his time at the office. As Katherine Shonfield observes, 'the schism between home and work is at the outset gendered' (Shonfield, 2010:377). Martin's assessment of the building provides the reader with an architectural parallel for the state of the Barfords' marriage. Not only does the space they inhabit bear no reflection of their own personalities, but, like their marriage, the structure and proportions of the building itself have been thrown out of harmony by 'an economical and unimaginative landlord' (*BM*:205). The grace and coherence of a house built around 1830 to serve the purpose of a family with servants, had been divided

into sections and adapted by elements which are entirely out of sympathy and proportion with the original. Oliver Barford and his wife occupy 'a tall, draughty sitting room on the ground floor, separated by folding doors from a back-bedroom looking on the garden' and 'a kitchen and a bathroom somewhere in the basement' (*BM*:203). This unpropitious living space underlines Oliver's lack of interest in creating a family life and the misery of his neglected wife in whom he appears to have little interest. Oliver comments to Martin sardonically: 'That's post-war domesticity; not very dignified, is it?' (*BM*:205). Martin's sensibility to buildings and their interaction with their inhabitants is far more perceptive than Letty's: 'I found the house very depressing […] It seemed to me to have no dignity and no privacy' (*BM*:206). Letty, oblivious to that sensibility, considers that having a home and husband to look after should be enough to keep a wife happy. This reflects, perhaps, the trials of her own marriage which have been manifested in less obvious but sometimes equally distressing ways. Her conventional views on marriage explain why her own marriage to Martin has survived and why she cannot understand Stacy, whom she accuses of thinking that 'nothing matters except bookwork and brains' (*BM*:207).

The Barfords' borrowed home certainly provides no comfort for Dorothy who is, according to her husband, 'one of those women who must have a house to fuss over or they get miserable' (*BM*:206). His callousness is highlighted by his knowledge of his wife's feelings but his failure to engage with finding a home that will allow her to fulfil what is her only potential source of interest. Dorothy declines from an 'inevitably neglected wife into a hysterical semi-invalid' (*BM*:217) and eventually, towards the end of the novel,

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poisons herself. Oliver's release from his unhappy union with Dorothy means that, at last, his relationship with Stacy, their 'cool, baffling, accustomed impertinence to each other' (*BM*:216) finds a resolution in a marriage that is measured out by houses and children. Stacy is able to abandon the succession of borrowed living spaces she has occupied either alone, with her parents or latterly, since her mother's death, with her father.   She and Oliver temporarily occupy:

> a top-floor flat in Torrington Square, where they had four
> spacious, inconvenient attic rooms with sloping ceilings,
> elegant Georgian fireplaces, barred windows with a view
> into the plane trees of the public garden, and a nursery
> gate at the top of the stairs for which they subsequently
> found a use. (*BM*:276)

How quickly they settle into a home which, although not their own space, provides a harmonious backdrop for their marriage and the detail of which provides the reader with information about its likely longevity. The physical appearance and interaction between habitation and inhabitants could not be more different than that experienced by Oliver and Dorothy Barford. The coda to this narrative is provided by their purchase of a 'staring white week-end cottage […] on top of a cliff near Dover which [Martin] found very hard to admire. It was designed for reinforced concrete in the best Le Corbusier manner' (*BM*:278). After a lifetime of living in the domestic spaces of others, of emotional and personal uncertainty, Stacy commits to a family home with the man who has all along been the cause of her uncertainty and, at times, unhappiness. Although the gendered boundary between home and work is

broken down to some extent by a shared professional occupation, Stacy is prepared to defer to the superior importance of Oliver's commercial design work. In their choice of habitation, Stacy and Oliver assert the progress of time and taste and, by inference, consign Martin to the past.

Of all the narrative lines in the novel, it is the marriage of Martin and Letty which is tracked most insistently by their pattern of domestic occupancy. Martin and Letty are married in 1892, when they settle in a rented flat in Gray's Inn. During the next twenty-five or so years, driven by Martin's interest in buildings, they move at least seven times. This often involves occupying short-term temporary accommodation while the longer-term temporary accommodation is prepared. A family joke develops: 'In another year it'll be time for the Lovells to move again' (*BM*:191). Although Martin spends much of his professional life designing or renovating properties for clients, Ashton explains that:

> 'curiously enough, Martin never built a house for his own
> family […]. Every three or four years he would discover
> some derelict and charming bargain […] and he would
> dig up his family by the roots, settle them in their new
> home add to it and transform it until its perfection
> destroyed his interest. (*BM*:110)

 These properties are mostly rented. Unlike Oliver's apparent unresponsiveness to his domestic surroundings during his first marriage, Martin is constantly striving to create perfect family homes. Although Letty is more concerned for the comfort and practicality of their habitations, the buildings Martin chooses are often in a poor state, in unsuitable locations or

impracticable. They move in turn to a 'weather-boarded […] six-roomed cottage on the edge of Hampstead Heath'; a 'villa on the banks of Regent's Park canal'; a house in Old Brompton 'in a then uncivilised region of later Georgian terraces'; a 'small Georgian house in the Westminster slums' (*BM*:111) and a house in Campden Hill Square, although Martin had 'really wanted to go and live in a delightful, dilapidated, rat-haunted William-and-Mary house on Ham Common' (*BM*:126). Although Martin appears to care about Letty, he is mostly insensitive to the effect of constant upheaval on a woman who 'hated moves. She was as miserable on such occasions as a cat in a strange house […] and by the time her slow affections had attached themselves to a new home and neighbourhood, Martin had usually lost interest in both' (*BM*:110-111).

Their views on their domestic habitations rarely coincide. Initially they are happy in their rented chambers on the top floor of a property in Gray's Inn Square, where they could 'go back up their carved staircase, and shut their outer door on the world and draw the curtains to shut in the light of their own fire', but Martin's procession around London over the years often lands Letty in situations which she finds less than ideal (*BM*:34). Letty finds the house in Westminster unhealthy, with its 'fogs from the river and the marshy subsoil', a reminder of the damp and unsanitary locations in *Jane Eyre* and *Invitation to the Waltz* (*BM*:112). A temporary stay in Rye between houses is in a cottage that:

> was dark, cramped and inconvenient in Letty's eyes
> but it had linen-fold panelling […] and a four-centred
> stone arch over a Tudor hearth with a fireback of

Sussex ironwork which had been fatal to Martin on

his visit of inspection'. (*BM*:102).

The conflict of pragmatism and aestheticism between Letty and Martin serves to strengthen Martin's relationship with Stacy and drive another wedge between the partners in the marriage. Yet Martin seldom seems to acknowledge that perhaps it is Letty's belief in the limits of expectation for women and in the ties of family duties that prevent her from feeling as rejected as Dorothy Barford. There is one moment when Martin questions Letty's objection to the thought of Stacy marrying an architect as she herself has done, when it 'occurred to him for the first time that [Letty] might not have had all that she expected out of life' (*BM*:124). But throughout his life, Martin inhabits, literally and figuratively, spaces which he tranforms for himself or for clients. The work he does for the latter enables him to live out fantasies of design in which, on occasion, the client's wishes are subjugated to his own interests. 'It is very difficult to remember clients have a right to their own ideas,' he says (*BM*:105). His clients' spaces are borrowed temporarily and used to live out vicarious dreams of occupancy. When the buildings are handed over, clients always 'spoilt them after he had finished' (*BM*:110).

The novel charts Martin's continuous search for something that is never made explicit.   Much of his life is spent living in rented attic rooms, including when he is first married and then later in the flat he, Letty and Stacy share in Brunswick Square during the war. Stacy also inhabits a flat with sloping ceilings on the top floor of a 'tumbledown Adam house [on] Tottenham Court Road' when she moves out of the Brunswick Square flat *(BM*:214). Following Letty's death, Martin gives up the flat in Brunswick Square and

moves into 'set of queer tumbledown attic rooms in Lincoln's Inn Fields'
(*BM*:264). Attic rooms are a recurring motif. The connotations for those who
inhabit such spaces are of transience and detachment and their recurrence
serves to underline the feeling of impermanence that permeates the narrative.
Martin admits earlier in the book: 'Bricks and mortar had come of late years to
satisfy him better than human relationships' (*BM*:135). But his obsession with
bricks and mortar, the repeated process of transformation and recreation of
domestic space and his apparent wariness of ownership indicates a
restlessness which slows down after Letty's death but is not fully resolved. It
is then that Stacy, prior to her reconciliation with Oliver, persuades him to
purchase a property that they can share, a mill-house with a garden where
Stacy will grow rose trees, sweet peas, lavender plants and vegetables. At
last there is a possibility of domestic stability. Despite her independence as a
working woman, Stacy repeatedly demonstrates a desire for homemaking. At
the cottage she occupies with Philip Giffard and at the mill-house, she is
attracted by the image of the traditional cottage garden. In her attic in
Tottenham Court Road she adorns the flat with 'a good deal of peasant
pottery [and] a great many bright cushions' [*BM*:214]. Like Muriel in *The
Crowded Street* and Olivia in *Weather in the Streets,* the role and choice of
objects in setting up a domestic space is central to establishing an identity.
Now at the mill-house and later in the cottage she and Oliver acquire, she has
an opportunity to achieve what Martin does not succeed in doing, that is
creating permanent, secure domestic spaces which reflect lasting and
satisfying relationships.

Towards the end of the novel, there are indications of changing times and changing tastes. Martin reflects that 'people had no money for his kind of buildings nowadays. They all wanted to live in flats or hotels, […] the old ten or twelve-bedroom house was a drug in the market' (*BM*:230-231). Nor do people want to commission the building of new houses. They want an escape, to 'buy a tumbledown pair of village cottages or a windmill or a Martello tower, and convert it into something inconveniently picturesque with the help of an interior decorator' (*BM*:231). The allure of Robert Audley's 'fairy cottage' is enduring, with its resonance of a happy rural past.

The progress of the architectural partnership which Martin joins as a young man and subsequently takes over reflects changing times and tastes. During a period of the expansion of manufacturing and commerce, Nick Barford, Martin's employer, built 'banks and town halls and things of that kind, a lot of important stuff' (*BM*:20). Despite his initial dreams of building cathedrals, Martin has spent much of his professional life building or converting domestic structures, inhabiting them in his mind for the duration of his involvement. And now Oliver has taken over the practice and is building factories, offices and investigating new materials. The practice tracks changing times. Martin considers Oliver Barford to be 'more of an engineer than an architect' who talks about 'continuous vertical support, lighting units, economy, floor-space, and ventilation.' (*BM*:226-227). 'I've had my best moments out of the things I've built,' says Martin in a final moment of truthfulness. 'They've meant more to me than Letty, or the children, or myself' (*BM*:302). As Martin and Oliver observe London from the scaffolding around Oliver's new commercial building, Oliver observes: 'You can't stop a thing

growing' (*BM*:298). Martin's fall from the scaffolding as he misses his footing, signposted earlier in the book by reference to his acrophobia, sends him hurtling towards the foundations of the building, to be buried in the past and swallowed by the future.

The theme of awakenings and social change, mirrored in the built environment, continues in two novels by Rosamund Lehmann, *Invitation to the Waltz*, published in 1932 and *The Weather in the Streets*, published in 1936. These novels exemplify what Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik assert as 'the way women writers […] came to terms in their work with contemporary social constructs of 'woman'; how […] their work deconstructed cultural paradigms of womanhood'. In measuring the progress of the female protagonists in the novels considered in this dissertation towards an independent and fulfilled future, historical context and 'an awareness of the values we bring […] to these texts' should be kept in mind (Horner and Zlosnik, 1990:1). From a twenty-first century perspective, the journey of these women may seem halting, progress fragile and future direction sometimes inconclusive, but in the context of the interbellum period, leaning towards the future but weighted by the past, their decisions, indecisions and intuitions are significant in reshaping their own lives and assembling a new paradigm for single women. The awakening of the protagonists to the possibility of another model of living is a key element in their stories. The narrative followed through *Invitation to the Waltz* and *The Weather in the Streets* tracks a young girl, Olivia, from an awakening to questions about her family's position, and, like Muriel in *The Crowded Street,* to her own feelings of alienation from the society in which she has been brought up. The social hierarchy in small rural

towns, the model of ownership, security and respectability, and its capacity to endure when challenged by the unconventional, is explored through the relationship at the heart of the novel, between Olivia and Rollo. Like Margaret Hale in *North and South,* Olivia is awakened to class difference and questions about the way society functions by her encounters in the home of a working-class family.

As in *The New House, The Crowded Street* and *Bricks and Mortar,* changing landscapes populated by new forms of housing mark changing needs and priorities but are derided even by those who are aware of the need for new ways of living. In particular, the ubiquity of the bungalow is noted and deplored in the novel, echoing the description in a number of provincial newspapers in 1927 of the beginnings of suburban sprawl in the 'bungaloid growth' that makes 'the approaches to any city repulsive' (*Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 1927:10 et al). In *The Weather in the Streets,* Olivia, who recognizes the need to create a new model of life, nevertheless rails against examples of modern style appearing in London streets:

> 'Every time I come along this road there's a fresh
> outbreak of bungalows. […] Nasty little brutes. […] So
> disgraced, so ignoble, so smug and pretentious […]
> Can't people be educated?' Her companion replies:
> 'But they have been! […] This is the glorious result:
> Art homes'. (*WS*:19-20).

The importance of personal and private space is imperative to new beginnings as women with independent choices, but views on form, design and the meanings they carry are, it seems, more traditional. The significance

of location, atmosphere and objects in defining roles is evident in the spaces in which Olivia tests out her independent life. Her attraction to the bohemian lifestyle of her new artist friends, the subjugation of domesticity to art, reflects Reed's view of the period that 'ultimately, in the eyes of the avant-garde, being undomestic came to serve as a guarantee of being art' (Reed, 1996:7). In her search for a new life, Olivia, like Muriel and Rhoda, is prompted by an external agent. In this instance, she chooses the agency of a man who is unlikely to flout conventional standards of behaviour because by living at least partly within such parameters he can have the security of family and the excitement of an affair.

The two novels shift through time, from one era to another. Although the span of years they cover is relatively small, the numerical gap in no way reflects the social and cultural chasm that is beginning to manifest itself over the time period of the two novels. These follow Olivia from her seventeenth birthday through to womanhood, amid a changing social order. In her introduction to *The Weather in the Streets,* Carmen Callil describes how 'such universal young women are unable to live in their parents' world, no world yet made which they could inhabit' (*WS*:vi). It is the struggle of transition from prescribed social roles to a new and more fulfilling paradigm for women's lives that runs through both novels.

Invitation to the Waltz is set in 1920 and describes a girl on the brink of adulthood, looking forward against a background of timeless, middle-class country life. The 'parents' world' referred to by Callil is defined in the opening pages by descriptions of setting: 'The village, in the hollow below the house, is picturesque, unhygienic: it has more atmosphere than form, than outline:

huddled shapes of soft red brick sag towards gardens massed with sunflowers' (*IW*:3). There are similarities here with the context of *The Crowded Street* both in the social setting and personal circumstances of Muriel. The next paragraph of the novel goes on to describe the 'newer square stone house' built by a mill-owner and now occupied by the third generation of his family (*IW*:3). Both the physical space and its connotations of substance and social standing are similar to that of Weare Grange, the 'grey square house' in *The Crowded Street*. Life continues but is not the same. It has been decimated by war. Through her characters, Lehmann articulates concerns about continuity and succession, touched upon in the narratives of *Lady Audley's Secret*, *The New House* and *The Crowded Stree*t. She writes: 'A gap yawns for the first time in the line of direct succession. The mould is the same but it is cracked: the flavour is strange' (*IW*:4).

Lehmann continues, with a montage of images piled on top of each other, to describe the minute details of the interior of the house as a container and cradle for its inhabitants, finishing with:

> Here is continuity spinning a web from room to room, from year to year. It is safe in this house…Here grows a curious plant with strong roots knotted all together: an unique specimen. In brief, a family lives here. (*IW*:5).

Its square and solid shape, the personal contents, its family ownership, represent stability in an uncertain world. However, there is a feeling of anticipation, of change. The first part of the book sets up social relationships by tracking Olivia's thoughts and actions. Most of these focus on the ball she

is to attend at Lady Spencer's house; a symbolic rite of passage provided by the local upper middle class landowners, where adulthood beckons. There are other women in the book trapped in a domestic situation that represents the stifling of hopes and ambitions. Olivia visits Miss Robinson, a young unmarried dressmaker who lives with her mother in a house from which she can 'escape no further than to the front room. […] [T]hese four walls held the remnants of her freedom, her humour, her hope […] and virginity, like a malignant growth, gnawed at her mind and body' (*IW*:33). There is a patriarchal and class-dominated relationship between Olivia's family and the Robinsons. The Robinsons live in a house built by Olivia's grandfather, 'that beneficent potentate'*,* who built houses that 'stood aloof from the old, the picturesque, the insanitary village proper - examples of modern improvements; and much local prestige attached to them' (*IW*:43). The house, occupied by the Robinsons but owned by Olivia's grandfather, is filled with the 'the odour of complacent dejection and sanctified decay' (*IW*:33). It represents the physical manifestation of the psychological prison constructed by Miss Robinson's mother and the dependence of the Robinsons within a hierarchical social structure. The opportunity for Miss Robinson to escape social status, house and parent to follow a professional singing career slipped by because her mother 'said my constitution 'ud never stand up against a professional life' (*IW*:41). The setting speaks eloquently of the plight of the unmarried young woman desperate to escape the burden of a suffocating mother, but with no financial independence and little likelihood of finding a husband in a world where the young male population has been decimated by war. Whether, in reality, Miss Robinson would have made her escape, she is

now resigned to life with her mother, constrained by real or imagined illness: 'Many a time Mother's passed the remark how thankful we should be to be together' (*IW*:40).

Lehmann uses the 'chilly, buff front sitting room' of the Robinsons' house as the setting in which, in a moment of suspension, Olivia ponders the changing social order, and, nostalgically, a loss of faith (*IW*:31). Baudrillard's reflection on colour, where pale colours are 'merely *signs* for [colour] complete with a dash of moralism' (Baudrillard, 2005:33), captures the joyless, constraining atmosphere in the Robinson household. In this oppressive and characterless location, Olivia reflects on a future that is as bleak and unpromising as the surroundings. Family life within this home is the antithesis of the safe, comforting containment of the 'newer square stone house' described at the beginning of the book.   However, Olivia, for the first time, begins to question her acquired perception of her grandfather and, by association, her family and herself:

> One must be very proud of all Grandpapa's works…She looked at them. But surely - surely they didn't look very nice?…in fact - horrid? All that pretentiousness and mincingness and mixture of materials […].She felt embarrassed for him, uncomfortable in her family sense' (*IW*:44).

Part Two of *Invitation to the Waltz* takes place at the home of the Spencers, and spans the evening of a ball. Lady Spencer represents the stability of the old social order, exemplified by the family home. However Olivia is not really part of this society. She is a visitor to this setting in which

the narrative is built up by dialogue and action. The borrowed space that Olivia occupies for the evening is used to frame her uncertainty as she makes tentative efforts to enter the social world of the Spencers. Bedroom, terrace and landing frame Olivia's lack of confidence and feeling of not fitting in. The bedroom is a 'sanctuary' in which she wants to hide (*IW*:117). She escapes from the throng in the ballroom to the terrace. Location provides removal and detachment: 'Living is going on on the other side of the wall but […] I don't want it' (*IW*:207). A landing provides a further frame for detachment, where she again escapes the social interaction from which she feels excluded. She settles in 'an armchair […] covered in white velvet' (*IW*:223) providing a static and framed parallel to her detachment from a promise of life of which she is as yet uncertain. The terrace, almost like a stage set, provides the frame for her meeting with Lady Spencer's son Rollo, separating the pair from the social interactions taking place within the house. The setting foreshadows their affair and its outcome, which is the subject of *The Weather in the Streets*.

Much of the imagery provided by domestic space in Lehmann's two novels suggests not only physical, but mental shelter of some sort. Although the garden of her family home represents a safe parameter for Olivia, she knows that life is changing. Beyond the garden, '[a]ll the landscape as far as the horizon seemed to begin to move' (*IW*:231). *Invitation to the Waltz* ends with an image of Olivia running from the garden into the fields beyond and the approaching sweep of sunlight. 'Everything's going to begin,' she says (*IW*:231). The young Olivia, embracing the future, becomes the older Olivia, lost in a space between convention and desire, seeking the protection of the familiar and the timeless but knowing that life is not enough.

The Weather in the Streets takes Olivia to London, to share a house with her cousin Etty. Like Margaret's cousin Edith in *North and South*, 'a soft ball of muslin and ribbon, and silken curls' (*N&S*:5), Etty embodies the trope of the pretty, spoilt, dependent girl, for whom the more sensible, intelligent but socially less advantaged cousin acts as companion and foil.   The novel starts with a description of Etty's house as the setting for the narrative. Olivia has moved away from her family home, 'storeroom that it was of generations of adolescence' (*WS*:71) to 'Etty's crammed dolls'-house' (*WS*:1). She gains independence but lacks permanence, status or money. Olivia is drawn into a new world of bohemian culture and artists' studios, so different from her earlier environment, where 'the vitality of shape, pattern, colour [makes] an aesthetic unity - the creative hand the individual mind mattering - the dirt, untidiness, poor materials not mattering at all' (*WS*:140). This is a very different perspective from the pre-war ideal of cleanliness, clutter and order.

She is awakened to and excited by another kind of life, but still waivers in her acceptance of change and the ability to move forward. Embarking on an affair with Rollo Spencer, she becomes pregnant, but terminates the pregnancy when it becomes clear that their relationship will never be more than an affair. Her different homes explain the personal conflicts in her life. Etty's miniature, suffocating house stifles Olivia with its feeling of being, like its owner, 'a pre-war model left over' (*WS*:73). The studios and rural cottage of her artist friends are the antitheses of the surroundings of wealth, comfort and tradition in which she spent her childhood and offer a vision of a less constrained and more bohemian lifestyle.   Her lover's family home represents an oppositional image of the conventional relationship that, despite her

awareness of changing possibilities for women, she would really like, while the Spencers' country house represents the constraints from which she is trying to escape. Following the notion of the rural retreat, she attempts a romantic idyll in a cottage; she stands outside Rollo's home envying his family life: 'I told myself rooms made by a couple, joint possessions, don't matter, they're not a real tie, not important…but they are, they're powerful.' (*WS*:176). The progress of her relationship with Rollo is reflected by the different settings within which they meet, though these spaces are inhabited and controlled by others. Olivia's search for identity is measured out in borrowed spaces, like an actor trying out different characters. The Spencer family home is a symbol of stability, respectability and the social conventions that Olivia is breaking by her affair with Rollo. It is the place she visits at the beginning of the affair: 'There it all was, not changed at all.' (*WS*:60), and towards the end, where Rollo recovers from his car accident. Despite the intervention of his mother in the affair, the pregnancy of his wife, and his own unwillingness to disturb the pattern of his life, Rollo urges: 'Let's not be final and desperate […] We've had such lovely times, […] it's so stupid to say never again. Don't you agree?'. Olivia's response: 'Why not a lunch, a drive, if he wanted to' (*WS*:372) confirms that Olivia, whose existence is reflected in the temporary, the uncertain, will remain in that state of liminality, while Rollo, sited as he is in the social and physical substance of his family home, will continue to fulfil the expectations of his position while maintaining and sidelining his relationship with Olivia.

Olivia's tussle between moving on and clinging to the familiar is frequently pointed up by references to buildings. Her relationship with the

spaces she inhabits is intuitive. Lehmann uses anthropomorphism to heighten the relationship between spaces and people. She says of a bedsit she borrows: 'this room never cracked a whole-hearted smile' (*WS*:190). Gradually modern structures (hotels, Rollo's house) become the symbol of Olivia's desired future and old structures (pubs and inns where she stays with Rollo) seem either fake or are used by Lehmann as the setting for the breaking down of the relationship. Like the George Inn at Millcote in *Jane Eyre* and the Castle Inn in *Lady Audley's Secret*, these public and transitory spaces indicate a progress of decline and destruction. The power of location to explain the changing status of the relationship between Olivia and Rollo is exemplified by the descriptions of the house belonging to Olivia's friend Simon. Initially this provides an idyllic setting where the lovers are transported to a new and romantic environment: 'the whole flavour of the house […] is so strong and individual I can almost taste it in my mouth' (*WS*:203). Later, as the relationship is breaking down, Olivia and Rollo return in the hope of finding the same magic, but this time the house smells damp and sour, as though it would never be inhabited again (*WS*:305).

Olivia is a woman of her time. Like Muriel in *The Crowded Street*, she has broken away from her past but not yet carved out a future. She has achieved independence of a sort but is tied emotionally to a man with whom she will never have the permanent relationship she craves. Despite her efforts to become independent, she admits: 'The thing is really, I don't like living alone' (*WS*:190). She has no physical space of her own but at the end of the novel remains itinerant, her social status reflected by the lack of permanence or ownership of her living spaces.

The themes embodied in the narratives of the novels already discussed run through *At Mrs Lippincote's*, written by Elizabeth Taylor and published in 1945. Mrs Lippincote's is the rented house used by Taylor as the setting for the novel. The house and its contents provide the site in which the disintegration of a marriage and the female protagonist's search for a more fulfilled life is explored. In his chapter 'Home – the experience of atmosphere', Paul Pennartz suggests that 'atmosphere is an inherent aspect of habitation' (Pennartz, 2006:95), while in his lecture 'Atmospheres', architect Peter Zumthor discusses the importance of atmosphere, an elusive combination of material form and the many other elements of an environment, including sound, colour, surface, location, light and particularly objects. Zumthor asserts that 'people interact with objects' (Zumthor, 2006:17). The close interaction between the female protagonists in the novels discussed in Chapters One and Two and the spaces they occupy, either temporarily or more permanently, and the attention applied by them to homemaking supports Zumthor's assertion. As we shall see, objects play a key role in the relationship between Julia, the protagonist in *At Mrs Lippincote's*, and the rented house. Briganti and Mezei note that '[t]he house is frequently presented as a symbol of the self', but this connection is dislocated when the house of occupation belongs to someone else (Briganti & Mezei, 2006:20). Mrs Lippincote's house is full of her furniture and belongings. Discussing the role of the sort of dark furniture that fills Mrs Lippincote's house, Baudrillard explains that such furniture was 'heavy, round-bellied – overloaded with connotations of motherhood' (Baudrillard, 2005:47). This symbolism is another reminder to Julia of her failure to meet the expectations of the woman's role as domestic linchpin of the family. Julia's

inability to create space, physical and psychological, for expression of her own identity, and the overbearing presence of Mrs Lippincote embodied in her belongings, is a further element in Julia's disorientation and need to escape into her own fantasy world. As Miller observes, 'the prior presence of material culture may have a constraining impact upon what one feels one can do with possessions in such a manner that they may appear to possess their own agency' (Miller, 2001:112).

The novel explores the marriage of Roddy Davenant, who, like Philip Giffard in *Bricks and Mortar*, is in the air force, and his wife Julia. Roddy's posting brings them to Mrs Lippincote's house, with their son Oliver and Roddy's cousin Eleanor. This domestic space, like a theatre set, introduces a device by which Taylor questions concepts of reality and permanence. Although Roddy has none of Philip Giffard's physical and mental aggression, the fragility of his marriage to Julia becomes increasingly evident and is exposed at the end of the novel. It seems that Roddy has previously taken up his postings alone as, towards the end of the novel, his Wing Commander says: 'When I urged that your wife should come to live here, I did so in the hope that it might save your marriage' (*AML*:196). The tensions in their marriage are subtly signposted through the novel. Whereas Roddy is at home in the structured lifestyle of the air force and the male environment of the mess, Julia inhabits a world of the imagination, fed by literature and seeking for self. She describes 'those times when the body divides, one part set down firmly before the sink, but the mind all the time tacking, veering, going forward' (*AML*:99). Roddy does not value the world of books and the imagination. As with other female protagonists discussed in this chapter, Julia is aware that

something is out of alignment. She has moments of blunt honesty but there are other times when she is seeking adventure and romance at a cerebral, rather than a physical level.   She has a close affinity with her son Oliver, who, like her, loves books and inhabits a world peopled by characters or locations from fiction. Oliver is placed as an outsider, the normal pattern of life interrupted by illness or accident. His frequent dislocation and lack of harmony with his living spaces is evident from the beginning of the novel: 'He had never found himself in congenial surroundings and now looked at it all as if it were a description in a book' (*AML*:1945). This enables him to take a detached view of Mrs Lippincote's house, which he imagines as Lowood School or other locations in *Jane Eyre*. This device adds layers to the image of Mrs Lippincote's house created for the reader who is familiar with Brontë's account of life at Lowood School. Oliver's detachment from his living spaces is a further indication of the lack of a warm and secure family life that truly inhabits the spaces in which it is conducted.

Like Ellen in *The New House* and Beatrice in *The Crowded Street,* Eleanor, Roddy's cousin, is another example of a female relation attached to the household. She is 'forty and unmarried' [with] a little money in Imperial Tobacco, [and] a royal blue evening dress' and is 'in love with her cousin' (*AML*:14). Eleanor disapproves of Julia but is also searching for an identity. The interactions of this family group are played out in a house belonging to a stranger, where the walls 'felt clammy and unfamiliar' and 'the ghosts of servants seemed to hover' (*AML*:8-9). 'Oliver might grow up to be a man in this funny place' Julia comments, prompting a reflection on how a life

develops in an entirely unsympathetic environment (*AML*:12). As Nicola Humble observes:

> This displacement [to Mrs Lippincote's] is emblematic of
>
> both the social and psychological disruptions of wartime,
>
> and of a distance between the fey bohemian sensibility
>
> of the heroine Julia and the stuffy Victorianism of Mrs
>
> Lippincote's house. (Humble, 2001:112).

Although the Wing Commander assumes the move will cement Julia's marriage, the displacement to a domestic space that is itself in a state of neglect and feels entirely alien to Julia is also a metaphor for the disintegration of her relationship with Roddy. The house itself is full of shadowy areas, of 'ticking clocks' and 'stairs [that] creaked and popped' (*AML*:37), objects that Baudrillard describes as an ensemble 'constituting the most extraordinary symbolic resume of bourgeois domesticity', a state with which Julia feels no affinity (Baudrillard, 2006:22). The locked room at the top of the house which Oliver cannot enter, becomes the fictional attic in Jane Eyre. This analogy is strengthened by the random visits of Mrs Lippincote's mentally-fragile daughter Phyllis, who cannot separate herself from the house and makes unannounced intrusions to sort through her possessions in the attic. The power of those objects to offer security to Phyllis provides a tangible equivalent to the memories of Julia's own childhood home that Julia recollects, as described below. As Penelope Lively suggests in her memoir *A House Unlocked,* 'from each object there spins a shining thread of reference' (Lively, 2002:xi). This may be the case for Phyllis, but Julia is surrounded by objects from which, however, she can draw no reference at all. As Briganti

and Mezei observe, such objects are an insistent reminder to Julia, as the lodger, that 'she is beholden to someone else' (Briganti & Mezei, 2018:3). The presence of Mrs Lippincote settles on the house and seems to exercise a panoptic view of the household, reinforced by visits from Mrs Whapshott, her cleaner and the presence of the family photos. Although the expected visit from Mrs Lippincote does not materialise for some time, Julia dares not displace household objects or make any move to own the space.

Eleanor's presence in the household is a further source of conflict. Although she conforms to the stereotype of the middle-aged spinster whose role is to be useful to her family, she also apportions romantic ciphers to men. As Julia imagines the Wing Commander as Mr Rochester, so Eleanor transforms the ailing Mr Aldridge into Lord Byron. She writes to Reggy, a prisoner of war, simply because it fulfils her habit of prodigious letter writing. Her growing involvement with Communist activities provides her with an identity and a group of friends, although the reality and depth of her friendships are questionable. At the end of the novel, when she contemplates life independently from Roddy and Julia, she imagines herself 'as part of that ménage, reliable, useful, unobtrusive at first; later, accepted, her worth assessed; and finally, indispensable' (*AML*:199). This defines a highly constructed and unspontaneous friendship. However, the model of domestic living described by one of her Communist friends provides a counterpoint to the importance placed on objects and possessions in the household of Mrs Lippincote: 'When you are not lonely, when you have a lot of people, then you don't need to find *things* to take a pride in' (*AML*:87).

The theme of impermanence and displacement in borrowed places runs through the novel. It is not only the Davenant family and Mrs Lippincote who are displaced; Mr Taylor, whose restaurant in Soho has been bombed, is using his sister's bungalow as a club. But it is no substitute for his establishment in Soho and the reference to the bungalow, as in *Weather in the Streets*, carries connotations of ugliness and lack of taste. Julia tries to imagine an element of romance in her meeting with him, but he is ill and the reality is sordid. This is emphasised by the description of the bungalow/club, where the interior is cheap and fake. Just as Julia waits for a visit from Mrs Lippincote, Mr Taylor waits eternally for a visit from his sister, who never materialises. When Julia meets his mother after his death, she is nothing like the beautiful woman he described. These lives occupy a world beyond reality, a sort of heterotopia, lived out in borrowed spaces and shifting narratives.

Miller suggests that 'building up a home and building up a marriage are seen as complementary aspects in the ideal of Christian domesticity' (Miller, 2001:13). A key element of that domestic model and consequently of the success of marriage, is cleanliness. But in *At Mrs Lippincote's*, dirt is a recurring theme, representing Julia's failure to manage her household and her marriage. Julia escapes on her own from the oppression of the household in a 'grubby white coat' (*AML*:93). In Mr Taylor's bungalow she sits on a divan covered in 'grubby pink blankets' (*AML*:100). Later, when she meets Mrs Lippincote's nephew, Julia notices she is wearing 'dirty quilted slippers' (*AML*:138) and the Wing Commander finds her 'sandals covered with fluff' under her bed' (*AML*:141). Beneath a very thin surface, nothing is as it seems. This is a narrative of reversed social control where landladies,

cleaners and barmaids hold sway over those on whom they are financially dependent. Mrs Lippincote, Mr Aldridge's landlady, Mr Taylor's sister and Greta, the barmaid at his club, exert control, psychological or practical, over those who pay them.

The dislocation Julia feels at Mrs Lippincote's reflects her feelings about her marriage. Her description of her childhood home explains why she is at odds:

> Her mother coming in on those summer evenings was
> the signal for bed, for the last crust covered deeply with
> butter, and the creaking upstairs to dark bedrooms
> smelling of apples. 'The peace and simplicity […]. We
> are a reading, drinking family, and a weeping family'.
> (*AML*:182).

There is no fear of the dark bedrooms of her childhood home as there are of the dark bedrooms of Mrs Lippincote's house. Her 'reading, drinking […] weeping family' has not prepared her for life with Roddy, who considers her 'woefully ignorant of the world' and 'looked forward to assisting in her development' but discovered 'she had been grown up all the time'. The trouble is her refusal to accept the 'great many little rules relating to the behaviour of women' (*AML*:105). The lack of understanding and empathy between Julia and Roddy is reflected in her 'struggle with the house' that was 'hopeless from the beginning' (*AML*:31). Returning from an evening out by herself, the house becomes a battle-line with 'Roddy and Eleanor ranged against me' (*AML*:94). An argument ensues and Julia senses that: 'The room was between them' (*AML*:105). As Briganti and Mezei infer, 'domestic spaces frequently serve as the medium of negotiation and

communication' (Briganti & Mezei, 2004:149). Julia's descriptions of the house reflect the claustrophobia she feels: 'The house seemed glued up: bannisters were damp to the touch, doors stuck, […] the stairs exploded' (*AML*:105). Julia is not able to engage in the essential activity of home-making: 'She felt burdened by Mrs Lippincote's possessions' and although she considers removing them she can find nowhere to store them as 'the cupboards are full' (*AML*:13).

The narrative places most of the characters in settings in which they are temporary inhabitants, unable to construct a home which reflects their tastes, personalities and ways of life. At the end of the book, The Wing Commander sends Roddy to another posting and the Davenants prepare to leave Mrs Lippincote's. This intervention offers a reconfiguration. Julia reflects that 'Mrs Lippincote will soon be back in her own home' (*AML*:202), while she gives a bleak assessment of her own position: 'I am a parasite. I follow my man round like a piece of luggage or part of a travelling harem.   He is under contract to provide for me, but where he does so is for him to decide' (*AML*:199). But as war causes displacement and the opportunity for reconfiguration, so this personal upheaval enables Julia to make some decisions about the future. She decides: 'I don't care how lonely I am […] I shall never move again'. The pattern of temporary habitation, the lack of a personal space, has a profound effect on relationships.   Julia thinks of the clutter of objects in Mrs Lippincote's house and decides there is no point in hoarding memories of the past. She frames the image of 'Husband and wife, alone together. On either side of – not our hearth but a borrowed one' (*AML*:214). Truths beneath the surface are revealed. Roddy wants not just love but admiration; he and Julia are unable to see each other as real people,

but only as part of the construction that is marriage. Relationships happen as a consequence of time and place, so once the decision to leave Mrs Lippincote's is made, Oliver and the Wing Commander's daughter Felicity, who have forged a friendship through circumstance, are 'already lost to each other' (*AML*:207). The narrative of *At Mrs Lippincote's* is enhanced by subtle inference. As in theatre, the characters move in constructed settings, both actual and psychological, which are far less substantial than they appear to be, offering enriching layers of meaning. At the end of the novel, the curtain closes on this episode and we know that, for at least some of the characters, the departure from Mrs. Lippincote's marks a new beginning, although for Julia and Eleanor, like Muriel and Olivia, there is no certainty of how the future will work out: 'And with a great rattle and a flourish [Julia] drew Mrs Lippincote's damask curtains across the window for the last time' (*AML*:215).

As Blunt and Dowling argue, the concept of home, which might take the form of any sort of shelter, is much wider than the physical dwelling itself (Blunt & Dowling, 2006:13). Bachelard's vision of home as a place for dreaming and a receptacle and instigator of memories imbues it with a connection with its occupants that operates on a spiritual level (Bachelard, 1994). And yet, as Blunt and Dowling go on to explore, home is also a place of repression for women, who look beyond its boundaries for the sort of meaning and fulfilment they do not find in the domestic sphere. In their own ways, the female protagonists in the novels explored in this chapter are looking beyond the boundaries of the known and familiar, even if they are not sure what they are seeking. For some, the home they inhabit carries the sedimented possessions and walls layered with memories described by Miller

(2008:91). The physical surroundings of home and contents become, as Baudrillard observes, 'spatial incarnations of the emotional bonds and the permanence of the family group' (Baudrillard, 2005:14). To choose to leave home is not simply a geographical shift but carries the weight of rejection of the values and relationships that exist within the family home.

The disconnection of the protagonists from their living spaces in the novels discussed here is emblematic of their disconnection from their family and social environment. Olivia's growing awareness of the ugliness of the houses built by her grandfather, representative of her family's patriarchal social position, Muriel's suffocation in Marshington, Stacy's antipathy towards the life her mother wishes for her and Julia's alienation from the overpowering presence of the spirit of Mrs Lippincote are symptomatic of their wider personal and social displacement. Very often the conflict is between different generations of women, played out in a home representing the site of family politics.   As Spurr suggests, the disconnect between people and places creates 'the need to find a way to live in a world in the absence of any necessary relation between the human subject and the built environment' (Spurr, 2012:xi). In leaving one home, there is a need to begin the process of creating a new version of home that properly reflects the relationships and lifestyles therein. On an individual scale the building up of that relationship begins with the selection of objects and colours which contribute towards the creation of an environment that embodies an individual state of being. So Muriel immerses herself in homemaking, Stacy adorns her flat with peasant pottery and coloured cushions and Olivia, feeling no connection with her borrowed bedsit, finds an affinity with the shapes, patterns and colours that

predominate in the homes of her bohemian friends. Julia, trapped in a house full of another woman's possessions, cannot engage in activities that may begin to create a home. She can only retreat into her imagination as a protection against intrusion from her own family and from the pervasive presence of Mrs Lippincote. In this exploration of borrowed spaces and their relationship to the situations of women who inhabit them, what Briganti and Mezei describe as 'the interweaving of the home as subtext and text' reflects how the relationship of dweller to dwelling is affected by the transaction between those two parties and how that transaction is key to the ability to create an individual identity (Briganti & Mezei, 2016:167).

The novels discussed in this chapter chart the disentanglement of the women protagonists from families and social circumstances in which they are deeply embedded. The domestic locations within which the narratives are set, the objects they contain and the implications they carry for interpretations of situations and relationships have been explored. In Chapter Three, 'Serviced Space', the women protagonists have already become temporarily or permanently detached from the family home, placing them in situations where they are able to make observations about themselves, other people, their current circumstances and future directions. Sometimes decisions about the future are not conclusive, but the stories indicate a recognition that personal change is necessary, if not inevitable. Often this relates to a context of wider social changes; sometimes the instinct for change is difficult for the protagonists to rationalise, although seen from a perspective of, at the least, half a century, the contemporary reader is able to recognise social pressures and ambitions which may simply have been experienced by the protagonists

as intuitions. The chronology of the novels in Chapter Three overlaps the early novels discussed in this chapter. This allows a comparison between women living at the same time in different physical situations, before moving on to novels written in the middle of the twentieth century. Despite significant social changes, the position of many women within domestic living spaces retains some of the expectations that weighed upon those discussed in this chapter. Although the protagonists recognise their disconnection from society, they are often unable to resolve how to achieve a more satisfactory state of being. The patterns of the past that are so deeply embedded in the present confuse and disturb the search for personal progress, sometimes preventing women who are searching for a different way of life from finding any sort of new direction.

Chapter Three

Serviced Space

The Hotel by Elizabeth Bowen (1927)
After Leaving Mr Mackenzie by Jean Rhys (1930)
To Room Nineteen by Doris Lessing (1963)
At Bertram's Hotel by Agatha Christie (1965)
Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont by Elizabeth Taylor (1971)

> Today this world has diminished: for the living,
> through hotel rooms; for the dead, through
> crematoriums. (Benjamin, 1999:221).

Writing in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Walter Benjamin reflects on how 'the world of the shell', the familiar pattern of habitation that existed during the nineteenth-century, was unsettled by the ideas of Modernism (Benjamin, 1999:221). If dislocation and displacement are recurring themes of narratives located in borrowed spaces, then those set in serviced spaces explore a further removal or disconnection from surroundings and those who inhabit them. Serviced spaces include hotels and apartments occupied on a short-term or long-term basis, where room service, housekeeping and, in the case of hotels, meals are provided. The novels discussed in this chapter are set in hotels, providing an opportunity to explore through narratives and characters issues of displacement and attempts to create some sort of home amidst a random and shifting 'family'.

'The great advantage of a hotel is that it is a refuge from home life'

suggests the waiter in Act Two of George Bernard Shaw's play *You Never*

Can Tell (Shaw, 1921:263). Escaping home life may be one reason to

choose hotel living, but sometimes such a move is made through necessity

rather than choice. Although Susan, the protagonist in Doris Lessing's *To*

Room Nineteen uses a hotel room as a solitary and secret refuge from a

disintegrating marriage and family life, many of the characters in the other

novels considered in this chapter either have no permanent home or are

temporarily transient, seeking to resolve personal situations. For some the

hotel becomes a substitute home, the 'alternative domestic spaces' described

by Terri Mullholland (Mullholland, 2011:2). For others, it becomes a transient

stopping place in a literal and metaphorical journey through life.

Bachelard contends that it is the memories formed by home – the

physical space and the psychological concept – that prevent human beings

from becoming detached and rootless. Are memories of earlier homes

sufficient to sustain those who have been 'dispersed', to use Bachelard's

term, and who find themselves inhabiting spaces where there is little

possibility of homemaking (Bachelard,1994:7)? The bland and impersonal

surroundings of private hotels and the lack of agency of guests (even those in

long-term residence) in making any intervention in the hotel environment

remove one of the principal conditions of creating a mental and physical state

of home. Griselda Pollock notes the routines and rituals carried out by women

in the domestic sphere as part of homemaking (Pollock,1988:81). For women

whose model of family life was based on traditional gender roles and lived in

gendered spaces within the home, their subsequent occupation of serviced

spaces where those roles cannot be fulfilled required a recalibration of identity. Augé contends that 'individuals […] never become detached from the order that assigns them a position' (Augé, 2008:18-19). Although 'the concepts of home and privacy were relatively new constructs in the nineteenth-century', by the twentieth century the role of women as homemakers and housekeepers, together with gendered spaces within the home, had assigned a position to women that was deeply embedded in the social and personal psyche (Briganti & Mezei, 2018:5). The concept of privacy was also well established, privacy being the territory of the home. The protagonists in the novels discussed in this chapter exist outside frameworks that fulfil the above conditions of 'home'. For one reason or another, they inhabit spaces that neither contain memories nor embed them within family units. In *The Hotel*, Sydney tests out possible identities. Hotel guests have no historical knowledge of each other, making possible a reinvention of the self. In *Mrs Palfrey At The Claremont*, Mrs Palfrey, spending her last years at the Claremont hotel, invents a nephew, subscribing to the need to present a sense of her identity within a family to the other guests. Julia, the protagonist in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie,* has chosen to reject her place in family life. *To Room Nineteen* explores the gradual withdrawal of Susan from a family life that has constructed itself around her, without passion or real intention, because it was what families did. In a reversal of the usual expectations, the hotel room becomes her private domain while 'home' relates to a life with which she progressively feels little connection. Jane Marple's stay at Bertram's Hotel, in the novel of the same name, is based on a desire to revisit old memories but reveals a story of illusion and deceit that undermines the

superficial image of the hotel as an establishment of traditional values; somewhere that has the 'aesthetic and moral dimensions' required of a home-like space (Douglas, 1991:289). As Mary Douglas points out, 'the reference to morality points a major difference between a home and a hotel' as hotels are primarily concerned with cost efficiency (1991:297). Sophie Watson suggests that there are many conditions that constitute homelessness for women, both physical and psychological, and that simply having physical shelter does not provide the qualities defined as 'home' (Watson,1986). These characters, removed from conditions associated with home and homemaking, live in a state of what Spurr calls 'spiritual homelessness' (Spurr, 2012:54).

Exploring the concept of homelessness, Atkinson and Jacobs note that 'there are many routes to lost homes', and acknowledge the negative impact on health of those who, through loss of home, live with friends or family (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016:56). The uncertain and sometimes miserable situations of the women protagonists included in this chapter, attest to this view. The state of women caught in various situations caused by changing circumstances reflect what Mullholland describes as 'the conflict between women's emerging social and economic independence and a dominant ideology [of] domesticity' (Mullholland, 2011:Abstract). For younger women like Sydney, transient dwelling mirrors a journey of self-discovery, where she is able to test out different versions of herself (*TH*). However, older women like Mrs Palfrey and her fellow female guests at the Claremont, for whom changes in their lives were caused by loss of family home through death or circumstance, can only seek to recreate the familiar and personal in an

unfamiliar and impersonal context (*MPC*). As McDowell maintains, 'homelessness for women challenges every assumption about a woman's place' (1999:90).

It is not only the transactional relationship between occupant and owner, guest and host, and members of extended family groups that determines the pattern of behaviour and relationships within the serviced space acting as home. Space itself, the boundaries within which daily activity takes place, imposes a model of interaction and order on the inhabitants. As Woods proposes, design equals control (Woods, 2015:94). In hotels, communal areas such as drawing rooms and dining rooms bring residents together in forced social intercourse, although engagement in solitary activities such as letter-writing or reading provides an invisible protection from intrusion through learned social conventions. The segregated spaces of Victorian houses, which would have provided family homes for many of the long-term residents in hotels in the early to mid-twentieth century, defined roles and behaviour imbued with Victorian family values. Those values, along with the design of living spaces, were changing in line with modernist ideas as novels of the early 1930s were written, opening up living areas and blurring the boundaries between work and home life that had been so clearly defined during the late eighteenth and nineteenth-century. The occupants of such houses were, however, changing their models of life too. In one of the novels discussed in the previous chapter, Martin Lovell declared his professional preference as an architect was for designing bespoke houses, but observes: 'People had no money for his kind of building nowadays. They all wanted to

live in flats and hotels, and their wives shirked the difficulties of housekeeping and the expense of nurseries' (*BM*:231).

However, for the occupants of the Claremont and Bertram's Hotel, the shift in circumstances forces them to try to find a way of making a home of sorts within a space that is 'a perfect opposite of the home […] because it uses market principles for its transactions' (Douglas, 1991:304). Mullholland contends that 'the hotel inverts the organisation of the family home' (Mullholland, 2011:128). As discussed above, the use and arrangement of space controls interactions, routines and behaviours. Not only do the divisions of space within the hotel preclude the definition of roles dictated by the separate spaces within the family home, but the arrangement of furniture directs the interactions and behaviour of the hotel community.

In *The Hotel*, Sydney, the young female protagonist, observes that 'people live under the compulsion of their furniture' (*TH*:69). Baudrillard emphasises the 'infracultural or transcultural system' that underpins the way in which people, spaces and furniture interact and 'the systems of behaviour and relationships that result therefrom' (2005:2). The symbolism of furniture, its arrangement and use, can be considered as a key to the social structure of a living space. Despite its division of shared spaces for specific uses, for example, dining room, lounge or drawing room area, the use of space in the hotel sits midway between that of the domestic home of the nineteenth-century and the open plan living spaces favoured by modernist architects. Dining and lounge areas can only be communal, and the arrangement of furniture therein determines the interaction of the users. As Douglas points out, seating is a way of ordering (Douglas, 1991:301). There may be

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opportunities for unobtrusive surveillance of one another by guests, but often this is facilitated by the angles at which furniture is placed. This enables guests in *The Hotel* to observe or exchange gossip about each other while inhabiting shared spaces, as described later in this chapter. The choice of a seat at a table for one in the dining room makes a different statement about that individual's propensity for social interaction than, for example, that at a table for two or more. If that choice is dictated by the options provided by the hotel management, a pattern of social interaction is pre-determined whereby connections between guests must be made deliberately rather than happening by circumstance. Communal seating areas lack the focus of the domestic living room, where, as Baudrillard observes, the placing of furniture becomes a key instrument in directing the interactions of the family (Baudrillard, 2005:13). However, the placing of furniture in the communal areas of hotels, the sofa and the easy chair, at once 'de-emphasizes everything in the sitting posture that suggests confrontation' and dictates 'a relaxed social interaction' (Baudrillard, 2005:45). Although, therefore, an informality of communication may be encouraged, the convergence of forced bodily position and gestural messages combine to communicate subtle meanings between guests. Thus presence in a social space may be offset by an act of separation, for example reading a newspaper that inserts a physical barrier between one occupant and another, precluding social interaction. Rather than retreating to different spaces, therefore, some individual control can be exerted over proxemics by a choice of activities that carry tacit meanings. As Baudrillard observes, the possibility of some defence of privacy while inhabiting public spaces 'may well respond to […] the wish never to be

alone – but never to be face to face with another person either' (Baudrillard, 2005:46).

As Briganti and Mezei observe, inhabitants of hotels and boarding houses 'were often retired army officers or single women' (Briganti & Mezei, 2018:3). Their histories and backgrounds were various; their values and behavioural cultures diverse. Bourdieu asserts the importance of habitus, which he defines as personal taste comprising positions and practices, preferences and opinions (Bourdieu, 1989:19). For hotel residents, the proximity of strangers with no shared habitus has to be absorbed somehow into a sort of community. On meeting another resident at the Claremont, Mrs Palfrey acknowledges that, despite their differences, she must accept her changed circumstances and learn to adapt to company she would not necessarily choose (*MPC*:15). As Bourdieu observes, 'nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies' (Bourdieu, 1989:19). In dealing with changed circumstances, not only are hotel residents such as Mrs Palfrey required to adapt to the company of people with whom they would not necessarily choose to spend time, but they also have to adapt to a regime that is different, although not necessarily more dominant, than the routines, conventions and habits of life in the family home.

Douglas comments on 'the tyrannies of home' and its control over time, tastes and behaviour (Douglas, 1991:287). These may be the tyranny of an authoritarian father, of family culture and belief systems, or, for single women, the tyranny of caring responsibilities. The female protagonists in the novels discussed in this chapter are all escaping the tyranny of home in one way or another. Mrs Palfrey's loss of home forces her into the company of strangers,

which appears to be preferable to the company she would experience in her daughter's home (*MPC*). Susan escapes the overwhelming weight of her domestic circumstances in a hotel room that provides isolation (*TRN*). Sydney breaks away from the conventions of her home in search of her own identity and Jane Marple seeks reassurance in a hotel which she believes reflects her own habitus (*TH, ABH*). Julia Martin, who has rejected home and family, has, by her own admission, failed to make a satisfactory alternative life (*ALM*). The power structure of home is replaced by the power structure of the hotel, one that is determined by financial transaction and the logistics of providing the services bound by that transaction. Mullholland notes the difficulty in regulating the diversity of guests that might comprise a hotel community (Mullholland, 2011:59). Market forces determine that customers who pay more receive better treatment than those who pay less, and that long-term residents who might require additional attention, for example through illness, will be less welcome than those who demand no more than the general expectations of service arrangements.

The random grouping of hotel guests arranges its own dynamic and power structures. As Reed observes, the reality is that 'subordinate groups cannot recreate their situation outside or free from the constraints of the dominant culture' (Reed,1996:149). The transfer of gender hierarchy from home to hotel is evident in the novels considered within this chapter. Where the narrative is concerned with the social groupings within hotels, it is men who are usually what McDowell describes as 'centre stage' and women who adopt a supporting role (McDowell, 1999:1). For those seeking some sort of companionship, or who feel obligated to participate in their living environment,

the power dynamics of the hotel community replicate those in many early twentieth-century homes, which are challenged by younger guests like Sydney (*TH*) and Bess Sedgwick (*ABH*) rather than the older female members of these temporary communities. Thus Mr Lee-Mittison assumes the role of group leader while his wife's efforts are directed towards ensuring the other guests support his activities in order that his opinion of his own superiority is not deflated. Colonel Duperrier is able to isolate his wife in an upstairs bedroom while having access to the company of young ladies downstairs in a way that would be less likely to happen in the domestic environment (*TH),* although there are echoes of Rochester's treatment of Bertha Mason (*JE*).

In constructing identities to present themselves to the hotel community, the female guests at the Claremont emphasise the attentions of their real or invented male relatives; a devoted nephew or a concerned brother-in-law adding status to elderly female guests whose family relationships may be peripheral in reality (*MPC*). For those women such as Julia and Susan, who do not wish to participate in a hotel community, the use of hotel as a replacement home has come about as a rejection of existing relationships with men or has placed them in thrall to men who enable them to find a space to live (*TRN,ALM*). Jane Marple's role is primarily as observer, but her visit to Bertram's Hotel has been paid for by relatives (*ABH*). She notes the changes in the geographical location and the sort of guests, which compare unfavourably with her memories of earlier visits in different times. Although circumstances vary, the power relationships in these scenarios are weighted

towards a reinforcement of male dominance or a reflection of the dependency of older females.

Elizabeth Wilson observes that women became increasingly visible in cities towards the end of the nineteenth-century and that shopping in department stores offered an opportunity for female shoppers to wander alone beyond the home. Like the hotel, the department store is 'both public and private, and yet neither' (Wilson, 1992:59). Allowing women to haunt the city streets provides a narrative device that explores not only the changed circumstances of the women themselves, but a view of the changing physical and geographical environment and the wider influence of social change. As noted in Chapter Two, Julia's wanderings beyond the home signify a shift from uncomfortable reality to an imagined alternative existence (*AML*). The wanderings of another Julia (*ALM*), Jane Marple (*ABH)* and Mrs Palfrey (*MPC*) beyond their hotels as they haunt the streets, illustrate their disconnection from their "homes" and reflect their fractured lives. Julia's wanderings accentuate the impersonal similarity of cheap hotels and their environments, that scarcely change over time. However, the journeys of Jane Marple and Mrs Palfrey around London allow them to reflect on circumstances and buildings that demonstrate changing customs and living practices. Jane Marple notes the improved amenities provided by department stores, while regretting the conversion of gracious town houses into flats and the intrusion of modern buildings in the cityscape. Mrs Palfrey frequents the Food Hall at Harrods, where, encountering Ludo, a young writer, she declares 'I have a Harrod's card' as though it is a passport to independence and a validation of her good taste (*MPC*:91). She also wanders the streets observing the lives of

the inhabitants of basements and bedsits. The reconfiguration of the large Victorian terraces of London reflects the change in circumstances of families who might once have occupied them, while the lives of current occupants of these spaces, often young people with little money, demonstrate changing patterns of social, family and economic life. Caught between expectations of behaviour imposed by nineteenth-century gender roles and shifting female identities in the first half of the twentieth century, the wanderings of these women present a metaphor for the liminality of a generation of females who were caught, often unwillingly, in a tide of change but unsure of its direction. Removed from the self-identity and refuge of home they move around the city, alienated from the immediate environment and with no useful or owned place in the wider world.

The novels selected for discussion in this chapter present the loneliness of forced community and the possibilities inherent in such a setting for plot devices. They also set the context of period. Social patterns are explored, including tours around Europe in the Interbellum period and hotels as the repository for single females and the elderly; the territory of those disconnected from life, without a home or seeking escape. Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel* is set on the Italian Riviera, to which a large cast of characters have journeyed for a variety of reasons. The private hotel in Elizabeth Taylor's *Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont* is peopled by individuals living out their days in impersonal spaces and random groupings. Agatha Christie's *At Bertram's Hotel* uses its hotel setting to construct a complex plot built on the arrivals, departures and undisclosed connections of guests, while the hotel's owners trade on the guests' nostalgia for a former era by ensuring that, in '1955 it

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looked precisely as it had looked in 1939' (*ABH*:1). In Rhys's *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, Julia wanders from one cheap hotel to another, rootless and alone, her life unresolved, while Lessing's Susan adopts a hotel room as a location that ultimately becomes the setting for her final escape (*TRN*).

Bowen's novel *The Hotel* presents a large cast of characters through whom she is able to explore a number of social themes. Despite its location, we learn that 'nearly everybody here was English' (*TH*:20). The female characters allow Bowen to identify issues relating to women in a period of transition when the security of established gender roles and behaviour was beginning to be challenged. The 'tender friends' Miss Pym and Miss Fitzgerald display the jealousies and dependencies of a close relationship which is never made explicit. Miss Pym and Sydney Warren, a young female whose independence and unwillingness to conform are central to the narrative, are drawn to the charismatic Mrs Kerr, who 'took fashion in and subdued it and remained herself' (*TH*:7). Mrs Kerr herself appears to be in thrall to her son Ronald, who in turn seems less than captivated by his mother, while Mrs Lee-Mittison lives through her husband. Her sole interest appears to be to make him happy: 'She was gathering Herbert's happiness, all his little plans for the day, for protection under her feathers' (*TH*:37). She assists her husband in engineering social control and status among the hotel guests but craves domesticity. Her husband, however, constructs a social life in the hotel 'centring round Mr. Lee-Mittison.' In drawing guests 'as soon as possible into the social life of the Hotel' Mr Lee-Mittison manages to surround himself with young females (*TH*:30). Colonel Duperrier, 'who knew that all women were born to be twenty', abandons his lonely, rejected wife 'of whom

he had asked no more than all she triumphantly promised, to be twenty at any age', to seek out the company of twenty-year-old female hotel guests (*TH*:128).

Young Victor Ammering, suffering from depression caused by his war experiences, and James Milton, a clergyman in his forties, present opportunities for marriage for the young single females. The Hon. Mrs and Miss Pinkerton, who 'imposed themselves on the world by conviction' cling to a dissolving social status, endeavouring to create a private domain within a public space (*TH*:26). This mix of characters, apparently random in their roles as hotel guests, provides for the author a range of views and opinions. In this way the narrative is able to explore social situations through conflicts between convention and new directions, appearance and reality, expectation and aspiration. The hotel setting provides a time-limited frame. By the nature of the location, people come and go. Their encounters, brought about by chance and within a finite period, result in the exposure of beliefs and behaviour that are likely to remain less exposed in sustained relationships. The effects of war on a generation of young people and the wave of change it heralds underpin the lack of direction which seems to grip many of the younger characters. The division between generations is sharply defined in some cases; in others, the adoption of established mores washes over a disturbing undercurrent of uncertainty and intimations of change.

At one extreme, the Pinkertons, considering themselves superior to the other guests in a hotel 'of this type', work entirely against the setting, its expectations and etiquette. Rather than mingling in the dining room, gathering in the drawing room, playing bridge or joining outings organised by

the Lee-Mittisons, they 'withdrew early to their own rooms. No one else had ever been invited to join them there' (*TH*:22-23). They elicit special treatment by paying: as 'no private suite with a bathroom was available…they had had reserved, at some expense, the bathroom opposite to their doors for their exclusive occupation' (*TH*:22). When Mr Milton unwittingly invades what the Pinkertons consider to be their enclosed and barricaded space, the results are, in microcosm, an assault on the established order of life. They have been forced to venture 'out into the world along a kind of promontory' and despite their best efforts to preserve their territory, they cannot protect themselves from the flow of change beginning to trickle beneath their bathroom door (*TH*:26).

At the other extreme stands Sydney Warren. She, like other female characters encountered in previous chapters of this thesis, knows that life is changing. These women know they do not want what is expected of them but do not know quite what they do want. They stand alone in their individual narratives, but are linked through their stories to the emergence of a female imperative for individual freedom. Sydney lines up with Rhoda (*NH*), Delia (*CS*), Stacy (*BM*), Olivia (*WS*) and Julia (*AML*) as a women who is in some way different or apart. Delia's position as a vicar's daughter affords her some social detachment, but the other women are caught in a place between past and future. Sydney uses her time at the hotel for a purpose. Unlike many of the guests, she does not regard time as something merely to be filled. She does not need people. Her stay at the hotel is not prompted by the desire to escape from loneliness. Mrs Kerr, who goes abroad for the winter to avoid loneliness, reflects that: 'Sydney tells me she likes to be a great deal alone.

Then why should she want to come out to a hotel?' (*TH*:53). And yet what better place to be alone than somewhere where everyone is a stranger? For Sydney, the stay at the hotel offers time to observe and reflect on what she sees.

The hotel and its society are foils for Sydney's reflections on change. She delights in contradicting and challenging the established societal norms amongst this transient group of people in a neutral location. She is perverse; when it is raining she says: 'If I were Monet […] I would paint this and present the picture as a poster for the Cote D'Azur' (*TH*:55). She seems to be infatuated with Mrs Kerr but becomes engaged to James Milton. She thinks about the couples in the 'thousands of villas round the hundreds of miles of coast [living] as one is told they are living – for one another' (*TH*:55). Sydney, happy in her own company, deduces that 'the importance of personal relations is very much over-estimated' (*TH*:55). Her natural state is one of withdrawal and she tries to map out for herself 'a deep-down life in which emotions ceased their clashing together and friends appeared only as painted along the edge of one's quietness' (*TH*:57). She frequently places herself apart from others in the hotel or on outings and uses the hotel to test potential liaisons.

The narrative of *The Hotel* presents a number of potential versions of coupledom. Those couples who appear superficially to conform to the version of those who live for one another, confound this vision. Both the Lee-Mittisons and the Duperriers exemplify deeply flawed versions of coupledom. Although Colonel Duperrier may hold hopes and dreams unfulfilled for him by his wife and sought for in the young female guests, Mr Lee-Mittison, in his

ambition to create a social scene with himself at the centre, seems oblivious to the needs and reactions of either his wife or the other guests. The eternal loyalty of his wife, regardless of his treatment of her, conditions her reaction to other guests. When they do not react towards her husband as she knows he needs them to, 'her mind grew dark with resentment. […] He had always to be considered successful' (*TH*:44). And yet her protective instincts produce a bond not present in the relationship between Colonel Duperrier and his invalid wife. She remains in her room, 'tossing to and fro in her poor mind, while her body lay rigid, silent though she was so pent up, storing up her cries for him'(*TH*:128). Mrs Duperrier, in common with Rollo's wife (*WS*), Mrs Hale (*NS*), Bertha Rochester (*JE*), and even Lady Audley (*LAS*) has been removed or has removed herself from family life, unable to deal with rejection or emotional neglect. Mrs Duperrier, captive in a hotel room which has no semblance of the familiarity of home, knows that downstairs her husband is engaging with those females who display the qualities of youth and beauty for which he married her and unreasonably expects her to maintain.

The hotel setting allows not only those dissatisfied with their lives to encounter new directions but also the bringing together of a random collection of people whose interactions enable the author to provide a contemporary social commentary. The setting is a hothouse for connections, a forcing frame which speeds up decisions, a space where normal markers and points of reference are absent. As the characters move towards the end of their stay and exit this distorted space, some are able to assess their choices with a detachment and self-knowledge thrown into focus by an imminent return to their own milieux, while others continue along newly-trodden paths. The

hotel itself provides a way of reflecting the wider world between the two World Wars. As one of the lady guests observes, 'They say it's the same in all these places – not a man to be had' (*TH*:53).

The situation for young females like Joan and Veronica Lawrence is bewildering. Joan, the more reflective and less self-absorbed of the two, identifies the circumstances of the time and how it affects the different generations. Her conversations with Colonel Duperrier frame the situation in which young people in particular find themselves. Colonel Duperrier deplores Victor Ammering's apparent aimlessness: 'Can't young Ammering get a job?' he says impatiently. Joan's response captures the predicament for a whole generation in this interwar period. 'The War's come very hard indeed on our generation' she explains. 'It must be very nice for you, having no future to think of ' (*TH*:48,49). Joan articulates perhaps more clearly than the other younger hotel guests the state in which they are suspended, the hesitance about forming relationships and the reason for what may appear to be inertia and indecisiveness: 'Besides, what's the good of being ambitious? There may be another war. And even if there isn't, disappointed people are dreadful to live with' (*TH*:49). Joan describes this state as 'like being sleepy in the morning and wishing it were bedtime', an abnegation of responsibility and hope. She regards Colonel Duperrier sympathetically and understands his awkward approaches. He wants to ask her to go for a walk in the hills, but he fears that 'at all events she would be bored with him' (*TH*:50). Joan sees quite clearly what Colonel Duperrier 'had never thought of himself', that if his wife was to die, 'he would marry some girl of twenty-three who would be very much in love with him and with whom he would be very happy' (*TH*:47). By

bringing these two characters together through the device of the hotel setting, Bowen is able to explore not only inter-generational differences, the state of a society affected by war, but also to emphasise the depth of female intuition.

Joan's sister Veronica, meanwhile, has not worked out why she is not content. She appears to be a more forceful character than Joan and therefore might have more in common with Sydney. However, she has none of Sydney's independence of mind. Veronica admits: 'I don't want to *be* anything. I'm not modern'. She has no aspiration to do anything other than follow a predictable social pattern. 'I must marry somebody. You see, I must have children' (*TH*:99). Veronica is horrified when Sydney suggests that marriage isn't a necessary condition for childbirth. She sees herself as a composite of qualities required for the status of wife and mother. These qualities mostly relate to appearance:

> Hands on hips she paused a moment to look at
> herself in the wardrobe from every angle […]. It did
> seem that for all she had been designed for she was
> tragically more than adequate. (*TH*:98).

Victor Ammering, being by age the most likely suitor in this collection of travellers thrown together at the hotel, is the one who appears to meet Veronica's needs. However, she gives the matter little thought: 'Everybody's the same and I must have somebody' (*TH*:99). Veronica acknowledges that achieving marriage and children will compromise her happiness, despite her lack of any other ambition, so she and Victor indulge in frequent visits to the local patisserie as a comfort and substitute for making a firm commitment. In this strange world of suspended reality, the function of the hotel as marriage

bureau is reinforced when even the independent and rational Sydney succumbs to social expectations and becomes engaged to James Milton. Eileen, the third Lawrence sister, says: 'This hotel […] seems to be producing brides in very large quantities' (*TH*:127). However, Sydney is aware that relationships forged within this artificial world may not survive the return to real life. As she says to James Milton: 'I do want to feel we've some sort of attachment outside this improbable place' (*TH*:148). Sydney views people and events in the hotel with an objectivity that Mrs Kerr does not possess.

Mrs Kerr seems to be a construction designed to ensnare, mystify and attract. We are introduced to her at the beginning of the book, described by Miss Pym, who looks up the stairs 'to where her friend stood beautifully, balanced either for advance or immobility' (*TH*:6). Mrs Kerr is a mystery, especially to the ladies of the embroidery group who meet in the drawing-room. She does very little but creates the appearance of impenetrable mental activity. 'Nobody who was not thinking could do absolutely nothing all day and look so very superior about it, like a cat,' says one of the ladies (*TH*:51). Mrs Kerr has emotional power over people. Miss Pym's relationship with Miss Fitzgerald (although its nature is not explicit) is threatened by her unrequited fascination for Mrs Kerr. Despite her independence and rationality, Sydney cannot hide her delight when Mrs Kerr gives her some amethysts. There is a strong undercurrent of an unrealised sexual relationship between the two women. This theme is picked up in a number of interactions, including that between the young Cordelia Barry and Sydney. Cordelia admires Sydney and engineers opportunities to spend time with her, sometimes conflicting with Sydney's intention to spend time with James Milton.

The one person who seems to hold power over Mrs Kerr is her son Ronald.   The pattern of validation of older single women living in hotels by younger (mostly male) relatives is reflected in both *The Hotel* and in *Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont* which will be discussed later in this chapter. Mrs Kerr's motivations are explored by the embroidery group, revealing to the reader the loneliness and financial difficulties of those who become perpetual travellers:

> 'She has a nearly grown-up son. I can't think why she doesn't make a home for him.'
>
> 'But if one does make a home for anybody one is still very much alone.   The best type of man is no companion.'
>
> 'Still, he is someone *there*.'
>
> 'Besides, my dear, make a home…! Of course, it's what one would love to do, but it nearly kills one and it's so expensive.' (*TH*:54).

Mrs Kerr's son Ronald, turning up eventually to visit his mother, has some understanding of her. The dominant pattern of stripes on the walls and furnishings of Mrs Kerr's room give him 'a sense of being caged into this crowded emptiness' (*TH*:95). Mrs Kerr affirms her conscious effort to retain characteristics which her son might find attractive: 'Ronald, you would hate me to be rational. It's forbidding and horrible in a woman, I think' (*TH*:95). This undermines Mrs Kerr's relationship with Sydney, who is mostly coldly rational. After Sydney's one irrational act of becoming engaged to James Milton, Ronald explains his mother's reaction:

I'm afraid she may perhaps feel like I do, that one's

friends, however various and delightful they may be at

other times, are least interesting […] at these moments

when they approximate most closely to the normal.

(*TH*:129).

The bleakness of life for an ageing generation, unable to afford the

lifestyle they were used to, unwanted by younger relatives, is emphasised by

their eternal movement around these constructed and shifting societies,

where travellers are 'passed on from introduction to introduction', create new

friendship groups or spend their time avoiding contact with people they hardly

know in shared spaces set up for communal existence. Unspoken social rules

are created, temporary ownership of spaces evolves and contravention

evokes silent but patent disapproval.

For some of these women, and for Mrs Kerr, the world of the hotel *is*

the reality. Hotel life is a preferable reality for Mr Lee-Mittison as it provides

him with a captive audience. The Pinkertons are destined by circumstance to

spend their time trying to recreate a personal and hierarchical world in a

context which is impersonal and creates its own structure. The hotel world

offers Colonel Duperrier an opportunity to indulge for a few weeks in the

company of twenty-year old women while his wife, who he thought would

always be twenty, goes slowly mad upstairs. James Milton, dipping his toe in

the world of travel, holidays and human interaction, does not seem to be

doing so explicity in order to find a relationship, but becomes engaged to

Sydney. However, he is sufficiently aware of the fragile nature of that

arrangement to understand its transience. 'Don't change, don't be different'

he says to Sydney towards the end of the book, as he foresees the future. 'At that moment he loved her as sharply as though she already were lost to him' (*TH*:150).

There is no clear future mapped out for Sydney. She knows her life needs to move on and she seems to be using her time at the hotel to try out possible directions. As discussed above, she reflects on coupledom and also on the nature of same-sex relationships. She says to Mrs Kerr: 'You and I are supposed to assume […] that that man down in the garden could be more to either of us than the other' (*TH*:60). And yet she becomes engaged to James Milton. However when the time comes to leave the hotel, she has the sense of 'being flung back on to living' (*TH*:156). Her acknowledgement of the unreality of the place, the relationships struck and the thought of change as inevitable and, in the case of marriage, predictable, throws her into a state of panic from which she can only escape by willing the vehicle carrying the guests to the station to crash. There is, in fact, an accident, which wakes Sydney to a state of realisation.

> I think we have been asleep here […] in a dream
> [where] shapes move […] governed by some funny
> law of convenience that seems to us perfectly
> rational, they clash together without any noise and
> come apart without injury. (*TH*:160)

We do not know where the future might eventually take her. Initially she is to be taken away by her cousin to 'a place on the French Riviera' (*TH*:162). Despite her otherness and the sense that she is seeking a new direction, there is no guarantee that she will move on from her earlier conversation with

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Veronica, who asks 'What shall you do […] when you get back to England?'
'Oh, go on where I left off: […] try and pass my next exams!' (*TH*:102). The
metaphor in the following sentence emphasises the lack of certainty in
Sydney's future: 'Veronica […] shut the door after her – not satisfactorily, for
it clicked open again' (*TH*:103).

Mrs Kerr and the ladies in the embroidery group will go on wandering,
as will the Pinkertons, trying to reclaim a space that defines their former status
in a world where that status is disregarded. James Milton who, before his
stay at the hotel, 'had never seen a man and woman kiss' has to some extent
'broken through the glass wall that divided him from experience' (*TH*:42). Life
has changed for him, although the 'transitory notion of marrying [Sydney] had
been abandoned' (*TH*:162). For some, life will be ever-changing within the
narrow limits of hotel society; for others, decisive changes of direction may
take place, or issues raised within the intense world of hotel society may
conveniently dissolve again when the real world is re-entered. Ronald's
reflection on change reveals that, like the Villa Tre Cipressi, closed up,
decaying and 'disappointing as one's first princess' (*TH*:105), people cling to
tradition and familiarity even when society moves on and circumstances
encourage new behaviours:

> 'There is nothing now to prevent women being
> different,' said Ronald despondently, 'and yet they
> seem to go on being the same. What is the good
> of a new world if nobody can be got to come and
> live in it?'. (*TH*:111).

Ronald may be the only one in the cast of characters in the hotel who understands Sydney. She appears to be a woman seeking a new life, but even she departs to an inconclusive future. Ronald's mother, Mrs Kerr, who casts herself as the flame around which moths gather, is the one who is eternally left behind. 'I never realize one's come to the end of a season anywhere until I find everybody going away at once', she says to James Milton. He replies: 'And then […] you don't get a place on the train' (*TH*:156). At the end, the only ones who seem to come full circle are Miss Pym and Miss Fitzgerald. The crisis in their relationship, caused by Miss Pym's infatuation with Mrs Kerr, opens the book. By the end, they find resolution. Miss Pym recalls: 'Eleanor, do you remember the day when we – so nearly lost one another?' as 'hand in hand, reunited, in perfect security, they sat and remembered that day' (*TH*:175).

The hotel setting provides the author with a context which is understood by the reader. Whatever the circumstances of travellers, all are in transit both literally and metaphorically, caught in a temporary reality. Unlikely friendships are formed, mostly passing and often brittle. Life is lived through devices for passing the time, making friends or avoiding them. Letters are written, groups develop their own hierarchies, rules are often unspoken but understood. The hotel provides a microcosm of society within a collapsed time-frame and with little real purpose. It is a world of surveillance, where the angle of a chair, the position of a plant, the proximity of a dining table provides opportunities for social comment. So the embroidery group discusses Mrs Kerr; Mr Lee-Mittison, sitting behind his newspaper, sets himself up as the arbiter of guests' behavior; residents of the terraces of villas look down on the

'English Visitors' (*TH*:83); and Sydney is able to watch Mrs Kerr in the dining room without being 'too much observed' (*TH*:18). Their thoughts elucidate the narrative by building up a picture of the characters. The hotel provides a world where it is possible to observe the nuances of emotions, relationships and behaviour. 'Days abroad' are different sorts of days, when time has to be got through, is measured from one meal to the next (*TH:*51). A stay in a hotel may be a point of stasis or a catalyst for change. By the interaction of its guests, it can expose dissatisfaction and present options. However, as Sydney observes, it is inevitable that this theatre of humanity will be repeated endlessly: 'What a lot of energy is wasted […] in replacing one lot of people by another exactly the same' (*TH*:141).

Julia Martin*,* the protagonist in Jean Rhys's novel *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, is rootless. She wanders through life, from one relationship to another. She has no home, nor, it seems, the need to create one. She lives in hotels, her life unresolved, consisting of temporary episodes and sheltering in temporary dwelling places. There is nothing to counterbalance her anxieties about money and relationships. She recalls her mother saying: 'I can't rest in this country. This is such a cold, grey country' (*ALM*:318). Julia seems to have inherited a drifting uncertainty and inability to settle. She cannot follow the same route as her sister Norah, who remains at home looking after their ailing mother. Conforming to expectations has not, however, made Norah's life any more satisfying emotionally than Julia's except that she has had the physical security of a home. Julia is constantly anxious, depressed and without money. The world that she has constructed is one of disconnection and each episode is 'placed with all the other disconnected

episodes which made up her life' (*ALM*:350). Julia has failed to 'construct a social world that is ordinary and solid and which quiets doubts and anxieties' where she 'can be at home, or rather, at Home' (Gouldner, 1975:432). The hotel, Julia's habitat, provides a metaphor for this disconnected life. Choice of location is mainly dictated by cost; 'a cheap hotel on the Quai des Grands Augustins' and later 'a cheap hotel in Bloomsbury' (ALM:251,283). The connections between residents occupying hotel rooms are random, established by chance, passing on the stairs or in the dining room. Julia avoids people: 'If I have any luck, I oughtn't to meet anybody on the stairs' and, in the street: 'She was so anxious not to meet anybody […] she always kept to the back streets' (*ALM*: 319,256). Encounters take place in 'liminal spaces, such as cafés or restaurants' (Thacker, 2009:192). She is not insensitive to or unaware of the surroundings she occupies and of their effect on her and describes in considerable detail the various interiors she inhabits. There is nothing personal about them and her descriptions are objective. Unlike the borrowed spaces discussed in the previous chapter, there is little opportunity for personalisation or to develop any sense of belonging, however transitory. Julia's disconnection from people reflects the way she remembers: 'It was always places that she thought of, not people'. Hotel rooms represent a secret sanctuary: 'Locked in her room […] she felt safe' (*ALM*:253). Her main escape is to sleep.

Like the room in Bertram's Hotel that confuses Canon Pennyfeather, (discussed later in the chapter), the predictability of hotel spaces reflects the lack of ownership of those who inhabit them. Entering Julia's hotel for the first time in the dark, Mr Horsfield 'knew that the whole house was solid, with

huge rooms […] crammed with unwieldy furniture […]. He even knew the look of the street outside […], a grey street, with high, dark houses opposite' (*ALM*:335). Returning to London briefly, Julia reflects that the streets near her hotel are 'a labyrinth […] all exactly alike' (*ALM*:315). She feels that 'her life had moved in a circle. Predestined, she had returned to her starting point, in this little Bloomsbury bedroom that was so exactly like the little Bloomsbury bedroom she had left nearly ten years before' (*ALM*:285).

Julia survives mostly by living off men. She does not appear to set out to do this. It seems she cannot sustain relationships. Mostly the men who support her financially, at least for a time, do so because they want to disengage from her and terminate relationships. These men are often encountered randomly. Mr Mackenzie, the most recent of her lovers, reflects that although 'for a time she had obsessed him, […] he had never really liked her' (*ALM*:261). He arranges to pay her off through his lawyer and Julia reflects that these two men 'perfectly represented organized society, in which she had no place and against which she had not a dog's chance' (*ALM*:259). She is an outsider and a misfit at a time when single women were becoming aware of the need for a life that differs from the conventional pathway of Julia's sister Norah or, as discussed in previous chapters, Rhoda (*NH*) and Muriel (*CS*). But the options for financial independence are not established so while a door opens at one end, the escape route is not yet open at the other.

Julia meets George Horsfield, who witnesses an altercation in a restaurant between Julia and Mr Mackenzie. Like the guests in *The Hotel,* he had been 'travelling about Spain and the South of France because he had a vague idea that the sight of the sun would cure all his ills and would develop

the love of life and humanity in which he felt that he was lamentably deficient' (*ALM*:268). This meeting of two individuals whose direction in life is undetermined is a product of chance. Julia's feeling that 'all my life and all myself were floating away from me like smoke and there was nothing to lay hold of' shows her to be of as little substance as the decisions she makes and the way she makes them (*ALM*:278). She admits: 'I had a shot at the life I wanted. And I failed' (*ALM*:313). She has no self-worth, no self-respect. Visiting a former lover, Mr James, in the hope of persuading him to give her money, 'she felt she had no right to sit there and intrude her sordid wish somehow to keep alive into that beautiful room' (*ALM*:311). In moving through a succession of cheap hotel rooms, Julia is living out her feeling that she is worth nothing more. At the same time she also avoids making considered decisions, leaving those to chance as well: `If a taxi hoots before I count three, I'll go to London. If not, I won't' (*ALM*:281). The men in her life are pleased to retire to their own pleasant homes where they do not need to think about Julia. As the door was used as a metaphor for Sydney's indecision (*TH*), so it is used to represent Julia's rejection: '[Mr Horsfield] shut the door and sighed. It was as if he had altogether shut out the thought of Julia.' He retires to his 'world of lowered voices, and of passions, like Japanese dwarf trees, suppressed for many generations. A familiar world' (*ALM*:349). There is frequent reference to the symbiotic relationship between Julia's state of mind and the spaces she inhabits. She feels 'calmer and happier' outside, and convinces herself that 'it was the room which depressed her because it was so narrow […]. We're like mites in a cheese in that damned hotel' (*ALM*:351). Landladies watch in the background, observing behaviour, often

signifying disapproval, reinforcing the relationship between mental and physical space: 'There are no dark corners in my house. I don't allow dark corners in my house' says the nameless landlady (*ALM*:343). The room in which Julia's mother dies, however, represents the sort of space that makes her feel safe, rather than the sad associations it might bring to mind: 'the room was very quiet – quiet and shut away from everything […]. Curtains of thick green stuff were drawn over the windows […]. And here was the silence – the best thing in the world' (*ALM*:303).

Silence and solitude is what Susan seeks when she begins to visit 'a small, quiet hotel' in Doris Lessing's novel *To Room Nineteen*. Matthew and Susan Rawlings had both inhabited 'pleasant flats' before their marriage, moving to a 'new flat in South Kensington' after their wedding and then to a house in Richmond (*TRN*:4-5). Having avoided falling into the trap of 'buying a house in the country *for the sake of the children*', the 'weekend father' syndrome and its opportunities for infidelity, their marriage experiences 'a certain flatness' (*TRN*:7,5). This story is about a life measured out by domestic spaces, which mark the progress of life and relationships. It is about the gap between expectation and reality, individual need and social convention and the importance of personal space. Susan tries to create such a space in the family home but cannot prevent it from becoming 'another family room' (*TRN*:26). Need becomes howling, raging impatience, personified as a devil figure who appears to Susan. In her desire to escape, she dreams of 'having a room or a place, anywhere, where she could go and sit […] no one knowing where she was' (*TRN*:28). She rents an 'ordinary and anonymous' room in a 'small quiet hotel' (*TRN*:29). The room has no

associations for her; it is a neutral space. As in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie,*
the landlady is the figure who observes and intercedes. She is concerned for
Susan's welfare, but in this case is herself a lonely woman doing her job 'with
all the rectitude expected of her' (*TRN*:30). The novel charts Susan's gradual
disconnection from the conventions and rules which have been set up around
family life, and the breakdown of her relationship with her husband. This has
been threaded together in a framework of reasonable and sensible behaviour.
Having avoided a lifestyle which might encourage Matthew to drift into
infidelity, she detaches herself from family life and their relationship to such an
extent that 'he had become like other husbands, with his real life in his work
and the people he met there, and very likely a serious affair. All this was her
fault' (*TRN*:36). Set up with an *au pair* to take over her domestic duties,
Susan finds another hotel room, this time not in Miss Townsend's respectable
hotel, but in one of the smaller hotels in South Kensington with 'windowpanes
that needed cleaning' (*TRN*:38). The room, number 19, is 'hideous. It had
thin green brocade curtains […] a cheap green satin bedspread […] a gas fire
and a shilling meter' (*TRN*:40). Like Julia (*ALM*), Susan's choice of room
reflects her low self-esteem and acceptance that she is destroying her
marriage and neglecting her responsibilities. Spending time in the hotel room
is Susan's way of removing herself from the past and present. When she is in
Room 19, she becomes someone other than herself. 'She has no past and
no future […] This room had become more her own than the house she lived
in' (*TRN*:43). Her visits to the hotel extend from a few times a week to every
day. Exchanges between Matthew and Susan are conducted in a reasonable
way; even Matthew's suspicions that Susan may not be 'well' are explored

reasonably as he tries to discover how she sees their future. Susan's brief

pretence that she is having a relationship, a conventional path of behaviour in

the breakdown of a marriage, is unconvincing. The extent to which her reality

is Room 19 is evident when, her location having been discovered by a private

detective, she tries 'to shrink herself back into the shelter of the room, a snail

pecked out of its shell and trying to squirm back' (*TRN*:47). Room 19 has

become her refuge, a life more real than the life that takes place within her

family home. By adopting the physical defence and psychological protection

of this metaphorical shell, she has accepted what Bachelard describes as the

state of solitude sought by those who are in flight (Bachelard:123). Although

Room 19 contains none of the memories, personal objects or sites of habit

associated with theories of home, Susan is more mentally 'at home' in this

state of homelessness. The fusion of being and space is acknowledged as

Susan describes the room as 'the place where I'm happy. In fact, without it I

don't exist.' The relationship between mental and physical space does not,

certainly in this case, depend on aesthetics. Susan describes Room 19 as 'a

very sordid hotel room', suggesting that the interaction between human

occupation and physical space is more complex than one of memories and

habits (*TRN*:51). In the same way that Julia is able to be objective about

herself, her behaviour and her situation (*ALM*), Susan considers practical

outcomes for her family:

> What did it matter whether [Matthew] married Phil Hunt or
>
> Sophie? Though it ought to be Sophie who was already
>
> the mother of those children…and what hypocrisy to sit
>
> here worrying about the children, when she was going to

leave them because she had not got the energy to stay.

(*TRN*:57).

At the end of the story, Susan, returning to Room 19, 'pushed the thin rug against the door, made sure the windows were tight shut, put two shillings in the meter, and turned on the gas' (*TRN*:57). The story tracks the gradual breakdown of a relationship and of a human being who appears to follow a deliberate course of self-destruction because she cannot find a way out of a life that she has allowed to be constructed around her but in which she has lost her own self. The narratives of *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* and *To Room 19* are chilling and hopeless. The settings of each, the impersonal, often sordid, individual cells within the larger structures of serviced spaces, devoid of the elements of home that piece together an idea of self, reflect the dislocation and lost presents and futures of the two female protagonists.

The setting of the hotel in Agatha Christie's *At Bertram's Hotel*, however, is one of physical comfort and traditional aesthetics. Bertram's Hotel retains its distinctive period qualities by choice; they are its main selling point. The narrative of the novel is partly about change; the effects of change and the instinct to forestall it. Other hotels 'had felt the wind of change' but the visitor to Bertram's 'felt, almost with alarm, that you had re-entered a vanished world […] You were in Edwardian England once more' (*BH*:2). The hotel management retains the atmosphere for commercial interests with a view to attracting visitors from overseas. In some ways it is a pretence; the 'decayed aristocrats, impoverished members of the old County families […] are all so much *mise en scène*' (*BH*:10). Although these guests seek the reassurance that life, at Bertram's at any rate, remains unchallenged by changing times,

they are also used as extras in the piece of theatre constantly playing out in the hotel. However, dependent on this market for survival, the hotel accommodates its guests by a consideration of their comfort in the variety of seating available and by maintaining an ambience that offers familiarity and reassurance.

The cast of characters encountered in *At Bertram's Hotel* are such as might be found in any hotel with a clientele lingering in the early twentieth century: a Colonel (there is always a Colonel!), elderly ladies (or 'fluffy old pussies' as the Colonel calls them) a young girl and her mother (*BH*:5). The hotel ledger, requested by Chief Detective-Inspector Davy to aid his investigations later in the novel, acts as a cast list (*BH*:148). The mother, Bess Sedgwick, estranged from her daughter, is, like Sydney, (*TH*) a modern woman who does not conform to convention. However, unlike Sydney, Bess knows her direction in life and also that she is no role model for her daughter Elvira, whose upbringing has been entrusted to others. Unlike Susan (*TRN*), she has avoided the trap of family life for which she knows she is not suited. The physical setting at Bertram's is similar to that at the Claremont (*MPC*) and *The Hotel*. A chintz drawing room, dining room, smoking-room and writing-rooms provide opportunities for surveillance or for feigning occupation to avoid social contact. Micky Gorman, the Irish doorman murdered later in the story, watches the comings and goings of guests. The elderly ladies gathered in the big entrance lounge 'enjoyed seeing who came in and out, recognizing old friends, and commenting unfavourably on how these had aged' (*BH*: 4). The random collection of characters at Bertram's enables Christie to develop a plot hinged on chance, circumstance and the understanding that hotel

guests come and go. The elderly Jane Marple, visiting the hotel for the first time since she was fourteen, has plenty of time to observe and to rekindle acquaintances that offer an opportunity to reflect on the passing of time and the role of change. Responding to a question about the 'sweet unspoilt village' where she lives, she reflects on 'the new Building Estate' and the 'up-to-date shop fronts', evidence of changing times so far resisted at Bertram's (*BH*:12). Her friend Lady Selina questions the concept of progress, which, in bringing sophistication and convenience, also adds complexity and confusion. Even an acknowledgement of the modern is quickly out of date. Miss Marple, describing her painter niece as 'rather modern' (*BH*:13) is unaware that she 'was now regarded by the young arriviste artists as completely old-fashioned' (*BH*:14). However, Jane Marple accepts that change is inevitable and does have some advantages. Visiting the Army and Navy Stores she finds it 'gayer and much brighter. [She] did not object to the amenities of the present' (*BH*:69). However, her wanderings around the 'handsome' terraces of Richmond reveals that 'each house seemed to be turned into flats' and that the house in Lowndes Square where her cousin 'had lived in some style' had been replaced by 'a vast skyscraper building of modernistic design' (*BH*:111). The narrative also refers to the role of relatives in the lives of the elderly. It is Jane Marple's niece and nephew who have paid for her stay at Bertram's. However the tendency of relatives to disregard the individuality of the elderly is also inferred. Miss Marple's niece was surprised by her choice of London as a destination for a stay as 'she had thought Bournemouth would have been Aunt Jane's Mecca' (*BH*:15), in the same way that Mrs Palfrey's daughter suggests 'Eastbourne as a more suitable place for [Mrs Palfrey] to live'

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(*MPC*:8). Miss Marple's visit to Bertram's Hotel is 'simply to refurbish her memories of the past in their old original colours'.   However, Jane Marple is able to be objective. She realises that 'to have made [the hotel] stand still […] must really have cost a lot of money...Not a bit of plastic in the place!...None of this place seemed real at all' (*BH*:16,45). That is a key observation as the plot exposes that Bertram's is in fact a front for criminal activity.

Apart from considering the progress of time and its effect on lives and landscapes, Christie, like Taylor, uses the hotel setting to make comment on the situation of the elderly. Jane Marple compares the elderly residents now with those at Bertram's during her last visit many decades before:

> They had been natural then – but they weren't very natural now. Elderly people nowadays weren't like elderly people then – they had that worried look of domestic anxieties with which they are too tired to cope, or they […] tried to appear bustling and competent. […] [T]heir hands were not the hands she remembered, tapering, delicate hands – they were harsh from washing up and detergents. (Christie, 1965:46)

This observation puts forward a compelling picture of the financial and social changes which those who had been used to a secure life and an established place in society were having to address.

The hotel setting also allows Christie to play with coincidence. The random grouping of hotel guests on any one day may also throw up coincidences. So it is that Bess Sedgwick arrives at the same location as her

daughter and that a member of the hotel staff, Micky Gorman, is her one-time

husband to whom she may still be married. The characters staying in

Bertram's Hotel either wittingly or unwittingly construct a fabricated world.

Jane Marple is the observer who, by noticing small details, is able to piece

together the reality behind the lies, deceit and theft which runs through the

narrative. The intrusion of other lives, inevitable when occupying the shared

corridors and spaces of a hotel, provides her with the information that solves

the apparent disappearance of Canon Pennyfather, one of the hotel guests.

'There are so many queer noises in London' she explains to Chief Detective-

Inspector Davy. 'Footsteps, perhaps, outside my door […] So I just opened

my door and looked out. There was Canon Pennyfather leaving his room'

(*BH*:139). Christie's story is primarily a crime puzzle. The hotel setting

enables her to construct a plot using travellers who are brought together

randomly and the confusing, impersonal similarity of hotel bedroom spaces

that contributes to the confusion experienced by Canon Pennyfather on his

unanticipated return in the middle of the night. The narrative of *At Bertram's

Hotel* engineers an intersection of characters in a setting that is deliberately

evocative of a different age. It reflects their past histories and current

situations and in so doing, places them in relation to the current social and

economic context.

Elizabeth Taylor's novel *Mrs Palfrey At The Claremont* rehearses many

of the themes explored in the novels already discussed in this chapter. The

Claremont, a private hotel, is situated in the Cromwell Road, London.

Although it has some trade from travelling guests, many of its inhabitants are

permanent residents. Most of the long-term guests at the Claremont are

waiting to die. The Claremont fulfils the role of a rest home for itinerant elderly residents, unwanted by family and unable to afford a home. Although the management of the hotel offers 'seasonal terms', at the Claremont these 'meant very little'. The permanent residents are suffered by the management, who resent their presence especially 'during the Motor Show, when there's not a bed to be found in London' (*MPC*:72). The hotel 'stuffed elderly women into the worst bedrooms at a price they could just afford; because one-night guests (extra laundry bill) would have made a fuss' (*MPC*:44). In the detail of life at the Claremont, the commonalities of hotel living are exposed. Attempts to create a personal space in a communal setting, to deal with the slow passage of time and to navigate a place in the constructed society of the hotel occupy the residents in Cromwell Road as much as they do the travellers on the Italian Riviera. But there is little uncertainty about the future for those in the Claremont. The door to the future that clicked open again in *The Hotel* remains firmly shut at the Claremont. There is only one way out. Mrs Palfrey comes to the Claremont to 'stay as long as she could, and from there, at last, be taken to hospital and hope to die as soon as possible, with no trouble but to those who were paid to deal with her' (*MPC*:20). As noted previously, hotels are staging posts; in the case of the Claremont, as Benjamin notes above, a stop en route to the crematorium.

The role of chance in a narrative is signalled by the choice of hotel as setting. The choice of the Claremont by Mrs Palfrey is itself a matter of chance. 'She had simply chanced on an advertisement in a Sunday newspaper while staying in Scotland with her daughter Elizabeth' and chose it because of its 'reduced winter rates' (*MPC*:1). So Mrs Palfrey is deposited in

a society of characters who have been brought together by chance and where she is 'deeply desiring to find her place and be accepted in it' (*MPC*:12). Although the future for these characters may be certain, in the interim they are required to adapt to each other and to the pattern of life in the hotel. Encountering Mrs Burton, on whom 'drink has really taken its toll' Mrs Palfrey decides that: 'She was not the sort of woman […] with whom she would ordinarily have been in company […] but life had changed, and to save her sanity she must change with it' (*MPC*:15).

Entering a world of strangers, the neutral spaces of the hotel provide a background for them to meet and reconstruct themselves. A similar social hierarchy emerges to that existing in *The Hotel.* Mrs Arbuthnot fulfils the role of Mrs Kerr and, as in the case of the latter, is the one whose departure shows her to be vulnerable and lonely. Like Sydney in *The Hotel*, Mrs Palfrey even receives an offer of marriage. Mr Osmond, who Mrs Burton, 'who reckoned she knew a thing or two' considers to be 'a silly old fairy', admires Mrs Palfrey because 'she looks so wonderfully like a man, and had an air of behaving like one' (*MPC*:158,134). But his attentions make her feel trapped and she realises that, in the progress of life that she cannot control, 'she must soldier on […] with this new life of her own' (*MPC*:189). Surveillance of each other allows the guests to piece together information and exchange views. Writing letters, watching television, dining and knitting in the lounge provide opportunities for discreet observation or shared confidences. The context of a random group of strangers also allows the author to construct a narrative which is made interesting by layers of deception, dissembling and pretence. In *Mrs Palfrey At The Claremont* Taylor picks up the theme of loneliness and

the desperate need to be needed. The guests at *The Hotel* speculate on why Mrs Kerr does not make a home for her son; the status of the guests at the Claremont depends partly on proving that they have relatives who are devoted to them. They 'talked a great deal more about visitors than was warranted' (*MPC*:21). Mrs Post reflects: 'As one gets older life becomes all take and no give. One relies on other people for the treats and things. It's like being an infant again' (*MPC*:129). In convincing themselves that they are wanted, they give themselves some meaning and function. Mrs Palfrey is honest about her relationship with her daughter, who herself has become a constructed personality. Living in Scotland but born in Tunbridge Wells, Elizabeth 'had surrendered herself' [to all things Scottish] 'as if it were all she could ever have desired' (*MPC*:104). Her adoption of Scottish words makes 'her Scottish husband wince' as much as it does Mrs Palfrey, who is therefore quite happy that her daughter does not invite her to live with her. In moving to the Claremont, she misses retirement in the 'furnished house in Rottingdean [which] had, simply, been bliss' (*MPC*:64). The element of privacy and ownership of even borrowed space, as discussed in the previous chapter, is entirely absent in the serviced space of the hotel. Acts of personalisation, Mrs Palfrey's *Palgrave's Golden Treasury* and copy of the Bible in her bedroom and 'her own packet of crispbread and […] her own Allbran and superior make of marmalade' in the dining room, fail to transform this serviced space into a home (*MPC*:5). A visit to the flat of one of the Claremont's regular temporary guests later in the narrative emphasises the contrast with hotel life: 'After hotel life, this flat seemed so personal, […] so free and yet a haven' (*MPC*:151). Despite the presence of Mrs Lippincote's detritus, as discussed in the

previous chapter, the borrowed space inhabited by Julia and her family

provided more privacy and comfort than the Claremont does for Mrs Palfrey.

A moment of suggestion of comfort – 'the bathroom was warm and steamy' –

soon reflects the sordidness of communal living: 'The floor mat was damp and

in the wet bath was a coiled grey hair' (*MPC*:7).

Thrown into this uneasy communal living, Mrs Palfrey is propelled into

deception by the priorities of others. The obsession with family visitors runs

through conversations: 'My cousin is coming for lunch' says Mrs Post.

'Relations make all the difference […] although one would never make a

home with them' (*MPC*:10). 'My brother-in-law's coming to dinner' says Mrs

Burton. 'Hence the hairdo […] he keeps an eye on me' (*MPC*:15). Newcomer

Colonel Mildmay says: 'I have a couple of nephews […] partly my reason for

coming to London' (*MPC*:188). Mrs de Salis introduces 'my sister-in-law

Bunty, who lives in an hotel in Brighton' (*MPC*:152). And so Mrs Palfrey

invents a nephew – in fact, a young man who helps her when she falls in the

street – to replace the real one who works at the British Museum but does not

bother to visit. The pretend nephew, Ludo, a young writer, adds another layer

to the narrative. Both he and Mrs Palfrey use each other to create new worlds,

she to enhance her standing with the other guests and he to provide material

for a novel he is writing. But there is a tenderness about the relationship; Mrs

Palfrey looks forward to Ludo's company almost as if he is a lover and, we

assume, Ludo exposes the plight of the residents in his story *They Weren't*

Allowed To Die There, completed at the end of the novel.

Changing times are signalled frequently in *Mrs Palfrey At The*

Claremont. Intergenerational change is referenced through comments on

standards and practices of behaviour. 'England's manners!' exclaims Mrs

Post as she is splashed by a passing car. 'What has happened to them?

They used to be so good' (*MPC*:9). Mrs Palfrey's letters to her real nephew

Desmond remain unanswered. 'A question of upbringing was involved.

Letters should be answered' (*MPC*:18). Despite Elizabeth's apparent shared

disapproval of this slip of manners by her son, she shows little respect for Mrs

Palfrey at the end of the book, when she does not bother to announce her

mother's death in the *Daily Telegraph* because she decides that 'there was no

one left who would be interested' (*MPC*:205). Through Mrs Palfrey's

friendship with Ludo, developed to address the curiosity of her fellow guests

and her own 'panic at her loneliness' she ventures beyond the world of the

hotel to the changing landscapes and living patterns in the London streets

(*MPC*:19). As Mrs Palfrey wanders around the area, a picture emerges of

how time has moved on:

> She could glimpse bed-sitting rooms […] where once
>
> cooks had attended ranges, rattling dampers, hooking
>
> off hot-plates, skimming stock pots, while listening to
>
> housemaids' gossip above stairs (*MPC*:63).

The reader is given a view of the reconfiguration of large private dwellings into

flats as she sees into 'basement windows […] sometimes bleak kitchens,

sometimes cosy sitting-rooms with a tablecloth laid and a bird in a cage'

(*MPC*:24). Ludo also realises that priorities have become reversed for the

generations. His girlfriend's parents would not understand that for girls who

lived in London flats, 'clothes came before food; fun before comfort; privacy

nowhere' (*MPC*:57). Although these priorities are not necessarily Ludo's they are the complete reverse of Mrs Palfrey's.

Mrs Palfrey At The Claremont presents a bleak but sympathetic picture of old age. By setting the narrative in an hotel, Taylor immediately signals the insecurity of the residents and the circularity of circumstance. Desperately trying to maintain a veneer of dignity, the elderly residents are despatched when inconvenience overcomes economic benefit. Mrs Arbuthnot leaves the Claremont declaring it to be going downhill, but in reality because she has 'become incontinent and in the nicest possible way […] had been asked to leave' (*MPC*:102). Mrs Palfrey is ushered out on a stretcher after a fall, by Mr Wilkins, the manager, who was 'getting a little tired of these old people […] cluttering up the place'(*MPC*:193). The transience of the hotel population depersonalises each group in the constant process of replacement. As Mrs Arbuthnot leaves, Mrs de Salis arrives from a convalescent home; an endless process of replacement, as Sydney observed in *The Hotel*.

Running through the narratives of the novels considered in this chapter is the thread of how women are affected by changing times. Single women, unwanted by family, inhabit the liminal social space of the hotel, thrown together with random and often passing strangers, deprived of the dignity of privacy and home. This recalls the fate in previous chapters of Aunt Ellen (*NH*)*,* of Eleanor (*AML*) and of Mrs Lippincote herself. Elizabeth Taylor describes Mrs Lippincote, having vacated her house, 'unfolding her napkin alone at a table in a small private hotel down the road.' (*AML*:10). The hotel is another stage on life's journey, a stopping point between a life which might have been in some way useful to others and the nursing home. Subjected to

the surveillance of other guests and hotel staff, the occupants of hotels may reconstruct themselves or have to adapt to unfamiliar social groupings. Hierarchies emerge and those who do not conform (for example, Sydney (*TH*) and Bess (*BH*)) are outsiders, the subject of gossip and speculation. This picks up the theme of surveillance in the country house. In Chapter One, we saw how, in *Lady Audley's Secret*, Lady Audley, herself an outsider, was subject to surveillance. She had little privacy in Audley Court and, unwanted by her husband's family and unnecessary to her own child, was banished to an institution where the principles of the Panopticon applied. Often it is male figures who take on the role of surveillance and control: Mr Lee-Mittison hiding behind his newspaper and choreographing social gatherings in *The Hotel*; Mr Wilkins the manager of the Claremont, ensuring the removal of elderly guests whose ailments become too obvious or troublesome; Micky Gorman the doorman and Mr Humfries the manager at Bertram's, the latter maintaining a front for 'one of the biggest and best crime syndicates that's been known for years' (*BH*:251). In hotels, 'days were lived separately. One sat at separate tables and went on separate walks' (*MPC*: 23) yet it is impossible to escape from the intrusion of strangers. The novels examined in this chapter expose characters removed from home and privacy into a world of time filling, shared spaces and loneliness amongst strangers, and at the mercy of those who own or manage the spaces they are inhabiting. Many of these characters are searching for direction. Some of them are seeking escape from a pattern of life dictated by convention rather than choice. They pass through urban landscapes that are changing, where familiar lifestyles are

no longer possible, where ways of living are shifting, and society is reconfiguring itself.

The serviced space of the hotel is a stepping stone to the communal spaces which are considered in Chapter Four. Serviced space serves a different purpose but, as demonstrated by the novels explored in this chapter, is a choice often determined by financial necessity. As I move on to consider the relationship between changing lives and shared spaces in Chapter Four, a further examination of what defines community and how this differs in relation to context, will be necessary. McDowell notes that 'communities are context-dependent, contingent, and defined by power relations; their boundaries are created by mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion' (1999:100). This chapter has considered the power dynamics evident in a number of hotel communities in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Four of the six novels included in Chapter Four were written at around the same time as the later novels in this chapter, while two were written further into the twentieth century. However, as the setting of each novel is some sort of shared, rather than serviced, living space, it will be possible to consider the difference context and habitus makes to the way in which communities operate, in different spaces and at different times.

Briganti and Mezei note the difference between novels set in hotels and those set in bedsits in shared houses. They suggest that novels set in hotels mostly investigate 'a community framed by the restrictive traditions, social practices and spaces of this communal dwelling'. Novels set in bedsits, however, 'explore an individual inner consciousness [and] struggle with agency' (Briganti & Mezei, 2018:25). However, in the process of examining

communities within the context of hotels, the novels discussed in this chapter also provide insight into the 'individual inner consciousness' of women displaced from home. Although Susan (*TRN*) and Julia (*ALM*) do not interact with other hotel guests, they are nonetheless bound by rules of occupancy to some extent, and their reaction to and reflections on their surroundings provide considerable insight into their states of mind. Insights into the inner consciousness of female characters in the other novels included in this chapter are also provided in their reaction to other guests and to changed circumstances, so, although an exploration of inner consciousness may not be the sole focus of the narratives, this layer of meaning is included by reference to the reaction of each principal character to the context in which she finds herself.

In Chapter Four, the 'shared spaces' of the title include a house converted into bedsits, spaces shared by an extended family, a club for young ladies, a family commune, a tower block and a squat. Although some of these communities are initially defined by shared ideology and others by shared circumstances, the ways in which they operate illuminate tensions between personal directions and communal interests and the role played by the community in individual life journeys. Augé refers to the 'inscriptions of the social bond', rules of residence imposed in public places (Augé, 2008:viii). These may be overt but, whether overt or unspoken, apply in some way to all communities. The novels discussed in Chapter Four explore groups of people living in households, who have come together in a number of ways through a number of circumstances. Atkinson and Jacobs suggest that the term 'household' describes 'a complex range of social structures contained within a

dwelling or house, […] more or less those who consider themselves to be living together' but the word has connotations of family groupings (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016:10). This is a useful term by which to describe most of the groupings encountered in Chapter Four and to differentiate from those encountered in Chapter Three. The residents of the Claremont, Bertram's Hotel, *The Hotel*, and those establishments that provide the settings for *To Room Nineteen* and *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* may occupy a dwelling of sorts, but, with their impermanent groupings and diverse engagements, could not be considered as 'households'. The individual ideologies and motivations of communities that come together as households, and especially the place of women within these communities, will form a focus for discussion of the novels included in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Shared Space

The L-Shaped Room by Lynne Reid Banks (1960)
The Pumpkin Eater by Penelope Mortimer (1962)
The Girls of Slender Means by Muriel Spark (1963)
The Wedding Group by Elizabeth Taylor (1968)
Benefits by Zoe Fairbairns (1979)
The Good Terrorist by Doris Lessing (1985)

> But the house is not fixed forever by its site
>
> and structure: it is also an evolving entity of
>
> layered residues and accretions, responsive
>
> to the subtle modifications of habitual
>
> experience. (Smyth & Croft, 2006:42).

The changing lives of buildings, encapsulated in adaptations to the design and use of their internal spaces, reflect and control the motivations, interactions and pathways of the individuals who form the communities within them. This chapter is concerned with both entities, that is, buildings and communities. 'Communities' in this context refers to collections of individuals forming households, whose connections may be through family links, political and social ideologies, emotional ties or economic or work status. These communities represent different models of liminal or deliberately oppositional groups. The novels are examined in chronological order later in the chapter, but, initially, a number of themes are traced through the selected texts. In each of the novels, the setting or settings for the narrative provide some sort

of collective home for the protagonists. The buildings that provide homes in these six novels were constructed in periods when their design reflected contemporaneous economic and social patterns. In most cases, the structures have outlasted their original purposes by many decades. They have been adapted to suit the needs of the time. The exception is Collingdeane Tower in Zoë Fairbairn's novel *Benefits*, a 1960s tower block, the concept and construction of which proved to be severely flawed almost as soon as it was built. As Woods observes, the modern tower structure maximises the usable floor area for commercial purposes but failure to consider the application of its living spaces in practical and social terms renders it simply an 'iconic [object] in the urban landscape' rather than a home (Woods, 2015:30). Bachelard comments that such towers have no affinity with those who dream of houses because they 'have no roots, […] no cellars. From the street to the roof, the rooms pile up one on top of the other' (Bachelard, 1994:26-7). Clare Cooper Marcus, taking up Bachelard's idea, notes that 'the high-rise apartment building is rejected […] as a family home because […] it gives one no territory on the ground' and therefore detracts from the identities of inhabitants as 'separate and unique' personalities (Cooper Marcus, 1974:134). These very circumstances, however, create a symbolic home base for the community of women protesters. Collingdeane Tower, isolated from the surrounding community in Seyer Street, dysfunctional as a living space and unwanted by the council that built it, serves as an appropriate symbol of the government's view of the women who inhabit it. As a campaign base, it also fulfils for the women inhabitants some of the functions of lookout and protection traditionally associated with the sort of tower structure to which the female

protagonist in Penelope Mortimer's *The Pumpkin Eater* retreats to isolate herself from her family. The metaphorical qualities of the tower in these two novels will be explored in more depth later in this chapter.

Several definitions of "home" are explored in the Introduction to this thesis. These include home as a place of peace, a place of disenfranchisement and abuse of women, a frame of reference for life, a topography of intimate being, a social, economic and cultural institution and a manifestation of the pressure of change on existing orders.   Smyth and Croft's definition of home in the quote above reflects on a micro scale Calvino's description of the city as the physical representation of the relationship between spaces and events of the past (Calvino, 1972:9). The histories carried by buildings may be unknown to current occupants, but their continuing status as "home" may be considered in the light of Douglas's definition: 'home starts by bringing some space under control' (Douglas, 1991:289).   In each of the six novels discussed in this chapter, the efforts explored to control and reshape domestic spaces, either physically or psychologically, connote the power struggles within the communities that inhabit them. Although the "homes" described in several of the novels (*LSR, GSM, GT*) were originally designed to support the construct of the Victorian family by the physical separation of different classes, control of function and behaviour, and protection of family privacy, their capacity to adapt to changing needs is infinitely greater than that of Collingdeane Tower. Moira Munro and Ruth Madigan suggest that the longevity of Victorian housing may be ascribed to the continuing ideal of the bourgeois family as a model of domestic respectability, despite the adaptations made to its design (Munro &

Madigan,1999:107). Woods also emphasizes the adaptability of traditional

architecture. Describing the city of Split in Croatia, Woods notes that although

no new building had taken place, there was 'a continual remodelling of earlier

buildings to meet changing demand for contemporary living'. He recognises

the need for an architecture 'drawing its sinews from webbings of shifting

forces, from patterns of unpredictable movements', that responds to 'a

continually changing matrix of conditions' (Woods, 2015:72, 54). With the

exception of Collingdeane Tower, the buildings that provide the settings for

the novels considered in this chapter are mostly the product of the

remodelling of space to meet the purpose and demands of the present.

Although over time individual members of the communities described in these

novels may move on, the settings establish a space that offers a sort of home.

Douglas further suggests that home is a 'realisation of ideas' for those

inhabiting it at any one time and that it should be a site 'based on synchrony

and order' (Douglas, 1991:289,300). The ways in which domestic space is

organised to produce a realisation of ideas that reflects the fears, aspirations

and ideologies of those who inhabit it, provides a narrative of the ways in

which they are engaged in a process of change. In this chapter, the

households or communities are not cohesive family units, nor are they

random individuals whose transaction with their living spaces is based on the

exchange of services for payment, as in the previous chapter. They occupy a

liminal space between the two states. Their interactions with living spaces and

the way in which, in turn, living spaces shape their lives, provide an

opportunity to analyse the symbiosis that exists between intention and reality.

The communities in each novel are in some way outside the mainstream of society, either through circumstance or by intent. Their living spaces provide a narrative of the interactions of inhabitants and their relationship with the mainstream. The L-shaped room in Reid-Banks's novel of the same name is a space remodelled for individual living from the structure of a substantial Victorian family home (*LSR*). The house, where 'each room has a strictly defined role corresponding to one or another of the various functions of the family unit' has been repurposed to accommodate a collection of individuals whose only connection is their occupancy of the building (Baudrillard, 2005:13). The structural adaptation of the family home and the circumstances of the inhabitants present a double metaphor for changing times. Tim Putnam notes that: 'When a new model of living is mapped onto a house […] the meaning of domestic space is redefined' (Putnam, 1999:149). The function originally served by the building is obsolete, as is the family lifestyle for which the house was built. Ironically, it provides a home of sorts for Jane Graham, rejected by her own conventional family for her transgressive behaviour.

The current function of the building is to accommodate those who have cut loose from the family ties so central to its original purpose. Mullholland observes that such spaces 'encouraged transience and discouraged domesticity', further eroding the principles of family life and the gender roles allotted to its participants (Mullholland, 2016:11). However, although initially uninvested in this new living space, the act of homemaking eventually draws Jane in and allows her to create a home within a reconstructed space where one part of the room is invisible from the other. As Barrie concludes, it is

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'social and behavioural structures that […] have shaped the forms, uses, and meanings of the house' (Barrie, 2017:36). The role of the L-shaped room and the community of inhabitants in Jane's life represent the impact of social and economic changes over a century on living patterns and social views. Paul Delany describes the bedsit as 'a place of complex in-betweenness' providing a transition between living in the parental home and creating a new family in its own home (Delany, 2018: 63). The 'diverse range and class of lodgers' accommodated in bedsits become a temporary family (Armstrong, 2011:160). In Jane Graham's case, her L-shaped bedsit becomes the crucible of the psychological and physical changes that enable her to return to her family home as a mother whose confidence in herself places her in a different relationship with her own family.

The women who rent rooms in the multiple-occupancy May of Teck Club in Muriel Spark's *The Girls of Slender Means* occupy a hostel run according to rules of conduct imposed by the management (*GSM*). There is little interaction by the inhabitants with the building itself, so little opportunity to imprint on it any personal identity or to give new life to a building that is 'habitable for the time being' (*GSM*:7). Indeed, set at the end of the Second World War, the May of Teck Club responds to the needs of the moment by accommodating young women who have left families to take up jobs in London. However, the impermanence of the building and lack of investment of the inhabitants in its existence as a place of homemaking reinforces the displaced position of these young women. Responding to economic necessity and the requirement for women to fill jobs during the period of the War, they find themselves outside the enduring gendered domestic ideology once the

War ends.   This ideology was not seriously challenged until the 1970s, when industrial restructuring and the rise in service sector employment created the need for women to fill jobs (McDowell,1999:79). Although the individual life-stories and aspirations of the May of Teck women are in some cases within the parameters of prevailing social expectations, especially in their intentions to find husbands, nonetheless they form a community whose structure reflects the class divisions dictated by the original use of the building as a large family home, but subverts that purpose as it creates an entirely female household whose occupations are non-domestic.

In Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist*, Alice Mellings decides to take on the transformation of No. 43, Old Mill Road, partly for ideological purposes as the base for a radical commune, and partly because she wants to restore the 'beautiful and unloved' Victorian house to a home (*GT*:5). These twin aspirations demonstrate her conflicted position. Although adopting a political and ideological stance that is in opposition to that of her middle-class family, she subscribes to the middle-class dream described by Marjorie Garber, of finding 'the "Cinderella house", […] a neglected, falling-down property that needs to be nursed back to health and beauty – to be, in short, Understood' (Garber, 2000:11). The house is repurposed not as Putnam describes such projects, 'in midcareer when incomes rise and childbirth has peaked', but to house a commune of young people for transgressive and revolutionary purposes (Putnam, 1999:148). A house designed to reinforce the patriarchal integration of the ideal family is subverted to accommodate a group of individuals who are the antithesis of the family model for whom it was constructed. The inhabitants become a sort of dysfunctional family tied

together by resistance against the very hierarchical and patriarchal dominance the house was designed to reinforce. However, Alice's acts of homemaking and her determination to make the kitchen the focus of the house at once subscribe to the traditional gendered role of female domestic activity and subvert patriarchal control by replacing it with a control of the household masterminded from the kitchen. The relationships within the household are complex. Although ostensibly sharing their political goals, the members of the commune have different views on how these should be achieved, and different reasons for occupying the house. However Alice may attempt to control the household by proving herself indispensable domestically, the power of her boyfriend Jasper to determine her actions places her in a traditionally gendered relationship. Jasper's insistence on the inviolability of his personal space in their shared bedroom reinforces the isolation in which their relationship locates Alice, especially compared with the couple in the room next door, whose relationship is emphasised by the bed in the middle of the room which, as Baudrillard observes, is 'eloquent in its embodiment of bourgeois marriage' (Baudrillard, 2005:47).

Barrie suggests that attitudes towards domesticity are powerfully influenced by memories associated with childhood homes (Barrie, 2017:40). The commune created at No. 43, Old Mill Road seems partly to respond to the need to create the security that Alice's childhood did not provide. Domestic routines, the sense of providing for the 'family', drive Alice's actions. Douglas notes that it is the biological pressures of family responsibilities for the young that keep families together and suggests that 'other embryonic communities have more trouble about mustering solidarity and demanding

sacrifice' (Douglas,1991:306). The community at No. 43, Old Mill Road breaks down when individual and ideological differences divide the group. As Douglas explains, 'If solidarity weakens, individual raids destroy the collective resource base' (Douglas,1991:299).

However, family groupings within communities are no guarantee of durability. In Elizabeth Taylor's novel *The Wedding Group*, Quayne, the family compound created and controlled by Harry Bretton, is a relentlessly patriarchal and gendered space (*WG*). The females in the family undertake domestic roles within a framework that offers them no voice, no opportunity for decision-making and little freedom to explore the world beyond Quayne. There are also intimations of incestuous abuse. Douglas further suggests that 'the more we reflect on the tyranny of the home, the less surprising it is that the young wish to be free of its scrutiny and control' (Douglas 1991:287). This is certainly true for Cressy, the only female member of the Bretton family who has the courage to break away from the family compound. Like Jane Graham and Alice Mellings, Cressy crosses the threshold from home into the 'unknown and unpredictable, […] entering an ontological condition of homelessness' (Barrie, 2017:22). However, unlike Jane and Alice, Cressy's experience in her childhood home provides her with no organisational or practical skills, and no ability to make decisions. Her first independent home is above an antique shop, surrounded by objects that no longer have any practical application, but, as Baudrillard suggests, signify previous cultural systems and the passing of time, emphasising her lack of knowledge of modern life (Baudrillard, 2005:72).

The family grouping in the Armitage household, in Penelope Mortimer's novel *The Pumpkin Eater*, is equally dysfunctional (*PE*). The mother of this extended family, referred to only as Mrs Armitage, provides no domestic comfort or security for her family, which includes a large number of children from previous relationships.   Where the life of the Brettons is strictly monitored by Harry Bretton within the family compound, Mrs Armitage's children drift between the care of the men in the extended family in a range of temporary homes whose structures reflect the instability and impermanence of the family unit. Subverting the traditional gendered domestic pattern, it is the female protagonist who retreats to a tower, sheltering from family in a structure intended as the new family home. She uses its symbolic function as a place of protection and lookout, whilst the families of Collingdeane Tower use their building as a structure of defiance and defence.

Woods suggests that property ownership, especially in 'nice' areas, indicates stability and civic responsibility (Wood, 2015:35). Based on that indicator, the inhabitants of the shared spaces explored in this chapter can be categorised as other, neither property owners nor dwellers in 'nice' areas. They may occupy houses that were once 'nice', but in areas now run-down and undesirable. Their identification as outsiders is further strengthened by the composition of their communities as other than family units. Although Quayne is a family compound, owned by Harry Bretton and housed in a "nice" area, it is so removed from its locality and the progress of time that its eventual submergence beneath a tide of new building seems an entirely appropriate and inevitable end.

Property ownership also brings power, which is traditionally patriarchal. As McDowell observes, however, displacement experienced as a result of changing economic, social and cultural circumstances 'is almost always associated with the renegotiation of gender divisions' (McDowell, 1999:2). In novels set in the shared spaces of bedsits, flats and hostels (*LSR, GSM*), control is often in the hands of the landlady, 'a perennial societal discomfort with the notion of female authority and independence', and not necessarily any more sympathetic or any less controlling because she is female (Briganti & Mezei, 2018:9). Yet in terms of homemaking, it is not necessarily ownership that defines the instinct. In the novels selected for this chapter, homemaking seems to be a more deeply-rooted and sometimes selfish imperative, relating to experience, memory and need. The inability of Mrs. Armitage to maintain a home (*PE*), Cressy's incapacity to deal with domestic tasks (*WG*), the transient nature of building and inhabitants at the May of Teck Club (*GSM*) and the threatened survival and unsuitable design of Collingdeane Tower (*BS*) communicate the relationship of the protagonists with their living spaces and the impermanence of their situations. The empathy that develops between Jane Graham and her bedsit represents an acknowledgement and resolution of her personal situation (*LSR*). She is able to find home, literally and metaphorically. Alice, whose instinct for homemaking and need for a personal home space drives her creation of the commune, has resolved nothing by the time it becomes clear that she no longer has a reason to occupy the house (*GT*). Her attachment to it, however, is deeply emotional. As Douglas asserts, it is only those committed to the

home whose vigilance ensures its survival and who believe that its collapse will be a personal loss (Douglas,1991:307).

Shared living spaces provide the context for the narratives in the six novels considered in this chapter. The social, political and economic conditions in which these novels are set are integral to the circumstances in which the narratives are created. The dynamics between the characters living in these shared spaces create cause and effect, driving the narratives. As described above, the settings for these six novels include a collection of bedsits in a converted Victorian house, a series of leasehold properties in which the shared space of marriage plays out, a club that provides accommodation for girls on low incomes, an artist's family commune, an abandoned Victorian family home that is taken over as a squat by a group of political activists and a 1960s tower block.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Elizabeth Taylor's Mrs Palfrey walks the streets of London looking through windows (*MPC*). She observes how large dwellings, constructed to reflect the social position and practical needs of financially-secure families at the beginning of the twentieth century, have been reconfigured to provide multiple self-contained living spaces for low-income inhabitants. They are examples of 'tenementing', described by Burnett as the 'sub-division of existing houses into separately-occupied floors or single rooms – […] the most obvious response of owners and tenants to increased pressure on accommodation' (Burnett, 1986:64). These domestic spaces act as barometers of economic and social change, demonstrating how, within the period of half a century, context and need demanded the transformation of patterns of existence. The practice of adapting large family

properties into multiple-occupancy blocks was particularly widespread in the 1950s and 1960s. Such adaptations disrupt the flow of the original design and therefore the way in which habitation is conducted within those spaces. Many conversions of these homes were about maximising income and minimising outlay, resulting in poor quality accommodation with limited privacy. In the previous chapter, inhabitants of serviced spaces retained some element of choice and control by nature of the transaction between occupant and owner. The provision of service to the person who is paying to inhabit the space applies, even in the case of the elderly residents of The Claremont who were not popular with the hotel management (*MPC*). Although inhabitants of multiple-occupancy spaces may be paying rent, there is no such expectation of service.   The relationship between landlord and those occupying such properties is often the reverse of what might be expected between one who pays and one who receives payment. Power is in the hands of the one who receives payment.

Until the Rent Act of 1965, prompted by the exploitation of tenants of multiple-occupancy properties, there was little control over the treatment of occupants by landlords. This situation is reflected in the *L-Shaped Room*, set in the bedsits of 'one of those gone-to-seed houses in Fulham' (*LSR:7*). The novel explores themes of secrecy, isolation, social and economic exclusion and the liminal state of women. The setting is central to describing class and gender position in 1960. Jane Graham leaves her middle-class home because she is pregnant and her father throws her out. She finds a bedsit in Fulham, London, 'an ugly, degraded district' where, in the 1960s, the large Victorian terraced houses had deteriorated into collections of scruffy, poorly-

maintained bedsits (*LSR*:36). We are introduced to the setting on the first page: 'My room was five flights up […] all dark brown wallpaper inside and peeling paint outside' (*LSR*:7). The choice of location and living conditions is deliberate. Jane's low self-worth reflects society's view of single pregnant women. 'I wanted to put myself in a setting that seemed proper to my situation' (*LSR*:36).

For a young woman from a middle-class family, the loss of her 'own room at home, and safety, and familiarity' makes her situation all the more bleak (*LSR*:49). But Jane becomes part of a community brought together by habitation of the small units within the structure of the larger house and by the inadequate living conditions. Large spaces have been divided to create more rooms and more income, but afford little privacy either because of the thinness of the dividing walls or the opportunities afforded by the landings and doorways for covert listening. Secrets are revealed by eavesdropping: Jane's morning sickness, and her developing relationship with Toby, another resident, are uncovered by John, the black musician who occupies the room next door to Jane. Her arrangements for an abortion are overheard by Mavis, who occupies the room near the telephone on the landing. Jane lives at the top of the house; two prostitutes, one of whom is also called Jane, live in the basement. The pregnant, middle-class Jane bridges both class and physical distance as she begins to recognise prostitute Jane as an individual rather than as a stereotype. The framework of physical space provides a context for interactions between gender, class and race. Jane's location of 'home' gradually shifts away from her childhood home when she becomes involved with Toby, because the L-shaped room is the space within which the

relationship develops: 'I realised I was calling the L-Shaped Room home for the first time. I was longing to get back to it…or perhaps its associations were what lent it this sudden magnetism' (*LSR*:155).

There is a very personal interaction between Jane and the L-shaped space she inhabits. Although initially craving the safety and familiarity of her own room at her family home, she develops a close relationship with her rented living space. 'It needed me,' she says. 'My transformation of it would be a work of creation, like making a garden' (*LSR*:49). Reid-Banks uses the creation of an anthropomorphic relationship between Jane and the L-shaped room to develop a strong connection between the space and its place in the narrative. This connection is developed further as the narrative progresses. Returning from a night out with Toby, Jane says of the room: 'It's pleased to see us…It's happy we're home' (*LSR*:96). The room becomes complicit in the relationship which proves to be Jane's rite of passage between her status at the beginning of the book as the daughter in an emotionally cold middle-class household and the more independent woman with a deeper understanding of life and society which she becomes by the end. Although she finally chooses to move back to her family home with her baby, she does so on her own terms, even though she remains socially in a liminal state.

The transformation and personalising of unfamiliar space tracks Jane's personal journey, her state of physical and mental health, its role as backdrop to the relationship with Toby, its emptiness when he leaves and her eventual move back to her family home. As Jane's pregnancy progresses and she develops a 'new to-hell-with-it outlook,' her interest in transforming the impersonal space of her rented room into a home increases. 'Every shop

window with a relevance to house interiors' draws her 'like a magnet.' (*LSR*:86). As the narrative unfolds, Jane's descriptions of and relationships with the room act as a barometer, measuring the development of her understanding and acceptance of her own circumstances. It provides sanctuary and solitude; it displays physical reactions to abandonment. Jane's removal to her aunt Addy's 'little white cottage', an idealised rural space, provides a temporal and physical detachment from the L-shaped room, a move beyond the threshold of her personal space to one where she can adopt a more objective position (*LSR*:200). The inextricable connections between the L-shaped room and the complexities of Jane's relationship with Toby allow the space to speak for Jane's wider feelings. When she says that 'Leaving the L-shaped room was a horrible wrench', the reader knows that it is not just the room that Jane is sad to leave. As she prepares to depart with Addy, her feelings about the affair with Toby are reflected in her description of the room which 'already had a pathetic, don't-leave-me air of desolation' (*LSR*:199). When she returns from her stay, the reaction Jane ascribes to the room provides a metaphor for the beginnings of her detachment from the emotional connections which have grown from occupying shared space. 'The L-shaped room had an air of damp neglect and (as it were) hardly looked up when I came in' (*LSR*:209).

The urge for homemaking is as pressing for Jane as it is for Alice in Doris Lessing's novel *The Good Terrorist*, to be discussed later in this chapter. Although both Jane and Alice can be considered as transgressive, their impulses for homemaking underpin their transgressions. 'It would be difficult for any man […] to understand my irrational feeling for places' Jane

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says, subscribing to the traditional view of women as domestic, irrational creatures (*LSR*:250). Jane's 'irrational feeling for places' is further drawn out at the end of the book, when she returns because 'I hadn't said goodbye to the room that had sheltered me and taught me so much' (*LSR*:266). That 'irrational feeling' is perhaps an instinctive knowledge that habitation, space and the condition of the human spirit are closely interrelated. Despite its squalidness, the room is the catalyst for change; the frame within which Jane's experience and preconceptions of class are questioned, and the shelter in which her struggle against convention and social expectation unfolds. As she visits the room for the last time, the narrative comes full circle. 'I didn't want to get mixed up with anyone in the house' says the new occupant of the L-shaped room. 'Once you start turning a room into something, there's no stopping' (*LSR*:268).

The relationships that develop within the shared space of the large house, the physical separation of residents who, in developing those relationships, sometimes penetrate others' physical and psychological spaces, is balanced by interludes in public spaces such as communal gardens and cafes. Moving the location for the narrative to such spaces provides an interlude for respite, reflection or negotiation. They provide neutral ground which removes the protagonists from the main scene of the narrative and provides interaction with minor characters who may, however, offer another perspective. For example, Jane's discussion about the advert for the L-shaped room in a paper shop allows the owner to provide a commentary on the views of the 1960s working class on race, politics and class (*LSR*:10). Her unexpected meeting with the father of her unborn child in a communal garden and their brief visit to

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a café, not only provides a neutral and public context for the encounter, but also a view of public reaction to a pregnant, single female. A similar trope in *The Good Terrorist*, discussed later in this chapter, uses Fred's Caff, which, with its yellow formica tables and yellow lights, offers a haven of warmth and comfort food, away from the privations that characterize bedsits and communes (*GT*:47). Tea, toast and the occasional curry provide respite and sustenance.

Penelope Mortimer's *The Pumpkin Eater* explores the shared space of marriage, the complexities of family relationships and the metaphors presented by inhabited structures. The first person narrative is constructed initially through conversations with a psychoanalyst, which allows the narrator to recount the back story and reveals her own state of mind. The female protagonist is known to the reader only as Mrs Armitage, emphasising the lack of identity other than that associated with her husband. This underpins the depiction of a character who may be physically present in a shared family life but is often mentally absent. Her only fulfilment seems to be to produce children. When she suspects her husband's infidelity and later agrees to an abortion, the defining elements of her life, as wife and mother, are undermined. Characters move in and out of the narrative. Like some of the family's inhabited spaces, their presence is often temporary and insubstantial. The narrator is persuaded by her father to 'shed the load a bit' by sending 'the elder children to boarding school' when she marries her fourth husband, Jake Armitage, a scriptwriter who is becoming increasingly successful (*PE*:17). She reflects that 'I let [the children] drift until only our fingertips were touching, then reaching, then finding nothing' (*PE*:20). Early in the book, she looks out of the

window into the garden 'where some of the younger children […] were sitting each in an individual cardboard box', a state of being that provides a metaphorical description of the uncertainty in which the family exists, temporarily protected by makeshift shelters, individually contained and separated, but with no idea of their direction (*PE*:21). Later:

> In a useless attempt to keep something for ourselves, we gave them bed-sitting rooms, television sets, new electric fires; but at eight o'clock, then nine o'clock, then ten o'clock they would be sitting in a patient row on the sofa preparing to talk to us or play games with us or perhaps just watch us, their eyes restless as maggots, expecting us to bring them up. (*PE*:100).

Despite the attempt to compartmentalise the children, like that of Susan in *To Room Nineteen*, to create a private space for their parents' marriage, the children continue to invade the living space and assert their right to a family life. The fragility of the narrator's marriage to former husband Giles is revealed through a description of their home, where attempts to control the children's ownership of the living space were also unsuccessful:

> We lived in a sort of barn […] someone had begun to convert it before the war, then when the war came they just left it and we rented it for practically nothing […] it was huge, there was nothing inside except a big platform […] Giles collected a lot of hardboard […] and made dozens of partitions, like loose

boxes…since the walls were only about six feet high

the children used to climb over them […] After a bit

they got very shaky and some of them fell down, but

by that time, I think Giles knew it was all over so he

didn't bother to fix them up again. (*PE*:75).

The impermanence of relationships, the tenuous threads that hold this family

together, is reflected in the temporary spatial structures whose collapse is

likely if their purpose is tested.

The narrator responds obliquely to the psychoanalyst's questions, often

using metaphor to explain her feelings. Metaphors frequently relate to

buildings – houses and other structures inhabited by the family. She explains

her obsession with dust by describing the current family home. The lease of

the house was bought by her father when the couple were married. The

surrounding houses are being pulled down. It is impossible to keep dust, the

detritus of destruction, under control (*PE*:124). This description provides an

instant and clearly-drawn reflection on the state of the Armitage's marriage; a

time-limited occupation of a house they do not own in an area which is being

demolished. There is nothing permanent or solid in this situation.

The tower, a device used by authors including Thomas Hardy in his

novel *Two on a Tower* (1882) and by W.B.Yeats in his poem *The Tower*

(1928) as a place of removal, for reflection or protection, is introduced early

on and runs through the narrative. In *The Pumpkin Eater* the tower is an

ideal, or possibly an escape, an isolated monument to the future sited near

one of the narrator's previous three marital homes, where she meets Jake

Armitage. Jake promises his new wife that he will 'build a tower of brick and

glass overlooking the valley where we met' (*PE*:20). Early in the narrative, the narrator, having realised that Jake has had a relationship with Philpot, the woman they are sheltering, questions the source of her fear. 'Thirty-one years old, healthy and whole, married to a fourth husband (why four?) who loved me, with a bodyguard of children (why so many?) – what was I frightened of?' (*PE*:32). She realises that it is her husband. She is 'Mrs Enterprise', a 'legitimate expense' (*PE*:350). She has no identity and no purpose other than to produce more children that her husband does not want and she cannot care for. She uses the tower to try to get Jake to agree to her pregnancy: 'When we've got the tower we can spread out a bit, can't we, and you really won't notice it' (*PE*:102). Neither part of that statement carries any logic or moves closer to resolving the problems within the Armitages' marriage.

Buildings interconnect and structure the narrative. They link past and future. The nature of relationships is described by where they take place and the physical condition, appearance and location of buildings often signifies the state of the relationships playing out within. When asked to describe Jake, the narrator uses their family home as a vehicle to reflect on her husband and the superficiality of their marriage:

> When people come into the sitting-room for the first
>
> time they always say what a marvellous room it is,
>
> and then after a bit I see them noticing things […]
>
> the burns in the carpet and the marks on the wall.
>
> (*PE*:11).

Later in the marriage, Jake's mental detachment is signified by his physical removal from working at home to an office in St James's.   Moving through a

series of leasehold houses, homemaking itself is time-limited and temporary. The activities that normally constitute homemaking signify the opposite. As she realises that Jake is most likely having an affair with Philpot, Mrs Armitage cleans out the kitchen cupboards, 'a sign of unease' (*PE*:20).

The narrative explores a search for identity and independence, gained through self-knowledge. Unlike Jane Graham's pregnancy in *The L-Shaped Room* which sets her on a path to self-discovery, Mrs Armitage's pregnancy is a desperate device to prevent her from having to face such a situation. After the abortion Mrs Armitage begins 'very tentatively' to believe in herself (*PE*:108). She is full of plans and knows that 'I could make life work again' (*PE*:110). She discovers that an actress working with her husband is expecting his baby, setting them 'back at the beginning again' (*PE*:121). But the tower is finished and although it seems like 'a folly built for some cancelled celebration' its symbolism remains as 'a sepulchre in which one hopes to rest, at some distant date, in peace' (*PE*:123). The tower holds much more promise than it can ever fulfil. It becomes a symbol of a perfect life, as though the past can be shed along with responsibilities. But there is also a hope of redemption and regeneration. Describing the neighbourhood around their current home to a young interviewer, Mrs Armitage notes that:

> Twelve years ago […] there were many ruins round
> here […] Then the houses were rebuilt, their scars
> were patched, skirtings, spandrils, treads and risers
> washed, prepared and painted, sashes and beading
> renewed, soffits, reveals and sills replastered, slates
> and flashing replaced and repaired […] where those

straight houses had stood, holding families and

'cellists and old, exhausted Jews on every floor, they

were now building cottages for company directors.

(*PE*:124-5).

The cycle of repurposing and redeveloping continues; even those homes that may have offered what seemed like permanence to their inhabitants are, in the longer view, an impermanent sanctuary in a world of relentless social change. But Mrs Armitage clings to the image of the 'permanent, indestructible and freehold tower' (*PE*:128), her own sanctuary from a life of temporary habitation. She admits that, although 'the past was never entirely forgotten […] in the tower there was only the future' (*PE*:123). This is a new construction, which, unlike the repurposed houses, holds no imprint of past memories, lives and actions, but its structure carries an historical function. After seeking the temporary comfort of an encounter with her third husband, she decides to go to the tower, where, 'in a cell of brick and glass, I sat and watched the wall of sky that rose ten feet away' (*PE*:151). She is removed from the elements of her life that cancel out her own identity: 'there were no children to identify me or regulate the chaos of time' (*PE*:152). However, the family ties that seem so tenuous throughout the narrative are in the end intangible and indestructible. Although the narrator wants an escape, she accepts that in negotiating daily family life, she needs not only the practical elements that allow it to happen, but 'a state of mind to think of all these things, and that state of mind is the one that keeps you at home' (*PE*:159). Her inability to exist outside the family is acknowledged as she admits: 'Of course if I hadn't known they would come for me, I might have

gone somewhere else' (*PE:* 159). At the end of the novel, the narrator watches from the tower as the children appear over the brow of the hill, sent by Jake in the knowledge that she could not turn them away. As she hides from them at the top of the tower, they break in, penetrating her privacy. When Jake arrives he is, in effect, entering her space. In that moment, the function of the tower, that receptacle for dreams, is as a marker of a new reality and moment of personal change. The narrator says: 'I was no longer frightened of him. I no longer needed him. I accepted him at last, because he was inevitable' (*PE*:158).

Muriel Spark's *The Girls of Slender Means* is set in 1945 in a multiple-occupancy 'Club' that provides accommodation for girls on low incomes. This charitable declaration provides a veneer of respectability. However, the building, still reflecting the social order dictated by its original purpose by the distribution of its current occupants according to status and financial viability, contains a community brought together by chance. The opening lines of the book, 'Long ago in 1945 all the nice people in England were poor' immediately suggests to the reader an element of allegory (*GSM*:7). The structure used as the narrative evolves jumps from the May of Teck Club during the victory celebrations at the end of the Second World War to a future identified episodically either by phone calls alluding to events in the years after the war or by hints at the lives of some of the characters. This device allows Spark to cover a wide time-frame although the extent is not clearly defined. It also produces a disjointed narrative, offering clues and snapshots but preventing the reader from becoming too absorbed in the narrative flow or identifying with the characters.

The initial image described by Spark introduces the reader to the devastation of England in 1945:

> The streets of the cities were lined with buildings in
> bad repair […] houses like giant teeth in which decay
> had been drilled out, leaving only the cavity […] room
> after room exposed, as on a stage, with one wall
> missing […] most of all the staircases survived […]
> leading up to an unspecified destination. (*GSM*:7)

This description of the physical state of the city provides a metaphor for its society. Devastated homes, broken families, uncertain futures require reconstructing either literally or psychologically. The celebration of the end of the war in May 1945 was, as one of the residents of the May of Teck Club observed, 'something between a wedding and a funeral on a world scale' after which 'everyone began to consider where they personally stood in the new order of things' (*GSM*:17).

Spark's description of the May of Teck Club, the setting for much of the narrative, further reinforces the metaphor:

> The May of Teck Club [was] one of a row of tall
> houses which had endured, but barely. Some
> bombs had dropped nearby […] leaving the
> buildings cracked on the outside and shakily
> hinged within, but habitable for the time being.
> (*GSM*:7).

The Club 'exists for the Pecuniary Convenience and Social Protection of Ladies of Slender Means below the age of Thirty Years, who are obliged to

reside apart from their Families in order to follow an Occupation in London' (*GSM*:9). The repeated axiom that 'all the nice people were poor […] the best of the rich being poor in spirit', creates an image of a society not only ravaged by destruction of its physical, social and economic structures, but sharply divided by class (*GSM*:8).

The May of Teck Club provides a home for women who, either by necessity or choice, wish to pursue an independent life, at least for a time. Those living in this fragile building, that had been 'three times window-shattered since 1940, but never directly hit', form a community of varying ages, backgrounds and intentions brought together by gender and economic situation (*GSM*:8). The living arrangements at the May of Teck Club provide a microcosm of stratified society and of organisational behaviour, where official management and personal seniority both have some influence on the members but, in this time of uncertainty and change, neither has a definitive authority. Although nominally run by a committee, the rules and notices produced are mostly associated with conservatism, 'a desirable order of life which none of the members was old enough to remember from direct experience' and which therefore carries little relevance (*GSM*:12). However, providing a focus for the disparate community, the notice board is a place for meeting and comment, much as it is in *At Bertram's Hotel.* The seniority of a number of residents at the May of Teck Club, three spinsters whose nicknames, Collie, Greggie and Jarvie, derive from their surnames, give them some sort of unofficial authority, but being unofficial, this can be disregarded at will by younger residents. It is not clear why these women in their fifties remain at a club intended to house young ladies under the age of thirty but

they are examples of the generation of women whose situations are explored in novels examined in earlier chapters, including Aunt Ellen in *The New House* and Aunt Beatrice in *The Crowded Street.* During the war, the matter of the spinsters' continued occupancy 'had been left in abeyance' (*GSM*:14), and so they are at least able to save for their old age. They had settled on this place as home, although the capacity for homemaking in this shared and physically fragile institution is limited.

The building, once a spacious Victorian residence, is an example of the many women's hostels 'which had flourished since the emancipation of women had called for them'. As 'love and money were the vital themes in all the bedrooms and dormitories' the definition of 'emancipation' applied to the young ladies of the May of Teck Club relates to living independently of family rather than achieving a state of gender equality. The concerns of the young ladies primarily revolve around finding romance on the one hand and identifying young men of sufficient means to make good husbands on the other. These twin aspirations are seldom brought together in one person. Moments of low morale amongst members are more likely to be caused not by lack of career success but by 'being given the brush-off by a boy-friend'. As 'very little has been done to change its interior' the stratification of the Victorian family residence remains although its structure is subverted to reflect age, intention and sexual preference (*GSM*:26). Above the ground floor offices and communal areas, the first floor ballroom, originally the showpiece of the house, is a dormitory for the youngest residents. On the second floor, once the bedrooms of the family residence, live the staff and those who can afford to share rooms rather than live in cubicles, including Collie and Jarvie.

Many of these residents are 'young women in transit […] looking for flats or bedsits', part of a shifting wartime population unsure of their position in society (*GSM*:28). The third floor houses rooms which have been successively subdivided to provide ten small bedrooms for 'celibates […] who had decided on a spinster's life' (*GSM*:29) for reasons that varied from 'prim and pretty virgins who would never become fully-wakened women' to those 'in their late twenties who were too wide-awake ever to surrender to any man' (*GSM*:29). The former servants' quarters on the fourth floor, at the top of the house, accommodates 'the most attractive, sophisticated and lively girls' (*GSM*:30). These are girls who have both lovers and men-friends 'with whom they did not sleep but whom they cultivated with a view to marriage' (*GSM*:30). Although emancipation for these girls may not be financial or career-related gender equality, they view marriage proactively as a means of security but with no intention of curtailing their sexual freedom. To some extent transgressive, their placing at the top of the house locates them at once at the bottom of the social hierarchy in the former servants' quarters of the traditional family home, but at the top of the female community in terms of the likelihood of fulfilling their ambitions of sexual liaisons or marriage. Even Jane Wright, 'fat but intellectually glamorous by virtue of the fact that she worked for a publisher […] was on the look-out for a husband' (*GSM*:30). 'Incorrectly subscribing to the belief that she was capable of thought', she believes that she has 'a certain something […] to offer [literary men], this being her literary and brain-work side' (*GSM*:72). She fails to realise that 'literary men, if they like women at all, do not want literary women' (*GSM*:76).

By bringing this diverse group of women together in the shared space of

the May of Teck Club, Spark is able to use the setting to explore a number of themes with a subtlety enhanced by the building itself. She divides the residents into categories as described above and through that process raises questions and explores issues of personal and gender identity, of the conventions of sexual interplay, of social structure and of the tension between reality and individual perception. Issues of sexuality are inferred: the implied lesbian relationship between Greggie and Jarvie, who share a room on the second floor rather than joining the celibates on the third floor; the warden who 'drove a car as she would have driven a man had she possessed one' (*GSM*:100); the inference that literary men prefer other literary men, in part disproved when Jane concludes that Nicholas, an author she invites to the May of Teck Club, 'at least liked both sexes' (*GSM*:42). Nicholas's subsequent idolisation of the glamorous Selina, whose 'body was so austere and economically furnished', suggests that Jane is probably correct, while Dorothy, another resident, 'intended to marry one of three young men […] who happened to find themselves drawn to boyish figures' as she 'knew well enough that her hipless and breastless shape would always attract the sort of young man who felt at home with it' (*GSM*:92,43). Society's predilection for less conventional sexual activity is suggested by the success 'in certain quarters' of a book entitled *The Symbolism of Louisa May Alcott*, published by Jane's employer, 'since it had a big lesbian theme' (*GSM*:41). Colonel Dobell, an American serviceman housed in the building adjacent to the May of Teck Club, is happy to take Selina as his mistress until his ambiguously-named wife Gareth threatens to visit, when he is 'anxious to situate Selina in another context, as he put it!' (*GSM*:94). Through the interaction of characters

brought together in the May of Teck Club and the narrative that develops, many of the uncertainties and complexities of status and identity are explored. The publisher George Johnson, Jane's employer, 'had obtained a succession of three young wives on account of his continuous eloquence […] on the subject of […] books' (*GSM*:39). These wives, in turn abandoned by him, reflect a self-determined construction of himself which he can only repeat. His current wife Tilly finds companionship at the May of Teck Club. At the end of the novel, when an unexpected event at the club provides a personal disaster which contrasts with the national state of peace, Tilly's removal from the decaying and dangerous building, stripped of her clothes, may prove to be a traumatic but symbolic escape from her married life of subjugation.

The May of Teck Club and the community it houses represents its time, not only because of the visible signs of damage to the building, the transformation of a family home into a shared living space for women, but also because of the particular circumstances and relationships generated by wartime. The inhabitants of this community 'were capable of quick happenings and reversals, rapid formations of intimate friendships […] that […] in peace would take years to happen' (*GSM*:95).

The individual characters use the Club for their own purposes. For the women who live there, it is either a transit point on the way to more permanent independent accommodation, a safe harbour which offers a means to provide some security in old age by making financial savings, or a convenient arena for conducting relationships with a view to marriage. The female characters are pragmatic about the Club and its purpose. Jane describes it to Nicholas as 'just a girls' hostel […] that's all it boils down to',

while Tilly thinks 'it's like being back at school' (*GSM*:64:102). Selina uses it as a base from which to conduct her many relationships while preferring men that do not wish to possess her entirely. But the male characters impose their own fantasies on the Club. Colonel Dobell 'seemed to be in love with the entire club, Selina being the centre and practical focus of his feelings' while Nicholas is 'enamoured of the May of Teck Club as an aesthetic and ethical conception'(*GSM*:86). The girls are complicit in this. Jane tells Nicholas 'things […] which fitted his ideal of the place' as 'a miniature expression of a free society […] a community held together by the graceful attributes of a common poverty' (*GSM*:84). At the same time, Nicholas is aware that he is 'imposing upon this society an image incomprehensible to itself' although this realisation does not prevent him from becoming frustrated that Selina, rather than considering herself as 'an ideal society personified amongst her bones […] only wanted a packet of hair grips' (*GSM*:71,92). The male characters are placed in opposition to the female characters, whose observations of the activities in this wartime microcosm are mostly realistic. The male characters construct idealised versions of this community of women, but their motives, whether or not apparent to themselves, are sexually driven. Although Nicholas may convince himself that he is taking Selina to bed 'with the aim of converting her soul '(*GSM*:92) what he really wants is the experience of making love to her on the roof of the May of Teck Club.

The disintegrating structure of the May of Teck Club provides a façade behind which the various characters in the novel conduct their lives in a community brought together by chance at a time of upheaval and uncertainty. Many of these characters present a façade to each other, creating

constructions of themselves as they would like to be seen. Colonel Dobell, who appears to be a man with some power and romantic vision, is in reality dominated by his wife and quickly abandons any aspirations of sexual assignations on her arrival. Nicholas, who, unlike Jane, sees 'the May of Teck Club as a microcosmic ideal society' presents himself as a poet, but also 'wants monarchy [and] anarchism' (*GSM*:65). 'What does he want? […] Simple answer is, he is a mess' says his friend Rudi Bittesch (*GSM*:58). Jane considers herself an intellectual but, the reader is told, is more suited to writing gossip columns. She uses Nicholas to introduce her to a group of poets whom 'she longed to meet' at a party where 'beer was served in jam-jars, which was an affectation of the highest order, since jam-jars were at that time in shorter supply than glasses and mugs' (*GSM*:61:64). Jane's employer, George Johnson, currently known professionally as Huy Throvis-Mew, is in the habit of 'changing his name after a number of years' (*GSM*:38). Joanna gives elocution lessons, helping residents like Nancy who is 'trying to overcome her Midlands accent', although she can only maintain the deception when she is calm and in control of herself (*GSM*:43). Selina, who is pragmatic in her attitude to relationships and resists any of the imposed interpretations put upon her or the May of Teck Club's 'microcosmic ideal society' by men, holds, however, the ultimate instrument of transformation, a Shiaparelli dress, which is shared between the girls as required. This garment bestows upon the wearer an aura of beauty and allure. Pauline Fox, borrowing it to meet her fictional lover Jack Buchanan for dinner, intrigues Nicholas as she 'picked up the rustling skirt and floated away up the staircase' (*GSM*:89).

The narrative ends with a shocking and unexpected event which inflicts

fatal damage on the May of Teck building and causes the death of Joanna, a vicar's daughter for whom life was experienced second-hand through poetry. Greggie's story about an unexploded bomb in the garden of the May of Teck Club proves to be correct. The explosion rearranges the familiar layout of the house. The girls, who had been on the top floor trying to get out of the window onto the roof 'for a lark' at the time of the explosion, find themselves trapped (*GSM*:109). Escape routes no longer function: the fire escape, 'which had featured in so many safety-instruction regulations […] lay in zigzag fragments'; the skylight 'had been bricked up […] when a man had penetrated the attic-floor of the club to visit a girl' (*GSM*:117). Ironically it is the hammering to unblock the skylight escape route that finally destroys the house, which 'sank into its centre, a high heap of rubble' (*GSM*:130). All but Joanna escape. Selina salvages the Schiaparelli dress, an instrument of transformation that she will carry with her into an unknown future. The May of Teck Club may not, in reality, be the idealised society envisioned by the male characters in the novel, but the building itself provides a metaphor for social change. Sudden and unexpected acts, especially those occurring at times of fragility and uncertainty, destroy what exists of the order and framework of a society. The construct of society is as fragile as the construct of the building. The members are left clinging to the remaining fragments, uncertain of where and how to move on, aware that the structure of life in the future will present a different and unknown landscape.

A family commune, purporting to be self-sufficient both practically and socially, provides the background for the narrative developed in *The Wedding Group* by Elizabeth Taylor. The isolated social group, presided over by the

patriarchal and egotistical artist Harry Bretton, provides a context for the subjugation of female members of the family and suggestions of sexual abuse of the children. The commune bears a strong similarity to that created by the artist Eric Gill, who was a neighbour of the author. The novel also explores the results of parental manipulation and control and the link between psychological state and physical location. Quayne, the Bretton family compound, is 'mostly a world of women' the wife, daughters and granddaughters of Harry Bretton. Their husbands 'were in no case of much account' (*WG*:3).

The reader is introduced to the claustrophobic world of ritual, religion and communal meals lived within the Quayne compound. This consists of 'the old farmhouse, […] the chapel, which they had built themselves of handmade bricks', the great barn where the family gathers at mealtimes and for Harry's readings, the farm cottages where the families live and a studio or workshop. The compound is protected on four sides by beech woods. Quayne is Harry's creation, 'the family growing into a community […] all thought out by him' (*WG*:6). Life at Quayne conforms to Harry's vision. The women are submissive, the pattern of life as constructed as Harry's personality. Communal activities, such as the evening reading, are organised by Harry, 'who loves the sound of his own voice'. The entire family converts to Roman Catholicism; the husbands, 'acquired after the conversion [are] of the proper faith' (*WG*:6). Cressy, the least compliant of the granddaughters, introduces the first fissure into the fabric of the Quayne community. Even though she knows that 'a dreadful fuss would follow', she announces that she is giving up her faith (*WG*:5). It is the first step on a journey of change. The

narrative follows Cressy's transition from the control of her family environment to her life beyond Quayne. She stays first in an attic room above an antique shop, traditionally the living area for servants, distant from the other occupants. Although Alexia, the owner, considers the room 'hardly fit for human habitation', Cressy thinks it is beautiful (*WG*: 55). Faded wallpaper and fusty smell notwithstanding, this is 'the place where her new life would begin' (*WG*:55).

This spartan setting, with a gas ring on the landing outside her room, is more of a home to Cressy than the family community at Quayne. It raises questions about the nature of 'home' and of inhabiting. It is more than physical environment; it represents an ease of being and a state of mind. The many elements that contribute to the stifling conformity of Quayne, the lack of independence, Harry's view of femininity as 'an ungainly aberration […] a lark!' contribute to a regime in which ease of being cannot flourish (*WG*:42). As the novel tracks Cressy through the various living spaces she inhabits, it explores the effect of her upbringing on her ability to conduct an independent life beyond Quayne and how this interacts with the family circumstances of her husband-to-be David and his parents. Cressy meets David, a journalist, when he is writing a piece about Quayne. David lives nearby with his mother Midge, a woman deserted by her husband and without friends. Whilst most of David's friends are married, he enjoys light-hearted love affairs, no responsibilities and 'the freedom to come and go as he wished' (*WG*:16). However, as the narrative develops, Midge is revealed as possessive and manipulative, although this is often cleverly disguised by apparent kindness or a desire to help. She lives vicariously through her son; when he is away, she

is mostly 'living in the future', while the present 'went very slowly for her' (*WG*:51). David's father 'had not left Midge for another woman. He had just left her [..], he could not bear to live with her any longer' (*WG*:24). David lives with his mother and his father returns to live with his Aunt Sylvie 'in a great darkness of mahogany [and] the sound of clocks ticking' as he did before his marriage (*WG*:25). When David marries Cressy, it is a coupling of two individuals who, by their family backgrounds, have not been given the tools and skills to manage relationships or build a home successfully. The control applied by Harry Bretton at Quayne appears to be a deliberate attempt to prevent the women in his family from surviving beyond the boundaries of the commune. The hints of sexual abuse of the young female family members, mirroring the behaviour of Eric Gill with his own daughters, is chilling evidence of the self-serving behaviour of Harry Bretton (MacCarthy,1990). The pornographic material that Cressy discovers 'amongst her grandfather's books' is justified by her as 'artistic', though in considering their sex life, David 'wondered where she got all her ideas from, she was so full of bizarre suggestions' (*WG*:114:109). As Cressy is introduced to the world beyond Quayne, David observes her 'falling in love with the present time' with hamburgers, fruit machines and ten-pin bowling (*WG*:84).

Midge is afraid of change and is concerned for her own future. She worries that she will have to leave her house and 'her lovely things' (*WG*:57), despite them bringing her little contentment. However, Cressy's lack of practical abilities or homemaking aptitude opens up an opportunity for Midge to edge herself into a position whereby Cressy depends on her for company and practical support, while she provides David with the domestic comforts of

which Cressy is incapable. Neither woman has the inner reserves to enjoy an independent and contented existence. Midge suggests that David and Cressy should live nearby and although 'neither of them loved the country', she finds them a cottage across the fields from her own house (*WG*:107). This is Midge's project, although the final effect, 'resulting from David's mistakes, Cressy's apathy and Midge's advice, discernment, and generosity' was 'of everything cancelled out […] Neither cosiness nor beauty had been achieved' (*WG*:108). The end product of the transformation of the cottage is a manifestation of a relationship triangle where the personalities are out of sympathy, ill-equipped to co-exist and unsure of what 'home' should be. David vacillates between the chaotic house he inhabits with Cressy and the comfort of his mother's house. Midge knowingly plays on Cressy's poor housekeeping by providing the home comforts she knows David likes: 'I'm going to put the fire on in your bedroom […] what about a supper tray in bed?' she offers when he calls in on the way to his own house. She sends him off to pick up Cressy. 'I shan't be able to get back home fast enough' he says, more likely referring to his mother's home than his own house (*WG*: 131).

Midge has created an environment that she calls home, 'skilfully done […] a success, and she loved it', but her loneliness prevents her from enjoying it or thoroughly inhabiting it (*WG*: 56). David's appreciation of 'home' is more to do with Midge's provision of physical comforts than an association with happy family life or the appeal of the surroundings. Cressy thinks the attic room, her initial refuge, is more of a home to her than Quayne, where, on a return visit, 'everything dripped'. Starlings 'looked like tea leaves in the watery-grey distance' (*WG*:111). Her experience of growing up in that stifling

community colours, literally, her reading of the place.

David considers Quayne as a cultural object from his perspective as a writer, but personally it makes him feel smothered, 'wanting open spaces' (*WG*:21). In Fleet Street where he works, he is 'caught in a cleft between high buildings' (*WG*:21). And yet he dislikes the countryside and wants to escape to London, entrapped by his mother's attempts to use Cressy's inadequacies as a homemaker to insinuate herself into their lives.

The description of the cottage where David and Cressy live, selected by Midge, contains none of the elements of comfort and homeliness that David finds at his mother's house. It reflects the uncertainty of the relationship between David and Cressy, two people ill-equipped by the models provided by their upbringings to adapt to the emotional and practical interactions of marriage. David avoids going home and finds excuses to stay in London. Cressy is 'at the window for long periods, watching the birds making arrowed tracks across the snow […]. I have been snowed upon myself, she thought' (*WG*:118). In this situation, Midge makes herself indispensable and ensures that Cressy becomes dependent on her. Neither David nor Cressy recognise her motive, but Alexia, a friend of David's, observes to her husband 'That woman has them in thrall – especially the girl. She pets her, and spoils her, does all her thinking for her, and stuffs her up like a Strasbourg goose'(*WG*:148). When Cressy gives birth to a son, Timmy, Midge begins to take control of him too. David, Cressy and Midge are caught in a web of dependency, where Midge fulfils the role of homemaker, even in the couple's own house. Cressy has escaped from one controlling environment to another; despite the courage and independence she shows in leaving

Quayne, her dependency on Midge robs her of her brief and new-found confidence. David seeks escape from his family commitments by conducting an affair in London, while trapped into living in the country by a subconscious submission to Midge's emotional control. When David discovers that Midge has invented a burglary to try to persuade him not to move to London, he claims that 'if it hadn't been for the so-called break-in, we'd have been living in London by now' (*WG*:189).

Location or living arrangements at the end of the book indicate change for many of the characters. However this is not conclusive. Earlier references to Quayne include allusions to its power to affect events. Cressy's mother Rose describes Cressy's wedding to David at Quayne as 'like a very quiet funeral' (*WG*:113). Quayne itself is dying, Harry's ideal undermined by Cressy's rejection and the threat of invasion by the outside world. As some of the younger members of the Quayne community venture beyond its boundaries, the outside world penetrates Quayne. The woods are being cleared and new houses built around its perimeter. Harry moves his family to Suffolk to recreate the Quayne community. As Cressy visits Quayne for the last time to say goodbye to her parents, she says 'it was like going to a funeral […] I feel like an orphan'(*WG*:186). Even though she has escaped physically from Quayne, its psychological power over her as a family living space within which its inhabitants were indoctrinated with a pattern of domestic life, is inescapable. Although Harry is moving the community, he is unlikely to change. He will continue to control his family and shape their existence to suit his own purposes. David sees a move to London with Cressy and Timmy as a solution to their relationship problems and a reason to stop his extra-marital

affair. He seems unable to make independent choices; the house he envisages in Chelsea is a copy of one occupied by his successful photographer friend. Cressy worries about how she will cope with Timmy without Midge to help her, but the attraction of London life and of finding out more about the world is enough to convince her to agree to the move. The reality of making a home in London may be very different from the ideal. The end of the book provides no conclusion. David and Cressy spend a night out looking forward to a future in a new place, whilst Midge, whose 'heart had grown large with love', looks after Timmy (*WG*:192). The future is, perhaps, signposted.

Both Harry and Midge are, in their own ways, scared of change and the loss of power over their families. David's father Archie, who ventured into marriage with Midge from the safety of the time-warp that is Aunt Sophie's house, retreats back to the familiar and solitary rituals of daily life. David is restless, wandering between the homes of Midge, his girlfriend Nell, and Cressy, unable to establish where his home should be, but knowing that 'England felt too small for him […] feeling smothered, wanting open spaces'(*WG*:21). Cressy reaches out for independence but looks out, with her pregnant cousin Petronella, at the new houses surrounding Quayne. 'Aren't they awful,' Pet says, reflecting the sentiments of the families in *The New House, Invitation to the Waltz,* and *The Weather in the Streets* when confronted by similar signs of change (*WG*:141). Change may be inevitable but progress is a tenuous process. Harry Bretton's attempts to establish a permanent monument to himself by imposing a pattern of life on his family is unlikely to last beyond a generation as he cannot separate their way of life

entirely from external influence. Midge's ideal of family life, symbolised by the Wedgwood wedding group purchased for her by Cressy, is as fragile as the ceramic ornament. The accidental destruction of the ornament by Timmy at the end of the book is yet another signifier of the future.

The tower is a powerful image in fictional narratives. Jung's reference to the tower as a structure representing the maternal hearth, manifest in the home he built himself in Bollingen, conforms in part to the symbolism of Hardy and Yeats and to its representation in *The Pumpkin Eater* as a place of protection and reflection. But the tower is also a place of removal, of isolation and ultimately of invasion of privacy, as experienced by the female protagonist at the end of *The Pumpkin Eater*. Much of the story of *Benefits* by Zoë Fairbairns takes place in Collingdeane Tower, a tower block in London built in the 1960s. The novel is set in the long, hot summer of 1976, by which time 'anyone with any choice in the matter moved out of the flats, leaving behind only those with no choice' (*BS*:3). The novel explores the power of the state in deciding how lives are shaped through the impact of social, economic and planning decisions, including the structuring of living spaces. The tower block is a symbol of changing social ideas, of the effects of short-sighted planning and of resistance, offering a place for collective action and a site of invasion. Collingdeane Tower represents on a public scale the meanings explored on a personal scale by the use of the tower as symbol in *The Pumpkin Eater. Benefits* raises issues of gender inequality, power and control, the Welfare State, economics and conflict between individual and collective interests, exploring the characters' relationships with different living

spaces and what these tell the reader about the political and moral positions of those individuals.

The political and social narratives in this novel are notable for their parallels with the current period in politics. A royal relative who was 'orange from head to foot' (*BS*:41), visits a slum transformed into a project of social engineering and control; in Parliament 'no longer did MPs defer to the Speaker, […] it was the loudest voice that got a hearing' (*BS*:45); Derek's depleted staff pension fund results in the loss of the Byers's home (*BS*:183); questions about climate change become a rallying cry for political parties (*BS*:178) and the 'Europea' project, 'a new superstate that would unite parts of the world that had never been united [because] the twenty-first century would be no time to go it alone' (*BS*:105) are all issues that resonate with contemporary political agendas and debates. The spirit of Europea is encapsulated in its conference centre, a 'huge glistening ball' containing every possible facility required by visitors. In contrast with Collingdeane Tower and its female occupants, the conference centre, a vision of the future, is populated by 'a gathering of males' (*BS*:107). Its structure, appearing to defy logical construction, may signal the future of the project it represents. The time lag between political decision making and implementation meant that by the time Collingdeane Tower was ready for occupation, 'planners, builders and social workers were already losing faith in tower blocks' (*BS*:3). Oversights in practical design, for example, lack of space for kitchen appliances, were examples of why such structures failed as homes. Judy Attfield comments that 'prospective tenants were told to keep their washing machines on the balcony and the refrigerator in the hall' (Attfield, 1999:79).

The condition of Collingdeane Tower deteriorated rapidly as 'the curtain came down on the era of affluence that had spawned and nurtured the British welfare state' (*BS*:3). Eventually it was closed and boarded up as the council 'tried to pretend they had never built it' before a group of women 'looking for somewhere to squat and establish a feminist community' move in (*BS*:4). The principle demands of these women are the payment of child benefit to mothers and the right to abortion. The tower, once promoted as an ideal vision of social housing, then abandoned as a defunct and unsuccessful experiment, becomes the symbol of a fight for a better future for the women and of their resistance to social experiments by the government.

The community of women who come together in this shared space have different histories but at this point in time share an ideology and aspiration. They differ in this way from the shared community in *The L-Shaped Room*, a random collection of individuals, and from the family connections between characters who share living spaces in *The Wedding Group* or *The Pumpkin Eater*. Their different circumstances place the individuals within the tower community at points where their lives are shifting, their moment of coming together in Collingdeane Tower serving as a signpost to their futures. Lynn, who does not live in the tower block but supports the women's position, is able to observe the community with some detachment and doubts if the squat will last, as they 'seemed to prefer consciousness-raising to clearing out rubble' (*BS*:7). Lynn is aware of the need for a balance between the application of ideology and practical action in achieving a successful outcome for the women's campaign. However united their intentions, these are quickly undermined by the physical discomfort and

impracticality of their living space. Although the members of the group may share a vision of women's rights to financial and personal independence, they also have different individual motivations. Posy, a 'big, muscular, denim-clad' Australian lesbian, 'the sort who drew sneers about feminism being the last refuge of women who could not attract a man', is driven by a vision of an 'international female revolution, led by her' (*BS:*9). Her participation in the tower community appears to be the latest stage in a global journey that coincides with significant moments in the struggle for female emancipation at locations around the world. When the women manage without her leadership, she threatens to return to Australia, which suggests that her role as leader is more important to her than the cause. Marsha, who lives with a man but has never had sex, seems unclear of her identity. Judy, refusing to acknowledge her pregnancy, drifts in and out of the group, while Lynn, who has resisted motherhood, decides to become pregnant. Each of these women, brought together by a common cause in a shared location, is at a pivotal moment in her life. The community that has come together in the tower through circumstance or ideology is surrounded by another community built up through economic situation and geographical location in the surrounding streets. The tower and the surrounding Seyer Street slums are symbols of the outcomes of social policies, monuments to bad planning, economic downturn and welfare deficit. Collingdeane Tower is a physical and psychological space; for those women like Lynn and Marsha, who do not inhabit it physically, it is where they "live" psychologically. Lynn and her husband Derek have bought a house in Seyer Street, where they are surrounded by families with feral children, including the Tynes and the 'proliferating' Hindleys

(*BS:*159). Marsha lives with a man whom she dislikes but respects, who later becomes involved in planning government experiments including the 'Europop' birth control project, which has devastating effects on babies affected by the addition of chemicals to the water. The links between the women extend beyond their habitation of the tower; Lynn takes on Judy's baby when Judy's mental instability prevents her from caring for him. Marsha becomes Posy's partner and accompanies her to Australia as she pursues her crusade for women's rights. Lynn gives birth to a daughter, Jane, whose hereditary health problems contribute to a fractious relationship with her mother.

This is a novel in which the relationships between characters are maintained but realigned. The shifts in relationships are often mirrored by the spaces in which they are conducted, or the response of the protagonists to their living spaces. The various spaces that Lynn occupies as the narrative progresses, and her reactions to them, symbolise the changes in her life. Living in the slum area of Seyer Street aligns with Lynn's principles. When she and David move to a new house on an estate that is more suitable for bringing up their child, who has poor health, she yearns for Seyer Street and detests 'the rise in their station in life' (*BS*:79). Her longing for closed spaces and privacy mirrors the reaction of families in Harlow New Town to individualise and close off the spaces in their new open plan homes (Attfield,1999:78). She detests the 'trendy brainwave' of providing flexible living spaces created by partitions rather than walls.

Where the temporary partitions erected in the barn in *The Pumpkin Eater* present a metaphor for the state of the protagonist's relationship with

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her husband, the lack of structure within Lynn's new house undermines her preference for fixed living spaces that enable her to separate herself from the 'rising tide of debris' that accompanies her role as mother and housewife (*BS*:79). However, the removal of physical structure in her home reflects the growing disjunction in her family life: a daughter who is in opposition to Lynn's values until she makes her own personal protest against social policy by becoming pregnant; and Lynn's developing relationship with Marsha and loss of livelihood when Derek loses his job as an academic.   The financial impossibility of maintaining their own home forces Lynn and Derek to move into the home of their daughter and son-in-law. Once again the shifting pattern of family relationships is reflected by the division of space in the house, where downstairs is shared and upstairs walls are adjusted to provide some private spaces (*BS*:189). Shared space emphasises the improved relationship between Lynn and Jane while the adjustment of walls upstairs defines a protected marital space for Lynn and Derek, despite Lynn's ongoing relationship with Marsha. Collingdeane Tower and Lynn's various homes are markers for their physical and psychological placing. Although Lynn remains rooted in her family home, Marsha's presence is more fluid. Lynn's attachment to place signifies the difference between their positions. Lynn is compromising the conventions of marriage but its physical base remains 'home', while Marsha, habitually peripatetic and mentally unpredictable, finds it hard to establish physical and emotional permanence. At the end of the novel, Derek and his son-in-law adjust the walls in the top of their shared house to create a safe space for Marsha when she needs one, signifying a symbolic act of acceptance and protection (*BS*:209). Spaces designed to

accommodate 'a family's needs at different stages in the life-cycle' have served to facilitate Lynn's changing family requirements despite her initial rejection of the concept of adaptable living (*BS*:80).

The idea of spaces of safety, sanctuary, escape, reflection, defence and power is explored consistently in this novel. Lynn's first visit to the tower makes her feel 'powerful and sensual, perched on top of a building that the authorities had put up and then washed their hand of' (*BS*:12). The top of the tower is a lookout, 'the best place to be when you were glum, surveying the suburb and the city beyond it, […] knowing that it was full of women who were their own women' (*BS*:157). Marsha seeks sanctuary in the top of Lynn's house just as she does in the 'quiet, clean room with a wide bed' towards the top of Collingdeane Tower when she returns from Australia. Judy, who refused to accept her pregnancy, creates the 'woom' at the top of the tower, her own space, a sort of chapel where she performs spiritual ceremonies and from where she eventually jumps to her death in the belief she will be saved by her 'goddess', as the police invade the tower (*BS*:161). Another tower, 'a skyscraper […] that had been built for offices but never occupied,' becomes a royal palace, commandeered by a monarchy in the parallel dystopian world of the novel. The power of the tower as symbol of ideological, physical and sociological worlds, of enduring meaning despite its physical dilapidation, is encapsulated in the killing of David Laing, complicit in the eviction of the women and children from the tower. Marsha shoots him because, as she says: 'You took my tower' (*BS*:163). Marsha was the first to break into the tower to establish the commune and the first to try to destroy it after the eviction. Her history, relationships and ideology are interwoven

physically and psychologically with the building. Its eviction represents a power battle that will return the tower to an unwanted inconvenience, at which point, as Lynn says, 'they'll give it to us […] if we want it' (*BS*:214). In the interim, it remains as a symbol of control, resistance, protection, community, escape and isolation, of all that is wrong with society and some of what is right. The transgressive act of possessing space is representative of asserting power. The occupation of Collingdeane Tower by the women and its subsequent invasion by the police, acting on behalf of the government, is symbolic of the tension between these two elements of society. 'What *do* the women want?' ask the politicians. The women respond not by offering meetings and discussion, but by 'thronging into buildings […], (barns, government offices, second homes left empty by the rich) and setting up house' (*BS*:212). The focus of their opposition is explained not by words but by their choice of targets for occupation. After the eviction of the tower, the repossession of a building that was unwanted by the state in the first place simply places responsibility for its maintenance back in its hands. The vindictiveness of the government's opposition to the women and their demands is reflected by its wish to control protest by reclaiming assets they do not want rather than adopting a constructive approach to their use.

The novel contains parallel communities whose positions in relation to each other shift throughout. The women, the community within Collingdeane Tower and the families in the surrounding slums of Seyer Street, are sometimes in opposition and sometimes connected. The Tynes and Hindleys, large families with uncontrollable children living in poverty in Seyer Street, are appropriated by the FAMILY party to prove the value of intervention in

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producing a society based on sound family values. However, the FAMILY movement is based on rewards for prescribed behaviour so no more inclusive for the community of women in Collingdeane Tower than the government's social policies. Judy's son Jim moves between the two communities, brought up for some of the time by Lynn, reclaimed from time to time by Judy, experiencing life as part of two communities sidelined by existing power structures. His involvement in political life as founder of the Social Security Party includes principles of underpinning financial provision for social welfare and listening to the voices of women. The Hindleys, whose flirtation with the FAMILY movement clearly does no permanent damage to their true identity, reclaim their familiar territory as feral warriors, putting these skills to productive use by defending the women within the tower against the onslaught by the police. The Hindley children are 'a clan, a community', which, when put to constructive use, is at least as effective as the organised forces of the state and feels some common responsibility in a fight against authority that ignored the needs of their own community and the women in the tower (*BS*:162). The spaces which provide the sites of struggle for the women and the residents of Seyer Street, reflect their different situations. The tower and the houses in Seyer Street provide appalling living conditions, reflecting the status of their communities within the social hierarchy. Whereas the tower, with its rectangular structure dominating the Seyer Street slums, is a symbol for the ideology of the community of women, the ramshackle houses of Seyer Street represent the random and precarious lives of the occupants of the slums.

However, through the action in the novel runs the thread of 'home'. The concept of home as a place of familiarity and comfort, sometimes unrecognised as such, relates especially to Lynn and her family. Despite the complexity of family relationships, Lynn is located in a family home of sorts. Even though she identifies with the women in Collingdeane Tower, it never becomes her physical home, the place she returns to, in the way it does for Judy and the families of women and children who live there. Lynn's home shifts from Seyer Street to a new estate and finally to her daughter's house. Whatever her feelings about these locations and the relationships they encompass, she remains rooted in them. Despite her difficult relationship with her mother, even Jane 'kept wanting to wake up in her own bed at home' in the early days of her marriage, signifying a deeper attachment to her home and family than she might want to acknowledge (*BS*:150). As Lynn tries to care for Martha after she receives news of Posy's death, she urges her to 'come home', while acknowledging the potential for conflict by bringing her into a household in which she lives in a conventional family unit. When Martha is released from prison at the end of the novel, Lynn tells her: 'You see, I'm not going to leave Derek. […] I want you to live here with us. Derek must accept that. But I'm not going off to some commune' (*BS*:211). Despite her social principles and empathy with the women of Collingdeane Tower, the security and pattern of living offered by a family unit in a private space reflect Lynn's values more closely than the commune within the tower.

By contrast with the poorly-constructed and ill-conceived space of Collingdeane Tower, Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist* is set in a large, derelict Victorian house. Its conversion into a living space for a group of

political activists is used to explore the motivations of individuals linked by an allegedly shared ideology, the power shifts between inhabitants and the instinctive need for homemaking. This description of parts of London in the 1970s still applied to streets such as Old Mill Road, where, in the 1980s, Alice begins to turn No 43 into a habitable shared commune:

> To walk through Islington, Camden and Hackney in the early 1970s was to walk along street after street of soot-blackened, late Georgian and Victorian terraces and villas, boarded up and left semi-derelict. […] Thousands of these houses had been reclaimed and repaired by squatters. […] This historic spatial configuration of the city allowed […] social and political movements […] to flourish, as groups of like-minded people began to live and work in close proximity. (Wall, 2017:1).

Squatters who occupied derelict houses from the 1960s onwards did so for a number of reasons: to provide homes for the homeless; to provide communities for the marginalized; to seek new political, social and economic structures; and sometimes to protest at the dereliction and demolition of those gracious and spacious houses, the majority of which were built between 1875 and 1919. Economic changes, war, unemployment and 'the stalling of postwar planning and housing policy' had reconfigured the lives of families for whom those properties were home (Wall, 2017:2). The squatters who moved in to repurpose them as communal living spaces reconfigured such derelict Victorian mansions, a symbolic and metaphorical act reflecting their attempts

to dismantle the dominant political opinion and social norms of their own time. The pattern of communal living that begins to emerge at No 43 Old Mill Road is different from that of Quayne. The latter is created and conducted by a dominant patriarch. There is no room for dissent or divergence and membership of that group is restricted to family members, a concept that is itself rather Victorian. The individuals who gather in Old Mill Road have various motives. Jasper and Bert wish to align themselves politically with the IRA, while lesbian partners Roberta and Fay spend most of their time with a women's group, presumably engaged in the politics of feminism. Philip is homeless, having been thrown out by his partner and Mary and Reg seem to be taking advantage of cheap temporary lodgings whilst they wait to move to a permanent home. There are a number of other members of the commune, several of whom pass through or play a less significant part in the narrative.

Alice, the novel's main protagonist, is highly critical of her parents and their lifestyle. Her relationship with the immature, self-obsessed and selfish Jasper is unsatisfactory from all perspectives and yet Alice seems unwilling to acknowledge that he takes whatever he can and gives her little in return, anachronistic in relation to the feminism of the time. However, this is the only way their relationship can operate. He uses emotional blackmail, spends her money and belittles her in front of his friends. Alice places herself in the position of homemaker. It provides her with an identity and makes her indispensable to the group. This is a role she has played before in other squats; she fixes things practically, materially and personally; 'she had been housemother' (*GT*:17). She knows where to go, who to see and how to manage and manipulate those in authority. Although the relationship between

squatters and authority changed a number of times from the late 1960s onwards, it is possible for Alice to arrange an agreed temporary occupation of No 43. She is driven by a desire for homemaking. She purges the house of detritus, of the buckets of excrement in the attic, of the layers of rubbish in the garden. She unblocks the toilets, sorts out the electricity and water, finds furniture and restores the derelict property to function and habitation. Her feelings for the house seem to be stronger than her relationships with the people within it. The first time she sees it, her heart is 'full of pain because of the capacious, beautiful and unloved house' (*GT:5*). Her relationship with the house and its role in shaping her identity resembles that of Jane Graham and her L-shaped room. Both properties are creations that in some way embody the two women's personal progress. But although Jane Graham becomes involved in relationships with others living in the house in Fulham through proximity, lack of privacy and chance encounters, there is no real intention to create a community. Alice Mellings, however, not only wants to create a community within No. 43 Old Mill Road, but she negotiates a central, almost matriarchal position for herself. As the narrative progresses, Old Mill Road becomes 'Alice's little street'; No. 43 becomes 'her house' (*GT*:39). Although less obviously controlling than Harry Bretton at Quayne, the house is, nonetheless, being created to her design. She treats the house as a human being requiring rehabilitation. However, Alice's ideal of community, a group of people brought together by common political beliefs and a mutually supportive infrastructure, proves challenging and ultimately unachievable. Personal interests and relationships dictate the distribution of living spaces. Even within the bedroom Alice shares with Jasper, the emotional distance between them

is reflected by Jasper's protection of his personal space. As she pulls her sleeping bag against the wall, wary of encroachment, Jasper complains: 'You are in my *space* […] You know we don't get into each other's *space*' (*GT:*46). The walls cannot prevent Alice from being aware of the night-time lives of the other inhabitants, of 'the grunting and whispering and shifting and moaning – right on the other side of the wall, close to her ear' (*GT:*45).

Her relentless homemaking does not, in fact, make No. 43 into a home, any more than it makes the occupants into a family. Both physically and mentally, Alice constructs a framework within which she hosts the random group of people who are allegedly part of the Communist Centre Union. Like the facade behind which the lives of these squat dwellers are played out, the characters themselves are constructions. Often they claim allegiance to a particular group but find they are not really wanted. They are the outsiders. Roberta and Faye are not really wanted by the women's group which they visit so frequently that the reader questions why they are not living with them. When Bert and Jasper want to join a picket line, 'Comrade Andrew,' living in another squat next door 'is not all that keen on cadres from outside joining the pickets' (*GT:*138). When the two men travel to Ireland to offer their services to the IRA, they are rejected. Mary and Reg are not really revolutionaries but espouse gentler causes such as the environment.

Reality is tenuous. Just as No. 43 fulfils a temporary role in the lives of its inhabitants, so those inhabitants adopt temporary personalities, edifices constructed to present to each other. Roberta's voice is 'a made-up one. Modelled on Coronation Street, probably' (*GT*:29). Faye played 'the cheeky cockney as seen in a thousand films' (*GT:*31). Bert modifies his voice, 'the

posh tones of some public school […] roughened with the intention of sounding working class'. Alice herself, whose voice is 'basic BBC correct, flavourless […] had been tempted to reclaim her father's Northern tones, but had judged this dishonest' (*GT:*29). Alice is outraged if anyone questions her credentials as a revolutionary: 'But Faye, do you think I'm not a revolutionary?' (*GT:*114). She harangues her mother: 'Mum, why aren't you like us? […] We help each other out when we're in trouble. Don't you see that your world is finished?' (*GT:*19). And yet she cannot exist without stealing or begging money from her parents and their friends and craves the 'bourgeois inclinations' she claims to reject (*GT:*8*)*. She wants the residents still dwelling in the street to recognize her as a good neighbour when she attends to the old woman next door. Most of all, Alice wants to immerse herself in the sort of family life she glimpsed as a child but to which she never fully felt she belonged. She warms to vignettes that conform to her craving for family: the 'big table' in the kitchen; 'a real meal'; her desire to compel the commune 'into being a family by the magic of that soup' (*GT:86,90,*195).

Loss of home is a theme that runs through the book. When Alice's mother moves from the family home into a small flat, Alice's heart 'whimpered and hurt her; she had no real home now. There was no place that knew her; could recognize her and take her in' (*GT:*228). Memories of her childhood, of the way her parents took her room away when it was needed to accommodate guests 'as if they had only lent it to me' constitute a reality that Alice cannot seem to acknowledge, of a child trying repeatedly to create the security she never really felt in a home that is at the centre of her being (*GT:*233). The occupants of No 43 arrive there because, for one reason or

another, they have no home. No 43 itself was once a home and through Alice's efforts regains some of that function temporarily.

Despite her anxiety to be taken seriously as a revolutionary, it is her mother Dorothy, whose lifestyle Alice condemns, who set the mould for Alice. Dorothy is the real revolutionary, veteran of the Aldermaston marches, who has found her own freedom from the 'years of my life I've spent, staggering around with loads of food and cooking it' (*GT:*350). She sees clearly that Alice is spending her life exactly as she did, 'cooking and nannying for other people. An all-purpose female drudge' (*GT:*353). Alice's revolution, despite her claims that 'we are going to pull everything *down'* is simply a reworking of the female domestic role in a context that appears to be brave and new but that is, as her mother says, 'running about playing at revolutions' (*GT:*354). Alice cannot recognize the reality of her actions, nor can she bear to have her childhood dreams destroyed. Nothing works out as intended. In salvaging the curtains from her mother's home when it goes up for sale, she unknowingly wrecks the deal. The first attempt at planting a bomb, made by Jocelin, following instructions in a handbook about how to be a good terrorist, is a non-event which makes a few lines in the local paper. The second bomb explodes with disastrous consequences, killing Faye and four other people. The commune is metaphorically blown apart. Alice considers leaving, her bond with the house similar to that of Jane Graham as she leaves the L-shaped room.

> Poor house, she thought, full of tenderness. I hope
>
> someone is going to love it one day and look after it
>
> […]. She felt she could pull the walls of this house,

her house, around her like a blanket, where she could

snuggle, where she could feel safe. (*GT*:392).

In the end, Alice is alone, deserted by the inhabitants of the commune at No. 43. She is out of her depth in the aftermath of the bombing, involved in a dangerous situation she cannot control. Unable to recognise her own needs or reflect honestly on her behaviour, she locks herself in the attic at the top of the house. As Smyth and Croft suggest, such spaces are 'blank, functionless, rarely visited places' in which to experience 'states of abstraction and reverie' (Smyth & Croft:30), while Bachelard describes the attic as a place of shelter, signified by the 'bare rafters of the strong framework', somewhere to clarify thoughts (Bachelard, 2005:18). This is the place to which Alice retreats, abandoned by those for whom she made a home and no closer to self-knowledge. Unlike Jane Graham, who moves on from the L-shaped room both physically and psychologically, Alice is unable to do either.

Whether the connections between those living in shared communities are through circumstance, economic status, ideology, class, or family ties, the physical structures in which they live, their communal interests, individual differences and motivations create complex relationships. Shared living space might operate according to a set of rules imposed upon the residents, as at the May of Teck Club, the bedsits in Fulham and at Quayne; by a principle of democratic action sometimes sullied by self-interest, as at No. 43, Old Mill Road and Collingdeane Tower; or simply by the absence of any lasting framework, as is mostly the case in the spaces inhabited by the Armitage family. The organisation of domestic space both reflects and is shaped by the nature of the households inhabiting it, and imprints a way of life

on those communities. Often such shared communities are transient, reflecting Douglas's observation that it is those who invest most in the physical building of shared communities who feel the greatest loss when they are dismantled (Douglas, 1991:307). The novels studied here suggest that, when the instinct for homemaking, for creating a secure and private place of retreat, is embedded in the individual psyche, it surfaces even in situations when the social structures of conventional family life are absent or undermined. Whether it survives or fulfils the intentions of the homemaker is determined by the factors contributing to its context. When that instinct is not present or when its fulfilment is thwarted or untenable, lack of 'home' signifies an undefined personal future.

Chapter Five traces the threads that cut across the categories of living spaces explored in this thesis, bringing together the themes that emerge from this examination of the narrative power of domestic space. It considers not only the importance of 'home' and the various living spaces explored through the previous chapters, but considers the wider issues running through the period of this study relating to the lives of women, their families and the social contexts in which they live. The independent journeys of the female protagonists in the selected novels depend on circumstance and are often reflected in their living spaces. Some of these women find it impossible to move beyond the world in which they exist, whereas some make significant journeys on a path to self-fulfilment. However, the obstacles and challenges encountered by women seeking a state of change reach across decades and through society, suggesting the power of tradition is, for some, a safe harbour and for others, a force of confinement. Taking an overview of the previous

four chapters, these factors will be explored in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

'Makings and *un*makings': the role of domestic space in stories of change

> Home is a place of comings and goings, of living and
>
> dying, of moving in and moving out, of material decay
>
> and repair. These makings and *un*makings signify
>
> change and the passing of time.
>
> (Baxter & Brickell, 2014:140)

This study explores the links between the situations of the female protagonists in the selected novels, their living spaces, and what the relationship between situation and living space tells us about moments of change in the lives of these women. Although each chapter of the thesis explores a different category of habitation, overarching themes emerge relating to the social position of women and how these manifest themselves over more than a century. Although there were significant changes in the status of women during the period of this study, the endurance of elements of established ideologies and social models is evident, not only in the wider social context described in the novels, but also in the personal situations and mindsets of the principal characters. This chapter traces the themes that emerge from the previous chapters, pulling them together to identify the factors that persist in the relationship between the position of women, their living spaces and the social context in the selected novels.

As explained in the Introduction, the time frame selected for this study is deliberately wide. It covers a period during which social, industrial, economic and political change affected not only the distribution of population but dismantled established living and working patterns, creating a new class of wealth among industrialists and manufacturers and many social problems related to poor working and living conditions for the working class. Through changes to property laws and demands for women's suffrage, the gendered, patriarchal model of family and working life was gradually eroded, although it was so deeply embedded as a culture that elements have lingered into the twenty-first century. Different models co-exist within and between societies. In his book *Families in the 21st Century*, Gøsta Esping-Andersen identifies two theoretical frameworks relating to the family unit: conjugal specialisation, based on traditional gender roles, and the promotion of 'individualism and self-realization' (Esping-Andersen, 2016:9). The female protagonists discussed in this thesis share a dissatisfaction with the societies in which they exist and an aspiration to find a different and more fulfilling life, even if they move no further than distancing themselves from their own family circumstances. As Esping-Andersen observes, both of the family models described above are undermined by the 'changing economic role of women' (Esping-Andersen, 2016:9). However, he suggests that the model of the family unit itself is practically and economically viable when 'both men and society at large adapt to women's new roles' and survives successfully where women have renegotiated their roles in households or have the financial resources to delegate domestic duties (Esping-Andersen, 2016:10). Whatever model of family life was recognised as defining the period of each novel in this

thesis, the desire for changes in status and opportunities is evident for each of the principal characters. Although there has been progress in some societies in addressing and improving gender equality, there are still many women who, because of their social or cultural situations, can identify with the women in the novels discussed in the previous chapters, who want a new future but cannot always see the way forward. Over decades, and in some cases centuries, the principal direction of the flow of progress may be evident, but its pathways are often indirect, meandering back and forth between past, present and future. This is especially so when considering the relationship between women, family, patriarchy and domesticity.

The structure of the thesis is both vertical and horizontal. The vertical categorisation of domestic space through the preceding four chapters has also included some horizontal interleaving of the dates at which the novels were published. Although this structure produces a diachronic thrust, it also allows for some synchronic comparison of situations between the categories of habitation. The particularly enduring nineteenth and twentieth century convention of 'insistent and anthropomorphic identity' that aligns women with the home is evident throughout the time frame, creating psychological or practical barriers for those who wish to break away and a sense of loss for those who have no home with which to be identified (Garber, 2000:58). Despite the different contexts of domestic space explored in the previous chapters, they share themes of power, gendered relationships, the signification of domestic space and its contents and the thresholds between private and public space. These are discussed in more detail in this chapter.

The concept of 'home' continues to be an elusive but crucial factor in the exploration of the evolution of women's lives and identities. As Putnam suggests:

> Dwelling is at the core of how people situate themselves in the world. The boundary of the home is still the most culturally significant spatial demarcation, and the way in which homemaking is elaborated […] provides key terms for ordering one's past, present and future.
>
> (Putnam, 1999:144)

The role of the home as a combination of 'material, social and cultural resources' and the relationships that sustain them, explains its centrality to the analysis of women's place in society (Putnam & Newton, 1990:7). The relationship of the female characters with the domestic space they occupy in the selected novels provides one component of the map of their individual conditions and directions.

In Chapter One, the power of ordered spaces, the traditional country or family house, to maintain and reinforce social conventions of class, wealth and inheritance and the impact of challenges to established ways of life on such properties and the women who inhabit them, are evidence of the massive changes brought about by the Second Industrial Revolution, World War One, the beginning of the campaign for women's suffrage, and taxation. As Philips and Haywood explain, country houses 'had been an economic anomaly since the Industrial Revolution' (Philips & Haywood, 1998:44). These changes become evident in the aspirations and attitudes of women

living in the borrowed spaces explored in Chapter Two, who strive to reshape lives based on conventions they begin to question, even if they are not sure of the form such reshaping will take. Their relationships with their temporary 'borrowed' spaces raise questions about their given identities as homemakers, their futures and the power they have to control the direction of their own lives. The destabilising effect of World War Two and its aftermath on the physical and psychological landscape offered opportunities to these women to get out of the home and into work, while they saw these opportunities withdrawn to some extent when 'housework was established even more securely as a woman's lot in life' by a post-war government, presumably because it was a convenient way to get women back in the home after the war effort (McDowell, 1999:79).

The connotation of impermanence and transition in the concept of serviced space in Chapter Three provides a reflection of the position of women who, for various reasons, are removed from home, even a borrowed home. Heidegger's concept of 'dwelling' as a state of peace and freedom, (Heidegger, 2011:246) and Bachelard's argument that 'our house is our corner of the world' (Bachelard, 1994:4), reinforce the importance of home to our experience of living. If, as Putnam suggests above, dwelling is a key element of identity and relationship with the world, these women have been removed, or have removed themselves, from the context that enables them to define a sense of self, despite the progress made by feminist movements. Cieraad describes privacy as 'a supreme home condition' (Cieraad, 1999:7), determined as such by the patriarchal Victorian family unit and embedded in an architecture of separation in the design of the Victorian house. This

separated the family within from the external and classified the inhabitants within its physical structure.

The condition of 'home' as a place of privacy and separation is challenged by the concept of shared space, explored in Chapter Four. In some cases, interaction with other residents is unavoidable because of structural circumstances; in others, it is a deliberate attempt to make a 'home' for those who come together through some commonality of circumstance. Leonore Davidoff notes the breakdown of the family through industrialization and urbanisation (Davidoff, 1979:65), whilst McDowell observes that the cross-generational links of females were broken by new patterns of work destroying traditional and enduring family units (McDowell, 1999:99). New groupings come together to make 'home' but the longevity of such communities is not guaranteed, even when instigated by a 'homemaker'. Their lifetime is likely to be determined by their relevance to purpose and therefore subject to change on a more rapid scale of movement than that driven by wider social changes.

Consistent themes and questions can be picked up through the four chapters in the thesis. The first is the relevance of the concept of 'home' as key to the condition of women. Many of the novels discussed in this thesis embody a reflection of 'home' as a place of limitation, curtailment of ambition, a site of patriarchal domination and a location from which escape is the only route to personal fulfilment. As Kathy Burrell asserts, the home is 'ultimately tied into wider economic and social fields' (Burrell, 2014:147). Despite its supposed identity as a locus of privacy and therefore its potential as a cradle for individual codes and values, it is so often permeated by prevailing norms

that its walls become boundaries of imprisonment rather than protection. Barrie proposes that 'houses may be the ultimate foil for ideological agendas because of their embeddedness in everyday life', encouraging a focus on the micro rather than the macro (Barrie, 2017:9).

During the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, despite the progress made in relation to women's rights, from property ownership to suffrage to second-wave feminism and women's experiences in two world wars, the continued dominance of a gendered view of the home and the roles of women within it created a context that stifled rather than enabled women who wanted to shape their own lives. In *Jane Eyre* and *North and South* it is financial independence that enables Jane Eyre and Margaret Hale to control their own futures and their relationships with their husbands. Lucy Audley's ambitions are eventually defeated by the weight of tradition, convention and the instinct of the Audley family for self-preservation (*LAS*). It is Chris, the male protagonist in *The Return of the Soldier*, whose search for the spiritual aspect of home reflects his detachment from the house created for him by his wife Kitty, but in failing to fulfil her role of homemaker for her husband, Kitty herself is cut adrift from the identity carved out for her as a wife. Lucy, the young wife in *Vera*, becomes submerged by her husband's domination in his ambition to recreate a model of the patriarchal country house. In common with the female protagonists in Chapter Two, Rhoda finds the strength and opportunity to make a life for herself by breaking away from her family home (*NH*). It is the family home that acts as a site of containment and discomfort for Muriel (*CS*), Stacy (*BM*), Olivia (*IW & WS*) and Julia (*AML*); women living in borrowed spaces (Chapter Two), because of the gendered expectations

and conventions carried by the concept of 'home'. For those women living in serviced spaces (Chapter Three), flight from home has propelled them to a position of temporary and liminal habitation. Sydney seeks her own identity rather than accepting the one she is given as potential wife (*TH*); Julia is lost, unhappy at home but fails to find an independent and alternative way of life (*ALM*); Susan escapes a family life that has grown up around her without an active intention on her part (*TRN*); Jane Marple and Mrs Palfrey reflect the position in society of older women whose lives are conducted at the edge of the social structure of the family unit (*ABH, MPC*). Finally, in Chapter Four, each novel includes protagonists whose 'home' during the timespan of the narrative is located in spaces that are either not a family home at all, or where the idea of family unit has been subverted (*LSR, PE, GSM, WG, BS, GT*). Clearly then, the concept of home in the novels explored in this thesis is complex at practical, physical and psychological levels and the relationships of women with the spaces they call home and the inhabitants within them reflect much of the conflict of identities, roles and independent aspirations embodied within the stories.

The buildings within which homes are created carry unspoken narratives. As Hans-Georg Gadamer suggests, buildings mediate between past and present (Gadamer, 1989:157). Their age, design and history carry forward subtle messages and stories, while their repurposing records social, economic and political progress and reinterpretation. The random additions to Audley Court, made with no overview of their effect on the purpose or coherence of the building, bear out Gadamer's proposition that 'where the original intention becomes completely unrecognisable, or its unity is destroyed

by too many subsequent alterations, then the building itself becomes incomprehensible' (Gadamer, 1989:156). It was, perhaps, inevitable that, given this indifference to the path of progress, Audley Court became a relic which could only be consigned to the past.

Houses, their design and appearance, provide evidence of the cultures in which they are located. Jane Eyre's life journey and social status can be mapped by the houses she occupies, and later owns. The contrasting descriptions of Margaret Hale's home at the vicarage in Helstone and the houses and streets of Milton-Northern capture not only the physical locations but the cultures and lives they embody (*NS*). The power of a building to communicate the nature of the relationships contained within it is evident in the attempts by both Kitty and Wemyss to create houses that are concerned with image and have no integrity or substance and can never, therefore, become a home. In Kitty's case, she strives for the ideal home that can be featured in magazines, while Wemyss wishes to create a history and status for himself that is mostly an invention (*RS,VR)*. The design of housing reflects not only aesthetic and stylistic preferences at a point in time, but also changing economic and social conditions. The catalyst for Rhoda's departure from the family home is the economic necessity of moving to a smaller house, where roles are reorganised to fit space and circumstance. However, as with Muriel and Olivia, this does not stop her from despising the changing landscapes caused by new building spreading on the outskirts of towns, accommodating a very different way of life from that traditionally conducted in the large family houses that they were, in some cases, replacing in an effort to meet the housing needs of the moment (*NH, CS, IW, WS*).

The disdain of these women for such physical manifestations of change suggests that, despite discontent with their personal lives, the social implications of progress are also difficult to accommodate. Julia's alienation in Mrs. Lippincote's house is caused partly by its overpowering sense of the presence of its owner and the history of family it holds (*AML*), while the lives and relationships of occupants of the various hotels included in Chapter Three are shaped by the patterns imposed by the lack of private 'home' space in buildings designed to accommodate transient populations. Buildings that survive the passage of time, as have most of those used as settings for the narratives of novels in Chapter Four, hold 'the presence of the past in a present that supersedes it but still lays claim to it' (Augé, 2008:61). In most cases, repurposing adapts buildings designed to accommodate a way of life suitable for another period, their reshaped use of space imbued with the culture and values of contemporary society. The 'historical meaning' to which Gadamer refers is layered beneath the reordering of space by reducing size to accommodate individual living units (*LSR, BS*), by temporarily subdividing larger spaces or creating new versions of traditional structures (*PE*), by making additions to signify the culture and values of family space (*WG*) or by change of use (*GSM*). When repurposing attempts to restore rather than restructure, the original concept of family lingers, with its connotations of domesticity, but the interpretation of 'family' is subverted (*GT*). Changing living patterns are reflected through repurposing, very often reducing space and allocating it to the individual living independently from family.

Repurposed living spaces are often intended for communities that are not nuclear family units. As Briganti and Mezei observe: 'the single-roomed

"home" is largely a product of our congested cities and towns' and the result of the breakdown of family units (Briganti & Mezei, 2018:4). Blunt and Dowling similarly comment on this practice which 'involves unsettling the normative assumption that an 'ideal' home is one inhabited by a nuclear family and […] suggests ways in which people can live in more collaborative, collective or cooperative ways' (Blunt & Dowling, 2006:262). The repurposing of buildings to facilitate different lifestyles opens up their histories and superimposes new models of habitation. As Walter Benjamin observes in his collection of writing *The Arcades Project*: 'The nineteenth-century, like no other century, was addicted to dwelling. […] The twentieth century, with its porosity and transparency […] has put an end to dwelling in the old sense' (Benjamin, 1999:220-221). Some of these buildings, in particular large Victorian family houses, survive the process of reuse more successfully than others. Their size and structural craftsmanship present opportunities for multiple uses, including their continuing evidence of status and identity when renovated as family homes for contemporary use, drawing on their history to promote the values with which their inhabitants wish to be associated. This indicates that, despite changing ideologies and economic landscape, the image of Victorian family life lingers in the spaces and structures that once embodied its values. However, Douglas notes that homes survive only as long as they meet the needs of their inhabitants (Douglas, 1991:307). Smyth and Croft observe the way in which buildings reflect the 'inevitability of decay' within a capitalist society in which consumerism is encouraged 'as an endlessly replenishing cycle of the modish and up-to-date' (Smyth & Croft, 2006:33). Collingdeane Tower is one such building, providing a site of constant reminder of the

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ideology that spawned it and the inappropriateness of its design and construction as a location for 'home' (*BS*). It remains as a symbol of what Shonfield describes as 'a visual logic […] in built architecture and a "logic of society" – the strategies inspired by a state bureaucracy' to define and implant an ideology (Shonfield, 2000:379). The failure of the concept for living it embodies and its poor physical structure is encapsulated in its abandonment by the state bureaucracy and its subsequent symbol of the fight against that bureaucracy by the group of women who occupy it.

According to Gadamer, architecture 'gives shape to space' (Gadamer, 1989:157). Buildings enclose living space and define the threshold between the private and the public. Their walls provide physical protection, concealment or incarceration, but are no defence against the 'influence of external institutions on the domestic sphere' through politics, economics, housing policies, planning, employment and value systems (Putnam, 1999:152). Burrell notes 'the high levels of porosity of domestic space' and, despite Barrie's contention that the home acts as a foil for ideological agendas, argues that inside the home cannot be understood without reference to both the immediate contexts of the street and wider structural economic forces (Burrell, 2015:146).

As Shonfield says, 'In buildings, […] we would expect to see […] delineation of *boundary*' (Shonfield, 2000:372). In defining change, it is often the thresholds within houses and between houses and their wider surroundings that signify the boundary between prevailing conventions and evidence of changing directions. These may be the physical thresholds of doorways, windows, entrances and exits, or the psychological barriers

through which individuals need to pass to enter a state of change. In fulfilling

Baudrillard's proposition that '*lifestyle is reflected in architecture* [sic]*'*, the

potential for buildings to embed and underpin conventional lifestyles is as

significant as their potential to reflect changing priorities and ideologies

(Baudrillard, 2005:21).

Segregated social and gendered spaces, such as those in which the

narratives of *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley's Secret* are conducted, are broken

down, intruded upon or abandoned. While Lucy Audley passes in and out of

Audley Court to conduct relationships that contravene social boundaries, the

areas that should provide her with privacy and invisibility, according to the

purpose of the design of country houses, are penetrated and provide no

protection from class or gender intrusion (*LAS*). The threshold through which

she passes finally, the Belgian asylum, offers no privacy but is an impenetrable

structure of containment. The physical thresholds through which Jane Eyre

passes, however, mark her journey towards fulfilment and independence, even

though individually the nature of the buildings and the attitude of their

inhabitants towards Jane Eyre illuminate the nature of her social position and

the weight of convention against which she struggles (*JE*).

Thacker suggests that 'the interiority of psychic space is often

profoundly informed by exterior social spaces' (Thacker, 2009:5). In the

novels explored in this thesis, the physical boundaries represented by

buildings are synonymous with the psychological thresholds through which

protagonists need to pass to begin to move forwards. This is especially the

case in those novels where single females strive to create independent lives

for themselves, against the expectations of a society where the role of the

unmarried female is at the bottom of the family hierarchy and whose duty is to care for other family members. Rhoda (*NH*), Muriel (*CS*), Stacy (*BM*), Julia (*AML*), Julia (*ALM*), Susan (*TRN*), Jane (*LSR*), Mrs Armitage (*PE*), Cressy (*WG*) and Alice *(GT)* are all women who, oppressed by the social structures and expectations contained within the physical boundaries of the buildings that are their homes, seek escape by crossing those thresholds and entering others in which to exist, more or less successfully, in living spaces that provide an opportunity to escape from an unacceptable present. The fragility of family relationships is reflected by those who constantly move from one property to another or inhabit temporary residences, failing to establish a real home or occupying spaces where there are few physical boundaries to create a satisfactory or individual space for living. The reader understands, through the relationship of protagonist with living space, that the future of such protagonists is likely to involve further exits and entrances of different spaces before they discover any sort of physical and psychological peace (*NH, WS, TH, MPC, ALM, LSR, PE, GSM, WG, BS, GT*).

Those who set about creating a home that reflects an ideology and social order out of step with others in the household, embody in their creation their insensitivity and consequent lack of connection to their own family members. Kitty creates a brittle structure reflecting her lack of understanding that for her husband, spiritual values take precedence over convention, social divisions and material wealth (*RS*). Wemyss attempts to reconstruct a house more suited to the lifestyles and values of past generations, thereby engulfing his wife in a hopelessness and subjugation from which she is unlikely to emerge (*VR*).

Baudrillard notes that 'the house itself is the symbolic equivalent of the human body, whose potent organic schema is later generalized into an ideal design for the integration of social structures' (Baudrillard, 2005:27). However, viewed over time, this is as likely to exist as a restrictive and impenetrable boundary as it is to embody a physically relevant and spiritually compatible space. The relationship between philosophies that underpin the boundaries and thresholds that control life within the home and the design of its space are evident at times of significant change. Despite the longevity of Victorian homes and their survival, often in modified form, the effects of the ideals of modernism are as evident in living spaces as they are in living patterns. The design of Victorian homes deliberately separated work from home, allocating gendered roles and creating private family space. The bringing together of these two aspects of life in one space and the breakdown of gender divisions within the home is apparent in the removal of boundaries and thresholds in modernist home designs. As Attfield observes: 'The segregation of genders and classes gave way to a more ambiguous open plan with its attendant implications of [...] social equality and adaptability to change' (Attfield, 1999:76).

Despite the spread of modernist ideology and architectural design between the end of the nineteenth-century and the middle of the twentieth century, however, even in those novels discussed in this thesis that are set within the modernist period, there are few that reflect the physical settings of the modernist home. The principle of what Baudrillard describes as 'the proliferation of openings and transparent partitions' of modernist design are evident in the temporary boundaries erected by Mrs Armitage's former

husband Giles to contain the children in their home in the barn, but these are

practical responses symbolic of the fluidity and uncertainty of his marriage

rather than a deliberate attempt to shape and order family life (*PE*). In a

reverse of contemporary concerns over the isolation of children whose

bedrooms are equipped with computers, televisions and games consoles, the

novel also presents a reverse culture where it is the children who consistently

encroach on their mother's privacy, despite her best efforts to contain them in

bedrooms by providing them with entertainment and, later, by retreating to the

tower, usually a symbol of protection. It is only Stacy (*BM*) who, having finally

found resolution in her personal and professional life, is able to reflect this in

her purchase of a reinforced concrete modernist house in the style of architect

Le Corbusier, signifying that she no longer needs to look to the safety of the

past and the familiar in creating a future for her family and herself.

Woods suggests that 'the more that concepts and ideas formulated by

the architect have an immediacy for contemporary conditions of living,

thinking and working, the higher we will value it as architecture' (Woods,

2015:8). However, the difficulty of identifying contemporary conditions for

living amongst the complexity of relationships, habits and individual needs

that shape the home may account for attachment to familiar and embedded

patterns of living and the reluctance to move forward at a consistent pace with

changing ideologies and the structures that embody them. Indeed, the

constant pull of the past and the conviction that the present represents a

source of dwindling values, reinforces the instinct to retreat to the familiar.

William Morris noted that 'many of the best men among us look back much to

the past […] to enrich the present and the future' (Morris, 1879). But he also made an observation about the resistance to change and aversion to risk by:

> Those comfortable unconscious oppressors who think that they have everything to fear from any change […] and secondly those poor people, who, living hard and anxiously as they do, can hardly conceive of any change for the better happening to them. (Morris, 1884).

This analysis of resistance to change, especially in the very personal sphere of the home, perhaps accounts for the choice of settings for narratives that demonstrate the persistence, and therefore adaptation, of living spaces redolent of traditions and established values rather than the symbols of a more contemporary period.

Thresholds between private and public, between home and street, between neighbourhood and city, convey a sense of the wider context in which a narrative is set. As Shonfield suggests, fiction 'legitimates architectural and urban insights'. She proposes that the 'the *story* of how a space is used […] reveals an unspoken history of the role of space within the city'. The relationship between individual living space and the collection of built spaces that make up a city, the references that each element makes to the 'economic forces and superstructures of society', enriches the narratives in which they participate (Shonfield, 2010:374,375). As Augé observes, 'a great metropolis […] absorbs and divides the world in all its diverseness and inequality' (Augé, 2008:xiii). That 'diverseness and inequality' is evident in the urban landscape where buildings are 'autonomous objects' but also

'constituent parts' of a larger whole (Borsi et al. 2018:1305). Tracking through the novels featured in each chapter of this thesis, a history of social and economic change can be described, even if the line is fractured and its direction inconsistent. For buildings sited beyond the city, for example, Lowood School, Ferndean (*JE*), Helstone vicarage (*N&S*) and the village near Olivia's family home (*IW*), locations carrying connotations of decay, damp or disease are reminders of relative living conditions dependent on class and income. In the case of Stone Hall and Quayne (*NH, WG*), the encroachment of new houses provides a comparison of past and present, noted by Rhoda as her bedroom window at the new house provides a threshold that frames her future. Lynne Hapgood, describing the development of the suburbs in the early twentieth century, notes 'an entirely new kind of society […] evolving on the […] doorstep' of Britain's cities (Hapgood, 2005:1). The description of Baldry Court contrasts with the surrounding landscape of the River Thames and Monkey Island, the rural beauty and naturalness of which throws into relief the spiritual emptiness of the house.

The comparisons and values of life in the north and south of England, as well as those between the impoverished Hales, the wealthy Thorntons and the working-class Higgins and Boucher families are explored through descriptions not only of their respective homes but the streets that surround them and their possessions (*NS*). Looking out on the city of London, it is the changed view of familiar surroundings that signifies for Martin Lovell the past and future, those who fall behind and those who move forward (*BM*). Olivia recognises the boundary between the garden of her family home and the fields beyond as a representation of the personal journey she is about to

make, while the threshold between Mrs Lippincote's house and its surroundings marks the boundaries between Julia's family life and the life of her imagination (*AML*). The wanderings of Mrs Palfrey and Jane Marple around the changing surroundings of their city hotels (*MPC, ABH*) and the relationships between houses and streets in different parts of London (*LSR, PE, GSM, GT*), all testify to the changed uses of houses and the circumstances of their residents, the result of shifting economic, political and moral landscapes. The threshold between public and private, between personal and universal may be determined by physical design but impermeability is perhaps more successfully achieved by psychological intent. Audley Court, Thornton's house, Quayne and Mrs Armitage's tower are intended to be impervious to external influence and physical intrusion (*LAS,NS,WG,PE*). Yet these buildings fail to maintain that privacy because of their inhabitants' inability to confront the progress of changing times and their effect on the individual, or to accept inevitable responsibilities. The buildings that resist penetration, for example, the Belgian asylum (*LAS*) and The Willows (*VR*), whose thresholds remain impenetrable and whose inhabitants are removed from the changing world, are those where the will of those incarcerated within is so subjugated that the possibility of self-direction is removed.

The ability of living space to assert power and indicate power relations in fiction lies partly in Woods's assertion that 'design equals control' (Woods, 2015:94). The architect is therefore handed a powerful role in shaping living patterns and social relations within living spaces. However, as Woods also points out, decisions to 'build or not to build' are made by those who control

financial resources and who in turn are locked into prevailing economic and social frameworks (Woods, 2015:8). The many contributing factors combining to create current ideologies and practices are therefore evident in the built environment, directing ways of life by decisions about how and what to build. In the novels included in Chapter One, the ordered space of the country house represents within the narratives a controlling structure which embodies a traditional way of life that is being dismantled by war, industrial development and economic and social upheaval. Hegel and Williams both observe that permanence of property ownership is representative of power and status (Hegel, 1986:174; Williams, 1984:21). However, the narratives of these novels reflect the changes taking place beyond the walls of country houses by the failure of these symbols of family position to survive the progress of their stories. The closing up or abandonment of homes as a trope for signifying changing times is also used in novels discussed in other chapters in this thesis. Thornfield (*JE*) and the Castle Inn (*LAS*) are destroyed, Audley Court is abandoned (*LAS*) and Stone Hall is likely to be demolished (*NH*). The Villa Cipressi has been closed up and Bertram's Hotel is exposed as a front for illicit activity (*TH, ABH*). The May of Teck Club is destroyed by an unexploded bomb; Collingdeane Tower, constructed to provide social housing, has been abandoned by the council; and the houses in Old Mill Road, once gracious and prestigious residences of respectable Victorian families, are now derelict (*GSM,BS,GT*). The fate of these buildings speaks not only of shifts in power between the traditional upper classes and the new wealth of industry and enterprise, but the shift in working patterns and location of the class that served them. The effects of these changes play out over a long period and

reflect the power of established patterns of life and lack of ability to deal with change. Rather than face the future with agility and innovation, the males to whom responsibility for survival of the family, its wealth and reputation falls, prefer to escape to living spaces in which are embedded a rural, safe and romantic future that avoids exposure to significant change. As Augé observes, the 'obsolete form' of the cottage reflects back the image of what we are by showing us what we are no longer (Augé, 2008:21). Representing the abnegation of traditional roles and responsibilities and a vision of an ideal, the cottage is used as Jane Eyre's symbol of domestic perfection (*JE*); to signify Robert Audley's relinquishment of responsibility for Audley Court (*LAS*); as an element of the rural idyll by the Thames remembered by Chris Baldry (*RS*); as Maurice's vision of escape from his new, neat suburban home and the responsibilities of the family business (*NH*); as one of the locations used by Olivia in her attempt to find a fulfilling relationship with Rollo (*WS*); as the site of Stacy's desire to create a domestic ideal in her first marriage (*BM*); and as Jane Graham's retreat from her relationship with Toby (*LSR*). The longing for a home that embodies an ideal, a way of life unsullied by the intrusion of responsibility or the realities and practicalities of living, endures in the psyche, and is represented in physical form by a structure rooted in the history of shelter and signifying a deep reluctance to accept the uprooting caused by changing times. The cottage represents an escape from the power of convention and from responsibilities that necessitate the suppression of the essential self. The 'cottage ornée' on Monkey Island, with its connotations of isolation and simplicity, is called 'The Hut' (*RS*). This references Bachelard's vision of the hut as 'an image of solitude' and his claim that the human psyche

is so strongly bound to a state of solitude 'that we begin to dream of nothing but a solitary house' (Bachelard, 1994:37). The vertical space of the house with its cellars and attics and the axis of the tower, layer upon layer soaring into the sky, represents by contrast the accrued complications and responsibilities of the households that occupy them.

As domestic buildings carry messages about the status and ways of life of those who occupy them, so the spaces within buildings carry connotations of control. Philips and Haywood note that 'in fiction, the house becomes a metonym for a national heritage and a particular ideology of 'English' class values' (Philips & Haywood, 1998:45). The internal structure of the country house delineated roles and expectations of behaviour and social relationships, as did the design of the Victorian family house. Within those domestic spheres, the codes attached to different spaces present cultural meanings that are 'affected by and reflected in embodied practices and lived social relations' and therefore lend narrative power to the stories that unfold within their boundaries (McDowell,1999:35). The connotation of attics, discussed in earlier chapters, persists as a symbol of retreat, refuge or entrapment. From *Jane Eyre* to *The Good Terrorist*, the location of female protagonists in attic spaces speaks of their status, personal condition and social relationships. The descriptions of life conducted in the public spaces of hotels discussed in Chapter Three explain Mullholland's proposition that 'the hotel inverts the organisation of the family home' where privacy and personal control determines order (Mullholland, 2011:128). The subversion of the roles of buildings, for example shared houses originally intended as private family dwellings, lends connotations of narratives of transgression and subversion of

established values. As Mullholland observes, 'space and place become intrinsically linked; the locations in which a relationship is played out determine the type and acceptability of that relationship' (Mullholland, 2011:148). The relationships that are embodied by the stories explored in this thesis are interwoven with the spaces in which they take place. Many are of transgressive relationships that contravene social order or convention. They take place in spaces where the protagonists are either unwelcome or discomforted, where no harmony exists between habitation and inhabitant. Whether the disjunction is caused by social class, personality, conventions of sexual relationships or generational differences, the location of interaction illuminates its status and likely future. For example, the dislocation of Jane Eyre, Margaret Hale and Lucy Audley from their physical and social environments will only improve when they have the power to change both of those elements; only two of them, Jane Eyre and Margaret Hale, succeed in doing so (*JE, NS, LAS*). The unsympathetic environments of Baldry Court and The Willows condemn Kitty and Vera to an unhappy future, while the nature of the illicit relationship Olivia conducts with Rollo is thrown into relief by the variety of spaces in which this is conducted, when set against the stability of Rollo's family and marital homes (*RS, VR, WS*). The changing relationship of Jane Graham with her L-shaped room, the inability of Cressy to develop any sort of control over domestic space and Alice's affinity with a living space that means far more to her than it does to the other occupants, are further examples of the way in which location adds layers of meaning to stories (*LSR, WG, GT*).

Hall's reference to the 'making of meaning through signification' may be applied not only to buildings, the way they are inhabited and the relationships of those that inhabit them, but also to the objects placed within them and the role they play in embedding ideologies and practices (Hall, 2000:161). The importance of objects and the way in which their meanings change reflect changing ideologies. Baudrillard comments on the arrangement of objects within the design of the pre-modernist house: 'Each room has a strictly defined role corresponding to one or another of the various functions of the family unit' and 'each piece of furniture […] internalizes its own particular function and takes on the symbolic dignity pertaining to it' (Baudrillard, 2005:13). Comparing this description to Baudrillard's observations on contemporary design, reveals that 'function [of contemporary objects] is no longer obscured by […] moral theatricality' (Baudrillard, 2005:16). Once space is freed from the designated function of nineteenth-century design, furniture is released from its designating order and hierarchy. Tracking descriptions of objects through the novels and chapters in this thesis, including the importance of their choice when creating domestic interiors, provides further evidence of the relevance and signification of the spaces which provide settings for the development of narratives.

In Chapter One, Mr Reed's bed in the red-room, to which Jane was banished for her transgressive behaviour, was used as a symbol of family power and the meting out of retribution (*JE*). The enduring dominance of the bed and its connotations of the state of marital respectability is used to emphasise the conventional relationship between Mary and Reg, compared with the tenuous relationship between Alice and Jasper (*GT*). On a practical

level, Mr. Hale's observations on the possessions of northern and southern working classes illustrate their differences in values without the necessity for further explanation (*NS*). The power of objects to embody memories and create a 'home' and their potential to alienate is encompassed in the descriptions of the house at Crampton, containing familiar objects from Helstone, and the formality of the dining room at the Thornton's house (*NS*). The contrast between the contents of the renovated Baldry Court and the nursery, the one room that remains unchanged, emphasises the lack of personal resonance of Kitty's refurbishment and the importance of physical objects in preserving memories (*RS*). Similarly, the lack of meaning or personal connection involved in the upgrading of The Willows to resemble a country gentleman's residence, contrasts with Vera's bedroom, where Lucy finds some affinity to her predecessor through her possessions. The scale of objects in relation to inhabitants is also used to signify relationships; in Aunt Dot's small house, Wemyss's size overpowers the space, whereas the scale of Wemyss's furniture completely overpowers Lucy (*VR*). The packing and unpacking of objects triggers memories and reflections for Rhoda, her mother and Aunt Ellen, setting a context for the story that follows (*NH*). The description of objects and furniture in the lodgings of Oliver Barford and his wife Dorothy provides not only a visual representation of their domestic space but signifies the hopeless nature of their marriage by the cheap and ageing nature of the contents of their home (*BM*).

While the presence of the 'sedimented possessions' described by Daniel Miller are an intrinsic element of their family homes, the importance of choice of objects, colour and pattern to the creation of an empathetic and

positive living environment is embodied in the choices of Stacy, Muriel and Olivia as they make their own independent living spaces (*BM, CS, WS*). Julia is overwhelmed by Mrs. Lippincote's objects; her inability to remove or replace them is symbolic of her inability to address the issues within her marriage or to move forward personally (*AML*). The unsympathetic and unnecessary burdening of bedrooms with unwieldy furniture in the cheap hotels frequented by Julia is evidence of a lack of concern for the physical and psychological comfort of guests, or perhaps a deliberate attempt to prevent them from staying too long (*ALM*). The ordering of the seating at the Claremont is further evidence of the way in which objects control the use of public space; by contrast, the small touches of personal possessions, such as Mrs. Palfrey's Bible and copy of Palgrave's Golden Treasury, are offset by the evidence of other users in the bathroom. Glimpses of table cloths and birds in cages provide insight into others' lives as Mrs Palfrey walks the streets (*MPC*). The anthropomorphism applied to domestic spaces and furniture emphasises the nature of relationships between living spaces and inhabitants, often reinforcing their personal, psychological or social states (*LSR, GT*). Details such as marks on carpets and walls, imperfections not noticeable at first, highlight the parallels between the state of physical objects and the relationships of those who use them (*PE*), while the affectation of Joanna's literary friends who use jam jars instead of beer glasses explains all that the reader needs to know about their priorities and personalities (*GSM*). The material living spaces within which narratives are set, their contents and the interactions of those who inhabit them, draw on models of social, economic

and political life whose traditions and practices are embedded in history and therefore carry meanings that underpin stories.

This thesis focuses on female protagonists in novels by women writers, and as such on the gendered aspects of relationships and actions. It demonstrates how domestic spaces illuminate these narratives. Whether it is relationships between mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and cousins or those between strangers thrown together by circumstance, the gendered histories of domestic spaces carry a weight of meaning in the home that is often dominated by a patriarchal hierarchy that imposes expectations upon women. Such expectations are the constituents of ideologies mostly developed for economic, political or religious reasons. As Barrie proposes, 'ideology and its material means are primarily used to convince and coerce others to believe and act in prescribed ways' (Barrie, 2017:7). Louis Althusser uses the 'metaphor of the edifice' to represent the ways in which ideology is imposed through the hierarchy of a social structure; often it is women who create the 'infrastructure' that is dominated by a male 'superstructure' (Althusser, 2001:90). The narratives in the novels discussed here tell stories of women who seek to circumvent, escape or subvert domestic superstructures, often in a landscape in which the replacement of such superstructures is difficult to discern. Baudrillard observes that in adapting to new models of home, it is necessary to try to adjust from an order that carries deep somatic and psychological attachment (Baudrillard, 2005:58). The efforts of women to extricate themselves from the strictly domestic roles to which they were assigned represents a struggle between the recognition that life needs to change and the hegemonic dominance of gender order and the deeply

ingrained acceptance of that order by women. Hall describes the way this duality works as a 'stratification of power and economic resources within [a] status quo [that] seems natural and unchallengable'. Within such a stratification, those at the bottom of the hierarchy 'have been taught to devalue themselves' and therefore do not question the conditions within which they live (Hall, 2000:78).

The novels selected for this study all include protagonists for whom the questions about or the circumstances of their conditions lead to decisions that take them out of their family home environments. Initially they seldom have a clear idea of their futures; some, like Lucy Audley (*LAS*), the young wife Lucy (*VR*), Mrs Palfrey *(MPC)*, and Susan *(TRN)*, make decisions that remove them from home but that will eventually condemn them to a hopeless future. Others, like Jane Eyre (*JE*), Margaret Hale (*NS*), Stacy (*BM*) and Jane Graham (*LSR*) are able to resolve their questions and create a different pathway, even if sometimes this is secured by financial inheritance from a male relative (*JE; NS*). For the remainder, the future is left hanging. Kitty may never be able to develop a more meaningful relationship with Chris (*RS*), and the future for Rhoda (*NH*), Muriel (*CS*), Olivia (*IW,WS*), Sydney (*TH*) Julia (*AML*), Julia (*ALM*), Mrs Armitage (*PE*), Cassy (*WG*), Lynn (*BS*) and Alice (*GT*) is signposted but uncertain. The 'girls of slender means' will move on from the May of Teck Club because it has been partially destroyed (*GSM*), while Jane Marple discovers that an environment that she anticipated would symbolise a familiar way of life and a sense of continuity and security is a sham (*BH*).

Although the wider struggle portrayed in many of these novels is against the notion of patriarchal dominance and its implications for the lives of women, relationships between women present different models. To some extent the novels deal with communities of women; these vary from small family communities to the community living in Collingdeane Tower (*BS*). Sometimes these communities include men, for instance in the commune created by Alice at No. 43 Old Mill Road (*GT*). The dynamics of these relationships are closely linked with the role within the home designated to the protagonist. Although the traditionally designated roles of women may be the result of an ideology created and dominated by men, it is women themselves within the home who may reinforce these roles or who find it impossible to extricate themselves from a deeply embedded imperative of domesticity. As Baudrillard observes: 'The domestic world, almost as much as the world of work, is governed by regular gestures of control and remote control' (Baudrillard, 2005:50). Communities of women are no more likely to achieve general consensus than communities of mixed gender or families; their focuses shift from family ties to shared ideologies or circumstances. Relationships between women in the selected novels offer insights into the motivations and characters of protagonists. These may be relationships between mothers and daughters, between cousins or sisters, aunts and nieces, or may be based on same-sex attraction. Sometimes it is these relationships and their implicit expectations that provoke the crisis at the heart of the story or explain the circumstances and motivations of the protagonists and their subsequent pathways through living spaces. Mothers' social and practical expectations of daughters, played out in the family home, are often

catalysts for change. Rhoda (*NH*), Muriel (*CS*), Olivia (*IW*), and Stacy (*BM*),

stifled by the social and domestic expectations of their mothers, find an

escape route.   Miss Robinson has been so conditioned by her mother that

she will never have the spirit or means to leave home (*IW*), while Miss

Pinkerton is destined to wander forever with the Hon. Mrs Pinkerton, trying to

create a personal domestic world which is entirely inappropriate for its time

and the circumstances (*TH*). Sometimes the relationship between mother and

daughter is subverted. Margaret Hale's protective and responsible behaviour

towards her mother sets up her character, confirmed by her wider social

concerns and eventual rescue of the Thornton factory (*NS*). Stacy's

relationship with her mother Letty, is the opposite of Letty's relationship with

her own mother, Lady Stapleford. It is clear to the reader that, despite its

erratic progress, Stacy will follow an independent and ultimately fulfilling

route. Although she no longer has a family home, Mrs Palfrey prefers to share

the company of strangers than suffer the irritations of life with her daughter,

who demonstrates none of Margaret Hale's sense of responsibility for her

mother anyway. The invisible control exercised over Julia by Mrs Lippincote

through her house and possessions has a physical manifestation in the

strange behaviour of her daughter Phyllis, a disturbed young woman who

drifts in and out of the house and seems as much affected by the contents as

does Julia (*AML*). The fluctuating relationship between Lynn and her

daughter Jane is pursued through the various living spaces they occupy, each

marking a phase in their reaction to each other (*BS*). Despite the antagonism

of Alice for her mother, Alice fails to acknowledge her mother's history of

political protest, while her mother recognises that Alice is committing herself to the domestic trap she herself failed to avoid (*GT*).

The novels are liberally scattered with empty-headed, pretty or biddable women who act as foils for their less attractive, socially inferior and more interesting relatives. These may be sisters or cousins who mostly conform to the qualities required to fulfil the designated roles of women as socially acceptable marriage material, thereby highlighting the otherness of the protagonists. Eliza and Georgiana Reed (*JE*), Marigold Spencer (*IW*), Margaret Hale's cousin Edith (*NS*), Fanny Thornton (*NS*), Olivia's sister Kate and her cousin Etty (*IW,WS*), Jenny's cousin Kitty (*RS*) and Cressy's cousin Petronella (*WG*) represent women who follow a prescribed path and submit to expectations. Some of these female family relationships serve to accentuate other aspects of protagonists' characters. The courage of the unmarried Aunt Dot in standing up to Wemyss shows up Lucy's loss of self (*RS*), while the fates of Aunt Ellen and Aunt Beatrice Bennett, whose duty is to look after other family members while never acquiring a home of their own, explain by example the necessity of escape from the family home for their young nieces (*NH, CS*). The future of these elderly women is in the gift of their married relations, whose expectations are so embedded in the conventions of family roles that there is no room for consideration of these women as individuals who may have other aspirations. The pairings of sisters also provide specific functions. Muriel's cautious approach to her search for independence is justified by her more impetuous sister Connie's unhappy fate and the unsatisfactory living situations in which Connie finds herself (*CS*). Without the encouragement and intervention of her independently-minded and socially-

concerned sister Delia, Rhoda is unlikely to have made the decision to leave the family home (*CS*), while Julia's sister Norah, although following a safer path by staying at home to care for their mother, has found no more contentment than Julia (*ALM*).

Where same-sex female relationships are included in the selected novels, they happen mostly in living spaces that are not conventional family homes. Most are transitional spaces that emphasise the otherness of such relationships, reflecting contemporary social attitudes. McDowell suggests that displacement is 'the result of changing economic, social and cultural circumstances. […] It is almost always associated with the renegotiation of gender divisions' (McDowell,1999:2). The same-sex relationships occurring in these novels are conducted in hotels, hostels and communes. Sometimes they are implied rather than explicit, but signify explorations or choices that challenge social conventions. A stay in a hotel, suspended from the normal pattern of life, allows Sydney to consider futures other than marriage as she becomes infatuated with Mrs Kerr, although she rejects the attentions of Cordelia Barry. The hotel, a hothouse for new relationships, upsets the enduring partnership between Miss Pym and Miss Fitzgerald, before it is restored at the end of the novel (*TH*). Long-term habitation in a hostel intended for temporary lodgings for young working girls provides a home space for Collie and Jarvie, whose relationship is implied by their occupation of the same room. The length of their stay in the hostel suggests the difficulty of finding a permanent home for these women in a transgressive relationship (*GSM*). Same-sex relationships become explicitly acknowledged in the novels towards the end of the period of this study.

Lynn's relationship with Marsha evolves during the story into a permanent and negotiated element of family life. Although beginning in Collingdeane Tower, it is mostly conducted in Lynn's living spaces as she and her husband move from their own family home to one shared with their daughter's family. The placing of Lynn's relationship with Marsha indicates its centrality to Lynn's life, but also the importance to Lynn of her conventional family set-up and her family home (*BS*). The commune at No. 43 Old Mill Road includes Roberta and Faye, a lesbian couple. This relationship represents the diversity of such shared living spaces and, by reference to the women's group they visit, the wider community of same-sex relationships, although their presence in the transient living space of the commune suggests the uncertainty of their future, which concludes in the accidental killing of Faye (*GT*).

However, regardless of the nature of relationships, social conventions and ideals, a common thread runs through the novels discussed in this thesis. Although the protagonists are mostly transgressive in some way, the imperative for homemaking remains an essential component of self-validation. The relationship of the homemaker to the domestic space may vary; it may be permanent or temporary, but the ability to create a home, a place of spiritual rest and physical comfort, is a key element of accepting and achieving a state of change. For women for whom change is inevitable, either by desire or by circumstance, for those who are at a disjuncture with social conventions and expectations, the making of their own homes is an act of self-affirmation, a reflex that fills the space between before and after.

As Woods suggests:

> What makes home 'home' are the constants. When
> we go out into the world, we want a measure of
> discovery, adventure, the unpredictable […]. But
> when we come home we want to find the familiar and
> the predictable, perhaps only to provide a frame of
> reference [for] our experiences elsewhere. Home is
> a sanctuary where we feel safe. (Woods, 2015:67)

Tracking through the chapters of this thesis, it is interesting to note that those women who engage actively with the process of homemaking as an element of their changed and independent lives signal more positive futures for themselves than those for whom homemaking plays no part. Jane Eyre (*JE*), Margaret Hale (*NS*), Rhoda (*NH*), Muriel (*CS*), Stacy (*BM*) and Jane Graham (*LSR*) recognise the power of the domestic and the acts of creating and maintaining the home. Although the situation of each woman is different, and sometimes not fully resolved, the creation of a home sanctuary provides a symbol of grounding. In contrast, those women whose situations include a rejection of homemaking are rootless and mostly hopeless. Lucy Audley (*LAS*), Lucy (*VR*), Julia (*AML*), Julia (*ALM*), Susan (*TRN*), Mrs Armitage (*PE*), and Cassy (*WG*) have either no inclination or no skills to engage in homemaking. They have lost, or never found, their own identities. For Kitty (*RS*) and Alice (*GT*), homemaking is a tool not only used to fulfil an instinct but also to perform an act of control. In both cases, the 'homes' they create carry through an individual vision that is central to the plans of the homemaker but disregards the instincts, concerns or motivations of those

who occupy them. When the project fails, the importance invested in the act of homemaking by these two women leaves them without directions for the future. Of the remainder, Mrs Palfrey and the occupants of the May of Teck Club inhabit temporary and public domestic spaces, unable to create independent homes (*MPC, GSM*). Olivia recognises the importance of homemaking in creating an environment that reflects a lifestyle, but is unable to create the family home she would like because she is a mistress and not a wife (*WS*). Lynn maintains her home base in one way or another, as a symbol of stability, despite changing economic and personal circumstances, while the women of Collingdeane Tower survive in a domestic space that is not, and never was, suitable for habitation, but which offers a symbolic base of protest (*BS*).

Despite the passage of more than a century during which the novels were written, the tension between the struggles of individual women to achieve a state of balance and control over their own lives and an enduring social construct that embeds expectations of women's roles and behaviours remained unresolved. Although property ownership, financial independence, education and feminism opened women's worlds, women's relationships with their homes is a marker of their personal conditions. McDowell comments on the way in which Bachelard's work speaks to women 'in his recognition of how important the home is in the social construction of meaning and subjectivity' (McDowell, 1999:72). In contexts of change, regardless of period, it is often the way in which home is (or is not) created and managed that gives meaning to changed identities. Buildings order space, carrying in their design and construction significations of the political, economic and social ideologies

of the times in which they are built. The complex relationship between domestic space, the architects who design it and the planners and builders who construct it produces a framework which to some extent dictates the way life is lived within. The inhabitants who reshape and remodel leave the marks of changing lifestyles and domestic patterns. The protagonists in the novels are defined as 'other' by their reactions to social and family expectations. Putnam notes that 'the diminished public role of families leads to the ascendance of nurturance over the preoccupation with identity construction' (Putnam, 1999:148). The breaking down of the strictly ordered spaces within the home and the democratising effect of cheap and disposable furniture have dismantled the traditional significance of objects and redistributed household roles. But the instinct for 'nurturance' asserts itself in the act of homemaking. Even for women like Alice (*GT*), strongly opposed to the status quo, the power to gather and provide for a 'family' of sorts and an understanding of the power of the kitchen, becomes more important than the causes the household claims to espouse.

Mitchell's conclusion that 'spatial form is no casual metaphor but an essential feature of the interpretation and experience of literature' is a central tenet of this thesis. He describes space as 'the body of time […] which permeates all that we apprehend'. Time is 'the soul of space, the invisible entity which animates the field of our experience' (Mitchell,1980: 545-6). The buildings in which homes are created and the marks of change they carry, speak of experiences that shift through time. Domestic space provides histories that enrich narratives with revelations about the lives lived within them. Habitation and the codes it represents at any one time present a

background of expectation against which we can measure the 'otherness' of the protagonist and the scale of change necessary for that individual to become *other* than 'other'. Barrie notes the symbiosis that exists between domestic space and cultural contexts. He suggests that house and home enforce beliefs and hierarchies and embody concepts of self and family, while absorbing meaning from these (Barrie, 2017:7). In the novels selected for this study, the living spaces of female protagonists either represent models of family life which suppress their own aspirations, or are representative of a transition from such circumstances to a future that is often unresolved.

Between the date of the first novel discussed in this thesis (1847) and the last (1985), stories of women are traced through the homes they occupy and their relationships with them. The descriptions of these spaces and the components of life within them provide keys to understanding the 'reception and function' of the narratives (Hall, 2000:74). A history of change is held within these stories, sometimes difficult to discern and at other times sudden or shocking. The dominance of a patriarchal society, evident in 1847 in Jane Eyre's fight for position and independence, is still evident in 1976, in a society where the women of Collingdeane Tower protest while men make the rules (*BS*). In 1976, however, the fight against gender domination is taken out of the home and into the wider society (*BS*).

Within the family home, it is Lynn's decision that her family will adapt to her relationship with Marsha. In 1985, the collapse of Alice's homemaking project leaves her alone, defeated and vulnerable, having learnt little that will help her to find a future direction. While social and political machinery is slow to extricate itself from traditional hierarchies, changes in the balance of power

within the home and adjustment to changing gender values is as likely to be achieved at the micro level by the small actions and decisions of individuals as it is at macro level by governments and institutions. The home, its structure and spaces and the contents, meanings and relationships it contains, is a key site for mapping change. The mining of its physical and psychological details offers a rich vein of layered meaning for writers who include domestic settings in their fictional narratives.

Conclusion

> Culture at large evidences an untapped spatial and architectural understanding. The site of this understanding is in its fictions. […] By moving fictional insight to centre stage, it may yet be possible […] to argue for the constructive exploitation of the analysis and insight of the fictions of […] the novel in public discussion of the city's future. (Shonfield, 2000:387).

As an interdisciplinary study, there are many areas of knowledge that connect with the subject of this thesis. In exploring the ways in which domestic space adds meaning to fictional narrative, the argument focussed on the relationship between principal female characters and their living spaces in a selection of novels across a wide time period, namely 1847-1985. There are many directions relating to the main topic, including more specific examinations of social, political and economic histories and principles, and details of architectural design and its relationship with power structures, that could be pursued in future. The time span of this study provides an opportunity to consider structural changes in family units, the way their dynamics are reflected in their living spaces and the ways in which such living spaces are adapted over time according to circumstance and individual preference. Sometimes, those living spaces outlive their function; however, others survive

and adapt. There are points at which elements come together to create an ordering of space that produces a framework for a way of living which coalesces with social and economic hegemonies. There are other periods where the various forces involved in the production of living space are so discordant that, as in high-rise blocks like Collingdeane Tower, they produce structures that have no empathy with inhabitants and are unfit for purpose. However, although the concept of tower blocks may have been a failure in the period in which they were originally built because of issues with quality and social planning, the subsequent popularity of such buildings as expensive private homes may be seen in examples such as the refurbished Trellick Tower in London W10, and the Park Hill Flats in Sheffield. There is an interesting line of research to be pursued on this phenomenon, which may include differences in social need, economic status, changes in individual lifestyles, property ownership, meanings of home and the pressures on living space in big cities. Shonfield wonders if there could ever be a complete correspondence between an architectural and a social logic, providing successful strategies driven by the state (Shonfield, 2000:379). Such a situation would rely on an equitable and symbiotic power balance between the individual and the state.

The family homes in which the novels in Chapters One and Two are set reflect the patterns of life and identity of the owners, as well as social values and hierarchies at that point in time. However, the female protagonists are mostly in opposition to those values; they exist on the cusp of change. States of change are slow to work their way through the mechanisms of political, economic and social decision-making. Within living spaces, power

rests in property ownership. For Mrs Armitage, defined by her husband and children, it is the 'permanent, indestructible and freehold' tower that provides a metaphor for a future where she might find her own identity (*PE)*, although in the end it is the location where she is absorbed back into her family. However, it is not living spaces alone that resolve the search for home. It requires a state of mind that enables investment in the practical and spiritual conditions of homemaking. States of change unsettle both conditions, as reflected by the living spaces in which the protagonists find themselves. Their stories also suggest that the different characters in a novel interpret the same community in different ways, filtered through their own perceptions and preferences. For example, the community at Quayne is either preserving traditional values or is an oppressive and gendered prison (WG). The May of Teck Club is either a girls' hostel, or a romantic expression of a free society (*GSM*). Weare Grange either symbolises the social aspirations of Marshington or represents a stifling vision of family life and its responsibilities (*CS*). The reader's understanding is driven by the narrative voice and supported by the meanings implicit in the living spaces that provide settings for the stories. The impetus for change that runs through the narratives often unfolds at an individual level, but reflects upheavals in whole social structures. The relationship of the protagonist with home or living space acts as a marker on an individual journey but reflects the route of a whole society.

Shonfield observes that the 'conflict over […] design in architecture […] deals directly with the question of the proper framing of the urban process in space and time' (Shonfield, 2000:370). The condition of living, the spaces we occupy and the ways in which we use them, identify our values. As Christina

Hardyment observed on the BBC Radio 4 programme *A House and a Home*, the houses inherited by heroines such as Jane Eyre and Margaret Hale were not necessarily the largest and most lavish, but were the most appropriate on moral grounds (Hardyment, 2020).

Following the provision and requirements of housing through the period covered by this thesis, a picture of increasing fragmentation and uncertainty emerges. As Barrie suggests, it is society's predominant values and ideologies that give meanings to the house (Barrie, 2017:36). Large spaces are divided into smaller units. The family bond is broken by patterns of work. Space is maximised by removing divisions between living areas and houses are built on smaller plots to provide homes at affordable prices. In an article in *The Guardian*, Simon Usborne writes of what he calls 'Shoebox Britain'. He notes that 'in 2014, the average new-build in the UK was the smallest in Europe'. He describes the 'slicing and dicing' of houses and former office buildings that is 'redefining the whole idea of home, recalling a dark era of tenements and rookeries' (Usborne, 2018). In reflecting contemporary social and economic situations, the quality and space of homes is reducing. The 'room of one's own' that held such appeal for women seeking independence in the early twentieth century is now likely to cause isolation and mental and physical illness related to poor living conditions.

New concerns emerge that shift the focus of planning, currently towards sustainability. Although addressing issues that affect buildings of the future, there are valuable lessons to be learnt from the past. New council housing in Goldsmith Street, Norwich City Centre, is designed around the principle of the Victorian terrace, because of its economical use of space.

Consultation with tenants and design principles of sustainability and sociability, however, use the best of the past together with new possibilities for the future. These living spaces tell us as much about current social, physical and economic conditions as do country houses and Victorian family homes. Woods suggests a new vision for the role of architecture. Rather than the enduring, the monumental, the symbols of times past, an acceptance that purposes and needs change over time might sustain a concept of impermanence. Recycling of materials and land might provide more flexible and relevant policies that allow the built environment to adapt rapidly to social, economic, environmental and political requirements and principles. Woods considers this possibility:

> 'The new cities demand an architecture that rises from and sinks back into fluidity, into the turbulence of a continually changing matrix of conditions, into an eternal, ceaseless flux – architecture drawing its sinews from webbings of shifting forces, from patterns of unpredictable movements, from abrupt changes of mind, from alterations of position, spontaneous integrations and syntheses – architecture resisting change even as it flows from it, struggling to crystallize and become eternal, even as it is broken and scattered […] architecture seeking persistence in a world of the eternally perishing…
> (Woods, 2015:54)

However, recognising the need for such a revision of practice challenges centuries of acceptance of the importance of tradition that values the layers of meaning and memories carried by buildings. It also poses questions about the role of architects. Are they leaders or followers of change, proactive or reactive? There are examples of both approaches and their success or failure is usually tied up in economic outcome. What would such a practice mean to the value of domestic space as metaphor for change?

In reading fiction, Sophia Barnes asserts that 'we are challenged to 'realize […]' the relationship between the fictional world and our own' (Barnes, 2016:3). As readers, we carry our own interpretations and memories of living spaces, providing personal resonances and understandings. In acknowledging the weight and complexity of meaning carried by such spaces in fiction, narratives of change are clarified and amplified. Domestic space and 'home' are not necessarily the same thing, but the relationship between domestic space, inhabitants and the concept of 'home' is key to defining a state of being.

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