Conventions Were Outraged: Country, House, Fiction

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation traces intersections among subjectivity, gender, desire, and nation in English country house novels from 1921 to 1949. Inter-war and wartime fiction by Daphne du Maurier, Virginia Woolf, Nancy Mitford, P. G. Wodehouse, Elizabeth Bowen, and Evelyn Waugh performs and critiques conventional domestic ideals and, by extension, interrupts the discourses of power that underpin militaristic political certainties. I consider country house novels to be campy endorsements of the English home, in which characters can reimagine, but not escape, their roles within mythologized domestic and national spaces. The Introduction correlates theoretical critiques of nationalism, class, and gender to illuminate continuities among the naïve patriotism of the country house novel and its ironic figurations of rigid class and gender categories. Chapter 1 provides generic and critical contexts through a study of du Maurier's *Rebecca*, in which the narrator's subversion of social hierarchies relies upon the persistence, however ironic, of patriarchal nationalism. That queer desire is the necessary center around which oppressive norms operate only partially mitigates their force. Chapter 2 examines figures of absence in "A Haunted House," *To the Lighthouse*, and *Orlando*. Woolf's queering of the country house novel relies upon her Gothic figuration of Englishness, in which characters are only included within nationalist spaces by virtue of their exclusion. In Chapter 3, continuities between *Orlando* and *Between the Acts* test Woolf's call to "indifference" to war in *Three Guineas*. The country house reifies the nostalgic crisis of Woolf's feminist pacifism: political agency must occupy the borderland between nostalgic idealism and cynical self-abnegation. Chapter 4 examines popular country house novels by Wodehouse, Mitford, Bowen, and Waugh that explicitly engage, with various degrees of seriousness, with political conflicts of the 1930s and '40s. Exposing disavowed affinities among the country house ethos, English patriotism, and fascist nostalgia provides opportunities to negotiate, if not resolve, ethical quandaries of wartime neutrality, irony, and indifference. By forcing readers to confront their own circumscription by nationalist and gendered expectations, these country house novels ultimately foreclose the possibility of escaping them – but they also demand readers' renewed commitment to figures of difference and narratives of failure.

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INTRODUCTION

"This isn't real life any more," he said. "Tea on the lawn, evensong, croquet, the old ladies calling, the gentle unmalicious gossip, the gardener trundling the wheelbarrow full of leaves and grass. People write about it as if it still went on; lady novelists describe it over and over again in books of the month, but it's not there any more."

—Graham Greene

I see war (or should I say feel war?) more as a territory than as a page of history: of its impersonal active historic side I have, I find, not written.

—Elizabeth Bowen

The English country house novel, which emerged in the late nineteenth century during the first stages of the historical decline of the great houses themselves, has always belied a vexed relationship with history. The country house as it is portrayed in its namesake genre had largely ceased to exist by the end of the First World War; therefore, its presence in the twentieth-century novel always evokes a fading splendour. Paradoxically, the country house novel, which conventionally imagines the homes of the English upper class as microcosms of the genteel, hegemonic English nation, proliferated and diversified after World War I, when the British Empire, upper-class patriarchy at home, and by extension, the central values of Englishness, seemed to be in crisis. Such fiction ambivalently reflected conservative ideals at a time when the country's political, social, and economic climate was changing drastically. This dissertation offers

readings of domestic fictions, including popular and canonical works by male and female authors, that examine representations of the private, everyday lives of individuals and their relationships with the places that they identify as "home." Taking the English country house novel as a paradigmatic example of English domestic fiction, I trace representations of and intersections among subjectivity, gender, and nationalism in inter-war and wartime novels by Daphne du Maurier, Virginia Woolf, Nancy Mitford, P. G. Wodehouse, Elizabeth Bowen, and Evelyn Waugh. In different ways, these authors' works perform, expose, and critique heteronormative, patriarchal domestic ideals and, by extension, interrupt the discourses of power that underpin militaristic political certainties.

Richard Gill suggests that the autonomous, self-contained country house is a particularly apt symbol of community, and that its disappearance, paradoxically, seems to have strengthened its power as a symbol of English ideals (13, 17). At the same time, the resurgence of country house novels amid the political and social upheaval of the mid-twentieth century provided opportunities for marginalized voices to participate in the nationalist narratives that the genre typically manifests. By inhabiting the domestic spaces of the country house, figures of difference act as agents of interruption within the very social narratives that marginalize them, as I shall demonstrate. Authors can rupture patriarchal legacies and masculinist national histories by representing symbolic national spaces from the points of view of female, working-class, and queer characters. Focalizing the country house novel through figures of difference, in other words, fragments the illusion of inclusiveness that underpins narratives of national community.

Yet, even if making visible marginalized characters can undermine the patriarchal, aristocratic hegemony of the country house novel, the genre itself relies upon the persistence of those ideologies. Historically, a crux of the country house novel's plot is the question of

inheritance: for fictional estates from Mansfield Park to Howards End, domestic, economic, and familial continuity requires that characters make fortuitous marriages and designate deserving heirs. In the twentieth century, the genre's preoccupation with sustaining the estate's organizing social norms can result in the violent policing of class and gender hierarchies, and the xenophobic exclusion of figures of foreignness. If – given the social, political, and economic realities of a post-World War I Britain – the country house novel's conservatism is always articulated in the face of the inevitable obsolescence of these ideals, then the genre's characteristic nostalgia nonetheless demonstrates a commitment to conventional hierarchies that belies their declining social relevancy.

My focus on the home will address a new historicist interest in the profusion and popularity of domestic novels contemporaneous with the rise of fascism and recurrent and escalating violence on an international scale. Robert Graves and Alan Hodge titled their landmark history of the British interwar period (which they completed as the Dunkirk evacuation occurred) *The Long Week-End* (1940). With its evocations of privacy, leisure, and retreat from the public sphere, a "week-end" is a telling correlative for the inter-war period. Like many of the texts in this study, Graves and Hodge regarded the interwar period nostalgically even as it ended. Extending this point of view, anachronistic representations of the ordered country home were, perhaps, a welcome antidote to the violence of the Blitz, when one of three actual homes in Britain was damaged or destroyed. At the same time, the genre's reactionary retreat to an idealized English past can have disturbing affinities with fascist political narratives that rely on the notion of a debased present. German, Italian, and British Fascism each invoked a more innocent, simpler past to justify racist and sexist policies – a vision that can be all too easy to reconcile with the nostalgic ideals of the country house novel. The continuities between

political extremism and nostalgia (which authors and readers sometimes embraced as an escape from political realities) situate the literature of "the long week-end" of the 1920s and '30s among its political contexts, in which it was, of course, inextricably implicated.

This dissertation addresses several significant theoretical concerns, including: the ways in which power is spatialized, both publicly and within private spaces such as the home, and how these networks of power demarcate possibilities for self-determination; how queer desire circulates in and around the country house novel and how this mediates literary representations of class, gender, sexuality, nation, and history; the ways in which gendered identities are performed by characters, particularly with respect to the ideological constructs of "home" that invoke patriotic masculinity and patriotic femininity (and vice versa); and the novel as a network of relationships and identities that reflects or refuses these spatialized networks of power. These questions require that I demonstrate how and why domestic fiction can undermine and revise existing identity categories despite its prevailing conservatism.[1]

Recent critical work on the mid-twentieth-century middlebrow[2] novel has demonstrated that the distinction between highbrow modernist literature and middlebrow domestic fiction is a gendered one.[3] My project is designed to continue the important work of recovering texts often dismissed because they eschew formal experimentation, concern for cataclysmic historical moments, and non-linear narrative organization. Authors who participate in the country house literary tradition often employ such modernist tactics as the fragmentation of subjectivity, aesthetic self-consciousness, irony, and narrative indeterminacy. Although their formal organizations may be reminiscent of the realist novel, each of these texts exceeds the realist mode. By juxtaposing such authors as Virginia Woolf, central to the modernist canon and an ardent pacifist, with less-studied authors such as P. G. Wodehouse and Nancy Mitford, whose

nostalgic, farcical works typically remain relegated to the category of conservative mass entertainment, this dissertation contributes to an ongoing project – most notably taken up by Alison Light, Nicola Humble, and Kristin Bluemel – of reassessing overly rigid critical boundaries between literary modernism and the "popular" or middlebrow. Bluemel's notion of "Intermodernism" recuperates middlebrow interwar fiction, which, she argues, has been marginalized by critical categories of high modernism that privilege the experimental, the elitist, the masculine, and the pre-war, and in which "whatever is not modernism will function as modernism's other" (Bluemel 2). Bluemel defines the Intermodern as being: typically representative of working-class cultures; often politically radical; and committed to non-canonical or popular genres (1). By tracing continuities among canonical and popular works, I show how experimental works such as *To the Lighthouse*, or country house novels fixated on the lives of the upper classes, like *Rebecca* or *Wigs on the Green*, can also interrupt literary and nationalist hierarchies by intervening in generic fiction. The subversive potential of ironically deployed generic conventions, clichés, and stereotypes, which are more often associated with popular fiction, are central to Woolf's modernist satire in *Orlando*, for example, or to her pacifist critique of nationalism in *Between the Acts*. Such connections not only illuminate the political relevancy of inter-war popular fiction, but also show how experimental works of the period self-consciously participate in conventionally middlebrow forms.

This project correlates the critical work that has been done on women's literary interventions in the prevailing militaristic rhetoric of the inter-war, World War II, and post-war years[4] with the substantial body of criticism on the architecture and domesticity of and in literature.[5] Recent studies of "domestic modernism," in particular, emphasize the ways in which the spaces of private life facilitate exploration and representation of modernist concerns with

interiority. In this formulation, interior spaces not only manifest narrative coherence, but also mirror – and even delineate – subjectivity. This critical approach revises prevailing concepts of modernism that locate modernity in the public world of work, politics, and city life, which, as Janet Wolff argues, is organized and populated by men (141). By emphasizing the subject's potential for self-determination within the space of the home, re-evaluations of domestic modernism trace the emergence of traditionally silenced feminine voices. They also make a space for the everyday, conventional, and unexceptional within a modernist canon in which, as one critic suggests, "the shock value of form is [often] paramount" (Ardis 380). Victoria Rosner argues against the assumption that modernism always privileges aesthetic autonomy, suggesting, "at the very moments when modernist literature depicts itself as autonomous and sealed within psychological interiority, it is most reliant on the built environment of things, rooms, and spaces" (13). Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei endorse the feminist potential of this domestic turn: "The domestic space of the house and garden operates as a site of agency and mode of communication for female novelists and protagonists, with the domain of the private, the interior and the everyday replacing the public sphere… as the focus of attention"; they further suggest that this new emphasis on the domestic sphere facilitated, in the interwar years, the entry of the feminine domestic space into the discourse of history and politics: "The domestic in itself became the national" (1, 153). Briganti and Mezei's and Rosner's studies are exemplary interventions in the story of literary modernism, which uncover a masculine norm behind many theories of the modern and challenge distinctions between highbrow and middlebrow fiction, experimental and conservative form, and public and private spheres, undermining binary distinctions that reify patriarchal structures of power.

I expand upon this already-vibrant field of feminist studies of inter-war and wartime

domestic fiction by including works by both male and female authors. Male authors also wrote country house novels, and it is productive to question the ways in which a male author might also subvert the ruling attitudes and assumptions of the patriarchal household. In several of these novels, queerness, non-heterosexual desire, and anxious masculine gender performance, for example, not only inflect but actually reorganize the gendered sphere ideology that structures the domestic novel. Although the criticism that has been published on domestic fiction as a specifically "feminine" genre is crucial in opening a space for women's lives and women's self-determination against the backdrop of international modernism – and this dissertation draws substantially on that body of work – such an approach threatens to reify a gendered separation of spheres. I illuminate the ways in which domestic fiction can transgress and undermine the gendered categories that organize the family home, and disrupt the political values that posit the patriarchal nuclear family as the domestic ideal. Examining the over-the-top nostalgia of Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, for example, in comparison to representations of memory and desire in du Maurier's *Rebecca* shows how both texts rely upon temporal and spatial displacement to mediate circulations of queer desire. Both authors emphasize the role of artifice in their negotiations of English history, ironically undermining the *gravitas* of important personages, great events, and hegemonic spaces that guarantee the persistence of such narratives. By expanding the discussion of conflict, gender, and domesticity to include works by male authors, I aim to read these domestic narratives not only as feminine acts of resistance to oppressive patriarchal authority, which they certainly are, but also as campy re-presentations, and even endorsements, of the English home. Queer and straight, male and female, dominant and marginalized characters can reinscribe their roles within the mythologized country house, in which, as Jonathan Dollimore observes of oppressive gender roles, "identification with, and desire for,

may coexist with parodic subversion of" (233). When authors recognize the "naturalness" of domestic sphere ideology as an oppressive fiction but nonetheless commit to its representations, they can ironically undermine the coherence of gendered, class-bound, and nationalist truths from within the very narrative forms that seem to reify them.

The domestic novel is a particularly appropriate genre in which to confront categories of "Englishness" and the ways in which they overdetermine identities and desire in the context of the 1920s, 1930s, and World War II. Ina Habermann identifies a "negotiation and reconfiguration of national identity in the 1930s and 40s," which corresponded with Britons' struggles to recover from the trauma of the First World War, economic hardships, changing class and gender relations, and the burgeoning of mass media and the entertainment industry (6). Habermann's definition of "interwar Englishness" as "a 'symbolic form,' created by the interaction of various kinds of mythmaking and memory, and disseminated in medialized form to shape the cultural imaginary of the community" (8), is germane to my study. This dissertation examines the ways in which texts reflect or revise stereotypically "English" attributes. At the level of character, these include "a sense of humour, stoicism and emotional reticence (the 'stiff upper lip'), politeness verging on hypocrisy, self-deprecation, decency, endurance, individualism and refined manners, as well as hooliganism" (Habermann 7). English society is typically perceived as being "class-ridden but also harmonious (as in the 'upstairs, downstairs' motif), [and] the political system seems characterized by institutional stability and traditional continuity, and ideas about the country itself comprise pastoralism and ruralism" (Habermann 7).[6] Like Habermann, I am interested in the role English stereotypes play in grounding representations of national communities. My study departs from Habermann's considerations of the mythopoeisis of Englishness by focusing on the deconstruction and fragmentation of nationalist myths

through and within the discourses of patriarchal nationalism. Whereas Habermann reads *Rebecca* as an account of "the development of collective identity focalized through an individual," for example (42), I consider how the novel's narrator manipulates ideals of collective identity to evade nationalist and patriarchal hierarchies.

The mythological country house attests to the symbolic significance of harmonious class relations, institutional stability, and ruralism for English nationalism. Raymond Williams has famously characterized the country house as "a myth functioning as a memory," which supplants the historical realities of imperial domination and classist oppression with an illusion of a genteel, harmonious homeland (24, 43). Roland Barthes's theorization of myth as a secondary level of linguistic signification can help elucidate how nationalist stereotypes operate in the country house novel. As a second-order semiological system, myth operates as a metalanguage (Barthes 138). It signifies a concept by alienating the signifier of meaning and providing it with form, which in turn conveys the concept of the myth (140-1). Applying this semiological system to the mythic country house, one can see how its specific meanings – the classist and imperialist oppression upon which its domestic economy relies, and the real experiences of the women and men who live and work there – become obscured, and the country house as a mythic form manifests the concept of English economic, patriarchal, and imperial might. Barthes explains: "The form of myth is not a symbol…. But at the same time [its] presence is tamed, put at a distance, made almost transparent; it recedes a little, it becomes the accomplice of a concept which comes to it fully armed… once made use of, it becomes artificial" (143). On the other hand, "to the qualitative poverty of the form, which is the repository of a rarefied meaning, there corresponds the richness of the concept which is open to the whole of History" (143). Although myth evacuates its signifier of historical and cultural

specificity, in other words, the concept of the myth is nonetheless historically contingent. By making visible those individuals, such as female, working-class, and queer characters, whose experience is obviated by the unifying myth of the country house, these novels can recuperate meanings "distanced" by mythic form and reveal nationalist paradigms as being both artificial and historical. "When a myth reaches an entire community," Barthes tells us, "it is from the latter that the mythologist must become estranged if he wants to liberate the myth" (185). Likewise, by revealing the unifying ideal of the country house as a "myth functioning as a memory" that relies upon exclusionary social paradigms, authors paradoxically fragment ideals of national community. Such a project plays nationalist mythopoeisis backwards, by making visible figures of difference within the totality that nationalist myths promote.

As England prepared for World War II, the gendered implications of nationalist myths became increasingly fraught with contradictions. The proliferation of domestic fiction coincided with an apparent re-entrenchment of gendered sphere ideology as the government mobilized the population for another war. The looser gender roles and carnivalesque atmosphere of sexual license that flourished after the First World War, epitomized by the Bright Young People,[7] were replaced by the much more conservative values of the home front. During the late 1930s, when patriarchal, militaristic ideologies of imperial expansion and appeasement caused political tensions to escalate, and during World War II, when civilians were widely mobilized, the conventional identification of women with the home, the bastion of idealized Englishness, and men with the public sphere of work, politics, and battle once again became a touchstone of nationalistic discourse. Within the logic of "home front" militarism – a term that evokes the jingoistic propaganda of World War I[8] – every aspect of "home" life was conscripted into the public war effort, including the ways in which gendered identities and family life were organized.

Images of "patriotic femininity," which married the mobilization of women with heterosexual, patriarchal ideals, were an important theme in wartime propaganda (Goodman 41). Women were encouraged to contribute to the war effort by entering the public sphere and doing work normally perceived as "a man's job," but were always expected to recognize their new roles' impermanence, only "for the duration," and their feminine identities as being essentially tied to the private world of family life. Meanwhile, compulsory heterosexuality, polarized gender categories, and the social devaluation of femininity contributed to a misogynistic ideal of male patriotism. Such rhetoric correlated with the dehumanization of Britain's adversaries in homophobic and sexist propaganda: through stereotypes of monstrously effeminate Asian men, for example, or of hysterically emotional Italians and Germans. As Kathy J. Phillips explains, common taunts that branded those who did not want to fight as "sissies" – implicitly demoting a man to his "sister" – manipulated men into enlisting. Such tactics, observes Phillips, "depend on men's detecting within themselves their basic human similarity to women and yet interpreting such commonality as a failure. The fear of showing this inevitably failed masculinity still feeds into war by requiring a perpetual fight as the only proof of a never-finished manhood" (17). Wartime appeals to heterosexual gender ideals posited that essentialist gendered identities were inextricably tied to one's love of country and to "typically" English moral qualities, such as stoicism, bravery, and resourcefulness. Failure is the necessary end point of these constructions. Given the ideals of "patriotic" femininity and masculinity, and the disruptions to private and public roles that war necessitated, it was always impossible to do one's wartime duty *and* live up to its conservative, patriarchal codes of self-presentation.

The uneasy tension between public and private identities that characterized World War II nationalism therefore produced uncertainty and instability at the core of seemingly ossified

identity categories. Petra Rau describes how home front militarism could blur the line between combatant and non-combatant: "As few areas of life remained without official exclamation marks ('Dig for Victory!', 'Eat greens!', 'Eat less bread!', 'Keep mum!', 'Save now!'. 'Lend – don't spend!', 'Post early!', 'Get a War Job!'), civilians felt as regimented as soldiers" (*English Modernism, National Identity and the Germans*, 189). Such obvious conscription of the home, furthermore, could be dangerously reminiscent of the totalitarian and draconian tactics of fascist regimes abroad (Rau 189). Women, even as they were held up as ideals of English femininity (patriotic and stoic, yet in need of protection), were also vilified in propaganda as being prone to gossip, and therefore as potential "leaks" or spies (Rau 190). Rau argues that propaganda situated women in an impossible "in-between" state, as both compatriots on the home front and as the potential "foe within": "Women have no tenable relation to this discourse, whether they talk too much, not at all or to the wrong people" (195). For English men and women during wartime, gendered and political categories were already collapsing; the proliferation of domestic fiction during this time reflects the crisis of gendered patriotism in different ways, ranging from Virginia Woolf's earnest condemnation of patriarchal militarism in *Between the Acts* to Elizabeth Bowen's cynical, insistently domesticated rendering of international espionage in *The Heat of the Day*.

During the mid-twentieth century, the class hierarchies underpinning the mythos of the English country house were also changing: the assumption that the lifestyles of the landed gentry symbolize and uphold English values, and thus are implicitly ethical, was undermined in the years encompassing the two world wars. While upper-class policy makers led the nation into war, working- and middle-class "little Englanders," and their roles in war work at home and abroad, emerged as alternative, widely valorized exemplars of English moral integrity. The glimpses that mid-twentieth century English country house novels offer into the "everyday

lives" of upper-class families reflect, and sometimes revise, a bourgeois fantasy of aristocratic manners and taste. This bourgeois class awareness not only belies an anxiety about what it means to be English when the political, social, and economic climate in England was changing drastically, but also represents a watershed moment of middle-class self-determination and literary authority. Nicola Humble argues that the mid-twentieth-century middlebrow novel "not only reflected shifts in middle-class opinion and ideology, but also inspired them…. The 'feminine middlebrow' in this period was a powerful force in establishing and consolidating, but also resisting, new class and gender identities" (3). Although some of the novels featured in this study, such as Wodehouse's Jeeves and Wooster stories, are more obviously meant for mass consumption than others, each of these texts reflects an awareness of class hierarchies and class mobility, and each negotiates middle-class English values – complacently, satirically, resistantly, nostalgically, and sometimes in two or more ways simultaneously. At the same time, these country house novels often devalue working-class characters' domestic labour, even as they require it to articulate their otherwise radical social critiques. The domestic novel's affinities with the middlebrow, the domestic, and the feminine make it a vexed site of exploration for these categories, where entrenched classist prejudices paradoxically coexist with characters' and authors' remapping of class lines.

My project is grounded on the argument that everyday routines and intimate spaces are infused with political significance. Working from Michel Foucault's model of discipline as a diffuse and subtle mechanism that produces "docile bodies" and "proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space" (*Discipline and Punish* 138, 141), I trace the relationships of power that structure literary representations of the English home, and argue that, as manifestations of networks of social conditions and power relations, neither the home front nor

the remote country house can be bracketed from the theatre of war. This spatial analysis will also draw on work by Michel de Certeau, Benedict Anderson, and Giorgio Agamben, exploring how space is infused with meaning and authority, and how these ordered spaces are imagined and navigated by individuals. In his examination of the discourses of power that produce, police, and articulate modern subjectivity, Foucault suggests that institutions which seem essential might, in fact, be contingent; yet, despite their contingency, they are inescapable. In my readings of domestic fiction, however, some characters evade, if not escape, structures of authority despite the prohibitions and surveillance that infuse the home. De Certeau's work in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, which examines how individuals can "poach" from and redeploy oppressive discourses of power, will help to explain how such ironic evasion might be possible.

By differentiating between the disciplinary organization of space and subjects' phenomenological experience of these terrains, de Certeau argues that it is possible to speak, read, and act for oneself even when it is impossible for the subject completely to escape oppressive ideologies. Taking into account the diffuse relations of power set forth by Foucault, de Certeau "bring[s] to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and make-shift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of 'discipline'" (de Certeau xv). The "tactic," which stands in direct relation to the "strategies" accessible to disciplinary power,

> cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutionalized localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of the tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. (de Certeau xix)

If the totalizing, organizing power of the carceral[9] at once establishes binary oppositions and

contains both sides of those oppositions – as Foucault describes, "tak[ing] back with one hand what it seems to exclude with the other" (301) – de Certeau's tactical subject practices "an art of being in between," in which, "without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of plurality and creativity" (30). Engaging in continual acts of "poaching" in which they operate within the space of discipline, using the products of power for operations of their own, de Certeauvian subjects assert themselves by consuming, redefining, and redeploying the language of the other.[10] For de Certeau, poaching constitutes an act of enunciation and can include such disparate activities as speaking, reading, walking, cooking, and inhabiting a dwelling (33, 40). De Certeau's theory works through Foucault's discursive model by manipulating the affinities Foucault establishes among space, narrative, and agency: the speech act, for example, makes the discourse of power "habitable." Narratives, like spaces, reflect and perpetuate discipline in seemingly innocuous ways. By inhabiting these spaces and stories, individuals can improvise new meanings within them, however fleetingly. Furthermore, practices of resistance are, in de Certeau's formulation, practices of consumption: by continuously re-signifying and disrupting the ordering of reality by those with will and power, subjects deploy the language of power and articulate difference in unexpected and inassimilable ways. Testing de Certeau's renegotiation of Foucauldian power mechanisms, this study examines the carefully policed, gendered, and classed space of the country house novel – and the real hierarchies and identities that the genre *appears* to reify – as textual places that are rife with poachers. Multiplicity, disorder, and slippage are ungovernable counterparts to the apparent conservatism and conventionality of the text, destabilizing oppressive hierarchies without collapsing them.

I also extend Anderson's work on nations as "imagined communities," which illuminates

the ways in which private experiences are perceived as being tied to the experiences of one's compatriots, connecting each individual to a national collective with shared values and interests. Anderson explains how phenomena of print capitalism – taking the circulation and consumption of newspapers as an illustrative example – convince the individual that "the imagined world" of the nation "is visibly rooted in everyday life… [a] fiction [that] seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations" (36). Nationalism, the ability to convince individuals to work, fight, and die for an extended community that is imagined to be disinterested, thus establishes "the links between the dead and the as yet unborn" (Anderson 11). Following Anderson's line of inquiry, this project considers how novels construct Englishness, establishing a sense of a national community that is at once imagined in fiction and perceived, to varying degrees, to be real. Furthermore, I demonstrate how staging narratives of private rebellion and clandestine resistance – undermining conventional gender roles, for example – disrupts the national imaginary that depends on the acceptance and enactment of these values.

Such private revisionism, however, always occurs *within* the purview of patriarchy and patriotism. Giorgio Agamben illustrates this point with his assertion that political power is grounded in the very impossibility of distinguishing between the nation and that which it excludes. The status of citizen is not granted equitably, and so the concept of "a people" always contains a constitutive alienation (*Means Without End* 30). Achieving political immanence means being conscripted into nationalist narratives; claiming an identity outside the limited roles the nation offers means suffering erasure from the community without escaping its organizing mechanizations of power. For this reason, Agamben identifies the refugee – who is both circumscribed within national space and excluded from political power – as the representative

figure of modern political life (19). To recognize the refugee in oneself can constitute an act of self-assertion *through* self-effacement. This, Agamben argues, opens a space for political change: only in a world where states have been "perforated and topologically deformed" by citizens' recognitions of themselves as the refugees they are can the relationship between the nation and that which it ostensibly excludes be reimagined (25). At the same time, claiming such a disruptive role requires acknowledging one's exclusion from political power.[11] Within this framework, therefore, individual agency remains limited.

As Agamben demonstrates, what Benedict Anderson designates as one of the "paradoxes" of nationalism, its "'political' power" versus its "philosophical poverty and even incoherence" (5), both includes individuals within a national community and alienates them from it. Inevitably, then, as Slavoj Žižek observes, nationalism "thus becomes an 'internal limit', an unattainable point" that prevents national subjects from achieving "full identity-with-themselves" (*For They Know Now What They Do* 110). By distinguishing itself from other nations (often through cultural stereotypes), a national group actually alienates individuals within that group, because they do not embody nationalist ideals. This point reinforces Agamben's argument that ideology operates most powerfully at its margins, producing the "exclusionary inclusion" that characterizes and situates the figure of the refugee (*HS* 8). Nationalism, in other words, inevitably divides the group it purports to unite. Žižek's and Agamben's critiques of nationalist ideology, like Judith Butler's critique of gender, position categorically policed identities as norms that can never be fully internalized (Butler 179). The correspondences that their arguments illuminate between external borders and inner limits – and the policing of appearances and the assumption of "natural" identity categories – helps one to discern the theoretical affinities between the naïve patriotism of the country house novel and its ironic

figurations of rigid class and gender categories.

Offering accounts of upper class, eccentric English families in open-ended, ambiguous narratives, the authors I study deploy the signs and markers of Englishness while refusing unambiguous belief in the ideologies that underpin them. They thus disrupt not only class and gender categories, but also the more general boundaries that realist narratives rely upon to make meaning. My inquiry into models of domesticity, individual subjectivity, and Englishness – and the political, social, and philosophical concerns that they share – not only interrogates each of these three kinds of spaces, but also problematizes the realist mode that seems to characterize domestic fiction. Theorizing the ways in which gender roles are mapped and remapped through representations of the English home is central to this undertaking. Conventional markers of Englishness in works by du Maurier, Woolf, Mitford, Wodehouse, Bowen, and Waugh – and the gender norms that they presuppose – persist through characters' performance of conventions while the texts evacuate those conventions of their political force. When identities are perceived as performative and lacking in essential qualities, imagined communities fail to cohere. Consensus becomes problematic and illusory, which results in the disruption of the narrative coherence of the novel and the impossibility of closure.[12] With their shared affinity for aestheticism, aristocratic detachment, irony, theatrical frivolity, and sexual transgression,[13] these narratives not only attest to the authors' engagement with literary modernism, but also queer prevailing modernist conventions. Authors demonstrate the extent to which, to borrow again from Agamben, the refugee's constitutive alienation within the nation-state is not the exception but the rule – the extent to which, in other words, all modern subjects are refugees (*HS* 115). Such a recognition underpins an "aesthetic of failure" (Cleto 3), as I shall demonstrate. These texts' elevation of paradox, perversity, and performance over authenticity – and, by extension,

their undermining of patriarchal, heteronormative values – are defining aspects of both their modernism and their subversive politics of desire.

Both the country house novel and the country house decorating style are intrinsically elegiac – both thrived in the mid-twentieth century, when country houses themselves were becoming increasingly unsustainable (Littlejohn 40). Although the novels that this study examines feature many kinds of domestic spaces, including great estates, rural cottages, London flats, suburban houses, and an Irish "Big House," in each novel a country house is central to the plot. "Country house style" is manifested as a literary tradition; as an architectural, landscaping, and interior design aesthetic; and as the real conditions of life in the houses themselves; all three will inflect this study. "Country-house style" exemplifies the phenomenon of retrospective invention that characterized popular representations of these quintessentially English homes: for example, the "Yellow Room," repeatedly cited as the epitome of the English country house interior, was designed by an American, Nancy Lancaster, in 1958-59, eighteen years after the first country house was opened to tourists by the National Trust (Ward 102, Littlejohn 42). Moreover, the "Yellow Room" was not located in the country – or in a house either, for that matter – but in Lancaster's London *pied-à-terre*, above the design firm of Colefax & Fowler where she worked (Ward 102). As Louise Ward summarizes:

> this fantasy of comfortable living was taken to be more than an evocation of how life might be lived – or even had *been* lived… the reality is that an American fabricated an identity for the English country-house ideal which was later taken to be both a tradition of aristocratic interior decoration and the epitome of Englishness, at home and abroad. (105)

Thus the invention and performance of Englishness in the context of the country house comes

to stand in for real, historical domestic spaces that were, by many accounts, actually dark, cluttered, drafty, and uncomfortable.[14] This literary study examines how the country-house paradigm in domestic fiction achieves a similarly performative nostalgia for an ideal of Englishness that, as the literature subversively implies, only ever existed as a temporally displaced fantasy of a kind of sufficiency and plenitude – an impossible paradigm of class, gender, and national identity that is revealed to be devoid of intrinsic ontological or ethical status.

Theoretical work on camp, defined by Fabio Cleto as "a discursive resistance, a semiotic excess" that articulates "an aesthetic of failure" (3), will help to demystify these authors' use of a symbol of Englishness that is economically unsustainable, ideologically outdated, and architecturally obsolete. By aestheticizing, celebrating, *and* ironically undermining the ethos of the country house, these novels represent a "longing for… an intrinsic, essential, stabilizing 'core'" (Cleto 3) even as they eulogize, satirize, and even vilify belief in an inherently moral "oaken heart" of Englishness. Like Englishness, class positions, gender, and sexuality are, of course, epistemological constructs; characters likewise achieve stylized performances of these identity categories rather than unproblematic states of being. My critique of gender identities in domestic fiction as being self-conscious and spectacular will draw substantially on Butler's work on performativity; for Butler, "the 'internal' is a surface signification, and gender norms are finally phantasmatic, impossible to embody" (179). Butler's theorization of gender intersects productively with Dollimore's definition of camp as being "situated at the point of emergence of the artificial from the real, culture from nature – or rather when and where the real collapses into artifice, nature into culture; camp restores vitality to artifice, and vice versa, deriving the artificial from, and feeding it back into or as, the real. The reality is the pleasure of unreality"

(225). Through the "real unreality" of a camp aesthetic, texts that seem conventional can actually disrupt the coherence of realist narrative – just as Nancy Lancaster's "Yellow Room" at once cites, celebrates, and undermines real country houses in its "country-house style," which Lancaster achieves through imitation, invention, and pastiche. The "country-house style" comes to stand in for actual country house aesthetics (or lack thereof), revealing the values conveyed by the country house interior (understated good taste, class hierarchy, patriarchy, and domestic harmony) always to have been a nostalgic notion of what a country house *should* be like. Similarly, novels may self-consciously over-perform generic conventions, characters may offer highly stylized examples of ideal class, gender, and sexual identities, and domestic plots may depend so heavily on gendered sphere ideologies that they threaten to collapse, claustrophobically, in upon themselves – each of these seemingly conservative tactics might mask an ironic subversion of nationalistic and patriarchal ideologies.

In her essay "Notes on Camp," Susan Sontag suggests that the "camp sensibility" is central to modern culture (64). Equating campiness with modernity is apt, but Sontag's essay is problematically reductive, defining camp as a homosexual "sensibility." Dollimore undermines the notion of "a gay sensibility" that Sontag's essay reifies, and instead examines camp in terms of contradiction – camp as "a parodic critique of the essence of sensibility as conventionally understood" (222). The focus on "perversity and paradox" that Dollimore uses to describe camp's "revenge on authenticity" is most useful to my project. Such a dynamic delineation of the field can encompass the disparate works I study, in which spectacular navigations of convention, space, and identity categories abound – revealing campy performance at play in unexpected class-bound, gendered, and politically overdetermined places. Pamela Robertson's definition of female camp, for example, as "a parodic play" in which women laugh at their own

image even as they acknowledges its power (277), demonstrates the ways in which women participate in the perverse gaze of the self-conscious camp subject and spectator. Such an approach should also elucidate the theoretical methodology of this project. Given the ambivalent interplay among nostalgia, enjoyment, and failure in these texts, Foucault's work on spatialized power relations and the production of knowledge, de Certeau's work on consumption and evasion, Anderson's work on imagined communities, Agamben's work on the nation's inclusive exclusions, and Butler's work on performativity each productively articulate ways in which power and desire circulate. This project interrogates connections among their disparate theoretical models in order to examine the ways in which mid-twentieth-century British domestic fiction critiques prevailing "sensibilities" grounded in rigid paradigms of gender, home, class, and nation.

Foucault has persuasively demonstrated how sexuality has come to represent a central truth of individual identities,[15] and how diffuse structures of power that police and produce desire are distributed spatially. In *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*, Aaron Betsky defines "queer space" as

> a useless, amoral, and sensual space that lives only in and for experience. It is a space of spectacle, consumption, dance, and obscenity. It is a misuse or deformation of a place, an appropriation of the buildings and codes of the city for perverse purposes. It is a space between the body and technology, a space of pure artifice. (5)

Betsky further explains the relation of queer space to the middle-class ordering of space, in which patriarchal, heteronormative values are reflected in architecture. The single-family home, for example, glorifies the nuclear family, while public squares and boulevards suggest correct

modes of public behaviour. At the same time, as I shall demonstrate, the disavowed and/or obsessively policed persistence of queer desire is necessary to the carceral organization of such domains. Yet, "none of these worked too well for queer men… the public space was where the queer man had to hide his desire. They were the other side, or ob-scene, of the middle-class scene… the closet was the ultimate interior" (9-10), as Betsky observes, mobilizing Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's studies. Drawing upon Betsky's work on the ordering of the middle class "scene," and the simultaneous production of the "ob-scene," this study will examine the "in-between spaces" that not only queer men, but also straight men, straight and queer women, and others whose sexual and gendered identities do not quite fit into the English domestic ideal inhabit *within* the country house novel. These novels make visible the necessary but hidden counterparts to domestic spaces of gendered performance and display. In different ways and for different kinds of characters, women's boudoirs, empty rooms, attics, basements, crypts, and servants' quarters all provide a space for the "ob-scene" correlatives to the country house's traditional "scene." By navigating these sites, characters inject multiplicity and alternative possible histories into linear patriarchal narratives. De Certeau's work on the in-between spaces of everyday life and Agamben's figure of the refugee will also be of particular use in theorizing the "queer spaces" that permeate the genre. The value of this project lies in its task of recognizing opportunities for disruption or evasion, however limited and ambiguous, within synecdochal domestic manifestations of Englishness – at a time when easy belief in political absolutes was revealed, on an international scale, to be gravely dangerous. The ethical and political import of authors' ironic, aesthetic evasion or subversion of oppressive discourses is fundamentally ambiguous – a consideration that became more urgent as the real political consequences of conservative ideals became increasingly more difficult to escape.

Chapter 1 of this study questions the extent to which a seemingly conservative, popular country house novel – Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) – might ironically subvert the patriarchal and nationalist legacies that it enshrines in its pages. One of the most commercially successful English novels of the twentieth century, *Rebecca* is generally received as a conventional romance. Yet, its romantic resolution requires the unnamed narrator's collusion with her husband's murder of his eponymous first wife. The narrative figures this quandary in terms of Gothic terror, which is presented as the exception to "normal" feminine experience but in fact underpins and reaffirms patriarchal hegemony. How and why is this romantic "resolution" presented as an adequate happy ending to the novel's marriage plot? By reading the narrator's masochistic, anti-feminist account as an ironic S/M performance, I demonstrate how the narrator's fictional memoir in fact covertly dismantles the sexist and classist ideologies it seems to take for granted. The novel's iconic estate, Manderley, is a site of continual and uncontainable boundary-crossing rather than a bastion of essentialist class and gender positions, and therefore disorders nationalist hierarchies. At the same time, *Rebecca* epitomizes a central problematic of the twentieth-century country house novel, one that will be addressed throughout this dissertation: its subversion of oppressive hierarchies relies upon the persistence, however ironic, of patriarchal and patriotic social codes. That transgressive feminine desire is exposed as the necessary center around which such codes operate only partially mitigates the violent force of homophobic and sexist expectations.

In Chapter 2, I focus on three works by Virginia Woolf: "The Haunted House" (1921), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *Orlando* (1928). This shift from du Maurier, a master of mass-market paperbacks, to Woolf, who is, of course, widely acknowledged as a major modernist author, is intended to emphasize commonalities among popular and avant-garde domestic fiction. Woolf,

who set many of her works in the city, chose rural settings for these country house narratives. Extending my discussion of the Gothic from Chapter 1, I examine each narrative's setting as a "haunted house." Woolf employs Gothic tropes to explore the uncertainty of twentieth-century political life, in which the pervasiveness of banal, everyday violence manifests Gothic terror on an international scale. By comparing ghostly "absent presences" in these three texts, which are rarely considered together, I consider how Woolfian haunting causes queerness and indeterminacy to proliferate within hegemonic nationalist discourses. "A Haunted House" both demarcates and destabilizes domestic, narratological, and subjective boundaries through experimental focalization of its setting through shifting and indeterminate consciousnesses. The story endorses community building even if unambiguous connection is finally impossible. My analysis of *To the Lighthouse* considers the means by which invisible or disavowed feminine presence sustains social connection both through and in spite of patriarchal and militaristic histories. Turning to *Orlando*, I show how the titular hero/ine revels in material and corporeal signifiers of upper-class English patriarchy, including his/her sprawling estate, while overturning the gender norms that give meaning to the trappings of domesticity. Characters for which nationalist historical narratives cannot or will not account have no access to a utopian "elsewhere" – but the ways in which Woolf furnishes the symbolic homes that confine them reveal totalizing narratives to be haunted by the possibility of fragmentation. By making visible characters that are marginalized by and within nationalist, patriarchal ideals, Woolf invites readers to recognize Englishness itself as being fundamentally fractured by its constitutive exclusions.

Chapter 3 explores similarities and differences between *Orlando* and *Between the Acts* (1941) with respect to the historical and cultural contexts in which they were written. The

campiness of *Orlando* gains new significance when Woolf, writing against the backdrop of an impending world war, takes up similar themes of haunting, difference, and the performance of self in *Between the Acts*. By reading through the literary, ethical, and political trajectories linking these novels and Woolf's pacifist polemic *Three Guineas* (1938), this chapter tests the efficacy of purposeful "indifference" as an alternative to militarist discourse. Queerness and nostalgia complicate the tension between unity and disunity that is central to *Between the Acts*. They structure a parodic historical framework, which intersects productively with the ethical potential of haunting. By considering the trajectory of these works as a Woolfian project of articulating a feminist rhetoric that refuses the either/or logic of military aggression, I examine the efficacy of (and posit limits to) Woolf's domestic narratives in addressing and alleviating the violence that, Woolf implies, pervades not only the international stage but also the most intimate spaces of private life. Formally and thematically, *Between the Acts* invites readers' commitment to characters that are at once caught within and alienated by spectacles of community. The novel thus endorses the dissolution of nationalist, gendered, and class-bound binaries – not through a masculinist act of synthesis, but through an explicitly feminized and queer privileging of in-betweenness.

In Chapter 4, I turn to popular country house novels by Nancy Mitford, P. G. Wodehouse, Elizabeth Bowen, and Evelyn Waugh. Mitford's *Wigs on the Green* (1935), Wodehouse's *The Code of the Woosters* (1938), Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1949), and Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945; 1960) interrupt their country house narratives with direct representations of political and martial conflict. Like *Between the Acts*, these narratives expose the affinities among the country house novel's conventions and fascist rhetoric. Alarming continuities between unifying nostalgic myths, on the one hand, and fascism's violent reduction

of binaries, on the other, emerge with mounting urgency in these seemingly apolitical novels. Not just snobbish elegies to a disappearing class system or escapist nostalgia, these works achieve a self-conscious performance of nostalgia; their tones of snobbery and gentle satire conceal a critique of the untroubled beliefs and easy ideological positions that their characters articulate. Camp allows these authors to exaggerate and defamiliarize the complacency of English upper-class life, thus ambivalently evading or ironically undermining the heteronormative, patriarchal, imperial ideologies that underpin the most intimate domestic routines of the mythic country house. Ironically deployed or campy nostalgia, however, can be difficult to distinguish from real conservatism. This chapter questions whether nostalgia can ever articulate a productive social critique, or if it is fundamentally limited by its inherently reactionary escapism.

In the dissertation's conclusion, I consider the ethical import of authors' interventions, however ironic, in nostalgic national fictions. As Isa Oliver muses in *Between the Acts*, "surely it was time someone invented a new plot, or the author came out from the bushes" (*BA* 194). As these texts demonstrate, nationalist ideologies are totalizing. No "new," more inclusive narrative is finally available. Is it enough, then, for the author to "come out from the bushes"? Is it ethically or politically consequential for authors to expose the social norms that nationalist ideologies take for granted as being performative, morally vacuous, and divisive rather than unifying? By seeking after alternative visions of community, authors renegotiate but inevitably replicate exclusionary boundaries. Given this limitation, I propose that ironic interrogations of stereotypical English ideals are nonetheless ethically valuable, albeit provisionally and tenuously so, insofar as they open up spaces of difference wherein individual subjectivities can be recognized. By inviting historically revisionary and empathic reading practices, these country

house novels illuminate the potential for social and political transformation.

The parameters of this project demand an updated approach to British fiction of the 1920s, '30s, and '40s: comprising late modernist and middlebrow novels, abstruse experimentalism and direct political engagement, campy self-satire and conscientious protest, works of the period exceed critical categories and share common concerns with preserving, redefining, or refusing concepts of self, home, and identity. Considered with respect to international political crises in which complacency towards unambiguous, monolithic political beliefs threatened national integrity and the liberty of subjects, the subtlety, incisiveness, and even playfulness with which these narratives of domesticity reveal nostalgic notions of Englishness to be devoid of intrinsic ethical value raise crucial questions about the limits of modernism, the implications of identity, and how fictions of nationality, class, and gender create and foreclose opportunities for resistance.

CHAPTER 1

"How Absurd to Say We Are Not Companions": The Remembered Domesticities of *Rebecca*

Narration does indeed have a content, but it also belongs to the art of making a coup.

—Michel de Certeau

Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* is a fictional memoir. In its pages, the narrator – who is the unnamed, much-younger second wife of the wealthy, mysterious, and tortured Maxim de Winter – remembers the first days of their courtship and their iconic, lost estate, Manderley, from a position of exile on some unknown Mediterranean island. Her narrative, as Heta Pyrhönen demonstrates, is an example of the Bluebeard Gothic,[1] in which the young wife's initiation into womanhood requires her discovery of her husband's terrible secrets (in the original fairy tale, of course, the secret is his murder of his past wives, with their corpses secreted in a locked chamber; in *Rebecca*, it is the eventual discovery that Rebecca's death was at Maxim's hand). *Rebecca* departs from the fairy tale in that the discovery of the first wife's body actually facilitates a more intimate partnership between Maxim and his second wife. The scene in which the narrator decides to keep Maxim's secret – and tacitly acknowledges that Rebecca's misogynistic and brutal murder was justified – employs all the conventions of romance fiction. Rather than precipitating a crisis, wherein the ingénue must be saved from her sadistic husband, Maxim's confession elicits reconciliation and physical passion and confirms the narrator, at last, as Manderley's ideal mistress. This resolution is ambiguous: both characters' displays of desire for the other are unconvincing, as I shall demonstrate; the would-be romantic hero is represented as

being childlike, impotent, and defeated; and the heroine, cringingly submissive to her husband from the first, has become complicit with a heinous crime in the interest of domestic harmony. Yet, the narrator seems to insist that harmony has been achieved because the family and its legacy are secure. Readers are tempted to agree with the narrator: the novel was marketed as "an exquisite love story" with phenomenal success by its publisher, Victor Gollancz,[2] and the sentiment has been echoed on book jackets over the course of its many reprintings. This chapter examines the ways in which the novel offers readers "exquisite" romance, while demonstrating how in fact it covertly dismantles the ideologies it seems to take for granted. *Rebecca* epitomizes a central problematic of the twentieth-century country house novel: its subversion of oppressive hierarchies relies upon its sustenance, however ironic, of patriarchal and patriotic social codes.

The novel's retrospective narrative has two primary effects. First, it reconstructs Manderley as an elegized, yet uncannily present space, wherein relationships and hierarchies are explored and negotiated. Second, the narrator's fantasies and the reminiscences of other characters invoke Rebecca's transgressive body, repeatedly disrupting the cohesiveness of the household. These two projects of remembering/memorializing undergird and drive the romantic plot, as I shall demonstrate. Through its several different plotlines, the novel portrays vexed navigations of home. The country house functions as a microcosm of the English nation; the narrator emphasizes the role of mistress of the house as an exemplar of English moral integrity. Yet, the novel ironically undermines the narrator's putative unity of character and transparency of purpose. Ideals of masculinity are similarly vexed: Maxim seems, at first, to represent authority, dominance, and progress, but later reveals himself to be a cowardly, impulsive hypocrite and an unconvincing figure of heterosexual masculinity. The home, superficially displaying familial unity, class privilege, and a harmonious domesticity, thus only seems to be,

and never actually is, a guarantor of English cultural hegemony. Textually, the narrative replicates the architecture of home, constructing boundaries that would separate those who are "properly" English from those who are not.[3] Through multiplying ironies, uncanny returns, and an unconvincing resolution, *Rebecca* – as well as the second wife through whom the narrative is focalized – continually transgress the hierarchical categories of the narrative's own construction, evacuating the country house novel of its conservative certainties. Authority and desire never circulate simply through the highly visible classed, gendered, heterosexual subject positions that English familial decorum takes for granted. Manderley emerges as a site of continual and uncontainable boundary-crossing rather than a bastion of essentialist class and gender positions.

Rebecca, I would suggest, is situated at the centre of ongoing debates about the nature of Englishness amid the socio-political upheavals of the early twentieth century. As Alison Light observes, "*Rebecca* is a rewrite of *Jane Eyre* amidst nostalgia for the waning of the British Empire and the decline of its aristocracy" ("Returning to Manderley" 7). Manderley is a little England, which faces destruction at the hands of deceitful, sexually illicit women – a role shared by Rebecca, Mrs. Danvers, and finally the narrator herself. The narrator's upwardly mobile class identity poses a further challenge to the estate's organizing hierarchies. These threats are at once contained and perpetuated, as Light suggests, by the narrator's retrospective account:

> From the outset, the novel acknowledges that the regulation of female sexuality finds its weapon in the expression of class difference. In so doing, it threatens to expose the social construction of sexuality and the inherent instability of *all* class and gender definitions. The narrative's circular structure thus tries to mop up and gloss over the disorder at its centre. (11)

The estate's destruction enables its reconstruction (in prose) by the narrator, a parvenu. Her

memoir both elegizes Manderley and reconstructs it in its own mirror image: it suggests that the women's subversion of Maxim's authority over gender and class hierarchies is, paradoxically, the only means by which Manderley's integrity can be preserved. Her focus on the temptations to transgression offered by Rebecca's memory, and by the traces of Rebecca preserved by Mrs. Danvers throughout the house, undermines the narrator's seemingly unconditional valuation of "correct" aristocratic feminine behaviour.

Of course, the resistant potential of the narrator's memoir remains deeply ambiguous. Readers might question whether it is enough ironically to undermine the estate's misogynistic social codes, if doing so ultimately means preserving them. Maxim, after all, is never brought to justice for Rebecca's murder; Rebecca's memory is never recuperated from Maxim's vilification and the novel's implications that Rebecca was a harlot, a fake, and a lesbian. The second wife, however, does rise above her lowly class origins, her imperfect mastery of social codes, and her naïveté, competing with and finally replacing the late Rebecca as Manderley's mistress. She does so not by resisting others' disdain, however, but by meeting their expectations, performing her role as the self-effacing ingénue with total commitment. Doing so necessitates her complicity with Rebecca's murder. At the end of her narrative, she is stronger, but has replaced Rebecca as a stereotypical castrating woman, mediating Maxim's relationship with his aristocratic legacy even as she reminds him of all he has lost. This anti-feminist narrative, unfortunately, is also consistent with some of the conventions of the country house novel in the twentieth century. The genre conveys nostalgia not only for British imperial might and aristocratic hegemony, but also for an entrenched patriarchy grounded in laws of primogeniture. In *Rebecca*, the narrator continually insists on Maxim's masculine privilege and authority even as her narrative contradicts her testaments to his sovereign power. Rather than simply reflecting internalized misogyny on

the narrator's part, I propose that this veiled undermining of hierarchies achieves a queering of the romance text, and a subversive tactic of feminine self-determination from within inescapable normative discourses. That the narrator's final triumph over Rebecca, Maxim, and Manderley itself depends on her mastery, rather than refusal, of oppressive misogynistic ideologies, however, cannot be denied.

The narrative, therefore, has much to reveal about the twentieth-century country house novel. *Rebecca*'s preoccupation with eroded masculine authority addresses a central problem of the genre: the persistence of aristocratic patriarchal legacies. How can the estate persist, country house novels ask, in the face of changing social and political realities? Its commitment to generational, moral, and economic continuity characterizes the genre, yet this commitment is always articulated in the face of the inevitable obsolescence of these ideals. I would suggest that the pleasure of the country house novel is precisely this unflagging commitment to outdated, unsustainable, and sometimes oppressive social realities. As *Rebecca* demonstrates, the genre's simultaneous promotion of conservative hierarchies and representation of their decay invites readers to question how and why they can accept such hierarchies as worthy of saving. *Rebecca* poses such questions with particular urgency: its "exquisite" romance plot, which actually comprises feminine masochism and the unquestioned, violent instantiation of masculine authority, forces readers to examine their own enjoyment. Such self-reflexiveness extends to readers' participation in nostalgia for Manderley, the English country house *ne plus ultra* and the scene of pervasive and self-perpetuating classist and gendered violence.

Through its insistence on the integrity of the marriage plot, the novel camps the romance novel, and, by extension, disrupts and subverts class, gender, and nationalist identities. As Jonathan Dollimore argues:

> sexuality in its normative forms constitutes a "truth" connecting inextricably with other truths and norms not explicitly sexual. This is a major reason why sexual deviance is found threatening: in deviating from normative truth and the "nature" which underpins it, such deviance shifts and confuses the norms of truth and being throughout culture. (222)

By undermining sexual norms, *Rebecca* throws Englishness itself into crisis. The narrator in particular recognizes and negotiates Foucauldian spirals of pleasure and power within the existing social framework. In Foucault's famous formulation, the surveillance and proscription of sexuality through social discourses at once polices and incites desire by delineating acceptable forms of sexual behaviour. Social institutions, therefore, do not merely prohibit wayward desire, but in fact create a reciprocal dynamic between pleasure and power (*The History of Sexuality* 45). The first section of this chapter demonstrates how the narrator employs slave/master (S/M) fetishism, both within her early relationship with Maxim *and* as a narrative technique, to perform, explore, and negotiate norms of behaviour within a heterosexual marriage plot that crosses boundaries of age and class. Pairing S/M performativity with theories of the camp aesthetic, including Esther Newton's work on female impersonators and drag performance, illuminates the ways in which the narrator's account of her marriage to Maxim dismantles categories of identity, authority, and difference. The second section examines Maxim's confession in terms of male masochistic fantasy, drawing on Gilles Deleuze's *Coldness and Cruelty*. Positioning male masochism as the other side of the coin of female submissiveness, I interrogate representations of masculinity in *Rebecca*, identifying a final, irresolvable crisis of male entitlement. The scene of the de Winters' reconciliation recuperates, if not resolves, this crisis by aligning Maxim with the narrator as a figure of queerness. The third section demonstrates that

ungovernable circulations of pleasure and power, which Maxim and the narrator's relationship seems intended to domesticate, are mapped onto the elegized space of Manderley. This section expands upon Michel de Certeau's argument that carceral spaces (such as the country house) can invite the evasion and reinscription of normative discourses. Finally, the fourth section discusses the ways in which transgressive feminine desires and relationships in fact mediate and motivate the text's more (ostensibly) "conventional" themes – the marriage plot, the country house narrative, and the memoir.

By tracing the permutations of desire, space, and memory, this chapter suggests that the romantic "resolution" of *Rebecca*, when Maxim confesses to his first wife's murder and embraces his second wife as his partner in covering up the crime, presents a façade of class-privileged, heterosexual harmony and unproblematic nationalism while at the same time acknowledging that such distinctions are vacuous. They are empty signifiers that, the text insists, are somehow *adequate* – adequate testaments to English moral virtue, adequately happy endings for the upper-middle-class characters and for the memory of Manderley, the house with which they are so closely identified. This complacency (on the part of the characters *and* readers) is due in part to the expectations fostered historically by English country house literature: from Andrew Marvell's paean to his patron Lord Fairfax's estate in *Upon Appleton House* (1651) to the mid-twentieth-century farces of P. G. Wodehouse, the country house novel is typically perceived as being conservative and nostalgic, lauding the stability and fruitfulness of the ancestral estate as an idealized retreat from encroaching modernity. Often, social transgressions occur but are contained or surmounted by tradition, with the aristocratic family's position once again guaranteed after a proper marriage is made or a deserving heir found.[4] Superficial adherence to such conventions in *Rebecca* produces an ending that satisfies the generic imperative of familial

and moral consensus in spite of a period of upheaval.

Yet, despite its conservative sympathies, the country house novel is always a paradoxically, self-consciously idealized space in which such upheaval is only *barely* contained. As I have suggested in the Introduction, the carefully policed space of the country house is one of anxious and not-always-desired social confrontation, in which the threat of sexual, political, and moral deviance is always present. Given this tension between order and upheaval, what I call the "adequacy" of du Maurier's romance can be situated within a mythology of Englishness. When order is restored and legacies are guaranteed, the certainty of transgression remains but is necessarily unacknowledged – even though the allure of deviance from the norm is the very stuff of the narrator's fascination with her own, and Manderley's, pasts. By providing a semblance of narrative closure, du Maurier at once obscures and perpetuates the novel's more interesting romance: the constellations of desire among the narrator, Mrs. Danvers, Rebecca, and Manderley. These deviant romances persist in the cyclical, retrospective space of the memoir, their endings forever uncertain.

Through the uncontainable persistence of transgressive desire, *Rebecca* turns the patriarchal and heteronormative logic of the country house novel against itself while endorsing the synecdochal equivalency between country estate and English nation. This narrative slippage has implications for the novel's representations of domesticity and nation, both of which conventionally rely on rigidly gendered categories and hinge on respectable femininity: as Robin Hackett argues, "middle-class and white women were burdened with the responsibility of preserving the strength, including the imperial strength, of the English race" (19). The ideal of domestic stability presents home and homeland as eternal and apolitical, a practice deeply rooted in the persistence of traditional gender roles (Nesbitt 6-7). When women occupy the center of

nationalist questions in this way, any shift in gender roles undermines concepts of national integrity reliant on sphere ideologies. With the spectacular conflagration that marks *Rebecca*'s finale, order has been restored violently and England rises phoenix-like from the ashes. Although the intriguing possibility of domestic upheaval has impelled the plot towards its resolution, readers must finally come back into the fold, forget (or at least forgive) the death of Rebecca, and accept the romantic resolution offered, however cringingly awkward it may be. This is the resolution that the genre demands, after all, and so characters' flirtations with alternatives have been spectacularly quashed. The pleasure that rebellion – *and* the hegemonic violence with which the text presumes to contain such rebellion – provides for characters and for readers drives this quintessentially "English" love story. Furthermore, the palimpsestic nature of the memoir's narration (which I will explore in detail below) enables the narrator to replay this cycle endlessly through memory and storytelling. Through the push-and-pull of gleeful transgression and brutal oppression, *Rebecca* invites readers at once to identify with, refuse, and cynically acquiesce to patriarchal privilege. When domestic hierarchies mask deviance and difference in this way, prerogatives of gender, class, and even nation lose ontological and ethical status, while the possibility of their transgression persists – bizarrely – in organizing the space of home.

"Terribly happy": Masochism and memoir

In *Rebecca*, the narrator represents her story as a journey from innocence to experience, in which the feckless young second wife arrives at Manderley like Alice going through the looking glass, a newcomer to a world whose rules and customs bewilder her. A loss of innocence – which occurs not through the agency of the narrator but through Maxim's revelation of his own

past sins – finally grants her authority over Maxim, his housekeeper Mrs. Danvers, and the legacy of his glamourous first wife, Rebecca. Early in the story, however, the narrator and Maxim dwell on her inexperience. At Manderley, she is made to feel more like an interloper than a châtelaine. As Michelle A. Massé observes, class intersects with gender so that structures of oppression obscure and reinforce each other in subjugating the narrator (147). Her youth, femininity, and working-class background are all used to justify Maxim's cruelty to her, which the narrative weaves into a tale of Gothic seduction in which female masochism serves as the mechanism by which the narrator is finally initiated into Rebecca's world of upper-class feminine entitlement. Massé argues that female masochism is essential to the Gothic romance plot, which she characterizes in terms of "frequently predictable characters, the Ur-plot of separation from the known, exposure to horror, alliance of horror and romance plot, and often conservative resolution" (2). In the Gothic romance, the female protagonist, who must endure pain and humiliation, is rewarded with love once she submits to male domination. In this formulation, Massé explains, "The ideology of romance insists that there never was any pain or renunciation, that the suffering they experience is really the love and recognition for which they long or at least its prelude" (3-4). When the narrator recognizes Maxim as Manderley's fearful master, capable of violent passion (if not for his wife, at least for his reputation), Rebecca's power diminishes. The narrator's tortured self-comparisons with her predecessor cease and she at last makes a legitimate claim to her household and her husband. Within the logic of the Gothic, it is only through her renewed submission to her husband's authority that such a transformation is possible.

In this sense, Massé argues, "the Gothic novel is indeed 'about' masochism" (2), and stages "the cultural, psychoanalytic, and fictional expectation that [female protagonists] *should* be

masochistic if they are 'normal' women" (2). The Gothic romance therefore reifies patriarchal expectations of feminine subjugation didactically, representing female masochism as the path to "normal" romantic fulfillment. This is one reason why Rebecca, the sadistic dominatrix of horses and her husband, is described as being "not even normal" (*R* 304): she refuses to relinquish agency. The nameless narrator never seems to have had any agency in the first place: she begins as a paid companion to the vulgar Mrs. Van Hopper, useless and disregarded though continually corrected in her actions and manners. Her ambiguous social position makes her feel "like a whipping boy who must bear his master's pains when I watched people laugh behind [Mrs. Van Hopper's] back" (*R* 12), humiliated by proxy and powerless to speak for herself. When she marries Maxim, he replaces Mrs. Van Hopper as a figure of authority and censure, an arrangement that he makes explicit after his new bride accepts his proposal: "'instead of being companion to Mrs. Van Hopper you become mine, and your new duties will be almost exactly the same'" (*R* 59). She is to be not only his companion, but his whipping boy too, making a lateral move from one subservient role to another.

Yet, the interplay between feminine masochism and masculine sadism in *Rebecca* is not as straightforward, nor as anti-feminist, as Massé suggests. The narrator's submissiveness is guaranteed by a narrative that, after all, she herself tells. In this respect, her inability to navigate social situations is as carefully constructed as Maxim's apparent mastery of them. Massé argues that the narrator is "excruciatingly aware of her own inferiority and status as an outsider," with the result that her "active drives for looking, knowing, and acting are minimal and highly repressed: she is far more able to direct aggressive urges inward and against herself than outward" (148-9). While I agree with Massé's suggestion that the narrator's marginalization is compounded by the multiple hierarchies to which she is subjected, I would suggest that the

narrator does not simply internalize but also masters and manipulates these discourses, and that her awkwardness is, at least in part, a masquerade. Judy Giles suggests that the role of narrator empowers the young woman: unlike Rebecca, the narrator, alone with her thoughts in the anonymous hotel, enjoys "a room of her own" (43): "It is her dreams and the story she tells that confirm her existence and make her visible, thus rendering her knowable only through her inner psyche and not via her social role" (Giles 43). Her "inner psyche," however, is continually focused on the roles that she plays in the narrative's performative retelling of the past. Her "active drives for looking, knowing, and acting" are other-directed, even if they only exist as fantasies. She watches Maxim, recognizes his misogynistic aggression, and then satisfies his desire to dominate as a means to social advancement and, more importantly, to fulfilling her own (and not Maxim's) Gothic fantasy. Their first meeting, for example, is characterized by Maxim's condescending rudeness, directed at Mrs. Van Hopper but with a strongly punitive effect on the narrator: "I was left to writhe in her stead, feeling like a child that had been smacked" (*R* 16). This scene is consistent with her usual experiences at Mrs. Van Hopper's side. Whereas her role in Mrs. Van Hopper's social blunders usually leave her "hating her errand" (*R* 12), Maxim's rudeness sparks fantasies for the narrator that anticipate the triangulated love story of the Bluebeard Gothic: old (or dead) woman, young woman, mysterious husband. "Had I been older," she reflects, "I would have caught his eye and smiled, her unbelievable behaviour making a bond between us; but as it was I was stricken into shame" (*R* 17). His rudeness makes her feel ashamed, yes, but also allows her imaginatively to transform herself into someone else, in the conditional tense – someone like Rebecca. Maxim is made to occupy a central role in this fantasy relationship: "stealing a glance at him I was reminded more than ever of my Gentleman Unknown who, cloaked and secret, walked a corridor by night" (*R* 18). The theatrical and

stylized role that she constructs for Maxim – that of the Gothic antagonist/hero[5] – demonstrates that the narrator is already self-consciously fashioning, rather than passively assuming, her role of the victim/heroine even while she both identifies with Rebecca *and* condemns her, carefully situating each of these personae within the logic of the Gothic.

With her continual admissions to feeling "unimportant" (*R* 17), the unnamed narrator is being somewhat disingenuous – she is the narrator, after all, and she manipulates the story she tells to produce a Gothic tale and position herself as its heroine. As Holly Blackford demonstrates, the narrator's authority does not guarantee truth-telling: "The reader never knows what is real and what exists only in the character's mind…. The novel sets up her inauthenticity by dwelling on her early training as a companion to a social climber" (244). The framing narrative distances her from her first days at Manderley, redeeming her from past humiliations and elevating her above the "shame" of her once-inferior position as incompetent second wife. Her authorship is aligned with (and an exercise in) her new authority as Maxim's caretaker. Despite the bleakness and melancholy of the de Winters' final situation, peripatetic and traumatized, she narrates with "happiness," "courage," and "confidence" (*R* 6, 8, 9).[6] As Maxim's wife and protector, she is a transient upper-class expatriate who lives with her husband in various European hotels, not unlike the Monte Carlo establishment where they met. The narrator's account of her submissive adoration for – and bewilderment by – Maxim in Monte Carlo comes *after* her portrait of their current relationship, in which she maternalistically monitors and manipulates his moods. In the novel's first chapter (the only part of the story that occurs in the present tense) she distracts Maxim with inane newspaper stories about cricket when the "grey look on his face" warns her of his unhappiness. Crisis averted, she returns to thoughts of Manderley, but tells the reader that she will "keep the things that hurt to myself

alone. They can be my secret indulgence" (*R* 7). Speaking from the present, from her position as teller of the tale, the narrator is candid about her narrative tactics of withholding and embellishing details in order to achieve an ending in which "we march in unison, [and] no clash of thought or opinion makes a barrier between us" (*R* 6). For the narrator, intimacy means that Maxim has no secrets; but she secretly indulges in memories of her own subjection, which are for "[her] alone." The language that she uses to describe her marital bliss suggests that the harmony they have achieved is carefully orchestrated, a function of the wife's erotically charged, self-sacrificing narrative.

The narrator's account of her early flirtations with Maxim illuminates her strategy of manipulating the relationship *and* the narrative to construct a Gothic seduction plot, controlled not by the dominant male, but by the *performatively* subservient female protagonist. When Maxim writes her a note apologizing for his initial rudeness, for example, "my name was on the envelope, and spelt correctly, an unusual thing" (*R* 20). Maxim makes her feel considered and special by learning her name, which the narrator herself refuses to divulge to the reader. Although she tells us that he considers her to have a "lovely and unusual" name (*R* 25), one never learns it; she reserves this privilege for Maxim. This authority/authorship is not something that he claims, but rather a role that she constructs for him by positioning him within *her* narrative as the sole knower and writer of her moniker. The narrator thus constructs a hierarchy of knowledge and places the reader at the bottom. While she seems to be emphasizing Maxim's authority and initiative, her narrative reveals *her* to be in control of the scene as she reproduces his writing, figuring herself as his object of desire. Thus the narrative conveys his knowledge through the narrator's perception while explicitly limiting the reader's access to information.

Repeatedly, the authority of the narrator is concealed: the novel itself bears Rebecca's

name as its title, not hers; Maxim and Mrs. Van Hopper even negotiate the terms of the narrator's transition from Mrs. Van Hopper's companion to Maxim's wife while she waits outside. Significantly, while these negotiations take place, the narrator defaces a book of poems that Rebecca had given Max: she cuts the title page bearing Rebecca's inscription "right out of the book," leaving "no jagged edges… the book looked white and clean" (*R* 63). Not yet satisfied, she tears the page to pieces and then sets it on fire, foreshadowing Mrs. Danvers's arson of Manderley, the beauty of which largely was due to Rebecca's decorative touches. Watching as "the letter R was the last to go," the narrator "felt better, much better" (*R* 64). This scene rehearses the narrator's project of authorship: when she appears to be patiently, submissively waiting for Maxim's affections, she is involved in a strategy of erasure and manipulation, all the while crafting her story into one of masochistic self-abasement. This project necessitates her revision and replacement of Rebecca's subjectivity; her predecessor can only haunt the narrator's story as the subject of her fantasies and, as I will suggest, the object of her desire. The scene not only foreshadows the narrator's complicity in the violence done to Rebecca's body by Maxim (as she tears up the page), but also parallels Mrs. Danvers's homoerotic custodianship of traces of Rebecca's body (although the narrator tears up Rebecca's moniker in this scene, she also both inhabits and enshrines it by using it as the title of her memoir).

Certainly, real structural inequalities of class and gender permeate the novel (and will be explicated over the course of this chapter). Yet, by internalizing and amplifying her status as an outsider, by casting herself as "the raw ex-schoolgirl, red-elbowed and lanky-haired" (*R* 17), the narrator exceeds the Gothic heroine's role by misdirecting the reader's desiring gaze elsewhere (usually at Rebecca, where it is often aligned with the narrator's own). Her submissiveness,

which seems to reflect internalized misogyny, actually grants her a role of revisionary authorship and ambiguous agency. By living up (or down) to Maxim's every condescending pronouncement about her character – to the point where her narrative is infused with masochism – the narrator paradoxically functions as a desiring subject who finally ruptures Maxim's patriarchal assumptions through mimicry. In doing so, she emasculates Maxim more expertly than Rebecca, the seductive, independent, whip-wielding *femme fatale*, ever could. The spectacular and blatant anti-feminism of *Rebecca*, performed to excess, is co-opted as an instrument of feminine self-determination. Loosed from the moorings of the patriarchal estate, the narrator finally thrives, now empowered to narrate the story of Manderley's chaotic demise even as she insists upon the persistence of the ideals it once embodied.

Anne McClintock's work on slave/master (S/M) fetishism in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* explores intersections among sexuality, gender, domesticity, and nation, which help to explicate how the narrator's performance of submission can be a means to empowerment. McClintock theorizes the S/M fetish as "an organized subculture shaped around the exercise of social risk and social transformation. As an organized subculture, S/M reverses and transforms the social meanings it borrows" (143). Emphatically, she opposes S/M rituals to sadomasochism, which she characterizes as a "pathological expression" of what is assumed to be "natural male aggression and natural female passivity" (143). Reading Maxim and his second wife's marriage as an S/M relationship clarifies why and how the narrator self-consciously performs masochism within the carefully framed and organized arena of her retrospective narrative, rather than simply submitting to the ideologies that oppress her. Like the narrative itself, "S/M parades a slavish obedience to conventions of power…. At the same time, with its exaggerated emphasis on costumery, script, and scene, S/M reveals that social order is

unnatural, scripted, and invented" (McClintock 143). This schema is useful for understanding how the narrator manipulates her text. After receiving Maxim's letter, for example, she draws a portrait of him as the Gentleman Unknown, but dismisses her sketch because the "lace collar and beard" she gives him are "like props in a charade" (*R* 21). The use of costume intrudes, for a moment, into the narrative, revealing the centrality of artifice and aesthetics to her fantasy of Maxim as a Renaissance feudal lord. The narrator's clothes also function as fetishized objects, testaments to her degradation: in contrast to Rebecca's beautiful negligées, for example, which are "thin as gossamer, apricot in colour" (*R* 187), the narrator's underclothes are made of "plain material" (*R* 152), but neither she nor Maxim insist on replacing them. After seeing the "shocked" expression on her maid Alice's face, the narrator imagines the underthings as instruments of her humiliation: "I often wondered whether Alice told the others, and if my underclothes became a topic of conversation in the servants' hall, something rather dreadful, to be discussed in low tones when the men were nowhere about" (*R* 153). Consistently, costume functions to delineate artifice and authenticity: most memorably at the disastrous costume ball, when the narrator tries (and fails publicly) to live up to Rebecca's legacy; but also in the narrative's emphasis on Rebecca's wardrobe[7] and in Beatrice's friendly queries as to why Maxim has not bought the narrator "something decent to wear" (*R* 111). Maxim's and the narrator's failures to procure clothes that are more appropriate to her new position reinforce her class inferiority and inexperience. Moreover, the narrator's repeated insistence on her disregard for clothes – and her ineptitude in choosing appropriate ones – belie her fascination with and concern for Maxim's and Rebecca's clothing, both real and imagined.

Script and scene are equally important, especially in the early days of the courtship. Driving with Maxim, for example, she says "savagely," "'I wish I was a woman of about thirty-

seven dressed in black satin with a string of pearls'"; Maxim replies, "'You would not be in this car with me if you were… and stop biting those nails, they are ugly enough already'" (*R* 40). By articulating her wish to be an elegant, mature, upper-class lady (once again by invoking costume) – a desire that is dismissed curtly by Maxim – the narrator seems to yearn for equality, but she also acknowledges that these aspirations are transgressive, given her inferior status and because the very terms of their relationship prohibit such equal footing. The narrator's self-presentation as a rebellious child or uncivilized "savage" anticipates and *invites* Maxim's paternalistic scolding. Her self-characterization as a "savage" in this scene aligns the reminiscing narrator (as opposed to the past self that she narrates) with Maxim, characterizing her wish to grow up uncivilized and uncouth – further evidence of her immaturity – rather than as an act of resistance to Maxim's paternalistic oppression. With his brutal proposal of marriage, Maxim seems to set a precedent of total patriarchal control. His condescending attitude, however, in fact *echoes* the condescension of the earlier exchange. In his proposal, he never uses the word "love" but instead comments repeatedly on her social ineptitude and her childish naïveté, which both disgust and attract him. His speech is misogynistic and condescending: "'I'm asking you to marry me, you little fool'" (*R* 57). When the narrator hesitantly suggests, "'I don't belong to your sort of world,'" Maxim's denial only confirms her inferiority: he calls her "ignorant" and "unintelligent," retorting, "'I'm the person to judge that, whether you belong [at Manderley] or not'" (*R* 58). Yet, the exchange ends on a tenderer note, with Maxim remarking, "'It's a pity you have to grow up'" (59). Clearly, Maxim desires his young bride to be (and to remain) ignorant and unintelligent, a "little fool" who cannot even evaluate her own status or decide where she belongs. It would be a "pity" to agree to a marriage of equals.

More troubling than Maxim's abusive disregard for his young fiancée is the narrator's

apparent complicity in her own subjugation. Yet, the narrator can use these scenes of submission as means to narrative authority. She imagines counter-narratives and alternate histories, which empower her to withstand Maxim's characterization of her as a fool. She is, therefore, both subjugated and, through her retelling of the story, resistant to her subjugation. Childish rebelliousness – exemplified in the earlier scene in the car in which the narrator tells us she acted "savagely," a gross overstatement from the reader's point of view – invites Maxim to condescend to her, but her construction of the narrative, which lurches wildly back and forth in time, organizes seemingly disconnected events into a pattern in which she is always triumphant. Annamarie Jagose calls the reader's attention to "the narrator's inability to sustain herself in any temporal framing for long, her pitching back and forth between the scene she describes and those she fancies preceded or might follow it" (358). Jagose interprets these jarring temporal shifts to be, in part, the narrator's "attempt[s] to imagine herself inhabiting more reassuring versions of her marriage" even as they "reinforce the narrator's frequent descriptions of herself as uncertain, transitional, and anxious" (358). I would suggest that such reinforcement is deliberate, and that the narrator's attempts to construct a "happy" marriage are, within the logic of the text, successful. Although the narrator tells the reader that "I don't believe, even in my fiercest moments, I had considered this possibility [of Maxim's proposal]," that she was "shocked" and "bewildered" and "angry at him for laughing" at her discomfiture (*R* 58-9), she nonetheless fits this turn of events into a story that makes sense: "I knew now why I had bought that picture post-card as a child; it was a premonition, a blank step into the future" (*R* 59). Continually, the narrator's story undermines her claims to passivity, naïveté, and uncertainty. What is presented as a "*blank* step into the future" is later overwritten with meaning and purpose. The fictional memoir is focalized not through the terrified young bride, but

retrospectively, from a position of authority and certitude.

Maxim's prejudices, in fact, enable the narrator to ironize his presumption of power within the space of her memoir (a reversal of power in which, as I will demonstrate, Maxim himself is also erotically invested). To borrow again from McClintock,

> To argue that in S/M "whoever is the 'master' has power and whoever is the slave has not" is to read theater for reality; it is to play the world forward…. S/M plays social power backward, visibly and outrageously staging hierarchy, difference and power, the irrational, ecstasy, or alienation of the body, placing these ideas at the center of Western reason. (143)

By "staging" hierarchy as being central to, and yet occluded by, the mechanisms of the romance genre, *Rebecca* reveals both the Bluebeard Gothic and the social order that produces it to be scripted, invented, and certainly not natural. In the episode cited above, the narrator's use of words like "angry" and "fierce" along with "shocked" and "bewildered" lets slip what her narrative would belie: the "savage" narrator and not Maxim is the guarantor of epistemological authority in the story. In this way, as McClintock demonstrates, "consensual S/M… insists on exhibiting the 'primitive' (slave, baby, woman) as a *character* in the historical time of modernity. S/M performs the 'primitive irrational' as a dramatic script; a theatrical, communal performance in the heart of Western reason" (143). *Rebecca*'s exhibition of the narrator as savage, childlike, and grudgingly submissive is produced by the narrator's own account. Maxim, on the other hand, representative of patriarchy, wealth, and English imperial might, is a two-dimensional persona with no psychic depth, a flat character in the Gothic romance of the narrator's own construction. This S/M performance features the confluence of race, class, and gender, with implications not only for the Gothic novel and the romance genre, but also for the text's

presentation of the nation.[8] In her willing obedience to conventions of power, the narrator exposes and critiques the supposed "naturalness" of these conventions, all the while co-opting them into her own project of subversion and, finally, domination – one which ironically manipulates the ideals of Englishness upon which the story relies.

The narrator crosses and tests differently classed, gendered, and sexualized identities, subscribing to each in turn, assuring the reader of her sincerity each time. Her identity is therefore not only an S/M performance but a campy one as well, taking camp to be an aesthetic of failure wherein subjects wholeheartedly subscribe to an identity even when acknowledging that identity to be impossible (Cleto 3). The campiness of the story that the narrator tells intersects complexly with her S/M performance; both stage and disrupt gendered and classed hierarchies in different ways. The narrator performs submission; she is *impersonating* the victim/heroine of the Bluebeard Gothic. Similarly, Maxim impersonates the dominating Gothic "Gentleman Unknown," but is later exposed as a transparently inept master – of Manderly, of Rebecca, and of the narrator herself. Consequently, both the narrator's act of storytelling and Maxim's role in her narrative are like drag performances. Esther Newton theorizes the drag queen as a performer who at once inhabits a feminine persona and insists on the constructedness of the performance (105-6). The drag queen and the fetishized "slave" are two sides of the same coin, as it were: both explore and subvert mechanisms of hierarchy and the distribution of power. While the submissive partner in an S/M relationship inhabits various subject positions to the extent that the hierarchies that produce them are revealed as being constructed, the drag queen appears to obscure such oppositions, all the while insisting upon the persistence of difference. Interpreting the narrator's performance of masochism as a kind of queer drag performance shows how her relationship with Maxim, her relationship with

Manderley, Maxim's relationship with Manderley, and Maxim's relationship with Rebecca intertwine: they all feature norms of class, gender, and national identity that become ends in themselves, producing semiotic excess and, as a consequence, readerly pleasure. Like the drag queen who removes her wig at the end of the performance, signifying that her clothes are female but her body is genitally male, the narrator's double-voiced oscillation between mistress of Manderley and lanky-haired interloper uses prolepsis, analepsis, fantasy, and irony to emphasize difference between the narrated persona of her memoir and her narrating (and thus "authentic") self. McClintock's S/M relationship "performs a slavish obedience to the conventions of power" while at the same time revealing that the social order is inessential (143). Similarly, Newton's camp also can be interpreted as a "theater of signs" that "visibly and outrageously stag[es] hierarchy, difference, and power" (McClintock 146, 143): "The double stance toward role, putting on a good show while indicating distance (showing that it is a show) is the heart of drag as camp" (Newton 105). For Newton, camp is "in the eye of the homosexual beholder" (103) and is always "synonymous with homosexual taste" (102). Yet, given Newton's assertion that "all drag symbolism opposes the 'inner' or 'real' self (subjective self) to the 'outer' self (social self)," creating a "double inversion" that reveals all appearances of "self" as illusions (98, 101), I would suggest that the narrator's performance of masochism – while not (overtly) homosexual – functions not only as S/M performance but as camp impersonation as well.[9]

The discovery of the sunken sailboat at the bottom of the bay, with Rebecca's body inside, further blurs the boundaries between appearance and reality, fantasy and fact. With the uncanny return of Rebecca's corpse, institutionalized patriarchal cruelty ceases to be directed at the narrator exclusively, which paradoxically engenders a crucial reversal in the narrator's S/M performance. The function of S/M as a "theater of signs"[10] (McClintock 146) is nowhere more

apparent in *Rebecca* than just before Maxim's secret – the murder of Rebecca – is exposed. A series of upheavals, precipitated by the wreck of the German ship in the bay, force the narrator and Maxim to confront the real hegemonic violence that the persistence of Maxim's conservative ideals – and his control over patronymic inheritance – at Manderley requires.[11] Confronting Maxim's misogyny enables the narrator to replay her husband's actions in a "triumph over memory [that is] theatrical and symbolic" in which "resolution is perpetually deferred" (McClintock 147): "I had listened to his story, and part of me went with him like a shadow in his tracks. I too had killed Rebecca, I too had sunk the boat there in the bay" (*R* 319). Not only does she listen to Maxim's story, she also positions herself as an accomplice, validating his patriarchal prerogative to violence. Thus symbolically, she murders the ideal woman of her aspirations and also becomes/replaces her once and for all, completing the process that began with burning, in Monte Carlo, the page inscribed by Rebecca. During her avowal of complicity with Maxim, the narrator moves fluidly between different classed, gendered, and aged identities, employing Rebecca's submerged corpse as a fetishized prop in her erotic performance. With the uncanny return of *Je Reviens* (Rebecca's boat), the narrator sets the stage for a romantic climax.

"How calm I am, I thought, how cool":

Composed femininity and masculine masochism

The scene of Rebecca's return begins with an exercise in role-playing. Standing on the beach with the working-class holiday-makers, watching the ship go down, the narrator admits, "I wish I could lose my own identity and join them," eating their working-class meals and playing their working-class games (*R* 288). Imaginatively inhabiting their class position (which used to be hers also) allows her finally to occupy her own: "I realized, perhaps for the first time, with a

funny feeling of bewilderment and pride that it was my home, I belonged there, and Manderley belonged to me" (*R* 291). Although she has not yet learned that Rebecca's body has been found (or that Maxim was responsible for her death), the narrator's behaviour in this scene marks a shift from the masochistic narrative that has so far characterized her story to a more masterful and stylized performance of upper-middle-class femininity. After learning that Manderley's days are numbered – that one day the house will be razed, the property subdivided, and middle-class bungalows built – she takes possession of the place. Similarly, the narrator's failed attempt to *be* Rebecca – consciously or not – at the costume ball on the eve of the wreck similarly facilitates her final embodiment of "Mrs. de Winter." Going to sleep alone, she agonizes, "there was nothing quite so shaming, so degrading as a marriage that had failed…. For I had no illusions left now, I no longer made any effort to pretend…. He wanted something I could not give him, something I had had before…. He would never love me because of Rebecca" (*R* 261-2). Ironically, the next day, Maxim *will* love her precisely *because of* Rebecca – or at least because she acknowledges what he considers to be the moral necessity of her death. In both of these ironic reversals, the narrator's proclaimed inability to "keep house" at Manderley or to be sophisticated like Rebecca facilitate her fulfillment of the roles of mistress and wife. Furthermore, in this version of the Bluebeard tale, the new wife's discovery of her husband's awful secret does not mandate her demise. Instead, her narrative overwrites the Bluebeard intertext: the narrator imaginatively murders the first wife, but also perpetuates her traces within the house. She thus achieves legitimacy as the mistress of Manderley – a role that she had perceived as Rebecca's, even in death.

Maxim's confession fulfills these various successes-through-failure, which, I suggest, are at the heart of the narrator's campy self-determination as Manderley's mistress. Maxim's guilt in

Rebecca's murder should have shown how potentially dangerous his abusive disregard for his second wife really is, but instead his power paradoxically collapses in on itself. As Heta Pyrhönen argues, "Maxim's confession includes the greatest surprise of the novel: the revelation of the romantic hero – *not* the female protagonist – as the masochist" (128). When Maxim admits to killing his first wife, he insists that he, like the narrator, is a victim of patriarchal codes. He is a slave to social convention, playing out his own masochistic scenario in which Rebecca is the punisher, but Manderley is the master and Maxim is its slave: "She knew I would sacrifice pride, honour, personal feelings, every damned quality on earth, rather than have them know the things about her that she had told me then…. I put Manderley first, before anything else. And it does not prosper, that sort of love" (*R* 306). As Pyrhönen's analysis of the text demonstrates, the "contract" that Rebecca offered Maxim – that she make a "show-home" out of Manderley and feign marital bliss, in exchange for her sexual freedom away from the estate (*R* 305) – attests to Rebecca's subversive mastery of social codes. "Thanks to her promiscuity," Pyrhönen suggests, "Rebecca in her capacity as the 'angel-wife' mocks everything traditional marriage represents. The contract invests her with the symbolic power exerted in marriage, reversing the common power dynamic between husband and wife" (127). In the early days of his second marriage, Maxim achieves the role of master of Manderley through the narrator's idealization (and fear) of him as the Gothic hero of a Bluebeard story. His first marriage, in contrast, grants him legitimacy through Rebecca's cynical performance of chastity. In both scenarios, Maxim's patriarchal privilege is simply a function of his relationship with women rather than an essential masculine trait – that is, the authority of the master of the house is always contingent upon his wife's manipulation of appearances. It is also contingent upon a contract that excuses him from a "normal" (read: straight or vanilla) sexual relationship with his wife. The house itself figures

this ironic reversal of paternalistic domestic hierarchy: in this text, *real* estate (as opposed to the *ideal* estate, which conventionally testifies to masculine authority and privilege) always manifests the subversion of gendered essentialism.

Unexpectedly, Maxim's confession elicits support from the narrator. She claims to align herself with her husband, imaginatively identifying with him as if they had both perpetrated the murder. This reaction reinforces their uncanny sameness, positioning them both as victims of and devotees to the heteronormative patriarchy that Manderley symbolizes. Such an attitude also aligns the narrator with Rebecca. Although she feels tender toward Max, her lack of concern evokes the characteristic disregard of the first Mrs. de Winter: "I did not care about his shame. None of the things he had told me mattered to me at all…. Maxim was talking to me and I listened to him, but his words meant nothing to me. I did not really care" (*R* 306). Ironically, this is also the moment at which Maxim displays romantic passion for the narrator: "Then he began to kiss me. He had not kissed me like this before. I put my hands behind his head and shut my eyes…. 'I love you so much,' he whispered. 'So much'" (*R* 299-300). The narrator reacts to Maxim's confession – and the love and tenderness that she claims to have been longing for – with a combination of alienation and passivity: "At the moment I am nothing, I have no heart, and no mind, and no senses, I am just a wooden thing in Maxim's arms" (*R* 299). At the sound of her name, which once made her feel so special, she, mirroring Maxim's obsessive reverence for the estate, deflects her gaze away from Maxim to Manderley: "I opened my eyes and looked at the little patch of curtain above his head. He went on kissing me, hungry, desperate, murmuring my name. I kept on looking at the curtain, and saw where the sun had faded it, making it lighter than the piece above. How calm I am, I thought. How cool" (*R* 300). As a moment of romantic resolution, this scene is oddly unconvincing. The romantic heroine, so far

willfully submissive to Maxim, continually likening herself to their cocker spaniel Jasper in her practice of groveling for his affection, now rebuffs him with woodenness and coolness, causing him to think that "'It's too late. You don't love me now'" (*R* 300). Instead of Maxim, the narrator directs her gaze at the furnishings that Rebecca chose. During this episode, when Maxim ceases to be the cruel "Gentleman Unknown" and displays vulnerability and cowardice, his desires become transparent and his subjectivity changes registers. Although he expresses physical passion for the narrator, it is always Manderley, and not his wife, that is the real object of desire, to be feared for and protected. Through multiplied deflections of desire and blame, Manderley mediates Maxim's passion for the narrator and the narrator's cool regard for him. The intimacy that they newly enjoy, then, is not only a renegotiated masochistic contract – as I will demonstrate – but also represents a shared responsibility for the country house, which in turn guarantees the legitimacy of their romantic relationship and the adequacy of the story's melancholy conclusion.

With the need to reassure Maxim, the narrator assumes a new persona – that of the maternal, stoic English matron, a role that allows her to "fit in" to Maxim's world at last.[12] Although the narrator's syntax suggests that "calm" and "cool" are synonymous in this passage, they in fact signal two very different aspects of the transformation of her character. By acting "calm" in a fraught situation, she styles herself as the no-nonsense matron (in the style of the title character *Mrs. Miniver*, published the same year as *Rebecca*[13]). As Louise Harrington suggests, "In her stoicism and lack of emotion, the narrator at last becomes 'English'" (294). The narrator's "cool" demeanour, by contrast, evokes another subject of her fantasies, the young Rebecca – who was anything but matronly (Harrington argues that Rebecca is "the antithesis of the traditional woman of empire, who is associated with private domestic space" [296]). The

word echoes Mrs. Danvers's account of Rebecca's mastery of a "hot" horse: after "slashing at him, drawing blood, digging the spurs into his side, and when she got off his back he was trembling all over, full of froth and blood," Rebecca "walked off to wash her hands as *cool* as you please" (*R* 273, emphasis added). The coolness that the narrator achieves also intersects with a vision of wifehood that she had entertained following Maxim's proposal: "Great cool rooms, filled with flowers…. Mrs. de Winter. I would be Mrs. de Winter" (60). The word "cool" thus links the narrator, Rebecca, and Manderley, encapsulating them all in the figure of Mrs. de Winter – a position that the narrator does not really inhabit until after the wreck and Maxim's confession.

It is worth considering, given the frequency with which the descriptor appears, what "coolness" means with regard to the narrator, Rebecca, and Manderley – does their coolness denote frigidity, nonchalance, a sense of being *au courant*? Certainly, the narrator's coolness allows her fully to "become" Mrs. de Winter; she embodies her wintery name at last. Deleuze's theorization of masochism in *Coldness and Cruelty* is most helpful in accounting for this confluence of identities around the words "Mrs. de Winter" and "cool," which, I would suggest, denotes a feminine authority that at once threatens and underpins Maxim's sovereignty. This odd triangulation – home, first wife, second wife – reflects the Deleuzian distillation of the "three mothers"[14] in the masochistic ideal of the "cruel and cold" dominant woman.

> Through the contract, that is through the most rational and temporarily determinate act, the masochist reaches towards the most mythical and the most timeless realms, where the three mother-images dwell. Finally, he ensures that he will be beaten; we have seen that what is beaten, humiliated and ridiculed in him is the image and the likeness of the father, and the possibility of the father's

> aggressive return. *It is not a child but a father that is being beaten*. The masochist thus liberates himself in preparation for a rebirth in which the father will have no part. (Deleuze 66)

By entering into the masochistic contract with the cruel but nurturing woman, Deleuze argues, the male masochist stages a crisis of the patriarchal symbolic order wherein the super-ego is wrested from the beating father and embodied by the mother. In this way, the masochist becomes autonomous from the father, and the symbolic order becomes aligned with the maternal order (Deleuze 63). When Maxim's uncertainty becomes articulated within the narrator's story, a new kind of S/M script therefore becomes evident. The narrator plays the dominant role of nurturing mother, and Maxim is the needy child: "He kissed my face and hands. He held my hands very tightly like a child who would gain confidence" (*R* 302). Maxim himself admits that a shift has taken place, declaring that, while he does not regret Rebecca's murder, "'I can't forget what it's done to you…. It's gone forever, that funny, young, lost look that I loved. It won't come back again. I killed that too, when I told you about Rebecca…. You are so much older'" (*R* 355-6). When the narrator compares her husband to Jasper, the transformation is complete: "Maxim came over to me where I was standing by the fireplace. I held out my arms to him and he came to me like a child. I put my arms around him and held him. We did not say anything for a long time. I held him and comforted him as though he were Jasper" (*R* 396). The narrator's emphasis on her "coolness" during these exchanges is paramount: in Deleuzian terms, it marks the moment at which the narrator's insistence on her own undesirableness turns, repositioning the humiliated raw-elbowed outcast as the silent, idealized beating mother of misogynistic masochistic fantasy.

The masochistic contract reinforces misogynistic codes by making Maxim the victim of

overbearing, maternal women. Yet, it also allows both Maxim and the narrator to renegotiate oppressive gender roles while allowing the hierarchies that sustain Manderley – and their marriage – to persist. In her combination of sentimentality and aloofness, the narrator achieves a romantic resolution that circumvents physical passion. Such a disavowal of sensuality is a crucial aspect of Deleuzian masochism: "The coldness of the masochistic ideal…. is not the negation of feeling but rather the disavowal of sensuality. It is as if sentimentality assumed in this instance the superior role of impersonal element, while sensuality held us prisoner of the particularities and imperfections of secondary nature" (Deleuze 52). By inhabiting the role of the mother, the narrator therefore becomes the sentimental mistress of Manderley and the supervisor of Maxim, yet retains the desexualized persona that she had before. The narrator's coolness (or, in Deleuzian terms, coldness and cruelty) to her husband therefore signals not a simple reversal of a relationship governed by S/M fetishism, but the intensification and reciprocal recognition of a masochistic fantasy that the narrator and Maxim share. Perhaps it is this quality that makes their romance such an "exquisite" one: because they both *desire* (and perform) subjugation by the punishing disciplinary codes that structure the myth of the country house, they are ideal subjects of the English Gothic romance.

The intimacy that the narrator achieves with Maxim at the moment of his revelation of guilt, in other words, undermines the heterosexual contract that it appears to instantiate. The "disavowal of sensuality" that Deleuze equates with male masochism is also a disavowal of heterosexual eroticism. When the narrator complains that Maxim "wanted something I could not give him," her statement may have implications beyond what she suspects: that "he would never love me because of Rebecca" (*R* 261-2). Their shared attraction to and abhorrence of Rebecca – and their joint participation in misogynistic performances of S/M eroticism –

produce a "sameness" that suggests their mutual alienation from heterosexuality. Maxim's dependence on a cynical contract to sustain his marriage and estate – his agreement that Rebecca be his "angel-wife," for example, in exchange for her sexual freedom, or his confession to her murder, which implicates his second wife in a guilty secret – belies his patriarchal mastery. The *necessity* of performing a perfect marriage after his actions have made such a union impossible paradoxically enables him to achieve domestic happiness with the narrator, a scenario that queers the trajectory of the marriage plot. The "coldness and cruelty" that the narrator embodies as the domineering mother in a babyism fetish, therefore, might represent not a misogynistic equation of the powerful maternal woman as a *de facto* punisher, but rather a kink that liberates both Maxim and the narrator from heteronormative expectations.

As Heta Pyrhönen points out, "becoming" Mrs. de Winter requires participating in a male masochistic fantasy that provides the illusion of absolute power but also denies any autonomous selfhood outside the masculine fantasy.[15] "When the woman identifies with the mother," Pyrhönen comments, "she is able to entertain the illusion of being all. When she realizes that the masochist forces this symbolic identification on her, she must acknowledge that she is nothing, for the fantasy denies her a separate identity" (135). To some extent, to become Mrs. de Winter is to become Rebecca, the beating woman and ostensive "angel-wife." Whereas Rebecca escaped the masochistic contract by embracing the self-abnegation such a role necessitates – through death – the narrator only sinks deeper into fantasy (Pyrhönen 135, 131). To embody the masochistic beating mother is to engage in a theatre of masculine desire: "What characterizes masochism and its theatricality is a particular form of cruelty in the woman torturer: the cruelty of the Ideal" (Deleuze 55). Readers, Pyrhönen argues, must make a choice: given that the Bluebeard Gothic invites readers to identify with the beaten woman, does one

identify with Rebecca or the narrator – in both cases becoming the beater, condemned to repeat the Deleuzian scenario? I propose that such a quandary demands a queer reading practice by implicating the reader in the marriage plots' necessarily misogynistic outcomes. Pyrhönen suggests that du Maurier, through her manipulation of the conventions of the Bluebeard Gothic, emphasizes that masochism *is* the plot of the novel, and thus exposes the conventions of romance as modes of entrapment: "the male version of masochism seamlessly structures interpersonal relationships and narration, thus drawing the readers' attention to the writer's total destruction of romantic notions of love: only delusion and torture remain" (136). The total effacement of female subjectivity by the mechanisms of masochistic idealization serves to highlight and critique what is always already implicit in the Gothic resolution. In this clear-eyed analysis, masochistic fantasy in du Maurier's text can trouble the norms of phallogocentrism (as Deleuze demonstrates), but threatens to subsume female bodies and identities into a scenario that is always meant to serve the pleasure of masculine subjectivity.

Whereas Pyrhönen suggests that the novel's misogyny is total, I would suggest that the framing narrative of the novel complicates this dynamic by showing readers what Bluebeard looks like when his young wife discovers his secret but remains at his side, and questions what it means when his castle is razed to the ground and the trappings of his wealth are no longer on display. Very soon after their meeting, the narrator learns to make the connection between man and house: when Maxim asks why Mrs. Van Hopper considers him to be of "any importance," she replies, "'I think because of Manderley'" (*R* 3). One learns that he had to tolerate Rebecca, because of Manderley; he had to kill her too, because of Manderley. Because of Manderley, he can only hope that his second wife will keep the secret of his guilt, and save the estate from the blight of a murderous master (she does not, of course – her act of remembering, which

constitutes the narrative of *Rebecca*, is her betrayal of Maxim's wishes). Manderley, then, testifies to the female authority that grounds the metonymy between man and estate. The home, conventionally a feminized space, determines the integrity of the estate, which is Maxim's identity and his occupation: "'I've no time to hang about at this hour of the day. Running a place like Manderley, you know, is a full-time job'" (*R* 88). Yet, he was never able to make much of it; that triumph was Rebecca's: "'Her blasted taste made Manderley the thing it is today…. God, the place was a wilderness…. crying out for skill and care that [my father] would never give to it, that I would not have thought of giving to it'" (*R* 307). Maxim identifies himself with Manderley, but his ineptitude in the management of his estate not only demonstrates the contingency of his character, but also his basic inability to sustain and enforce patriarchal authority (a trait, it seems, that he has inherited from his own father). The male masochism plot denies feminine subjectivity, as Pyrhönen demonstrates. Yet, the country house plot reveals Maxim also to be subject of a fantasy: the national myth of the country house, eternal bastion of Englishness, guarantor of upper-class male privilege, and testament to a harmonious and entrenched social hierarchy. Manderley, of course, is none of these things: as Gina Wisker demonstrates, Manderley is a pointless shell of a home, emptied of meaning except for the secrets it hides (88). Maxim's identification with the place is inextricably intertwined with his masochistic justification for Rebecca's death and his new wife's complicity. The superficiality of the country house fantasy therefore diminishes the totalizing force of the masochistic one. The text implies that masculinity, like real estate, is inadequate without the supplement of wifely domestic service. At the same time, the mythic status of the house shows how the estate's illusion of plenitude in fact derives from the love/hate of women, whose domestic service both underpins and undermines the authority of the patriarch.

In my analysis, the narrator's positioning of the story as a memoir allows her a degree of authority and control that trumps Maxim's: even if her story is one of transformation into the idealized beating woman, it nonetheless retains the quality of impersonation when viewed from the perspective of the reader, which is never aligned with Maxim's perspective. Through her S/M performance, the narrator participates in the misogyny of the novel's Gothic seduction plot, manipulating its anti-feminist conventions to achieve an ambiguous authority through her retrospective account. This complicates her final inhabitation of the role of stern matron that complements Maxim's new position as infantilized dependent. As McClintock points out, "Role switching is a common feature of S/M" (148). At the narrative's end, Maxim's now-fetishized babyism reverses their relationship of power. The prominence of fetishism allows one to conceive of the novel's romantic "resolution" in terms of S/M performance *and* Deleuzian masochism, exposing not only the narrator but also Maxim as characters that can only perform their roles *ad absurdum*, embodying the hopelessness of adequately fulfilling social expectations – and of "adequacy" itself as a condition of successful romance. As McClintock argues, "Far from being merely phallic substitutes, fetishes can be seen as the displacement onto an object (or person) of contradictions that the individual cannot resolve at a personal level" (184). Thus the narrator's new habits of patting Maxim on the head, supervising his meals, waking him up in the morning, and reading to him represent a fetishization of the everyday practices of domesticity as well as Maxim's (now explicitly infantile) subservience to them. In Deleuzian terms, the necessity of the masochistic *contract*[16] aligns Maxim and the narrator in their shared submission to gender- and class-bound expectations: she agrees not only to embody the mythical ideal of the beating mother, but also to position Maxim's infantilization as punishment for his guilt in Rebecca's death. In this way, his babyism functions as his punishment and also his reward: "The masochist

regards the law as a punitive process and therefore begins by having the punishment inflicted upon himself; once he has undergone the punishment, he feels that he is allowed or indeed commanded to experience the pleasure that the law was supposed to forbid" (Deleuze 88). His pleasure is, in part, his unmooring from Manderley, and the making explicit of his failure to function as its master – which, in Deleuzian terms, gives him a new kind of authority (the authority to enlist the narrator to help him play out his anxieties as masochistic fantasy).

The narrator also acts masochistically, in Deleuzian terms, and produces a masochistic narrative. Deleuze characterizes masochism as "a state of waiting": "Pure waiting divides naturally into two simultaneous currents, the first representing what is awaited, something essentially tardy, always late and always postponed, the second representing something that is expected and on which depends the speeding up of the awaited object" (71). The burning down of Manderley functions in this way: through the relentless time-shifting of her memoir, the narrator consistently anticipates the horror of the fire; yet, this catastrophe is never represented textually. If Maxim is finally deprived of Manderley and, by extension, of his manhood, the narrator exists in a constant state of anticipation of that rupture, always tethered to the expectations of upper-middle-class femininity that the estate represents while recognizing those values, like the mansion, as being always-already lost. Maxim exists in a state of lack for which only the narrator's coldness and cruelty can compensate, by enabling him to recreate himself in the absence of patriarchal domination, which is represented by Manderley. The narrator, on the other hand, in her function *as* narrator, exists in a state of plenitude in which disciplinary discourses (manifested in her own masochistic narrative, which takes part in S/M performance, Maxim's masochistic demand that she dominate him, and her own idealized vision of herself as stoic English matron) overlap, intensify, and negate each other. Thus she achieves an ironic,

campy performance of selfhood that both exaggerates and obscures gender and class difference, and defies any fantasy of feminist liberation from masculinist economies of desire. The vacuity of her character, then, is not only an effect of Maxim's masochism, but follows from her earlier S/M performance, one grounded in the narrator's own desiring subjectivity. At the same time, her narrative positions her (and the reader) on the road to Manderley interminably.

"Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again":

Spatial stories and dreams of presence

The last paragraph of the novel implies, but does not represent, the destruction of Manderley:

> [Maxim] drove faster, much faster. We topped the hill before us and saw Lanyon lying in a hollow at our feet. There to the left of us was the silver streak of the river, widening to the estuary at Kerrith six miles away. The road to Manderley lay ahead. There was no moon. The sky above our heads was inky black. But the sky on the horizon was not dark at all. It was shot with crimson, like a splash of blood. And the ashes blew towards us with the salt wind from the sea. (*R* 427-8)

The final episode in the novel seems to orient the de Winters in space and time: readers know that it is two o'clock in the morning (*R* 427), that they are on the hill above Lanyon, and that Kerrith is six miles away. These details, however, are largely irrelevant to the narrator's account. The passage situates one, vividly, on "the road to Manderley," below a sky that is "inky black" and in contemplation of a blaze that looks "like the dawn was breaking" (*R* 427). While the accumulation of details provides the illusion of specificity, readers can never be sure where the narrator is situated with respect to Manderley: she is always somewhere on the road thereto, and

the certainties of arrival/possession are continually deferred. Below the surface of the "inky black" writing that constitutes the narrative, a trajectory is evident: one that promises to reconstruct Manderley through memoir but also continually delays readers' arrival. It is for this reason that the destruction of the estate in a fire set by Mrs. Danvers,[17] which is never represented except through simile, looks like the start of a new day: it positions the narrator to begin her story anew, with the book's famous first line: "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again" (*R* 1). At the same time, the scene drags the narrator backwards toward the past by invoking the image of her predecessor. Even in the process of disappearing, Manderley reminds one of Rebecca: the wind and sea, thoroughly and symbolically linked with the first Mrs. de Winter through the image of the "squally" bay (*R* 145), convey the ashes of the house to the narrator. Day and night, creation and destruction, and past and future collapse in on each other through the dream logic of the story's beginning and end.

After the fire, which Maxim recognizes as Manderley in flames but the narrator, ever obtuse, does not (*R* 427), the narrator gains an authority over the estate that she never enjoyed when she physically inhabited it. In her dream, which begins the novel, the house in which she was afraid of the servants, frequently lost, and afraid to touch anything is now "*our* Manderley, secretive and silent as it had always been…. As I stood there, hushed and still, I could swear that the house was not an empty shell but lived and breathed as it had lived before" (*R* 2-3, emphasis added). Maxim, the privileged male puppet-master of the masochistic contract, mourns the loss of Manderley and is emasculated by his lack of a home. The narrator, in contrast, can reanimate the dead house in her dreams, which punctuate the text. In doing so, she becomes like Rebecca. During her first days at Manderley, the narrator recognizes Rebecca's gift of animating domestic spaces, in contrast to the deathliness of Maxim's rooms. Although Maxim claims that sustaining

life at Manderley is his "full-time job," it is always Mrs. de Winter who is credited with breathing life into the house. Maxim's library, for example, has a "musty smell," and has "tables littered with magazines and papers, seldom if ever read, but left there from long custom" (*R* 93); whereas Rebecca's morning room seems "vividly alive, having something of the same glow and brilliance that the rhododendrons had, massed there, beneath the window. And I noticed then that the rhododendrons… had been permitted to the room itself" (93). Rhododendrons, like Rebecca herself, seem innocuous in their decorative function but imply danger in their uncontainable fecundity. In the narrator's dream of returning to Manderley, the invasion of the house by natural forces suggests miscegenation and the breaking down of barriers:

> I turned to the house, and though it stood inviolate, untouched, as though we ourselves had left just yesterday, I saw that the garden had obeyed the jungle law, even as the woods had done. The rhododendrons stood fifty feet high, twisted and entwined with bracken, and they had entered into alien marriage with a host of nameless shrubs, poor, bastard things that clung around their roots as though conscious of their own spurious origin. (*R* 3)

Although the house remains "inviolate," keeping out the rhododendrons and other intruders, the "bastard" shrubs, reminiscent of the bastard child that Rebecca claimed to be carrying before she died, encroach ever closer. The rhododendrons – associated throughout the text with Rebecca's uncontainable sexuality – reach grotesque proportions. Meanwhile, the bracken with which the flowers are "twisted and entwined" call to mind the "savage" orphan narrator, who enters the house through an "alien marriage" (she insists that she does not belong at Manderley). Annamarie Jagose argues that the dream imagery represents "not simply the reversal of sexual sequence – perversion's triumph over heterosexuality – but the incoherent jumbling of the

oppositional terms that govern sequence's operation: before and after, past and future, first and second" (363). As I have demonstrated, the narrator's fictional memoir achieves a violent erasure and revision of Rebecca's narrative. At the same time, the narrator's voice aligns itself with Rebecca, obscuring, as Jagose demonstrates, the divisions that would separate them through the "jungle law" of illicit desire. The dreamscape's sexualized re-presentations of the fictional space of the garden both threatens the house's integrity as bastion of patriarchy – a process symbolized by the "bastard shrubs" and "alien marriage" – and reaffirms the necessity of such a citadel. Although the narrator insists that she lives in a world of overdetermined identities and strict social expectations, her deference belies her project of boundary making and breaking – manifested through these images of "miscegenation, masturbation, monstrousness, and primitivism" (Jagose 363) – which the symbolism of her initial dream makes explicit. The fictional memoir of *Rebecca* is therefore a project of reconstructing Manderley as a textual and sexual space, one that consistently undermines the authority of Maxim and the patriarchal, class-bound ideals of Englishness that he embodies.

By the end of the dream, the house becomes "a desolate shell, soulless at last" because a "cloud, hitherto unseen, came upon the moon, and hovered an instant like a dark hand before a face. The illusion went with it, and the lights in the windows were extinguished" (*R* 4). This imagery, of course, foreshadows the final scene of the novel, in which the moon is also conspicuously absent. With its lights extinguished, Manderley then becomes tomb-like, a monument to *hidden* fears and suffering: "The house was a sepulchre, our fear and suffering lay buried in the ruins" (*R* 4). The opposition between a lively and harmonious Manderley and a soulless, dead one is not analogous to the opposition between dreaming and wakefulness; both are contained within the dream. Whereas Maxim's estate is open to feminized forces of entropy,

the narrator's dream is inviolate. These convolutions of memory are the narrator's secret; she cannot share the dream with Maxim: "we would not talk of Manderley, I would not tell my dream. For Manderley was ours no longer. Manderley was no more" (*R* 4). In her indulgence in the pleasure and pain of these memories, the narrator, like Rebecca, enjoys a secret, sexualized life. In the narrator's case, the secret Manderley of her dreams works in service of her masochistic performance, further troubling the boundary between public, normative codes and private pleasure and pain. Meanwhile, the narrator's constant lurching between the present, the past, and her dreams allows her to explore several fictional worlds simultaneously: she is tourist, intruder, mistress, and protector of Manderley, which in its turn is at once prison, tomb, monument, and paradise. From the story's first paragraph to its last, the narrator's vivid use of symbolism and dreams marks the story hers and Rebecca's, not Maxim's, despite the centrality of the Bluebeard seduction narrative to the novel's plot. The fictional memoir that *Rebecca* comprises therefore represents a feminine re-presentation and re-occupation of Manderley, which effects an alteration and reinscription of textual spaces and their meanings. This project occurs concomitantly with the protagonist's construction of her story as masochistic.

In Foucauldian terms, Manderley, when it is extant, is a carceral space, where techniques of training, discipline, and punishment are diffused into seemingly non-penitentiary spaces and practices, constituting a system of surveillance and correction to which "there is no outside" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 301). In *Rebecca,* these disciplinary techniques are in the service of patriarchy, class privilege, heterosexuality, and imperialism, as many of Maxim's social interactions in the text demonstrate. During his proposal, Maxim explicitly equates Manderley with England; the narrator may choose to go "home" to the estate or continue her un-English, cosmopolitan existence as a paid companion: "'the choice is open to you. Either you go to

America with Mrs. Van Hopper or you come to Manderley with me'" (*R* 57). Rebecca knew how devoted Maxim was (and is) to making Manderley a showpiece of marital harmony and upper-class social leadership, even as she mocked these values: "'I'll run your damn Manderley for you, make it the most famous show-place in all the country, if you like. And people will visit us, and envy us, and talk about us; they'll say we are the luckiest, happiest, handsomest couple in all England. What a leg-pull, Max!'" (*R* 305). She goes too far, however, when she suggests she might be pregnant with an illegitimate child, asking, "'It would give you the biggest thrill of your life, wouldn't it, Max, to watch my son grow bigger day by day, and to know that when you died, all this would be his?'" (*R* 313). Rebecca's threat to patriarchal privilege and continuity has become too great, too real, and leads Maxim to murder her – he must protect the metonymy between man and estate. Colonel Julyan, who investigates Rebecca's death, is the representative of English imperial might abroad and aristocratic influence at home. It is largely due to his sympathy for the de Winters that Maxim is exonerated. With the complacent phrase, "'Give me England every time, when it comes to settling down. You know where you are over here'" (*R* 330), he sits down to luncheon with the de Winters, where they chat about curry in China and Singapore and raspberry jam in England, and finally reach a foregone conclusion that Rebecca's death was accidental. Favell recognizes Julyan and Maxim's political affinities, demonstrating that he, like Julyan, "know[s] where you are over here": "'You won't let him down because you've dined with him, and he'd dined with you. He's a big name down here. He's the owner of Manderley. You poor bloody little snob….You're like a little trade union here at Manderley, aren't you?… no one going to give anyone else away. Even the local magistrate is on the same racket'" (*R* 373, 375). Throughout the text, gender, class and power relations are explicitly recognized and policed. These instances, in which the ideologies that are reified in Manderley are

explicitly acknowledged, hint at their pervasiveness. In contrast to Maxim and Julyan's complacency or Rebecca and Favell's cynicism, the narrator repeatedly articulates her awareness of powerlessness and victimhood. Though her status as mistress of the house legitimates her in some ways, her initial role as a paid companion in Monte Carlo, youth, class position, and inexperience exclude her from the mechanisms of power in many others.

The idealized Manderley of conservative English virtue is therefore a space in which the narrator is always subject to oppressive discourses of power. Foucault argues that, "By operating at every level of the social body and by mingling ceaselessly the art of rectifying and the right to punish, the universality of the carceral lowers the level from which it becomes natural and acceptable to be punished" (*DP* 303). By placing the individual in the position of continual transgression and, by extension, continual expectation of punishment, the carceral system individualizes subjects in terms of classifying their delinquency (*DP* 297). Manderley as carceral space produces a continual fear of punishment in the narrator, which intersects complexly with the S/M scenarios that she plays out in her memoir. Whereas her fears of displeasing Maxim are frequently mitigated by the *frisson* of erotic excitement and the pleasures of role-playing, the narrator's fears about transgressing the rules of Manderley are real and terrifying. Reading Rebecca's correspondence during her first time alone in the morning room, for example, the narrator is paranoid and admits to "feeling guilty suddenly, and deceitful, as though I were staying in someone else's house… and I had unforgivably, in a stealthy manner, peeped at her correspondence" (*R* 95). Shortly thereafter, Maxim's sister Beatrice arrives, and the narrator plots her escape in panic: "I wondered if it would be possible to hide, to get out of the window, into the garden so that Frith, bringing them to the morning-room, would say, 'Madam must have gone out,' and it would seem quite natural" (*R* 99). The "naturalness" that she aims for is,

of course, unattainable; she will never "naturally" fit into her new position of entitlement. While she never wishes to run away from Maxim – in fact, she frequently wishes to freeze her moments with him in time[18] – her navigations of Manderley are filled with fantasies of imprisonment and escape. When the narrator breaks the valuable cupid in the morning-room, for example, she hides the evidence in an attempt to escape confrontation; when she is forced to admit her mistake, Maxim observes, "'It looks as though Mrs. de Winter thought you would put her in prison, doesn't it, Mrs. Danvers?'" (*R* 159). She hides from the servants, imagining the house's windows as panoptic instruments of surveillance over the lawn, one of the only places where she feels at ease. Hungry for a snack, she secrets away some biscuits: "I went and ate them in the woods, in case one of the servants should see me on the lawn from the windows, and then go and tell the cook that they did not think Mrs. de Winter cared for the food prepared in the kitchen" (*R* 169).

Yet, in her retrospective account, the threats of humiliation and punishment that Manderley represents are distant; the place recalls the paradise that she dreamed of before she arrived there: the narrator tells us that she chooses to "think of it as it might have been, could I have lived there without fear" (*R* 4). Her memoir, in which moments of fear and paranoia continually occur, seems to contradict this statement. The narrator's very awareness of transgression, narrated from the safety of exile, shows that the boundaries that constitute Manderley can be made porous. If, as Louise Harrington suggests, "the domestic space of the house is, metaphorically, the domestic space of England, defined always by that which is outside and other" (297), then the narrator's tactic of boundary-crossing – which at once implies an uncertain future of class mobility and reanimates the ungovernable, sexualized corpse of Rebecca – infuses the spaces of discipline with the threat of foreignness and dissolution.

Thus the narrator imaginatively *occupies* Manderley – a space in which she was consistently the object of censure and marginalization during her tenure as its mistress – through remembering and storytelling. From the space of her "bare little hotel room, comforting in its lack of atmosphere" (*R* 4), the narrator weaves a story of foreboding, in which identities are always profoundly unstable. By reconstructing Manderley through her memories of a Bluebeard's castle haunted not only by Rebecca, the dead wife, but also by her Mephistophelian, seemingly omniscient and omnipresent housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, the narrator herself becomes a kind of ghost – an interloper in time and space, with secret knowledge and unresolved desires. The narrator is made spectral in part by her ambivalence: she is at once enlivened by the estate's grandeur and oppressed by its hierarchies. Gina Wisker argues that the narrator's initial idealization of Manderley is crucial to the task of dismantling the ideologies it symbolizes:

> Engaging with, before undermining, the settled comforts of tradition, du Maurier conjures for us through the memory of the shadowy second wife a fantasy image of Manderley, that inheritor of the grand English country house setting, whose forefathers are Pemberley, Pemberton, and Howards End (etc., etc.)[19] and which should stand solidly for aristocratic virtue, the caring practices which spring from paternalism, continuity, fruitfulness…. It is attractive but pointless, emptied out of meaning except for the hidden unpleasant secrets, the pretences, lies, of the high living lifestyle of the previous era. (88)

My analysis considers the narrator's relationship to Manderley as that of a poacher, one who makes use of the estate of the entitled gentleman, consuming its codes and rituals, to procure what *she* needs and desires, taking something away from the place – the story itself, which

legitimates her new identity – without leaving any trace that she was there. For Michel de Certeau, "poaching" is inextricably tied with the process of consumption, "an art of using" products of discipline for ends that are unexpected and unproductive (from the point of view of those in power):

> In reality, a rationalized, expansionist, centralized, spectacular and clamorous production is confronted by an entirely different kind of production, called "consumption" and characterized by its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of circumstances), its poaching, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility, since it shows itself not in its own products (where would it place them?) but in an art of using those imposed on it. (31)

In *Rebecca,* this project requires that the narrator first occupy the space and subjugate herself to its ruling ideologies. Manderley is destroyed in the end, after all, leaving the narrator guiltless and invisible, a silent, secret occupier of memorialized space.

Thus the reader can approach the narrator's account as a tactical reinscription of Manderley's structuring hierarchies. In de Certeau's exposition, which engages productively with Foucault's model of discipline, a "tactic" is an evasion and reinscription of power that takes place within the space of discipline:

> I call a "tactic" a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutionalized localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of the tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. (de Certeau xix)

Given de Certeau's formulation, the narrator's complex relationship to Manderley – which is at

once gone forever and achingly real, a place of alienation and attraction, of forbidden desires and reassuring familiarity – can be conceived of as being in the place of the "other," wherein "the weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them" (de Certeau xix). Through the practices of everyday life, de Certeau explains, individuals reinscribe spaces of discipline with unpredictable, temporary, and subjective meanings – tactics – that cannot be subsumed by discourses of power. By chronicling her time at Manderley, by navigating its overdetermined spaces and trespassing in rooms and places that are closed to her (such as Rebecca's room, the cottage by the lake, and the servants' hallways), the narrator unearths stories about Rebecca and Manderley that run counter to Maxim's "official" version. The narrator hides, breaks things, opens doors that are meant to be locked, and speaks to people she is not meant to encounter: these are all acts of poaching, of making or breaking meanings that she is meant to receive passively or not at all.

Poaching, which deploys "hunter's tricks"[20] in spaces that are delineated and controlled by figures of authority, is anti-authoritarian. Tellingly, Maxim's family assumes that the narrator likes to hunt for foxes. A hobby of the entitled upper classes, hunting requires access to a large expanse of space, and the strategic exercise of power over that space. Lacking their upbringing, the narrator is of course not an able hunter or horsewoman. When Beatrice makes the alarming claim, ""The hunting is so much better with us. You must come over and stay, when Maxim can spare you. Giles will mount you"" (*R* 106), the narrator replies, ""I'm afraid I don't hunt…. I learnt to ride, as a child, but very feebly; I don't remember much about it"" (106). Beatrice's presumption takes for granted that the narrator can only participate under certain circumstances: first, when Maxim does not need her; and second, when another man can "mount" her. When the narrator demurs based on her inabilities, the group speaks instead of her hobby of painting.

The hunt is implicitly sexualized and tied both to her husband's requirements at Manderley and to the memory of Rebecca, who was a skilled horsewoman. The narrator is better at painting, an act of observing, interpreting, and imagining. Despite the narrator's *failure* of memory (she has forgotten how to ride) in this episode, her memories alone constitute the narrative; it is her capacity to observe, to record, and to reveal that drives this romantic thriller. The narrator poaches, in the de Certeauvian sense, right under Maxim's nose.

The narrator of *Rebecca*, in other words, tells her own story in the space in which Maxim's and Rebecca's stories should be: she tells their story, yes, but it is one that is continually ruptured by the vagaries and inflections of her memories. In this way, to borrow again from de Certeau, "Things *extra* and *other* (details and excesses coming from elsewhere) insert themselves into the accepted framework, the imposed order….The surface of this order is everywhere punched and torn by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve-order" (107). For de Certeau, this construction of a "sieve-order" is an effect of narration, and *also* an effect of occupying space. Walking and speaking both produce "spatial stories" in which memory and storytelling effect spatial transformations, which in turn alter the discursive constructions that the spaces of power represent. The "sieve-order" thus constitutes "the very relationship between spatial practices and the constructed order" (107). These relationships, negotiated by walking through and inhabiting space, are then renegotiated through acts of remembering. De Certeau explains how the story operates in time and space:

> With variations, each [story] repeats the recourse to a different world from which can, *must*, come the blow that will change the established order. But all these variants could very well be no more than the shadows – enlarged into symbolic and narrative projections – thrown by the journalistic practice that consists in

> seizing the opportunity and making memory the means of transforming places. (86)

Narration, that is to say, is a kind of navigation that reconstructs and alters as it passes through a space. The narrator spends much of the book exploring Manderley, alternately behaving as tourist, detective, fugitive, interloper, and mistress. In doing so, she constructs a memorialized space in which Maxim's power and Rebecca's legacy are real and oppressive, but cannot subsume the narrator's authority – which is, in turn, subject to the reader's interpretation. Reading, for de Certeau, *also* offers an opportunity for poaching: just as the narrator changes space by remembering and narrating, so the reader inserts her own interpretations, memories, and affective responses into the narrator's account.[21] The intensely disciplinary space of Manderley is thus transformed into a palimpsestic record, altered by every retelling – a "zoo of everyday practices" (de Certeau 79) in which discourse and power are continually reinscribed and evaded.

The narrator's preliminary exploration of Manderley's west wing – its "Bluebeard's chamber" where Rebecca's room lies untouched since her death – exemplifies the kinds of spatial and temporal transformations that de Certeau describes. The narrator literally runs there in fear as she attempts to flee from the morning room to her bedroom so as to avoid meeting Maxim's sister Beatrice alone – an encounter that would, she believes, test her imperfect mastery of class-, age-, and gender-based social codes. Although her girlish incompetence was required, even encouraged, by Maxim in Monte Carlo, she feels hopelessly inadequate among the individuals who "belong" at Manderley. Hearing the voices of people approaching, the narrator "went quickly into the big drawing-room, and made for a door…on the left. It led into a long stone passage, and I ran along it, fully aware of my stupidity" (*R* 99). Although expecting to

arrive at her bedroom in the east wing at the top of the stairs, she finds herself in a different corridor, "similar in some ways to the one in the east wing, but broader and darker" (100). Opening a door randomly to find an out-of-use bedroom, she imagines it as a vault:

> The room smelt close and stale, the smell of a room seldom if ever used, whose ornaments are herded together in the centre of a bed and left there, covered with a sheet. It might be too that the curtain had not been drawn from the window since some preceding summer, and if one crossed there now and pulled them aside, opening the creaking shutters, a dead moth who had been imprisoned behind them for many months would fall to the carpet and lie there, beside a forgotten pin, and a dried leaf blown there before the windows were closed for the last time. (*R* 100)

Certainly, this does not read like the account of a châtelaine surveying her domain – the narrator recalls that the experience makes her "fully aware of [her] stupidity." Fleeing from social obligations, personified by Bea and Giles, she finds the west wing, and perceives secrets there. Rather than the bodies of Bluebeard's wives, the self-styled Gothic heroine imagines "ornaments" on the bed, shrouded by the sheet. She imagines the curtain swept aside, revealing a corpse – but the corpse is that of a moth. Thus the narrator's perceptions lead readers to anticipate revelations of horror, which, when confronted, are supplanted by insects and home décor. Through ironic diminution, the narrative thereby constructs the room as a Gothic setting and simultaneously exposes generic expectations of the Gothic as being sensational but ultimately empty.

The moth is a creature that, when drawn to the flame, symbolizes irresistible attraction; it lies beside a pin, an instrument of feminine beauty and of the crafty embellishment of which the

narrator claims to be so incapable. As always, Rebecca's corpse haunts the text through symbols of feminine loveliness and social competence, and holds a strong attraction for the narrator. The pin could also be used, however, to affix the moth in a collector's cabinet; the narrator's story serves a similar function of not only remembering, but also arranging and maintaining Rebecca's presence – if not by manipulating her deathly body, at least by handling her things. By imaginatively summoning the moth and the "forgotten pin," the narrator infuses the disused room with past and present meaning and desire, and figures desirable femininity both as an object of a deadly attraction and as a result of a paralyzing process of fetishization. De Certeau argues that, "Narration does indeed have a content, but it also belongs to the art of making a *coup*: it is a detour by way of a past ('the other day,' 'in olden days') or by way of a quotation (a 'saying,' a proverb) made in order to take advantage of an occasion and to modify an equilibrium by taking it by surprise" (79). By exploring Manderley, by imagining meanings hidden in its most seemingly insignificant spaces (this passage is the only time this particular room appears in the novel), the narrator thus occupies and interprets the carceral house. To borrow again from de Certeau's terminology, Manderley is a *place*, which is ordered and organized by discourses of power. By occupying this place, the narrator transforms it into a *space*, which is "composed of intersections and mobile elements… in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken… *space is a practiced place*" (de Certeau 117). The narrator's reaction to the empty room, when recalled, is again modified by the act of remembering. This new meaning is situated within a narrative that is itself affected by *its* time and place and the presence of an interlocutor (de Certeau 83-5). The narrator's intrusion into the forgotten room therefore achieves a telescoping of time and place, comprising its actual former uses and occupants (which one never discovers), the narrator's conjectures, with all their symbolic density, the time and place in which she views

them, and the time and place from which she narrates – that is, a barren hotel room on the Continent. In this way, the carceral totality of Manderley becomes ruptured, or "punched and torn," to use de Certeau's terms – recalling the narrator's rough treatment of Rebecca's book of poetry – by unpredictable and uncontainable acts of inhabiting, imagining, forgetting, and remembering.

Manderley can seem vast and labyrinthine or cozy and intimate, depending on the narrator's point of view. The two most significant layers in the palimpsest produced by the narrative's technique of telescoping space and time are the narrator's changing, often claustrophobically subjective perceptions of the space and its occupants and the continuing influence of Rebecca. Manderley is, in this respect, a haunted house; one that is haunted by Rebecca and by the narrator in turn. Again, de Certeau provides a peculiar insight: "There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can 'invoke' or not. Haunted places are the only ones people can live in – and this inverts the schema of the *Panopticon*…. Only hints of what is known but unrevealed are passed on 'just between you and me'" (108). Memory, like power, is dispersed; it is only temporarily localizable, and the places where people live are "like the presences of diverse absences" (de Certeau 108). That is to suggest, when one recalls, "here, there used to be…" one invokes a past that is unseen but made present in memory and narration; this is the narrator's task both during the time she lives at Manderley, and in the framing narrative in which she remembers her life there. The continual presence/absence of Rebecca in the narrator's story arises in part from her masochistic performance, in which her own inferiority relies on the memory of Rebecca, the woman with the "breeding, brains, and beauty" (*R* 304) that she can never possess. Anxious fascination with Rebecca belies not only identification but also desire, mediated by memory and

by Mrs. Danvers. Through her occupation and narration of space, the narrator also stages an imaginative triumph over patriarchy: her obsession with Rebecca places female characters at the heart of the story of revelation and retribution.[22] The ways in which female desire structures the narrative produces a Bluebeard tale in which Bluebeard is finally irrelevant, stripped of his power to shock and to punish.

Constellations of female desire

The novel's heterosexual romance plot brackets, rather than constitutes or parallels, the narrator's tenure as mistress of Manderley. This plot comprises the narrator's initial courtship with Maxim in Monte Carlo, which I have interpreted with respect to S/M fetishism and camp performativity, and Maxim's confession of his crime – the murder of Rebecca – to his young wife, which appears to reverse the distribution of power in their relationship and legitimate her as the long-suffering, tweedy English matron that she so longs to be, even as it necessitates their exile on the Continent. The convolutions of identity, knowledge, and power that characterize the romance plot are compelling insofar as they exemplify a crisis of patriarchal authority while sustaining the appearance of English cultural hegemony. In other words, the romance plot offers the pretence of resolution even though Rebecca's spectre is only partially contained. What happens *between* the narrator's two "love scenes" with Max – her exploration of Manderley and her education about Rebecca's past, mainly through the tutelage of Mrs. Danvers – has received substantial critical attention.[23] It is worth considering *why* Rebecca's legacy must be contained in the first place: duplicitous or not, she was almost universally adored, and it is thanks to her care and energy that Manderley is the glorious show-home it is when the narrator arrives. Mary Wings asks a question that is obvious, but carefully overstepped by the narrator: "Rebecca's

character is described as so heinous we are expected not only to forgive the slaughter but applaud it. How does this happen?" (20). Convincingly, Wings demonstrates that Rebecca's crime – suggested by Maxim's claim that she "was not even normal" (*R* 304) – is her queerness (19-22). The ways in which desire circulates among the narrator, Mrs. Danvers, and Rebecca (and/or her corpse) is, in some ways, a more convincing and revealing romance than the ostensibly "central," heteronormative one. At the same time, the novel insists that patriarchal power is invested in – and in fact, relies upon – the simultaneous enshrinement and disavowal of female domestic intimacy. Transgressive, presumably lesbian feminine allegiances and desires at once threaten and undergird heterosexual resolution, placing the narrative at a further remove from patriarchal hegemony. As I have suggested, the violent containment of Rebecca's alleged lesbianism also liberates Maxim and the narrator from the expectation of "straight" eroticism, instead enabling an adequate performance of heterosexuality – while ironizing the idea of adequately fulfilling gender roles at all – through S/M kink. In other words, their joint abhorrence of Rebecca, and their shared guardianship of the secret of her murder, both repress and fuel homoeroticism under the guise of heterosexual normativity.

Although the narrator treats the carceral space of Manderley as a metaphor for Maxim's upper-class patriarchal entitlement, her imaginative navigations and transformations of the estate are symbolically invested in two female figures: Mrs. Danvers, a figure of surveillance and censure, and Rebecca, the exemplarily graceful mistress against whom the narrator worries she pales in comparison. When she feels marginalized and alienated, the narrator identifies Mrs. Danvers as an omniscient watcher who recognizes her as being a fraud. Upon her arrival at the estate, for example, the narrator feels antagonized by the servants, and attributes the hostile atmosphere to the housekeeper's orchestration of the scene: the servants remind the narrator of

"the watching crowd about the block, and I the victim with my hands behind my back" (*R* 74). Of course, readers are never given the sense that the servants' threat is anything more than the narrator's fantasy.[24] Mrs. Danvers appears in the crowd like death itself, "whose prominent cheek-bones and great, hollow eyes gave her a skull's face, parchment white, set on a skeleton's frame" (*R* 74). With her skeletal face and deathly aspect, Mrs. Danvers is literally in the service of the dead: she keeps Manderley running according to Rebecca's preferences and instructions. Critics have interpreted the narrator's relationship with Mrs. Danvers in different ways: Holly Blackford argues that the Gothic heroine wishes to "belong to the house," and it is the servant who at once stands in her way and symbolizes the living death that is the end result of women's domestic ideals;[25] Judy Giles considers the narrator's inability to manage her servants as being explicitly tied to her sexual inexperience, given a domestic ideology in which the upper-class wife is expected to be pleasingly submissive to her husband but his assertive agent in the household (39-40); Annamarie Jagose identifies Mrs. Danvers as crucial to the production of female "perversity" which drives the plot of the novel (360). In each of these formulations, as well as in the narrator's alignment of Mrs. Danvers with Maxim in humiliating the narrator (for example, when she breaks the cupid figurine), Mrs. Danvers serves as the narrator's intermediary: negotiating, facilitating, or exacerbating her relationships with other characters and settings in the text. The housekeeper is indeed crucial to the domestic economy of Manderley, from a narrative as well as from a practical point of view. Mrs. Danvers, like Manderley, exists only in the past, as a figment in the narrator's textual reconstruction of the great house (she disappears as Manderley burns). She possesses past, intimate knowledge of Rebecca (more intimate, it is implied, than Maxim's), can navigate the labyrinthine back passages of the house, and also not only understands, but also manages and orchestrates, the social codes that the narrator finds

bewildering. Therefore, she exists at the intersections of past/present, master/servant, and public/private, managing and manipulating the "sieve-order" that forms the narrator's retrospective account of the estate.

As Janet Harbord argues, "In romance fiction the most substantial part of the text is concerned with other potential outcomes on the way to closure (heterosexuality, marriage), and the retrospective ordering of events as *the* legitimate path through these murky woods is often the final moment of clarification and enlightenment" (96). I have argued that the ordering of events into a coherent, teleological narrative is ambivalently achieved through the narrator's story. By constructing a tale of Gothic seduction that is explicitly performative and obviously self-conscious, she makes the process of "retrospective ordering" transparent. Mrs. Danvers, in contrast, embodies the diffuse, ungovernable knowledge and desire that constitutes, in Harbord's words, "other potential outcomes." Revealingly, this narrative function coexists with her occupation of maintaining the appearance of harmony and order at Manderley. This seeming contradiction is nowhere more apparent than at the fancy dress ball: as the narrator sheepishly admits to Maxim when he praises her "for remembering every detail" in preparation for the party, "Mrs. Danvers is responsible for everything" (*R* 232). Everything indeed – she is responsible for the seeming effortlessness of the lavish party, and also for exposing its contradictions: by suggesting that the narrator dress up as Caroline de Winter (which was Rebecca's choice for her last costume ball at Manderley), Mrs. Danvers transforms the costume party into a scene of Gothic horror, in which Rebecca seemingly rises from the dead. Mrs. Danvers, then, has the twin function of maintaining order while offering the temptation (and/or exposing the inevitability) of transgression.

Indeed, Mrs. Danvers inhabits multiple roles, often simultaneously: she acts as Rebecca's

devotee, even after the latter's death; as a proxy for Maxim to the narrator, insofar as she doubles his disapproving gaze; as the narrator's rival for domestic authority; and as Maxim's antagonist, when she sustains traces of Rebecca in the house and later accuses him of her murder. She is therefore a screen onto which the narrator maps successively the de Winters' erotic potentialities. Most significantly, she is a servant to Manderley itself, a guardian and sustainer of its organizing ideals. Maxim positions himself as the self-abnegating servant of the estate. In fact, Mrs. Danvers performs this role, to the extent of destroying Manderley (and, one can safely assume, herself) when its image of hegemony becomes unsustainable. Mrs. Danvers's violent self-sacrifice mirrors Maxim's murder of Rebecca, an act that he also positions as a self-sacrifice: as the destruction of his own integrity in the interest of preserving the ethical purity of Manderley. Whereas Maxim's crime only perpetuates his crisis of masculinity, Mrs. Danver's presumed self-immolation ruptures the heterosexual plot, which requires her triangulating presence.

The narrator's retrospective navigations of Manderley generate a transgressive, palimpsestic narrative site wherein she reconstructs the estate, the bastion of patriarchal entitlement, as a space of ambivalent feminine self-determination. In addition to conjuring the vanished Manderley, the narrator's memoir also reanimates the body of Rebecca, which is mapped onto the setting of the home through the presence of somatic traces and fetishized objects. Mrs. Danvers's deference to Rebecca's memory, her task of keeping Rebecca present and alive, mirrors the narrator's fantasies of Rebecca and her obsessive awareness of Rebecca's traces in the house. Jagose explicitly equates the narrator's jarring time-shifting with illicit desire:

> the novel's fascinated shuttling between the past and the present is symptomatic of its continued yet failed attempt to secure the sequence of its own story where

> the temporal obsession is the alibi for the sexual one, worked across the always crumbling distinctions between the first and second Mrs. de Winters, between a perverse and a normative sexuality, between homosexuality and heterosexuality. (358)

As Jagose demonstrates, the circulation of desire thus overlays and drives the novel's temporal organization. The temporal "shuttling" that characterizes the narratives is mirrored, as I have demonstrated, in characters' recreation of the past through imagined space, which sometimes overlays real places (creating, in de Certeauvian terms, a "practiced place"). Mrs. Danvers's function in the house is to organize and maintain places that, given the myth of the country house as microcosm of the nation, should map and uphold discourses of power. Yet, she is most proud of her maintenance of Rebecca's bedroom, which has become a shrine to the rebellious dead woman's memory. The narrator wanders into the room, "the most beautiful room in the house" (*R* 187), followed by Mrs. Danvers, who crosses personal boundaries to connect with the narrator in shared admiration for Rebecca's things: "I believe if she had come any closer to me I would have fainted. I felt her breath on my face" (*R* 188). Mrs. Danvers shows the narrator Rebecca's bed, her nightdress (unwashed since the last time Rebecca wore it), her brushes, her furs, and finally her underwear. She encourages the narrator to feel each one, and tells her to insert her hands into Rebecca's slippers. In this scene, with its representations of lesbian desire, Rebecca's possessions, enshrined and manipulated by "Danny," come to stand in for the body of Rebecca herself.

By curating Rebecca's room, Mrs. Danvers demonstrates that, as Rebecca herself once put it, "'you maid me better than anyone, Danny'" (*R* 189). Blackford emphasizes the pun on maid/made in this sentence, arguing that, "It is the servant character that constructs bourgeois

femininity as a fetish, working with and maintaining the objects that define the upper class lady"; without control of these commodities herself, the narrator, and not Rebecca or Mrs. Danvers, becomes a ghost (Blackford 248). By exploring the possibility of lesbian desire among the narrator, Rebecca, and Mrs. Danvers, and by suggesting that the desirable, competent, "normal" femininity that the narrative endorses is in fact produced by homosexual deviancy and fetishism, this scene makes explicit the latent connections between property and feminine sexuality that haunt the novel. Neither Maxim's expectations nor the social expectations placed upon Maxim-as-landed-gentry order the space of Manderley and the relationships that it sustains; rather, it is feminine mastery of social codes – and the ways in which alternatives to those codes can be imagined and explored from within the space of discipline – that underlie the *appearance* of hegemony. As Aaron Betsky suggests, the closet is "the ultimate interior, the place where interiority starts…. If the hearth is the heart of the home, where the family gathers to affirm itself as a unit in the glow of the fire, the closet contains both the secret recesses of the soul and the masks that you wear" (16-7). Rebecca's closet attests to the dependency of patriarchy and the force of the estate upon women's performance of "normal" femininity, and its concomitant estrangement of feminine relationships. In its very discreteness, this closet in particular, receptacle of the still-wrinkled negligees of the lost "angel-wife," is fundamentally implicated in, as well as disruptive to, public masculinist power.

Along with her careful maintenance of traces of Rebecca, Mrs. Danvers also guards the memory of her mistress's violent death, apotheosizing her as a latter-day Venus de Milo: "'The rocks had battered her to bits, you know,' she whispered, 'her beautiful face unrecognizable, and both arms gone'" (*R* 191). This violence is replicated by Mrs. Danvers on the body of the narrator: "She took hold of my arm, and walked me towards the bed. I could not resist her" (*R*

189); and later, "My arm was bruised and numb from the pressure of her fingers" (*R* 192). Mrs. Danvers thus treats the narrator as she has always dreamed of being treated, and as Maxim refuses to treat her – as if she might become more like Rebecca. The implied violence of this triangulated homoerotic encounter testifies to the force of metonymy at Manderley and in the country house genre. Rebecca has been disarmed – a metonym, perhaps, for her alienation from the patriarchal, nationalist power that Manderley represents. Mrs. Danvers's symbolic re-attachment of her former mistress's limbs to the body of the newcomer positions the narrator as both disempowered – in this scene, she too is symbolically disarmed – and empowered by her identification with her predecessor. The avulsion of Rebecca's arms and their symbolic identification with the body of the narrator thus parallels the metonymic equivalency between Rebecca's enticing and horrifying closet and the masculinist power manifested in Manderley.

Janet Harbord and Annamarie Jagose have argued that the relationship between Maxim de Winter and his second wife not only fails to eclipse the transgressive legacy of Rebecca, but it also *requires* it as a condition for romantic resolution (Harbord 102, Jagose 361-2). As Jagose explains,

> The novel's passion – like its horror – goes on being articulated in terms of female perversity. The heterosexuality that would cinch the novelistic economy of sequence remains secondary to the perversion it allegedly succeeds not only because it is never half as plausible or interpolating but also because the former remains constitutionally dependent on the latter. (361-2)

This relation is never more obvious than in the scene in which Maxim kisses his young wife, just after confessing to Rebecca's murder. As I have explored, she responds to his affection "like a wooden thing in Maxim's arms" (*R* 299). Returning to the crisis at hand, Maxim worries out

loud about Rebecca's body, still clad in her beautiful clothes: "'They'll identify her body,' he said, 'there's everything there to tell them, there in the cabin. The clothes she had, the shoes, the rings on her fingers'" (*R* 301). This description elicits a strong physical response from the narrator, which would have been less surprising, in terms of a generic romantic climax, in response to her husband's kiss: "The feeling came back to me, little by little, as I knew it would. My hands were cold no longer. They were clammy, warm. I felt a wave of colour come into my face, my throat. My cheeks were burning hot" (*R* 301). In these lines, with their strong suggestion of sexual arousal, the body of Rebecca mediates between Maxim and the narrator, obliquely facilitating the narrator's reciprocation of Maxim's physical passion. The narrator's pleasure in her husband's embrace is, in fact, pleasure at the thought of Rebecca, obliging readers to consider the former in light of, and as a figure for, the latter. Soon after this exchange, Maxim begs the narrator for her understanding and, implicitly, her forgiveness: "'Do you understand?' he said, 'do you, do you?'" (*R* 306). Once again, the narrator does not address Maxim directly; her response is deflected by the figure of Rebecca. She answers, "'Yes'… 'my sweet, my love,' but I looked away from him so he should not see my face. What did it matter whether I understood him or not? My heart was light as a feather floating in the air. He had never loved Rebecca" (*R* 306-7). Her heart, "light as a feather," attests to the relief of closure and resolution. The only thing that this passage has resolved, however, is that Maxim's imagined idealization of Rebecca, a source of anxiety for the narrator for the first half of the text, is the narrator's mistaken fantasy rather than fact. The connection between the narrator and Maxim remains unstable, as demonstrated by the narrator's evasive turning away from her husband, and by their constant wondering, "What are we going to do?" and "What are we going to say?" (*R* 302). Rebecca's irresistible charm remains uncontested, even after her duplicity has been exposed. Maxim tells

the narrator, "'Had she met you, she would have walked off into the garden with you, arm-in-arm… and you would have been taken in, like the rest. You would have sat at her feet and worshipped her'" (*R* 304). Maxim's construction of this scene is meant to emphasize Rebecca's loathsome duplicity, but it also echoes and affirms the narrator's fantasies of Rebecca, in which she is always beautiful, charming, and beloved. The relief that the scene of romantic "resolution" provides – to the narrator and to the reader – is motivated by the affirmation of Rebecca's charm *and* the inauthentic social relations that she fostered, which persist throughout the novel that bears her name. The fact that the novel is named *Rebecca* and not *Maxim*, or even *Manderley*, attests to the narrator's final privileging of the former over the latter two. Furthermore, the narrator's namelessness confirms her final communion with Rebecca: her narrative, the title implies, is also and at the same time Rebecca's.

I have returned to this scene of romantic closure – in which Maxim admits to Rebecca's murder and the narrator tacitly agrees that Rebecca "deserved" her fate – at several points in this chapter, and from several different theoretical perspectives, because of the ways in which it parodies the conventions of the romance genre. As Harbord reminds us, romance depends on a moment of "clarification and enlightenment" in which the heterosexual pairing is shown to be the ideal fate for the heroine (96). The pleasure of *Rebecca* is not only the ways in which alternative possibilities are inadequately contained, but also the ways in which these temptations of transgression constitute the very spatial and temporal field of the novel, and crystallize in this climactic scene. Through circulations of queer desire including triangulated lesbian sexuality, masochism, S/M fetishism, and campy performativity, the heterosexual romance plot is destabilized and decentered. This takes place at the level of plot (as the romance story is enacted by the narrator and Maxim) and narration (through the narrator's fictional memoir). At the level

of plot, *Rebecca*, with its interest in unified subjectivity, cause-and-effect narration, and elucidating resolution, is, to borrow a term from Deleuze and Guattari, an arborescent narrative.[26] It thrives on binary logic, on the "One that becomes two" (Deleuze and Guattari 5). Yet, the narrator's retrospective retelling represents desire as being multiple and non-hierarchical; time and space are structured by power, yes, but also by the convolutions of fantasy, imagination, memory, and desire. They are contingent, shifting, and subject to breaks and ruptures even as they continue to signify in the service of power. I would therefore suggest that rhizomatic principles of connection and heterogeneity are at work beneath and throughout the arborescent organization of the plot.[27] The narrator is always becoming-Rebecca. Manderley is consistently reterritorialized and deterritorialized through lines of flight that mark characters' navigations of textual space.[28] If, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, "there is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language with a political multiplicity" (7), then *Rebecca*'s romance plot belies a polyglossia of desire that at once undermines and undergirds the necessity of (arborescent) heterosexual closure.

Through its multiplicitous, rhizomatic infrastructures of memory and desire, *Rebecca* demonstrates the subversive potential – and limitations – of the camp country house novel. By fabulously staging patriarchal entitlement and feminine masochism, du Maurier's text explores the implications of romance and Gothic generic conventions for male and female characters. These discourses are performed to excess through the novel's Bluebeard intertext, in which the heroine commits herself to, rather than flees from, the Bluebeard character. Through her fictional memoir, the narrator represents this Gothic romance as a classic English love story. Yet, the narrative refuses to contain the proliferation of illicit desires that the romance should overcome, and suggests that the marriage plot actually depends on such transgression to achieve

closure. Despite the novel's campy send-up of conservatism, the fact that it ultimately punishes Rebecca and exonerates Maxim is difficult to reconcile with the social transgression that this chapter has considered. *Rebecca* explores a kind of decadence of conservative values, which balances on a razor's edge between misogyny and class prejudice on the one hand and the total collapse of ideals of English upper-class patriarchal hegemony on the other.

Given its deeply ambivalent approach to conservative, class-bound nationalist ideologies, the publication of this novel on the eve of World War II (when nations' embrace of the very classist, sexist conservatism that Maxim de Winter embodies was fuelling the spread of fascism in Europe) is significant. Gina Wisker notes that in 1938 Neville Chamberlain travelled around Europe with a copy of *Rebecca* in his briefcase for light reading on diplomatic visits that, Chamberlain believed, would prevent the outbreak of war (84). The ironies and contradictions of *Rebecca* suggest that the novel is a bellwether disguised as an escapist diversion: its excessive realization of domestic and national ideals produces and perpetuates (rather than resolves) Gothic horror. By staging a crisis in which fantasies of Englishness have spun wildly out of control, *Rebecca* unearths the skeletons in the closet that both the "Merrie England" of old and the iconic English subject of modernity, exemplified by *Mrs. Miniver* and her "stiff upper lip," would sentimentally disavow – and yet both of these ideals of Englishness would become ubiquitous in wartime propaganda. Despite its unquestionable misogyny, the novel's interest in boundary crossing, in the possibilities, limits, and consequences of subjective agency, and in the necessity of transgression to the achievement of consensus, illustrates how seeming testaments to totalizing nationalist discourse can fragment the very totality that they seem to promote. The next chapter examines Virginia Woolf's inter-war interventions in the Gothic, questioning the extent to which the anti-feminism of du Maurier's narrative can be resisted or evaded. Whereas

Rebecca is misogynistically punished for her queerness, cosmopolitanism, and rebelliousness against patriarchy, Woolf's *Orlando* celebrates these characteristics in its eponymous hero/ine. Although *To the Lighthouse*, "The Haunted House," and *Orlando* were published earlier than *Rebecca* (at a time when a second world war could not yet be anticipated with certainty), du Maurier and Woolf address similar questions of gender, class, and nationalism in their country house novels. Whereas *Rebecca* figures Gothic terror as the exception to "normality," which in fact underpins and reaffirms patriarchal hegemony, Woolf identifies this seeming state of exception as a fundamentally constitutive condition of modern life, perhaps offering an alternative historical narrative to the one that Rebecca de Winter could not escape.

CHAPTER 2

Spectral Subjects: The Woolfian Gothic

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight.

—Walter Benjamin

Despite her statement, in a 1917 review of Elinor Mordaunt's *Before Midnight*, that "we do not like the war in fiction, and we do not like the supernatural" ("Before Midnight" 87), ghosts appear in Virginia Woolf's fiction with surprising regularity, especially after the First World War. This is in part a reaction, as Paul K. Saint-Amour and others have noted, to the haunting omnipresence of violence and trauma in wartime: the carnage at the Front for soldiers, and the anxieties and losses borne by civilians (Saint-Amour 207-10, G. Johnson 241-4). In 1921 Woolf argued that life had outpaced the Victorian Gothic and rendered its methods obsolete: "Nowadays we breakfast on a richer feast of horror than served them for a twelvemonth. We are tired of violence; we suspect mystery" ("Ghost Stories" 321). Yet, the Gothic permeates Woolf's post-war *oeuvre*. Writing at a time when world war at once demanded and defied national, ethical, and gender categories, Woolf employs Gothic tropes to explore the uncertainty of twentieth-century political life. Rather than offering straightforwardly Gothic fictions, in which heteronormative, patriarchal, and nationalist norms are thrown into crisis but ultimately reinstated,[1] in Woolf's ghost stories queerness and indeterminacy proliferate. In "A Haunted House" (1921), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *Orlando* (1928), the haunted house and its resident

"ghosts" foreground figures marginalized by history.

These narrative practices disrupt and re-imagine nationalist and domestic ideals. Due to their divergent subject matter, tone, and form, these works are rarely considered together. Each articulates an ambivalent inter-war vision of community through its interventions in country house fiction. In her oblique representation of war in Section II of *To the Lighthouse*, "Time Passes," as well as in her explorations of memory, biography, and inheritance in "A Haunted House" and *Orlando*, Woolf disorders the grand narratives of national history. Ghostly presences in "A Haunted House" and "Time Passes" manifest forgotten or obscured traces of the past. By comparing absent presences in those works with the ghosts that haunt Woolf's seemingly more escapist novel, *Orlando*, this chapter shows how *Orlando*'s campy and parodic historical framework complicates such binaries as individuality and community, home and foreignness, and inside and outside. Moreover, feminine and queer characters for which nationalist historical narratives cannot or will not account have no access to a utopian "elsewhere" – but the ways in which Woolf furnishes the symbolic homes that confine them reveal totalizing narratives to be haunted by the possibility of fragmentation. Rather than counter or resolve the suspense and uncertainty of modern life, Woolf invites readers to recognize Englishness as being fundamentally fractured, and thus empathize with characters that are excluded by patriotic ideals.

Contradicting her claim that "we do not like the war in fiction," Woolf's writing emphasizes the banal, everyday possibilities for violence that characterize modern life, frequently alluding to the civilian experience of war on the home front. At a distance from war's atrocities but nonetheless subject to war's physical and emotional deprivations, civilians during and after wartime experienced a suspenseful anticipation of further conflict as well as direct, horrific

confrontation with violence.[2] For Woolf, both the incidental violence of everyday life and the grand-scale violence of escalating militarism instill Gothic *horror*, in which individuals confront gross violence or dissolution. Given the commonality of horrific situations, however, her fiction manifests Gothic *terror*, the production of sustained suspense, as a necessary condition of modern subjectivity. The distinction between Gothic horror and Gothic terror carries with it long-standing gendered implications.[3] By focusing on the lingering, everyday suspense of post-war life, Woolf domesticates Gothic terror. Rather than normalizing gendered violence, this domestication of an already-feminized Gothic mode interrupts patriarchal social norms by making porous the boundaries between private and public spaces. Her narratives show how violence and suspense structure private spaces and stories, which are generally presumed to be separate from the public world and its conflicts. In doing so, they offer alternatives to patriarchal paradigms of history and their emphasis on discrete "events" of war.

According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis of Gothic conventions, the very banality of Gothic terror makes it traumatic:

> The worst violence, the most potent margin, and the most paralyzing instances of the uncanny in these novels do not occur in, for example, the catacombs of the Inquisition or the stultification of nightmares. Instead, they are invoked in the very breach of the imprisoning wall… no nightmare is ever as terrifying as waking up from some innocuous dream *to find it true.* (13-14)

Woolf demonstrates that even if historical subjects recognize "the nightmare of history" (to borrow a phrase from Joyce[4]) to be a narrative construction, they can only awaken "to find it true." If it is terrifying to recognize history as being simply one story among many possible others, it is even more disturbing to perceive how its narratives organize social realities. This

becomes clearer when we consider the Nietzschean concept of monumental history, in which the "great moments of the individual battle form a chain, a highroad for humanity through the ages, and the highest points of those vanished moments are yet great and living for men" (13). In this masculinist historical narrative of "action and struggle" (12), the present always pales in comparison with the greatness of the past. Such "struggle" distorts the past into a mythic fiction, with which the specificity of the present can never compare. "If [the past] is to give us strength," Nietzsche observes, "many of the differences must be neglected, the individuality of the past forced into a general formula and all the sharp angles broken off for the sake of correspondence" (14). This "forcing" of the past necessarily excluses historical subjects that do not represent the "highest points." By tracing the connections between banality and perpetual suspense in everyday social situations, Woolf's Gothic figures the contingency of the modern historical subject (and of the feminine subject in particular) upon narratives of the past both as a condition of perpetual suspense *and* as a kind of exclusion.

In this sense the dissolution of the boundaries between the living and the dead, or the "normal" and the pathological – once a terrifying Gothic crisis – becomes a defining characteristic of modern life. As Saint-Amour argues, Woolf "promoted Gothic's understanding of ineliminable dread as its essential feature, and… dismissed its interest in the supernatural as an obsolete frill…. [A]ccording to modernism, supernatural premises were no longer the necessary engine of perpetual suspense because history itself had become Gothic" (209). Although horror and terror pervade "ordinary" life, Woolf rejects both horrific scenes and the supernatural in her Gothic interventions so as to figure haunting not only as a trauma but also as an opportunity for empathy between characters and, by extension, for characters by readers. The "breach of the imprisoning wall," to borrow Sedgwick's phrase, generates suspense, but it also

enables readers to recognize unconventional modes of community-building. If all historical subjects are, to some extent, occluded by history's narratives, then recognizing nationalist narratives as being fundamentally haunted can enable historical subjects to interrupt or re-imagine the nationalist projects in which they are implicated. By exposing domestic organization in particular as being complicit in public violence, Woolf's Gothic histories can provide spaces for limited historical agency.

Several critics, including Erica L. Johnson, Erica Delsandro, Judith Wilt, Gina Wisker, and Saint-Amour, discuss the Gothic conventions of Woolf's novels.[5] As Johnson reads *Orlando*, "Woolf shows Englishness to be composed of exclusions as well as inclusions, revealing the extent to which national identity is haunted by what she might have called 'invisible presences,' which inhabit national space not as subjects and citizens, but as ghosts" (113). My study is indebted to Johnson's incisive explication of the ways in which national space in *Orlando* makes room for male presence, but excludes females, thus aligning femininity with ghostliness. Wilt and Wisker identify the redemptive potential of feminine "haunting" in Woolf's domestic fiction, arguing that ghosts provide opportunities for connection over boundaries of time and space. These critics, whether they approach the appearance of ghosts as figures of continuity (Wilt, Wisker) or as disruptions of nationalistic, patriarchal, imperialistic, and heteronormative temporal models (Delsandro, Johnson, Saint-Amour), each explicate individuals' potential to transform the national and historical discourses with which they are, however hesitantly, identified. Departing from interpretations of haunting as the "imprinting of the human on places" that manifests the "continuity of relationships and values" in spite of social upheaval (Wisker 4, 7), I propose that haunting exposes the past's alienation from the present. By focusing on the ways in which characters *recognize* themselves and others as ghosts, this chapter

examines the potential for individual perceptions and desires to interrupt the masculinist story of the nation, which, in Woolf's fiction, nonetheless always requires the submissive passivity of feminine characters. In conversation with Delsandro and Johnson, I consider the connections between characters' self-awareness *as* figures of exclusion and the queering of historical narratives that Delsandro identifies as central to *Between the Acts*. By recognizing themselves and others *as* ghosts, both absorbed and excluded by nostalgic ideals of Englishness, characters act as subversively campy performers of national and gender identities. [6]

The (re-)appearances of silenced or invisible characters interrupt the coherence of the nation which, as Benedict Anderson has argued, has much to do with ghosts. Anderson's examination of a common motif – the tomb of the unknown warrior – shows how the modern conception of a nation as a community is always underpinned by loss and erasure:

> void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings. (This is why so many different nations have such tombs without feeling any need to specify the nationality of their absent occupants. What else could they be *but* Germans, Americans, Argentinians…?) (9)

In her fiction, Woolf anticipates and complicates the question that Anderson raises: her ghosts *are* English, but they are many other things besides. These absent presences interrupt nationalist imaginings by exceeding them, revealing themselves to be less familiar than their circumscription by history might suggest. Anderson suggests that the ghost – the unknown or anonymous yet exemplary compatriot – is central to ideals of the nation. By focusing on the ghosts that haunt familiar, domestic spaces rather than public myths of national self-regard, Woolf makes visible the figures that history erases rather than apotheosizes. This tactic transforms masculinist

national histories by interrupting them with feminine and queer presence. Because the reliance on universality that Anderson's study identifies demands the disavowal of such figures, Woolf's haunted domestic spaces in fact rupture totalizing nationalist narratives.

This tactic has multiple implications for the ideal of a national community which, for Anderson, is implicitly masculine. As Anderson demonstrates, the nation is

> imagined as a *community,* because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. (7)

Nationhood, like religion, creates a sense of continuity that, although arbitrary, structures modern thought about identity to the extent of justifying self-sacrifice in the name of the "imagined community" (Anderson 26). The nation's symbolic linkage of successive generations is achieved through a "fraternity" – a self-sustaining brotherhood, in other words, that obviates women's role in generational progress and marginalizes them from historical narratives. Modern nationalism works on the assumption that nationality is essential, that an individual must "'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender" (Anderson 5). Woolf's work undermines both assumptions. Consistently, Woolf shows that "having" the "wrong" gender, desires, or ambitions complicates one's performance of seemingly essential, uncomplicated Englishness.[7] Anderson's use of scare quotes when he refers to "having" a nationality or gender reflects his work's affinities with Woolf's critique. As Judith Butler has famously argued, gender norms are "finally phantasmatic, impossible to embody"; they are projected onto the surface of one's body and then assumed to attest to some interior, fundamental gender identity (179). Similarly,

nationality, as Anderson suggests, presumes fundamental connections between and across generations that cannot accommodate the specific goals and identities of individuals. When the "inner" self and one's social role conflict in this way, subjectivity interrupts rather than manifests national and gender ideals, and thus positions the historical subject as an aporia in ideology, or a subject of absence. National histories not only subsume but also require marginalized historical subjects as haunting figures.

In particular, making marginalized subjects visible troubles linear, progress-oriented narratives of nationalist and monumental history. Woolf's hyperbolic temporal and spatial narrative framework in *Orlando* exposes the violent "forcing" of the individuality of the past by assuming an ironic distance from history's trajectory. Furthermore, Woolf interrupts nationalist visions of "homogeneous, empty time"[8] with her emphasis on "the hussy, Memory, with all her ragtag and bobtail" (*O* 77). At the level of the individual, the fickle workings of memory, the "hussy," make visible specific traces of the past that have been omitted from the "chain" of monumental history. As Delsandro and others have argued, the Woolfian ghost is a figure of queerness who interrupts heteronormative social narratives.[9] Ghosts can represent marginalized identities that "haunt the normative construction of identity," with the result that "the presence of the queer in literature, history, and culture has come to signify more than 'transgressive' sexuality: queering has emerged as the means by which the power of signification and the very idea of identity are interrogated, disrupted, and continuously refigured" (Delsandro 94). Woolf's parodic characterization of memory as a woman (and a "hussy" at that) queers the masculinist narrative of progress and greatness. These transgressive feminized histories make visible erased individuals, like the bumboat woman, who haunt nationalist narratives. Ghosts interrupt the present with the past, and thus are both agents of and obstacles to historical continuity. In

recognizing these historical "ghosts," the remembering subject also confronts her own alienation from history's narrative.

In *Orlando*, for example, the sudden recall of a memory often complicates the identity of the subject through which the present is focalized. Lady Orlando strays "too far from the present moment" when her seventeenth-century memories creep into her twentieth-century day: "'I take up a handbag and I think of an old bumboat woman frozen in the ice'" (*O* 290-1). The memory causes Orlando to wonder, "if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many different people are there not – Heaven help us – all having lodgment at one time or another in the human spirit?" (293-4). This multiplicity of selves, which comprises the male self of her past as well as the female self of her present, also stalls the masculinist thrust of monumental history, implicating the present in the past. The narrator reflects,

> it cannot be denied that the most successful practitioners of the art of life, often unknown people by the way, somehow contrive to synchronize the sixty or seventy different times that beat simultaneously in every normal human system so that when eleven strikes, all the rest chime in unison, and the present is neither a violent disruption nor completely forgotten in the past. (*O* 291)

The diction of this passage recalls Walter Pater's paean to the "love of art of its own sake" in *The Renaissance*:

> Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, of from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without… those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us,

> experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight…each of them is limited by time, and… as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it. (199, 196)

Whereas monumental history undervalues the specificity of the present by mythologizing the greatness of the past, the "thick wall of personality" that rings the Paterian subject safeguards the specificity of individual experience. "Not the fruit of experience," therefore, "but experience itself, is the end" (Pater 197). If apprehending the single moment is an end in itself, then the "theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no claim upon us" (Pater 198). Orlando's experience, which comprises "sixty or seventy different times" simultaneously, is the "infinitely divisible" impression of the single mind that liberate her from narratives of history that do not serve but rather obscure her individuality. Orlando's Paterian outlook redeems her from historical narratives that would render her present "completely forgotten in the past"; in other words, her memories go against the grain of monumental history.

Orlando's multivalent temporal schema approaches the "time of the now" theorized by Walter Benjamin in 1940, which supplants a monumental "chain" of events with a non-linear "constellation":

> no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical post-humously, as it were, through events that may by separated from it for thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like beads on a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation

which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. (263)

In Woolf's texts, the "present moment" carries with it an accumulation of the past that troubles narratives of national progress as well as the coherence of the historical subject. This is particularly true of female characters because "when we write of a woman, everything is out of place – culminations and perorations; the accent never falls where it does with a man" (*O* 297-8). Women's culminations and perorations disorder monumental history, but the result in not simpy chaos. Rather, Orlando's constellations of memories disrupt hierarchies by making connections, causing the past and present to "chime in unison."

Such unifying historical revisionism always occurs *within* conventional narratives of patriarchal, national history. Woolf's examinations of various historically contingent identities – that the housewife as well as of the soldier – explore how "ghostly national imaginings" grant a sense of identity and belonging to all national subjects, and at what cost. As Giorgio Agamben argues in *Means Without End*, the existence of the "human itself" is precluded by the existence of the nation, which structures modern thinking about identity to the extent that "*Birth* [*nascita*] comes into being immediately as *nation*, so there may not be any difference between the two moments" (19). The status of citizen is not granted equitably, and so the concept of "a people" always contains a constitutive alienation: "*The concept of people always contains within itself the fundamental biopolitical fracture. It is what cannot be included in the whole of which it is part as well as what cannot belong to the whole in which it is included*" (*MWE* 30-1). Achieving political immanence means being conscripted into nationalist narratives; claiming an identity outside the limited roles the nation offers means suffering erasure from the community without escaping its organizing mechanizations of power. Woolf positions ghostly characters at the site of this fracture. Their exclusion *within* the time and space of the nation undermines nationalist ideals of community. In

Woolf's fiction, this absence exists at the center of gendered constructions, thus aligning the suspense usually ascribed to modern public life with feminine and private spaces.

These ghostly subjects exist in the borderland between citizen and outcast yet are tethered inescapably to nationalist interests, a position that Agamben identifies with that of the refugee. Agamben characterizes the refugee as one who bears the full force of nationalistic political power: "even in the best of cases, the status of the refugee has always been considered a temporary condition that ought to lead either to naturalization or repatriation. A stable statute for the human itself is inconceivable in the law of the nation-state" (*MWE* 19). This state of affairs, in which the only figure that can evade political overdetermination lacks political agency, seems hopeless indeed. To recognize the refugee in oneself, however, can constitute an act of self-assertion *through* self-effacement. This, Agamben argues, opens a space for political change: only in a world where states have been "perforated and topologically deformed" by citizens' recognitions of themselves as the refugees they are can the relationship between the nation and that which it ostensibly excludes be reimagined (25). "This space would coincide neither with any of the homogeneous national territories nor with their *topographical* sum," Agamben argues, "but would rather act on them by articulating and performing them *topologically* as in the Klein bottle or the Möbius strip, where exterior and interior in-determine each other" (24). The emphasis that topology places on continuity and connectedness, in contrast to topography's attention to discrete quantities and specific locations, illuminates the intersections among Woolf's representations of ghostly historical subjects and Agamben's call for the self-recognition of refugees. Only by seizing upon the ways in which the nation fails to exhaust the self (and therefore cannot claim it) can the marginalized subject negotiate between the nation and the nullity that limns her. In this sense, the refugee and the Woolfian ghost are figures that haunt

national space rather than occupy it.

The inscrutability of historical subjects and the non-linear circumlocutions of memory are mutually sustaining. Woolf's circular narrative time, organized by individual memories, can "[blast] a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework" (Benjamin 263), providing an opportunity to fight for "the oppressed past" (Benjamin 263) and disrupting the masculinist and nationalist time of "progress." By remembering the old bumboat woman, Orlando conjures up a spectre from the past who, given her marginalized identity, was only ever a ghost (or refugee) to begin with. At the same time, she finds her own realness called into question, becoming spectral herself. Orlando's awareness of exceeding the bounds of singular, self-identical personhood, precipitated by her recognition of a woman who has been denied political existence, paradoxically enhances her sense of continuity with the past. This transgression of boundaries can, to borrow Agamben's phrase, "perforat[e] and topologically defor[m]" the space of the nation. If the ghost cannot move the wall, in other words, she can reveal its porousness. The old bumboat woman, a curiosity of the Great Frost of the early seventeenth century, embodies the refugee, at once subjugated by the nation and made invisible by narratives of Englishness.[10] Significantly, Orlando's position toward the bumboat woman changes with Orlando's change of sex; Lord Orlando, the self-contained and disinterested observer of a *topographical* curiosity, becomes Lady Orlando, whose memory of the frozen woman alters the *topology* of time and space, including her ability to reconcile past and present selves.

While embracing one's own exclusions from nationalist narratives might offer dubious opportunities for social agency, the ability to see society's ghosts everywhere can offer more promising opportunities for liberation. As Avery Gordon argues, "haunting is a constitutive

element of modern social life" (7). Haunting achieves subversive reconfigurations of time, space, and memory that can alter the subject's relationship with historical narratives. Functioning as a trace of what has been socially or discursively oppressed – an opportunity missed, a subject silenced, or an injustice forgotten – the ghost is situated at the nexus of past and future, both as a symptom of past wounds and losses and as a potentially transformative reminder of the better life that never materialized. "Being haunted draws us affectively," Gordon comments, "sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as transformative recognition" (8). By representing the house of Englishness as a haunted one, Woolf can offer a vision of continuity and harmony while continually disrupting that vision – a tactic that moves toward a more ethical (but also more suspenseful) model of community. That which has been forgotten or excluded persists in Woolf's fiction as a trace, an echo, a refugee – a ghost.

"A Haunted House" and *To the Lighthouse*: Companionable spectres

Many ghostly presences haunt Woolf's fiction. To cite briefly a few (post-World War I) examples, one might consider: the central, structuring absence of the titular character, a war casualty, in *Jacob's Room* (1922); Evans's ghost, which appears to Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925); Mrs. Ramsay's sudden death in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and the reverberations of her influence in the book's final section; and the burden of remembering Percival that all six characters in *The Waves* (1931) must bear. In *Orlando* (1928) ghosts interact more subtly with the living: Orlando's sprawling house is littered with the bones of his ancestors, and Orlando's transition to being female renders her "as good as dead," legally speaking. In each of Woolf's ghost stories, the ghost is a (or the) central character, whose absent presence troubles the

coherence of all literary subjects. Wilt argues that Woolf achieves a "misty fluidity of the self" through a two-fold process: the "ghostly ubiquity of certain charismatic figures [and] the shadowier but pervasive rolling forward into real 'time' of some eternal substantive force… something free from any motive but continuation, something mysteriously allied with those charismatic persons, or they with it" (65). What Wilt perceives as a character-driven continuity, a "rolling forward" tied to the central ghostly characters, is actually pervasive. While the ubiquitous influence of some of Woolf's main characters makes the continuity that Wilt identifies most apparent, the impact that even the seemingly incidental characters have in the narratives – for example, Mrs. McNab, who restores the Ramsays' house to order before their return – intensifies the sense of community that continues not in spite of but *along with* forces of alienation, trauma, and upheaval.

Woolf's Gothic mode destabilizes boundaries between inside and outside, self and other. Given the unmistakable affinities between Woolf's story "A Haunted House" and James's *The Turn of the Screw*,[11] her appreciation for the "companionable," domestic ghosts in the latter is telling:

> Henry James's ghosts have nothing in common with the violent old ghosts…. They have their origin within us. They are present whenever the significant overflows our powers of expressing it; whenever the ordinary appears ringed round by the strange. The baffling things that are left over, the frightening ones that persist – these are the emotions that he takes, embodies, makes consoling and companionable. ("Ghost Stories" 324)

Woolf's description of James's ghosts as projections of the self intersects with Gordon's characterization of ghosts as those aspects of modern social life that have been forgotten or

discursively silenced. Like Agamben's refugees, the ghosts that Woolf appreciates in James's novel persist in the narrative by virtue of their exclusion: they are impossible to ignore because no narrative accounts for them. Like James's and Gordon's, Woolf's ghosts are insistently quotidian. Both *The Turn of the Screw* and "A Haunted House" eschew direct confrontations with ghosts; the ghosts are never exorcised. They are simply *there*. Both works portray them ambiguously, as potentially originating from the protagonist's psyche rather than as threatening antagonists from the outside. Both intervene in the tradition of country house literature, transforming tales of harmonious English domesticity into uncanny scenarios in which "the ordinary appears ringed round by the strange." Yet, whereas James's Bly impresses the governess as a dreadful place, Woolf's haunted house has a pulse that beats "'Safe, safe, safe'" (*HH* 116). George M. Johnson argues that "Woolf creates exactly the opposite effect to James's; she transforms the evil, the 'unutterable obscenity' exuded in James's house to the comfort and security of her house'" (245-6). "A Haunted House" is remarkable, even within Woolf's canon, in that it seems to write horror and terror out of the Gothic genre entirely.

Yet, the "security" it offers is less consoling than Johnson's reading suggests. As John Paul Riquelme demonstrates, the Gothic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries "is structurally and implicitly a negative version of pastoral because of its turn to foreign locales that are threatening and bizarre" (Riquelme 587). Conversely, the modernist Gothic typically "relocates the antipastoral setting and its implications much closer to home: on native soil… in the library, in the house, in the bedroom, in the schoolroom, in the mind, and in language" (587). In *To the Lighthouse*, for example, when the Ramsey children plan to take a boat ride, Mrs. Ramsey "very irrationally" fears for them: "And again she felt alone in the presence of her old antagonist, life" (*TL* 66). Although Woolf often situates her ghost stories within country houses,

her Gothic fiction does not exactly intervene in the country house genre in order to make these places threatening and bizarre. Rather, her fiction assumes that these places have always been, fundamentally, threatening and bizarre, not because conventional ideologies are interrupted but rather because they persist. With no "outside" to these ruling hierarchies available, Woolf explores the contradictions and exclusions that they produce, revealing the invisible (and necessary) persistence of marginalized gender and class positions within the myth of English pastoral harmony. Woolf's invitation to readers, to recognize that the familiar is always "ringed round by the strange," often has the effect of making the strange more familiar also.

Woolf's fiction often inaugurates a proliferation of uncertainty, making identities, bodies, and even houses themselves a little less substantial (often a paradoxically familiarizing effect). Although their status, names, and other details are left ambiguous, the ghosts in "The Haunted House" are exemplary in this respect. Set at some indeterminate time in the pre-World War I past, the story offers a sense of connection and safety without mitigating the home's atmosphere of uncertainty and loss. The ghosts are searching for something – their "treasure" – in a house which, one assumes, was once theirs. Repeatedly, they discover the treasure, only to continue the search: "'Here we left it,' she said. And he added, 'Oh, but here too!' 'It's upstairs,' she murmured. 'And in the garden,' he whispered" (*HH* 116). Projection of their inner lives onto the house changes it, causing spaces to expand, contract, and multiply. Just as the ghosts' search makes architectural boundaries permeable, it traverses psychological, temporal, and narrative borders, making divisions between people, times, and plotlines fluid. The voices of three speakers occupying three different points of view produce a tapestry of perception and memory, which fosters telepathic understanding and unexpected connections as characters' consciousnesses flow together and apart.

The text replicates the ghosts' transgression of boundaries through its ambiguous characterization. The story begins with the statement, "Whatever hour you woke there was a door shutting"; later, a speaker assures someone "it wasn't you that woke us" (*HH* 116). The subject of the "you" is difficult to identify; pronoun slippage allows statements to have multiple referents, and the thoughts of one speaker are often inexplicably taken up by another. The focalization then shifts to the point of view of a reader in the garden, referred to both in the third and the first person:

> "They're looking for it; they're drawing the curtain," one might say, and so read on a page or two. "Now they've found it," one would be certain, stopping the pencil on the margin. And then, tired of reading, one might rise and see for oneself, the house all empty, the doors standing open…. "What did I come in here for? What did I want to find?" My hands were empty. (*HH* 116)

As "one" becomes "I," the narrative calls into question not only the object of the search but also the searcher's identity, drawing the reader into the quest for answers. While this solitary quest is taking place, the ghosts "had found it…. Not that one could ever see them. The window panes reflected apples, reflected roses; all the leaves were green in the glass" (*HH* 116). The solitary reader/watcher is outside again, seeing the surrounding outdoors reflected by the window in place of the ghosts on the other side, whose position and search he or she had so recently occupied. Later, another speaker (presumably someone who lives in the house) reports, "Wandering through the house, whispering not to wake us the ghostly couple seek their joy" (117), a statement shortly followed by the ghosts' recollection: "Here we slept" (117). The speaker who reports that the ghosts "whisper[ed] not to wake us" narrates while asleep, mirroring the impossible first person position of the deceased. The ghost then recognizes the

sleepers' bed as her own, taking their place in turn. The separation of these characters by the boundaries of life and death, condensed in the figure of the window, allows such topological deformations of time and space.

The house preserves traces of the past in a non-linear, non-teleological movement toward continuity and inclusiveness, without offering the final unity of narrative closure (or even discrete subject positions). The heartbeat of the house connects its denizens across boundaries of time, beating "'Safe, safe, safe'" with increasing fervour until the climactic final paragraph connects all the points of view with the memories of the ghostly couple. The dreaming speaker opens his or her eyes to confront the ghosts, but the narrative withholds the final scene of confrontation. The utter alterity of the ghosts enables the sleepers and the reader to share the treasure: the "light in the heart" which is introduced not by recognition but with further deferral and uncertainty: "'Oh, is *this* your buried treasure?'" (*HH* 117). The story ends with a question, not an answer; nothing and no one is laid to rest – yet, it is only through this lack of closure that a sense of an ending can be achieved. It is never clear to readers whether the sleeper dreamed the ghosts, or if the ghosts imagined the speaker, or if the reader in the garden imagined or perceived the episode, because the narrative point of view remains inchoate and narrative authority is never unambiguous. Finding the treasure fails to restore some lost plenitude, but sharing the search provides a sense of connection even when connection seems impossible.

Section I of *To the Lighthouse* also takes place before World War I. Like the ghosts' quest, Lily Briscoe's struggle to empathize with Mrs. Ramsay, even before her death, makes apparent the tensions between empathy and alienation, between closeness and the certainty of loss. Lily meditates on the relationship between intimacy and knowledge:

> she imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of a woman who was,

> physically, touching her, were stood, like treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed into those secret chambers?… Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions written on tablets… but intimacy itself, which was knowledge. (*TL* 44)

As in "The Haunted House," Lily's quest for connection is figuratively spatialized. The knowledge that Lily seeks, the "treasure in the tombs of kings," is that which is hidden in plain sight.[12] Lily strives to access the inner life of the person who is *right there*. This passage, notably, represents the quest in Gothic terms: as a foray into secret spaces, into tombs (Bowlby 59). The suspense that might characterize a search for treasure in a crypt – that is, the Gothic possibility of an encounter with the supernatural, the danger of finding something other than treasure – is domesticated in this scene by the seeming directness of the encounter between the two women. At the same time, the intense privacy of Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts makes the intimacy that Lily desires impossible. As in "A Haunted House," the search for "treasure" is inconclusive, but not in vain: it not only inspires Lily to imagine intimacy with Mrs. Ramsay as being fundamentally unattainable, but also fuels her continued commitment to connection (and to retaining the separation that makes the desire for connection possible). The "unity" that Mrs. Ramsay seems to promise but from which she ultimately escapes, the novel suggests, is only attainable through the erasure of subjectivity in death.

The parallel Woolf draws between tombs and the "chambers of the mind and heart" is explicit when Lily does find some "art" by which to approach Mrs. Ramsay, years after her

demise. In Part III, "The Lighthouse," Lily takes up her painting, begun in the first section, which depicts Mrs. Ramsay reading to James as "a triangular purple shape" (*TL* 45). Although Lily does not know it, her art mirrors Mrs. Ramsay's own apprehension of her inner being: "all the being and doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others" (*TL* 52). This passage implies that to be self-identical, to be "oneself," is to become a kind of spectre, "invisible to others." Like the watcher's admission in "A Haunted House," "not that you could see them," Lily's perception of Mrs. Ramsay suggests an ironic confrontation with otherness: to recognize Mrs. Ramsay is to recognize the limits to intimacy with her. For Mrs. Ramsay to recognize herself – or to use Agamben's term, the "human itself" – is to confront the limits of her existence as a coherent subject. After Mrs. Ramsay's death, Lily notices the "odd-shaped triangular shadow" on the steps of the summer house, which causes "the old horror [to] come back – to want and not to have" (*TL* 164, 165). This "horrific" sense of loss culminates in Lily's (and the reader's) apprehension of Mrs. Ramsay's haunting presence ("There she sat") and motivates Lily to seek intimacy with other characters ("Mr. Ramsay? She wanted him") (*TL* 165). In this scene, the search for treasure – for intimacy with Mrs. Ramsay – culminates not in possession or arrival but in a transmutation of desire, which fuels social engagement and inspires further searching. Lily recognizes Mrs. Ramsay as a ghost on the threshold – between the house and its exterior, between the past and the present, between empathy and alienation – whose final resistance to social narratives strengthens the bond between Lily and that comical apotheosis of teleological, patriarchal thought, Mr. Ramsay. As in her life, Mrs. Ramsay, present but absent, functions as the invisible guarantor of social cohesion.

The domestic settings of "A Haunted House" and *To the Lighthouse* embed characters'

preoccupations with intimacy and agency within specific historical and nationalist contexts. Entrenched ideals of Englishness, doubly epitomized in wartime propaganda, promoted two contradictory functions of the middle-class family home. On the one hand, the home served as "the cradle of the nation," producing future generations of soldiers and statesmen. On the other hand, it promised an escape from the frenzy of modernity: part of women's patriotic duty was to create a domestic sphere away from, and as an alternative to, their husbands' public lives. Woolf engages both of these expectations in order to position the home both within and in opposition to narratives of national progress. Rather than the overlooked and taken-for-granted guarantor of explicit masculine power, Woolf represents the English home as a fraught, contested space in which relationships – especially those between women and men – at once rely on patriarchal sphere ideology to provide meaning and structure for social interactions and yet continually confront social hierarchies as barriers to community building. If, as Elizabeth Grosz observes, "Woman is/provides space for man, but occupies none herself" (99), then Woolf reveals the feminine spaces disavowed by patriarchal culture to be indispensable to the persistence of social narratives. Furthermore, the texts' country house settings position them among traditionally conservative portraits of upper-class Englishness. Raymond Williams has demonstrated that the nostalgic ideal of country life as an "innocent alternative to ambition, disturbance, and war" is "a myth functioning as a memory" that serves to dissimulate the social injustices of which country houses are both the products and the testaments (24, 43). By focalizing country house narratives through marginalized points of view, Woolf both ruptures the coherence of the country house ideal and offers a more comprehensive critique of Englishness. As Wisker argues, "Virginia Woolf's contribution to the English country house tradition is one that emphasizes the ways in which people's lives and actions are themselves part of the houses in which they have taken

place; are imprinted on the houses; have become vestiges of the history of the houses and of England itself" (24). By "exploring the continued presence of the human imprinted on places and on others' lives" (Wisker 5), Woolf's ghost stories go beyond celebrations of uncanny characters to reveal how domestic, architectural, narratalogical, and generic organization exceeds and interrupts nationalist narratives of progress. As I shall demonstrate, these traces of continued presence expose, but do not recuperate, the constitutive exclusion of marginalized subjects by domestic and nationalist hierarchies.

In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf positions the Ramsays' summer house as a microcosm of the nation, but figurative language complicates relationships among the state of the house, the lives of the Ramsays, and historical events. Section II, "Time Passes," collapses the passage of ten years at the unoccupied house into one extended domestic scene, and indirectly records the contemporaneous devastation of World War I. The unifying force of the house exists in tension with the (here uncannily intertwined) disruptions of death, war, and nature, seeming to resist the inevitable passage of time: "Whatever else may perish and disappear what lies here is steadfast" (*TL* 104). Yet, the narrative reveals that the house is not impervious to time; the iconography of war is unmistakable in various descriptions. Like a steadfast soldier, the house endures the violent battering of time, which is represented by "stray airs, the advance guards of great armies" (105). Even when acknowledging war's effects, the narrator keeps the war at a distance through metaphor and indirection. As Karen L. Levenback notes, this refusal to represent war directly reflects an attempt to represent civilian wartime experience: Woolf employs "typographical and syntactical signals that call attention both to geographic distance from the fighting and to lexical resistance to representing it accurately. Woolf was coming to see how liminality of experience could be recalled and with what difficulty memory was transformed into art" (89). The narrative

presence is doubly removed from the war: first, by her distance from the Front, and second, through the passage of time. For much of Part II, the narrator narrates from within the emphatically *empty* house. The "liminality of experience" reflected in Woolf's writing of domestic space both reveals the extent to which (usually feminine) civilian subjects and spaces were absorbed within the war effort, and emphasizes their exclusion from the retrospective, "historical" account of England's military involvement.

Compared with the three sudden deaths experienced in the Ramsay family, the cyclical time of the house makes it seem impervious to change. The ghost-like "airs" that enter the empty rooms raise questions that preoccupied English subjects in wartime: "Were they allies? Were they enemies? How long would they endure?" (*TL* 104). Meanwhile, as poppies bloom among the dahlias, bracketed but direct reports of losses interrupt Woolf's densely metaphorical prose: Andrew dies in war, Prue dies in childbirth, and Mrs. Ramsay dies in the night, seeming to slip noiselessly from her husband's outstretched arms. Amid these deaths – losses that reflect the consequences of stultifying social expectations for men and women – the house persists, *indifferently:*

> Loveliness and stillness clasped hands in the bedroom, and among the shrouded jugs and sheeted chairs even the prying of the wind, and the soft nose of the clammy sea airs, rubbing, snuffling, iterating, reiterating their questions – "Will you fade? Will you perish?" – scarcely disturbed the peace, the indifference, the air of pure integrity, as if the question they asked scarcely needed that they should answer: we remain. (*TL* 106)

The house is not untouched by the national atmosphere of fear and suspicion. Yet, it retains an "air of pure integrity" that anticipates the pacifist strategy of "indifference" proposed in *Three*

Guineas (310). "Time Passes" seems to reflect the home's immunity from the conditions of war despite its use of military metaphor. Yet, the traumatic interruptions created by the Ramsays' deaths expose the integrity of the house as a sexist construction. As Levenback argues, Woolf's interrupted narrative critiques histories that sequester war's trauma on the battlefield: "Such metaphors do not merely invite the reader to question the authority of the civilian point of view represented by the narrator…. It is as if narrative authority is intentionally undercut, not only by bracketed news from the outside… but also by losing the sense of civilian immunity that prewar language embodied" (104). Levenback's reading demonstrates how this seeming imperviousness reflects a "linguistic unease" similar to that of combatant narratives that struggle to escape patriotic narratives' mythic constructions of war experience (105). The tenuous language that proceeds from such unease tests narrative continuity in the face of uncertainty. The house, described metaphorically, becomes less inviting when those metaphors are ruptured by the reporting of death. Like Mrs. Ramsay, with whom Lily Briscoe can enjoy "intimacy itself, which was knowledge" only after her demise, despite the fact that it was "not knowledge but unity [Lily] desired," the house both promises and withholds a sense of unifying, welcoming domesticity.

Reading "Time Passes" in dialogue with "A Haunted House" provides further insight as to Woolf's attempts at a post-war historical narrative mode: the use of (purposefully) evasive language eschews myths of war while offering a sense of continuity. The narrative's failure to privilege one subject position over another disorganizes the gendered binaries that the house's persistent "loveliness and stillness" would seem to confirm. "Time Passes," like "A Haunted House," uses pronoun slippage to "confound" spaces and identities: "Not only was furniture confounded; there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say 'This is

he' or 'This is she'" (*TL* 103). Whereas the home's function of simply "remaining" despite social and military upheaval problematically confirms patriarchal sphere ideology, which brackets civilians' experience from the "real" story of war, Woolf's undercutting of the harmonious domestic narrative also provides opportunities to remember pasts that might otherwise be written out of historical accounts. Mrs. Ramsay's and Prue's deaths, for example, are as disruptive to the house's atmosphere of continuity as Andrew's. Instead of resisting violence, the house absorbs it: when the "airs" that are "the advance guards of great armies" invade, the house offers nothing "in bedroom or drawing-room that wholly resisted them" (*TL* 105). A room preserves a "human shape…. a form from which life had parted" (*TL* 106), carrying loss forward into the future rather than providing a restorative wholeness.

It should be noted, of course, that the "pure integrity" of the house is at once interrupted and sustained by the largely unacknowledged labour of Mrs. McNab, Mrs. Bast, and Mrs. Bast's son George, who restore the house to order, if not wholeness, after the Ramsays' long absence. The text figures Mrs. McNab's work as simultaneously transgressive, restorative, and generative: "tearing the veil of silence with hands that had stood in the wash-tub" (*TL* 106), she lurches grotesquely through the house, reversing its decline. Nonetheless, as Mrs. Bast predicts of the Ramsays, "they'd find it changed" (*TL* 115). Finally, the old women effect "some rusty laborious birth" through which the house is made habitable again (114). Thus they embody the dissolution of boundaries that characterize the house more generally, as Mary Lou Emery has demonstrated: "They seem to partake of the female, the inhuman, the natural, and the mechanical simultaneously and indeterminately" (221). "Most obviously," Emery observes, Mrs. McNab "seems to embody the incredible chaos of the war, its annihilation of all distinctions previously thought essential to human civilization, including those between self and Other, masculine and

feminine, public and private, culture and nature" (222). In absorbing these oppositions, her domestic labour enables Lily Briscoe to emerge at the center of Part III with her "vision," her own "work" of art (Emery 222). Mrs. McNab, in other words, is the real unifier. Only through her transgression of categorical boundaries can the Ramsays return to the newly reorganized house, and thus renegotiate their relationships with each other. Her labour remains largely unacknowledged, however, and is superseded by Lily's. Her presence is mostly limited to "Time Passes," and is forgotten in Part III, supplanted by those of the house's (and the text's) more privileged occupants.

Mrs. McNab's containment by class hierarchies thus reveals the limits of Woolf's Gothic critique of totalizing nationalist ideologies. The Gothic requires the disruptive but eventually contained presence of an othered (in this case female and working class) body. As Emery demonstrates, Mrs. McNab absorbs into her body the gendered oppositions that organized the Ramsays' marriage and Part I of the novel, facilitiating Lily's emergence as the focalizer of Part III (222). Arguably, the text's own work of making Mrs. McNab visible to the reader critiques the narrative's social organization. McNab's characterization, however, actually reaffirms her oppression. She is not a ghost like Mrs. Ramsay, a figure of absence and ineffability, but rather a monster. The text emphasizes her embodiment – manifested in her voice, her pained movements, and her labour – which is unmistakably grotesque. The home relies upon her domestic labour, but also requires its invisibility, a requirement that she does not meet. The working, suffering body of Mrs. McNab therefore destroys the "integrity" of the house even as she restores it. As a violent means of containment, the text describes her as an inarticulate and chthonic monster, going so far as to split her in two:

> As she lurched (for she rolled like a ship at sea) and leered (for her eyes fell on

> nothing directly, but with a sidelong glance that deprecated the scorn and anger of the world – she was witless, she knew it), as she clutched the banisters and hauled herself upstairs and rolled from room to room, she sang. […] with her sidelong leer which slipped and turned aside even from her own face, and her own sorrows, stood and gaped in the glass, aimlessly smiling, and began again the old amble and hobble, taking up mats, putting down china, looking sideways in the glass, as if, after all, she had her consolations, as if indeed there twined about her dirge some incorrigible hope. (*TL* 107)

The "lurching," "leering" old woman not only acknowledges, but in fact expresses her exclusion from the "world" on her face – with her "sidelong" glances, she literally views the world from the sides, from the margins. This "sidelong" view even includes McNab herself, "turn[ing] aside from her own face" and providing her with awareness of her abjection ("she was witless, she knew it"). She has a subjectivity, one that the text both acknowledges and in the same gesture makes unknowable. She has a song, but the text, not the singer, saps it of meaning.

Mrs. McNab manifests the constitutive, inclusive exclusion upon which the nation-state relies. As Agamben demonstrates, the politics of the *polis* actually *requires* and *hinges* upon the absent presence of a figure whom Agamben designates as *homo sacer*, or "bare life," who can be killed with impunity but never sacrificed. *Homo sacer*, the ultimate refugee, is the mirror image of sovereign power. Mrs. McNab's work of embodying the contradictions of national power – her manifestation of the war's annihilation of binaries – enables Lily's voice to claim authority. Agamben explains, "There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in inclusive exclusion" (*HS* 8). Mrs. McNab's very presence interrupts the domestic

space (one that synecdochally represents the nation), which requires her disavowed labour to perpetuate itself. The narrativization of the house in "Time Passes," therefore, is the idyll of England that both disavows and substantiates her exclusion within it. The refugee's presence can deform nationalist narratives, a project that, I am suggesting, is central to Woolf's interwar fiction. Mrs. McNab's characterization, however, finally reaffirms her invisibility. Her role in making visible nationalist contradictions reveals a crucial limitation of Woolf's feminist pacifism, which occasionally takes for granted the subjugation of working class individuals such as Mrs. McNab and the bumboat woman of *Orlando*.

Echoes of "A Haunted House" and *To the Lighthouse* reverberate in *Orlando*, which tests the "pure integrity" of a country house over several centuries and parodies the upper-class, patriarchal entitlement that guarantees its persistence as a family estate. The Ramsays' house offers the guarantee that "we remain," yet this refrain, too, continues to lose its reassuring tone. *Orlando* features a parodic condensation of "Time Passes," reducing Woolf's sweeping, evocative record to the banal marking of natural time:

> probably the reader can imagine the passage which should follow and how every tree and plant in the neighbourhood is described as first green, then golden; how moons rise and suns set; how spring follows winter and autumn summer; how night succeeds day and day night; how there is first a storm and then fine weather… a conclusion which, one cannot help feeling, might have been reached more quickly by the simple statement that 'Time passed' (here the exact amount could be indicated in brackets) and nothing whatever happened. (*O* 94)

The shift from the present tense to the past – from "Time Passes" to the blandly delivered "Time passed" – reflects Woolf's further dismantling of the redemptive power of historical

narrative. Questions raised by the "airs" in *To the Lighthouse* are reduced in *Orlando* to "nothing whatever." This intertextuality does not monumentalize earlier works and cement the authority of her authorial voice, but rather achieves an ironic diminution of her earlier writings. Woolf reiterated this seeming refusal of the formal and thematic seriousness in her diary: she called *Orlando* a "writers holiday [sic]" from her "serious poetic experimental books" (*Diary* 3:177, 3:131). Woolf's joking self-citations cause her own words to reverberate and thus multiply, positioning Woolf herself as a haunting echo within her own canon. The echoes, repetitions, and self-reflexive references that link *Orlando* and these earlier texts demonstrate that the texts themselves are haunted – not only by the ghosts that haunt the present, but by the lost potential that even absence seemed to offer in the not-so-distant past.

England as camp in *Orlando*

Orlando is a mock biography in which the biographer struggles to depict a main character whose polymorphous and ungovernable national, sexual, and social identities repeatedly frustrate tidy description. In various ways, *Orlando* explores selfhood as an exercise in in-betweenness. My analysis illuminates spaces between and at the margins of socially-sanctioned subject positions, in which historical subjects can diffuse or interrupt discursive operations of power. In particular, Orlando's protean gender and sexuality ironically exaggerate categories of Englishness, making visible, to greater or lesser extents, various marginalized positions. Critics have demonstrated how the novel's ambiguities illuminate and critique categories of gender, sexuality, history, and race. Rachel Bowlby, for example, argues that while *Orlando* is ostensibly the story of a man who becomes a woman, the narrative portrays femininity as an inherently unstable position, in which s/he vacillates constantly between male and female. Masquerade, in this analysis, might be a

feminine strategy of finding a position outside the "masculine circle of perfect harmony and consistency" (59). Nancy Cervetti identifies uncertainty about characters' genders in the novel as "contagious," and demonstrates how ambiguity generates characters' desire and readers' pleasure (128). Victoria L. Smith argues that through its emphasis on lack, the text explores the impossibility of representing "woman for herself, as herself," always depicting femininity as a doubled position. Helen Southworth examines how the book negotiates "the sting of nostalgia," usefully demonstrating how Woolf's ambivalence toward idealistic visions of nation anticipates her anti-nationalist argument in *Three Guineas* ten years later. Expanding upon these readings, this chapter examines the text's ironic interventions in narratives of heteronormativity, racial belonging, and national affiliation which, as Jaime Hovey has demonstrated, were already inextricably intertwined within interwar discourses of Englishness (393-4).

Orlando's transition to femininity – and ghostliness – proceeds in inverse proportion to the marginalization or "ghosting" of other oppressed subjects. In other words, the more completely Orlando recognizes herself as one who haunts history's narratives, the more visibly other marginalized individuals emerge. My focus proceeds from Erica L. Johnson's argument that, while Lord Orlando enjoys Englishness as an ontological given, as a woman Lady Orlando haunts national space. By making this distinction, the text "traces outlines of subjects who materialize and dissolve, pulsing on the frontier of visibility and invisibility, inhabitation of the nation and haunting thereof" (Johnson 115). Agamben's analysis of biopolitics offers a useful lens through which to examine precisely how Woolf realizes boundaries demarcating those who "belong" from those who do not. Both the English country house and the refugee camp – one at the symbolic center of nationalist operations of power, the other its disavowed and indeterminate margin – are similarly implicated in nationalist ideals. Focusing on marginalized

characters (which I will align with the ghost and the refugee), this study explores the potential for – and posits limits to – opportunities to transgress the limits of sexual, social, and national categories.

Orlando positions "in between" states as constitutive of identities (even masculine ones), rather than as exceptions to stable social roles. While Cervetti, Smith, and others identify femininity as an inherently doubled state, Bowlby's reading of the text demonstrates that gender in *Orlando* generates identities that are inescapably contingent upon their social readability. In other words, the text refuses to grant even stable interiority as a given, showing how characters' sense of being is overdetermined by their social contexts and physical environments, many of which are themselves effects of Woolf's figurative excess and rhetorical dexterity. Characters and relationships are contingent with respect to time and space, an instability that evokes the Gothic. I could go further than Bowlby to note that Woolf's ghosts, alienated from and yet subject to nationalist and patriarchal discourses, reach their theatrical and comical apotheosis in *Orlando*. The novel presents racial, sexual, and class difference so hyperbolically that identity categories cohere only through self-conscious performance. The novel's campy pleasure in theatricalized self-presentation as a means to social legibility belies a distrust of categories of sameness and difference, which will reverberate with increasing urgency as interwar patriotic ideologies crystallize.

Readers first glimpse Orlando as a beautiful sixteen-year-old boy of the Elizabethan age, surrounded by the trappings of English imperialism and aristocratic wealth: "He – for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it – was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which hung from the rafters" (*O* 13). The ambiguity of the biographer's presentation of Orlando's masculinity has garnered extensive critical

attention (E. Johnson 116; Bowlby 49-51). Despite the biographer's reassurances, the protagonist's gender – assumedly the most fundamental and obvious marker of identity[13] – is immediately ambiguous. Already, Orlando is in "disguise." The biographer's insistence that "there could be no doubt of his sex," which seems intended to reassure readers of the boy's identity, conveys a note of anxiety: this statement is true not because his appearance is so transparent as to preclude doubt, but because the biographer refuses, and thus admits, such doubt. To raise the question, "*why* could there be no doubt?" is to question the very genre of masculine life-writing. Orlando's patriarchal legacy guarantees the coherence of his character. The head he slices at had been struck "from the shoulders of a vast Pagan who had started up under the moon in the barbarian fields of Africa" by Orlando's fathers, who "had ridden in fields of asphodel, and stony fields, and fields watered by strange rivers, and they had struck many heads off many shoulders…. His fathers had been noble since they had been at all. They came out of the northern mists wearing coronets on their heads" (*O* 13, 14). Patriarchy, imperialism, and entitlement are inextricably intertwined; Orlando's unquestionable masculinity is inherited from his fathers. Mastery of the landscape is also deeply enmeshed in family ties: readers learn that from the point of view of his favourite oak tree, Orlando could survey "nineteen English counties… and on clear days thirty, or forty perhaps"; often, he stands "counting, gazing, recognizing. That was his father's house; that was his uncle's. His aunt owned those three great turrets among the trees there. The heath was theirs and the forest; the pheasant and the deer, the fox, the badger, and the butterfly" (*O* 18). His identity is guaranteed, in other words, by the mythic proportions of his Englishness, by his family's enormous geographical and architectural holdings and by the ancestors who emerged from the mists in their coronets. The scene demonstrates the extent to which, to borrow Hovey's phrase, "national ideology often

depends on essentializing equivalences between elements of identity such as gender and sexuality, on the one hand, and race and nationality, on the other" (393). There *could be no doubt* of Orlando's sex because to doubt it would be to throw the biographer's narrative, which begins as the story of a man who is "English root and fibre" (116), into crisis.

Of course, the irony – and the pleasure – of *Orlando* is that Woolf throws these hegemonic narratives into crisis so vividly and so immediately. As Orlando lunges at the abject head dangling from the rafters, the coloured lights and shadows of his family's coat of arms, which adorns the attic window, array him as tellingly as his clothing does:

> Orlando stood now in the midst of the yellow body of an heraldic leopard. When he put his hand on the window-sill to push the window open, it was instantly coloured red, blue, and yellow like a butterfly's wing. Thus, those who like symbols, and have a turn for the deciphering of them, might observe that though the shapely legs, the handsome body, and the well-set shoulders were all of them decorated with various tints of heraldic light, Orlando's face, as he threw the window open, was lit solely by the sun itself. A more candid, sullen face it would be impossible to find. Happy the mother who bears, happy the biographer who records the life of such a one! Never need she vex herself, nor he invoke the help of novelist or poet. From deed to deed, from glory to glory, from office to office he must go, his scribe following after, till they reach what ever seat it may be that is the height of their desire. (*O* 14)

This passage undermines the biographer's claims to the naturalness of Orlando's gender, class, and national identity – not to mention his own authority as a disinterested recorder of facts – in several ways. The window projects the coat of arms onto Orlando's body as onto a screen,

adorning his body like the clothes that disguise, rather than display, his identity. As Bowlby points out, the proposition that Orlando's clothes can disguise his sex and yet leave no room for doubt undermines the very possibility of "reading" Orlando clearly: "The surface/reality structure of the argument leaves no ground at all for choosing a perspective from which to judge accurately. There are always two levels; either the surface mirrors, or it travesties, the underlying reality" (55). Such ambiguity causes difficulties for biography, parodying genre and the disinterested and authoritative "scribes" of history.

Despite his claims never to need the help of a "novelist or poet," the biographer appeals to "those who like symbols" to recognize the significance of the unfiltered sunlight on Orlando's face, which attests to his self-identicalness and the naturalness of his "inner" self. Unlike the rest of his body, his visage is naked of the adornments that would obscure (or express) its meaning. The biographer proceeds to describe Orlando's face, but stops when he reaches his forehead and his eyes. In place of clothes or crest, figurative language veils straightforward description:

> we must admit that he had eyes like drenched violets, so large that the water seemed to have brimmed in them and widened them; and a brow like the swelling of a marble dome pressed between two blank medallions which were his temples. Directly we glance at eyes and forehead, thus do we rhapsodize. Directly we glance at eyes and forehead, we have to admit a thousand disagreeables which it is the aim of every good biographer to ignore…. so, mounting up the spiral stairway into his brain – which was a roomy one – all these sights, and the garden sounds too, the hammer beating, the wood chopping, began that riot and confusion of the passions and emotions which every good biographer detests. (*O* 15)

The biographer's comically literal turn to purple prose, with the "drenched violets" of Orlando's eyes, aligns his descriptive language with the florid dress and ornate window. Rather than providing a description that leaves no room for ambiguity, the biographer's blazon raises questions for readers, both about Orlando's identity and the biographer's meaning. Is Orlando's brain, atop the spiral staircase, roomy because of its capacity for knowledge, or simply because it is empty? Are the "blank medallions" of his temples meant to suggest currency – an unknown quantity of wealth, perhaps? Or are they empty medals, accolades for which Orlando has no legitimate claim? Alternatively, are they simply placeholders, marking a lack of (and need for) meaning itself? The architectural metaphor suggests that Orlando's psychic life simply mirrors his surroundings, reflecting their outside rather than hiding some elusive, unchangeable "self." Thus, while some critics emphasize the lack of contradiction in Orlando's identity as a young nobleman, which the text certainly suggests, I propose that Woolf also cheekily undermines such certainty from the beginning. The roomy attic of *his* brain might, upon closer inspection, simply house another grinning, shrunken head in an endless *mise en abyme* effect of assuming and projecting subjective depth. This not only undermines Orlando's claims to privilege, but also moves the silent, othered head of the Moor from the margins of the house and the nation to the very center of English identity. If this were the case, likening Orlando's brain with the attic room (and, by extension, the exotic, abject head that hangs at its centre) collapses difference and undermines the naturalness of privilege.

Woolf also parodies the project of biography itself through the figure of the exasperated biographer, who, like "every good biographer," "detests" the "riot and confusion of the passions and emotions" of his subject (*O* 15). Orlando's individuality seems to disappear behind the biographer's descriptions; the biographer's words acknowledge, but provide no access to, the

riot of emotions that Orlando experiences. Paul de Man's essay "Autobiography as De-Facement" provides insight into the function of such description in Woolf's mock biography of Orlando.[14] As de Man suggests, "any book with a title page is, to some extent, autobiographical" insofar as it privileges the authorial voice as that of a particular person (922). Like autobiography, biography is ostensibly "rooted in a single subject whose identity is defined by the uncontestable readability of a proper name" (de Man 920). Because Woolf identifies the narrator function as a biographer (who occasionally interrupts his own account), the reader cannot take for granted that the narrator's perspective is aligned with Woolf's. Woolf thus both obscures and makes visible her own project of authorship. Similarly, autobiography both defaces and recovers its subject: de Man posits *prosopopeia* as the trope of autobiography (926), defining *prosopopiea* as "the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or living entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply, and confers upon it the power of speech" (926). The autobiographical voice, in other words, speaks from a position of absence and silence that is recuperated by literary representation. By making the subject legible, however, the autobiography is privative: it obscures the individuality of the subject through this very process. Thus, autobiography "veils a defacement of the mind of which it is itself the cause" (de Man 930). The biographer's descriptions manifest Orlando's and Woolf's faces and voice, but obscures the specificity of those voices. They are both there (in language) and not there (insofar as language is required to evoke them). Whereas marginalized characters' social oppression renders them absent presences within national discourse, Woolf's mock biographical form renders seemingly authoritative characters (including that of "Woolf" herself) absent presences within the language of the novel.

Furthermore, the narrative's reliance on nostalgic clichés of Englishness to grant Lord

Orlando interiority parodically underscores the ways in which discourses of nationalism and patriarchy make individual subjects intelligible, and how extensively they rely upon each other for coherence. Titled, beautiful, male, Orlando is the privileged and idealized subject of national ideology. As such, he embodies the sovereign personhood denied to so many other characters in the text. The first words he speaks, in fact, as he surveys the extent of his domain, are "'I am alone'" (*O* 17). Although, at that moment, "he felt the need of something which he could attach his floating heart to" (*O* 19), his sense of transience differs from the ghostliness I have set forth above; rather than that which has been excluded by nationalist discourse, he expresses those qualities that it privileges. This description manifests the medieval ideal of the sovereign's two bodies: the natural one, and the mythic one that never dies, which comes to stand in for national figuration itself.[15] Unlike the king's "*character angelicus,*" which represents "the Immutable within time" (Kantorowicz 8), Orlando's body is protean, and needful of pinning down. He tethers his heart, which threatens to escape the bounds of Englishness because it is "filled with spiced and amorous gales" (*O* 19), to the oak tree:

> To the oak tree he tied it and as he lay there, gradually the flutter in and about him stilled itself; the little leaves hung; the deer stopped; the pale summer clouds stayed; his limbs grew heavy on the ground; and he lay so still that by degrees the deer stepped nearer and nearer and the rooks wheeled round him and the swallows dipped and circled and the dragonflies shot past, as if all the fertility and amorous activity of a summer's evening were woven web-like about his body. (*O* 19)

The landscape (to which he is entitled) forms a tableau around him, delineating, "web-like," the very contours of his selfhood. He becomes part of the landscape, but does not disappear into it;

rather, his identity becomes more coherent when the biographer organizes the natural scene to reflect a highly stylized pastoral vision.[16] Likewise, the static landscape becomes more one-dimensional the more deeply Orlando inhabits his position of upper-class male privilege, and is finally arrested in hyperbolic stillness during the Great Frost of 1607-8. Orlando, by now a favourite in the English court, gambols amid the fallout of a cold snap "so extraordinary that a kind of petrification sometimes ensued" (*O* 33). As aristocrats drink and dance on the frozen Thames, working-class and rural characters – particularly women – are quite literally erased or subsumed by the English landscape: "At Norwich a young countrywoman started to cross the road in her usual robust health and was seen by the onlookers to turn visibly to powder and be blown in a puff of dust over the roofs as the icy blast struck her at a street corner" (*O* 32-3). Shepherds and ploughmen stand frozen in the fields, while unfortunate wayfarers "literally turned to stone where they stood" (*O* 33). Erica L. Johnson argues that the "icy seal" over England in Orlando's youth both confirms his privileged status and reveals national geographies to be haunted by those that are excluded by hierarchies of gender, race, and class (117-118). If Woolf's prose reveals Orlando's subjective depth to be an effect of social privilege – a mere trick of the light, perhaps, filtered through the summer air and the family crest – then those who exist on the margins of political life are not only powerless but barely visible, incorporated into the pastoral landscape that would disavow such disharmony.[17]

Even in death, the petrified workers, the vaporized countrywoman, and the old bumboat woman who sits huddled and frozen as the royal carnival mills around her are so integral to the social scene of the Great Frost as to serve as comical exaggerations of what Agamben terms "bare life." In the young Orlando's frozen world, boundaries between historical subjects and those forgotten by history are as crystal clear as the frozen waters of the Thames. The old

bumboat woman, for example, is frozen to death and yet seems to exist in a state of suspended animation, looking "for all the world as if she were about to serve a customer" (*O* 27). Hers is a state of exclusion so fundamental that her ghostly presence becomes a "view" in itself: "'Twas a sight King James specially liked to look upon, and he would bring a troupe of courtiers to gaze with him" (*O* 35). This juxtaposition of sovereign power and the woman's state of total suspension within this striking natural and political landscape crystallizes Agamben's argument that,

> The state of nature and the state of exception are nothing but two sides of a single topological process in which what was presupposed as external (the state of nature) now reappears, as in a Möbius strip or a Leyden jar, in the inside (as the state of exception), and the sovereign power is this very impossibility of distinguishing between outside and inside, nature and exception, *physis* and *nomos*. (*HS* 37)

The bumboat woman, both a "real" English subject and a frozen non-being, protects King James's sovereignty as a cultural phenomenon *and* as a "natural" condition.[18] Positioned at the point of indistinction between the "human being as such" and the political existence of the citizen, the bumboat woman is a refugee, in Agamben's sense, from the English nation that she helps to define at this historical moment. Ironically, the natural phenomenon of the Frost carries out what the nation-state would have accomplished anyway: that is, sequester and silence the woman as a non-agent and an object of the patriarchal, sovereign gaze. Meanwhile, the aristocracy revel in the state of upheaval: "while the country people suffered the extremity of want, and the trade of the country was at a standstill, London enjoyed a carnival of the utmost brilliancy" (*O* 33). The presence of the refugee, who throws the conception of "human rights"

into crisis by confronting citizens with a person "who [has] really lost every quality and every specific relation except for the pure fact of being human" (*MWE* 19), is a crucial rather than incidental part of this spectacle of nationalist and aristocratic privilege. An analogy can thus be made with the refugee camp, which, as Agamben argues, is the ultimate realization of sovereign power: "if sovereign power is founded on the ability to decide on the state of exception, the camp is the structure in which the state of exception is permanently realized" (*MWE* 40). Agamben defines the refugee camp as "the materialization of the state of exception and… the consequent creation of a space for naked life as such," a condition that necessitates that individuals "admit to be facing a camp virtually every time such a structure is created" (41). Only through her entrapment in the ice can the bumboat woman enjoy a place at the center of the king's festivities.

It is no coincidence that Orlando comes of age as a statesman and politician against the backdrop of these imprisoned bodies; his privilege requires the oppression of others, who are included in his world by virtue of their exclusion. For this reason, Agamben's study of the refugee camp tells us much about the world of the Great Frost: both illuminate "a zone of indistinction between the outside and the inside, the exception and the rule, the licit and the illicit" (*MWE* 41). The Frost, like the camp, materializes a state of exception which has *become* the rule – a condition also theorized by Woolf's contemporary Walter Benjamin. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin argues that, "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule" (257). Woolf exaggerates the political exclusion of marginalized characters even further in the absurd scene of the thaw: she ejects further multitudes of citizens from London, marooned on ice floes. This sad state of affairs places due emphasis on the refugees' qualities of opacity and exclusion which, the

text implies, always defined them. At the same time, the narrative's construction of Orlando's entitled subjectivity from the outside in, as it were – from the trappings of his privilege to the presumption of his essential being, his interior life, and his freedom to make choices – reveals how his life of political freedom is likewise contingent upon the exclusion of others.[19] In contrast to Orlando dreaming in the pastoral idyll of his estate, marginalized characters are literally absorbed into the landscape.[20] By creating a literary landscape in which the absent presence of oppressed subjects of Englishness provides a stylized backdrop not only for the excesses of the entitled but as the ground for Orlando's coherence as a subject, Woolf exaggerates social hierarchies and shows them to be markers of the "state of exception" that they foster. *Orlando* thus illuminates spaces of incoherence and play within social hierarchies by calling readers' attention to the no-place of the boundaries that structure them.

Of course, the advantages such a tactic provides to marginalized characters like the bumboat woman remain deeply ambiguous, as Mrs. McNab's abject characterization in *To the Lighthouse* demonstrates. Admittedly, the strategy of likening all manner of inclusionary exclusions, such as the plight of the frozen woman as a spectacle for the king, to the refugee camp might threaten to obscure further the specificity of already-invisible or disregarded subjects.[21] Yet, for the purposes of this study, the refugee camp analogy is useful because it shows how the norms and discourses of the nation-state, which make subjects intelligible as citizens, are policed through a double gesture of inclusion and exclusion. If, however, as Marie-Christine Leps contends, "biopolitics can only and ever repeat the originary structure of the inclusive exclusion – history as the constant reiteration of the *easily recognizable* same" (25), then the question remains whether the refugee can ever attain subjective agency. Agamben proclaims that, "Only in a world in which the spaces of states have been… perforated and topologically

deformed and in which the citizen has been able to recognize the refugee that he or she is – only in such a world is the political survival of mankind thinkable" (*MWE* 26). While the victims of the Great Frost are never granted interiority (or, arguably, even life itself) in Woolf's text, Orlando's subsequent oscillation between differently gendered and sexualized positions effects a transition from perfectly entitled citizenship to his/her subjection to exclusionary discourses of national belonging. Sovereignty is the very indistinction between these two categories, and its integration into culture (*HS* 35). By embodying, and thus making visible, the distinction between inclusion and exclusion, Orlando exposes sovereign power's limits in organizing social realities. *Orlando*, one might say, is the story of a citizen coming to recognize "the refugee that he or she is" and testing the effects of that recognition upon national space and historical time. Although the transformative potential of the texts – both Woolf's and Agamben's – can be contested, Woolf's interest in boundary-making and -breaking can achieve a topological deformation of nationalism, at least given the fantastic spatial and temporal scope of Orlando's world.

Orlando and the conditions of its publication are themselves topologically related; Woolf repeatedly transgresses and reinstates boundaries between fiction and reality. This distortion of categories of authority and its exclusion, replicated in the text's mock biographical form, also complicates the relationship between author and reader and throws "reality" into question. The biographer as narrator function is a mask for the implied author. Readers' awareness of the mask as such recuperates Woolf's seeming absence from the text. Given the connections I am making between *Orlando*'s presentation of historical subjects and the social and political context in which it was written, it is useful to consider the interplay between the personal and the public in Woolf's production of the novel. Historically, much of *Orlando*'s critical reception positions it as a "love letter" to Vita Sackville-West: as a therapeutic project of coming to terms with the end

of their love affair, or as a biography of Vita that restores to her the family estate, Knole, by providing the masculine identity that would have allowed her to inherit.[22] Nigel Nicolson praised the novel as "the longest and most charming love letter in literature" (202), whereas Marjorie Garber and Victoria L. Smith prefer to characterize it as a "*fairy tale à clef*" because, as Smith observes, "Woolf's public, sapphic love letter to Sackville-West necessarily had to be a fairy tale, necessarily had to turn fact into 'fiction'" (60-1). By acknowledging fact through fiction without necessarily privileging either, *Orlando* subversively intervenes in heteronormative genres and the gender, class, and racial positions they presuppose. As Smith demonstrates, the novel transposes a story of lesbian desire onto "the matrix of fairy tales that generally presume and enforce strict adherence to patriarchal hierarchy, heterosexuality, and a happy home" (61). This double narrative achieves a camping of the fairy tale plot in which, to borrow from Sue-Ellen Case's definition of lesbian camp, "Camp articulates the lives of homosexuals through the obtuse tone of irony and inscribes their oppression with the same device. Likewise, it eradicates the ruling powers of heterosexist realist modes" (189). *Orlando*'s theatrical presentations and transmutation of desire stake a claim for queer romance at the very center of a seemingly conventional English narrative.

In other words, as Orlando and Sasha wander in London amid the human testaments to exclusionary state power, they also inhabit a very different kind of camp. As Orlando's description in the book's opening pages demonstrates, the text presents him in terms of irony, aestheticism, theatricality, and humour, four features that Jack Babuscio suggests are basic to camp style (119). By the time the young lord has become besotted with Sasha, a Russian princess, he seethes rhetorical excess: "Images, metaphors of the most extreme and extravagant twined and twisted in his mind. He called her a melon, a pineapple, an olive tree, an emerald,

and a fox in the snow all in the space of three seconds" (*O* 36). Several critics have noted the novel's campiness later in the narrative, especially after Orlando becomes a woman (Hovey 396-7, Boxwell 307). Even as a man, however, Orlando inhabits a world of carnivalesque excess and flamboyant performance; his gender identity is a masquerade. The campy characterization of Lord Orlando reveals the extent to which his subjective agency depends upon the recognition and performance – his own as well as his biographer's – of gender norms and nationalist ideals.

When the Frost ends and Sasha leaves him, all the trappings of his masculine power are lost: he is alone, exiled from Court, his hopes for the future dashed. It is at this point, in the transition between English masculinity of mythic proportions and the condition of exclusion from that position, that the multiple functions of camp are most apparent. Orlando falls into a deep, week-long sleep that causes the biographer to raise philosophical questions with seeming earnestness:

> Are we so made that we have to take death in small doses daily or we could not go on with the business of living? And then what strange powers are these that penetrate our most secret ways and change our most treasured possessions without our willing it? Had Orlando, worn out by the extremity of his suffering, died for a week, and then come to life again? If so, of what nature is death and of what nature life? (*O* 65-6)

Positioned between death and life – or perhaps more accurately, as the *zoē* of Agamben's *homo sacer*, who can do little more than simply exist[23] – Orlando interrupts the genre of the masculinist biography by existing therein as an absent presence, a ghost. Rather than approaching this scene as a narrative crisis, the biographer continues with the tale: "Having waited well over half an hour for an answer to these questions, and none coming, let us get on with the story" (*O* 66).

Orlando's absent presence signals a queerness that haunts the story of Englishness. For the queer historical subject, the ontological stability of character that young Lord Orlando enjoys is never available. Camp provides a means of articulating a self through the very discourses that render that selfhood incoherent or taboo: as Neil Bartlett contends, writing from the point of view of a gay man, "We still consider inventing a real life to be an ordinary, even inevitable activity. If you can't be authentic (and you can't), if this doesn't feel like real life (and it doesn't), then you can be *camp*" (182).

This notion of "being camp" when "being real" is not available anticipates the ways in which Lady Orlando will negotiate the heterosexist, patriarchal world in which she finds herself. For Lady Orlando, drag offers opportunities to inhabit multiple racial and sexual identities, from a Roma in Turkish trousers to a proper Victorian married lady to a dashing lad-about-town. None is more "authentic" than another, for clothes make the man (or woman, as the case may be):

> She had, it seems, no difficulty in sustaining the different parts, for her sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothes can conceive; nor can there be any doubt that she reaped a twofold harvest by this device; the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied. From the probity of breeches she turned to the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally. (*O* 211)

Despite the biographer's protestation that "If… the subject of one's biography will neither love nor kill, but will only think and imagine, we may conclude that he or she is no better than a corpse and so leave her" (*O* 198), Orlando's long slumbers and flights of imagination nevertheless drive the narrative forward. *Orlando*, then, provides a place for the refugee, who (to

various extents) lacks agency but is aware of her position at the borders of citizenry. The novel explores the symbolic space of the refugee camp in part through an appropriately campy narrative style. By figuring gender as an unstable, contextually determined condition rather than as a fundamental quality of the self, the novel ironizes the very question of what "inclusivity" could mean.

Revealingly, camp reaches its most elevated articulations when Orlando goes to Turkey as an ambassador, fleeing the attentions of the Archduchess Harriet Griselda of Finster-Aarhorn and Scandop-Boom in the Roumanian territory (who is actually a man in drag). In Turkey, theatrical performance stands in for substance to a farcical degree: on his diplomatic visits, for example, Orlando and his Turkish counterparts ceremonially drink from empty cups and smoke from empty hookahs, for "had either smoke or drink been real, the human frame would have sunk beneath the surfeit" (*O* 119). D. A. Boxwell cogently observes that "Woolf's theatricalised orient encompasses ritual excess and excess as ritual" (320). In this episode in particular, Boxwell argues, "the text simultaneously mocks Western cultural constructions of the orient and campily renders the orient as a fantastic space of excessive splendor and debasement," a strategy which "represents the essence of camp and drag: appearance as illusion, illusion as appearance" (320). At Orlando's ducal installation, the violence of a riot cuts through the ambassadorial veils of excess and ambiguity; when the biographer describes these events, he attests that "we are on the firm, if rather narrow, ground of ascertained truth" (*O* 126). Once again, Orlando escapes from a distressing political reality, withdrawing from the scene in a trance. His lapse in consciousness forms yet another aporia in the narrative, since "nobody has ever known exactly what took place later that night" (*O* 126); this ambiguity will be crucial in the legal battles that will accompany Orlando's sex change later. On the seventh day of his trance, an insurrection

takes place but Orlando is spared by the marauders because his unconsciousness renders him "to all appearances dead" (*O* 128). Finally, with the appearance of our Lady of Purity, our Lady of Chastity, and our Lady of Modesty, Orlando is transformed into a woman in a scene in which, as Hovey suggests, the "theatrical, campy staging of the protagonist's gender mutability, which points to performativity and queerness, also pokes fun at the hypocrisies of middle-class sexual mores" (399). The theatricality that characterizes Orlando's transition to femininity, which Orlando herself notes "without showing any signs of discomposure" (*O* 133), signals an escalating destabilization of categories of "truth." During her subsequent time with the Roma, when she wears trousers and struggles to communicate in an unfamiliar tongue, existing at the very margins of English imperialism, camp performance undermines the patriarchal and imperialist narratives that brought Orlando to Turkey in the first place and aligns her femininity with queerness. As Bowlby asserts, "as a woman, [Orlando] is forever vacillating between the sexes, as if femininity is an inherently unstable position, or as if its very condition is that of putting on and off the identities of one or the other sex" (59). In this contra-patriarchal performance, Orlando refuses to play English femininity "straight"; Lady Orlando is a fundamentally queer figure who calls the naturalness of conventional social roles into question.

Returning from her Turkish sojourn, Lady Orlando confronts the social consequences of her new femininity as she sails for England aboard *The Enamored Lady*: she realizes, "Once I set foot on English soil…. I shall never be able to crack a man over the head, or tell him he lies in his teeth, or draw my sword and run him through the body, or sit among my peers, or wear a coronet, or walk in a procession" (*O* 151). Re-entry into Englishness, in other words, is also re-entry into conventional gender roles. As Erica L. Johnson has noted, Orlando's femininity, which places her in negative relation to the political agency of masculine citizenship, partially

absents her from her own biography. To enter England is to leave political personhood behind. Whereas Orlando enjoys an ontological relation to Englishness as a man, as a woman Orlando *haunts* nationalist narratives: "Marginalized by national and literary discourse for her sexuality and gender fluidity, Orlando claims Englishness… as a structure into which she inserts herself as an interruption, for if ghosts haunt unsignified reality, unsignified reality produces ghosts" (Johnson 124). The text acknowledges this ghostliness legally: Lady Orlando soon finds herself in Chancery, the chief charges against her being "(1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing; (3) that she was an English Duke who had married one Rosina Pepita, a dancer; and had by her three sons, which now declaring that their father was deceased, claimed that all his property descended to them" (*O* 161). Orlando's femininity renders her, legally speaking, a non-entity; at the same time, she inherits the consequences of Lord Orlando's sexual escapades, supplanted by the "true" heirs his past liaison might have produced. The narrative also characterizes Orlando's queerness as a legacy from her masculine past: "as all Orlando's loves had been women, now, through the culpable laggardry of the human frame to adapt itself to convention, though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved" (*O* 154). The narrator insists (employing the plural third person pronoun to reflect an Orlando still in transition between genders), "the change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity" (*O* 133). Yet, the two "deaths" of Orlando demonstrate a fundamental difference in their constitutive states of exception. The *legal* death of Orlando as a woman is a state of exception, which seems much like Orlando's earlier trance, in which he was "*to all appearances* dead" (*O* 128, emphasis added). In the case of Orlando as a man, his state of exception is a vital one – he only appears dead – that excuses him from death at his political

oppenents' hand. Orlando is the sovereign, "the king that 'never dies'… replaced by the king that always dies" (Kantorowicz 30). In other words, "The king is dead! Long live the king!" (Kantorowicz 412). For Orlando as a woman, her state of legal exclusion *might as well be* actual death. Lady Orlando is the other side of the coin to Lord Orlando's sovereign power. She is *homo sacer*: alive and present, but suffering legal and political exclusion from citizenship that renders her vitality moot.

Paradoxically, this doubleness, which the text positions at the very heart of Englishness, provisionally resolves the indeterminacy between inside and outside that characterizes the plight of the refugee. Legally, socially, and sexually marginalized, Lady Orlando occupies the camp (in all its implications) in unpredictable and transformative ways. With the arrival of Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, her story arrives at its conventional dénouement: romantic closure and marriage that renders Orlando "a real woman, at last" (*O* 241). Yet, even this narrative turn comes to pass through a moment of queer recognition: "'You're a woman, Shel!'…. 'You're a man, Orlando!'" (*O* 240). Significantly, this moment of mutual acknowledgement follows Orlando's proclamation, "'I'm dead, Sir!'" (*O* 239). Her active, declaratory inhabitation of this state of exception reflects a shift from the passive, legal death with which Chancery charges her, recalling the more vital death-in-life embodied by her previous masculine self. Underpinning Orlando's multivalent drag performance and the novel's disruption of conventional discourses of power is Orlando's uncanny ability to remain, in the narrative and in the symbolically overdetermined space of her country house, a figure of absence.

Ironical perambulations: *Orlando* and the feminine Gothic

For Orlando, the alienation from a socially-constructed identity that such absence

manifests is almost always generative. Lost in melancholy reflection in the crypt below the great house, Orlando reflects on her persistent desire for Sasha and her own transformation, and is inspired to write. The revelation is figured in architectural – and specifically Gothic – terms: "it was the effect of Sasha and her disillusionment perhaps, – into this frenzy was let fall some black drop, which turned her rhapsody into sluggishness. Slowly there had opened within her something intricate and many-chambered, which one must take a torch to explore, in prose not in verse" (*O* 168). Like the "spiral staircase to his brain" that the biographer noted in the young, boyish Orlando slicing at the Moor's head in the attic, Orlando's "many-chambered" selfhood suggests an equivalency between the novel's main character and the house that is so closely tied to his/her identity. From the attic with its crested stained glass window to the basement crypt, the house is inextricably implicated in the narrative's construction of Orlando's self. Whereas, in the first pages, the young Orlando gazes at his domain from the oak tree with an attitude of ownership and domination, by the end of the novel Lady Orlando concedes that, "The house was no longer hers entirely…. It belonged to time now; to history; was past the touch and control of the living" (*O* 304). Orlando's feminine existence becomes increasingly private, separating her from the public life of the courtier and the diplomat that she enjoyed as a man: her "many-chambered" selfhood also reminds us of the "chambers of the mind and heart" that Lily perceives in the conventionally domestic Mrs. Ramsay (*TL* 44). At the same time, descriptions of the house reach mock-epic proportions, eventually subsuming national space and historical time. Gothic tropes characterize the biographer's representation of the house, and signify differently depending on the gender of its master or mistress. Whereas the young, male Orlando nostalgically elegizes the haunted spaces of his home, for Lady Orlando, the "historic" house provides a space of future-oriented, campy self-fashioning. Evoking Mrs. Ramsay and the

"companionable ghosts" of "A Haunted House," Lady Orlando, a marginalized subject of Englishness, haunts this most conventional of symbolic national spaces.

Drawing upon Sedgwick's assertion that the Gothic protagonist struggles with a "doubleness where a singleness should be" (13), Isabella van Elferen argues that because the Gothic "thematizes the past *in* the present, the other *in* the self, transgression *in* nostalgia…. [it] is located in an eternal in-between, beyond day-to-day binary opposites" (3-4). As such, "the Gothic can be described as a critical paradigm foregrounding liminal spaces of history, locality, and identity" (van Elferen 4). It should be no surprise that Orlando occupies an increasingly Gothic literary world as the narrative unfolds. At the same time, the text presents nostalgia, which is central to the Gothic fascination with the in-between, as sentimental excess most closely associated with Orlando's masculine youth: looking back through the "obscure generations" of his family, "he apostrophised his house and race in terms of the most moving eloquence" (*O* 78). Upon Lady Orlando's return to the house, she confronts this legacy from an ironic distance. For van Elferen, Gothic nostalgia is distinguished not by a wistful desire for the past to return, but by the critical rewriting thereof, which consists not merely of an act of memory but of an *action* performed upon historical time:

> In whatever form, the Gothic recasts pasts upon presents, and brings with it unease and uncanniness as well as nostalgia and longing. The Gothic gaze into the past is not passive, and does not result in mere mirrored images. Gothic nostalgia is a gesture, a movement, an *act,* and one that intervenes in the structure and nature of things remembered. The Gothic gaze therefore entails transgressive rewriting *per se.* (3)

In this respect, Gothic is closely aligned with camp, which, as Pamela Robertson has noted,

takes up cultural products that have lost their initial significance and are available for redefinition: "Camp redefines and historicizes these cultural products not just nostalgically but with a critical recognition of the temptation to nostalgia, rendering both the object and the nostalgia outmoded through an ironic, laughing distanciation" (267). Orlando's ownership of his house (when he is a man) demonstrates a naturalized patriarchal relationship to the home as a retreat from the world of public life. After her newly feminine identity throws the perceived ontological basis for that ownership into crisis, Orlando renegotiates her relationship to the house that, the narrative suggests, belongs more to "history" than to her. Her retrospective recognition of the house as a spatialization of the same social norms that marginalize her – and her continuing love of the house nonetheless – effects the "laughing distanciation" that Robertson identifies as a strategy of female camp. The house concretizes ideological structures of Englishness; neither Orlando nor Woolf read this symbolic meaning straight. Through the narrative's ironically nostalgic repetition of various domestic scenes over the course of Orlando's life, both Orlando and Woolf (whose authorial presence is masked by the masculine voice of the narrator) act as invisible female observers who haunt nostalgic spaces of patriarchal power.

The text's strategy of describing the house first from the point of view of young, male Orlando and then later from the point of view of Lady Orlando ironically undermines masculine claims to mastery. Two examples in particular – descriptions of the basement crypt and attic room – illuminate the function of Gothic rewriting in opening up zones of indistinction between insides and outsides of domestic spaces and the gendered roles they organize. Mourning Sasha's departure for Russia, young, male Orlando perambulates the house, which "was haunted by a great variety of ghosts" and is filled with "skeletons of men and animals in attitudes of great agony" (*O* 66-7):

> Orlando now took a strange delight in thoughts of death and decay, and, after pacing long galleries and ballrooms with a taper in his hand, looking at picture after picture as if he sought the likeness of somebody whom he could not find, would mount into the family pew…. Even this was not enough for him, but he must descend into the crypt where his ancestors lay, coffin piles upon coffin, for ten generations together…. It was a ghastly sepulchre; dug deep beneath the foundations of the house as if the first Lord of the family, who had come from France with the Conqueror, had wished to testify how all pomp is built upon corruption… (*O* 68)

This Gothic vision of Orlando's house reiterates the testament to Orlando's patriarchal legacy offered in the novel's opening pages. Mythic ancestors who emerged from the mists wearing coronets, however, are reduced to "corruption," a pile of anonymous bones: "'Nothing remains of all these Princes… except one digit'" (*O* 69). The (comically phallic) "one digit" – the number one – only *seems* to testify to Orlando's masculine privilege of unitary identity. Yet, the finger points instead to multiplying indeterminacies:

> "Whose hand was it?," he went on to ask. "The right or the left? The hand of man or woman, of age or youth? Had it urged the war horse, or plied the needle…. Had it—" But here invention failed him or, what is more likely, provided him with so many instances of what a hand can do that he shrank, as was his wont, from the cardinal labour of composition. (69)

Theatrically and risibly, the Gothic scene restages Orlando's family legacy, underscoring the fact that even the august ancestors that give Orlando his name and his privilege are now nothing but ghosts or, even more devastatingly, a "corrupted" pile of relics that dissevers rather than

guarantees Orlando's sense of self.

As a woman, Orlando revisits these Gothic spaces. Consistent with her lack of "discomposure" upon her discovery of her newly feminine body in Turkey, *her* confrontations with the ambiguities of the past and the contingency of her upper-class privilege invite amusement rather than distress. Whereas the young, male Orlando notices with sadness that "all pomp is built upon corruption," Lady Orlando, sailing into London, notices the spot where the bumboat woman once sat and determines that "all that splendour and corruption was gone" (*O* 159). Upon her return home, she descends into the crypt, "But even the bones of her ancestors, Sir Miles, Sir Gervase, and the rest, had lost something of their sanctity…. Somehow the fact that these skeletons had been men with their way to make in the world like any modern upstart… filled her with remorse" (*O* 167). Lady Orlando is able to recognize the ghosts *as* historical subjects of the past, and understand the historical contingencies that govern their identities. She acknowledges her change in perspective, but never claims to master the meaning of the crypt: "'I am growing up…. I am losing my illusions, perhaps to acquire new ones'" (*O* 166, 167). The fact that the narrative records this thought twice in two pages reflects her awareness of the multiplication of ambiguities that accompanies (and perhaps even signals) her maturation. Whereas young, male Orlando moodily kicks the old bones about, Lady Orlando adds her own bodily traces to the ghostly legacy: "In the Queen's prayer book, along with the blood-stain, was also a lock of hair and crumb of pastry; Orlando now added to these keepsakes a flake of tobacco, and so, reading and smoking, was moved by the humane jumble of them all" (*O* 165). Orlando leaves evidence of her own body among the family relics, wearing, as it were, the trappings of her legacy like a costume even as she acknowledges that she too has already been taken up by history's narrative.

Lady Orlando's Gothic sensibility also enables her to recognize missing or invisible subjects that are excluded from the masculinist perceptions of her younger self. For example, in the attic room hangs an arras which signifies differently depending on whether it is focalized through male or female Orlando. In the book's first pages, readers learn that, "The green arras with the hunters on it moved perpetually" due to the wind. As modernity encroaches, Lady Orlando drives home from her confrontation with a grown-up Sasha at the department store to reorient herself with a tour of the house. Although her old bedroom, the "Ambassador's bedroom," was "as frail as a shell, iridescent and empty," Orlando "knew where the heart of the house still beat": "Gently opening a door, she stood on the threshold so that (as she fancied) the room could not see her and watched the tapestry rising and falling on the eternal faint breeze which never failed to move it. Still the hunter rode; *still Daphne flew*" (*O* 303, emphasis added). Poised on the threshold (and thus evoking Mrs. Ramsay), Orlando is ghost-like, invisible to the room. Her view reveals what that of the biographer and the young Orlando never did: the green arras portrays not only hunters, but also Daphne in flight. At the very "heart of the house," Orlando gazes upon a mythic figure of feminine doubleness. Daphne, typically represented at the moment of her transformation into a laurel, preserves her virginity from Apollo, escaping capture at the cost of her humanity. Daphne as laurel, perhaps, is the embodiment of *zoē*, life reduced to bare existence. Her predicament, of course, is that no independent identity is available to her in the masculinist terms in which the story is constructed; her transformation only confirms her powerlessness. Hers is an exclusion so complete that she does not even figure in the description of the arras from young Orlando's point of view. The episode epitomizes the radical ambiguity of feminine absent presence as an interruption to patriarchal narratives. The ghosts who haunt the house of Englishness, like Daphne, reveal borders between patriarchal

privilege and the exclusion of its racial and sexual others to be indeterminate, with the potential for the transgression of social hierarchies. To recognize the exclusion of the ghost, the refugee, and the absent presence, however, is also to reinscribe their otherness.

"All was lit as for the coming of a dead Queen": Nostalgia, difference, and the present

The haunting presence of Daphne throughout the text (which is revealed only at the story's end) exposes the limits to the agency provided by marginalized individuals' interruptions of patriarchal narratives. Yet, Lady Orlando's doubleness – her ability to navigate zones of liminality in which an entitled citizen confronts (and sometimes becomes) the marginalized subject as political non-entity – infuses patriarchal and nationalist narratives with queerness and indeterminacy. In "A Haunted House," *To the Lighthouse*, and *Orlando*, women's identification with domestic spaces at once reifies and subverts sexist sphere ideology. Women and houses seem to safeguard social hierarchies and promise generational continuity. At the same time, the "treasure" that ghosts and current inhabitants recognize in "A Haunted House," the "treasure in… tombs" embodied by Mrs. Ramsay, and the "many-chambered" consciousness of Lady Orlando all suggest that women's identification with symbolic spaces fails to inscribe them completely within coherent social narratives. Women's inevitable failure or refusal to guarantee the persistence of mythic domestic constructions situates them within those ideals as figures of evanescence and ambiguity. Through the revelation and perpetuation of alterity, Woolf's characterizations of women and houses counter hegemonic social narratives with multiplicity and difference. By exploring the centrality of feminized domestic spaces to nostalgic narratives of Englishness, each of these three works sets forth Gothic counter-histories in which narratives of national progress are interrupted and, to a certain extent, altered by haunting presences.

At the end of *Orlando*, which is set roughly contemporaneously with the date of its publication, Lady Orlando prepares to repeat with difference the events of her biography. Whereas the male Orlando's public life began with Queen Elizabeth I's visit to his family estate, in 1928 Lady Orlando experiences a citation of the past in which boundaries are dissolute: "Of wall or substance there was none. All was phantom. All was still. All was lit for the coming of a dead Queen" (*O* 313). Yet, a contemporary reader knows that the past, repeated with difference, is not simply redemptive: the hovering aeroplane that next "rushed out of the clouds and stood over her head" (*O* 313) is a harbinger not only of new organizations of national space – including, perhaps, the proliferation of gendered difference within hegemonic national and domestic narratives – but of the oncoming trauma of a *second* world war.[24] The campiness of *Orlando* gains new significance when Woolf takes up similar themes of haunting, difference, and the performance of self in her final novel, published posthumously in 1941, *Between the Acts*. By reading through literary, ethical, and political trajectories linking *Orlando, Three Guineas,* and *Between the Acts*, the next chapter tests the efficacy of purposeful "indifference" as an alternative to militarist discourse. Queerness, nostalgia, and a preoccupation with haunted houses complicate the tension between unity and disunity that is central to *Between the Acts*. They structure a campy and parodic historical framework, which intersects productively with – and exposes the limits to – the ethical potential of haunting.

CHAPTER 3

Repetition, Spectacle, and the Limits of Indifference in *Between the Acts*

The old house, for those that know how to listen, is a sort of geometry of echoes.

—Gaston Bachelard

Published in 1938 as a response to English rearmament,[1] Virginia Woolf's polemical *Three Guineas* proposes an "Outsiders Society" created by the "daughters of educated men" (309). The members of this society would promote "liberty, equality and peace" through an "attitude of complete indifference" to the masculine undertaking of armed conflict (*TG* 310). Indifference is the necessary alternative to patriotism, Woolf argues, which demands women's hypocritical support of a nationalist discourse that hypocritically excludes and discriminates against them:

> "Therefore if you insist upon fighting to protect me, or 'our' country, let it be understood, soberly and rationally between us, that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share; to procure benefits which I have not shared and probably will not share; but not to gratify my instincts, or to protect either myself or my country. For," the outsider will say, "in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world." (*TG* 313)

Despite her insistence that women's country is the "whole world," Woolf admits that such detached cosmopolitanism can be difficult to achieve. She acknowledges that for some, an "obstinate" love for home and country, grounded in visions of an idyllic English homeland,

threatens to undermine anti-patriotic resolve. Anticipating nostalgic counter-arguments, Woolf maintains that this sentiment can actually strengthen women's commitment to indifference:

> if, when reason has said its say, still some obstinate emotion remains, some love of England dropped into a child's ears by the cawing of rooks in an elm tree, by the splash of waves on a beach, or by English voices murmuring nursery rhymes, this drop of pure, if irrational, emotion she will make serve her to give to England first what she desires of peace and freedom for the whole world.
>
> Such then will be the nature of her "indifference" and from this indifference certain actions must follow. (*TG* 313)

For Woolf, the "pure, if irrational, emotion" one might feel for an idealized, pastoral national space exists in curious tension with the political gesture of disavowing nationalist certainties. The "certain actions" that indifference requires are all negative ones: abstaining from patriotic demonstrations; absenting oneself from ceremonies; "looking elsewhere" when war is discussed (*TG* 314). In this sense, indifference means "the making of no difference between conflicting parties; impartiality," but *not* "absence of care for or about a person or thing; want of zeal, interest, concern, or attention; unconcern, apathy" (*OED*). The attitude Woolf proposes, therefore, is emphatically and purposefully performative: actual concern for protecting freedoms – one's "zeal, interest, concern, or attention" for the rights of women and other oppressed people – paradoxically requires one's indifference with respect to violence. *Fighting* oppression, in other words, means *not* taking sides.

Woolf's female Outsider inhabits an impossible position with respect to national space: as a subject of patriarchal oppression, she is a citizen of nowhere; yet, for her actions to have real political consequences, she must locate her efforts in (English) space and time. Imaginary

spaces, born of affect and nostalgia, therefore serve as provisional locii for political agency and, as I shall argue, feminist and queer self-fashioning, represented in terms of omission and abstention. Because there is no "outside," in Foucault's terms – no ethical space of idealized Englishness outside the patriarchal and heteronormative hierarchies that organize English life – Woolfian political agency must occupy the borderland between sentimental ideal (an England that never really existed) and political reality (an England in which women's limited political agency has only been imagined in patriarchal terms). This chapter examines how Woolf's representations of quintessentially English spaces – taking the English country house as the most exemplary of these – grapple with the problem of locating marginalized subjects with respect to national and historical narratives. In *Between the Acts* (1941),[2] skepticism towards discourses of Englishness coexists with a narrative commitment to community. The perceived permanency of the country house seems to guarantee the persistence of harmonious social relations, but this harmony is always interrupted by the omissions and oppressions that hegemony requires. The country house as literary setting therefore reifies the nostalgic crisis of Woolf's feminist pacifism, confronting the limits to purposeful indifference when no alternative fiction to the patriarchal and imperialistic structuring narrative of the nation is available.

"What does 'our country' mean to me as an outsider?": Nationalism at the margins

In many ways, the figure of the Outsider explicitly politicizes the haunting characters that populate Woolf's earlier works, including "A Haunted House," *To the Lighthouse*, and *Orlando*. Like those of the bumboat woman and Lady Orlando, the position of the "Outsider" bears similarities to that which, as Giorgio Agamben argues, the refugee occupies. In contrast to the bumboat woman, Woolf's Outsider, like Lady Orlando, embraces her exclusion as a means to

political agency. By *purposefully* abstaining from discussions of war, she interrupts the "imagined community" of the nation (to borrow Benedict Anderson's term [26]). The Outsider's dissenting non-participation makes visible her exclusion by national ideologies, thus undermining the fictions of consensus that sustain them. Yet, the Outsider's tactic of purposeful indifference might also confirm her powerlessness. The plight of the refugee illustrates that political power is most active, and most inescapable, at its margins. As Agamben demonstrates, national communities paradoxically require the absent presence of *homo sacer* (*HS* 8).[3] This figure is the necessarily correlative of sovereign power; for this reason, the sovereign power is grounded in the very impossibility of distinguishing between the nation and that which it excludes (*HS* 37). By remaining purposefully indifferent to operations of military power, in other words, the Outsider exposes, but also inhabits, the indeterminacy upon which the citizen's entitlement to sovereign power relies.

Agamben does not simply oppose the citizen to the *homo sacer*. Rather, he argues that in modernity "we are all virtually *homines sacri*." (*HS* 115).[4] For this reason, as I discussed in Chapter 2, Agamben identifies the refugee as the exemplary political figure of the twentieth century and a potential agent of political transformation. The refugee "brings the originary fiction of sovereignty to crisis" by inhabiting the zones of indeterminacy that characterize the nation-state (*MWE* 21). As the embodiment of *homo sacer*, the refugee confounds limits of inside and outside, self and other. Agamben acknowledges that some refugees, particularly in the aftermath of World War I, *chose* their interstitial status: "many refugees, who were not technically stateless, preferred to become such rather than return to their country" (*MWE* 17). The Woolfian Outsider is just such a refugee. When she declares, "as a woman I have no country," she refuses the status of citizen that is already effectively denied to her. She designates herself as a stateless

person within the ideological and geographical space of the nation, which in turn only includes her as a political non-agent.

When Woolf proclaims, "the law of England denies us, and let us hope will long continue to deny us, the full stigma of nationality" (*TG 273*), she positions the Outsider in the borderland between citizen and outcast and yet inescapably tethered to nationalist interests. Women's otherness, confirmed by the English legal system, confers a unique ethical position. By refusing "the full stigma of nationality" Woolf hopes to work towards a more inclusive model of national community. "We can best help you to prevent war," she contends, "not by joining your society but by remaining outside your society but in co-operation with its aim," assuming the shared aim is to assert the rights of all men and women to "Justice and Equality and Liberty" (*TG* 366). Woolf's suggestion anticipates Agamben's argument. "Topological deformations," in which outside and inside become indeterminate (*HS* 37), can rupture the either/or logic of militarism – friend/enemy; citizen/foreigner; soldier/citizen; victor/vanquished – from within the totalizing reach of that logic. Woolf's Outsider, by remaining outside the men's pacifist society but in solidarity with it, at once undermines and contributes to the unity of the political group. In doing so, she changes its topology: by refusing membership, she offers a kind of solidarity *in difference* – a gesture that undermines the us/them logic of wartime more fundamentally than the society's fundraising has the potential to accomplish.

Despite Agamben's concern with subverting exclusionary categories of citizenship, women are a blind spot in his argument. He acknowledges that in modern history the distinction between *homo sacer* and citizen has extended to women and children (*HS* 130-1); in general, however, his argument assumes that *homo sacer* is a sacred *man,* not a woman. What for the sacred *man* is a state of exception – the condition of being included within the sphere of sovereign

power without accessing that power himself – has been, for most of human history, a defining characteristic of women's ordinary social existence. Woolf's tactic of purposeful indifference, and the evolution of her pacifism in *Between the Acts*, therefore both anticipate and exceed Agamben's argument. Her emphasis on continuities between public and private injustices is consistent with the notion that inside and outside are co-determinant: "the fear which forbids freedom in the private house… is connected with the other fear, the public fear, which is neither small nor insignificant, the fear which has led you to ask us to prevent war" (*TG* 363). Ultimately, Woolf's most exemplary figure of inclusive exclusion is not *homo sacer per se*, nor the political refugee, but the daughter confined at home. By suggesting that the daughter may be a figure of refusal and resistance rather than of complacent servitude or striving for assimilation in the public world of men, *Three Guineas* endorses the disruptive potential of women who cannot participate equitably in political dialogue. Whereas Agamben asserts that nature and law (*physis* and *nomos*) "are nothing but two sides of a single topological process" (*HS* 37), Woolf manipulates the feminine space of the home to reveal how *nomos* and *oikos* are similarly interconnected. In doing so, she disrupts complacent ideals of home – both domestic and national – with the feminine figure of exclusion who recognizes her own centrality to masculine prerogatives of sovereign power.

Tyranny at home, tyranny abroad: Woolf's feminist pacifism, 1938-1940

In *Three Guineas*, Woolf expands her comparison of the "private fear" of domestic oppression with the "public fear" of escalating international conflict, ultimately equating sexism in England to the anti-Semitism of the Nazis. Confronted with the image of the "Führer or Duce" and the "ruined houses and dead bodies" that lie behind them, Woolf argues, the English

must recognize a "very important connection" (*TG* 364). "The public and private worlds are inseparably connected," she insists; "the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other… we cannot dissociate ourselves from that figure because we are that figure" (364). While Woolf's contention that "our thoughts and actions can change that figure" illuminates the real political potential of women's private actions, the parallels she draws between German and English dictatorship are overstated. As Marina Mackay and others have noted, "Events after 1938 entirely invalidated Woolf's equations between German Jews and middle-class Englishwomen" (Mackay 236). Mia Spiro explains that although "Woolf's strategy to connect English nationalism and Nazi ideology is compelling because both are based in subjugating Others," her rhetoric could obscure the dehumanizing violence of the Final Solution: "correlating English patriarchal oppression with despotic and murderous dictatorships is especially obtuse, not least because this oversimplification results in obscuring the particular histories and conditions of the groups who are victims of Nazi violence and brutality" (47). Not surprisingly, similar charges have been levelled at Agamben and his designation of the Nazi concentration camp as the representative political paradigm of the twentieth century.[5] Clearly, the strategies that are so rhetorically effective in *Three Guineas* seem less so when considered in light of the Holocaust. In *Between the Acts* and contemporaneous writings, Woolf herself also articulates a more nuanced pacifist argument, which moves through and beyond indifference to test the efficacy of the "private means in private" available to English women and others who "remai[n] outside" the loci of political power.

In the essay "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid" (1940), Woolf's condemnation of tyranny, both on individual and societal scales, echoes her argument in *Three Guineas*. Her concession that simply abstaining from war is no longer an option reflects her increasingly keen

recognition that most men as well as women are unwilling and unwitting participants in and victims of the war. Writing under the threat of aerial bombardment, Woolf scoffs at the idea of disarmament as a panacea: "do the current thinkers honestly believe that by writing 'Disarmament' on a sheet of paper at a conference table they will have done all that is needful?" ("Thoughts on Peace" 218). Rather than simply demobilizing troops, she argues, the English must destroy the "aggressiveness, tyranny, insane love of power made manifest" in Hitler, which also motivates young Englishmen's "love of medals and decorations… their fighting instinct, their subconscious Hitlerism" (217, 218). To destroy aggression, English women must find an alternative narrative of masculinity and nation: in other words, "We must compensate the man for the loss of his gun" (218). Although she recognizes her exclusion by militarist discourses, the female speaker must join the fight, though not in masculine terms: "How far can [we] fight for freedom without firearms?… we can fight with the mind. We can make ideas that will help the young Englishman who is fighting up in the sky to defeat the enemy" (216). By working privately to conceive of alternatives to the gun and the bomb, the Outsider can puncture the masculinist ideologies that justify and perpetuate war.

This assertion reflects a move from the indifference of the Outsider to a new feminist commitment to finding an alternative to – rather than simply abstaining from – patriotic ideals. Instead of absenting herself from discussions of war, Woolf's speaker inhabits the violent present: by inserting herself into hegemonic narratives as an interrupting *presence*, she also gestures toward a multiplicity of possible (and alternative) futures. In *Between the Acts*, Woolf commits even more deeply to the present moment – or more specifically to the recent past, a June day in 1939, just a few months before England's declaration of war on Nazi Germany in September of that year. In the novel's exploration of various "ideas" about war, politics, gender,

and nation – embodied by the cast of characters that populates its intersecting narratives – Woolf struggles to articulate an alternative language of national cohesion to the one that is propelling England towards war. *Between the Acts* ironically deploys gendered stories of Englishness, inhabiting the borderland between nostalgic past and uncertain future to open a present moment that, while tenuous, offers a provisional space and time for political transformation.

Repetition and "the present moment"

At first glance, *Between the Acts* exhibits a tightly-honed unity of time and place. The action takes place at Pointz Hall, the Olivers' country house, where the locals have gathered to watch the annual pageant, which rehearses English history from the Elizabethan Age to their present day. Yet, Woolf's ironic novelization of the pageant (which is separate from its performance[6]) disrupts the narrative's temporal unity and achieves a doubling of semantic and historical registers. In *Between the Acts*, Woolf anticipates the characters' future, which aligns with her present at the time of the novel's composition, and at the same time writes backward through history, and, through allusions to previous works, through her *oeuvre*. In terms of its own conditions of production, the novel thus conveys a mood of belatedness: the characters sit in uncertainty during the pageant's ambiguous ending, but readers, like Woolf, can anticipate history's next act. Woolf wrote the novel in 1940-1, after the war that the characters fear had already arrived. The dramatic irony of the narrative's composition manifests itself in its language; echoes, clichés, nonsense, and noise characterize both the narrative and the historical pageant at its center.[7] Characters struggle to assert themselves through fraying social scripts. At the same time, Woolf's prose manifests the difficulty of finding meaningful ways to foster empathic

connection. Anxious explorations of unifying narratives reflect a wariness of their aggressive or exclusionary potential, especially with regard to fascistic strategies of hegemonic violence and the propagandistic, nationalist clichés of wartime.

The text also echoes and deflates the vibrant prose of her earlier novels. Similarities between *Orlando* and *Between the Acts* are notable, and have so far not received much critical attention. Both novels achieve a telescoping of time and space that troubles the teleological conceptions of history that their predominant genres – the country house novel, the biography, and the historical pageant – typically reify. In *Orlando*, approximately four hundred years pass; the title character begins the story as a man and ends it as a woman, travels between England and Turkey and the country and the city, "enjoy[s] the love of both sexes equally" (*O* 211), and oscillates between public life and an intensely private existence. Yet, Lord – and then Lady – Orlando remains "English root and fibre" (*O* 116), tied to his/her house and the iconic oak tree to which his/her sense of self is anchored. *Between the Acts*, by contrast, maintains a superficial unity of time and space, but the narrative jumps between many points of view and thus diverges from *Orlando*'s mock biographical form. Like *Orlando*, *Between the Acts* parodies generic conventions: the history pageant, rife with missteps and interruptions, is at the center of the plot. Through the villagers' performance of English history, *Between the Acts* replicates and condenses the vast temporal scope of the earlier novel.

Thus, like the plot of *Orlando*, the pageant begins with the Elizabethan era and brings its audience to "the present moment" (*O* 284), which in *Between the Acts* explicitly includes the reader: "It was now. Ourselves" (*BA* 167). The grand narrative of national time, space, and identity invokes a tension between conjunction and disjunction, which crystallizes in the "present moment." Feminine, queer, working-class, and other marginalized characters are

subjected to yet also interrupt the hegemonic vision offered by the texts' ironically nostalgic settings and rhetoric. In *Between the Acts*, the fractured gramophone chorus that punctuates the play (and signals its end) emphasizes the difficulty of holding onto a shared experience: "*Dispersed are we; we who have come together. But,* the gramophone asserted, *let us retain whatever made that harmony*" (*BA* 176-7). As the crowd disperses further, even this tenuous assertion breaks down until only its negative prefixes remain: "The gramophone gurgled *Unity – Dispersity*. It gurgled *Un… dis…* and ceased" (*BA* 181). In this scene and throughout the text, the difference between unity and dispersity erodes indifference: characters must recognize their own complicity in *and* alienation from the present. Unity *in* dispersity, which the text finally offers as an antidote to a more reductive vision of community, is therefore always reliant on individuals' consciousness of their own inclusive exclusion from and within history's narrative. Instead of evincing purposeful indifference, the text suggests, the Outsider might consider new ways to "retain the harmony" in the face of violence, however provisional or tenuous such connections might be. Such a tactic could offer the refugee from Englishness a place within it, allowing characters and readers to re-imagine what Englishness itself might mean.

Despite the revisionary potential of the text's fragmented representation of community, the repetition of tropes and phrases from earlier works conveys a cynicism about language, a sense that there is nothing new to say. As John Whittier-Ferguson suggests, in *Between the Acts* an "inventively exhausted prose" style reflects Woolf's late-modern disenchantment with the potential of language to provide new or transformative meanings (231-2). In particular, as Whittier-Ferguson notes, "Woolf writes as though she were always looking over her own shoulder" (236). In *To the Lighthouse*, for example, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay disagree about the weather and the consequences it will have for the family's upcoming trip to the lighthouse. In

response to young James's fears that the trip will be cancelled, his father brusquely declares, "'it won't be fine'" (*TL* 7). Mrs. Ramsay responds to her husband's brutal rationality with hopeful reassurances: "'it may be fine – I expect it will be fine'" (*TL* 8). The anxieties that the exchange raises about the uncertain future – especially for James Ramsay – re-emerge in *Between the Acts*:

> "If it's fine," Mrs. Swithin continued, "they'll act on the terrace…"
>
> "And if it's wet," Bartholomew continued, "in the Barn."
>
> "And which will it be?" Mrs. Swithin continued. "Wet or fine?" (*BA* 20)

Isa barely responds to this unexciting exchange, which she has heard each summer. As Whittier-Ferguson notes, "we too have heard these words before"; repeated, they seem "less consequential, less miraculous, less revelatory than their predecessors" (236). Less miraculous – perhaps. Nonetheless, these repetitions have much to reveal, especially when considered against their reiteration later in the story by Miss La Trobe, an Outsider to be sure, and the pageant's writer and director. "'Wet would it be, or fine?'" she muses. "Out came the sun; and, shading her eyes in the attitude proper to an admiral on his quarter-deck, she decided to risk the engagement out of doors. Doubts were over" (*BA* 57). Unlike Isa Oliver or Miss Swithin, La Trobe answers her own question with militaristic certainty that renders speculation prosaic and moot. The director also evokes the figure of Lily Briscoe from *To the Lighthouse*; like Lily, she is a marginalized woman, an artist whose vision is sometimes at odds with social expectations (and in some ways, a proxy for Woolf herself). Whereas Lily's painting fosters connection and bridges the present with the past, La Trobe's production reveals even the most supposedly unified community to be "dispersed," the naturalness of its coherence a tenuous fiction. She wants the audience to confront its complicity in the violence of nationalism. Her attitude towards the weather echoes the voices of James and Lily, with a difference. The family sailboat is a warship

now, and deferral must give way to action. La Trobe's leadership, framed in militaristic language, is ambiguous. Is she a dictator, who makes unilateral decisions that do not admit doubt? La Trobe's pageant goes against the grain of nationalist certainty by fragmenting its narratives from within and making visible figures of exclusion. Such echoes, repetitions, and self-conscious references are thus revelatory indeed. The tired language of *Between the Acts* is haunted – not only by the absences that haunt the present moment, but by the lost potential that even uncertainty seemed to offer in the not-so-distant past of Woolf's literary career.

Pointz Hall and the country house tradition

In Woolf's novel and La Trobe's pageant, re-imagining categories of Englishness entails fragmenting a complacent sense of community: building a consensus, in other words, means destroying one's sense of being accounted for. This apparent contradiction mirrors the ambivalent symbolic force of the country house itself. In *Between the Acts*, both the house and the pageant function as miniatures of the nation: the pageant rehearses the grand narrative of English history, while the house is assumed to represent "the cradle of our race" (*BA* 66). Both spaces ultimately deflate the nostalgic, sentimental ideals they promise to realize. The two visions of Englishness, the text suggests, are equally constructed, equally reliant on individuals' prescribed performance of their social roles – performances that are consistently undermined by the irony with which Woolf depicts them. Through citation, repetition, and cliché, the focalizing consciousness elevates artifice over the notion of "reality." In her depictions of the pageant, the more subtly constructed interiors of Pointz Hall, and the seemingly "natural" setting of the surrounding landscape, Woolf focuses on the "heart" of the scene as a constitutive aporia in meaning, which must be filled with fabricated common histories. Consistently in the novel,

performances expose how national and domestic fictions fail to accommodate specific parts and plots. Like La Trobe's unorthodox play, Woolf's ironic domestic scenes stage the borderland between sentimental constructions and social realities.

Pointz Hall epitomizes the tenuous position of the English country house in twentieth-century fiction, and reflects its evolving significance as a national symbol generally. In the late 1930s, the future of England's country houses was uncertain; the First World War had marked the beginning of their final decline. In his definitive history of the fate of the country house in the twentieth century, David Littlejohn records 458 demolitions between the two world wars, when their owners could not afford to keep them and new owners could not be found.[8] Another 629 houses would be demolished in the thirty years following World War II, partly as a result of damage sustained when they were taken over by the government for wartime use (Littlejohn 40). The middle-class Olivers are thus typical of a new generation of country house dwellers, living on a more modest scale in houses small enough to function without an army of servants. Pointz Hall is "homely," "a desirable house to live in" even if it does not "rank among the houses that are mentioned in guide books" (*BA* 6). It thus contrasts with the country house ideal, epitomized by Orlando's grand estate that Woolf based on Knole, the historic home of the Sackvilles and one of the great houses of England.[9] Notably, upkeep of Knole has relied on the support of the National Trust since 1946. In this sense, Lady Orlando's observation at the end of the novel is more prescient than Woolf could have imagined: "The house was no longer hers entirely…. It belonged to time now; to history" (*O* 304). *Between the Acts* thus picks up the story of the English country house approximately where *Orlando* left off. For these homes, erstwhile testaments to one family's wealth and power, the "next act" of history would mean a more total absorption into nationalist narratives: first as makeshift military bases in World War II, and then

as museums open to the public.

At the same time, "country house style" was emerging as a popular interior design aesthetic representing "a fictional lifestyle" born of "fabrication and reinvention," as Louise Ward has demonstrated (92, 93). Of course, the ideal of the country house had always been "composed of references and allusions (both real and mythical)" (Ward 92). When country houses were opened to the public after World War I, country house style generated new fictions of country house life instead of deflating its mythic significance:

> Elevated beyond the status of the private home of the privileged, the English country house… ceased to depend, as a cultural symbol, on an attachment to a particular property or even a particular kind of house. Instead… it became something that everyone could aspire to, or participate in, through the decoration of their homes. (Ward 93)

In their transition from exclusionary, elitist properties to representatives of a widely accessible "style" that anyone could adopt, real country houses disappeared behind fictions of the lifestyles they were imagined to represent.

Descriptions of Pointz Hall's interiors convey the story of the Olivers' family history, which, like country house style, is partially an invented one. Relatively recent arrivals to the countryside, they "had no connections with the Warings, the Elveys, the Mannerings or the Burnets; the old families who had all intermarried, and lay in their deaths intertwisted, like the ivy roots, beneath the churchyard wall" (*BA* 6). For these older families, the village itself is a testament to their connection to the place; their sense of belonging is as "natural" as the roots beneath the churchyard wall and thus needs no justification. The Olivers, by contrast, establish their family history through domestic organization and display: "Still, on going up the principal

staircase… there was a portrait… an ancestress of sorts" (6-7). Thus the Olivers make a place for themselves in a community where even the delivery boy's name is "in the Domesday Book" (*BA* 29). The display of ancestresses "of sorts" aligns the domestic space with the Olivers' pseudo-genealogy, a necessity for a family that had been there "only something over a hundred and twenty years" (6).

Rooms like the dining room, described frequently and in detail, express the family's relationship to history and also expose those expressions as fabricated ones. Domestic spaces can be read, like texts, but the novel frequently presents these spatial stories ironically. Mary A. Gillies argues that "Woolf's characteristic mode of perception is temporally, not spatially, oriented" (108-9). Such a claim seems limited, given the vivid settings that Woolf's novels describe. Particularly in *Between the Acts*, spatial configurations almost always complicate temporal ones. The novel's working title, *Pointz Hall*, attests to the narrative significance of setting. Pointz Hall's décor combines souvenirs of the past with aspirational artifacts, such as the "ancestress of sorts" in her lavish yellow brocade, which express a bourgeois and characteristically modern project of self-invention. As Benjamin has argued, interior design can produce "phantasmagorias of the interior" in which "the private environment represents the universe. In it [the private individual] gathers remote places and the past" (154). The room functions as a "box in the world theatre" (Benjamin 154). As such, the bourgeois interior functions both as a space of performance of the self and a record thereof: in addition to its purposeful organization by a decorator, who curates this display of the self, the room accumulates "traces" of the past. Characters thus function as audiences for, as well as performers in, the phantasmagorical domestic dramas taking place. When Mrs. Swithin offers a tour of the house to William Dodge, she explains that "'We live in things'" (64), and uses objects to express the family heritage: as

"she ran her hand over the sunk books in the wall on the landing," for example, she points out "'the poets from whom we descend by way of the mind'" (63). She also exposes the family's shared past as a partially invented one when she acknowledges the woman in the portrait: "'Not an ancestress…. But we claim her…. Who was she?'" (63). Interior decoration produces fictional lines of descent, addressing a need for a connection to the English countryside and the common past that such pastoral scenes suggest. At the same time, the narrative shifts focus to the female ancestors whose identities are erased from historical narratives, particularly through Mrs. Swithin's imaginative custodianship of the family's past.

Woolf's novelization of characters' attempts at self-determination in and through the country house stages intersections among space, history, and subjective experience. Memory alters the house's spaces and stories through Mrs. Swithin's perambulations. She remembers those who have gone before her, and includes them in the story of the house: "'Now up, now up again.' Again they mounted. 'Up and up they went,' she panted, seeing, it seemed, an invisible procession, 'up and up to bed'" (*BA* 63). This palimpsestic, temporal organization is qualitatively different from the artificial spatialization of time on a clock face, which, as Henri Bergson has argued, artificially separates past and present. Instead, the domestic space manifests Bergsonian "duration [*durée*]," the form "which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states" (Bergson 100). Characters' perceptions of the past, mediated by memory, organize their perceptions of the present. By inhabiting and interpreting the space of Pointz Hall, which is organized by artifacts of the past, remembering subjects can disorder the exclusionary histories to which the domestic interior is intended to attest. As I shall demonstrate, such characters reimagine the space of the house by inhabiting it, manifesting the silence and absence that are

imposed on them by the house's ruling hierarchies. By positioning such figures of interruption at the center, rather than at the margins, of the narrative – a strategy to which its very title attests – *Between the Acts* invites a reading practice that recognizes the illegible or excluded subjects that populate hegemonic fictions.

Ancestresses "of sorts"

By shifting the narrative point of view from the lady in the picture to Lucy Swithin, who is an actual female ancestor, the text disorders the genealogical history represented by the Olivers' display of the portrait. Mrs. Swithin is the widowed sister of the house's owner, and as a representative (by marriage) of the more well-established Swithins, is legally entitled to the oldest and most distinguished family name. Yet, she is mostly ignored or condescended to by other characters, referred to as "Flimsy" or "Batty." Mrs. Swithin is thus excluded from the historical authority that her husband's patronymic surname represents. At the same time, a relatively large proportion of the text – particularly indoor scenes – is focalized through her. The narrative privileges her imaginative temporal sensibility even as it critiques her naïve faith in history's unifying force. Throughout the narrative, Mrs. Swithin is engrossed in her "favourite reading – an Outline of history" (8). Woolf is alluding here to H. G. Wells's best-selling historical text, *An Outline of History: The Whole Story of Man* (1920), which offers readers "truly and clearly, in one continuous narrative, the whole story of life and mankind," as Wells promises in his preface to the 1922 edition (v).[10] The book begins with prehistory and ends contemporaneously with its publication in 1920, striving to transcend boundaries of nation and political interests. According to Wells, the book's historical project is a pacifist one, necessary after the "universal disaster" of the Great War:

> There can be no peace, we realize, but a common peace in all the world; no prosperity but a general prosperity. But *there can be no common peace and prosperity without common historical ideas*…. With nothing but narrow, selfish, and conflicting nationalist traditions, races and peoples are bound to drift towards conflict and destruction. (vi)

Wells's pacifist and post-nationalist project seems to chime with Woolf's; however, her narrative's stance towards *An Outline of History* is critical. In Wells's text, expansiveness does not guarantee inclusivity (among other omissions, for example, feminism is absent from his allegedly complete historical narrative). Woolf parodies the *Outline*'s pretensions to wholeness, which can only achieve the illusion of exhaustiveness through disavowed exclusions of already-marginalized groups.

In Mrs. Swithin's focalizing consciousness, the Olivers' genealogy and Wells's world history intersect. As she reads, thoughts of primordial history continually distract her from her consideration of Pointz Hall's more immediate past. Rather than manifesting teleological progression towards a shared future, the effect of her musings is one of extreme temporal compression: her imagination conjures up visions of "the iguanadon, the mammoth, and the mastodon; from whom presumably, she thought, we descend" (*BA* 8). Thus she experiences historically disparate times simultaneously: interrupted in her reading by the entry of Grace, the maid, it took her "five seconds of actual time, in mind time ever so much longer, to separate Grace herself, with blue china on a tray, from the leather-covered grunting monster… of the primeval forest" (*BA* 8). When she perambulates the house, she transforms its symbolic spaces through "mind time" by remembering and imagining the past. Her individual point of view thus transforms textual spaces, and supplants the Hegelian teleology of Wells's history with

Bergsonian *durée*.

While some critics, including Maria Di Battista and Natania Rosenfeld, interpret Mrs. Swithin as "an incorrigible, perhaps anachronistic monist indigenous to Woolf's fictional world, a reminder of the effortless epiphanies, and certitudes, of the past" (Di Battista 143), or "a potentially redemptive figure who falls short…. Mrs. Swithin's 'one making' is her limitation" (Rosenfeld 129), I would argue that Mrs. Swithin also undermines monolithic ideologies by including within them subjects of their exclusion. Certainly, Mrs. Swithin naïvely embodies Wells's model of world history as a quest for a common purpose, although she is marginalized within its narrative. At the same time, her commitment ironically destablizes hierarchies. With her query about the anonymous ancestress's identity, for example, she perceives traces of untold stories within the "official" narratives that Pointz Hall represents. As de Certeau has argued, such recognition of silence, anonymity, or absence allows characters who are alienated from the production of power to inhabit panoptic spaces, thus resisting power's operations: "There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can 'invoke' or not. Haunted places are the only ones people can live in—and this inverts the schema of the *Panopticon*" (de Certeau 108). By recognizing not only what is *there* but also what is *not there*, the de Certeauvian subject perceives (and, in the context of the novel, creates) an alternative story. Remembering what existed in a space before, acknowledging what is not present, and imagining what could be there in the future, individual perception functions "like those birds that lay their eggs only in other species' nests" (de Certeau 87). Memory, de Certeau suggests, works in and through spaces of power to transform that space through the intervention of subjective time. It thus "produces in a place that does not belong to it. It receives its form and its implantation from external circumstance, even if it furnishes the

content (the missing detail)" (87). Walking thus serves an enunciative function,[11] and describing domestic spaces through marginalized characters' points of view privileges such enunciations over the more official narratives in which they intervene. This de Certeauvian reading illuminates unexpected continuities among *Rebecca*, *Orlando*, and *Between the Acts*: in domestic novels ranging from the conservative and popular to the feminist and experimental, characters' perambulations of country houses manifest individuals' potentials to revise the hegemonic narratives such spaces represent.

Their tour complete, Swithin and Dodge finally reach the top of the house and stand together at the window, looking down at arriving guests in the courtyard below. The two figures, watching the human drama below them, evoke the watchers in the windows of Henry James's "house of fiction," which he describes in his famous preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*. In James's metaphor, windows, all providing different ways of seeing the same human scene, represent modes of literary representation that frame the writer's work. "They are but windows at the best," James concedes, "mere holes in a dead wall, disconnected, perched aloft; they are not hinged doors opening straight upon life" (x). The windows, which frame fiction itself, are circumscribed by convention and limit verisimilitude. The specificity of the view and of the viewer set each window apart from the others:

> But they have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. He and his neighbours are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white, one seeing big where the other sees small, one seeing

coarse where the other sees fine. (James x-xi)

The "unique instrument" of the gaze, which provides a distinct impression, recalls the Paterian "thick wall of personality" that rings the subject and safeguards the specificity of individual impressions (196). By focalizing the scene of the guests' arrival through the instruments of Swithin and Dodge's gazes, Woolf inverts the schema of the panopticon and aligns their marginalized subjectivities with the narrative authority of the implied author. By perambulating, gazing upon, and interpreting spatial distributions of power, these Outsiders produce a dissenting narrative within the carceral setting of Pointz Hall. The house thus provides an allegory for reading: Woolf's ideal reader must privilege not the "official" nationalist histories manifested in the house and pageant, but rather the reception of those histories by figures of exclusion.

More than any other character, Lucy Swithin presents opportunities for social participation and empathic connection to those who are socially oppressed, even if she cannot mitigate her own and others' marginalization. Her offer of the house tour is addressed to "no one in particular"; Dodge, recognized and despised by Giles as a homosexual, "knew she meant him" (*BA* 62). She strives to connect across difference: "She had forgotten his name. Yet she had singled him out" (*BA* 63). As she narrates her own and the family's pasts, room by empty bedroom, she speaks her thoughts "not caring if he thought her, as he had, inconsequent, sentimental, foolish. She had lent him a hand to help him up a steep place. She had guessed his trouble" (*BA* 65). As they stand at the window, William perceives the value of Lucy's gaze, privileging her "instruments" of interpretation: "her eyes in their caves of bone were still lambent. He saw her eyes only" (*BA* 67). Her kindness inspires William's wish to testify to the homophobic violence he has endured, but the words are never spoken. Although they never

reconcile their separate memories – Mrs. Swithin's sentimental ones and Dodge's traumatic ones – the *narrative* makes room for both, and so transforms the domestic space into a site in which stories of difference may proliferate.

"The essence of emptiness, silence": revisionary echoes

As the anonymity of the "ancestress of sorts" suggests, and perhaps not surprisingly given the nostalgic force of country house style, the gender roles that Pointz Hall's interior design manifests are utterly conventional. This sexism is most apparent in the symbolic "heart of the house," the dining room. Two portraits are featured, one of a male ancestor with his horse and hound, the other of a second anonymous woman. Whereas the male ancestor "ha[s] a name," the woman, implicitly positioned as a matriarchal figure through her juxtaposition with the patriarchal man, was "bought by Oliver because he liked the picture" (*BA* 33):

> He was a talk producer, that ancestor. But the lady was a picture…. she led the eye up, down, from the curve to the straight, through glades of greenery and shades of silver, dun, and rose into silence. The room was empty.
>
> Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent. The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was; a vase stood in the heart of the house, alabaster, smooth, cold, holding the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence. (*BA* 33-4)

In contrast to the named male ancestor, the anonymous lady, like the "ancestress of sorts" whose picture hangs in the stairway, is a fictional figure. Both the portrait and the womb-like alabaster vase are empty vessels (for flowers or for fabricated genealogical ties, as the case may be). Julia Briggs suggests the vase is at once "a symbol of artistic creation, a poetic monument such as Keats's Grecian Urn, or Eliot's Chinese jar, but it is also a cenotaph, a funeral urn,

perfectly wrought, yet memorializing a life that has ended, a past that has gone" (382). The vacuity of a vase, an urn, or a jar makes them ideal as conveyors of meaning. Woolf implicates the vase in a poetic tradition, and also in the Olivers' bourgeois project of familial mythopoesis, through comparison with the portraits. This project not only "suggests both the power and the limitations of traditional forms of art," as Briggs suggests (382), but also satirizes the sureness with which masculinist narratives and aesthetics assimilate feminine presence. The Olivers' male ancestor must be singular, named; but women must be anonymous presences so as to endorse the continuity of patriarchy's narratives. At the same time, descriptions of the "empty" portrait and the "silent" vase ascribe positive value to their ostensible vacuity, for example in the figure of the vase in which emptiness of the room can be "distilled." Through a synaesthetic process of leading the eye to "silence," the lady in the picture makes that silence visible and thus interrupts the meanings conveyed by the male "talk producer." By figuring the picture, the room, and the vase in terms of the positive presence of emptiness and silence, the text draws readers' attention to the untold histories to which the room does *not* explicitly testify. Focalizing these hegemonic spaces through figures that are excluded by the ideologies they promote has a similar interrupting effect. The seemingly silent, static, and empty interior thus becomes a vessel for contra-patriarchal meaning that fragments exclusionary yet totalizing histories.

Like the juxtaposition of the pseudo-ancestress with iguanadons, mammoths, and poets in Mrs. Swithin's mind, the text presents patriarchal history-making ironically through the narrative's alignment with marginalized points of view. The description of the dining room is at first focalized through the consciousness of Candish, the butler, whose job in domestic service makes him a kind of invisible presence in the household. Like Mrs. McNab, the largely unacknowledged domestic labourer in *To the Lighthouse*, Candish is a figure who embodies the

dissolution of binaries so as to facilitate connection. As he works, the gendered categories suggested by the paired portraits are made indeterminate: "He loved flowers, and arranging them, and placing the green sword or heart-shaped leaf that came, fitly, between them. Queerly he loved them, considering his gambling and drinking" (*BA* 32). In this scene of domestic labour, stereotypically masculine qualities (gambling, drinking, sword-shaped leaves) intermix with feminine ones (a love of flowers, heart-shaped leaves). At the same time, the sword and heart shapes in the flower arrangement evoke the images on a deck of cards, further interrelating "feminine" flower arranging with "masculine" gambling. This "queer" gender ambiguity implicitly proceeds from Candish's act of gazing: "with one last look, he left the dining-room" (*BA* 33). Whereas Mrs. McNab's labour is supplanted by Lily's artistic work, as I discussed in Chapter 2, Candish's work of queering the domestic space is taken up by the text itself. After Candish leaves the room, the anonymous narrator function describes the "empty" room from the point of view that he has just vacated. This arrangement both aligns the reader with a condition of absence, and supplants Candish's domestic labour with the reader's work of exegesis. His act of gazing models a hermeneutics (or perhaps an architecture) of reading in which the "empty" room can be shot through with meaning and loved "queerly," in a way that recuperates figures marginalized by Pointz Hall's (and, by extension, England's) heteronormative legacies. His task completed, Candish himself is excluded from the novel's focalization, supplanted by the viewpoint of the narrator function.

As Candish's evocation of Mrs. McNab demonstrates, Pointz Hall is haunted not only by figures of social exclusion and elision – that is, characters who are both within and outside the novel's plots, depending on one's point of view – but also by traces of earlier Woolfian literary interiors. In addition to conveying the "inventively exhaustive prose" style that Whittier-

Ferguson has explored, Woolf's use of allusion and repetition accrues intertextual meaning within seemingly insignificant feminized spaces. The Olivers' dining room – a room that is described as "a shell, singing of what was before time was" (*BA* 33) – calls to mind the "horny pink-lined shell" that adorns the centerpiece on the Ramsays' dinner table in *To the Lighthouse* (*TL* 79). Gazing upon the centerpiece inspires separate flights of fancy for Mrs. Ramsay and for Mr. Carmichael, but brings them together in their shared act of gazing: "That was his way of looking, different from hers. But looking together united them" (*TL* 79). This temporary scene of unity in shared separateness anticipates characters' spectatorship of Miss La Trobe's pageant; both foster "unity in dispersity." The dinner scene, described as an island of "order and dry land" surrounded by its "water[y]" reflection (*TL* 79), is, like La Trobe's pageant, an allegory for England itself. The domestic ritual of the Ramsays' dinner – reliant not only on servants' domestic labour but also on Mrs. Ramsay's work as the hostess – makes the disparate group cohere:

> the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by candlelight, and composed… into a party round a table, for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished, waterily. (*TL* 79-80)

The shell is the focal point of a scene of plenitude, sustained by the reflections that "shut off" the outside in a figurative manifestation of a Foucauldian carceral. This social cohesion is not effortless, the imagery suggests; it is carefully "composed," a "reflection" of careful adherence to social conventions, which are epitomized by the Ramsays' conventional marriage. Surrounded by mirror-like windows, the shell in the Ramsays' centerpiece is literally a *mise en abyme* (it is worth

noting that mollusc and nautilus shells actually grow in a kind of natural *mise en abyme* structure, a logarithmic spiral: they are fractal in nature, with each chamber a miniature of the one that precedes it). In *Between the Acts,* the central shell is so magnified as to subsume the room itself, now emptied of people. Through these allusions, the texts suggest a proliferating continuity from shell (the centerpiece) to rooms (the Ramsays' and Olivers' dining rooms) to shell again. Like a set of nesting dolls, these images parodically reveal the domestic idyll of the Ramsays' dinner as lacking a center, grounded in an infinite recursion of origin myths. Its contents are finally revealed as yet another "composed" domestic tableau, this time with the empty vase distilling emptiness at its "heart." The shell, historically a symbol of female embodiment,[12] thus carries forward the social expectations, which the anachronistic Mrs. Ramsay unerringly met, into the very architecture of *Between the Acts*.

The architecture of *Orlando*, too, is distilled in a shell. Descriptions of the Olivers' fictional female ancestor and the dining room in which she hangs have been purloined (in some cases almost to the letter) from the earlier novel. Both Lady Orlando's assessment of her estate and the narrator's descriptions of Pointz Hall focus on the "heart of the house." Lady Orlando perceives her ambassadorial bedroom, in use during her days as a man, as a relic that "shone like a shell that has lain at the bottom of the sea for centuries… it was rose and yellow, green and sand-coloured. It was as frail as a shell, as iridescent and as empty…. Ah, but she knew where the heart of the house still beat" (*O* 302-3). The "heart of the house" is not the shell-like Ambassador's bedroom, but the attic room with its arras depicting Daphne and Apollo. In both domestic "hearts," images of a silent woman – an absent presence – contrast with the historical and mythical significance of male "talk producers." The Olivers' fabricated ancestry replicates and parodies conventional narratives of more illustrious country house families and their homes,

a story that *Orlando* hyperbolically rehearses. The silent and anonymous woman in the Olivers' dining room and the shell imagery that surrounds her link the two anonymous women in the portraits, Lady Orlando, Mrs. Ramsay, and Daphne. They thus manifest an accumulation of past meanings, through which Woolf constructs a richly allusive feminine interjection in the "official" Oliver patriarchy in an intra- and intertextual *mise en abyme* effect.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard's imaginative exploration of the image of the shell is related to an ideal of "housewifely care," in which women continuously remake domestic environments "anew" (69). In this formulation, the shell is the perfect analogue to a home: "one must live to build one's house, and not build one's house to live in" (Bachelard 106). The shell is endlessly compelling to the imagination, Bachelard argues, because its inhabitant is at home wherever it travels (131). Notably, for Bachelard, the mollusc-like practice of building one's house from the inside is a feminine capability: "In the intimate harmony of walls and furniture, it may be said that we become conscious of a house that is built by women, since men only know how to build a house from the outside" (68). At the Ramsays' dinner party, for example, Mrs. Ramsay builds the home from within, "composing" an idyll by ensuring other characters' inclusion in the ritual. Like the chambers of a shell, this image of domesticity is replicated, both intra- and extratextually, with increasing spatial proportions: from centerpiece, to room, to home, to England. Woolf's later domestic scenes ironically invoke this kind of nostalgic formulation. The shell-like rooms, "delicate" like Orlando's ambassadorial bedroom, have a fossil-like air, calling to mind Mrs. Swithin's unifying prehistoric visions of "rhododendron forests in Picadilly; when the entire continent… was all one" (*BA* 8). The empty shell, "singing of what was before time was" or having "lain at the bottom of the sea for centuries," thus functions as a relic of patriarchal creation myths which, in Woolf's densely metaphorical prose,

exceed their own boundaries. Through the interruption of feminine absent presence, the fictions that organize gendered spaces proliferate, and thus are evacuated of monolithic certainties.

Pointz Hall's ironic configurations

Between the Acts draws literal and figurative connections between the country house and a stage upon which Englishness is performed. The working manuscript of the text was entitled *Pointz Hall*, after the house. In the final stages of revising the typescript, Woolf replaced this title with *Between the Acts* (Briggs 390), a reference to the pageant – or more precisely, to its interruptions. The title also serves as a metaphor for England's role on the world stage: the action takes place between two acts of world war. The transposition of house and performance reflected in Woolf's naming of the text also organizes its narrative: Pointz Hall, notoriously, is in the wrong place. Although the property offers an ideal, elevated building site, the house is situated at the bottom of the slope: "Nature had provided a site for a house; man had built his house in a hollow" (*BA* 9-10). According to Bart Oliver, the location of the house was meant to provide an "escape from nature" (7); yet the house seems almost claustrophobically enmeshed in its surroundings, swallowed up by the trees and hillside. Rather than commanding a view of the landscape, like the view of "nineteen English counties" that Orlando enjoys (*O* 18), the Olivers' windows provide limited surveillance over the surrounding property. In *Between the Acts*, in other words, there is no "escape from nature." The proper site for the house, the text suggests, is "a stretch of turf half a mile length and level, till it suddenly dipped into the lily pool" (*BA* 10). This site also "made a natural stage," leading Miss La Trobe to declare it "'the very place for a pageant!'" (*BA* 69). Elements of the terrace (where the house "should" be) resemble a room: "The trees barred the stage like pillars. And the human figure was seen to great advantage

against a background of sky" (*BA* 69-70). In the surrounding woods, "All that inner darkness became a hall" (*BA* 10). The grandiose language with which the text presents the figurative architecture of the lawn contrasts with the emphatic coziness of Pointz Hall; each space is figuratively circumscribed by the imagery of the other. Twinning the house and landscape demonstrates the continuity between the country house and the estate surrounding it – a convention of the country house novel – but also subverts the hierarchies that country house landscape writing presumes, which usually situates the country house at the apogee of symbolic domestic spaces.

The house and landscape are both nostalgic iterations of an idyllic way of life, which, the text repeatedly reminds us, is a nationalist construction. By pairing the "interior phantasmagoria" of Pointz Hall with the more explicitly scripted pageant on the lawn, which takes place against a landscape steeped in nationalist myth and reflective of social hierarchies, Woolf undermines the possibility of a natural space unmediated by the operations of power. The spectacular landscape is made claustrophobic by repetition, citation, and cliché – aurally, visually, and intertextually: "The view repeated in its own way what the tune was saying" (*BA* 120). Similarly, the twinning of the house and its grounds achieves a mirroring effect: like the Ramsays' dining room, in which the reflections in the windows of the room replace the view outside, the continuity between the Hall and its surroundings positions characters between two constructed and mutually reinforcing images of English gender and class hegemony. This *mise en abyme* construction suggests both expansiveness (the view is multiplied and extended through reflection) and immobility (the field of view is actually limited by the viewer's, and the mirrors', positions). By comically and hyperbolically literalizing continuities between domestic and national ideals – an effect that is extended intertextually – Woolf's *tableau* of the house and its

grounds attests to the pervasiveness of nationalist myths. The totalizing reach of these organizing hierarchies reflects the difficulties Woolf faced in "compensat[ing] man for the loss of his gun" ("Thoughts on Peace" 218), of finding alternative narratives to those propelling England towards war.

Woolf's subversive pairing of interior and exterior spaces is intensified by descriptions of the lily pond, a second "heart" for the estate through which Woolf reiterates her critique of women's passive role in domestic myth-making. The pond beside the stage forms "that deep centre, that black heart" of the property, which generates ghost stories about a lady who drowned herself for love (*BA* 40). As in the stylized image of a heart generally, this symbolic heart supplants the vital functionality of the bodily organ with patriarchal notions of traditionally feminine sentimentality. Pointz Hall's domestic hearts provide emotion in place of embodiment, myth instead of presence. They are aporias in space that are fashioned into receptacles for those spaces' organizing narratives. The "water world" of the haunted pool (*BA* 40) actualizes the aquatic imagery with which the "empty shell" of the Olivers' dining room is described, drawing further parallels among femininity, absence, silence, and landscape. Recalling the anonymous lady who poses against a verdant landscape, leading the eye "through glades of greenery… into silence" (*BA* 33), fish swim against "the blue patch made by sky, or shot silently to the edge" and the grass that grows there (*BA* 40). The *presence* of the fish distracts from the *absence* of the drowned lady: she was never actually there; the pond serves as a final resting place only for a drowned sheep. Yet, "servants… must have a ghost; the ghost must be a lady's; who had drowned herself for love" (*BA* 40). These two hearts convey two domestic myths in which women are passive representatives of, or even self-abnegating participants in, invented histories that both memorialize them and erase their identities. Both reiterate dramas of abjection. These

anonymous women also haunt these shared histories; they interrupt them as figures of exclusion. Woolf thus anticipates the Agambenian figure of *homo sacer* and extends his disruptive potential to female subjects.

At the same time, the organization of space in *Between the Acts* always threatens to re-absorb the marginal sites in which Agamben situates political transformation. Descriptions of Pointz Hall's lawn and the pastoral landscape that surrounds it are as equally implicated in the persistence of nationalist narratives as the domestic interior; given the apparently endless reach of unifying myths, epitomized, as Gill Plain has demonstrated, by "the view," their "margins" can be difficult to locate. Plain argues that "the view" represents the consoling fiction of Englishness that La Trobe's play is meant to undermine: "The patriotic myth is an insidious one. It pervades *Between the Acts* in the cryptic form of 'the view,' recurring with alarming frequency. The view is the enemy of the artist, always threatening to catch the audience's attention, seducing them into a complacent vision of unity" (126). In staging the pageant, Miss La Trobe must battle the view for the audience's attention: "She could feel them slipping through her fingers, looking at the view" (*BA* 136). The latter threatens to distract from Miss La Trobe's play, but it also imposes coherence on the fragmented performance, "repeat[ing]" the tune (*BA* 120). This "repetition" is "senseless, hideous, stupefying" (*BA* 61): even as they await the arrival of their guests, the Olivers feel it lulling them into unconsciousness: "How tempting, how very tempting, to let the view triumph; to reflect its ripple; to let their own minds ripple; to let outlines elongate and pitch over – so – with a sudden jerk" (*BA* 61). Plain suggests that the tension between the view and the pageant reflects "a degree of confusion… between [Woolf's] desire to destroy the complacent myths of patriotism and a desire to preserve aspects of a world that she cherished" (128). The necessity of formulating an alternative to these myths, Plain

argues, "becomes the sole life line of survival" (128). I agree that the need to find an alternative fiction to patriotism is urgent in Woolf's final novel. Extending Plain's perceptive consideration of the view, I would emphasize that *Between the Acts* consistently evinces Woolf's conviction that, while wartime jingoism may be productively critiqued, there is no outside to the imagined community of the nation.

In other words, in *Between the Acts* Woolf commits less to finding a consoling fiction as an alternative to patriotism than to confronting the limits of patriotic certainties. Making visible characters absented from national ideals ruptures those ideals from within, which is its own kind of consolation insofar as such a tactic exposes, if not accommodates, difference. The centrality of performance to the novel is crucial to this project. At the same time, the view creates a marginal space between performance and its consumption in which national fictions can be reimagined. Spiro agrees with Plain that the play lulls the audience into complacency: "The narrator observes how easily the audience can be manipulated by expressing an overall statement to describe their condition" (Spiro 50), for example when they collectively wonder, "Could they talk? Could they move? No, for the play was going on" (*BA* 75). Yet, Spiro argues, interruptions of the performance, in part through the narrator's focus on the view, also break through the audience's thrall: "The audience's reactions, the interruptions, the narrator's comments, the intrusion of the wind, the animals, the birds – these are all a part of the novelized heteroglossia that allows parody, and thus critique, to occur" (46). I contend that even this parody is finally reabsorbed by (and as) nostalgic pageantry. When the stage is empty, the illusion of the play "fails," in Miss La Trobe's estimation; but the view takes up the burden "in the very nick of time" with the cows' "primeval voice": "The cows annihilated the gap; bridged the distance; filled the emptiness and continued the emotion" (*BA* 126). The pastoral landscape – as

aestheticized as the one young Orlando surveys from his oak tree – placates the audience, equating the human herd with the cows in the field and illuminating for readers the naïve sense of unity that holds the audience in rapt attention. The cows' cohesive function, relies upon the same presumptions of female sentiment that the "hearts" of the house and landscape manifest: The cow that begins the bellowing is "one [that] had lost *her* calf. In the very nick of time she lifted her great moon-eyed head and bellowed" (*BA* 126, emphasis added). The view that distracts from the pageant is also that which completes it, ironically through the feminization of the landscape itself, synaesthetically conveyed in the maternal voice of the cow. This moment follows, and thus obviates, Miss La Trobe's recognition of her own exclusion: "'This is death,' she murmured, 'death'" (*BA* 126). La Trobe's project of interrupting history, like Woolf's, must therefore speak through the same totalizing visions of Englishness it seeks to fragment, thus alienating her even from her own performance.

The effect of this scene, in which the cows both interrupt and participate in the performance, is to reveal both the pageant and the view as spectacle. In Guy Debord's terms, the spectacle, which mediates social relationships through images, defines modern capitalist society: it "is not something *added* to the real world – not a decorative element, so to speak. On the contrary, it is the very heart of society's real unreality" (13). In the case of the domestic interior and of the play, images create myths of unity in part by distancing individuals from the community's ideal image of itself. The audience's observation creates not only "unity in dispersity" – the goal of La Trobe's pageant – but also a kind of dispersity in unity, as it were: "Spectators are linked only by a one-way relationship to the very center that maintains their isolation from each other. The spectacle thus unites what is separate, but it unites it only *in its separateness*… the spectator feels at home nowhere, for the spectacle is everywhere" (Debord 22,

23). The modern historical subject only achieves recognition as such at the moment of her alienation: the "self" emerges most vividly, in other words, when it exceeds its own image. As Plain's analysis of "the view" suggests, the spectacle is also "the sun that never sets on the empire of modern passivity" (Debord 15). By drawing parallels among the obviously spectacular dramatization of history and the images of national unity offered by the landscape and the country house, the narrative at once underscores the alienation of the audience and critiques its complacency toward hegemonic spectacles.

La Trobe's initially conventional pageant ultimately undermines its own narrative and forecloses its complacent or un-self-reflexive consumption. In particular, the actors' dramatizations of the Victorian age makes the audience suspicious of its nostalgic portrayal, which endorses such notions as the happy family home, the moral force of the British Empire, and the harmoniousness of the present moment with a progress-oriented national history. By presenting the Victorian cliché of "*'Ome, Sweet 'Ome*" in a scene narrated by Mr. Budge performing as a policeman (specifically, a traffic cop), the play emphasizes connections among sexual mores and banal iterations of statist violence. Confronted with fragmented and platitudinous articulations of shared values – for example, Budge's assertion, "*Be it ever so humble, there's no place like 'Ome*" (154) – Mrs. Jones wonders if there is not perhaps something "'unhygienic' about the home" (156), and Mrs. Swithin and Isa admit that they do not "get [La Trobe's] meaning" (157). What is so "unhygienic" about such a "humble" home, of course, is that it is not humble at all: Budge's boast is a specifically British one; his tacit comparison of England to the margins of its empire is couched in xenophobia. The dangerous reach of the unifying force of nation, meanwhile, is evident in Budge's conflation of moral right and imperial power, as he performs the task of "*directing the traffic of 'Er Majesty's Empire*": "*The Shah of Persia;*

Sultan of Morocco; or it may be 'Er Majesty in person; or Cook's tourists; black men; white men… all of 'em Obey the Rule of my truncheon," with which he insists, "*they obey the laws of God and Man*" (*BA* 154). Both imperialist violence and patriarchal domesticity, the scene suggests, are fundamental to English patriotism, as Woolf demonstrates in *Three Guineas*. This practice constitutes a kind of *détournement*, through which the text "restores all their subversive qualities to past critical judgments that have congealed into respectable truths – or, in other words, have been transformed into lies" (Debord 145). By theatrically projecting Victorian certainties into the "present moment," La Trobe defamiliarizes them. For instance, when "England" (who keeps forgetting her lines) speaks, Mrs. Manresa becomes aware of "a vast vacancy between her, the singing villagers and the piping child" (*BA* 71).

Détournement, whereby the pageant can undermine the nationalist narratives that it conveys, is a useful way to consider how La Trobe's script ruptures unifying narratives without escaping them: it invites its audience's recognition of how such narratives divide, rather than unite, individuals. This separation goes so far as to alienate characters from their own image. After the spectacle of Victorianism, the audience members "sat exposed…. They were neither one thing nor the other; neither Victorians nor themselves. They were suspended, without being, in limbo" (159). The spectacle, recognized as such by its audience, forces characters to acknowledge the ways in which they fail to measure up. Agamben's model of the refugee camp provides insight into how making the audience feel "suspended… in limbo" might transform the meaning of the idyllic scene into one that refuses, rather than reinstates, hegemonic nationalism. By emphasizing the ways in which spectacle and nationalism are related, the pageant reveals national unity, which relies on the assumption of a shared history, to be a nationalist representation, and also exposes individuals' simultaneous alienation by and

inscription within that community. "By exposing the performance of history's audience in the production of history," Delsandro contends, "[Woolf] explores the history experienced by those whose lives are lived simultaneously inside and outside of history's grand narratives" (90). This practice is queer insofar as it reveals characters' identities as being roles that mask rather than eliminate difference. As Debord contends, the spectacle is everywhere; social life is based in unreality. The refugee's self-awareness as such – which occurs here through the audience's confrontation with its own inclusive exclusion in the pageant's historical spectacle – is what makes political transformation possible. Such a recognition opens the potential to deform topologically the boundaries that structure nationalist historical narratives (Agamben, *MWE* 25), as well as the straight, bourgeois categories of selfhood that they organize. The text queers historical narratives by stirring in audience members their "unacted part[s]," as Mrs. Swithin puts it (*BA* 137). By interrupting its dramatization of the past with the present moment, the performance "disrupts the (hetero)normative temporalities that compose and enforce historical narratives," thereby interrupting certainty with the possibility of alternative possible futures (Delsandro 90). The play thus reveals to readers that history is "as disruptive as it is unifying" (Delsandro 94). Whereas such a revelation never undoes capitalism or statism, obviously, it does puncture the totality of these discourses by opening spaces of exclusion within them.

At the same time, through its novelization of the pageant's performance *and* its reception, the text invites the implied reader to assess a more comprehensive scene: one that comprises the pageant, its audience, and the setting of the performance. Being in "limbo" is a condition of characters' immersion in this seemingly inclusive tableau. Intradiagetically, characters are united only insofar as they are all equally alienated from the production of cultural value. Extradiagetically, the scene invites readers to take ironic pleasure in such alienation. In the

scene depicting (and manifesting) the "Present Time. Ourselves" (*BA* 160), a parade of actors enters, holding mirrors, and the audience must meet its own gaze. As individuals are "exposed" and "caught" in the mirrors' "awful show-up," characters perceive the paucity of their own reflections (165). Their self-perceptions are at odds their spectacularized images, which in turn reflect "us as we are, before we've had time to assume…" (165, ellipses in original). What must be "assumed," presumably, are the social roles that bridge the gap between image and "self." While the audience confronts its own fractured reflections, the text comically conflates characters' images, voices, and thoughts with those of domestic animals: "The very cows joined in. Walloping, tail lashing, the reticence of nature was undone, and the barriers which should divide Man the Master from the Brute were dissolved. Then the dogs joined in" (*BA* 165). With the exposure of selves "as [they] are," boundaries are made porous. For the reader, the breaking of the fourth wall inaugurates proliferating indeterminacies among pageant, audience, and landscape. The audience, heretofore represented as *bios* (or historical actors and individuals), now morphs into *zoē*, bare life (Agamben, *HS* 1). With this in mind, I would go further than Delsandro: at the very moment in which audience members recognize themselves as being complicit in history, readers recognize them as being utterly disenfranchised by the totality of history's narratives. The text suggests the potential for social transformation – for alternative parts and plots – with the same gesture with which it reabsorbs characters into the pastoral landscape. Woolf thus figures history itself as the history of failures to find alternatives, of the impossibility of an "outside" to nationalist fictions. Comically depicting history's actors as *zoē* , she undermines the sanctity of the monumental past and loosens its hold on the present.

To recognize such ensnarement is not uncritically to reinstate oppressive ideals of

community. This is particularly true in the cases of Mrs. Manresa and Miss La Trobe, each figures of sexual, national, and class otherness who show particular awareness of the roles they play in the day's performance. While the text positions both women as invaders or disrupters of Pointz Hall's superficial social harmony, it also privileges both their points of view. The "Outsider" status of each preserves and reinforces the dominant ideologies that would exclude them. In comparison to the drowned lady in the pond or the silent ladies in the two portraits, whose absent presences both ground and interrupt domestic and national histories, La Trobe and Manresa each purposefully inject difference into the novel's nostalgic setting through their production and reception of the pageant, respectively. La Trobe, a lesbian, is judged a disruptive interloper: "She was always all agog to get things up. But where did she spring from? With that name she wasn't presumably pure English" (*BA* 53). Manresa is rumoured to have been born in Tasmania – once a British penal colony, subjugated by imperial might and populated with disciplined bodies.[13] Married to Ralph Manresa, "a Jew, got up to look the very spit and image of the landed gentry" (37), she is, like La Trobe, sexually deviant, an irrepressible flirt. Anti-Semitic, classist, and sexist prejudices intersect to compound her exclusion from the community. La Trobe's name implies a further connection between the two women: there is a town in Tasmania called Latrobe, suggesting that perhaps La Trobe "sprang from" the same place that Manresa did.

Annette Oxindine explains that the text's equation of Miss La Trobe's illicit sexuality with her foreignness "preserves" English purity and underscores nationalist oppression:

> The oddness of La Trobe's sexuality is displaced onto her cultural difference, which serves to preserve the English identity as heterosexual. That such a displacement protects both the privileged status of English identity and

> heterosexual identity reinforces the parallels Woolf draws between nationalism and other forms of social oppression throughout the novel. (123)

La Trobe's sexuality also excludes her from a position of class privilege, aligning her more closely with the "queer" servant Candish and with the outcast Dodge than with her middle-class audience. Like the domestic labour of Mrs. McNab in *To the Lighthouse*, which is both necessary, and necessarily disavowed,[14] La Trobe's act of synthesis confirms her social exclusion. To quote again from Oxindine, "Like a servant or a slave, La Trobe does her 'work' near a family estate, is even given much responsibility, but she is later segregated from the people she has served" (127). Whereas "La Trobe is invisible as a person outside her function" (Oxindine 127), Manresa disappears as a person behind her sensational social behaviour: "Vulgar she was in her gestures, in her whole person, over-sexed, over-dressed for a picnic" (*BA* 37). She resists carceral operations of power that would subjugate her, a self-styled "wild child of nature" (37). She evinces indifference to the disapproval of others while remaining committed to social engagement. When she offers "a sample of her life" in conversation, the Olivers interpret it as "a few gobbets of gossip; mere trash" (*BA* 38). Manresa is the author, not the victim, of this social identity. She encourages the Olivers' superficial judgments by withholding personal information. She is all style, offering "nothing private; no strict biographical facts" (*BA* 36).

If La Trobe, the artist of the pageant, is Woolf's proxy, then Manresa might be the reader's, a model of ideal practices of reception. In particular, as Spiro notes,

> when viewers become captivated by the spectacle, whether it be the female spectacle or the pageant, Manresa undercuts the illusion by highlighting the constructed nature of the social web – identity, gender, history, art, sex, marriage, even nature…. Manresa is the one character who never becomes drawn into the

> spectacle, or fascinated by it, because she is not tempted by the desire to participate in a fantasy of unity or belonging. (103)

By narcissistically presenting *herself* as a spectacle, suggests Spiro, Manresa might subvert the subject/object, male/female divide (105). I would argue further that the ease with which Manresa acts as a consumer of social discourse – without regard for propriety – complements La Trobe's subversive deployment of oppressive social narratives. Like Agamben's refugee, both women are central to hegemonic notions of the community *because* they are outsiders. They are not, however, indifferent to the narratives that would marginalize them; rather, they participate in them, disruptively. When La Trobe confronts the audience with the parade of mirrors, only Mrs. Manresa meets her own reflected gaze: "All evaded or shaded themselves – save Mrs. Manresa who, facing herself in the glass, used it as a glass; had out her mirror; powdered her nose" (*BA* 167). This campy acceptance of the artifice of her social role – which repels other characters, who scoff at her painted face and fingernails, and her husband's invented family crest – allows her to withstand conscription into narratives that would exclude and objectify her. At this moment, when La Trobe's voice is supplanted by the lowing of the cow, Manresa is focused on her own continued, transgressive presence at the scene. Faced with the disjuncture between her "self" and her image, she paints her face and recommits to the self *as* image.

This lack of discomposure has an ethical function. When Manresa hears the story of the pond, and Bart's explanation that "kitchenmaids must have their drowned lady" (*BA* 40), she aligns herself with the kitchenmaids: "'But so must I!' cried the wild child of nature…. 'You see I'm on a level with…' she waited till Candish had retired, 'the servants. I'm nothing like so grown up as you are'" (*BA* 41, ellipses in original). Although her comparison between the servants and children, just out of Candish's hearing, is obviously condescending, the text also

suggests that she can "see" the servants as "real" people whereas the Olivers cannot: "'All I need,' said Mrs. Manresa ogling Candish, as if he were a real man, not a stuffed man, 'is a corkscrew'" (*BA* 37). She also, like Mrs. Swithin, directs Dodge's attention to the silent ladies in the pictures (*BA* 37), and befriends him while others dismiss him as "not a man to have straightforward love for a woman," as Giles homophobically judges him (55). Her impropriety therefore not only fills in the gaps of La Trobe's presentation, rescuing it from disaster – Southworth observes that her "saucy interjections, her bawdy nursery rhymes… cover the embarrassments of forgotten lines and round out La Trobe's alternative history" (126) – but also crosses lines dividing those who are included in the community from those who are not.

Even in Spiro's reading, which redeems Manresa's character from the "brush-off" she generally receives from critics (Spiro 98), "Mrs. Manresa undoubtedly represents the negative aspects of self-centered materialism, being the most 'fake' and 'unnatural' of characters in a novel that clearly opposes artifice and illusion" (101). Mrs. Manresa *is*, in many ways, a fake – a self-conscious spectacle of feminine sexuality and aspirational class performance. Her ostentatious appearance and behaviour would seem to oppose her to Mrs. Swithin, who, with a cross on her breast and a book in her hand, commits to a very different image of femininity. Whereas Swithin "belongs" at Pointz Hall, marginalized as she is by its structuring narratives, Manresa is indisputably an interloper (she has arrived at the pageant uninvited). Yet, the behaviour of both women reflects their shared awareness that "we live in things" (*BA* 64). Mrs. Swithin's uncritical acceptance of conventional social scripts and their unifying myths – her "one-making" (157) – has a paradoxically similar effect to Mrs. Manresa's "complete faith in flesh and blood" (35-6), which produces a liberating breach of decorum that others around her might share. It is significant that of all the characters, these two women have the most uncritical

attitude toward Dodge, and query the identities of the ladies in, and artists of, the portraits. Mrs. Swithin's belief in an inclusive community, and Mrs. Manresa's irreverence for the rules of social exclusion, position both women as ideal spectators of La Trobe's destabilizing performance, which the text subversively pairs with the house itself. All three women's readings of social scripts reject the either/or logic of patriarchy and nationalism, recognizing a liminal (and implicitly feminine and queer) space, at the heart of the house and in the heart of England, in which boundaries may be traversed and social roles confronted.

Nostalgic myths made manifest: The cynical anti-fascism of *Between the Acts*

La Trobe the artist, Swithin the idealist, and Manresa the materialist, I have suggested, each subvert patriarchal narratives from within the conventions that underpin them, through their roles as consumers and performers of domestic and nationalist discourses. Theoretically speaking, they inhabit the role of Agamben's *homo sacer* and of de Certeau's disruptive perambulator. The text disrupts nostalgic fictions through their perceptions and presences in an ambiguous act of Debordian *détournement*, which readers can recognize even if the characters themselves cannot. Moving through and beyond purposeful indifference to a new kind of commitment, Woolf's country house novel reflects a conviction that oppressive discourses may be interrupted from within. Yet, considered with respect to the increasingly undeniable violence and threatening expansion of fascistic regimes in Europe in the late 1930s, the real political efficacy of such an approach remains ambiguous. Critics including Judy Suh, Michele Pridmore-Brown, Spiro, Plain, and Rosenfeld have discussed *Between the Acts* as a novel about anti-fascism and fascism. Whether they consider Woolf's narrative strategy to be meaningfully resistant to political oppression, or treading dangerously close to reinstating the unifying exclusions of

fascist style, their readings invariably emphasize the text's ambivalence toward articulating alternative visions of community.[15] "As Hitler's territorial ambitions grew and his persecutions became more monstrous," notes Rosenfeld, "satire must have seemed less efficacious. It was, after all, still an echo" (123). Furthermore, as she notes, "The dictator deprives his audience of the ability to respond, except through echo" (Rosenfeld 126). Must all unifying narratives replicate, to some extent, the exclusionary consensus demanded by fascism? If no alternative vision of community is available, is it meaningful simply to expose shared histories as constructed and exclusionary? Is it better to draw marginalized individuals into the fold, or not? Such ambivalence ultimately tests Agamben's contention that the refugee, by recognizing himself as such, may deform the statist spaces that include him only by virtue of his political exclusion. With the refugee's self-recognition, a cynical neither/nor – the conviction that there is no liberating alternative to nationalist discourse – supplants the either/or of social exclusion.

By mobilizing nostalgic myths to reveal the contradictions of ideals of "home," Woolf fragments the real and symbolic space of the nation with the exclusions implicit in its ideals. These spaces of absent presence, in which citizens are "neither one thing nor the other" (*BA* 159), position individuals at the site of this contradiction. When La Trobe confronts the audience with its own reflection, she not only troubles the relationship between the individual and the community, but also anticipates critics' doubts about the text's potential for meaningful political effect given the realities of statist violence in Europe in 1939 and afterwards. Fragmenting complacency, the text suggests, is not so difficult; achieving an alternative, inclusive shared vision, however, might be impossible. With indifference foreclosed and complacency refused, audience members resist their own reflected gazes. They struggle to reclaim agency as their social roles are subsumed within the pageant's plot: "'Must we submit passively to this

malignant indignity?' the front row demanded…. Each tried to shift an inch or two beyond the inquisitive insulting eye" (*BA* 167). Under the "eye" of the mirrors, consensus is at once demanded and disrupted; next, the "megaphonic, anonymous, loud-speaking affirmation" from the bushes gives meaning to the image: "*Let's break the rhythm and forget the rhyme. And calmly consider ourselves. Ourselves. Some bony. Some fat.* (The glasses confirmed this.) *Liars most of us. Thieves too.* (The glasses made no comment on that.)…*Consider the gun slayers, bomb droppers here or there. They do openly what we do slyly*" (*BA* 168). The voice finally offers a reassurance – "*a loftier strain*" – of individuals' potential for ethical action even if they are simply "*orts, scraps, and fragments,*" and cedes to the "*gramophone affirming*" (169). Pridmore-Brown's contention that Woolf fights fascism by exploiting the "*weltanschauung* of the new physics and information technology" epitomized by the gramophone illuminates the ways in which the instruments of fascist spectacle may be deployed to subvert its unifying certainties.[16] Her diagnosis of the complexity of this spectacle's reception as "a drift toward entropy," a symptom of Woolf's "purported madness" that "replaces male mastery" (420), misses the purposefulness of La Trobe's and Woolf's authorial strategies. Rather than entropy, the open-endedness of the pageant's conclusion reflects the inevitable persistence of ordered hierarchies in the face of insurmountable difference.

Melba Cuddy-Keane compares the gramophone chorus with the choric voice of classical Greek comedies, and interprets the chorus of the pageant both as representing "the integration of society" (275) and as advocating "an irreversible dismantling of order [and] a permanent instability" (280). While I agree with Cuddy-Keane that the pageant and the narrative both strive to disorder social narratives, I disagree that such dismantling of order "inserts a new concept of community in which the insider-outside dichotomy is erased and the bond of common identity is rewritten" (Cuddy-Keane 275). The group goes forward together *on different levels*, signaling the

persistence of social hierarchies. The text indeed offers a hopeful vision of togetherness that preserves instead of erases personal difference. It achieves such unity not by dissolving the insider-outsider dichotomy, but by inviting readers' subversive recognition of its persistence. The pronoun shift in the statement "on different levels *they* diverged. On different levels *ourselves* went forward" invites such a reading (170, emphasis added). "Ourselves" is used where "they" or even "we" should be, grammatically speaking, suggesting that "ourselves" is an abstraction that does not include every person present the way "they," or especially "we," would. The unity that is produced thus belies a constitutive exclusion. As Delsandro perceptively observes, "In *Between the Acts*, 'I' is not simply rejected, but, moreover, interrogated: the 'I' of identity and its attendant role as author, be it of history, of the novel, or of the self, is disrupted and disturbed. And the 'We' that takes its place is a very queer one" (106-7). If individuals – "orts, scraps, and fragments" themselves – recognize the failure of a unified identity and yet embrace the necessity of performing one, then ideals of community can only produce further fragmentation.

To put it another way, the text's maintenance of the tension between closure and irresolution produces a fragmented whole, within which alienation and exclusion persist. Unity does not, for example, follow from the "last word" offered by Reverend Streatfield (whose very name – street/field – reflects the persistence of opposites). His pat speech inspires "horror": "What an intolerable constriction, contraction, and reduction to simplified absurdity he was, to be sure!" (*BA* 170). His function as the village patriarch of sorts, as moral compass and cohering voice, is at once outdated and compelling. He, like Mr. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, is a figure of needy masculinism, demanding a synthesis that both the pageant and the text refuse. The narrative compares him to the architecture of the church and home: "He wasn't such a bad fellow; the Rev. G. W. Streatfield; a piece of traditional church furniture; a corner cupboard; or

the top beam of a gate, fashioned by generations of village carpenters *after some lost-in-the-mists-of-antiquity model*" (*BA* 171, emphasis added). In Streatfield, patriarchy, the church, and the state are distilled; he is like country house style, a nostalgic copy of a lost original. His interpretation of the pageant's meaning ignores ambiguity and eliminates difference, even if he insists, "I am not here to explain…. I speak only as one of the audience, one of ourselves" (*BA* 173). "We are members of one another. Each is part of the whole," he says, pompously borrowing from Donne; "We act different parts, but are the same" (*BA* 172-3). His speech is interrupted, first by airplanes overhead, then by the village idiot, and finally by the gramophone with its refrain, "*Dispersed are we*" (*BA* 177). With these reminders of the real social consequences of the rigidity of our "different parts," the scene undermines Streatfield's improbable interpretation. While Woolf's readers might recognize the novel's satire of the nostalgic ideals of community as such, La Trobe's subversive performance is made illegible to those who most need to be confronted with its message.

While the narrative satirizes Streatfield's unifying vision, which makes the spectators feel "embarrassed, for him, for themselves" (*BA* 171), the "horror" that his sentiments inspire suggests the more serious political consequences of his outlook. Although the text shows the imagined community of the nation to be a spectacular one, the spectacle persists. Such a conundrum throws the ethical potential of narrative itself, and, by extension, the power of the author to fight tyranny, into crisis. Critics including Rosenfeld, Spiro, Pridmore-Brown, and Suh have illuminated the connections among Streatfield's masculinist synthesis and fascism's demand for social and political hegemony. Whereas Spiro focuses on the Nazi spectacle in particular, Suh considers how Woolf's text counters fascism more generally, which she characterizes as "a 'flight' from the binary" (142). Her essay demonstrates how fascist rhetoric operates through the

"binding" of binary terms: paternal/maternal, left/right, modern/antimodern, populist/elitist (142). Suh argues that Woolf's "undoing of humanist oppositions" mirrors this strategy of fascist self-representation, achieving an anti-fascism that is "inseparable from an ironic practice of fascist style" (141). Whereas fascism forces disparate social positions into unity, Woolf's fiction insists on the uncontainable persistence of difference. The violent elimination of difference through propaganda and rhetoric is, in many ways, the mirror image of the purposeful indifference that Woolf suggests in *Three Guineas*, which preserves opposition by demurring from monolithic political discourses. *Between the Acts* examines spaces of liminality within binary oppositions, negotiating the gaps between nature and culture, performance and spectatorship, identity and being, past and future. By bringing the audience to "the abyss of its own reflection" through the unifying mechanism of the pageant (Suh 144) – a *mise en abyme* – Woolf exposes the absolute lack of unity that underpins the fascist elimination of difference.

While the vision of community that Woolf offers is finally exclusionary in its own right, she nonetheless attempts to challenge exclusionary discourses through the development of an innovatively anti-Nazi aesthetic.[17] By focusing on the novel's spatial organization in particular, I have emphasized the ways in which Woolf refuses the either/or logic of wartime patriotism by repeatedly traversing domestic, generic, and narrative boundaries. Situating the question of "home" at the center of illusionary nationalist discourses can show how such reimagined notions of community can change that community's discursive repertoire – for example, by making the (patriotically symbolic) country house signify differently. Through repetition, allusion, and spectacle, the narrative establishes equivalencies among, and thus punctures the gendered and class boundaries between, the novel's settings – the home, the "natural stage" where the pageant unfolds, and the nation. Collapsing these symbolic spaces imbues them with

uncontainable difference, and thus exposes their unifying power as a dangerous fiction. As Judy Suh and others have argued, "in order to resist the state's co-optation of cultural production for its own proliferation, style must be enacted to create possibilities of life that defy the binary categorizations of modern life, especially in its bifurcations of gender" (142).[18] Woolf defies these binaries by exposing their centrality to constructions of community: since there is no "outside" to illusions of social cohesion, such a tactic suggests, then the othered "them" which the "us" is supposed to exclude may be revealed as fundamental and pervasive *within* the community's boundaries.

Formally, thematically, and narratologically, *Between the Acts* invites readers' consideration of characters that are at once caught within and alienated by spectacles of community. The novel thus endorses the dissolution of nationalist, gendered, and class-bound binaries – not through a masculinist act of synthesis, but through an explicitly feminized privileging of interstitiality and indeterminacy. Revealingly, the last word goes not to the Reverend Streatfield, nor even to Miss La Trobe, but to Isa and Giles Oliver. These characters, members of the novel's central heteronormative family unit, are both unhappy in their marriage and unfulfilled by their social roles of wife/mother and businessman, respectively. Even these seeming paradigms of social acceptability, in other words, are alienated by the patriarchal, nationalist, and capitalist ideologies that underpin their privilege. Isa, reacting to the play, queries, "Did the plot matter?… The plot was only there to beget emotion. There were only two emotions: love; and hate. There was no need to puzzle out the plot. Perhaps Miss La Trobe meant this when she cut the knot in the centre?" (*BA* 82). Later, she decides, "Peace was the third emotion" (*BA* 83). She muses, at the narrative's end, "Surely it was time someone invented a new plot, or the author came out from the bushes" (*BA* 194). She and Giles, who so often have trouble empathizing with each other,

are "Left alone together for the first time that day" (*BA* 197). Alone together, they will fight, and then embrace; "from that embrace another life might be born" (*BA* 197). As the light dims, "It was night before roads were made, or houses…. Then the curtain rose. They spoke" (*BA* 197). The novel ends with repetition, and with another performance. The past/present of this night is different from Mrs. Swithin's primordial time; it destabilizes rather than grounds the implications of the present within some teleological national history. Instead, the scene offers an opportunity to reimagine the present moment with respect to the past and the future; from the love and hate underpinning the embracing and fighting might emerge not only new life but also the "third emotion," peace.

If *Between the Acts* articulates a revision of the purposeful indifference proposed in *Three Guineas*, the novel's final scene might be Woolf's most explicit sketch of an alternative. Out of the binary opposition of loving and fighting – two kinds of confrontation, which prescribe individual parts so oppressively – might emerge a third condition, peace, in which the terms of interpersonal connection might be renegotiated, allowing a "new plot" to emerge. This domestic scene recalls the nostalgic vision that Woolf sets forth in *Three Guineas,* in which "some obstinate emotion remains, some love of England dropped into a child's ears by the cawing of rooks in an elm tree… or by English voices murmuring nursery rhymes" (*TG* 313). As Giles and Isa sit together, they become aware that "The house had lost its shelter" (*BA* 197). With nationalist fictions shattered and no "peace" available, the reader, like the characters, is exposed and without the shelter of nostalgic reassurances. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how popular country house novels by Nancy Mitford, P. G. Wodehouse, Elizabeth Bowen, and Evelyn Waugh literalize this quandary by interrupting their country house narratives with direct representations of political and martial conflict. Like *Between the Acts*, these narratives take an

ironic stance towards inherently exclusive nationalist ideals, subversively exposing the complicity of the country house novel's conventions with patriarchal, classist, and militarist oppression. Alarming continuities between unifying nostalgic myths, on the one hand, and fascism's violent reduction of binaries, on the other, emerge with mounting urgency in these less overtly political novels. The continuities between Woolf's feminist pacificism and these more conservative or apolitical fictions paradoxically demonstrate the limits of nostalgic critiques of patriotism in countering contemporaneous political discourses.

CHAPTER 4

A Dubious Art of Being In Between:

The Country House Novel, Nostalgia, and the Lure of Fascism

The modern nostalgic can be homesick and sick of home, at once.

—Svetlana Boym

In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing.

—Oscar Wilde

The country house as a literary setting has always been deeply nostalgic, evoking an idealized past that never really existed. As Judy Suh demonstrates, country house literature, from its earliest incarnation in seventeenth-century poetry, was "always already anachronistic"; the "country house ethos" always relied upon the fantasy of a simple, agrarian society disconnected from the court and the city (129-30). The genre's commitment to outdated pastoral ideals became even more visible with the obsolescence of the houses themselves. In the twentieth-century country house novel, the inherent anachronisms of the genre mingle strangely with authors' acknowledgment of current political events, which in some cases satirize the country house novel's conventions by juxtaposing them absurdly with modern realities. In Nancy Mitford's *The Pursuit of Love* (1945), Uncle Matthew's aristocratic acumen for hunting evolves quite naturally into a boyish enthusiasm for setting booby traps for anticipated German invaders. By using this nostalgic, conventional genre as a means to examine political conflicts, the country house novels of P. G. Wodehouse, Nancy Mitford, Elizabeth Bowen, and Evelyn Waugh offer

ambivalent representations of World War II that are limited by the genre's locally and ideologically rigid frame.

Notably, these works have enjoyed significant popular success. The country house narrative's cultural legacy has proven surprisingly durable over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, from Wodehouse's seven-decades-long career as one of the world's most popular writers in English to the contemporary appeal of Julian Fellowes's television series *Downton Abbey*. The country house novel is escapist, of course, and often transports readers to a seemingly innocent pre-World War I past. In the World War II-era novels considered in this chapter, however – Mitford's *Wigs on the Green* (1935), Wodehouse's *The Code of the Woosters* (1938), Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1949), and Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945; 1960) – contemporaneous political conflicts frequently intrude onto their pages. These novels juxtapose reactionary, potentially escapist generic norms with representations of real collective traumas, political movements, and social change, thus providing some escapist pleasures while forcing readers to confront the ethics of the exclusionary class, gender, and nationalist identities upon which such nostalgic escapism relies. Such a project is self-reflexive: the central problem of the country house novel is almost always one of legacy and entitlement, of the tenuous but reliably inevitable persistence of the estate's (and, implicitly, the genre's) organizing conventions. Dominant social norms, narrative tropes, and characteristic modes of dialogue and setting simply *must* survive, even in the face of intense social upheaval: this conservative commitment to generational, moral, and economic continuity is a hallmark of the genre. Yet, often the house and its manners subvert such conservatism by presenting a desperate and glittering façade, behind which morality, relationships, finances, and political ideals flounder. The genre's unconditional valuation of appearances, class status symbols, and correct behaviour is the actual

pleasure of the country house novel, one that is more subversive than conservative. Nonetheless, like du Maurier's *Rebecca*, the novels of Wodehouse, Mitford, Bowen, and Waugh commit to both conservative and subversive pleasures, as they both elegize and expose (but also preserve) oppressive class, gender, and nationalist ideologies. Furthermore, by sidestepping or satirizing political certainties, these works convey the authors' purposeful indifference, with varying degrees of Woolfian ethical commitment, to polarizing nationalist discourses. This chapter examines how country house novels respond, with disparate levels of explicit political engagement, to the European conflicts of the 1930s and '40s; questions the ethical potential of these undeniably nostalgic fictions; and examines the genre's enduring popular appeal.

In terms of its class politics, the limitations of the country house novel are notable and well-documented. Raymond Williams identifies a "fitting end" for country house literature in the "middle-class detective novels" and fictions about "metropolitan house-parties" of the early- to mid-twentieth century, which correspond with the actual houses' decline. In these tired repurposings of the genre, Williams contends, the house has no inherent cultural meaning, but rather serves as a stage upon which the dramas of the city play out: "Detached capital, detached income, detached consumption, detached social intercourse inhabit and vacate, visit and leave, these incidentally surviving and converted houses" (249). No longer attached to the land, financed with money from elsewhere, the country house as a literary setting can only now "accentuat[e] its inherent vices" (249). The latter are most grievous when considered in terms of class: Williams's critique underscores how the increasing alienation of the country house from its surrounding landscape exposes what was always there – an illusion of pastoral harmony that veils the estate's dependence upon the concealed work of rural labourers, and, later, colonial subjects. For Williams, the "abstract disposability and indifference of function" (250) of the

modern country house setting is so "fitting" because the houses have always been contingent upon unjustified and inequitable aristocratic hegemony.

Troubling class politics have not diminished the genre's middlebrow appeal. Whether the authors themselves were born into the landed gentry, like Bowen and Mitford, or more closely aligned with the middle class, like Wodehouse and Waugh, their works' success relied upon positive reception by middle-class readers. Nicola Humble identifies the middlebrow as fiction concerned primarily with class, the home, gender, and the family (3). From the 1920s to 1950s, Humble argues, middlebrow novels resonated with the growing middle class's fascination with status, and influenced its ideologies and opinions (13). As aristocratic hegemony waned, a new plutocracy of businesspeople and professionals dominated government, finance, and culture. The country house novel of this period, therefore, not only elegizes rigid class hierarchies, but also represents an annexing of previously exclusively aristocratic values by the ascendant middle class (Humble 65). Captain Charles Ryder of *Brideshead Revisited* – the novel's upwardly mobile narrator who serves as the estate's spiritual heir, and nearly inherits the property *in toto* – is perhaps the most notable representative of this trend. As Humble explains, "The middle-class adoption of aristocratic values was about far more than social climbing: it was an indication that the middle class was in the process of replacing the aristocracy in social, political, and economic significance" (70). Middlebrow fiction thus not only reflected, but also generated revised class and gender identities: "In the obsessive attention it paid to class markers and manners it was one of the spaces in which a new middle-class identity was forged, a site where the battle for hegemonic control of social modes and mores was closely fought" (Humble 5). Through its obsessive concern with social norms and behavioural codes, the country house novel provides fertile ground for middle-class self-invention, even while conservative hierarchies continue to

structure its plot formulations, setting, and characterization.

Country house novels as camp artifacts

The country house novels examined in this chapter demonstrate commitment to generic conventions while enacting a "hollowing out" and reappropriation of their conservative ethos. When Williams observes that, in twentieth-century country house literature, "the shell, the façade, of a quite different way of living, was now the reality [and] the façade has been presented with an increasing grossness" (249), his opprobrious tone conveys his justifiable disapproval of upper-class pretensions. As far as the country house novel is concerned, however, the pretensions are a major point. Emphasis on status accommodates middle-class self-regard, and endorses a conventionally aristocratic, undeniably snobbish social outlook in which middle-class readers are implicitly invited (and even privileged) to participate. The elevation of appearances over belief in an essential, fundamentally moral class identity can also accommodate unconventional class, gender, and sexual identities; in other words, social permissibility accompanies its campy commitment to façade. For this reason, the genre's purposeful alignment with "a myth functioning as a memory" (Williams 43) bears further discussion. Class-bound, gendered, and national performances, which are always already anachronistic and susceptible to collapse, underpin the plot. The country house novel is therefore an exemplary camp artifact, insofar as "camp has always been fascinated with, and has fashioned itself on, the outmoded, the out of date, the artifact past its prime" (Flinn 435). These "incidentally surviving" houses with their "gross façades" can take on a new kind of cultural capital, to be granted and appreciated by readers. As Andrew Ross explains, "Camp… is more than just a remembrance of things past, it is the *re-creation of surplus value from forgotten forms of labor*" (320). More than simply a stage set that

accommodates transplanted metropolitan plots and capital, the "shell"[1] of the country house provides a means by which the very nostalgia that props it up may be simultaneously appreciated, appropriated, and reimagined. Nostalgic formulations are redeployed to bolster and sustain the ostensible value of new systems of belief, prestige, and social order.

Judith Butler has effectively demonstrated how gender identities are "performatively constituted" by individuals' adherence to social norms, exposing their susceptibilty to destabilization.[2] Camp's subversive instantiation of such gender performativity has parallels in the class and nationalistic pretensions of country house literature. What Benedict Anderson designates as one of the "paradoxes" of nationalism, its "'political' power" versus its "philosophical poverty and even incoherence" (5), both enfolds individuals within a national community and alienates them from it. As Slavoj Žižek argues,

> National identification is an exemplary case of how an external border is reflected into an internal limit…. if I identify myself as an Englishman, I distinguish myself from the French, Germans, Scots, Irish, and so on. However, in the next stage, the question is raised of who among the English are "the real English," the paradigm of Englishness; who are the Englishmen who correspond in full to the notion of English? Are they the remaining landed gentry? Factory workers? Bankers? (*For They Know Not What they Do* 110)

Inevitably, "nobody is fully English… every empirical Englishman contains something 'non-English' – Englishness thus becomes an 'internal limit', an unattainable point which prevents empirical Englishmen from achieving full identity-with-themselves" (Žižek 110). Žižek demonstrates how, by distinguishing itself from others, a national group normalizes specific qualities that, in the end, create divisions *within* that group. This assertion resonates productively

with Agamben's argument that ideology operates most powerfully at its margins, producing the "exclusionary inclusion" that characterizes and situates the figure of the refugee. Žižek's and Agamben's critiques of nationalist ideology, like Butler's critique of gender, position categorically policed identities as norms that can never be fully internalized, and thus are "finally phantasmatic, impossible to embody" (Butler 179). Ideals of gender presentation and sexual behaviour, like nationalist values, become so rigid as to exclude real bodies and individual desires. The correspondences that Žižek's, Agamben's, and Butler's arguments illuminate between external borders and inner limits – and the policing of appearances and the assumption of "natural" identity categories – help one to perceive the theoretical affinities between camp as a queer aesthetic and the purposefully and pleasurably pretentious class politics and naïve patriotism of the country house novel.

By privileging the performance of unity and status, authors and characters uphold rigid conventions while tactically undermining the coherence of their structuring values, including compulsory heterosexuality, patriarchy, and unquestioning patriotism. Thus a seemingly conservative popular genre can serve as a vehicle for veiled political and sexual counterplots. The political efficacy of the camp text, however, may be limited. Andrew Britton contends that camp situates itself among oppressive discourses without revising them: "even at its most disturbing [camp] asks for little more than living-room" (138). In response to Britton, I propose that simply establishing "living room" for marginalized identities might be the only means by which to interrupt totalizing ideologies that threaten to absorb, contain, and silence opposition. Domestic fiction, with its investment in the inhabitation and organization of space, illustrates this ambiguous disruptive potential with particular vividness. Žižek, like Britton, also notes the limits of ironic distanciation from ideology. "An ideological identification exerts a true hold on

us," he contends, "precisely when we maintain an awareness that we are not fully identical to it, that there is a rich human person beneath it: 'not all is ideology, beneath the ideological mask, I am also a human person' is *the very form of ideology*, of its 'practical efficiency'" (*The Plague of Fantasies* 27). Rather than demarcating the limits of camp's exposure of sexual norms, however, Žižek's point destabilizes such norms precisely *by* revealing them as totalizing. As Pamela Robertson points out with respect to feminist camp, the camp spectator "distanc[es] herself from her own image by making fun of, and out of, that image – without losing sight of the real power that image has over her" (277). To distance oneself from one's image, in other words, is not to reveal a pre-ideological "self" behind it. As an aesthetic of failure, camp privileges these moments at which authenticity and ideology become most indeterminate. This point is the crux of the genre's twinned investments, during the 1930s, in representing decrepit houses, aristocrats, and social systems, and staging spectacles of extreme political commitment.

When considered with respect to political movements like fascism – which, with its emphasis on spectacle, myth, and the cult of leadership, itself exudes a campy commitment to excess and disregard for any "actual" historical or social referent behind nationalist displays – the political stakes of camp become starker. The country house novels examined in this chapter do not refuse political extremism, but rather destabilize exclusionary political ideals by framing their narratives in unexpected ways. Considered with respect to contemporaneously burgeoning fascist regimes in Europe – and the brief but nonetheless significant influence of the British Union of Fascists (BUF) – the nostalgia that underpins these country house fictions, ironic or otherwise, has multiple and unsavoury political implications. Fascism, in its German, Italian, and British incarnations, typically employed the image of a more innocent, simpler past to justify its vision of a new national future – a vision that can be all too easy to reconcile with the nostalgic

ideals of the country house novel.

Ironically deployed or campy nostalgia, in other words, can be difficult to distinguish from real conservatism. It is worth questioning, therefore, whether nostalgia can ever achieve a productive social critique, or if it is fundamentally limited by its inherently reactionary escapism. In his study, *Ethics and Nostalgia in the Contemporary Novel*, John J. Su poses a crucial question for any study of the resistant potential of pastoral narratives: "Can nostalgia ever assist ethics?" (1). He argues that, despite its problematic enlistment in gendered, classist, and imperialist ideologies, nostalgia can "facilitat[e] an exploration of ethical ideals in the face of disappointing circumstances" (4). Susan Stewart, in contrast, identifies nostalgia as a "social disease" that, in its most extreme manifestations, can be used to justify fascism (ix); Svetlana Boym theorizes "restorative nostalgia" in terms of "a simple premodern conception of good and evil" and "inevitable scapegoating of the mythical enemy" (43). Boym also posits a "reflective nostalgia" that

> is more oriented toward an individual narrative that savors details and memorial signs, perpetually deferring homecoming itself. If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space. Restorative nostalgia takes itself dead seriously. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, can be ironic and humorous. (49)

Whereas Stewart's pathological nostalgia symbolizes "sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience" (23), Boym's reflective nostalgia takes up that sadness *as* its object; a melancholic sense of lack can also be a generative source of narrative pleasure. This is very close to Pamela

Robertson's observation that camp both deploys and critiques nostalgia, rendering nostalgia as well as its object outmoded (267). Reflective nostalgia thus can work both centripetally and centrifugally. Centripetally, as Su argues, nostalgic narratives can "provide a means of establishing ethical ideals that can be shared by diverse groups who have in common only a longing for a past that never was" (3); however, they can also exacerbate reactionism and scapegoating. Centrifugally, they can reaffirm the marginalization of some individuals, justifying oppression in the name of restoring a lost plentitude. Camp nostalgia creates new social divisions even as it destabilizes old ones: it can expose the longed-for past *as* an illusion, dividing its audience into (to borrow Andrew Ross's terms) the savvy cognoscenti who can relish its belatedness and the "ignoranti" who hope for its actual return.[3]

Like camp, nostalgia works ambiguously at best to subvert oppressive nationalist, gender, and sexual hierarchies.[4] Etymologically, *nostalgia* means "a longing for home"; as Boym notes, however, even the term's origins belie its promise of return: "*nostalgia* comes from two Greek roots, yet it did not originate in ancient Greece. *Nostalgia* is only pseudo-Greek, or nostalgically Greek," having been coined in 1688 as a diagnosis for mercenary soldiers who were too homesick to fight (3). The first sufferers of nostalgia demonstrated indifference towards the outcome of battle, an inability to distinguish between real and imaginary events, and a tendency to see ghosts (Boym 3). The first nostalgics, therefore, were paradoxically inept patriots – their love and longing for their native countries incapacitated them for fighting. Nostalgia thus implicitly acknowledges the contradictions between personal and official nationalist narratives. This kind of resistant nostalgia is typically a masculine prerogative, which is particularly evident in modern art and literature. When Jeffrey M. Perl asserts that "[the] application of the process of return could almost stand as a definition of modernism" (14), for example, he is speaking

almost exclusively of male artists and critics: Joyce, Freud, Pound, Picasso. Lynne Huffer's feminist critique shows how nostalgia prevents the exploration of new kinds of relationships outside of traditional gender roles, and aligns home with a passive, maternal figure who awaits the returning male hero. "Nostalgia is necessarily static and unchanging… in its attempt to retrieve a lost utopian space," Huffer insists, and thus inevitably "upholds the status quo" (19). I agree with Huffer that nostalgia preserves outdated and oppressive sexual norms. The ironic deployment of these norms, however, can also normalize marginalized identities, by enabling individuals to masquerade in or appropriate nostalgic family roles. Just as nostalgia both fuels and disrupts militaristic justification for conflict, as in the case of the homesick mercenaries, so it both preserves and punctures nationalist and domestic hegemony.

Nostalgia, elegy, and camp can seem nearly identical from a literary standpoint and yet articulate widely divergent affective, ethical, and ideological positions. The question, then, becomes: in the novels of Wodehouse, Mitford, Bowen, and Waugh, what kind of nostalgia is operating? Is it reflective nostalgia, which relishes its own potential to destabilize spatial and historical boundaries? Or do these authors express, in Boym's terms, restorative nostalgia, employing narrative to halt the teleology of history and revert to a lost Golden Age? When Eugenia Malmains laments, "'Respect for parents, love of home, veneration of the marriage tie, are all at a discount in England today'" (*WG* 9), or when Charles Ryder lauds a glass of Burgundy that evokes an "older and better world" and speaks "in the pure authentic accent… words of hope" (*BR* 169), the nostalgia of Mitford and Waugh's texts seems deliberately ridiculous and couched in purple prose. A consideration of the works in their historical and biographical contexts, however, reveals how even a laughing, distanced critique of nostalgia – which nonetheless retains the affect of longing – can form complex and far from transparent

dialogues with political extremism. For Wodehouse and Mitford in particular, who, in different ways, each strove to occupy a middle ground during World War II, their satirical responses to the war frequently skirted folly at best and, at worst, outright treason. Bowen, also facing dilemmas of allegiance and betrayal, foregrounds the impossibility of neutrality in *The Heat of the Day*. Waugh's novel, in contrast, demonstrates nostalgia's potential to situate queer identities among otherwise conservative nationalist certainties and assist middle-class self-determination. The political import of the mid-twentieth century country house novel, therefore, remains ambiguous. The ambivalence of the genre's characteristic nostalgia – it can both uncritically eulogize and ironically subvert conservative and oppressive social codes – became most apparent when the either/or political divisions of World War II-era Europe made indifference an unattainable position.

Nancy Mitford and the BUF: The ambivalent parody of *Wigs on the Green*

Pelham Grenville Wodehouse and Nancy Mitford are undisputed masters of the twentieth-century country house novel. Both authors write with relentless wit, and a compulsion to regard even the most disturbing turn of events as an enormous joke or, if levity is impossible, to ignore it. This irreverence extended to their political outlooks. Mitford, in a 1935 letter to her sister Diana, challenged Diana's view "that Fascism is something too serious to be dealt with in a funny book at all. Surely that is a little unreasonable?" (Mosley, *LN* 100). Wodehouse's sense of the ridiculous was even more unbelievably tenacious: in a 1939 letter to William Townend, he wrote, "the ghastly thing" about Nazi spectacle "is that it's all so frightfully funny" (Ratcliffe 278). Both Mitford and Wodehouse wrote country house novels that parodied fascism, published in 1935 and 1938 respectively (Wodehouse's novel was serialized in both the US and

Britain). Mitford modeled Eugenia Malmains, the eccentric, naïve protagonist of *Wigs on the Green*, on her sister Unity, political activist, devoted Nazi, and a personal friend of Adolf Hitler. Like Eugenia, Unity was a figure of both uncompromising extremism and eccentric, childish naïveté: she frequently caused a stir in her village by appearing at the local shop and "throwing up her hand in a smart Nazi salute before ordering a twopenny chocolate bar" (Lovell 169). The Union Jackshirts, the fictional fascist organization of which Eugenia is a member, is an obvious parody of the British Union of Fascists (BUF), Britain's most influential fascist organization. Wodehouse's Bertie and Jeeves novel *The Code of the Woosters* features as its villain Roderick Spode, leader of the "Black Shorts," an obvious caricature of Oswald Mosley and the BUF (also known as Black Shirts).

These texts, considered in the context of Mitford's and Wodehouse's wartime experiences, demarcate the potential – and, more importantly, the problems – of the country house genre and its attendant conventions in resisting or containing oppressive discourses. At times, the characteristic nostalgia of the country house novel shows alarming affinities with fascism's reactionary politics. Authors can emphasize these parallels to expose relationships among twentieth-century British identity, fascism, and country house style, thus critiquing the genre's ethics from within its conventions. Regarded simply as a silly political fad, fascism fits all too comfortably within a genre that generates much of its entertainment value by showcasing the eccentricities of isolated and out-of-touch aristocrats.[5] Wodehouse's and Mitford's responses to political extremism, hopelessly inadequate in hindsight, reveal complexities of British nationalist constructions in the 1930s that have only recently received serious critical attention. Wodehouse's *The Code of the Woosters* articulates obliviousness towards fascism's threat that seems inexcusable in 1938. *Wigs on the Green* reflects ambivalence toward fascism that was relatively

common in 1934, when the threat of war seemed remote. Mitford's author function mocks the overblown nationalist rhetoric of the Union Jackshirts while seeming to sympathize with their nostalgic pastoral vision.

To understand how these novels could articulate such a myopically dismissive and mocking approach to fascist aims, one must understand the role fascism played in 1930s British politics. As historians including Dan Stone, Robert Griffiths, and Martin Pugh have noted, "Most people start from a view of inter-war fascism as a political contagion, arriving, like most unpleasant things, from abroad, and from which the British enjoyed a natural immunity" (Pugh 2). As Stone argues, however, this outlook obscures the complexity of British political culture at the time:

> British fascism had as much a claim to be called *British* fascism as it did to be called British *fascism*. It was a primarily indigenous movement that had roots in the aristocratic revivalism of the Edwardian years, the Edwardian popular leagues, and the Diehard movement.[6] Its rural nostalgia, antisemitism, and corporatism were just as much British as Continental concerns. (356)

For these reasons, British fascism was more naturally aligned with nostalgic ideals of Englishness – many of which, of course, were later mobilized in anti-fascist propaganda during wartime – than some post-war critics concede. Fascism reflected an obsession with moral, physical, and racial degeneracy (Pugh 5), an attitude that resonated with the country house novel's tendency to elegize a prelapsarian past. As a camp artifact, the modern country house novel aestheticizes this perceived decay rather than articulating a sincere belief in a nationalist rebirth of "lost" values. At the same time, however, the genre's tendency to appropriate nostalgic codes rather than rejecting them threatens to preserve prejudice in the interest of ironic performances of

hegemony. Loyalty to the group, promotion of national unity, and the achievement of consensus, central tenets of fascist ideology, all find expression in the country house novel, in one way or another, both before and after the war. *Wigs on the Green* and *The Code of the Woosters* both articulate a laughing distanciation from these ideals' most extreme expressions, which nonetheless chimes problematically with the real classism and nostalgia at the heart of their comedic plots.

Mitford wrote *Wigs on the Green* in 1934, during what Griffiths calls the BUF's "'respectable' phase" (53): between January and June of that year, the movement gained thousands of followers and received extensive publicity (Pugh 3). The movement that the novel parodies would therefore have been well known, but not yet considered a serious threat. Any reading of the novel, perhaps Mitford's least well-known work, demands context:[7] the Mitford family's political ties played a major role in the novel's production and reception. In 1934 Nancy Mitford's sister, Diana, was one of the BUF's most ardent followers; its leader, Oswald Moseley, was her lover. They were wed in 1936 at the Goebbels' apartment. Hitler was in attendance, and after the wedding they proceeded immediately to a Nazi rally at the Berlin Sportsplatz (Lovell 211-2). Unity Mitford was in Germany at the time, assiduously learning the language and loitering in cafés in the hopes of meeting Hitler personally. Jessica Mitford, on the other hand, had been a committed Communist since adolescence. She and her husband, Esmond Romilly – Winston Churchill's nephew, with whom she eloped scandalously – often attempted to sabotage Moseley's political demonstrations. Nancy Mitford considered herself "apolitical," but in the spring of 1934 she and her new husband Peter Rodd attended BUF rallies and even purchased black shirts (Lovell 168). They quickly, however, dismissed the movement as too extreme.

Over the course of the 1930s, the political chasms among the Mitfords widened in

proportion to the increasing likelihood of war. Perhaps most notorious of the political Mitfords was Unity, who made much of the fact that she was supposedly conceived in Swastika, Ontario, and of her middle name, Valkyrie. In the early 1930s, when Mitford wrote *Wigs on the Green,* Hitler "was not universally regarded as a monster, but as a statesman in whom everyone was interested, leading an administration with a new and radical form of government that appeared to be working well" (Lovell 176). Unity's devotion to Nazism, however, would continue long after Hitler's imperialistic and anti-Semitic ambitions became notorious. In June 1935 – at the same time that her sister Jessica was reading and disseminating *The Brown Book of Hitler Terror*, one of the first testaments to Nazi atrocity (Lovell 177) – Unity finally achieved her goal of obtaining a personal audience with Hitler; she charmed him and became one of his most devoted companions. According to her diary the two met and spoke at least 140 times between their first meeting and the outbreak of World War II (Lovell 184). The two spent time alone together, igniting rumors of a love affair, and Unity was known for catching Hitler's eye in public and inspiring "uncontrollable giggling," behaviour that he did not indulge in with anyone else (Lovell 267). At Unity's side, her siblings Tom, Pam, Debo, and Diana all met Hitler personally, and the "state visit" of her parents Lord and Lady Redesdale to Germany became a source of considerable embarrassment to the Redesdales as tensions between England and Germany mounted. Unity embraced Nazism's most extreme anti-Semitism and sent a letter to the German newspaper *Der Stürmer* that sparked outrage in Britain. Writing on behalf of the "British public," she proclaimed, "We hope… that you will see that we will soon win against the world enemy, in spite of all his cunning. We think with joy of the day when we shall be able to say with might and authority: England for the English! Out with the Jews! With German greeting, Heil Hitler!" (qtd. Lovell 188). She asked that the paper publish her full name "so that

everyone will know I am a Jew hater" (qtd. Lovell 188). When Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, Unity unsuccessfully attempted suicide with a gunshot wound to the head in a Munich park.

Nancy Mitford, despite her dilettantism with the BUF in 1934, quickly became a "rabid anti-Nazi," according to her sister Pam (Lovell 295). After working in Perpignan, France, to aid refugees from the Spanish Civil War and Franco's regime in 1939, Nancy wrote to her mother, "Personally I would join hands with the devil himself to stop any further extension of the disease" (Mosley, *LN* 113). Like nostalgia in its earliest iterations, fascism for Mitford is a "disease" that spreads with the proliferation of violence. Mitford disavowed the political commitments that her siblings embraced so fervently. In a 1939 letter, she declared, "There isn't a pin to put between Nazis & Bolshies. If one is a Jew one prefers one & if an aristocrat the other, that's all as far as I can see. *Fiends!*" (Mosley, *LN* 120). *Wigs on the Green* was published before her loathing of fascism had fully developed, but nonetheless caused considerable tension in her relationship with Unity and a serious rift with Diana. Four years after the novel was published, Nancy irreversibly altered her relationship with Diana on the strength of her convictions: in 1939 she informed on Diana to the Ministry of Economic Warfare, identifying her as "a very dangerous person" (Lovell 325), which led to her confinement at Holloway Prison for three and a half years. Writing to Evelyn Waugh about her brief involvement with the BUF, Nancy argued, "we were younger and high-spirited then and didn't know about Buchenwald" (Mosley, *Letters* 366). *Wigs on the Green* is outdated, a definite product of its historical moment. Even Mitford refused her publisher's request to issue a new edition in 1951; in a letter to Waugh, she reflected, "[The book] which isn't too bad, I find, is a total impossibility. Too much has happened for jokes about the Nazis to be regarded as funny or anything but the worst of

taste. After all, it was written in 1934, I really couldn't quite have foreseen all that came after" (Mosley, *Letters* 249). Its exploration of the political upheaval of the 1930s through generic plot formulas situates it among more enduring contemporaneous texts. In *Wigs on the Green*, Mitford juxtaposes aristocratic qualities of cosmopolitanism, good taste, and bohemianism – with which middle-class readers are invited to identify – with political extremism, on the one hand, and middle-class pretension, on the other. The novel opposes the country house ethos with exclusionary fascist politics, but the resistance that the mythic world of the novel's country house setting, Chalford Park, offers is itself based on inequitable class ideologies. Eugenia Malmains is a bored aristocratic teenager, who, stifled by her isolation in a decaying, but grand, estate, is naïvely in search of a cause.

The novel has received little critical attention; Judy Suh has written the only serious study of *Wigs on the Green* and its anti-fascist satire. In the context of this dissertation, the novel is significant insofar as it epitomizes the ambiguity of country house nostalgia in the context of British fascism in the 1930s. Suh argues,

> Mitford incorporates a strain of elegy that differentiates between active and reactive elements of aristocratic culture…. The critique of fascism that emerges from this combination of tones is deeply ambiguous. On one hand, Mitford connects the ennui and pessimism of the declining aristocracy with the embrace of fascism. On the other hand, she emphasizes fascism's instrumentalization of new forms of commodity culture and cultural simulacra. The mythic country house ethos, understood here as comprised by cosmopolitanism, hospitality, and patronage, surfaces as a potential cultural antidote to fascism. (135)

As Suh also notes, this critique goes hand in hand with a cynical portrayal of middle-class

pretensions to the country house ethos, embodied by Anne-Marie Lace (Suh 136). Meanwhile, Chalford Park languishes under the custodianship of Eugenia's elderly, out-of-touch, and paralyzingly conservative grandparents, who have remained housebound since the family scandal of their daughter's divorce.

Without the estate to provide a model of appropriate civic engagement, the text suggests, the village is vulnerable to political and aesthetic extremes. In terms of cultural pursuits, Chalford village offers only two options: Eugenia's "batty" politics or the avant-garde pretensions of Anne-Marie Lace and her entourage of aspiring, and untalented, local artists. The text mocks, yet is partly sympathetic to, both their points of view. Eugenia "is a lunatic but she's not stupid" (*WG* 9). The text frames some of her convictions sympathetically, especially her belief in the value of country house life: "'The great houses of England, one of her most envied attributes, stand empty – why?'" Eugenia asks. "'Because the great families of England herd together in luxury flats and spend their patrimony in divorce courts'" (*WG* 9). The purposeful provincialism of *Wigs on the Green* is evident in its characterization of the ridiculous, citified Mrs. Lace, whose mock-modernist approach to everything is "'Do let's be original, whatever happens'" (*WG* 47), and who would be most in her element "in London [where] she could undoubtedly have made an entrance into that sort of society which she longed for, that semi-intellectual society which is much photographed and often spoken of in newspapers" (*WG* 21). Yet, "Early upbringing in the parsonage had not been without its influence on her and Mrs. Lace was at heart a respectable little person" (*WG* 25): despite the condescension implied by characterizing Mrs. Lace as a "little person," the text privileges her apoliticism over Eugenia's fanaticism. Mrs. Lace articulates a short-sighted dismissal of fascism which is perhaps most closely aligned with Mitford's own in 1934: "when you find schoolgirls like Eugenia going mad

for something you can be pretty sure that it is nonsense" (*WG* 47). Both Eugenia and Mrs. Lace imperfectly participate in the provincial and conservative country house ethos, which is continually reasserted by the text as a corrective to both Eugenia's extremism and pageantry, and Mrs. Lace's aspirations to cosmopolitan, high modernist self-invention. The text thus articulates nostalgia for an aristocratic hegemony and cultural and political leadership, which is distilled in its fawning representations of Chalford Park, which "present[s] the most beautiful vision that could be imagined" (*WG* 36).

Like *Between the Acts*, *Wigs on the Green* novelizes a country pageant that stages and explores political questions. Unlike Woolf, Mitford uses the pageant to deride metropolitan modernism as "one of a series of clichés linked to the social-climbing middle class," as Suh suggests (141). To quote Jasper Aspect, the mooching aristocrat who serves as the amoral center of the text, "'We like Olde Englyshe best… because it is so wonderfully funny. Besides, a pageant must be kept thoroughly lowbrow or it loses all character'" (*WG* 120). Extending Suh's argument, I would point out that in Mitford's text, clichés, middle-class or otherwise, can serve a positive thematic function, fostering inclusion and bridging difference. The project, for example, forces Eugenia and Mrs. Lace into uneasy cooperation. In the end, the pageant "was all an enormous success… nobody seemed to notice the fact that Jasper had ignored historical truth to a degree unprecedented even in pageantry. The most popular scenes of all were those with the smallest foundation in fact" (*WG* 155). The pageant's emphasis on spectacle over accuracy and its lack of original content allows it to accommodate everyone's contribution, even that of the disgruntled avant-garde artists (who are also ardent but not-very-peaceful Pacifists) who successfully disrupt its performance by spooking the horses.

In the final production, George III and Queen Charlotte (played by Lace) visit Chalford

house in a heavily editorialized re-creation of an actual historical event. The novel's title is thus a pun – the pageant not only involves costumes (and wigs) but also portrays Whigs on the village green. The wigs/Whigs homophone emphasizes the text's critique of history as performance: in staging the pageant, the Union Jackshirts rewrite, rather than simply re-present, history. In Eugenia's production, all of the historical characters are devoted Union Jackshirts, who sing the Comrades' hymn and make rousing speeches. After the interruption by the Pacifists, the Battle of Chalford Park ensues, in which the Pacifists throw the Comrades in the duck pond, and the Comrades, emulating a tactic rumoured to be practiced by Mussolini's troops, force captured Pacifists to consume "enormous doses of 'Ex-Lax,' the 'Delicious Chocolate Laxative,' which was the only substitute for castor oil to be found in Nanny's medicine chest" (159).[8] At the end of the battle, everyone (except the Pacifists) enjoys the best vintage champagne from Chalford Park's cellar and delights in the day's exciting outcome, recalling acts of violence as blithely as if the fight had merely been playacting; "everybody danced with everybody else" (160), and a series of wedding engagements precipitates the comedic conclusion.

Mitford's use of a fascist pageant to drive these generic plot formulations finally absorbs both Eugenia's fascism and Anne-Marie Lace's modernist posturings within the world of the country house novel, in which old social hierarchies are reliably reinstated and social harmony regained no matter how violent the temporary period of upheaval. The novel's plotting both delegitimizes fascist spectacle and domesticates it: it is simply one more affectation among an eccentric cast of characters. It also replicates a specifically Nazi-like approach to the creation of historical narratives: as Spiro has noted, "Nazism was more than a political movement – it was a way of living and perceiving political reality that was illusory" (31). Nazi spectacle, which was crucial to Hitler's creation of political consensus, capitalized on nostalgic narratives that were

acknowledged as fantasy even at the moment of their greatest force. Just as these nostalgic fantasies justified future-oriented political action, the Blackshirts' performance of a historical fantasy – the supposedly Social Unionist views of King George – precipitates the Battle of Chalford Park, which is immediately perceived and recorded as a watershed historical event of always-already mythical status. Mitford uses this episode to emphasize fascism's reliance on cliché, and thus to erode its claims to social progressivism. At the same time, even the most absurd fascist spectacle fits within the domestic economy of Chalford Park, where Lady Malmains obsessively polices behaviour so as to maintain a façade of respectability – an attempt to reinstate forcefully the moral fortitude of an idealized English past.

This simultaneous undermining of extremism and disavowal of its real political consequences offer questionable resistance to its proliferation. Žižek's critique of cynicism demarcates the limits of such ironic participation: "in contemporary societies, democratic or totalitarian… cynical distance, laughter, irony, are, so to speak, part of the game. The ruling ideology is not meant to be taken seriously or literally" (*The Sublime Object of Ideology* 24). Eugenia's characterization might appear to achieve a sexist delegitimization of fascism by aligning political commitment with a childish, feminine outlook. By positioning the novel's most devoted fascist as an eccentric young woman, Mitford actually provides, to use Britton's term, "living-room" for the BUF rather than delegitimizing it. Eugenia's fascism, the novel suggests, offers an antidote to the boredom of being raised in an out-of-date and isolated household; one rigid and patriarchal social vision (fascism) counters another (nostalgic ideals of aristocratic Englishness). Both promote nostalgic, utopian social ideals; the Union Jackshirts welcome rebellious female voices whereas Chalford Park does not. Unlike her grandparents, the Union Jackshirts offer Eugenia a sense of agency and importance. At the same time, the book contains

its message by projecting it through Eugenia's sincere speeches and enthusiasm for militarism. Interrupted by her elderly Nanny, for example, Eugenia replies, "'Get out you filthy Pacifist, get out I say, and take your yellow razor gang with you'" (*WG* 8). Although this is eerily prescient on Mitford's part, given the proclivity of European fascists to persecute all those who were not explicitly aligned with them, Eugenia's tendency to project political warfare onto the sleepy village of Chalford Park is meant to strike readers as absurd. As Žižek proposes, the absurdity of Eugenia's approach is what allows her to continue her campaign with minimal opposition, both within the narrative and from Mitford's authorial tone.

Perhaps the most dangerous attitude is not Eugenia's violent commitment, but rather Jasper's toxic blend of nostalgia and cynicism. "Perhaps the greatest danger for totalitarianism is people who take its ideology literally," notes Žižek, because these people are "outdated," the "living dead," "certainly not a person representing the existing social and political powers" (*SO* 24). Eugenia's fanaticism is so over-the-top that she appears politically inconsequential and socially inept. Jasper, in contrast, is a pragmatist, a heavy-drinking, idle social climber who adeptly manipulates the conventions of aristocratic society for personal gain. Lamenting the lack of "genius… which could make anybody suppose that the English were once a fine race, brave, jolly and eccentric," he declares: "'it is to the Eugenias of this world that I look for salvation…. Germany and Italy have been saved by National Socialism; England might be saved by Social Unionism, who can tell? Therefore I say, *'Heil Hitler!' 'Viva il Duce!'* and 'Miss' – Miss, I'll have another beer, please'" (*WG* 49). While Mitford's use of comic diminution seems to undermine Jasper's political acumen, his complacency in the face of extremism is telling. His willingness to see how the conflict plays out (perhaps reflective of Mitford's own political ambivalence at the time) offers a preview of the British government's initial hesitancy to confront German and

Italian imperialism in the 1930s.

At the novel's end, set at the wedding of Lady Marjorie Merrith, an heiress, and Mr. Wilkins, a Chalford village local, Eugenia makes her first visit to London. She also enjoys a happy ending: she has just "spent a blissful morning with Comrades of the London branch" (*WG* 162). In her speech to the newly married couple, she wishes them "healthy little Aryan babies" and leads the party in the hymn of the Union Jackshirts (169). Eugenia's fanaticism, it is implied, will endure, concomitantly with the restoration of order represented by two marriages and the return of Noel, Jasper's friend and the novel's luckless straight man, to his job in business. Despite its satirical tone, Mitford's text sincerely elegizes the perceived political stability guaranteed by aristocratic leadership: with most of the Lords in Peersmont, an insane asylum for the nobility that is a facsimile of the Houses of Parliament, the countryside – and especially Chalford Park and the surrounding estate – is laid vulnerable to the influences of Eugenia and Mrs. Lace. The novel's ending accommodates fascist silliness within its debased present as easily as it does middle-class pretention. *Wigs on the Green* is therefore very far away, ideologically speaking, from Woolf's feminist destabilization of unifying social visions at the end of *Between the Acts*. Mitford's covert alignment of classism with fascism finally reinstates a distinctly masculinist nostalgia, elegizing a time when the House of Lords could provide paternalistic guidance for wayward villagers. If, as some critics have argued,[9] Mitford's autobiographically-inspired novels are attempts to defuse the scandal that circulated around her family during the 1930s and '40s, then *Wigs on the Green* conveys a disturbing apology for fascism even as it mocks its promise of social progress.

"Frightfully funny": P. G. Wodehouse and the limits of satire

Mitford's frothy comedies of manners are deeply indebted to P. G. Wodehouse. They utilize common Wodehousian plot devices including a rich heiress, male rivals in love, legacies from an aunt, broken engagements, assumed identities, and a happy ending.[10] Over the course of his long career, Wodehouse repeated these plots with endless variations, positioning them as central features of his distinctive style. Four novels published between 1938 and 1971, for example, concern Totleigh Towers, a fictional country house that is both idyllic and nightmarish.[11] "Totleigh Towers might be a place where Man was vile," as Bertie describes it, "but undoubtedly every prospect pleased" (*The Code of the Woosters* 44). The master of Totleigh Towers, Sir Watkyn Bassett, expresses severe and unfounded disapproval of Bertie, which Jeeves finally dispels, while Bertie navigates his on-and-off engagement to Madeline Bassett. Bertie and Jeeves also travel to other country estates, where Bertie negotiates similarly impossible social expectations. Wodehouse thus transforms Manderley-esque country house settings – panoptic domestic worlds organized by opaque, exclusionary rules and the constant threat of social opprobrium and even violence – into carnivalesque literary sites in which social hierarchies are consistently upended. By repeating these conflicts in each novel, the "Totleigh Towers Saga," as the series is known, foregrounds Sisyphean repetition and comic self-citation over resolution. Kristin Thompson has argued that Wodehouse's major contribution both to middlebrow literature, such as the detective story, and to more literarily ambitious works, such as Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, is this self-aware participation in genre fiction. His novels intervene in the conventions of the popular literature of the day not just to foreground, but actually to generate repetitive formulas (Thompson 5). "He does not," Thompson argues, "pull us away from the overly familiar but rather pushes us further and further into the clichés at work in his narratives"

(6). This distinct type of humour, neither destructive nor parodic, both defamiliarizes allusions by occluding their original source and serves the inclusive function of providing devoted readers with easily recognizable, and continually evolving, running jokes. Thompson offers an illuminating example: one of Wodehouse's most familiar tropes is the phrase "He reeled and would have fallen…," the unacknowledged source of which is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, from the scene in which Arthur stakes Lucy in her grave (Thompson 7). This Gothic intertext calls to mind *Rebecca*'s intervention in the Bluebeard plot or Woolf's domestications of Gothic terror in *To the Lighthouse*, "A Haunted House," and *Orlando*.[12] Whereas du Maurier and Woolf both sustain the tension generated by Gothic tropes, Wodehouse immediately and completely undermines their urgency. He uses the line from *Dracula* in many situations, often employing comic diminution. The "reeling" character steadies him- or herself "by clutching at a framed photograph or a passing dog" (Thompson 7). The original source of the quote is never acknowledged in Wodehouse's work. By assimilating intertextual phrases into his prose and purposefully situating them as clichés *per se*, the author both alienates them from their original meaning and calls into question the importance of an "original" meaning to begin with.

Wodehouse's response to the BUF in *The Code of the Woosters*, the first installment of the Totleigh Towers Saga, is consistent with this practice: he simply assimilates fascism into his comical world, deploying loquacious fascist bullies to complicate (only temporarily, of course) Bertie Wooster's plans, as if the fascist bully was a type that had always been integral to the country house genre and had always already been a cliché. Wodehouse thus deflates the revolutionary pretensions of fascism and situates it squarely within the absurdly reactionary politics that organizes the novel's comically panoptic country-house setting. Roderick Spode is a sort of generalized caricature of a dictator, Hitlerite mustache and all:

> It was as if Nature had intended to make a gorilla, and had changed its mind at the last moment.
>
> But it wasn't just the mere expanse of the bird that impressed. Close to, what you noticed more was his face, which was square and powerful and slightly moustached towards the centre. His gaze was keen and piercing. I don't know if you have even seen those pictures in the papers of Dictators with tilted chins and blazing eyes, inflaming the populace with fiery words on the occasion of the opening of a new skittle alley, but that was what he reminded me of. (*CW* 20)

Spode is the "founder and head of the Saviours of Britain, a Fascist organization better known as the Black Shorts" (*CW* 66). Spode devotes his time, overzealously, to enforcing the law: catching the thief who stole his uncle's prized silver cow-creamer or a stranger's umbrella, restoring Constable Oates's stolen policeman's helmet, and otherwise policing the visitors to Totleigh Towers. In each of these petty criminal cases, Bertie Wooster is inevitably the unwitting primary suspect. Wooster, however, is inclined to "think feudally" (*CW* 158), honouring above all his ties to old friends and women. The novel thus opposes Bertie's aristocratic, "feudal," and *ad hoc* "code of the Woosters" with Roderick's moral absolutes. In the end, Jeeves's proclivity to "use the bean," in Bertie's words, wins out over Spode's brute force.

Bertie must confront Spode's violent, self-righteous rage when Spode mistakenly assumes that he stole Constable Oates's helmet. Bertie escapes by informing Spode that he knows "all about Eulalie" (*CW* 150), and the Dictator becomes a cowering sycophant. Spode has a secret: he has "considerable talent" as a designer of ladies' undergarments, and is "the founder and proprietor of the emporium in Bond Street known as *Eulalie Soeurs*" (284). Jeeves has procured this secret from the "Junior Ganymede," a "club for gentlemen's personal

gentlemen" in which "every new member is required to supply the club with full information regarding his employer" (*CW* 123). In this Wodehousian world, Jeeves's social milieu is a looking-glass version of Bertie's. This *mise en abyme* effect, like the continuities among house, pageant, and landscape in *Between the Acts*, suggests the pervasiveness of conservative class and gender hierarchies. Like that of Mrs. Danvers, Mrs. McNab, and Candish – the domestic servants in *Rebecca*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *Between the Acts*, respectively – Jeeves's domestic labour guarantees his master's successful negotiation of exclusionary social hierarchies, facilitating the text's unifying *dénouement*. Unlike Danvers, McNab, and Candish, however, who each embody the disavowed oppositions that underpin patriarchal and classist hegemony, and thus queer the domestic spaces that they curate, Jeeves is Bertie's steadfast straight man. While the text's comic inversion of their roles – Bertie is a feckless idiot, and Jeeves the figure of social and intellectual mastery – does itself queer the master-servant relationship by inverting its hierarchies, the text's inclusion of Jeeves within its sphere of privilege, if not entitlement, sets him apart from the other servants I have discussed. Jeeves and Wooster's relationship represents an ossified, masculinist, and self-perpetuating class system of privilege and service, which cannot accommodate an "outside" to Bertie's aristocratic worldview and thus excludes Spode. Roderick's political ambitions and ties to the world of commerce through his London shop represent a kind of social climbing that locates him on the margins of Bertie's world of entitlement and tradition. Through class conservatism, epitomized not only by Bertie but also by Jeeves, Wodehouse neutralizes the fascists' threat of social upheaval and renders a character like Spode ridiculous rather than intimidating. Fascism's terror and violence never enter the novel; they are replaced by Roderick's fear of social embarrassment and thus are neutralized.

Like Mitford's, Wodehouse's comic deflation of fascist extremism relies on nostalgic

ideals of rigid class hierarchies. This classist satire not only excludes fascist extremism, by portraying Spode as a parvenu, but also reveals the affinities between his political ideology and the class system from which the text marginalizes him. Spode's political ambitions are inextricable from his social ones. He justifies his totalitarian policing of Bertie's and others' behaviour, for example, by appealing to the moral integrity of Totleigh Towers – a precedent set by Sir Watkyn Bassett, a justice of the peace and overzealous guardian of law and order. From the moment that Bertie arrives at Totleigh Towers, Sir Watkyn is on the hunt for an excuse to arrest him, throw him in jail, or fine him. The text accommodates Roderick's fascist posturing, therefore, within the morally rigid country house ethos established by the conservative aristocrat: his bullying, the text implies, is the only slightly exaggerated corollary of Sir Watkyn's. By aligning these two men, the text implicitly reconciles fascism with a nostalgic vision of England even as it mocks that vision for being myopic and reactionary.

The disastrous potential of such an approach is vividly apparent in P. G. Wodehouse's unfortunate response to his internment as a civilian prisoner by the German army. Nazi officers appropriated the Wodehouses' country house in Le Touquet, France, in the spring of 1940. Due to car troubles, the Wodehouses were unable to escape the German occupation, and P. G. Wodehouse was interned for a year as an enemy national. While conditions during Wodehouse's early internment, when he was shuttled among several dilapidated prisons, were sometimes almost intolerable,[13] he struggled to assume a cheerful face and not complain, which he regarded as his patriotic duty. For example, with respect to his particularly brutal treatment at a Belgian jail, his assessment was understated: "'Tough' is the adjective I would use to describe the whole of those five weeks at Huy" (*Fourth Berlin Broadcast*). When he finally reached his destination, however – a former insane asylum in Tost, in Upper Silesia – Wodehouse's living conditions

improved, and he formed close relationships with his fellow prisoners, even working on his novel *Joy in the Morning*, playing cricket, and contributing to the internees' newspaper the *Tost Times*. He struggled, however, with isolation from friends, acquaintances, and fans because his correspondence was limited to immediate family. He was released from camp, like all civilian prisoners, as his sixtieth birthday approached. When two German acquaintances suggested that he make a broadcast about his internment on German radio, he made the unfortunate choice of accepting their offer with the hopes of reassuring friends and readers that he was all right.

The gallows humour of Wodehouse's five radio broadcasts, entitled "How to Be an Internee and Like It" and recorded in 1941, is dreadfully ill-judged. Writing in Wodehouse's defense later, George Orwell suggested that he "had missed the turning-point of the war, and in 1941 he was still reacting in terms of 1939" (353). Rather than demonizing the German soldiers, Wodehouse portrays them as if they are comic villains from his country house stories. In the Berlin broadcasts, accounts of the absurdities of life in the internment camps, like his portrayals of Bertie Wooster's social crises, employ intertextual references and clichés to situate reminiscences of his traumatic experience within a familiar generic tradition. With respect to bureaucratic confusion, Wodehouse observes, "Lord Peter Wimsey is not going to solve the mystery as easily as that" (*Third Berlin Broadcast*); recalling a banal logistical conversation, he records a comment by "some bright person – Monsieur Poirot, perhaps" (*Third Broadcast*). Wimsey and Poirot – characters in the detective stories of Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christie, respectively, representative examples of what Raymond Williams refers to as the "middle-class detective stories" that dominate the twentieth-century country house genre – help Wodehouse to make light of the oppressive atmosphere of the camps, situate them within a recognizable discourse of British nationalism, and convey his experience to civilians. That British civilians

would be disturbed and angered by his tacit comparison of Nazi interment camps with their own treasured national fictions evidently escaped him.

Wodehouse's reaction to German occupation is friendliness, which he suggests is inevitable:

> The first time you see a German soldier over your garden fence, your impulse is to jump ten feet straight up into the air, and you do so. About a week later, you find that you are only jumping five feet. And then, after you have been living with him in a small village for two months, you inevitably begin to fraternise and to wish that you had learned German at school instead of Latin and Greek. (*First Berlin Broadcast*)

This perceived accommodation of Nazi aggression thrust him into the midst of the propaganda war, which by 1941 was intense. To make matters worse, Wodehouse thought he was broadcasting on behalf of the German Foreign Office; unbeknownst to him his words were owned and aired by the German Ministry of Propaganda, which edited the talks to portray Wodehouse as a Nazi sympathizer and leaked false information to this effect (Ratcliffe 307). Once aired, the broadcasts were naturally met with horror from the Allies, and the BBC accused Wodehouse of having "pawned his honour for a soft bed" and "fallen on his knees and worshipped Hitler" (text of broadcast over the Home Service Postscript of the BBC, 15 July 1941, qtd. Waugh, *Essays* 561). Although Wodehouse had been released from internment due to his age, appearances suggested he had capitulated with the Ministry of Propaganda in exchange for his freedom, and Goebbels did nothing to disabuse the Allies of this notion.

In a 1961 apology to Wodehouse written on behalf of the British public (after the author had been cleared of treason charges), Evelyn Waugh argued that Wodehouse had fallen victim to

both English and German patriotic rhetoric. Wodehouse's mistake, as Waugh rightly points out, is his refusal to hate the German soldiers, an attitude required by British wartime patriotism:

> Mr. Wodehouse's broadcasts were not calculated to engender respect for the Germans, nor hate. That was his offence in the eyes of the official propagandists of the period…. Our rulers at the time, like our enemies, were dedicated to fomenting hate. They would have had us believe that the whole German nation comprised a different order of creation from ourselves. Mr. Wodehouse's simple diversion from the party line was what was represented as "kneeling in worship" of Hitler. (*Essays* 563)

Wodehouse's predicament, therefore, not only reveals the limits of Wodehousian style when faced with political realities – a line must be drawn between the fictional Roderick Spode, safely subjugated by nostalgic discourses of Englishness, and actual, violent fascists – but also demonstrates the impossibility of purposeful indifference in 1941.[14] The Berlin broadcasts, while grievously ill-judged, represent a refusal to participate in the discourse of wartime conflict. By 1941, however, to borrow a phrase from Wodehouse himself, "the ghastly thing" about fascism was that it was too serious a reality for the humourous reflections of a nostalgic non-combatant to be tolerated.

Anglo-Irishness, neutrality, and the force of style in Elizabeth Bowen's wartime writing

Like Mitford and Wodehouse, the Anglo-Irish author Elizabeth Bowen exposes disturbing affinities between nostalgic ideals of Englishness and the foreign fascist rhetoric to which it was diametrically opposed in wartime propaganda. These contradictions became urgent for Wodehouse due to his situation as a civilian prisoner and public intellectual. For Bowen,

such questions of betrayal, patriotism, and the ethics of choice were inflected by the controversy of Irish wartime neutrality, which reverberates throughout her fiction. Bowen was writing two books while living in London during the Blitz (1940-41): *Bowen's Court* (1942), a history of the Bowen family's eponymous Big House in Cork and, by extension, of the Bowen family and its Anglo-Irish Ascendancy background; and *The Heat of the Day* (1949), which chronicles the experiences of its protagonist, Stella Rodney, living alone in Blitz-ravaged London. Both texts explore the possibility of political neutrality and, like Mitford's and Wodehouse's novels, posit the country house ethos as an antidote to fascism. Bowen negotiates political and gendered binaries in her portrayals of three different country houses. The titular estate in *Bowen's Court* was the actual hereditary estate of the Bowens located in Cork, Ireland. *The Heat of the Day* is set primarily in Stella Rodney's London apartment, but crucial plot turns take place at the novel's two country house settings: Mount Morris, the Rodney family's Irish estate; and Holme Dene, the English childhood home of Stella's lover, Robert Kelway.

Similarly to Mitford and Wodehouse, Bowen relies upon the rigidity of class hierarchies in her critique of national and gendered oppositions. Mitford's and Wodehouse's novels illustrate the affinities between nostalgia for English aristocratic hegemony and fascism, but finally endorse conservative class hierarchies as a corrective to fascist rhetoric. In *The Heat of the Day*, by contrast, Bowen aligns fascism unequivocally with the socially ambitious middle-class sensibility that organizes Holme Dene, which, the text implies, shares fascism's affinities for simulacra and nostalgic nationalist spectacle. Departing from Mitford's and Wodehouse's comical diminution of nostalgic conventions, Bowen emphatically rejects nationalist nostalgia, which the novel equates with the Kelways' socially ambitious *bourgeois* sensibility. Bowen counters Holme Dene's supposed middle-class inauthenticity with an aristocratic commitment

to manners, style, and appearances, which she elegizes in *Bowen's Court*. The organizing social norms of this gentrified lifestyle, she suggests, can serve a morally corrective function by countering exclusionary politics – a somewhat hypocritical claim, considering the insistence with which her texts police class hierarchies. Unlike *Wigs on the Green* and *The Code of the Woosters* – both popular novels that invite middle-class readers to share characters' aristocratic points of view – *The Heat of the Day* is a more experimental literary text, which resists such inclusivity both intra- and extradiagetically.

Like Mitford, Bowen grew up in a country house. Whereas Mitford's family life emerges most colorfully in her fictional works, especially *The Pursuit of Love* (1945), Bowen addresses her inheritance explicitly in the non-fictional *Bowen's Court*, a sweeping history of her family and its estate. Bowen describes the ancestral home as disconnected from its surroundings, isolated and self-sustaining:

> The land round Bowen's court, even under its windows, has an unhumanized air the house does nothing to change. Here are, even, no natural features, view or valley, to which the house may be felt to relate itself…. Like Flaubert's ideal book about nothing, it sustains itself on itself by the inner force of its style. (*BC* 21)

The notion that the big house could ever be "about nothing" is provocative considering the long and violent history of Anglo-Irish relations. To this extent, the metaphor is misleading: the big house is not "about nothing," but is rather about itself – a self-reflexive testament to the epistemological force of its ruling social codes and hierarchies. For Bowen, domestic ideals always carry with them political implications. In a 1953 speech entitled "The Idea of the Home," Bowen suggests that "home" connotes "an institution which has a practical-economic base, but which tapers up towards a moral ideal: there is involved, when one speaks of 'home,' at least

some notion of the ethics and the aesthetics of living" (*Listening In* 162). In "The Big House" (1940), Bowen asks, "does the big house justify its existence?" (*The Mulberry Tree* 29). Yes, she argues, as a "social idea" that privileges "the subjugation of the personal to the impersonal" (29). Optimistically, Bowen hopes that the open-door hospitality and valuation of social graces that defines big house life might foster better relations among the Anglo-Irish and their working-class Irish neighbours despite the fact that, as she concedes in *Bowen's Court*, "my family got their position and drew their power from a situation that shows an inherent wrong" (453). By prioritizing social conventions, *Bowen's Court* suggests, individuals might forget cultural differences and recognize common goals. The problematic class prejudice of such a strategy is, of course, rather obvious. Notoriously, Bowen suggested that property ownership has intrinsic ethical value:

> One may say that while property lasted the dangerous power-idea stayed, like a sword in its scabbard, fairly safely at rest…. I submit that the power-loving temperament is more dangerous when it either prefers or is forced to operate in what is materially a void. We have everything to dread from the dispossessed. (*BC* 455)

Bowen's misguided identification of the "dispossessed" as harbingers of social upheaval undermines her inclusive social vision; while she obviously recognizes Anglo-Irish class politics – and the unequal distribution of wealth it perpetuated – as "wrong," she remains suspicious of those with no stakes in property.

Bowen's conflicting nationalist identifications temper the complacency of her Anglo-Irish class privilege. Even in her pre-war writing, notions of being "at home" and "away" are inextricably intertwined; for Bowen, categories of belonging and foreignness are by no means

mutually exclusive. As Declan Kiberd notes, "If the Anglo-Irish were a hyphenated people, forever English in Ireland, forever Irish in England, then [Bowen] knew that better than most" (367). Foster suggests that Bowen "felt most at home in the mid-Irish sea…. The transit from Ireland to England and back again dominates her work as it did her life" (107). At the same time, Bowen frequently described the strength of her Irish roots: "As long as I can remember I've been extremely conscious of being Irish – even when I was writing about very unIrish things such as suburban life in Paris or the English seaside" ("Meet Elizabeth Bowen," qtd. Foster 108). For the author, Irishness is most keenly felt when she inhabits or writes about un-Irish national spaces. Separation, in other words, intensifies the imaginative integrity of her childhood memories and Anglo-Irish home.

Situated between England and Ireland – in her life, in her war work, and in her fiction – Bowen consequently associates "home" with "a highly disturbing emotion" ("Meet Elizabeth Bowen," qtd. Foster 108). Given the conflicting patriotic commitments demanded of the English and Irish during World War II, negotiating the political chasms between the two countries could confer a particular interstitial status – similar, in Agamben's terms, to that of the refugee. For Bowen, the very permanency and perceived impenetrability of the big house provides opportunities for interstitial, tactical self-determination among shifting patriotic values. Although her position of exclusive inclusion within the Irish state is based on her alignment with, rather than oppression by, British imperialism, the insistence with which she articulates the "highly disturbing emotion" of nationalist identifications situates her in a zone of indeterminacy, with a sense of home inseparable from the experience of being "in transit." Politically speaking, the Anglo-Irish were at the very locus of power during British rule; individuals acted as sovereign subjects situated firmly within the space of the (Catholic, Irish) other, which British

landowners claimed as their own. In that sense, in de Certeau's terms, they practiced strategic self-determination. Whereas those aligned with operations of power can unambiguously occupy carceral places, de Certeau explains, subjects of discipline can use tactics of evasion in which they practice an "art of being in between" (30). During the complex and decades-long struggle for Irish Home Rule and national independence, and following the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, Anglo-Irish presence persisted, but its political position was changing. Recognizing that her family's position was based on a social "wrong," Bowen practiced tactical self-determination, operating as a subject of self-conscious difference in a space that she recognized as rightfully belonging to the other. Considering Bowen's privileged, yet vexed, relationship to the country of her birth in terms of the refugee can help mediate between tactical and strategic possibilities for agency by situating Bowen indeterminately, both as a subject of power *and* a figure of marginality and difference.

Critics have noted significant parallels between Bowen's experience of the war and that of the fictional Stella Rodney in *The Heat of the Day*.[15] Bowen's Anglo-Irish identity complicates her relationship to national spaces, both English and Irish, and positions her as both part of and alienated from each. In *Bowen's Court*, the author meditates on Anglo-Irish identity and ideals of Big House life in an attempt to negotiate conflicting political commitments during World War II. Stella's experience mirrors the conundrum of Bowen's Anglo-Irishness: caught, at least for the duration of war, between two contradictory nationalist loyalties, Stella and Bowen must always, to a certain extent, act as figures of betrayal. Stella's attempt to sustain a relationship with her lover that is unsullied by social and political context – even after he is revealed as being a fascist spy – finally fails, but she practices a de Certeauvian "art of being in between" which nonetheless destabilizes political oppositions. Her tactical interruption of militarized spaces and

discourses positions her as an Agambenian figure, who can trouble distinctions of inside and outside – or, to use Agamben's terms, topologically deform the boundaries of citizenship – by embodying the condition of inclusive exclusion that statist violence produces. In both texts, through her explorations of constructed boundaries between national and gendered groups, Bowen troubles categories of inside and outside, thematically, politically, and ethically.

Stella Rodney occupies an impossible position: faced with a choice that is no choice, she will inevitably betray her lover, her country, and herself. Her story begins with the intrusion into her flat of Harrison, a spy for the British government, and his revelation that Robert Kelway, Stella's lover, is a Nazi spy. Stella must make a choice, Harrison insists, one that calls into question any potential for self-determination: she must leave Robert and enter into a relationship with Harrison in order to save Robert from persecution for treason, or continue her affair with Robert, a traitor, only to lose him as Harrison's net closes in. Placed at the center of two intertwining plots – one a love story, one an espionage story – that hinge on fluctuating distinctions between the familiar and the foreign, Stella is at once the ground for and disruption to both narratives. She fails to find a durable sense of "home" for herself or the novel's other characters, each of whom, down to a stray dog that "pushed its muzzle up at her, pleading to be allowed to be under obligation to *someone*" (*HD* 262-3), long to be told where and to whom they belong. Through Stella's tendency to invoke and collapse oppositions simultaneously – which reflects Bowen's Anglo-Irish ambivalence towards questions of loyalty and betrayal – the novel suspends the reader between incommensurable values: who is on the "right" side, and who is a traitor? How are boundaries of belonging and foreignness adjudicated?

The unresolved questions of agency and betrayal that the plot raises resonate throughout the novel's extant criticism, which is divided about Stella's potential for resistance.[16] These

questions are most directly addressed when Stella visits two very different country houses: Mount Morris, the family's Big House in the Republic of Ireland, to which Stella's son Roderick has just been named heir; and Holme Dene, the English, middle-class childhood home of Robert Kelway. Although Stella never chooses between Harrison and Robert, her trips convince her of Harrison's credibility and Robert's treason. On her visit to Mount Morris, she learns that Harrison's claim to being a friend of her uncle was true; at Holme Dene, she perceives Robert's motivation for his treasonous activities in his alienating middle-class family life. Although the inevitable collapse of Stella's own sense of home re-emphasizes her subjugation by patriarchal and nationalist discourses, her absent presence at the center of these discourses – which are manifested in the spaces of Mount Morris and Holme Dene – disrupts them in turn. When Stella demurs from choosing one man or the other, when she refuses to provide the meanings she is meant to embody, she inhabits the stories men tell about her in a way that forecloses their resolution. Shifting critical focus to the ways in which Stella navigates spatial manifestations of ideals of "home" illuminates new possibilities for female empowerment without reinstating the either/or logic that Stella – and Bowen herself – resist. In a novel so centrally concerned with the dialectics of inside and outside, with the ubiquitous threat of fascism and the contingency of nationalist loyalties, rupturing and redeploying domestic ideologies can open a space – albeit small and ambiguously delineated – in which a woman's enunciations and navigations can evade and undermine the panoptic power structures of wartime.

Strikingly, the author's description of Stella and Robert's relationship in *The Heat of the Day* echoes her description of Bowen's Court. Stella and Robert regard their relationship as a "hermetic world" of reciprocal attraction and empathy, "which, like the ideal book about nothing, stayed itself on itself by its inner force" (*HD* 97). The odd pairing of these two spaces –

one fictional and metaphorical, the other actual – through this linking simile (the hermetically sealed, ideal book about nothing) raises questions about whether it is ever possible to remain autonomous from the binary divisions of wartime politics. For Bowen and for Stella, style – and norms of social behaviour in particular – comes to stand in for historical or cultural content, sustaining individual and social identities that fall between totalizing nationalist narratives. Through her similar descriptive approaches to Bowen's Court and Stella and Robert's relationship, Bowen problematizes the possibility of situating domestic narratives within national ones, in the process producing unconventional, feminist wartime histories that supplant the political with the private. Notions of loyalty, agency, and betrayal permeate Bowen's writing about Ireland and its controversially neutral position during World War II. Similarly, through Stella and Robert's relationship, which the narrative reveals as being inextricable from the Allied/Axis conflict, *The Heat of the Day* obliquely explores possibilities for feminine agency within the parameters of modern national identifications.

Bowen's emphasis on "the force of style," both with respect to her family's country house and to Stella's love affair with Robert, hints at the (admittedly ambivalent) subversive potential of her big house narratives. Kristine A. Miller also notes the parallels between the "hermetic worlds" of Bowen's Court and Stella's affair with Robert (138), and adeptly examines the contradictions between Bowen's radical feminism and elitist class politics. I am not convinced, however, that the Anglo-Irish big house offers either Stella or Bowen an "elitist retreat from the problems of war," as Miller suggests (139).[17] First of all, as Bowen herself noted in her Afterword to *Bowen's Court*, the big house was mostly inaccessible to her family during the war due to the peril of crossing the sea (448). Second, Bowen's stance on Irish neutrality reflects a more nuanced approach to Anglo-Irish politics than Miller's reading suggests. In *The Heat of the*

Day, as I will demonstrate, Bowen undermines the illusion of sanctuary that Mount Morris, the Rodneys' Irish big house, provides for Stella; Stella must confront her responsibility to choose. In particular, the desperate history preserved by the house's domestic spaces demonstrates Bowen's awareness of the contradictory relationship between class elitism and feminist self-determination.

Like *Bowen's Court*, *The Heat of the Day* is concerned with binary oppositions that adjudicate oppressive categories of belonging and foreignness. The novel's espionage plot and romance plot both insist upon and obliterate difference. Petra Rau suggests that a "fiction of alterity" is crucial to both narratives: "Love is like spying because it relies on a perceived other whose boundaries it strives [to] dissolve and merge with the self into a romantic fiction of common frontiers. Love depends on alterity but strives to abolish it at the same time" (48). Ethical stakes are high when sameness and difference cannot be delineated: "War… depends on distinct constructions of ipseity and alterity (self-sameness and otherness)… if it is not altogether clear what distinguishes the self from the (inimical) other, conflict is neither justifiable nor feasible" (Rau 33). Rau's argument reveals what some feminist readings – those committed to compartmentalizing which characters do and do not have agency or access to discourse – might miss: alienation from meaning, hierarchy, and identity is not *only* a feminine problem in *The Heat of the Day*. Every character, whether a canny representative of the powers that be or a seemingly passive object of desire, struggles with the arbitrariness of binary oppositions that would give inside and outside, identity and action, ethical and ontological heft, as Roderick's and Harrison's over-investments in Stella's "home" demonstrate. Robert and Stella create a story that will not admit difference: "everything came to be woven into the continuous narrative of love, which, just as much, kept gaining substance, shadow, consistency from the imperfectly

known and not said" (*HD* 108). Whereas in war, difference justifies conflict, in love, difference (and the possibility of conflict that it produces) must be overcome. Multiplying ambiguities and unresolved differences, paradoxically, give the lovers the appearance of sameness, "the complicity of brother and sister twins, counterpart flowerings of temperament identical at least with regard to love" (*HD* 105). Stella and Robert perceive their intimacy as being constitutive of an isolation that borders on the solipsistic. By casting otherness outside their relationship, they maintain the illusion that their temperaments are "identical," because they are "identical at least with regard to love."

Despite Stella and Robert's fantasies of autonomy, however, their relationship is both produced and circumscribed by historical circumstances. Their love affair is not as independent as they wish it to be: "they were not alone…. Their time sat at the *third place* at their table. They were creatures of history, whose coming together was of a nature possible in no other day" (217, emphasis added). Maud Ellmann identifies the "third place" as "the incursion of history into private life" (153). In a novel that is all about "leaks" and "the porousness of architectural and psychic space" (Ellmann 153), a third term always exists in and beyond binary constructions. These figures of excess proliferate within the novel's plotting. All the stories in the novel are haunted by the presence of a third term: Louie occupies the third place at Stella and Harrison's table at the restaurant, disrupting Harrison's blackmail/seduction plot (*HD* 263); Cousin Nettie, despite her claim that "'you can't make any more stories out of [her]'" (*HD* 240), complicates Roderick's understanding of his parents' relationship by revealing that his father was unfaithful. Of all the "third places" in the story, however, the one Harrison occupies is the most persistent and the most powerful.[18] Harrison, like "history," triangulates Robert and Stella's "hermetic world." His inability to "inhabit" space like Stella's flat, where Stella consistently makes him feel

unwelcome and uncomfortable, demonstrates the limits to the disciplinary state power he represents in organizing identities and producing absolute categories of truth. These spaces – in which Harrison's presence is inevitable but his authority is not – epitomize the interstitial zones in which feminine agency circulates. The final dissolution of Robert and Stella's world, however, testifies to the inevitable reinstatement of the patriarchal, statist operations of power that Harrison represents.

Stella, limited as she is by gendered ideals, functions as a third term herself by rupturing the us/them logic of patriarchal militarism. London during the Blitz provides a unique opportunity for Stella and Robert to meet; Robert's espionage provides Harrison with an excuse to impose upon Stella. In the triangularized love plot that ensues, Stella inhabits the "third place"; both plots depend on the presence of the feminine to mediate between opposing masculine goals. The romantic choices she must make position her between the two political visions that the men represent – an unavoidable conundrum if, as Allan Hepburn suggests, "all political positions involve degrees of collaboration" (*Intrigue* 138). The novel's focus on "the relation of women to war" supplants militaristic conflict with a romantic dilemma, one in which Stella must bear the burden of political commitment and loss: "Stella collaborates by being in love…. Rather than relying on the skillful handling of guns in chase scenes, thrill in this novel depends on the skillful handling of moral quandaries" (Hepburn 136). Stella's impossible task of resolving Harrison and Kelway's military conflict, a consequence of her unwilling entanglement in conflicting seduction plots, thus requires her gendered difference. Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick's work on women's role in mediating male homosocial bonds – and her observation that "large scale social structures are congruent with… male-male-female erotic triangles" (26) – illuminates the political stakes of such a quandary. Despite their collapsing of binary oppositions, both plots

hinge on gender; this binary opposition, at least, is never challenged. As renée c. hoogland explains, "Whereas identity is exposed as a necessary fiction within a contingent set of discursive power/knowledge relations, the text focuses on what happens when this network is violently obliterated, while the heterosexual contract underpinning it still holds" (108). As the "hard center" around which the circulation of sameness and difference circulate, Stella's femininity produces both but also stands outside of both.

A de Certeauvian analysis of *The Heat of the Day* can provide alternatives to feminist readings that find Stella without adequate agency to resist the totalizing patriarchal and militarist narratives that threaten to subsume her. De Certeau argues that it is possible for subjects to evade disciplinary mechanisms even when there is no "outside" space in which to escape their power. In Bowen's novel, the organizing power of the carceral at once establishes binary oppositions and contains both sides of those oppositions – as Foucault argues, "tak[ing] back with one hand what it seems to exclude with the other" (301). This tension between monolithic ideology and the oppositions that it at once produces and relies upon – in particular, the boundaries that delineate inside and outside – is the engine that drives the novel's plots. Stella, positioned at the center of these plots, inhabits an interstitial space; both narratives position her as their "hard center," but she actually fractures their coherence. De Certeau's work on the "clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and make-shift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of 'discipline'" (xv) provides a crucial theoretical lens through which readers can interpret Stella's seeming passivity as a tactic of resistance.

Although Stella can only ever occupy the places where Harrison, Roderick, Robert, and the narrative situate her, she can rupture exclusionary value systems within and through her position therein. Through his examinations of "practices of everyday life" as "an art of being in

between," de Certeau demonstrates that the subject of discipline can, "without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him… [establish] within it a degree of plurality and creativity" (de Certeau 30). Engaging in acts of "poaching" in which they operate within the space of discipline, using the products of power for operations of their own, de Certeauvian subjects assert themselves by consuming, redefining, and redeploying the language of the other.[19] De Certeau's theory works through and against Foucault's discursive model by manipulating the affinities Foucault establishes among space, narrative, and agency. The "tactic," which stands in direct relation to the "strategies" available to disciplinary power,

> cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutionalized localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of the tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. (de Certeau xix)

By acting self-consciously as a consumer of rhetoric, both Harrison's and Robert's, without choosing between one "truth" and the other, Stella redeploys indeterminacy so as to resist the imperative to resolution. Of course, in the reality of war, this tactic is not sustainable in the long term; conflicts must be addressed, after all. Stella's production of ambiguity, however, nonetheless provides a real alternative, however provisional, to the logic of us/them that sustains violence: the logic of neither/nor.

This neither/nor logic resonates with Bowen's anxious Anglo-Irishness. Although opportunities to visit Bowen's Court were limited between 1939 and 1945, Bowen nonetheless traveled from England to Ireland in her role as an agent of British intelligence. Bowen furnished reports to the Ministry of Information about Irish attitudes toward the conflict,[20] a task that

frequently positioned her, politically and geographically, between the two nations (and certainly as a figure of betrayal – a spy – where Ireland was concerned). Although her activities were secret at the time, they certainly informed an article entitled "Eire," published in *The New Statesman* in 1941, in which Bowen is trenchant, if somewhat condescending, in her support of Irish neutrality:

> The decision – of which the momentousness was recognized – was made on behalf of a people young in political life, not yet adult in citizenship, now only just on the upgrade after internal strife and in no sense fit or ready to enter war. But the decision was not wholly grounded in weakness: it had one aspect of an assertion of strength. It was Eire's first major independent act. As such it had, and keeps, a symbolic as well as moral significance – a significance that identifies, for the people, Eire's neutrality with her integrity. (*MT* 31)

By equating Irish neutrality with Irish sovereignty, Bowen manipulates propagandistic notions of integrity, honour, and patriotism. She dislocates these terms from the Allied/Axis conflict and disrupts the binary logic of the two-sided war, creating a third space for Irish nationalist interests as an absent presence in the conflict (perhaps most notably manifested in the large scrawls of "EIRE" on Irish ground, alerting German bombers to its status as a *non*-target).[21]

Bowen's understanding of neutrality in these explicitly post-colonial terms contextualizes Stella's refusal to choose between Harrison and Robert in *The Heat of the Day*. Rather than Woolfian indifference or anti-feminist inability to negotiate the discourse of international conflict, Stella's practice of evading the necessity of choice – of choosing not to choose – might reflect an expression of sovereignty that is specifically informed by Bowen's contemporaneous war work. Similarly, the perceived separateness of the country house from the fields of war

might provide a provisional space wherein the ethics of such a tactic can be confronted. Whether Stella is trapped in a claustrophobic drawing room or threatened with domestic dissolution, home is a place where a sense of belonging – in terms of nation, family, and class – must be continually renegotiated. In her Afterword to *Bowen's Court*, penned in 1963, Bowen attests that writing about the family home was a tactic for writing *through* the war: "I tried to make it *my* means to approach truth" (*BC* 454). Similarly, for Stella, the necessity of visiting Mount Morris provides insight into her life in London. Most importantly, her trip represents a turning point in her relationships with Robert and Harrison. She learns that Harrison's story about visiting her uncle there is true – a revelation that causes her to suspect that his charges against Robert may also be credible.

Bowen's Court's function as "a means by which to approach truth" relies heavily on Bowen's self-consciously nostalgic attitude towards her family home. She describes *Bowen's Court* as a "magic mirror, reflecting something that did not really exist. That illusion – peace at its most ecstatic – I held to, to sustain me throughout the war…. War made me that image out of a house built of anxious history" (*BC* 457). In *The Heat of the Day*, however, Bowen consistently punctures the illusion of peace that Mount Morris offers Stella. News of Lieutenant-General Montgomery's November 1942 victory at El Alamein, decisive for the Allied forces, arrives at Mount Morris via the wireless during Stella's stay. The persistent sound of the radio emphasizes that, despite Stella's "assurance of being utterly out of reach" in Ireland (186), the war is not as distant as she thinks. Naïvely, she also imagines Ireland to be immune from wartime rationing. At Mount Morris, she is dazzled by the show of lights, with no blackout curtains to hide them: "Here, tonight, downstairs, those three yellow oblongs cast unspoilt on the gravel by the uncurtained windows had spelled ease, yes, but still more had set up a barbaric joy, as might

wine let soaking into the ground" (*HD* 186). This excess of light leads her to the presumption that there are "no shortages of any kind in Eire" (*HD* 186). Bowen's diction – "Here, tonight, downstairs" – echoes an earlier passage, describing Stella's nights in London: "To her, tonight, 'outside' meant the harmless world: the mischief was in her own and in other rooms" (*HD* 157). Through these linked domestic scenes, the novel presents Mount Morris as being subject to the same operations of power limning Stella's flat in London. In both scenes, Stella projects the "harmless" outside world from her position indoors: the comparisons between inside and outside result from the dissolution of domestic boundaries rather than their operation. "The exciting sensation of being outside war" (*HD* 186), in other words, is always revealed as illusory at the moment that it is most strongly experienced. Bowen thus undermines the carnivalesque potential that Stella identifies in Dublin. Rather than a "world inside out," as Bakhtin has identified the carnival, in which social hierarchies can be overturned and possibly renegotiated,[22] Stella's stay in Ireland will reveal the extent of war's totalizing reach.

At Mount Morris, Stella tests her potential to exist "outside time" and escape the exigencies of war. The text, however, repeatedly deflates the escapist promise of such a nostalgic notion. Exploring the downstairs rooms, Stella strains the "force of style" that makes the house's domestic organization cohere. In her relationships, as in her occupation of the big house's interior, Stella seeks to occupy aporias in historical narratives, making a space for herself both within and outside her world's multiple structuring events: the war, the Ascendancy, motherhood, and spy-counterspy scheming. In the drawing room, Stella imagines herself in the role of the lady of the house. She sees potential for feminine evasion of historical narratives, but the vision is not an attractive one. Imagining "Cousin Nettie Morris – and who now knew how many more before her?… pressed back, hour by hour, by the hours themselves, into cloudland,"

going "not quite mad, not quite even that, from in vain listening for meaning in the loudening ticking of the clock" (*HD* 193), Stella notices the chimneypiece clock, now missing its face. She confronts her reflection in the mirror and "became for a moment immortal as a portrait. Momentarily she became the lady of the house…. She wore the look of everything she had lost the secret of being" (*HD* 193). Melding with the identities of her erstwhile predecessors, Stella perceives herself as a kind of ghost, and absent presence within the intersecting national, class, and gender discourses that organize Mount Morris.

For Stella, Mount Morris provides objectivity and insight into her troubles in London without mitigating her marginalization by the discourses of power that have precipitated them. Like Bowen's Court for Bowen, the house offers a nostalgic illusion that provides Stella with the opposite of escape: the potential to inhabit more fully a subversively interstitial position – a practice that is grounded problematically in the "inherent wrong" of Anglo-Irish class privilege. Whereas the "hermetic world" that Stella inhabits with Robert makes her feel as if the war has "stopped," the liberating, ahistorical disconnectedness that she experiences at Mount Morris reconfirms the inevitable conscription of women into patriarchal narratives and domestic organizations. An "art of being in between" is thus revealed as being dangerously close to Cousin Nettie's feigned insanity: the mechanism by which Roderick's aunt, the former lady of Mount Morris, evades domestic obligation is voluntary incarceration in a home for the mentally ill. For Woolf, the "third emotion" between loving and fighting is "peace" (*BA* 83), a potential escape from the binary oppositions that justify war. For Bowen, peace is unattainable for female characters. The "third term" – whether among heteronormative romantic pairings or war's oppositions – is the female refugee herself, who mediates masculinist oppositions from a condition of inevitable betrayal. Stella's recognition of the limits to her evasive practices fuels

her decision to confront Robert, but not to abandon him: a decision that, inevitably, results in her continued forbearance of militarism's consequences.

Like her trips to Mount Morris, Stella's visit to Holme Dene, Robert's childhood home, confirms her suspicions of his fascist activities and undermines her fantasies of independence from war's influence. In contrast to the "force of style" that preserves the aristocratic moral integrity of Mount Morris, however, Holme Dene exudes a morally vacuous inauthenticity, which, the novel suggests, derives from middle-class pretensions to pastoral ideals. Holme Dene is a simulacrum of the country house that evokes (in rather an on-the-nose fashion) fascist spectacle. It contains furniture like "touring scenery" that can be reassembled anywhere to "get the same illusion" (*HD* 133); meanwhile, "swastika-arms of passages leading to nothing, stripped of carpet, bulbs gone from the light-sockets… flanked by doors with their keys turned" (289) organize the house. Robert's upbringing there has planted the seed of his fascist beliefs, the novel suggests. Like Mitford's Eugenia Malmains, Robert turns to fascism as an alternative to the social narrative that organizes his family home. Whereas Mitford portrays Eugenia's commitment to a nostalgic social vision somewhat sympathetically, however, Bowen is relentless in her condemnation of the Kelways' middle-class, kitschy domestic aesthetic, which aspires to the idyllic ideal of Englishness that is apotheosized in Mitford's Chalford Park. The Kelways, like Wodehouse's Roderick Spode, are parvenus, aspiring to an "authentic" English identity that the novel implicitly reserves for the landed gentry. The affinities between Holme Dene and fascist power, in fact, lie specifically in Holme Dene's manifestation of the Kelways' aspirations to be nostalgically, quaintly English: the lines drawn between "us" and "them," "home" and "foreignness," and "truth" and "untruth" are at once arbitrary, imitative, and relentlessly policed.

Stella's attitude towards the home and the socially incompetent and aggressive women

who live there is dismissive: "You could not account for this family headed by Mrs. Kelway by simply saying that it was middle-class, because that left you asking, middle of what? She saw the Kelways suspended in the middle of nothing… the effect was moral" (125). Unfortunately, the uncritical focalizing of the narrative through Stella's upper-middle-class sensibility reflects Bowen's own well-documented class prejudices; as Kristine A. Miller demonstrates, Bowen "relies on specific, class-based assumptions about the home" in order to critique gender roles (139).[23] Robert's personal history, like the home itself, is performative, epitomized by a wall of photographs, selected and arranged by his sister, that make Robert feel as if "'I don't exist – that I not only am but never have been… If to have gone through motions ever since one was born is, as I think now, criminal, here's my criminal record'" (*HD* 129). Robert's admission confirms what Harrison has suggested: that Robert is an "actor" (*HD* 39). Stella's project of "sp[ying] round a home," interpreted later by Harrison as a typical feminine reaction to the accusation of Robert's treachery (*HD* 144), allows her to confirm what she already knows: that Robert's identity, like all identities, is an effect of place, of boundaries drawn between self and other that produce and police moral distinctions. The "theatre" of Robert's family home "could not feel emptier than it is" (*HD* 129), but nonetheless imposes oppressive identity categories. Robert counters these with alternative simulacra: the overblown order and grandeur of fascism.

Even when she knows that Harrison's accusations are true, Stella acknowledges the duplicity of Robert's identity and refuses to resign their relationship to the logic embodied by Holme Dene. By insisting on the need for empathy and reciprocal understanding to make models of the self intelligible, Stella refuses to accept Holme Dene as an excuse for Robert's espionage. A middle-class upbringing, an overbearing mother, impossible expectations for the only son of a weak father – all these conditions characterize Robert's family home and dominate

his self-perception as a subject, but the alternative habitat of his relationship with Stella delegitimizes political extremism as an antidote. Stella demarcates the space of their relationship as being both substantial and disordered: "'You and I are an accident, if you like – outside us neither of us when we are together ever seems to look. How much of the "you" or the "me" is, even, outside of the "us"?'" (*HD* 210). Always privileging the relationship itself over either of their independent identities, Stella rejects boundaries and reaffirms their fantasy of an "us" without a "them," a relationship to which there is no "outside." When, just before his death, Robert tells Stella she must "reread me backwards, figure me out" (*HD* 304), the meanings that she finds in their story run counter to the political discourses that justify his actions. In fact, her position on her love affair with Robert not only acknowledges, but also subsumes and even erases, political difference: meeting Harrison after Robert's death, Stella suggests that he might have been "love's necessary missing part" (*HD* 361). Robert's turn to treason as an escape from the false sensibility of his strict middle-class upbringing is revealed, in Stella's re-reading of his story, to be in vain – Stella knows that there is no "outside" to panoptic structures of power, and that the best one can do is make a space for oneself inside them.

Through her perambulations of houses, Stella re-interprets war's destruction of categories of inside and outside. She reimagines domestic boundaries as de Certeauvian frontiers, spaces in which differences can be bridged instead of reified or violently eliminated. As "a middle place, composed of interactions and inter-views," de Certeau explains, "the frontier is a sort of void, a narrative sym-bol of exchanges and encounters" (127). If, as Caserio suggests, "For Bowen, narrative and history comprise the odd condition in which we perceive difference and disjunction and yet cannot tell sameness from difference or continuity from rupture" (274), this condition – which throws allegiance and identity into crisis – also opens a space, albeit a

tenuous one, where the feminine subject can dwell, a space in which she can redefine absolutes and manifest a disruptive, self-assertive counter-story that refuses the logic of war.

Similarly, Stella's imaginative spatialization of relationships, and particularly of the "habitat" of her relationship with Robert, undermines the logic of war by positing an "us" without a "them." Robert claims his spying is motivated by a need to have some kind of significance outside the "us" of his relationship: "'you have been my country,'" he tells Stella, "'But you've been too much because you are not enough – are you and I to be what we've known we are for nothing, nothing outside this room?'" (*HD* 307). Stella counters his self-justification, his need to "be on the winning side" (*HD* 310), with the argument that "'you cannot say there is not a country!'…. She had trodden every inch of a country with him, not perhaps least when she was alone" (*HD* 308-9). By supplanting the "imagined community" of the nation with the imagined country of her personal relationship – a tactic that Bowen replicates with her "magic mirror" account of *Bowen's Court* – Stella interrupts the teleology of conflict with an ethics of inaction and stasis: "Inside the ring of war, how peaceably little they had moved" (*HD* 309). As I have suggested, this tactic is perhaps grounded in Bowen's support of Irish neutrality during World War II as a crucial step towards national autonomy. While the agency that a de Certeauvan reading grants to Stella is ambiguous at best, it does provide a means by which to examine Stella's seeming passivity as a tactic of resistance. Through Stella's "spatial stories," *The Heat of the Day* manifests an anti-militarist, feminine state of exception to war's binary logic. Moving toward an ethics of the frontier rather than of the boundary – privileging indeterminacy and connection rather than boundaries and confrontation – illuminates the ethical potential of Stella's refusal to make a choice between opposing political commitments.

"In quest of this fading light": Nostalgic self-invention in *Brideshead Revisited*

In *Wigs on the Green*, *The Code of the Woosters*, and *The Heat of the Day*, middle-class characters, and particularly the upwardly mobile figure of the parvenu,[24] are characteristically susceptible to the lure of fascism, which is opposed to an implicitly moral aristocratic ethos, grounded in nostalgic hierarchies and epitomized by the country house. Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* takes a different approach, addressing English nationalist questions by situating the parvenu as the moral and narrative center of the text. Like the unnamed protagonist of *Rebecca*, Charles Ryder, Waugh's retrospective narrator, offers a memoir of a romanticized and irrevocably lost pastoral estate situated in an idealized past. Also like the second Mrs. de Winter, Charles is an interloper to the aristocratic world, whose authoritative reminiscences about the estate compensates for his lack of status and power within the class hierarchies of the country house. As Hepburn has demonstrated, the novel "can be interpreted as a comedy about social climbing narrated from the point of view of the social aspirant" ("Good Graces" 245). Waugh associates Ryder with nostalgic visions of Englishness: as his wife Celia exclaims, "'[Charles] *is* England to me'" (*BR* 255). In the novel's present, Brideshead is in decline, due to the Marchmain family's failure to thrive and to the national trauma of World War II (which has meant converting the estate into a military camp). Su has argued that Charles's nostalgia establishes "an ethical critique that insists on a return to the 'true' *ethos* or spirit of the nation" (122). This critique, as Su also notes, relies on Brideshead's decay: "This *ethos*… is constituted in the process of remembering it… only in the midst of decline can the true ideals of Britain be recognized" (122). The estate is now in disrepair, its grand fountain filled with soldiers' cigarette butts, and the family dispersed. Brideshead's decline enables Ryder to claim his place as the property's spiritual, if not actual, heir. *Brideshead Revisited* therefore employs a campy valuation of

decay and failure in order to accommodate middle-class and queer self-fashioning within the terms of the country house novel's conservative and classist framework. By situating Ryder's elegiac preservation of Brideshead within his memoir amid the Marchmains' dispersal and decline, the novel throws the assumed naturalness of compulsory heterosexuality and the prerogatives of masculine primogeniture into crisis. Through Ryder's love affairs with two of the Marchmains – Sebastian and, later, his sister Julia – his conversion to Catholicism, and his nostalgic commitment to a prelapsarian past, he appropriates and reimagines a national *ethos* symbolized by the estate.

Brideshead Revisited was first published in a limited edition in 1944, then revised for the general public in 1945, and revised again in 1960 (Kennedy 23). All references in this chapter are to the 1960 edition, in part because it includes a telling preface by Waugh, in which the author himself performs the nostalgia – and the compulsion to return – that is suggested by the novel's title. In the prologue and epilogue, which are set in the novel's present, Captain Charles Ryder returns to Brideshead, the idyll of his youth, which is now commissioned by the British government as an army base. The main action of the plot, however, takes place twenty years earlier. Waugh insists that the text is "a souvenir of the Second War rather than of the twenties and thirties, with which it ostensibly deals" (*BR* 8). Waugh notes that the "current cult of the English country house," which is how he identifies the popularity, for tourists, of National Trust properties in the 1960s, has forestalled the houses' inevitable decline; the book "is therefore a panegyric preached over an empty coffin" (8). The novel is a "war novel" insofar as it articulates, under the threat of destruction, a preemptive nostalgia for a national character that is perceived as being always already lost. Ryder seeks to escape the brutality of wartime by retreating to an idyllic, and largely imagined, past; at the same time, however, Waugh's Preface

situates that past within the discourses of wartime nationalism. Charles Ryder's and Waugh's repeated returns to Brideshead constitute Englishness as an echo; the ideal national space is one that can only ever be *re*visited. Like Wodehouse's clichéd comedies, the text assiduously disavows the presence or significance of an original symbolic manifestation of Englishness – Brideshead revisited, rather than the house as such, distills a nationalism that relies on nostalgia for its moral force.

Charles Ryder the narrator – as opposed to Charles Ryder, the young man who is the subject of his older self's memoir – returns to Brideshead, which he first visited as an Oxford student, in love with Sebastian. The older Charles is a convert to Catholicism, a reformed skeptic whose religious commitments seem to compete with his longing for the childlike paradise of his days at Brideshead with Sebastian. Valerie Kennedy identifies this tension as a "central problem" in the novel: "Charles's early experience of love with Sebastian dominates the text and overshadows both his love for Julia and his love of God" (29), she argues, with the result that "Charles's conversion belongs to a different order of reality from that of the other experiences in the novel" (37). Rather than a central problem, I consider Charles's twin faiths in Catholicism and in his idealized past to be complementary. Both allow Charles to share in the Marchmains' legacy, and both enable Charles to construct himself as a beacon of a national ethos that is necessarily lost. The moral equivalencies that Ryder implies between his conversion to Catholicism and his infatuation with Sebastian are implied by the novel's subtitle, *The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder*. Whether the irretrievable past is England's pre-Reformation history as a Catholic country or wine and strawberries in the afternoon with a young Sebastian, Charles claims the prerogative of evoking it in his memoir in order to define Englishness, elevating the moral status of both in the process.

Furthermore, Charles's homosexual and heterosexual affairs with Sebastian and Julia, like his Catholicism, are perhaps deployed in the service of class mobility, rather than as ends in themselves, as Hepburn has argued (248). The first time Charles has sex with Julia, tellingly, he portrays the act in terms of the inhabitation of property: "It was as though a deed of conveyance of her narrow loins had been drawn and sealed. I was making my first entry as the freeholder of a property I would enjoy and develop at leisure" (*BR* 248). Brideshead and Julia, his would-be bride, are comparably eroticized insofar as they each guarantee his moral and legal entitlement. His affairs and his conversion facilitate his potential claim to the estate, a hope that is dashed when Julia rejects him. This rejection, as I shall demonstrate, is consistent with the campiness with which Charles loves: his devotion is commensurate with the inevitable failure, destruction, or decay of his love object. Yet, Charles does inherit in the end, vicariously: he occupies Brideshead, now in shambles, as a military encampment. Alone among the soldiers, the newly Catholic Charles can perambulate the house, visit the chapel, and worship at the altar of the past.

Revisiting Brideshead, Charles laments, "it was not as it had been" (*BR* 11). He gains confidence as this impression intensifies, finally leading his second-in-command to remark, at the novel's end, "'You're looking unusually cheerful today'" (*BR* 331). Charles is energized by loss; he is attracted to it. His memoir accomplishes, in Ross's terms, a campy recuperation of lost cultural value, which transforms decay into opportunities for queer self-determination along with a middle-class appropriation of previously exclusive aristocratic codes. For this reason, nostalgia and melancholia are irresistible to him. He loves that Sebastian is "in love with his own childhood…. His teddy-bear, his nanny" (*BR* 100). Critics including Jeffrey Heath acknowledge that Sebastian is "unquestionably the most vivid character in the novel" (Heath 32); the

brilliance with which Sebastian is rendered, I would argue, stems from Charles's recognition that "his days in Arcadia were numbered" (*BR* 123). In terms of Charles's narrative, it is most appropriate that Sebastian, the golden child at Oxford and the reluctant darling of his mother, descend into alcoholism and exile, finally "suffering… maimed as he is – no dignity, no power of will" (*BR* 294). His abjection enables Charles to love him with a purity that was unattainable in their Oxford days, elevating the "profane" memories into "sacred" ones: as Sebastian's sister Cordelia puts it, "'No one is ever holy without suffering'" (*BR* 294). Similarly, Charles feels drawn to Julia because he perceives that, in the ten years since he first met the Marchmains, "the years had saddened her" (*BR* 228). Her air of disappointment is a "change in her from ten years ago… [it] was her reward, this haunting, magical sadness which spoke straight to the heart and struck silence; it was the completion of her beauty" (*BR* 228). Charles, during those ten years, has also experienced melancholy; nothing, he tells the reader, could compare with "the time of my friendship with Sebastian" (*BR* 214), including his years of marriage to Celia. In Charles's memoir, each character, including his own, achieves spiritual plenitude through the experience of loss.

During those ten years, Charles has found success as an architectural painter. He receives commissions to record houses "in the last decade of their grandeur," when their owners "salute their achievement at the moment of extinction" (*BR* 215-6). This work wins him considerable popular acclaim and social status. Charles reports that, during his separation from Sebastian, "My work upheld me, for I had chosen to do what I could do well, did better daily, and liked doing; incidentally it was something which no one else at that time was attempting to do" (*BR* 215). His work, in which he addresses and sustains nostalgia for the idyllic past, facilitates upward class mobility and reaffirms his authority over houses like Brideshead, as his affairs with

the Marchmains and his religious conversion do. Captain Charles Ryder performs his expertise at recording homes in decay through his memoir itself when, in the book's epilogue, he describes the ruins of Brideshead. Ending his visit in the chapel, he captures England's national ethos in a metonymic eternal flame. The chapel is "desolate," a condition that does not convey the "vanity" of the human labour it represents, he decides, but rather,

> Something quite remote from what the builders intended, has come out of their work, and out of the fierce little human tragedy in which I played; something none of us thought about at the time; a small red flame – a beaten-copper lamp of deplorable design relit before the beaten-copper door of a tabernacle; the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out…. It could not have been lit but for the builders and the tragedians, and there I found it this morning, burning anew among the old stones. (*BR* 331)

Through his roles both as a painter and as a memoirist, Charles takes the work of "builders" and "tragedians" and transforms them into something new: recognition of the moral and national ideals behind their work. The lamp is "relit," generating new cultural meanings and a newly authoritative identity for the narrator; its "deplorable design" co-opted into the sweeping nostalgic vision of his narrative.

Charles's narrative, of course, is Waugh's novel. *Brideshead Revisited*, a "panegyric preached over an empty coffin" (*BR* 8), ironically sustains the myth of the country house, insofar as myth is "a language that does not want to die," one that "wrests from the meanings which give it its sustenance an insidious, degraded survival" (Barthes 158). The novel lauds, rather than laments, the final destruction of its eponymous setting by the military. Later, Waugh acknowledges such a loss itself as an incomplete one. Just as Brideshead's destruction allows Charles Ryder to idealize

it as a symbol of England, the final survival of the country houses themselves, in the custodianship of the National Trust, reflects a cultural commitment to failure that fundamentally underpins the mid-twentieth-century country house novel. Waugh's preface reiterates this commitment. Similarly, *Rebecca*'s narrator candidly acknowledges that Manderley is a repository of violence and decay, and yet she obsessively reconstructs it in her memoir. Orlando's house and Pointz Hall reflect their national and political contexts in a claustrophobic, and even horrifying, *mise en abyme* effect – a phenomenon that does not prevent Woolf from subversively celebrating them. Such ironic commitment liberates the mythic form of the country house novel from its signification (Barthes 140-1). As Barthes suggests, "the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in turn, and to produce an *artificial myth*: and this reconstituted myth will in fact be a mythology. Since myth robs language of something, why not rob myth?" (161). Charles Ryder "robs" the mythic Brideshead of its original signification, which "the builders intended," and mythifies it differently, as a nostalgic symbol of which he is the privileged curator. Likewise, Waugh mythifies the "empty coffin" of the country house as a historically specific image of melancholic nationalist hyperbole, transforming it into a site of campy social and subjective transformation.

Each of these texts – *Wigs on the Green*, *The Code of the Woosters*, *The Heat of the Day*, and *Brideshead Revisited* – transforms the country house into "something quite remote from what the builders intended." Mitford, Wodehouse, Bowen, and Waugh manipulate the estate as national symbol and articulate new meanings through the "old stones" of ossified literary and social conventions. Whether the country house novel threatens to admit fascist ideals along with easily digestible English patriotic certainties, or resists oppressive ideologies by troubling the spatial, political, and moral distinctions upon which they rely, it consistently demonstrates the potential

of genre fiction to disrupt its own conventions. The country house novel occupies the epicenter of patriarchal and nationalist power and yet frequently operates at ideology's margins. Decline or upheaval, these novels suggest, is the condition for the reimagination of nationalist mythologies and the accommodation of new class, gender, and sexual identities therein. The enduring popularity of the country house novel perhaps lies in this troubling of the distinctions between center and margin: the persistence of style in the face of political, economic, and moral uncertainty both invites new opportunities for individual self-determination and reinstates the exclusionary ideologies that underpin nostalgic pastoral visions. The intersections among the country house ethos, fascist nostalgia, and British nationalist ideals provide provocative opportunities to negotiate, if not resolve, ethical quandaries of neutrality, irony, and indifference, and the nationalist imperative of choosing sides.

CONCLUSION

The country house novels of Daphne du Maurier, Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, Nancy Mitford, and Evelyn Waugh differ in their tones, plots, and levels of explicit political engagement. Yet, du Maurier's and Waugh's self-reflexive nostalgia, Woolf's feminist pacifism, Bowen's preoccupation with betrayal and interstitiality, and Mitford and Wodehouse's levity in the face of crisis each disrupt nationalist paradigms. Their texts illuminate avenues of escape and evasion, however limited, within discourses of conventional, complacent Englishness. By privileging the performance of unity and status over the guarantee of ethical and ontological depth, they reflect conservative hierarchies while undermining the coherence of their structuring values, including compulsory heterosexuality, patriarchy, aristocratic hegemony, and unquestioning patriotism. At the same time, the tension between ironic and reactionary nostalgia, which characterized the genre in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, necessarily limits the social and political subversion I have identified. After all, nostalgic social ideals were also central to racist, sexist, and homophobic fascist propaganda. The transformative potential of these narratives remains, therefore, ambiguous. Over the course of this study, it has become evident that the ethical and political relevance of these campy celebrations of patriotism and patriarchy lies in their perpetuation of this ambiguity, rather than their straightforward refusal of exclusionary norms. Ironic figurations of reactionary, escapist pastoral visions provide readers with nostalgic pleasure while prompting them to question the ethics of such enjoyment.

The inevitability of reinstating oppressive discourses is a limitation not only as far as these historically, generically, and thematically specific country house novels are concerned, but perhaps for all narratives that rely upon conventional forms to effect ironic critique. Ultimately, both genre fiction and parodies thereof can only signify as such when ossified conventions

remain discernible to the reader. The theoretical frame of this dissertation, however, shows how exposing such limits can be liberating: if discipline takes back with one hand what it seems to exclude with the other (Foucault, *DP* 301), then acknowledging the fact that there is no outside to power's operations is the necessary starting point for effective resistance. The country house novels that this dissertation has discussed expose the totalizing reach of the genre's structuring norms, and reveal them as being ethically vacuous constructions that fracture rather than unite social groups. The texts challenge readers to imagine alternative, more inclusive social narratives, while at the same time showing that such alternatives are unimaginable within the bourgeois conceptualization of community that they ironically or even cynically endorse.

There is no consoling possibility of escape from the nation, these authors insist; yet, characters can inhabit nationalist fictions in unpredictable ways. If Manderley is also a mandala,[1] a microcosm of the universe, then the totality that it represents is at its core a queer one. The mythic country house occupies the very locus of English nationalist, patriarchal, and imperialist might, but marginalized figures are always central to its operation. By enfolding and exposing nationalism's margins within "the heart of the house" (Woolf, *BA* 33), the genre reveals the ways in which center and margin pass through one another, like a Möbius strip or Leyden jar (Agamben, *HS* 37). It therefore provides opportunities to privilege interstitiality and indeterminacy, and thus articulates a feminist alternative both to gendered binaries that privilege masculinity and to the violent synthesis of opposites. Exposing the constitutive exclusions of both the country house novel and the nationalist discourse that it reifies, in other words, can destabilize the binaries that justify war. As Agamben demonstrates, power is most potent at its margins; those who are excluded from political power experience statist force most acutely. By privileging the points of view of these figures of exclusion, country house novels can queer

patriarchal and patriotic historical narratives, and recuperate individuals erased by mythic generalizations.

Crucial to such a project is the readerly enjoyment that the country house novel at once generates, invites, and problematizes. By exhausting generic conventions, these novels celebrate cliché and re-energize tired plot formulas. At the same time, their campy, elegiac tones invite readers at once to laugh at and to celebrate their own nostalgia. This tension is bound up with the bourgeois inclusivity of the feminine middlebrow: readers can identify with aristocratic mores even as they recognize their alienation from them. At the same time, characters always exceed outdated class and gender identities, and so readers become invested in individuals' evasions of social expectations that they cannot satisfy. *Rebecca*'s narrator, Orlando, Lucy Swithin, Stella Rodney, and Charles Ryder, to name a few examples, all negotiate carceral spaces in ways that change the meanings that such domains promote and police. They are, to use de Certeau's term, poachers, who reinscribe spaces of discipline with unpredictable, temporary, and subjective meanings that cannot be co-opted by discourses of power (de Certeau 40). Some characters, such as the narrator of *Rebecca* or Charles Ryder, seize narrative authority in this way; others, such as Orlando and Stella Rodney, embrace their exclusion from power as a means of fragmenting narrative coherence. In all cases, the reader occupies an interstitial position, tacitly committed to the genre's oppressive heteronormative expectations and yet, through the alignment of the reader's point of view with that of marginalized focalizing consciousnesses, invested in their dismantling. This interstitiality demands a queer reading practice, which is where I situate the real political potential of these texts. By focalizing texts through figures of difference, authors force the reader to confront his or her own status as a refugee – as one who is absorbed within the novels' snobbish class and gender ideals, but can also recognize them as

impossible to satisfy. Therefore he or she must privilege not the "official" nationalist histories manifested in the houses, but rather the distortions of those histories that result from their reception by figures of exclusion. Such an approach opens new spaces for empathy and connection even as the project of community-building is relentlessly undermined.

The empathy that campy critique generates, of course, has its own limits, especially when considered against the backdrop of war: as P. G. Wodehouse's misfortunes during World War II demonstrate, one can go too far in laughing at political and nationalist extremism. Wodehouse's mistake was *not* replicating official political divisions; his overstatement of similarities between German wartime bureaucracy and English peacetime stereotypes was personally and politically disastrous. Similarly, Woolf's comparison of middle-class English women with German Jews is a disturbing oversimplification, and Nancy Mitford's comedic send-up of fascist spectacle is, in retrospect, hopelessly naïve. Some refugees are more subject to overlapping systems of oppression than others, and it is ethically irresponsible to elide these distinctions. Yet, in the 1930s and '40s especially, the genre seemed to offer the temptation to do so. This condition further complicates the resistant potential of texts that are written, with very few exceptions, by white, English, middle- and upper-class authors. Undoubtedly, these texts reflect a specific historical moment. Their ambivalent nostalgia has sinister implications when considered in light of the Third Reich, which was in part justified by propagandistic constructions of a debased present and nostalgia for an ostensibly "pure" national past.

Given such obvious limitations, it is worth considering the enduring popularity of the country house novel, and the ease with which it has been adapted to television and film in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Despite its historical contingencies, the country house novel has experienced yet another renaissance – or even several – since World War II. That even

contemporary country house narratives are typically set in the pre-war or inter-war past suggests that the works I have discussed here are both representative and influential. I have argued that the genre's enduring popularity lies in the persistence of country house style despite political, economic, and moral uncertainty. This persistence has been replicated at the level of the genre itself: in 1981, for example, *Brideshead Revisited* was adapted as a BBC television serial to enormous popular and critical acclaim. Kazuo Ishiguro's superb Booker Prize-winning novel, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), comprises a devoted butler's nostalgic memoir, which chronicles his service to Lord Darlington, a Nazi sympathizer. The novel was also adapted to film, a critical success with eight Academy Award nominations. More recently, Julian Fellowes's film *Gosford Park* (2001) and the television series *Downton Abbey* (2010-present; now in its fourth season, with a fifth in production) have enjoyed mass popularity and laudatory receptions from critics. The genre's resiliency is tellingly proportionate to changes in class and gender politics, the decolonization of the English empire, and worldwide political upheaval. During the Thatcher era and in a post-9/11 and 7/7 Britain in particular, country house novels, television series, and films have continued to interrogate (and celebrate) entrenched class and gender categories, renegotiate the boundaries of local and national communities, and coordinate nostalgia with anxiety.

The country house novel is both a revealing cultural artifact and a potentially radical intervention in conventional narrative forms not despite, but rather because of the limitations it imposes on its own political critique. Reading a country house novel, I find it difficult to resist its incessant, multiplying, and mutually reinforcing images of comfort, leisure, and social harmony. It is hard not to sink complacently into the decadence of its florid domestic scenes, and embrace the promise of social and moral continuity that such inviting domesticity seems to

offer. Like Mrs. Manresa and Isa Oliver gazing at the lawn after too much champagne, however, I finally feel a little uncomfortable, a bit anxious. Even as the country house novel invites me into its illusion of a world impervious to the vagaries of history, it alienates me: its repetitive apotheosis of convention can be "senseless, hideous, stupefying" (Woolf, *BA* 61). The *mise en abyme* construction of the country house novel's microcosmic world, a self-perpetuating, self-replicating synecdoche of the nation, is at once far-reaching in its symbolic resonances and claustrophobically limited by its reliance upon social performances. Like the country pageant in *Between the Acts* or Stella's impossible choice in *The Heat of the Day*, the genre forces readers to confront their own circumscription by patriarchy and nationalism, and acknowledge the ways in which reassuring fictions of community fail to account for them. That doing so relies upon the final replication of these social structures ultimately forecloses the possibility of escape, but also demands readers' renewed commitment to figures of difference and narratives of failure.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Alison Light's pioneering study of middlebrow fiction demonstrates how the proliferation of "home-making" novels after World War I reflected a resurgence of conservative values. At the same time, Light argues, these texts also critique domestic ideals: "it was not the same old private life" (10). This study extends Light's project of illuminating the potential of "women's fiction" to revise gendered norms.

2. Nicola Humble sets forth a "working definition" of the feminine middlebrow, which I draw upon in this study: "the middlebrow novel is one that straddles the divide between the trashy romance or thriller on the one hand, and the philosophically or formally challenging novel on the other: offering narrative excitement without guilt, and intellectual stimulation without undue effort…. It is also a predominantly middle-class form." (11-12)

3. This point is by now well established, and has been the subject of extensive criticism. See Rita Felski, Alison Light, Nicola Humble, Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei, and Elizabeth Jane Harrison and Shirley Peterson.

4. Phyllis Lassner, Gill Plain, Lyndsey Stonebridge, and Judy Suh have all written at length on literary representations of women's wartime experience and feminist interventions in patriotic rhetoric.

5. See, for example, Ellen Eve Frank on "literary architecture" in nineteenth and twentieth century literature and fiction; Richard Gill on the English country house in literature; Bettina Knapp on architectural and literary archetypes; Victoria Rosner on modernism, architecture, and domesticity; and A. K. Weatherhead on English literary representations of

private residences.

6. For an excellent historicized definition of "Englishness," and its relation to literature and the concept of home, see also Judy Giles and Tim Middleton, eds., *Writing Englishness 1900-1950*.

7. See D. J. Taylor, *Bright Young People: The Lost Generation of London's Jazz Age* for a useful historical account of the exploits of this infamous social group in its political and social contexts.

8. The *OED* cites an article in the *Times* from April 1917 as the first usage of the phrase "home front."

9. Foucault's model of the carceral as a space in which techniques of training, discipline, and punishment are diffused into seemingly non-penitentiary spaces and practices: "The frontiers between confinement, judicial punishment and institutions of discipline, which were already blurred in the classical age, tended to disappear and to constitute a great carceral continuum that diffused penitentiary techniques into the most innocent disciplines, transmitting disciplinary norms into the very heart of the penal system and placing over the slightest illegality, the smallest irregularity, deviation or anomaly, the threat of delinquency" (*Discipline and Punish* 297).

10. De Certeau is explicit about the connection between consumption and agency: "The speech act is at the same time a use of language and an operation performed on it. We can attempt to apply this model to many non-linguistic operations by taking as our hypothesis that all these uses concern consumption" (33).

11. This insight is also central to Virginia Woolf's feminist pacifist argument in *Three Guineas* (1938). I explore this connection in Chapter 3.

12. Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth offers an invaluable explication of the narrative function of

consensus in *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel.*

13. Fabio Cleto lists these characteristics, among others, as appearing in early definitions of camp, which gained clandestine circulation in high culture to describe a certain literary style (the writings of Oscar Wilde, for example) "as literary enactments of precisely those strategies… traced in the drag urban scene" (9).

14. A. K. Weatherhead lists first-hand and fictional accounts of the often-comical discomforts of country houses, especially for guests (18).

15. Foucault develops this argument in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*.

CHAPTER 1

1. Pyrhönen characterizes the "Bluebeard Gothic" as a Gothic romance that uses the fairy-tale Bluebeard plot as its key intertext (3). In the Bluebeard tale, "a young woman marries a rich blue-bearded widower. He forbids her to enter his locked chamber, proclaiming that disobedience will result in her death. The defiant wife enters the room, finding there her murdered predecessors. Frightened, she drops the key into a pool of blood. Because the key is permanently stained, Bluebeard finds out about her disobedience. He is about to execute her, but she is saved in the nick of time" (Pyrhönen 3).

2. In 1938, *Rebecca* won the National Book Award for Favorite Novel of the Year in the United States. Although it has received limited critical attention, it has become "one of the most widely read novels of all time" (Kelly 66), and its popularity has been further enhanced by Alfred Hitchcock's Oscar-winning 1940 film adaptation of the same name. It should be noted that, until quite recently, its popular success has helped to relegate the novel to the easily-dismissed category of "romance" or "women's fiction": as Richard Kelly observes in 1987, "Despite the

literary snobs who will continue to patronize de Maurier's novels and despite the recent groups of feminists who see her romances enforcing traditional female values, millions of readers, especially women readers, continue to enjoy [du Maurier's] books and the films based upon her writings…. *Rebecca* is the classic Gothic romance of the twentieth century and as such will be around long after the high priests and priestesses of the current literary establishment have perished" (70). I aim to establish the literary relevance of *Rebecca* from the feminist point of view dismissed by Kelly.

3. Louise Harrington argues that "Manderley, and Rebecca's ghostly body, become sites where unconscious anxieties about national decline, the disintegration of gender divisions, and imperial degeneration are played out" (296).

4. See Nesbitt, Glen Cavaliero, Gill.

5. In Massé's terms, the Gothic involves "the representation of the *process* through which a woman becomes a masochist and assigns subjectivity to another" (3). The main male character, therefore, is at once antagonist (because he causes the woman pain) and hero (because through this process, he gains subjectivity in the eyes of the beaten woman, who grows to love him).

6. The de Winters' life on the Continent, where they achieve marital bliss despite their melancholy exile from England, calls to mind another famous English pair: the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. When Edward, Prince of Wales (later, and briefly, King Edward VIII) fell in love with Wallis Simpson, a twice-divorced American socialite, the monarchy faced an abdication crisis. Edward abdicated the throne less than a year after his accession in 1936, claiming he could not bear the burden of his position without "the help and support of the woman I love." Simpson's famously irreverent and domineering personality evokes Rebecca, but her class position, lower than her husband's, and the ambiguously "happy ending" to the

courtship – marriage on the Continent – suggests parallels with the narrator's story. Du Maurier was almost certainly aware of such connections; the absent presence of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and their sensational romance, intensifies the narrator's self-representation of an exiled paragon of unconditional marital commitment, romance, and English upper-class taste.

7. See Harbord 101 for a useful analysis of costume in *Rebecca*.

8. Benedict Anderson, in his famous work on nations as "imagined communities," argues that the nation is imagined as a "sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time" (26); it is thus idealized as being timeless and intrinsically unified. Anderson theorizes the ways in which the myths of nationalism, as cultural representations, produce a sense of shared experience with a large community of people, despite the fictionality of the ideal of "community in anonymity" that nationalism presupposes (see Anderson 35-6). Drawing from Anderson's work, McClintock demonstrates how nationalist myths obscure oppressive gendered, classed, and racial hierarchies: "Despite nationalists' ideological investment in the idea of popular *unity*, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender *difference*… nations are contested systems of cultural representation that limit and legitimate peoples' access to the resources of the nation-state" (353). By making visible the intertwining of gender, race, and class in her representation of the "savage" young English ingénue, the narrator of *Rebecca* achieves, through S/M role-playing, a queering of "natural" Englishness.

9. Camp is generally characterized as a "queer aesthetic" (Cleto); one that "expresses and confirms being a gay man" (Dyer 110); something that "signifies a *relationship between* things, people, and activities or qualities, and homosexuality" (Newton 102). While Pamela Robertson acknowledges that, "Any discussion of women's relation to camp will inevitably raise, rather

than settle, questions about appropriation, co-optation, and identity politics," she usefully argues that, "as an activity and a sensibility that foregrounds cross-sex and cross-gender identifications, camp provides an opportunity to talk about the many points of intersection, as well as the real differences, between feminist and gay theory, and among lesbians, heterosexual women, and gay men" (9). Because this chapter focuses on representations of gender performance and impersonation by women and men that identify (however unconvincingly) as heterosexual, I am borrowing from Robertson's model of "feminist camp" as gender parody (9-10). Robertson cites Alexander Doty's work, delineating camp as a discursive space similar to Doty's queerness: "the terms 'queer readings,' 'queer discourses,' and 'queer positions'… are attempts to account for the existence and expression of a wide range of positions within culture that are 'queer' or non-, anti-, or contra-straight" (Doty 3, qtd. Robertson 9). In this chapter, my use of the term "queerness" encompasses sexualities that include S/M fetishism, masochism, queer masculinity, lesbian desire, gender performance, and voyeurism.

10. "As a theater of signs, S/M grants temporary control over social risk. By scripting and controlling the *frame* of representation, in other words, the control frame – the diary, the camera, the theatrical scene – the player stages the delirious loss of control within a situation of extreme control" (McClintock 147).

11. The arrival of the distressed German sailors, who unintentionally shatter the peace of Manderley, is a harbinger of conflict to come: du Maurier acknowledges the threat of war with Germany on the horizon. Maxim's equanimity and generosity towards the sailors reflect ideals of gentlemanly Englishness, but also call the allegiances of Maxim, with his foreign-sounding last name, into question: when Frank asserts that "'Maxim is splendid at anything like this…. You'll find he will invite the whole crew back to Manderley,'" the coast-guard replies, "'He'd give the

coat off his back for any of his own people, I know that. I wish there were more like him in the country'" (*R* 285). Who are Maxim's "own people?" The question is further complicated when Maxim reveals that he killed his wife and possibly his unborn child. The episode thus throws categories of Englishness, and the value of such distinctions, into upheaval.

12. As Louise Harrington observes, "The characters in the text… conform to traditional ideas about upper class Englishness, from Beatrice's tweediness and familiarity with horses and dogs to Frank Crawley's polite deference to the narrator, to whom he always refers as 'Mrs. de Winter.'" Harrington argues that "these images are established to the extent that the text's use of them verges on caricature, thus destabilizing both the representation of certain codes of Englishness, and the ideal of Manderley as the apotheosis of that lifestyle" (294).

13. Several critics have cited *Mrs. Miniver* by Jan Struther as a model of ideal femininity in the period in which *Rebecca* was published. Judy Giles calls readers' attention to Mrs. Miniver's love of physical and emotional privacy, suggesting that such a wish is representative of mid-twentieth-century British women. As *Mrs. Miniver* demonstrates, "Readers in the 1930s may have found certain, historically specific pleasures in the self-contained solitude of the second Mrs. de Winter" (Giles 43). The narrator imagines Rebecca's show home transformed into a family home in "a period of glorious shabbiness," with sons "sprawling on the sofa with muddy boots, bringing with them always a litter of rods, and cricket bats, great clasp-knives, bows-and-arrows" (*R* 77). Alison Light identifies this domestic iconography with that in *Mrs. Miniver* (*Forever England* 117).

14. "Masoch's three women correspond to three fundamental mother images: the first is the primitive, uterine, hetaeric mother, mother of the cloaca and the swamps; the second is the Oedipal mother, the image of the beloved, who becomes linked with the sadistic father as victim

or as accomplice; and in between these two, the oral mother, mother of the steppe, who nurtures and brings death. We call her intermediate, but she may also come last of all, for she is both oral and silent and therefore has the last word" (Deleuze 55). In this formulation (without drawing too literal an equivalency) Manderley fulfills the place of the first mother, in that Maxim feels a fundamental narcissistic attachment with the place; the sadistic, beautiful Rebecca is the second; the second wife, of course, would be the third mother, who mediates between the masochist and the first two.

15. "The masochistic hero appears to be educated and fashioned by the authoritarian woman," Deleuze argues, "whereas basically it is he who forms her, dresses her for the part and prompts the harsh words she addresses to him. It is the victim who speaks through the mouth of his torturer, without sparing himself" (22).

16. "The contract presupposes in principle the free consent of the contracting parties and determines between them a system of reciprocal rights and duties; it cannot affect a third party and is valid for a limited period" (Deleuze 77).

17. The echoes of *Jane Eyre* in this scene and others are clear. For an excellent reading of *Rebecca* as a retelling of *Jane Eyre*, see Pyrhönen.

18. Driving with Maxim in Monte Carlo, the narrator wishes for an invention "that bottled up a memory, like a scent. And it never faded, and it never got stale" (*R* 40).

19. Wisker refers here to canonical works of English country house literature. Pemberley is the estate of Fitzwilliam Darcy in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Pemberton was the seat of Sir Lewis Pemberton, and the subject of Robert Herrick's 1648 poem "A Panegyric to Sir Lewis Pemberton." Howards End, of course, is the eponymous setting of E. M. Forster's 1910 novel.

20. "Dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping, and cooking are activities that seem to correspond to the characteristics of tactical ruses and surprises: clever tricks of the 'weak' within the order established by the 'strong,' an act of putting one over on the adversary on his own turf, hunters' tricks, maneuverably polymorph mobilities, jubilant, poetic, and warlike discoveries" (de Certeau 40).

21. "The reader takes neither the position of the author nor the author's position. He invents in texts something different from what they 'intended.' He detaches them from the (lost or accessory) origin. He combines their fragments and creates something un-known in the space organized by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meanings" (de Certeau 169).

22. In Deleuzian terms, Maxim's masochistic fantasy effects a parthenogenetic rebirth in which the father is absent.

23. See Blackford, Giles, Harbord, Jagose, Light, Pyrhönen, Wings.

24. Blackford argues that Mrs. Danvers's gaze doubles for the eyes of the narrator, looking at herself and assessing her inadequacies as mistress: "Although it would seem that Mrs. Danvers does become increasingly hostile to the second Mrs. de Winter, her words, looks, and actions can actually be read as a projection of the highly imaginative and insecure narrator" (244).

25. Blackford argues: "These housekeepers are, in a way, doing the newcomers a favor by demonstrating what being married to a house – and all that it signifies – is like. It is rather like being dead or in a trance, or so these uncanny servants symbolize" (234).

26. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the arborescent is like a tree: it has a single point of origin, and develops through the practice of "the One that becomes two" that characterizes binary logic (5). "Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems," they argue, "with centers of

significance and subjectification, central automata like organized memories. In the corresponding models, an element only receives information from a higher unit, and only receives a subjective affection along preestablished paths" (16). The arborescent is specifically aligned with the book, with the romance novel serving as a prime example: "The law of the book is the law of reflection, of the One that becomes two" (5).

27. As opposed to the arborescent, which is like a tree root, the rhizomatic is like growing grass, a decentered, anti-hierarchical system with no point of origin. It is not unified but multiple, organized by "principles of connection and heterogeneity" (Deleuze and Guattari 7) and "lines of flight" through which rhizomes "change in nature and connect with other multiplicities" (9). Deleuze and Guattari oppose the rhizome with the "classical or romantic book constituted by the interiority of a substance or subject" (9).

28. See Deleuze and Guattari 10 for a discussion of "lines of flight."

CHAPTER 2

1. In his comprehensive survey of Gothic literature, Jerrold E. Hogle observes that Gothic hauntings usually take the form of ghosts, spectres, or monsters that rise from antiquated realms "to manifest unresolved crimes or conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view" (2). Often, these unresolved conflicts exist at the very heart of family organization. Donna Heiland argues that these eruptions of the supernatural almost always concern the nation and its microcosm, the home: "The transgressive acts at the heart of gothic fiction generally focus on corruption in, or resistance to, the patriarchal structures that shaped the country's political life and its family life, and gender roles within those structures come in for particular scrutiny. Further, and importantly, these acts are often violent, and always frightening"

(5).

2. German Zeppelin raids during World War I, a precursor to the *Blitzkrieg* of World War II and other aerial bombing offensives, made the boundary between the war and the home front terribly porous.

3. There is a long-standing distinction between the "terror Gothic" or "feminine Gothic" and the "horror Gothic" or "masculine Gothic," terms which were first defined by Ann Radcliffe. As Hogle explains, "The first of these holds characters and readers mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety, and sanity kept largely out of sight or in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past, while the latter confronts the principal characters with the gross violence of physical or psychological dissolution, explicitly shattering the assumed norms (including the repressions) of everyday life with wildly shocking, and even revolting, consequences" (3).

4. I refer to Stephen Dedalus's famous claim in James Joyce's *Ulysses*: "'History… is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake'" (34).

5. Judith Wilt examines ghostly presences in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *A Room of One's Own*, considering how, in both works, ghosts provide a kind of solace, enabling characters' appreciation of the present and also emboldening them to an "ecstatic 'letting go'" (65). Wisker usefully examines country houses settings in *To the Lighthouse*, *Jacob's Room*, and "The Haunted House" in the context of English country house literature. Like Wilt, Wisker suggests that Woolf's ghosts express a sense of human continuity in the face of uncertainty. Wisker argues that Woolf uses Gothic tropes to update the English country house tradition by focusing on the day-to-day lives of women. Delsandro's reading of *Between the Acts* explores the queer performance of self within historical narratives, which, she argues, disrupts the

"(hetero)normative temporalities" that compose them (90). Saint-Amour offers a broader and more comprehensive survey of the Gothic in modernism in its political and historical contexts.

6. Wilt, Wisker, and Saint-Amour each consider the Gothic in modernism in terms of temporality: for Wilt and Wisker, it creates a reassuring and restorative continuity with the past, revealing feminine presences to recuperate their exclusion from characters' memories. Saint-Amour, in contrast, contends that the Gothic in modernism traces the "drift of suspense-events toward a condition of perpetual suspense" (210) as banal, everyday violence becomes a defining aspect of modernity. I extend Saint-Amour's argument, which he develops through a reading of Woolf's story "The Mark on the Wall," by demonstrating that such drifting toward suspense is pervasive in Woolf's canon. Starting with Delsandro's argument, that haunting in *Between the Acts* queers historical narratives by aligning historical subjects with actors, I draw connections among the Gothic and camp in *Orlando*, which will also underpin comparisons between *Orlando* and *Between the Acts* in Chapter 3. Erica L. Johnson's excellent Marxist and psychoanalytic reading of *Orlando*, which examines Orlando as a ghost with the help of Nancy Holland's feminist reading of Derrida's notion of "*hauntology*" (112), also demonstrates how exclusive national identities circumscribe individual identities. Johnson positions Orlando as a figure of exclusion, particularly after she becomes a woman. By drawing the work of Giorgio Agamben, Benedict Anderson, and Pamela Robertson into conversation with these critics, I draw new connections between nationality, gender, and haunting, and interpret characters' awareness of their own exclusion from nationalist narratives as a campy commitment to the subversive potential of nostalgic narrative.

7. For a detailed exposition of ways in which national ideology depends on essentializing class, gender, and racial identities, see Hovey 393.

8. Anderson demonstrates that, "The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving down (or up) history" (26).

9. In her excellent study of "queering history" in *Between the Acts*, to which this chapter is significantly indebted, Delsandro provides a detailed critical history of the figure of the ghost in queer theory (94). By extending the scope of Delsandro's work to Gothic representations of the country house and its implications for purposeful "indifference" over the course of Woolf's writings in the 1920s and '30s, I hope to illuminate further intersections among gender, sexuality, and nation as Woolf's final, ambivalent stance toward military conflict took shape.

10. Erica L. Johnson argues: "As a mnemonic device for national identity, the geography of England is indeed central to Orlando's identity, but through her parodic rendering of a frozen national space of Elizabethan England, Woolf also notes the limited extent to which even a crystallized landscape can represent the reality of the nation for all its inhabitants. She does this by inserting traces of those who, like Orlando, occupy the 'real' place of England yet who are not themselves real" (117). Johnson effectively demonstrates, "The icy seal over Orlando's national space materializes his homeland while dissipating those who do not possess the land" (118).

11. George M. Johnson develops this argument; see Johnson 246 for a detailed comparative analysis of the two works.

12. The image of the "tombs of kings" might also evoke the discovery of the tomb of King Tutankhamen in Egypt's Valley of Kings in November 1922, and the opening of the tomb in subsequent months.

13. In her discussion of this scene, Bowlby usefully quotes Freud's lecture on

"Femininity": "When you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is 'male or female?' and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty" (Freud 146, qtd. Bowlby 50).

14. De Man's work on autobiography applies to *Orlando* as it does to all fiction, because "the distinction between fiction and autobiography is not an either/or polarity but… is undecidable… [When] the author declares himself the subject of his own understanding," he makes explicit "the wider claim to authorship that takes place whenever a text is stated to be *by* someone and assumed to be understandable to the extent that this is the case" (922). Authorship itself is autobiographical, insofar as a particular knowing subject is assumed to have written the text; the authorial voice is that of a specific person.

15. Ernst Kantorowicz famously has described the patriotic ideal of the body politic as the "spectre of an absolutism exercised… by an abstract physiological fiction which in secular thought remains probably without parallel" (4).

16. Roger Hecht traces the pastoral tradition in English literature to demonstrate how the pastoral underpins patriarchal domination of nature and of women. After Orlando's transition to femininity and her self-positioning as "nature's bride," Hecht argues, Woolf constructs a "feminine pastoral" that "replaces the landscape of gender hierarchy and dominance with a near genderless landscape of mutual support and empowerment" (22-23). I am suggesting that the young Orlando's relationship with his land reflects a more conventional patriarchal approach of "possession, transformation, and naming" (Hecht 26), but the novel undermines the naturalness of this pastoral vision by highlighting the ways in which it is not the direct consequence of Orlando's masculinity; rather, both are constructed, in large part through Woolf's manipulation of figurative language.

17. One might consider the history of pastoral painting, which reached its apogee in the eighteenth century. Raymond Williams contends that agrarian bourgeois art "succeeded in creating in the land below their windows and terraces what Jonson at Penshurst had ideally imagined: a rural landscape emptied of rural labour and of labourers, a sylvan and watery prospect… from which the means of production had been banished" (125). In these paintings, for example by George Lambert and John Constable, in which "the order was being projected while it was also being composed" (126), rural workers are at once erased from and absorbed into the "view," which occludes and also naturalizes class injustice. Woolf's seventeenth-century urban view of the bumboat woman – and all the country people who have suffered a similar plight – effects an analogous transformation of subjects of the gaze into a landscape.

18. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben contends that sovereignty "presents itself as an incorporation of the state of nature in society, or, if one prefers, as a state of indistinction between nature and culture, between violence and law, and this very indistinction constitutes specifically sovereign violence" (35).

19. This doubleness lies in the distinction Agamben makes between *people* and *People*, which destabilizes the unitary subject through a dialectical oscillation between two positions: "on the one hand, the *People* as a whole and as an integral body politic and, on the other hand, the *people* as a subset and as fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies" (*Means* 31).

20. The necessity of the "outsider" to pastoral harmony is not, of course, unique to *Orlando*. One might consider Mrs. Bast and Mrs. McNab in *To the Lighthouse*, who labour to facilitate the novel's conclusion, but whose contributions are largely unacknowledged by the narrator function or by other characters (as I have discussed in this chapter). Mrs. Bast's name makes an intertextual reference to Leonard Bast, a working-class character in E. M. Forster's

Howards End who fathers a child with Helen Schlegel out of wedlock (1910). Despite his aspirations to cultural authority, Leonard is an outsider both to the Schlegels' cultural privilege and to the Wilcoxes' capitalist power. Leonard's death guarantees the persistence of the Schlegels' and Wilcoxes' alliance, while his illegitimate son stands to inherit Howards End, a country house. The novel's ending therefore suggests a newly inclusive nationalist vision, but also reaffirms Bast's exclusion. Like Orlando's entitlement, which is contingent upon exclusive social hierarchies, the upward social mobility of Leonard Bast's son requires the death of Bast himself.

21. Marie-Christine Leps charges that Agamben's biopolitics reproduces the "state of exception" without offering an alternative, thus reducing all manner of political oppression to a universalizing paradigm that can only reinforce the occlusion of historical subjects (25).

22. Nancy Cervetti provides a useful summary of *Orlando*'s reception history: see 132-3.

23. Agamben defines *bios* as that which "indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or group," and *zoē* as "the simple fact of living common to all living beings" (*HS* 1).

24. The aeroplane's appearance at the end of *Orlando* evokes the aeroplane that flies over London at the beginning of *Mrs. Dalloway*: both are reminders that the peace-time promise of commercial flight cannot be separated from the wartime mobilization of aircraft (and other technological marvels) as weapons of mass destruction.

CHAPTER 3

1. Grace Radin explains that the argument of *Three Guineas* was originally developed as part of a "Novel-Essay," which would eventually be published in two parts: Woolf's 1937 novel *The Years*, and her pamphlet *Three Guineas*, which Woolf published in 1938 as a complement to

the novel (xviii, 2). After the success of *Orlando*, Woolf "had become a symbolic figure to women who shared her aspirations and regarded her as a spokeswoman for those of her sex who wished to enter fully into the artistic and intellectual life of their time" (Radin 1). Woolf delivered a talk about the obstacles women would encounter as they entered the professions to the London and National Society for Women's Service in January 1931. The speech was well received, and inspired her to compose a hybrid essay and novel on the subject (Radin 1-2). As "the extreme difficulties of this task became apparent," however, Woolf decided to publish the novel and essay separately (Radin xvii).

2. At the time of Virginia Woolf's death on March 28, 1941, *Between the Acts* was as yet unpublished. According to her diary, Woolf finished the final typescript of the novel, at that point titled *Pointz Hall*, on November 23, 1940, and made further handwritten revisions until February 1941. On February 26, Woolf titled the book *Between the Acts* and gave it to Leonard Woolf to read. In March, she sent it to John Lehmann, Leonard's new partner at the Hogarth press, but then had second thoughts about publishing it (Briggs 389-90). Hogarth published the text posthumously on July 17, with a note on the text by Leonard Woolf stating that Virginia Woolf "would not, I believe, have made any large or material alterations in it, though she probably would have made a good many small corrections or revisions before passing the final proofs."

3. The *homo sacer* is the man who can be killed without his death being considered a homicide, yet cannot be sacrificed. In this sense he is outside both human and divine law (*HS* 73). As Agamben demonstrates, the figure of the sovereign requires *homo sacer*'s in-betweenness with regard to life and the law: "*The sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life – that is, life that may be killed without*

sacrifice – is the life that has been captured in this sphere" (*HS* 83, emphasis in original).

4. The diffusion of *homo sacer* throughout society is, as Agamben notes, partly a result of the expanded political agency afforded by democracy: "the spaces, the liberties, and the rights won by individuals in their conflicts with central powers always simultaneously prepared a tacit but increasing inscription of individuals' lives within the state order, thus offering a new and more dreadful foundation for the very sovereign power from which they wanted to liberate themselves" (*HS* 121). In this sense, it is a fundamental aspect of modernity that we are all, to some extent, *homines sacri*.

5. Marie-Christine Leps, for example, argues that citing Nazi concentration camps as the biopolitical paradigm of modernity erases, rather than preserves, specificity: "The problem with this kind of quasi-ontological and quasi-metaphysical structuralism is that rather important distinctions get lost in the wash: Marx's concept of class conflict is not equivalent to the Nazi 'final solution,' and a heuristic model that does not discern such disparity should be rethought" (25-6).

6. Mia Spiro points out that *Between the Acts* is not really a parody of a pageant, but rather a "novelization of one," in which the interruptions and intermissions that occur in the text, but not in the pageant, create a "novelized heteroglossia" that allows critique to occur (46). According to Gill Plain, "Woolf's fiction is not situated… in the hopes and aspirations of La Trobe's ludicrous pageant, but outside – in the space before, between and after the acts – where she attempts to created an alternative to the catalogue of rape that is patriarchal history" (127).

7. Rosenfeld argues that La Trobe's deployment of language in the pageant ethically refuses transcendent meaning: "The language Woolf imagines and La Trobe engenders lacks verisimilitude: there are no objects behind its words. It is language used entirely without craft,

and in it lies the only hope of a new plot for the world" (129). The aural aspects of setting include not only language, but also music, ambient sounds, and noise. Michele Pridmore-Brown stresses the "soundscape" of the novel, which foregrounds new media technologies and the ways in which they can create illusions of unity and mobilize individuals in the service of oppressive nationalist discourses, including fascism.

8. Littlejohn lists a number of coincident causes for their decline: "the continued depression in farm prices; the increasing difficulty in finding servants to run the house, as better jobs became available in cities; the death of heirs in the war; and the growth to record levels of income and inheritance tax." (40)

9. For more on Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West, see Chapter 2. Sackville-West published an extensive history of her family and Knole, a representative example of country-house literature's elegiac tone in the twentieth century (*Knole and the Sackvilles* [1922]).

10. All references to *An Outline of History* refer to the fourth edition, published in 1922. In this edition, the subtitle was changed from *The Whole Story of Man* to *Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*.

11. "At the most elementary level, [walking] has a triple 'enunciative' function: it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acting-out of the language); and it implies *relations* among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic 'contracts' in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an 'allocution,' 'posits another opposite' the speaker and puts contracts between interlocutors into action)." (de Certeau 97-8)

12. In Christian iconography, the scallop shell symbolizes the Virgin Mary and the

Immaculate Conception. Mary, as a passive vessel through which God's Word is made flesh, is both erased and apotheosized in her role as such. As the ideal woman of Christian morality, Mary embodies the denial of sexual agency to women in patriarchal narratives. Like the Virgin Mary, the "ancestress[es] of sorts" on the landing and in the dining room are "claimed" as matriarchal figures; their relationships to the real, named patriarch is fabricated, for in "real life they had never met, the long lady and the man holding his horse by the rein" (*BA* 36). The Christian significance of the shell imagery, while not made explicit in the text, is consistent with what Judith L. Johnston identifies as a triumverate configuration of masculinity in the novel, in which Reverend Streatfield, Bart Oliver, and Giles Oliver represent the three exclusively male professions: the ministry, the army, and commerce (261). In conjunction with Christian ideals of feminine passivity, however, the shell imagery also recalls Lady Orlando's past as a statesman, and thus punctures the story of the Mary's Annunciation and Christ's birth with another miraculous genealogy: Orlando's transition from a man to a woman.

13. Mia Spiro provides an excellent and comprehensive analysis of the meanings of Manresa's name (98-105).

14. See Chapter 2 for my discussion of Mrs. McNab's abject unifying function in "Time Passes."

15. Each critic discusses *Between the Acts* as opposing or resisting fascist discourses and style, reflecting the political position that Woolf made clear in *Three Guineas*. Suh suggests that Woolf mobilizes the discourses of modernism to undo humanist oppositions, thus mirroring fascist strategies of collapsing binaries and reinstating difference. Plain, in contrast, argues that Woolf is engaged in a desperate attempt to find an alternative fiction to nationalist myths of unity, but confronts the repeated failure of consoling fictions. Plain contends that Woolf

explores an alternative, Kristevan temporal mode that juxtaposes masculine progress with a feminine "continuity" with the past (130); ultimately recognizing such an alternative impossible, Woolf offers "a semi-ironic bequeathing of 'women's time' to future generations" even as she absents herself from history (134-5). Pridmore-Brown reads representations of technology as an anti-fascist strategy; whereas Rosenfeld confronts the limits of language, positing a "lack of verisimilitude" as "the only hope of a new plot for the world" (129). Spiro probes how the novel offers an ethical resistance to Nazism, but rightly points out that it also reinstates some of its underlying exclusionary discourses.

16. According to Pridmore-Brown, Woolf "uses a gramophone to demonstrate how patriotic messages, inscribed on bodies through rhythm and rhyme, can transform individuals into a herd that can be controlled by a charismatic leader" (408).

17. Spiro demonstrates that, while the final efficacy of Woolf's text against Nazi discourses remains ambiguous, the experimental mode of *Between the Acts* conveys an ethical project of reimagining social realities. The spectacle, a defining aspect of modern life, reached its apogee in Nazi propaganda (Spiro 25-6). Yet, as Spiro notes, many interpretations of the susceptibility of the German populace to Nazi spectacle wrongly ascribe total passivity to the German public (32). However much responsibility one assigns to spectators, however, theories of the spectacle in general offer little hope for resistance. "Are we inescapably trapped in our dependency on an inauthentic illusion of social reality?" Spiro asks. "How then can anyone imagine a society that is more liberal, tolerant, or less violent and oppressive?" (33). Spiro addresses these crucial questions – which are central to my study also – by examining how Woolf's text simultaneously highlights and critiques the effect of spectacle to point toward "an alternative future, in which members of society are aware, conscious, and accepting of multiple

contradictions and viewpoints" (39-40).

18. See Suh 142 for a summary of theoretical approaches to fascism and its "binding" of oppositions.

CHAPTER 4

1. See Chapter 3 for my discussion of shell imagery in Virginia Woolf's novels. Like the country houses of the Ramsays, Orlando, and the Olivers, the literary country houses I examine here might be interpreted as generically overdetermined "shells." They function as ethically and ontologically empty vessels for entrenched patriarchal legacies, and manifest totalizing nationalist ideologies through the infinite recursion of synecdochal miniatures of England.

2. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that "gender identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (25). Since gender norms are therefore impossible to embody perfectly, parody of the idea of a "natural" gender can critique and undermine oppressive binaries: "the repetition of heterosexual constructs both gay and straight may well by the inevitable site of the denaturalization and mobilization of gender categories" (41).

3. Ross reminds readers that camp can subvert but also replicate hierarchies. His language, perhaps surprisingly, echoes Williams's Marxist critique of the country house and its reliance on alienated labour: "The pseudoaristocratic patrilineage of camp cannot be overstated," because it "involves a division between manual and mental labor, or, in camp's own terminology, between ignorenti and cognoscenti…. [It] involves a celebration, on the part of the cognoscenti, of the alienation, distance, and incongruity reflected in the very process by which it locates hitherto unexpected value in a popular or obscure text. Camp would thus be reserved for

those with a high degree of cultural capital" (Ross 316).

4. In "Notes Against Camp," Britton argues that camp is necessarily "individualistic and apolitical," because, "in a contemporary context, gay camp seems little more than a kind of anaesthetic, allowing one to remain inside oppressive relations while enjoying the illusory confidence that one is flouting them" (138). Britton's points are crucial interventions in critical discussions around camp, which continues to evade definite definition. I am not convinced, however, by Britton's characterization of camp as "a solvent of context" (140) – as Robertson, Ross, and others have demonstrated, the recontextualization of camp artifacts enables a recuperation of lost cultural value and the generation of new meanings, including the redefinition of social norms.

5. Humble argues that one of the characteristics of the twentieth-century feminine middlebrow is "its sense of the family as a profoundly eccentric organization" (149). This is particularly true in its representation of the "stylish" eccentricities of the pre-eminently aristocratic (Humble 168).

6. The Diehard movement, fashionable among Edwardian aristocrats, promoted feudal revivalism. It was known for is reactionary and eugenic ideas, especially concerning women and race (Stone 353).

7. There are several extensive biographies of the Mitford siblings. *The Sisters* by Mary S. Lovell, the source of much of the historical context provided here, offers an even-handed biography of the seven Mitford children and their parents.

8. Mitford's joke refers to an instrument of political terror. As Michael R. Ebner explains, "In small towns, where everyone knew everyone, Fascists inflicted ritual humiliation on their enemies, a powerful strategy of terror understood by all. Black Shirts forced their opponents to

drink castor oil… and then sent them home, wrenching with pain and covered in their own feces" (32).

9. See, for example, Humble's argument that *The Pursuit of Love* represents an attempt to "transform the exploits of her sisters into eccentricities only slightly more exaggerated than those thought perfectly proper in the English aristocracy. In marketing her family as wild, strange, but essentially benign eccentrics, Mitford defuses that opprobrium that had attached itself to the family" after the political scandals of the 1930s (166-7).

10. Charlotte Mosley makes this point also, in her preface to *Wigs on the Green* (ix).

11. The "Totleigh Towers Saga" includes *The Code of the Woosters* (1938); *The Mating Season* (1949); *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* (1963); and *Much Obliged, Jeeves* (1971).

12. See Chapters 1 and 2 for more extended discussions of Gothic tropes in country house literature.

13. For an account of Wodehouse's internment, see Ratcliffe 293-310.

14. Waugh's apology to Wodehouse confirms Woolf's own recognition, which I discussed in Chapter 3, that indifference to masculine militarism became ethically unfeasible as Hitler's and Mussolini's imperialist threats became more urgent.

15. Critics including R. F. Foster, Declan Kiberd, and W. J. McCormack have characterized Bowen as inhabiting a "third place" with regard to Anglo-Irish national identifications. Miller disagrees, arguing that Bowen's class privilege occludes the contradictions of her Anglo-Irish identity during the war. For Miller, *Bowen's Court* represents a retreat from the war through inhabitation of the family's status and property, which imposes a false sense of order on the relationship between private life and national histories. Miller provides a summary of critical approaches to Bowen's wartime fiction, which examines the author's framing of

parallels between the individual and history in terms of her own Anglo-Irish identity (143). Although Miller makes important observations about Bowen's class prejudices, I agree with Foster, Kiberd, and McCormack that Bowen's writing shows a nuanced understanding of the contradictions of her class and national identities.

16. Several critics identify the inevitability of history and the dominance of patriarchal power as the story's ruling forces, which, they argue, deny self-determination to female characters. Harriet Chessman, for example, interprets women as objects either of silence or self-betrayal: "Women, in Bowen's vision, are inherently outsiders to discourse, unless they turn traitor and defect to the other side" (124). Gill Plain argues that although Stella is placed in a position of choice, she "cannot be the novel's arbiter of meaning" because she is always the object of masculine desire rather than the subject of her own story (186). Chessman and Plain's readings usefully examine Stella's circumscription by phallocentric discourse. By evaluating Stella's potential for agency only within the patriarchal logic of Harrison's threats and demands, however, critics privilege male characters' interpretations of Stella's behaviour. As Allan Hepburn rightly points out, Bowen's placement of the romantic plot at the center of the spy novel designates Stella, not Harrison or Kelway, as the arbiter of a judgment that is finally undecidable: "Men place the onus of understanding on Stella" (*Intrigue* 139). As Hepburn explains, "Instead of choosing whether women will be love objects… traitors… or moles…. Bowen demonstrates that equivalent roles are not only irrelevant to Stella, but limit the subtleties of her political position" (139). Phyllis Lassner reads Stella as the representative of "maternal presence" whose position gives her interpretive authority: "In a war story where interpretation seems impossible, the woman is suspected of harboring secret meaning" (135, 125). Stella's refusal – rather than inability – to provide the interpretations demanded of her creates, in

Lassner's words, "defensive entropy" that destabilizes the patriarchal language of absolutes (121). My reading is indebted to Hepburn's and Lassner's explications of how Stella's seeming passivity in fact reflects her acknowledgement of a scenario in which no ethically unambiguous choice is possible. I expand upon these readings of feminine agency in *The Heat of the Day* by demonstrating how Stella's tactic of occupying symbolic domestic spaces likewise destabilizes sphere ideology and opens aporias in seemingly monolithic discourses of patriarchy and wartime patriotism.

17. Bowen herself anxiously challenged this notion. In a 1946 article, published in *Vogue* and entitled "Ireland Makes Irish," Bowen rebuts the charge that Irish big houses are "Fairy-tale retreats from the harsher realities of the twentieth century," asserting, "I, who love these houses, would rather see them razed to the ground than believe that was true, and I do not believe it true" (*People, Places, Things* 155). Bowen elaborates, "Inherent in this way of life, as in all others, is responsibility" (*PPT* 155). I suspect that Bowen was more nostalgic for a disappearing way of life than she insists here; however, her fictional and non-fictional writings attest to the fact that she took seriously the political quandary of her Anglo-Irish privilege.

18. Ellmann's Foucauldian reading of *The Heat of the Day* identifies the problem, for Bowen's characters, of claiming personal space: "While the lovers strive to make one little room an everywhere, Bowen compresses everywhere into a little room, or more precisely six carceral spaces," which are linked by Harrison's intrusion into all of them (157). Ellmann's identification of the novel's settings as carcerals, in which national, gendered, and class identities are constantly produced and policed, informs my study by illuminating the political import of seemingly private domestic spaces. By focusing on the novel's country house settings in particular, however, this analysis examines the potential of a nostalgic country house ethos to offer an alternative to war's

violent and totalizing production of binary oppositions.

19. De Certeau demonstrates that, "The speech act is at the same time a use of language and an operation performed on it. We can attempt to apply this model to many non-linguistic operations by taking as our hypothesis that all these uses concern consumption" (33).

20. R. F. Foster provides a thoughtful, well-researched discussion of Bowen's intelligence work during the war, and its intersections with her vexed national identifications (113-20).

21. Although Ireland was not wholly neutral – for example, Ireland afforded rights-of-way for Allied ships in Irish waters – the Emergency government took measures to demonstrate Irish neutrality, such as making large markings on seaside land, which could be read from above, to alert pilots that they were flying over neutral ground.

22. In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin describes the literary carnivalesque as the overturning of social norms through humour and chaos, a practice with roots in the carnivals of the Middle Ages. Although the "gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities" is temporary, it can offer potential for cultural change (Bakhtin 11).

23. Bowen's class prejudices are well documented, notably by Bowen herself. In the afterword to *Bowen's Court*, for example, Bowen implies that property ownership bestows morality (*BC* 455). Acknowledging these prejudices is crucial for a clear-eyed analysis of evasive self-assertions that are accessible to female characters, which are limited by Bowen's class politics.

24. Suh situates the parvenu among the conventions of the country house genre: "The figure of the parvenu in classic country house poetry embodies a grave threat to the country house ethos by introducing deracinated urban values to the countryside, and typically enables the speaker to lament or satirize the imminent modern decay of hospitality" (135-6).

CONCLUSION

1. The near-homophony of Manderley and mandala implies a deliberate pun on du Maurier's part. A mandala is a Hindu or Buddhist spiritual symbol that represents a microcosm of the universe. More generally, it is a plan, chart, or geometric pattern that represents the cosmos metaphysically or symbolically. The pun, situating an English country house among Hindu and Buddhist religious symbolism, reflects the reach of the British empire – a connection that is also suggested by the homophony of Manderley and Mandalay, which was a British colony from 1885-1948.

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