

OVERSTEPPING THE BOUNDS: DOMESTIC
UPHEAVAL, REMOVAL, AND PERSONHOOD IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN'S
WRITING

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Abstract: This project discusses works by three nineteenth-century American women writers who wrote in the sentimental, domestic genre so popular with readers in an era that upheld domesticity, a dominant nineteenth-century ideology that designated home as middle-class women's main realm of influence, as the foremost authority on women's identity. While many sentimental and domestic works from the era embrace domesticity and its exaltation of women as wives and mothers first and foremost, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Susan Warner, and Harriet Jacobs, while not completely resisting this ideology, push beyond it to engage in conversations regarding women's identity that highlight nuance and individuality. This study examines these writers' general descriptions of domestic space in their works and significantly underscores the representations of domestic upheaval and removal they feature. In addressing this upheaval, this project demonstrates how each writer not only exposes the porous and illusory nature of home's borders but also uses this dismantling of boundaries to forward versions of personhood for women that overstep the group identity assigned them by the ideology of domesticity and to advance instead an identity that underscores women's individual personhood.

While the introduction briefly explains how I initially formed my line of inquiry for this study, the second chapter provides a concise history of scholars' critical assessments of nineteenth-century American women's writing and how this project adds to this scholarship. Chapter Three explores Catharine Maria Sedgwick's language and scenes of exile within four of her novels and argues that the author uses domestic upheaval as an opportunity to showcase her heroines' unique identities. Focusing on Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), Chapter Four discusses how Warner's heroine, Ellen Montgomery, overcomes the instability of her early removal from home and develops a stable sense of self through her Calvinist belief in heaven as her one unchanging home. Chapter Five then analyzes Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) for how Linda Brent's longing for a home of her own indicates more than simply ownership of a domestic space, and the conclusion brings everything full circle to address the twentieth-century's New Domesticity.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

“Gentle Christian, perhaps I have overstepped the bounds prescribed my sex,” begins Zoriana in Susanna Rowson’s 1794 play *Slaves in Algiers; or, a Struggle for Freedom*.¹ Zoriana speaks these words to the American captive Henry just prior to confessing her love for him, but within the context of Rowson’s play, the words take on a richer, somewhat doubled meaning. Rowson’s drama references a hostage crisis taking place as she wrote, in which pirates from Algiers had captured several American merchant ships trading in the Mediterranean and held their crew members captive for ransom. Set in and around the dey’s palace, the play dramatizes a fictional escape attempt and slave uprising incited by these American hostages, the results of a plan devised by both them and foreigners sympathetic to their plight. Zoriana represents the dey’s daughter who has fallen in love with an American captive, but she also bravely pledges to help the Americans escape her father’s hold and even takes part in devising their getaway. Rowson includes other powerful women in the cast as well, such as Fetnah, the daughter of a European Jewish trader, who not only quickly improvises a ruse to save her lover from the dey’s anger and exhibits courage in aiding the escape and uprising, but also delivers many of the script’s most forceful lines regarding female empowerment. Even throughout the sentimental storylines, Rowson’s women, in fact, largely prove the most capable and intelligent of all the characters, though the script ultimately endorses

women's duty to men, seen most directly in the stouthearted Fetnah relinquishing her lover and desires for America out of her duty to care for her father. Rowson, too, ambivalently concludes the play with an epilogue in which she, as the voice of her women audience members, proclaims,

“She says that we should have supreme dominion,
“And in good truth, we're all of her opinion.
“Women were born for universal sway;
“Men to adore, be silent, and obey.”

Similar to Fetnah's character, Rowson walks this sentiment back in the next several lines when she explains that women's "sway" lies mainly in performing their duties to care for husbands and families, but even here it seems the writer knowingly winks at us just a bit when concluding that, by doing their duty, women "hold in silken chains the lordly tyrant man."² We might also glimpse this knowing wink behind Zoriana's words as well, for when the character demurely remarks that she may have "overstepped the bounds prescribed her sex" in professing her love, we could just as easily imagine Rowson speaking the same words to her audience regarding what her play implies about the women of her day.

Zoriana's words demonstrate a double meaning in my project's title as well. The following chapters discuss works by three nineteenth-century American women writers who wrote in the sentimental, domestic genre so popular with readers in an era that upheld domesticity, a dominant nineteenth-century ideology that assigned home as middle-class women's main realm of influence, as the foremost authority on women's identity. While many sentimental and domestic works from the era embrace domesticity and its exaltation of women as wives and mothers first and foremost, the writers featured in this study, while not completely resisting this ideology, push beyond it to forward

alternative versions of personhood for women that underscore their individuality and strength. Accordingly, the words “overstepping the bounds” first of all reference the ways in which these writers step beyond the bounds of domesticity and its group identity for women to forward forms of personhood based on multiple factors both within and outside of the home. The word *bounds*, however, also denotes physical borders of spaces, such as houses and buildings, as well as the arbitrary borders used to demarcate geographical locations, such as cities, states, and nations. According to these definitions, “overstepping the bounds,” then, highlights another meaning for my project, one that indicates the ways in which the women characters presented in these writers’ works showcase their individuality and assert their personhood most when they step outside the physical boundaries of homes and home-places. While not necessarily the spaces identified by scholars today as the “public sphere” (such as marketplaces or political arenas), these outside spaces become areas in which these women characters meaningfully interact and connect with others in ways that help them to understand and define themselves as individuals and not faceless members within a group identity. Zoriana’s words in both of these interpretations thus fit well with this study’s direction, for whether these writers address domesticity’s bounds or the borders of home, their works overstep the bounds prescribed to their sex by expanding the ways women of their era might be identified and understood.

“She Lived as Much in These Things as in the Realities”

Interestingly, I did not initially come to this project through reading any nineteenth-century women’s writing or, really, any women’s writing at all, but through a

turn-of-the-century naturalist novel written by a man at a time when America began to emerge as a global industrial power. One of the first courses in which I enrolled as a new doctoral student focused on classic American travel narratives, so for my final paper of the semester, I chose to examine Theodore Dreiser's novel *Sister Carrie* (1900), a story about small-town girl Caroline Meeber's move to the big city, first to Chicago and then to New York. When analyzing this novel for how it highlights travel, I discovered that, throughout the text, Carrie seems constantly on the move, so much so, in fact, that scholars over the last century have taken to mapping her movements in a number of ways, not only through her physical travel but also through tracking the flow of money in the text or charting her changing consumer habits and social standings. All of this movement, however, led my inquiry in a direction that surprised me, for it significantly drew my attention to all the times when Carrie is *not* moving rather than the many times in which she is, directing my exploration of the novel away from notions of travel. As I looked more intently at Carrie's stationary times, in fact, I recognized that she never remains still for long but, instead, restlessly moves from place to place, prompting me then to ask, *Why does Carrie exhibit such restlessness?* My eventual answer formed the main argument of my paper: namely, that the traditional home-spaces in which Carrie resides during her times at rest do not satisfy her desire for comfort and belonging, two important qualities generally associated with nineteenth-century domestic ideals. In a nod to how industrialism and other social factors began to change people's notions of home at the turn of the century, Dreiser's Carrie turns to more unconventional home-like spaces to see her desires fulfilled, spaces that will significantly challenge the era's dominant domestic conceptions. This *Sister Carrie* project, then, represents my first foray into

studying writers' representations of home, and the following pages here present a truncated version of my analysis.

With Carrie's story arc in the novel, Dreiser highlights three different kinds of movement: physical travel, seen in her moves to Chicago and New York as well as her travel abroad when an actress; social climbing, imaged in her rise from impoverished small-town girl to Broadway actress; and relational distancing, glimpsed in how her relationships with others become less and less intimate the higher she climbs on the social ladder. Corresponding to this, her stationary times represent periods in which she not only rests from physical travel but also demonstrates no socioeconomic movement and maintains relatively constant relationships. The two most notable of these times (living with two different men: the dandy Drouet in Chicago and with Hurstwood, a married man, in New York) feature Carrie generally performing the traditional homemaker role, yet these times last only briefly before restlessness overtakes her and she moves once again. These short stints at homemaking that seem always to end in agitation illustrate that, while she appears to desire a place of security and belonging that she can call home, the traditional domestic spaces she occupies with Drouet and Hurstwood do not fit this bill. True, Carrie's deep desire for socioeconomic advancement also prompts many of her movements—Dreiser notes at the novel's start that Carrie “was interested in her charms, quick to understand the keener pleasures of life, ambitious to gain in material things,” and “dreaming wild dreams of some vague, far-off supremacy.”³ Dreiser frequently juxtaposes this desire, however, with Carrie's thoughts of her Columbia City childhood home, underscoring the way in which she longs possibly just as deeply to find domestic comfort and belonging: “She longed and longed and longed. It was now for the old

cottage room in Columbia City, now the mansions upon the Shore Drive” (87). These twin yet somewhat opposing desires placed so closely together throughout the text indicate that Carrie does not yet know what kind of home will most satisfy her deepest desires, that she likely does not yet understand what she wants most of all.⁴ And because she never finds herself at home in the flats she cohabits with Drouet and Hurstwood, she must continue moving in efforts to find the satisfaction she craves.

In her search, Carrie discovers two home-like stand-ins that largely provide this satisfaction, and though not conventional home spaces, she continually returns to them, both physically and imaginatively, whenever she yearns for the comfort and belonging traditionally associated with domestic spaces. The first of these spaces, her rocking chair, becomes the refuge to which she most often retreats when wrestling with her city identity or her desire for luxury and elevated social standing. Even as she moves from one place to another throughout the text, her living spaces invariably contain a rocking chair, and though an image generally associated with conventional domesticity, Carrie’s chair represents the space she dreams her dreams of grandeur outside the home, dreams that push against the chair’s domestic associations. Carrie’s other home-like space, the theater stage, thus physically realizes that for which she dreams, for on the stage she finally attains the wealth and fame she imagined for herself at her journey’s beginning. Dreiser, too, illustrates how the stage offers Carrie a place of acceptance and belonging, as he repeatedly expounds her “naturally imitative” disposition that specifically fitted her for an acting position and also observes how the theater “opened for her as if for its own.” In contrast with the North Shore Drive mansions “which waved her coldly away,” as well as the flats with Drouet and Hurstwood that only intensify her longings, the theater “took

her by the hand kindly, as one who says, ‘My dear, come in, ’” and gives her a place in which “she makes sense” (117, 129). These two spaces together, then, the rocking chair and the stage, evince the home-like qualities she desires: her rocking chair becomes the space to which she runs for refuge, while she most easily experiences a sense of belonging in the theater. Dreiser succinctly articulates, in fact, how these spaces function together to provide Carrie security and comfort:

For Carrie, as we well know, the stage had a great attraction. She had never forgotten her one histrionic achievement in Chicago. It dwelt in her mind and occupied her consciousness during many long afternoons in which her rocking-chair and her latest novel contributed the only pleasures of her state. Never could she witness a play without having her own ability vividly brought to consciousness. Some scenes made her long to be a part of them—to give expression to the feelings which she, in the place of the character represented would feel. Almost invariably she would carry the vivid imaginations away with her and brood over them the next day alone. She lived as much in these things as in the realities which made up her daily life. (228)

Here we see Carrie dreaming of the stage in the secure refuge of her rocking chair, and we also see how she lived within those dreams, as the stage offers her a kinship and belonging that “made her long to be a part of” what she sees and experiences there.

The above excerpt’s last line, “She lived as much in these things as in the realities which made up her daily life,” also suggests how both the rocking chair and the stage function as what spatial theorist Edward Soja conceptualizes as Thirdspace.⁵ In *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996), Soja theorizes different types or levels of space and identifies them on a graduated scale: “real” or “empirical space” comprises what he labels Firstspace, where “imagined” or “conceived space” constitutes what he marks as Secondspace. He then contrasts these with the next level, Thirdspace, which he describes as “a creative recombination or extension” of both real and imagined spaces. “Simultaneously real and imagined and

more,” explains Soja, “the exploration of Thirdspace can be described and inscribed in journeys to ‘real-and-imagined’ (or perhaps ‘realandimagined’?) places.” Inspired largely by Henri Lefebvre’s work, Soja propounds the need for what he deems “thirding,” the addition of other themes and ideas to epistemological binaries (such as the real versus imagined binary) so to “crack open” their oppositions and provide “a critical ‘other-than’ choice that speaks and critiques through its otherness.”⁶ In other words, Thirdspace critiques binary ways of thinking by simultaneously performing two opposing spatial functions and yet maintaining a distinguishable spatiality from both: not real-*or*-imagined but real-*and*-imagined and “Other”.

In *Sister Carrie*, the rocking chair and the theater both function as Thirdspace, as throughout the novel, Dreiser presents both places as simultaneously real and imagined space, and in this simultaneity, they transform for Carrie into the distinguishable Other space of home. Her rocking chair, for instance, not only presents a real, physical space in which Carrie tangibly sits and rocks back and forth; it also functions as imagined space, for there, as she daydreams, she enters the worlds of her desires, where she either achieves wealth and fame on the stage or finds herself back in her childhood home. In essence, the chair, while real, also becomes these imagined places. When Drouet first enlists Carrie for an acting role, for example, she retreats to her rocking chair and ponders what this opportunity might mean: “As usual, her imagination exaggerated the possibilities for her,” Dreiser observes. “As she rocked to and fro she felt the tensivity of woe in abandonment, the magnificence of wrath after deception, the languour of sorrow after defeat. Thoughts of all the charming women she had seen in plays—every fancy, every illusion which she had concerning the stage—now came back as a returning tide

after the ebb” (118). Here Carrie does not only imaginatively picture herself acting in a play but also feels the emotions of the actors themselves and participates with them in their stage experiences: she enters that imagined world while still in the confines of her physical chair. And as she does this, the openness resulting from the simultaneity of the chair’s both real and imagined space supplies Carrie a sense of comfort, similar to that of a traditional domestic space, thus making the chair a distinguishable “Other” space: an unconventional home for her.

A similar transformation also takes place with the theater in the novel. For one, any theater represents Thirdspace on at least some level, as the real, physical space of a theater’s stage, curtains, and seats simultaneously transforms into the imagined worlds, eras, and peoples portrayed within its plays, often transporting audiences in those real seats into the theater’s imagined worlds. Dreiser, though, additionally conveys the theater’s Thirdspace qualities specifically for Carrie in a couple ways: For one, she often conflates the physical being of the theater with her own dreams and desires for wealth and fame, frequently seeing the “large, empty, shadowy play-house” as a “wondrous reality ... above the common mass, above idleness, above want, above insignificance” (280). To Carrie, the theater as Thirdspace is not only a common building full of common things but also a gateway to an imagined world above all the commonness, where she need not fear impoverishment or dullness or going valueless and unnoticed. For two, Carrie’s biggest stage successes occur when she most loses herself in her imagination while acting, as Dreiser remarks, “The accessories she needed were within her own imagination. The acting of others could not affect them” (139). Here Dreiser indicates that, when on stage and “in the moment” during a play, the physical realities of the

theater—the stage, the props, other actors, the audience—all melt away as Carrie imaginatively enters the world that she acts out; while still in the real space of the theater, she simultaneously inhabits the play’s imagined space. In both of these ways, Dreiser demonstrates why Carrie feels so at home in the theater, why she there finds a sense of belonging often associated with traditional domestic spaces, for her tendency to live within her thoughts and dreams suits her for the stage just as much as her “naturally imitative” disposition. The theater, then, similar to the rocking chair, functions as Thirdspace for Carrie in that its simultaneous real and imagined space also creates the distinguishable Other space of an untraditional home for her.

In addition to identifying Thirdspace as simultaneously real and imagined space, Soja also argues that this simultaneity should “open up our spatial imaginaries to ways of thinking and acting politically that respond to all binarisms, to any attempt to confine thought and political action to only two alternatives, by interjecting an-Other set of choices.”⁷ Corresponding to this, the rocking chair and theater as Thirdspace reflect this binary-opening potential, specifically binaries associated with dominant Victorian-era notions of home, such as the supposed separation between a public sphere constituted by society and the marketplace versus the private domestic sphere. Carrie’s rocking chair challenges this binary, for people and events from the public sphere frequently invade the domestic sphere’s privacy as Carrie invites them to march through the dreams she lives out while rocking in her chair at her different apartments. The theater likewise critiques the binary as well, for the public sphere of the theater eventually becomes a private sanctuary for her, armed with attendants who bar others from intruding on her privacy and thus allowing her to be “self-withdrawing” and “reserved” in her home-like theater

space (353).⁸ Similar to the spheres binary, too, the home versus away binary represents another opposition critiqued by the Thirdspace rocking chair and theater. The chair, for instance, an emblem of traditional domestic spaces, additionally portrays Carrie at travel, for there she visits and inhabits various imaginative social and cultural worlds, making her both at home and away from home at the same time. And in addition to this, no matter where Carrie physically travels, her rocking-chair home-space travels with her, invariably occupying a space in her life no matter where she goes. The theater, on the other hand, while away from conventional domestic spaces as well as imaging in its plays the away-ness of other times and worlds, operates as another of Carrie's unconventional home-spaces in the way it provides her the welcome, comfort and belonging traditional domestic spaces do not.

As the rocking chair and theater function as Thirdspace by challenging these dominant binaries, then, the critique they generate also interestingly calls into question any moral hierarchy these binary notions of home prescribe. Dreiser hinges Carrie's story on one such binary, which he delineates at the novel's beginning: "When a girl leaves her home at eighteen, she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse. Of an intermediate balance, under the circumstances, there is no possibility" (1). This excerpt exhibits the moral judgments often inscribed by traditional nineteenth-century conceptions of home, for here, Dreiser not only posits a rigid and unnuanced opposition between home ("saving hands") and away ("cosmopolitan"); he also uses a young woman's virtue as means to lade this opposition with moral value: home invariably equals "better" while cosmopolitan equals "worse". The way Carrie's rocking

chair and the theater challenge the stability of such binaries, however, suggests that the moral hierarchy attached to these binaries should be questioned as well. That the rocking chair and theater additionally provide Carrie with “an-Other set of choices” for the home-like qualities she desires also indicates that the binary Dreiser sets up and the oppositional moral judgments he forwards with it do not encompass all of the options for evaluating Carrie and the choices she makes. When we arrive at the novel’s conclusion, in fact, determining whether Carrie has indeed become “better” or “worse” proves more complex than simply aligning her choices with one side of Dreiser’s binary or the other.

Carrie’s dissatisfaction with traditional domestic spaces coupled with the way she finds the peace of home in unconventional places upends the era’s dominant domestic ideologies and calls into question that which many nineteenth-century people took for granted regarding home. Soja’s Thirdspace theory also interestingly mirrors this ambivalence. While he claims that Thirdspace can potentially guide us in “our search for emancipatory change and freedom from domination,” he also remarks, “Dialectical thinking is difficult, for it challenges all conventional modes of thought and taken-for-granted epistemologies. It is disorderly, unruly, constantly evolving, unfixed, never presentable in permanent constructions.”⁹ Carrie’s ambiguous disquiet at the novel’s conclusion demonstrates the difficulty of this “dialectical thinking,” for challenging dominant conceptions of home, whatever positive potential it might carry, can also produce anxiety due to the dynamic, unstable sense of place it reveals. Even in the midst of this disillusionment, however, Carrie still manages to locate spaces in which she finds refuge and belonging, if not complete contentment, suggesting that people can find the qualities they desire in home even in the unlikely of places.

Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing

After completing the above project, I became more and more interested in the concept and place of home and determined to explore this as a topic for this current study, but though I had chosen early and nineteenth-century American writing as my doctoral specialization, I had not until that project read much about domesticity and all it entailed. Because the era's women writers so often discuss domestic topics in their works, I directed my attention to nineteenth-century women's publications and initially thought I would examine the era's domestic advice literature, that is until I discovered the wealth of sentimental domestic fiction women had published. I became hooked. Not only did I engage with these writers' representations of home and what those representations forward about identity and desire, but I also noticed how many of these works also feature domestic upheaval and scenes of removal in their stories. That a genre supposedly so fixated on uplifting home as a secure and stable refuge for women would essentially blow up the home repeatedly in its fictions intrigued me and led me to consider why this happens so much in these women's writing. Accordingly, I adopted this line of inquiry for this project's topic, and the following chapters outline what I see happening in the narratives of three prominent women writers: Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Susan Warner, and Harriet Jacobs.

Chapter 2, however, provides the context for my examination of these writers' works. I first discuss a brief history of how critics have received and critiqued nineteenth-century American domestic fiction, beginning with the generally negative critical assessments of the early to mid-twentieth century up into the late-twentieth century when

scholars began to recover these women's publications, many of which had gone out of print. Within this discussion, I also offer a definition and concise history of American domesticity, using Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The American Woman's Home* (1869), a domestic advice book from the era, as a reference point. In the chapter's latter half, I articulate more fully my project's overall argument: that these women writers all highlight domestic upheaval as opportunities to advance alternative versions of personhood for women that go beyond their identification as wives and mothers by simultaneously encompassing domesticity and pushing beyond it to underscore women's individuality. I additionally explain in this section the theoretical framework—mainly geographer Doreen Massey's theories regarding “that place called home”—that I use for the analysis of women's writing demonstrated throughout this project. Here, I again use Beecher and Stowe's advice book as an example of these theories.

In Chapter 3, I examine four novels written by Catharine Maria Sedgwick: *A New-England Tale* (1822), *Hope Leslie* (1827), *Home* (1835), and *The Linwoods* (1835). I outline how Sedgwick frequently references the concept of “exile” in these works, as she uses language evocative of exile and also features several scenes of removal in all of these novels. I contend that, in focusing on exile and removal, Sedgwick not only demonstrates the precariousness of nineteenth-century homes, especially for women, but also uses those removals and upheavals as opportunities to forward her heroines' individual identities. She does so by highlighting the amalgam of both traditionally domestic and unconventional character traits each heroine portrays, traits that also correspond to her description of the ideal American citizen.

Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1850) features in Chapter 4, as I explore the way in which the early exile experienced by her young heroine, Ellen Montgomery, prompts Ellen to search for a more stable place to call home. I maintain that Ellen does not find the security she desires until she looks to religion and the heaven it preaches, as Warner draws on the Calvinist teachings of her Presbyterian faith to argue that God and heaven alone can provide stability amidst chaos, as well as bring Ellen the sense of self and personhood that her domestic upheaval disrupts early in her life.

Chapter 5 highlights Harriet Jacobs' autobiographical novel *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). Here I examine how Jacobs depicts her literary persona, Linda Brent, literally overstepping home's bounds in her escape from the slave South to the northeastern states. In this examination, I explore how Brent's acts of literary subterfuge, seen both in letters she writes her slave master and in her life narrative itself, become ways she exposes the illusoriness of the boundaries and borders by which white people distinguished themselves as the superior race. I also analyze Brent's repeated desire for a home of her own and argue that this desire, paired with how she describes her childhood and grandmother's homes, demonstrates that home for her means more than four physical walls; it also, and more significantly, entails citizenly participation in the national community.

To conclude this project, I turn briefly to Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's novel *Pembroke* (1893) and how Freeman portrays her heroine reentering a broken home-space and restoring it with an unconventional act, one that her culture deems inappropriate but that interestingly brings healing to the home's occupant and transformation to their stagnant town. I then compare this act to a recent twenty-first-century movement dubbed

the New Domesticity, in which many of today's women are leaving the workforce to reenter their homes and homemaking positions with the intent of transforming the world. I discuss the similarities apparent between both nineteenth-century domesticity and this new domesticity, one of which presents as an adverse tendency to essentialize women's identities. In this way, I bring the dissertation full circle, illustrating that, though nineteenth-century domesticity seems a past relic rendered as history by feminism's work, we still have much we can discern from these early writers' representations of home and calls for the recognition of women's individuality and unique personhood.

CHAPTER II
THE “MOVEABLE SCREENS” OF DOMESTIC FICTION’S CRITICAL HISTORY
AND BLURRED BOUNDARIES

“But those novels with old-fashioned heroes and heroines in them—excuse me, Miss Kingsbury—are ruinous!” exclaims the minister Sewell in William Dean Howells’ *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1884). At a dinner party appearing half-way into the novel, the minister tears into the era’s popular fiction, largely comprised of women’s works, claiming it as “altogether noxious” and deriding many of these novels’ characteristic portrayal of self-sacrifice as “psychical suicide” and “as wholly immoral as the spectacle of a man falling upon his sword.”¹ Sewell most closely represents Howells’ own feelings on the fiction of his era, as the author fills Sewell’s mouth with sentiments he would later pen in an April 1887 “Editor’s Study” column in *Harper’s Magazine*. Here Howells complains of popular fictions’ “gaudy hero and heroine,” whom he claims hold their readers (especially women readers) “so much in ignorance of the world they misrepresent” by unrealistically sacrificing self at what he fashions as the altar of love and duty. He tracks as far as to call the fiction that houses these characters the “fungus-growth with which the fields of literature teem every day” and classes these novels with “opium-eating” and entertainments such as “card-playing and horse-racing.”²

Though Howells never mentions women writers by name, neither as a group nor as specific authors, his comments presage what would become a common twentieth-

century critical conception of many nineteenth-century women's works, a conception pointedly derisive of those works that emphasize domesticity, self-sacrifice, and duty as signature features in their stories and especially their heroines.³ Writing in the first two-thirds of the twentieth-century, critics such as Fred Lewis Pattee, Herbert Ross Brown, and Ann Douglas, often decried the sentimentalism these fictions portrayed, as well as what they saw as the glorifying of domesticity and a perceived separate spheres ideology that consigned women to the home. This attitude toward many women's works resulted in the majority of them falling out of print, sadly forgotten until feminist scholars in the last third of the twentieth century began a recovery movement to restore them to scholars' and readers' attention. To work against the derogatory bias of previous critics, early recovery scholars such as Nina Baym and Jane Tompkins contended that many nineteenth-century women writers, instead of supporting their era's ideologies of exalted domesticity and of separate public and private spheres, subtly resist and subvert these notions in their writing. As this recovery effort neared the twenty-first century, however, scholars such as Lora Romero and Linda McDowell began to challenge both the viewpoint that women writers whole-heartedly exalt domesticity and the viewpoint that they whole-heartedly resist it. These scholars even question the premises for our conceptions of nineteenth-century separate spheres contexts and suggest that women's fictions demonstrate an ambivalence to their era's cultural ideologies.

In attempting to come to terms with how women writers deal with domesticity and the public/private binary, critics and scholars have ironically created another binary: that of these writers' perceived advocacy of or resistance to their culture. While recent scholars claim these writers hold the two binary sides in tension through their

ambivalence to domesticity, we also see that through this tension, nineteenth-century women writers open up threads of conversation that extend beyond the domestic concerns of women's home lives. Many of these authors' storylines and characters transcend the advocacy/resistance binary, as these writers create new conversational spaces that overstep the bounds of domesticity and its group identification of women as wives and mothers to advocate alternative versions of personhood and individual identities for women in powerful and provocative ways. In combining private sphere domesticity with notions of public sphere community and citizenship, these writers likewise challenge the public/private binary as they expose the porousness, and thus illusoriness, of the boundaries between these two spheres. Even the era's domestic advice books, such as Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The American Woman's Home* (1869), as well as their authors' lives, indicate this subtle troubling of separate spheres ideologies even as they explicate and exalt the woman's position in the home. Though not official suffragists, these women lived lives and wrote of lives for women that acknowledge a civic power that reaches beyond simply marriage and the raising of future male citizens.

Into the Critical Abyss

In a now famous passage of a January 19th, 1855, letter to publisher William D. Ticknor, Nathaniel Hawthorne proclaimed that "America is now wholly given over to a d——d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash."⁴ While he arguably writes these words out of frustration and possibly a bit of jealousy at the popular success of many women's fictions over his own works, in a letter to Ticknor two weeks later, Hawthorne further explains

his assessment of these writers: “Generally women write like emasculated men,” he comments, “and are only to be distinguished from male authors by greater feebleness and folly.”⁵ Almost a century later, literary scholar Fred Lewis Pattee would take up this connection between emasculation and women writers and run with it, characterizing the entire decade of the 1850s, one of the most prolific for these women, as “feminine” in his book’s title, *The Feminine Fifties* (1940). This word choice may appear at first glance to indicate women writers’ popular success at this time, but he quickly qualifies the word in the first pages of his text by commenting that it easily encompasses all the other “‘f’ words that describe phases of the decade: *fervid, fevered, furious, fatuous, fertile, feeling, florid, furbelowed, fighting, funny,*” all adjectives describing the women-led “war of nerves” and “emotionalism” he perceives the decade reflected. Pattee echoes Howells’ comparison of nineteenth-century popular fiction to a drug when commenting, “Large numbers of middle-aged, middle-class women were taking to fiction as a narcotic, as a means for escape,” and he refers to women writers’ sentimentalism as “the feminine disease of the decade,” with one of its symptoms being women’s “desire to create romantic fiction.” Throughout the book, he reserves little good to say about any women’s works, often using negative reviews and parodies to characterize and summarize widely popular novels such as Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), Maria Cummins’ *The Lamplighter* (1854), and Fanny Fern’s *Ruth Hall* (1855). Heavily showering most of the decade’s women’s fictions with disparaging labels such as “ephemera” and “infinite chaos,” Pattee’s critique of these works significantly represents much of the modernist criticism that drove many of these titles out of print until the latter third of the twentieth century.⁶

Herbert Ross Brown likewise openly voices his disdain for nineteenth-century women's writing, when in the preface to his book *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789–1860* (1940) he remarks, "Many of the titles of these faded favorites, it is charitable to remark at the threshold of this book, deserve to appear on any list of the world's worst fiction." While he qualifies this statement by mentioning that, as a collection, these works "represent a wide level of taste," he essentially disregards their value for anything other than cultural study, arguing that "very few of these once popular novels are read today by critical readers with anything save an ironical appreciation." Like Howells, Brown negatively targets these works' underscoring of self-sacrifice, suggesting that "this popular absurdity" demonstrates a lack of these writers' restraint and that "the taint of exhibitionism and ... a selfish indulgence in the feelings" form the driving impulses behind this bent toward "self-abnegation." Brown also takes aim, however, at nineteenth-century women's popular representation of domesticity, contending that, by exalting the home, domestic fictions "were as limited in scope as the narrow sphere of interests of the women readers for whom they were designed." He supports the notion that these domestic novels advocated for women's consignment to a private sphere, as he indicates that they rarely record any instances of dissatisfaction with this confined life. Brown, though, finds what he perceives as these fictions' prescriptions for the ideal wife as "little short of appalling," denigrating their heroines' passivity and arguing that women's depictions of the marriage relationship only highlight "the weakness and helplessness of their sex." He concludes that their advice proved enough to recommend the celibate life to single women. While he comes down hard on what he sees as women writers' glorification of patriarchal dominance, Brown also betrays, however, what seems a faint

desire to let these writers off the hook when he proclaims that they, for the most part, do not fit into the categorization of realist writers. “The mirror which they held up to Nature was either concave or convex,” he observes, “the reflection was not that of life itself, but a distortion of it. Here are to be found the compensations in fiction for the coveted values life had failed to give them.” In other words, according to Brown, women writers felt compelled to incorporate unrealistically exalted pictures of domestic life and romanticize their heroines in such a way that they and their readers might escape their own mundane existences and live vicariously through these fictions.⁷

Although writing three decades later, Henry Nash Smith, in his article “The Scribbling Women and the Cosmic Success Story” (1974), likewise categorizes most nineteenth-century women writers as advocates for domesticity and separate spheres ideologies. As he uses popular women’s works between the 1850s and 1870s to frame the works of classical male authors such as Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, and Henry James, Smith highlights women’s writing as unthinking and its popularity as unplanned, “an accidental creation rather than the result of conscious contrivance on the part of either authors or publishers.” He claims that the era’s popular fiction centered on “soothing” its readers anxieties by “expressing only received ideas” rather than challenging the status quo and the culture’s dominant ideologies, most specifically those of “civilization, progress, and Manifest Destiny,” ideologies that, he argues, these fictions reflect. Smith explains that newly-middle-class readers found themselves anxious over losing their newfound socioeconomic mobility and so desired reassurance of their status both financially and socially. “The best-selling novels of the 1850s thus express an ethos of conformity,” he avers. “They emphasize unquestioning submission to authority, whether

of God or an earthly father figure or society in general.” Women writers’ advocacy of domesticity and of women’s submission to patriarchal systems, seen in such works as Cummins’ *The Lamplighter*, Smith suggests, “is likely to blind the reader to the historical forces that are at work” in these fictions and convince readers that “rapturous conformity” to cultural authorities secures “both worldly success and divine grace.” So though Smith largely finds nineteenth-century women’s writing essentially artless and rudimentary, he directs the bulk of his contempt at what he sees as their complicity in bolstering dominant cultural ideologies by promoting domesticity, submission, and self-sacrifice as ideal womanly qualities.⁸

Ann Douglas, in her book *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977), also argues within this vein, contending that nineteenth-century women writers, along with prominent Protestant ministers, largely sought to rationalize the era’s cultural ideologies of capitalism and industrial expansion. The book contrasts what Douglas describes as “the intellectual rigor and imaginative precision” of “Edwardsean” Calvinism with nineteenth-century Protestantism, leading her to identify the latter’s sentimentalism as “one for which Edwards and his contemporaries would have felt scorn and horror.” Like Smith, Douglas reasons that these women and ministers felt insecure with their social status, yet unlike Smith, she depicts their writing as a calculated, even if well-intentioned, bid for cultural power: “They were rightly insecure about their position in the broader society; they sought to gain indirect and compensatory control. Yet they were not insincere, ill-intentioned, or simple-minded.” Douglas nonetheless indicates their sentimentalism as dishonest for the ways in which she deems it resisted on the surface such “masculine” controls as capitalism, urbanization, and industrialization while

simultaneously (and more strongly) bolstering them beneath the surface. At the same time she observes women writers' cunning, Douglas does not, however, laud their style, declaring the "exaltation of the average" as "the trademark of mass culture," one that does nothing to "quicken" the "aspirations" of its audience. She maintains that, in contrast with "more serious writers" like Hawthorne, Thoreau, Cooper, Melville, and Whitman, who "wrote about men engaged in economically and ecologically significant activities," women writers goaded an American culture seemingly "bent on establishing a perpetual Mother's Day." She complains that, with "their debased religiosity" and "their sentimental peddling of Christian belief for its nostalgic value," the feminine ideals proposed in most women's works "inevitably guaranteed, not simply loss of the finest values contained in Calvinism, but the continuation of male hegemony in different guises."⁹

While Smith and Douglas propose that these women writers' exaltation of domesticity and submission works hand-in-hand with the era's social status quo, Helen Waite Papashvily asserts that these writers' fictions insidiously work against it and form a subtle yet effective revolt against a "common enemy": men. Her book *All the Happy Endings* (1956), along with Douglas's, additionally shows that women critics, too, joined the ranks of those disdainful and dismissive of nineteenth-century women's writing, as in one breath she describes much of it as "gory sentimentalism ... oozing sanctimonious piety" and in another, she claims it "made no lasting impressions" and now only exists as "a footnote in a textbook, a chapter in a dissertation." As she discusses Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, in fact, she initially finds herself at a loss to explain the novel's extreme popularity in the nineteenth century, implying that the book's aesthetics, along

with that of most of the era's domestic and sentimental fiction, cannot account for its great success. She reasons instead that, though these works' novelty played a partial role in their popularity, women readers embraced these fictions largely because they resonated with the "sorrows" the works portrayed, the sorrows of existing as women in a man's world. That women so empathized with these fictions' heroines, whereas men, she notes, "found a simple tale of home and family too full of sentiment, sacrifice, devotion and piety perhaps for masculine taste,"¹⁰ made these works the perfect "handbook" for women to wage a "devious, subtle, undeclared war against men." Papashvily then extends this argument throughout her book, claiming that the common themes in domestic novels in reality led women to strip away men's power in various ways. "To maim the male, to deprive him of the privilege of slavery and the pleasure of alcohol"—she cites these and other themes, such as demonstrating women's superiority in both practical and spiritual matters, as ways in which domestic fictions' heroines exemplify strategies for defeating men. Yet, with the exception of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which she declares a "major work of art," Papashvily discovers little to admire of domestic writing. She remarks that it held even less value for its own contemporary followers than it does for us today, with its value for us residing only in its ability to reveal "the fears and anxieties and frustrations, the plans and hopes and joys" of its nineteenth-century women readers.¹¹

Nineteenth-Century Domesticity

As noted in these examples, much of the criticism nineteenth-century women's writing has shouldered for over a century derides its focus on what many critics deem the

mundane, everyday world of the home and its management, a world that many of the era, both male and female, espoused as woman's primary domain. "Underlying the continuing failure to rethink paradigms based largely on a (white) male canon," reflects Carolyn Karcher, "is the assumption that men are more prone than women to tackle mighty themes, while women, conversely, are most prone to concentrate on private, domestic, and ultimately trivial matters—hence that women can safely be relegated to the margins of literary history."¹² And where many critics maintain these domestic matters as trivial, some additionally argue that the domestic focus of women's writing deviously (and purposely) upheld an oppressive patriarchal social order intended to stabilize an equally oppressive economic system. Domestic management to many nineteenth-century women, however, was anything but common or trivial and often seen by them as one of only a few suitable means for women to claim a realm of influence in the young republic. Both men and women in the nineteenth century, then, championed the glorifying of woman's place as manager of the home (a glorification we would eventually call "domesticity"), but for different reasons. The rise of this ideology during the era not only indicated a patriarchal push to placate women's desire for a role in the nation's affairs by ennobling woman's position in the home, but many women also markedly embraced domesticity as an opportunity to capture a semblance of control and power, one that sometimes extended beyond home's borders.

In her book *American Domesticity* (1999), Kathleen McHugh identifies a significant distinction between household chores and domesticity:

Housework is trivial, dull, stultifying labor, work only a woman in love or impoverished would willingly do, repetitive, strenuous, endless, infantilizing. Domesticity, by contrast, refers to home, family, maternity, warmth, hearth, to the creation of a private place where we can be who we really are, to a set of

experiences, possessions, and sentiments that are highly symbolically valued in our culture.¹³

The ideology of domesticity forwards women as the exalted creators, facilitators, and arbiters of this warm and inviting conception of home and the “experiences” and “sentiments” that supposedly made it so. The push to elevate this domestic position to national significance coincided, according to McHugh, with the push for universal white male suffrage after the Revolution, both cultural shifts resulting from the democratic rhetoric used by colonial leaders in their campaign for independence. She explains that when states began removing property ownership as the prerequisite for white men to vote, they also removed the “tangible criterion” that obscured the exclusion of women and people of color from their egalitarian claims.¹⁴ Women’s subservience to men demonstrated more and more a contradiction to the rhetoric of equality hailed as a rallying cry by so many revolutionaries and early-republic thinkers, a reality also observed by Kathryn Kish Sklar in her biography of Catharine Beecher. The “major ambiguity” early nineteenth-century women confronted, Sklar notes, resided in “how, in an egalitarian society, the submission of one sex to the other could be justified. Women in America had always experienced such inequity, but they had never before needed to reconcile it with a growing ideology of popular democracy and equal rights.”¹⁵ The rise of the ideology of domesticity—the postulate that women naturally, rightly, and regally sustained and presided over the private realm of home—early in the century proved the culture’s answer to women’s subordinate status. This domestic role became their national notoriety, an elevated position that ostensibly made things right yet simultaneously maintained women’s subservience. Domesticity provided the appearance of equality if not the substance: it gave women exalted status in the republic yet avoided granting them

citizenship, and it gave them an outlet for patriotic service to their nation without conferring to them a part of that nation.

Glenna Matthews, in her book *“Just a Housewife”* (1987), observes, however, that to many people of the era, domesticity did not represent mere lip service toward women; instead it declared that “both home and woman’s special nature were seen as uniquely valuable” to the nation. When describing this exalted view of women, she also points out that these notions of domesticity grew largely out of middle-class culture and became central to the way in which this class viewed itself in the nineteenth century.¹⁶ Matthews expends considerable space in her book explaining several factors that gave rise to the ideology, beginning as early as the boycotting of British goods in the years prior to the Revolution, which resulted in what she terms “the intermingling of the domestic and the political.” She explains that, without women working within their households to produce goods intended to fill the void, the boycotts would never have proven successful. In consequence, women largely discovered “a new self-respect” from their participation in this political realm, and even more significantly, the public likewise began reconsidering their previous notions of the female role as an altogether inferior one. After the Revolution and into the nineteenth century, Matthews also notes that the role of the middle-class housewife developed into a more skilled position, another factor that changed the public’s view of women. As more and more products became available for purchase in the early years of the republic and the duties between mistresses and servants became more differentiated by social class, middle-class women found themselves with more time to devote to “ornamental or ceremonial” tasks, such as the “elaboration of domestic space and rituals.” Technological advances, such as the stove,

and the creation of better tools for housework, such as various kitchen utensils, likewise allowed women more time for more skillful and creative work.¹⁷

While all of these things contributed to the rise of domesticity, Matthews indicates that concerns over maintaining a virtuous and properly socialized citizenry after the Revolution played arguably the largest role in idealizing women to near-angelic status in their positions within the home. Significantly influenced by Enlightenment philosophies, many postrevolutionary Americans understood that their newly-minted democratic government's success rested solely on the character of its people: "When the new republic was in its infancy," explains Margaret Nash, "many leaders keenly felt the fragility of this experiment in government. The best protection against failure, they believed, was a virtuous citizenry."¹⁸ Enlightenment educator Benjamin Rush confirms this sentiment in a 1778 letter to William Gordon, declaring, "Virtue, virtue alone, my dear friend, is the basis of a republic," as he warns against "ambition, avarice, craft, and dissolute manners" in America's political leaders.¹⁹ Concerns over future citizenry coincided with influential Enlightenment educational theories, most notably from John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), which emphasize the value of teaching children virtue and advocate a nurturing rather than authoritarian teaching style. As most during this era viewed women as naturally more chaste, affectionate and nurturing than men (as well as the ones who spent the most time around children), the vital role of educating the nation's future male citizens fell to mothers within their households, an exalted position Linda Kerber labels "Republican Motherhood." In "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment" (1976), Kerber describes how Enlightenment philosophers such as Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, and

Lord Kames argued against women as autonomous beings, submitting that “women existed only in their roles as mothers and wives.” This led postrevolutionary Americans to understand women’s political role as “secondhand,” through their experiences in relation to their husbands and sons. Writing of the Republican Mother, Kerber observes, “She had a responsibility to the political scene, though not to act on it. . . . Her political task was accomplished within the confines of her family. The model republican woman was a mother.”²⁰ This political aspect to motherhood added national value to women’s status, so exalting their role that, according to Lora Romero, many speeches and writings during the era “began to argue that if women did not exercise a civilizing influence on male household members, society would collapse into complete anarchy.”²¹ Proponents of the Republican Motherhood ideology, such as Benjamin Rush and Judith Sargent Murray, contended so strongly for the significance of women’s influence on future citizenry that their advocacy eventually led to widening opportunities for women’s education to include such male-dominated subjects as science and philosophy.²²

Not only did many people believe women proved most suitable for tending the home and educating children, but many nineteenth-century discourses actively taught women that “their subordinate status was instituted by divine and natural law and that because of their natures, they were best suited to domestic duties,” as noted by Catherine Kerrison in her book *Claiming the Pen* (2006).²³ This era, in fact, witnessed the publication of several women’s domestic advice books that supported the notion of a “natural” gendered hierarchy and bolstered the ideology of domesticity by seeking to train women for their domestic “profession,” such as Lydia Maria Child’s *The Frugal Housewife* (1829), John S. C. Abbott’s *The Mother at Home* (1834), and Lydia Huntley

Sigourney's *Letters to Mothers* (1838). The first chapter in Sigourney's *Letters*, for instance, outlines clearly the Republican Motherhood ideology and suggests that this womanly role is ordained by nature, given that women are the ones who carry and give birth to children. "This office is that of maternal teacher," pens Sigourney. "It is hers by hereditary right. Let her make it an inalienable possession. Nature invested her with it, when giving her the key of the infant soul, she bade her enter it through the affections." She then portrays this "office" as a political one, asserting of the mother, "The degree of her diligence in preparing her children to be good subjects of a just government, will be the true measure of her patriotism." Sigourney even goes as far as to state that women stepping outside of this naturally-ordained "office" would lead to ruinous consequences not only for the home but for the nation as well.²⁴

One of the era's most popular advice books, Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The American Woman's Home*, likewise maintains this gendered order as natural and proper, yet the authors specifically identify as their aim for writing their desire to "elevate" the female role in the home and demonstrate it "as much desired and respected as are the most honored professions of men."²⁵ Largely an expansion of Catherine Beecher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841), the book seeks to accomplish this elevation in a few different ways, the first seen in its bolstering of the Republican Motherhood ideology to the point of suggesting the maternal role as the most significant to America's success, as well as the most desired, of any other profession. The book's dedication, for instance, reads, "To the Women of America, in whose hands rest the real destinies of the republic, as moulded by the early training and preserved amid the maturer influences of home, this volume is affectionately inscribed" (n.p.). The first

chapter, then, articulates the proper social roles for both women and men, with the woman's described in accordance with the ideologies of domesticity and Republican Motherhood but also significantly depicted at the same social level as the male role:

Woman's profession embraces the care and nursing of the body in the critical periods of infancy and sickness, the training of the human mind in the most impressible period of childhood, the instruction and control of servants, and most of the government and economies of the family state. These duties are as sacred and important as any ordained to man.... (14)

In the following pages, when outlining man's social role, Beecher and Stowe additionally indicate that, while "man is appointed the out-door labor" away from home's comforts, "the great stimulus to all these toils, implanted in the heart of every true man, is the desire for a home of his own, and the hopes of paternity" (19). In other words, though men might enjoy the occupational opportunities and glories the outside world affords them, their deepest desire lies in the joys only the home and children can provide; outside glories cannot compare to the domestic and maternal occupations women happily experience every day. For these reasons, the authors conclude, "It has been shown that the best end for a woman to seek is the training of God's children for their eternal home, by guiding them to intelligence, virtue, and true happiness" (23), the most significant task there exists for anyone, they argue.

Beecher and Stowe additionally emphasize that a woman's duties to home and children entail, above all, a great deal of self-sacrifice, a characteristic they elaborate and glorify to such an extent as to elevate the women themselves who demonstrate it through their domestic and maternal work. While William Dean Howells and Herbert Ross Brown denigrate the women's fictions whose heroines display this trait, declaring it an act of "psychical suicide" and "exhibitionism," advice books like *The American Woman's*

Home hailed self-sacrifice as a much-desired attribute approaching divinity, explaining its popular appearance in a wide number of the era's sentimental works. In two different passages in their book's first chapter, Beecher and Stowe essentially place women just one step below Jesus Christ (apparently, then, a step above all earthly others) in holding the position they did in their homes and families. "The family state then, is the aptest earthly illustration of the heavenly kingdom," they reason in one passage, "and in it woman is its chief minister. Her great mission is self-denial, in training its members to self-sacrificing labors for the ignorant and weak: if not her own children, then the neglected children of her Father in heaven" (19). Not only do Beecher and Stowe claim that women's work in the home carries the most national significance of any other labor, but they contend it carries the most global significance as well. They argue that, since the family unit represents the closest earthly model to God's kingdom and since women hold the title of "chief minister" in their families, women then hold the highest earthly profession possible in their capacity as domestic and maternal workers. The second passage explicates the authors' reasoning for this assertion:

And such is the blessedness of aiding to sustain a truly Christian home, that no one comes so near the pattern of the All-perfect One as those who might hold what men call a higher place, and yet humble themselves to the lowest in order to aid in training the young, 'not as men-pleasers, but as servants to Christ, with good-will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men.' Such are preparing for high places in the kingdom of heaven. 'Whosoever will be chiefest among you, let him be your servant.' (20)

Through their self-sacrificial work in the home and family, women come closer to Christ's perfection and, according to the first passage, Christ's kingdom office than anyone else on earth. In the book's introduction, Beecher²⁶ even implies that women exhibiting self-sacrifice in their domestic profession leads to greater exaltation than

women stirring up “agitation of the public mind” by pursuing suffrage and women’s rights (16).²⁷

No other feature of *The American Woman’s Home*, however, elevates woman’s place in the home more than Beecher and Stowe’s repeated underscoring of domestic and maternal work as a professional vocation equal to any other professional career held by men. Beecher, in fact, essentially introduces their text as a training manual meant to fill what she deems a much-needed educational gap for women, equating their domestic work to any kind of labor men do outside the home. At the beginning of her introduction, for instance, she remarks that men who desire to work “in law, medicine, or divinity . . . are favored with numerous institutions richly endowed, with teachers of the highest talents and acquirements, with extensive libraries, and abundant and costly apparatus” (13). She then reasons that woman’s “profession,” a word consistently used throughout the book to highlight the equally vocational nature of women’s domestic work (placing it on the same level with practicing law, medicine, or religious leadership),²⁸ proves “as sacred and important as any ordained to man” and should therefore be afforded equally rigorous training (14). Following this, she then provides an accreditation of sorts for the book, outlining her and her sister’s extensive teaching qualifications, which include her own educational experiences under various domestic experts and her instruction and administration work at two different female seminaries. Beecher further establishes her credibility and, more significantly, elevates women’s domestic work to the level of men’s labor by referencing her years-long study of science and medicine (generally male-dominated fields associated with men’s professions) and claiming the book includes this research, “the latest results of science” (15).²⁹ And to cap the accreditation process, she

additionally discusses her own authorial successes (though curiously maintaining silence regarding her sister's notable works). She boasts,

At this time, the work on *Domestic Economy*, of which this volume may be called an enlarged edition, ... was prepared by the writer as a part of the *Massachusetts School Library*, and has since been extensively introduced as a text-book into public schools and higher female seminaries. It was followed by its sequel, *The Domestic Receipt-Book*, widely circulated by the Harpers in every State of the Union. (15)

Throughout her introduction, as well as throughout the whole book, Beecher purposefully chooses her words and organizes her research and instruction to demonstrate her and Stowe's "more elevated views of the true mission of woman" (16) and that this mission, this "profession," pales in comparison to no other, in fact in many ways is superior to all others.

Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing

Because many of the modernist critics derisive of nineteenth-century women's writing founded their dismissals in how these works often featured elements of domesticity, the first scholars involved in the late twentieth-century recovery of these works reintroduced them as writings of resistance: texts that either directly or indirectly resisted and even subverted the ideology of domesticity. "This massive historical and critical project redescribed middle-class women's so-called 'cult of domesticity' as a negative, ideologically enforced captivity," Dana Nelson explains of feminists' early recovery of women's writing. "They discovered that the 'bonds of womanhood' worked to foster a self-conscious culture and a powerful counterideology of matriarchal resistance."³⁰ Karcher, for instance, suggests that women writers wrote frequently of their everyday lives because "it allowed them to delineate the problems they and their sisters

faced in actual life and to identify resources on which their readers, as well as their heroines, might draw in the struggle for self-fulfillment.”³¹ Nina Baym, a pioneer in the recovery of nineteenth-century women’s writing, offers a similar contention in her early work, notably in her book *Women’s Fiction* (1978) in which she asserts that these women betray in their fictions a “didactic intention” to fortify female readers with the power to brook the adverse conditions of their domestic and social status. “My own view,” declares Baym, “is that these novels represent (what some might consider a contradiction in terms) a moderate, or limited, or pragmatic feminism, which is not in the least covert but quite obvious, needing only to be assessed in mid-nineteenth-century terms rather than those of a later century to be recognized for what it is.” She avers that these works encourage women readers to identify with and imitate their heroines who overcome adversity by adopting a more confident attitude and self-perception, claiming these fictions forward the notion that a change in personality can effect a change in women’s domestic and social status. Through this, she contends these texts demonstrate resistance to conventional domesticity, remarking, “They espouse a so-called ‘cult of domesticity’ but not as that cult is generally analyzed, as a conservative or traditional ethos.” Yet though these fictions might display this “moderate feminism,” Baym hints that their significance might end there, predicting that reexamining these texts may never uncover any aesthetic or artistic literary merit and that content, not style, may constitute the only factor in why we should study them. While she partially ascribes this apparent lack of aesthetics to what she sees as “a bias in favor of things male” infecting the criteria generally used to identify “great literature,” she additionally defends these fictions’ style by claiming their authors “saw themselves not as ‘artists’ but as professional writers.”

These women, she asserts, longed not for artistic merit but merely felt obligated to satisfy and teach their readers and hoped to support themselves and their families while fulfilling this duty.³²

Jane Tompkins' influential study *Sensational Designs* (1985) extends an even stronger statement in this line of thinking, arguing that our evaluation of whether or not texts are worthy of examination should depend not on artistic style or innovation but on the degree to which literary works provide us powerful access to their own cultural moments. "In this view," outlines Tompkins, "novels and stories should be studied not because they manage to escape the limitations of their particular time and place, but because they offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment." She uses this criterion to account for the contemporary popularity of many nineteenth-century women's works, notably Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, observing the way in which they reflected and reproduced their era's "commonly held assumptions." Regarding women writers' repeated focus on elements of domesticity in their works, she acknowledges that the era's sentimental literature rarely offers a wide-ranging setting but instead often takes place in the private space of the home. Similar to Baym, however, Tompkins identifies this domestic focus as an act of resistance to traditional notions of domesticity and contends these women highlight lessons in submission and keeping house as a means for women to garner what power and status they could in their position. These works transform submission into power and housekeeping into status by functioning "according to a principle of reversal whereby what is 'least' in the world's eyes becomes 'greatest' in its perspective," she postulates.

Encouraging submission, for instance, through modernist critics' eyes appeared as a manipulation to keep women in subjection to others, but according to Tompkins, submission actually represents "an assertion of autonomy," as it "is first of all a self-willed act of conquest of one's own passions"—the "mastery" of the self. She reasons further that, because submission is ultimately God's will, submissive women really subject themselves to God's authority first and foremost, an act that "cancels out" any "worldly (male) authority" and results in them receiving a divine power greater than man's. And just as this reversal converts submission to power in women's writing, Tompkins argues that it likewise converts the position of domestic manager to the highest form of social status possible for anyone. In her view, these works place the home not only at the center of their stories but also at the center of the world, thus imbuing women's every act, no matter how small, with moral and spiritual ramifications of national and even global significance. "Not only happiness," she remarks, "but salvation itself is seen to depend upon the performance of homely tasks," leading her to conclude, "By investing the slightest acts with moral significance, the religion of domesticity makes the destinies of the human race hang upon domestic routines." By presenting various qualities of domesticity such as submission and housekeeping as means to greater power and status, then, Tompkins proposes that women writers resisted rather than supported a conservative understanding of domesticity.³³

With recovery efforts in full swing by the late years of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, however, nineteenth-century women's writing scholars began to question this earlier tactic of proposing that authors crafted their texts as a means to resist full-stop the ideology of domesticity. Women's scholar Judith Fetterley, for instance,

reasons that this strategy does not reflect the complexity of these women's works and the multifaceted ways in which they wrote about women's themes, remarking that early recovery "seems to require a totalizing narrative that effectively excludes those writers who do not fit the story being told."³⁴ Dana Nelson likewise challenges this "totalizing narrative" that tends to ignore these texts' nuances, noting that even "the very notion of 'separate spheres' has been questioned, not just for the way it oversimplifies our understanding of literary and cultural practices as inevitably breaking down into categories of 'male' and 'female,' but also for the way its descriptive weight overshadows texts, customs, and manners that do not reflect such clean divisions."³⁵ And Caroline Chamberlin Hellman, in her book *Domesticity and Design in American Women's Lives and Literature* (2011), suggests that architectural representations of homes in nineteenth-century women's works reflect the complexity of women's lives, indicating that the "American home was an admittedly ambiguous space of both power and subjugation for women."³⁶

One of the most influential studies to begin questioning early recovery strategy, Lora Romero's *Home Fronts* (1997) contends that setting up women's works as resistant to the ideology of domesticity, while successful in helping launch the recovery movement, does not necessarily answer modernist critics' derogatory claims. "First-wave attempts, like Jane Tompkins's, to reverse the values of literary history by asserting that women's writing represents the genuinely subversive tradition," argues Romero, "do not fundamentally disrupt the logic of domesticity either; they just restore domestic women to the station of moral and political transcendence they allotted to themselves." Tompkins' contention, for instance, that women writers highlighted domestic

management as a means to express an exalted status for women as the world's chief moral and civilizing agents, according to Romero's argument, appears quite similar to the notions of Republican Motherhood and the glorification of women's virtue found in domesticity. Rather than positioning women's writing as wholly resistant, then, Romero implies that these texts both resist and naturalize the ideology of domesticity in various ways, indicating that people can never completely oppose nor completely embrace any given ideology because an ideology does not exist "as a whole, abstract entity" inside or outside of which people stand. Romero instead argues that women writers discovered within the ideology of domesticity a "logic" they could use with which "to *think* about their world":

Such women were neither victims of false consciousness nor clever manipulators of an ideology forced upon them and for which they had secret contempt. Instead, they were women who found in the antipatriarchal analysis of the family at the heart of domesticity a compelling language for describing women's second-class status and for imagining ways (some more efficacious than others) of improving it.³⁷

In other words, women writers used the vocabulary and imagery of domesticity, granted to them by their culture and with which they were most familiar, to analyze and theorize their world as well as to discover ways in which to become effective agents within it. And this world reached well beyond the domestic sphere, submits Romero, as women increasingly understood their "civilizing mission" to extend to "public and political" arenas. She notes that this led prominent women such as writer Elizabeth Oakes Smith and women's rights leader Elizabeth Cady Stanton to use "the logic of domesticity" to justify women's involvement at the ballot box and in other public matters.³⁸

Later women's writing scholars proceeded in a vein of criticism similar to Romero by challenging the notion of "separate spheres" that categorized men's and

women's lives by place, associating only men's activities with the public sphere while containing women's activities almost exclusively in the private sphere of home. Whereas early recovery scholars largely upheld the idea of "separate spheres" through their contention that domesticity metaphorically imprisoned women, Linda McDowell, in her book *Gender, Identity, and Place* (1999), submits that most nineteenth-century women did not find themselves completely excluded from public life. McDowell first troubles the foundation of "separate spheres" by indicating that domestic space does not represent purely private space, for domestic relationships constitute a "material representation of the social order": "Thus a focus on the social relations within a domestic space," she maintains, "crosses the boundary between the private and the public, between the particular and the general, and is not, as is often incorrectly asserted, a focus on the 'merely' domestic or the private sphere." She further asserts that, for many women in industrial cultures, relegation to the home "was never complete," noting that large groups of women, especially from working-class families, held waged employment outside of their homes and that many of these women even enjoyed a spirit of cooperation with their husbands as both toiled to financially support their families. McDowell additionally theorizes the nineteenth-century home for many women as an ambiguous site of both burden and satisfaction due to the relationships nurtured there, suggesting, "For many women, the family is not only the site of oppressive social relations and (too much) domestic labour, but also an arena of personal fulfillment through romantic love and relationships with children and other dependents."³⁹ Along this strain of criticism, Dale M. Bauer and Philip Gould's edited volume *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing* (2001) likewise features essays that similarly

question the “separate spheres” conception, as well as other “cultural contexts” such as domesticity and sentimentalism and how these terms might be re-envisioned.⁴⁰

More recent scholarship further troubles the “separate spheres” framework by examining various ways in which nineteenth-century women entered into the public sphere for endeavors extending beyond waged labor or leisure activities. Most of these studies emphasize women’s participation in social activism and political reform movements, as Hellman indicates that while these projects often began in the home, they did not remain there: “they are the antithesis of the private or personal. Their mission is without boundary, their occupation universal.”⁴¹ Matthews’ earlier study “*Just a Housewife*,” for instance, though mainly discussing domesticity’s rise and fall, includes an in-depth analysis of domestic feminism that describes the woman-led temperance movement and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union’s involvement with the push for women’s suffrage. Several more recent studies, such as Alisse Portnoy’s *Their Right to Speak* (2005), Stacey Robertson’s *Hearts Beating for Liberty* (2010), and Carol Faulkner’s *Lucretia Mott’s Heresy* (2011), outline and detail women’s efforts toward abolishing slavery and petitioning against Native American removal. And yet other similar analyses describe women’s involvement in political reform movements, such as Jane Dabel’s *A Respectable Woman* (2008) which specifically explores African American women’s political influence in nineteenth-century New York, and Alison Parker’s *Articulating Rights* (2010) which considers the evolution of women’s political reform strategies by examining six of the era’s most prominent women reformers.⁴²

Domestic Representations “Overstepping the Bounds”

While several nineteenth-century women writers indeed blurred the division between the public and private worlds by inserting themselves into various public activist projects, some of these writers also literarily blurred this division, as well as the separation between the political and the domestic, through the unlikeliest of ways: their representations of domestic spaces and life in their writings. Although these representations tend, as Romero notes, to bounce between both naturalization of and resistance to the ideology of domesticity, they often reference more than mere discussions of domesticity by opening up conversational threads about women's individuality and notions of citizenship. These conversational threads, in fact, signify an abstract discursive space very similar in conception to what theorist Edward Soja geographically identifies as "Thirdspace." As I briefly discuss in my introduction, Soja's Thirdspace represents a "new awareness" of place that is constructed from (yet also reaches beyond) the two opposing sides of a spatial binary between the "'real' material world" and the interpretation of this "real" world through "'imagined' representations of spatiality." He reaches this spatial awareness through a strategy he calls "'thirling-as-Othering," in which the binary undergoes "a creative process of *restructuring* that draws selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives" and essentially break open the binary opposition. "Thirling introduces a critical 'other-than' choice that speaks and critiques through its otherness," Soja explains. "That is to say, it does not derive simply from an additive combination of its binary antecedents but rather from a disordering, deconstruction, and tentative reconstitution of their presumed totalization producing an open alternative that is both similar and strikingly different."⁴³ Some nineteenth-century women writers' domestic depictions function discursively in a

similar way as Thirdspace in that, while simultaneously both supporting and opposing domesticity, they break open this binary of support and opposition by presenting embedded conversations about women's personhood and identity that appear similar to domestic discussions and yet are "strikingly different." Instead of using what Romero calls the "logic of domesticity" to think through women's issues and status, many women writers used domestic representations themselves to converse on topics that step beyond mere domestic concerns to those of national import such as citizenship. In doing so, these women overstep the debate of whether or not women should have a seat at the table for discussions such as these and instead use the domestic language at their disposal to launch into these conversations regardless.

While I use Soja's Thirdspace here to describe how women writers' enter into these beyond-domesticity discussions, I utilize spatial theorist Doreen Massey's work regarding home as the main theoretical framework for my examinations of the novels in the following chapters. In using domestic representations to overstep the divides between public and private and between the political and the domestic, the writers I address essentially demonstrate these divisions, these boundaries between worlds, to be unstable and even illusory. This demonstration coincides with how Massey describes the place of home itself in her book *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), as she argues that a conception of home as "static, self-enclosing, and defensive" does not accord with the permeable nature she claims all places possess. Massey bases this theory on her definition of place as an entity "formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location" and posits that the identity of a place "is always formed by the juxtaposition and co-presence there of particular sets of social interrelations, and by the

effects which that juxtaposition and co-presence produce.” From this definition, she illustrates the unfixed, ungrounded nature of all places, including homeplaces, postulating that if we define place as a set of social relations and social relations constantly change and rearrange, then we discover that places, including “that place called home,” remain in a constant state of flux and never exist as fixed entities. She maintains that the notion of home as fixed and secure generally originates from those in power who, seeing the always in flux nature of social relations, fear losing the power they believe they possess.⁴⁴ Massey reasons that those in power create boundaries between themselves and those they fear so they might orchestrate a secure identity of themselves based on a “negative counterposition with the Other beyond the boundaries.” Those within the secure place of home, in other words, can reassure themselves of their “elite” social status by contrasting themselves with those who exist outside of home. To fit more with nineteenth-century women and the ideology of domesticity, we might also look at this process in reverse: Instead of those in power founding their status on boundaries that demarcate inclusion (the powerful within the bounds) versus exclusion (the Other outside the bounds), we also see those in power using boundaries for containment, securing their status through a “negative counterposition” with those they have contained within the boundaries they have created. This would include the idea of using the boundaries of home and the ideology of domesticity to contain women in a private, domestic sphere. Massey, however, indicates the problem with these boundaries: “Yet, as has been seen, it has in principle always been difficult, and has over the centuries become more so, to distinguish the inside of a place from the outside,” observing that those outside the bounds inevitably cross into the inside (as well as those within the bounds venturing outside them). As such,

she submits that “the presence of the outside within” (and the inside without) reveals these boundaries as permeable and, therefore, illusory.⁴⁵

Many nineteenth-century women writers likewise demonstrate the chimerical nature of the binary divisions between public and private and between political and domestic through the ways in which they represent domestic spaces and situations in their works. Even domestic advice books like Beecher and Stowe’s *The American Woman’s Home*, while they identify home as women’s proper sphere, do not portray home as completely insulated from the public but feature domestic depictions that highlight the porousness of the boundaries that supposedly separate these worlds. Beecher and Stowe introduce one such depiction in their second chapter as they describe specifications for building what they call a “movable screen.” Chapter One of the text frames their domestic advice by articulating the grand and even national significance of woman’s place and duties in the home, and the rest of the book then follows this with intricately detailed prescriptions for how women might accomplish every conceivable facet of this purpose. These prescriptions include how to build and furnish the ideal house, for which the authors even provide several drawings and floor plans and give the precise dimensions and specifications for every room in the house and even a few of the furnishings, including their “movable screen.” Before describing how to build it, they begin with an explanation of the screen’s purpose:

The large room on the left can be made to serve the purpose of several rooms by means of a *movable screen*. By shifting this rolling screen from one part of the room to another, two apartments are always available, of any desired size within the limits of the large room. One side of the screen fronts what may be used as the parlor or sitting room; the other side is arranged for bedroom conveniences. (27)

Within their lengthy description of the screen, they specify that the builder decorate one side of the screen with “panel-paper” and pictures, as would befit a wall in a parlor, while outfitting the other side with movable boxes and hangers for use as a bedroom wardrobe. After providing the necessary dimensions and materials for the screen (including wheels for easy sliding) and offering exact directions for its construction, Beecher and Stowe then further explicate the screen’s advantages: namely that the screen (and the couches/beds they also describe) can be used in such a manner as to allow the room to function in both private and public ways. “The screen and couches can be so arranged,” they suggest, “as to have one room serve first as a large and airy sleeping-room; then, in the morning, it may be used as sitting room one side of the screen, and breakfast-room the other; and lastly, through the day it can be made a large parlor on the front side, and a sewing or retiring-room the other side” (32). Whereas the “airy sleeping-room” and the sitting and breakfast rooms act as private spaces, the parlor acts as public space, forming the part of the house in which the family would receive and entertain visitors, hold public events such as weddings and funerals, and even conduct business and participate in political conversation. The screen the authors prescribe, then, essentially represents a moving wall or boundary, one that, rather than ensuring a solid division between public and private functions, instead obfuscates any boundary between the two and allows the room to exist as both. While making the house more economical by creating a way for a room to perform double-duty, Beecher and Stowe’s movable screen also vividly illustrates the illusoriness of separate spheres thinking by showing that even houses themselves did not conform to these clean divisions.

After providing details and specifications for the other rooms of this ideal house, Beecher and Stowe then give substantial space in their text to discuss how to properly ventilate it, forming another domestic representation that blurs boundaries. To convey to readers the seriousness of this topic, they appeal to their readers' sense of concern for their families' health: "A learned physician also thus wrote to the author of this chapter: 'The subject of the ventilation of our dwelling-houses is one of the most important questions of our times. How many thousands are victims to a slow suicide and murder, the chief instrument of which is want of ventilation!'" (62). They devote three chapters to the subject, in fact: one of which outlines its needfulness and health benefits, one in which they articulate how best to accomplish it, and a third that discusses ventilation with regard to the best methods for heating houses. They first explain in detail the science behind the body's respiratory process, and then once they establish the body's needfulness for healthy air, they launch into a lament over the era's airtight inner spaces and express thankfulness that porous materials constitute the walls of most houses:

There is one provision of nature that is little understood, which saves the lives of thousands living in unventilated houses; and that is, the passage of pure air inward and impure air outward through the pores of bricks, wood stone, and mortar. Were such dwellings changed to tin, which is not thus porous, in less than a week thousands and tens of thousands would be in danger of perishing by suffocation. (57)

Multiple times throughout these chapters the authors claim that allowing the outside air to enter inside while letting the inside air to pass outside leads to more robust and healthy family members who experience more thriving and flourishing lives. "Better, far better, the old houses of the olden time, with their great roaring fires, and their bed-rooms where the snow came in and the wintry winds whistled," they quote from Stowe's *House and Home Papers* (1865). "Then, to be sure, you froze your back while you burned your face,

your water froze nightly in your pitcher, and you could write your name on the pretty snow-wreath that had sifted in through the window-cracks. But you woke full of life and vigor” (51). All of this illustrates not only the already porous nature of houses and ventilation’s process of replacing “poisoned” inner air with nature’s “pure air,” but it also presents a sharp illustration of the needfulness of allowing the outside in and releasing the inside out. Through their warnings and arguments regarding ventilation, Beecher and Stowe forcefully demonstrate that airtight boundaries do not tend toward life and health; they instead stifle and suffocate those caught within those boundaries. In their book, good ventilation again blurs the division between outside and inside, between public and private, as, similar to Massey’s theory, a properly ventilated house will make distinguishing outside (air) from inside (air) nearly impossible.

Beecher and Stowe’s inclusion of “the latest results of science” (15) throughout the book likewise forms an instance of boundary-blurring, for the authors provide detailed scientific explanations, complete with drawings and diagrams, not only to address ventilation issues but also many other domestic concerns as well. They discuss, for instance, the scientific principles of heat in Chapter Five, how the human body functions in Chapters Seven and Eight, the science behind healthful eating and drinking in Chapters Nine and Ten, medical reasoning in relation to personal cleanliness in Chapter Eleven, and so on. These depictions prove so impressive, in fact, that, regarding the technical specifications Beecher offers in *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* which also feature in *The American Woman’s Home*, Sklar observes, “Scholars of the history of technology have confirmed the technological rigor of Catharine Beecher’s household designs, and have credited her with the beginning of household automation.”²⁴⁶ Yet

Beecher and Stowe believe that women not only need to know this science in order to fulfill adequately their station as “prime minister of the family estate” (149), but the authors also assert that “it is woman’s special mission to bestow” this “light of knowledge and intelligence” to others “as she controls and regulates the ministries of a home” (49). The addition of this scientific material, however, also challenges the supposed boundary between public and private, as Beecher and Stowe blend science and technology, fields generally associated with the public sphere of business and progress, with the private, domestic sphere concerning caring for the home and family. By claiming this education as a necessity for women to perform their domestic occupation, they essentially imply that the public and private worlds inherently overlap, that no clear and stable division exists between them. Women, additionally, did not find wide acceptance within scientific and technological circles during this era, so the authors’ inclusion of such extensive scientific explanations within their domestic text somewhat oversteps what would likely be considered within woman’s purview at this point.

Perhaps Beecher and Stowe’s domestic advice book offers such evidence of ambiguity between the public and private worlds because no such certain division existed within their own lives. While in her introduction Beecher indirectly jabs at those actively fighting for women’s rights and suffrage and insists that woman’s duty is to rule over the home, both she and her co-author sister actively took part in several public and political endeavors that extended even beyond their prolific writing careers. Sklar underscores this irony in her biography of Beecher: “By 1847 her life was a bundle of contradictions. She was an expert on domestic economy, but had no home of her own; she was a writer on the moral education of children, but had no children herself; she was a competent

religious writer, but had never experienced conversion; and she urged young women to become teachers, but was herself not willing to teach.” Sklar additionally observes that Beecher mainly advocated patriarchal hierarchy not because she believed it natural for women to remain in the home but because she viewed it “as a political expedient necessary to the maintenance of democracy in America.”⁴⁷ In his introduction to the Stowe-Day Foundation edition of Beecher and Stowe’s text, Joseph Van Why similarly elucidates Beecher’s involvement with public activities, such as the era’s abolitionist movement, and her public engagement in political and theological conversations, discussions largely considered out of bounds for women. “For one who lectured and wrote on the submissive role of women,” Van Why remarks, “Catharine’s own actions and career suggest the opposite of a submissive person who envisioned the principle role of women as domestically centered. In many ways Catharine most closely resembled her father in nature and in attitude.”⁴⁸ With regard to Stowe, her public involvement in the abolitionist movement, most notably through her novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, remains a large part of her legacy today, as does her inclusion of strong, leader-like women characters in her works. Tompkins even contends that these characters demonstrate Stowe’s active endorsement of founding a world ruled by women. Concerning the Quaker settlement in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and character Rachel Halliday’s control over it, Tompkins maintains, “The new matriarchy . . . pictured here in the Indiana kitchen . . . constitutes the most politically subversive dimension of Stowe’s novel, more disruptive and far-reaching in its potential consequences than even the starting of a war on the freeing of slaves.”⁴⁹ And Hellman additionally notes Stowe’s ironic aversion to performing housework in light of her advice to women, concluding that “a profound

disjunction exists between Stowe's domestic life and the multi-faceted constructions of the domestic life she advocated."⁵⁰ For both Beecher and Stowe, then, the combination of the private and public worlds seen in their lives and the causes they supported reflects the ambivalence glimpsed also in *The American's Woman's Home*.

* * * * *

Similar to this discussion regarding Beecher and Stowe, the following three chapters will indeed explicate the ways in which Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Susan Warner, and Harriet Jacobs all blur the line between private and public as well as illustrate the illusoriness of home's boundaries within their novels. The way in which I approach this explication for each writers' works, however, involves not only examining their descriptions of domestic space in general, but more centrally, it involves analyzing their representations of domestic upheaval in particular. As the next chapter elucidates, for instance, Sedgwick pictures domestic upheaval in several ways by including many instances of the word "exile," references evocative of exile, and images and scenes of removal all throughout the four novels I explore. In addressing the domestic upheaval all three writers feature in their works, I explain how each writer not only exposes the porous and illusory nature of home's borders but also uses this dismantling of boundaries to forward versions of personhood for women that overstep the group identity assigned them by the ideology of domesticity and to advance instead an identity that underscores women's individuality.

CHAPTER III

“HOME CAN NEVER BE TRANSFERRED”: CATHARINE MARIA SEDGWICK’S RHETORIC OF EXILE

In January 1834, the Reverend Henry Ware, Jr., a prominent Unitarian minister and Harvard Divinity School professor, wrote to Catharine Maria Sedgwick proposing she compose “an exhibition of the practical character and influences of Christianity.” Suggesting the project consist of “a series of narratives, between a formal tale and a common tract,” Ware projected these texts might prove even more efficient than sermons at demonstrating Christianity’s “principles, its modes of operation on the heart and character, and the manner in which men may avail themselves of its power and peace.”¹ In response, Sedgwick would make at least four contributions to this collection, including the books *The Poor Rich Man and the Rich Poor Man* (1836), *Live and Let Live; or, Domestic Service Illustrated* (1837), and *Means and Ends, or Self-Training* (1839), yet her first text in this series remained one of her most popular: *Home: Scenes and Characters Illustrating Christian Truth* (1835). In two successive journal entries in November of the year she published *Home*, she mentions positive readers’ testimonies regarding the work and then states in a December 17, 1835, entry, “I have met everyone with congratulations about my book, which has, I think, proved more generally acceptable than anything I have before written.”² Even years later she continued to receive accolades for *Home*, as indicated in a letter from a country physician, Dr.

Cummings, in 1851: “This may look a little like enthusiasm—perhaps it is—but to me it is Gospel truth, and I have now put more than fifty volumes of the books in circulation in this region, and have got our Unitarian minister to say he will give a copy of ‘Home’ to every couple he marries.”³

Home presents the everyday domestic life of William Barclay, his wife Anne, and their children, extended family, and servants as a model for wholesome and healthful household management in the newly-formed American nation. At times we see small glimpses of Barclay’s public life as a New York City printing press “conductor,” but the book’s main focus, as its title suggests, centers on the daily domestic routines of this exemplary family as Sedgwick uses their tale to offer readers a guide for maintaining a Christian home. While her narrative largely highlights such things as proper Christian parenting, education, and affect, it also promotes some of the same domestic themes Beecher and Stowe feature in *The American Woman’s Home* (1869). Similar to Beecher and Stowe, for instance, Sedgwick discusses in *Home* the conception of what we now term Republican Motherhood, seen in Barclay’s assertion, “Home is the best school,—the parent the best teacher,”⁴ and provides two vivid examples of this concept in Barclay’s mother and wife. “The Barclays... believed that there was no way so certain,” *Home*’s narrator explains, “of giving their boys habits of order, regularity, and neatness, and of inspiring them with a grateful consideration for that sex whose lot it is to be the domestic minister of boy and man, as the being early accustomed to receive household services from their mother and sisters” (109). We find in this the belief that women’s most significant role with regard to national life is their role as “domestic ministers of boy and man,” comprised of influencing present and future American citizens under their roofs

(husbands and sons) with the qualities of virtue and discipline, as then illustrated in the actions of Mrs. Barclay and her future-Republican-Mother daughters. In this vein, Sedgwick devotes all of Chapter 10 of *Home* to enlightening women and girls of the “various household offices” that “a woman ought to know how to do” (104–5) in their jobs as “domestic ministers.”

Similar to other nineteenth-century domestic advice books, Sedgwick intends *Home* to image forth “a household... as perfect an image of heaven, as the infirmity of human nature, and the imperfections in the constitution of human affairs, would admit” (13–14), essentially casting the Barclays’ model home as a refuge closely resembling that which advocates for domesticity forwarded. Also similar to Beecher and Stowe’s advice book, however, *Home*, as well as many of Sedgwick’s other fictions, incorporates language and imagery that paradoxically highlights the porousness of such sanctuaries. Just as Beecher and Stowe’s discussion of ventilation in *The American Woman’s Home* portrays the way in which outside air penetrates the home-structure’s walls to mix with its inside air, Sedgwick insinuates a comparable infiltration of home’s “boundaries,” yet not by outside air but by outside people and forces. She accomplishes this through frequent references to “exile” (a common term in many of her domestic fictions) and by depicting numerous scenes of removal and, at times, homelessness in her writings, references and depictions that underscore not only home’s porousness but also its precariousness for women both physically and as a foundation for their identity as “domestic ministers.” This porousness of home’s boundaries, however, does not only present as dangerous or disillusioning for Sedgwick; it also carries with it the potential for a redefining of women’s identity. While “exile” and removal in Sedgwick’s writing

indicate the potential for danger when outside clashes with inside, the author also illustrates, through her heroines' experiences and interactions with people outside home's walls, the possibility for women's identity to step beyond domesticity and into more complex and individual conceptions of personhood.

Sedgwick's Language of Exile

Though Sedgwick sprinkles references to exile throughout several of her works, including *Home*, her discussion of Puritans as "voluntary exiles" in her historical romance *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827) illuminates her conceptions of home that shape how she defines and illustrates ideas like exile and removal throughout her writings.⁵ Set largely in the early seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay Colony, *Hope Leslie* delivers the story of the Fletcher family, Puritan emigrants from England who, soon after their arrival in the colonies, adopt the young Leslie daughters (Hope and Faith) after the death of the girls' mother Alice, Fletcher's former love. While much of the novel's action centers on friction between the colony's leadership in Boston, the Fletcher family on the edge of the frontier, and the nearby Native Pequot tribe, Sedgwick first presents her notions of home and exile that inform the way she describes and narrates these conceptions not only in *Hope Leslie* but in her other works as well. "They were pilgrims," she remarks of the Puritans, "for they had resigned, for ever, what the good hold most dear—their homes. Home can never be transferred; never repeated in the experience of an individual. The place consecrated by parental love, by the innocence and sports of childhood, by the first acquaintance with nature; by the linking of the heart to the visible creation, is the only home."⁶ In this description,

Sedgwick connects ideas of home with the nostalgia of childhood, arguing that no place deserves the title “home” other than the place where one first learns familial love and the love of nature. This connection of home with childhood also rings in her personal writings, such as an 1821 letter to her brother Robert in which she laments her brother Charles’s departure from their family home: “Oh, my dear Robert, this place is dreadfully changed without him. . . .The house is so still and solitary. My imagination is continually filled with those looks and voices that animated every part of the house—that beamed with love and rung with joy.”⁷ She would later observe in her autobiography, directed to her great-niece, “I believe, my dear Alice, that the people who surround us in our childhood, whose atmosphere infolds us, as it were, have more to do with the formation of our characters than all our didactic and perceptive education.”⁸ Out of similar sentiments Sedgwick then labels the past Puritan emigration as a “voluntary exile” in *Hope Leslie* (17), as she imagines these men sacrificing the homes of their nativity to take up residence in the colonies.⁹ She introduces the term “exile” early in the novel, initially connecting it to these Puritan men, “selected of Heaven to achieve a great work” and choosing “beggary and exile” in obedience to God (7–8), and yet the scenes of exile and removal that follow in the book (examined later in this chapter) will provide a stark contrast to this elective sacrifice of home.

In *Home*, Sedgwick repeats the nostalgic strain regarding home-places when describing William Barclay’s departure with his mother from his childhood home, again casting this exit as a form of exile:

Either because of his early solitude, or through the leading of his mother, who, turned back from the world, loved to commune with God in his works, or from an innate love of natural beauty, William Barclay knit his heart to this home of his childhood; and when his grandfather died, and the place was sold, and he was

compelled to leave it, he felt much as might our first parents, when from Paradise they “took their solitary way.” (3)

Here we see a home-place cast in the same light as that which Sedgwick describes in *Hope Leslie*: in “the leading of his mother” we find a “place consecrated by parental love” (*HL*, 17), in Barclay’s “innate love of natural beauty” we discover a “linking of the heart to the visible creation” (*HL*, 17), and we see “the innocence... of childhood” (*HL*, 17) in how Barclay’s heart “knit” itself to this childhood home.¹⁰ Though Barclay’s removal does not come as a result from a divine calling or the desire to escape persecution, as with the Puritan men, Sedgwick still places it in the same category of exile by comparing Barclay’s move to that of Adam and Eve when told they must leave God’s garden in the third chapter of Genesis. After these “first parents” disobey God’s command and eat of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden, part of their punishment includes expulsion from their paradisaal garden home (the home of their “nativity”) with the charge that they can never again inhabit it but must instead make their residence in the “cursed” earth outside of it. When responding later in the novel to a reproach leveled by Europeans claiming Americans “deficient in that love for the home of childhood” (115), Sedgwick, in her denial of that claim, continues to associate the newest residents of America (here, the people of New England) with exilic imagery from the Bible:

No, God has not denied, to any of his creatures, from the time that the exiles of Judea hung their harps on the willows of a strange land, to the present moment, that strong love of birth-place which tempers, to the native, the fierce winds of the north, and the fiercer heats of the Equator,—which equalizes every soil, and gives that inimitable, that “pleasant look” to the *old place*. (116)

Here again we see Sedgwick’s belief in “that strong love of birth-place” that makes the childhood home “the only home” in her eyes. And while the “old place” now refers to a different childhood home from that which the Puritan “exiles” forsook to come to the

colonies, she still connects these New-England-born residents with the Old Testament Israelite exiles, God's chosen people who, though wanderers for a season, eventually become Promise Land residents.¹¹

Sedgwick's first novel, *A New-England Tale* (1822), likewise features the language of exile, as she includes a reference to Adam and Eve's displacement from the Garden, similar to that which appears in *Home*, when describing young protagonist Jane Elton's removal from her childhood home. According to Susan K. Harris in her introduction to *A New-England Tale*, the novel initially began "as a religious tract, composed by ... Sedgwick after she converted from Calvinism to Unitarianism." Sedgwick's three brothers' urgings for her to develop the tract into a novel eventually led to the story we have today,¹² that of young Jane Elton who, at the death of her parents, must leave her beloved childhood home to live with her Aunt Wilson, a staunch and stringent Calvinist, and her self-absorbed cousins. Just after Jane learns she must leave her home, Chapter Two opens with these words: "Jane received the intelligence of her destination without the slightest emotion. The world was 'all before her,' and she cared not whither led her 'mournful way.'"¹³ As Emily VanDette observes in her note on this text, these lines echo the last lines of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), the point after which the archangel dispels Adam and Eve from their native home:

Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wip'd them soon;
The World was all before them, where to choose
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:
They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through *Eden* took thir solitary way.¹⁴

By quoting portions of these lines in regard to Jane's removal, Sedgwick likens Jane's displacement with the exile of Adam and Eve, giving the phrase, "The world was 'all

before her,” an ominous rather than anticipatory aspect, leading to a “mournful” as well as “solitary way” for Jane. A few pages later, Sedgwick doubles down on this exilic imagery, commenting, “Jane, in entering the family of Mrs. Wilson, was introduced to as new a scene as if she had been transported to a foreign country” (22).

Sedgwick’s 1835 novel set during the American Revolution invokes not the Puritans, as does *Hope Leslie*, but the Pilgrims when continuing her theme of childhood homelands and exile. This novel, *The Linwoods; or ‘Sixty Years Since’ in America*, chronicles the Linwood family’s divided loyalties during the war, with the father a staunch Tory raising his family in New York while son Herbert joins his good friend Eliot Lee in fighting with the revolutionaries. Female protagonist, Isabella Linwood, wavers between these two interests, first siding with her father and the British only to find herself ultimately more passionate toward the patriot cause. Sedgwick implies that love for their childhood homeland drives the revolutionaries, now natives to the land once foreign to the voluntarily exiled Puritans and Pilgrims, and they fight to rule themselves apart from the British who do not know it as they do. “The British soldiers are aliens to the soil; they have neither ‘built houses nor tilled lands’ here,” Isabella’s Aunt Archer writes in a letter to her niece, “and they cannot have the same kindly and home feeling that a native extends to the denizens of his own land.”¹⁵ Although the Pilgrims at one time also presented as “aliens to the soil,” having sacrificed their “true homes” in England, Sedgwick intimates that they made the land home for their descendants through building and tilling it, and now these very descendants battle to establish the land as home for their children as well. Eliot Lee, writing to his mother, declares that the revolutionaries, “bold with the transmitted spirit of freedom, sown at broadcast by our

Pilgrim fathers, have reflected on the past and calculated the future; and coolly estimating the worth of independence and the right of self-government, are willing to hazard all in the hope of gaining all; to sacrifice themselves for the prospective good of their children” (74).¹⁶ By linking the Pilgrims with the colonists and defining the British as their foreign counterparts, Sedgwick introduces more directly the language of exile out of these notions. She calls the patriot sympathizers, for instance, forced by British general Sir Henry Clinton to exit New York, “exiled whigs, who were driven forth from their homes” (290) and additionally marks Herbert Linwood “a fugitive in his native city” when he steals back into New York to visit his family (167). Herbert and any other colonists not siding with the British “aliens” who occupied New York, then, evoke Sedgwick’s imagery of the biblical Adam and Eve, as they also find themselves forcefully expelled from their native home.

Sedgwick’s Scenes of Removal

In addition to language of exile, Sedgwick’s works also feature several scenes in which characters, often women, find themselves removed or forced from their homes. Yet while Sedgwick describes the Puritan men and Pilgrim fathers’ voluntary exile in terms of self-sacrifice, freedom, and independence, she portrays many of these other characters’ removals from home in more violent and coercive terms, with some removals resulting in quite brutal ends. She even identifies a striking difference between the Puritan men’s exile from that of their wives when explaining in *Hope Leslie* that Fletcher’s wife Martha could only “receive his decision” to remove them to the colonial frontier “with meek submission,” a disposition commonly expected from wives “of that

age of undisputed masculine supremacy (or... of our less passive age).” Sedgwick, again referencing a biblical forfeiting of childhood home, then immediately compares Martha’s submission to Abraham’s from the book of Genesis, who “would as soon have remonstrated against the command that bade him go forth from his father’s house into the land of the Chaldees, as she would have failed in passive obedience to the resolve of her husband” (15–16). She argues here that while the Puritan men voluntarily absented their native home, their wives had no choice but to move in obedience to their god-like command, suggesting a coercive rather than voluntary exile for these women.¹⁷ In light of her description of these wives’ forced removal, in fact, the way in which Sedgwick heaps praise on the self-chosen exile of Puritan men as courageous and self-sacrificial almost reads a bit sarcastic.¹⁸

Many other women characters in Sedgwick’s works experience similarly forced, if not always violent, removals from their homes as well. *A New-England Tale*, for instance, opens, as previously mentioned, with young Jane Elton’s removal from her childhood home. Though her father initially enjoys business success, his own financial mismanagement brings their family to the brink of destitution and leads him to an early grave, with the frail Mrs. Elton following him just months later when Jane is only around twelve years old. Mr. Elton’s three sisters quibble over who must take in the orphaned Jane, with one sister coldly suggesting “Jane had better be put out at once” to become accustomed to her eventual fate as a “hired girl” (12), but Jane’s rigid Aunt Wilson finally acquiesces to house her for a time. Given these circumstances and Jane’s age, her removal to a relative’s residence does not seem extraordinary or coercive but expected, and yet Sedgwick’s descriptions of her move give the impression that the girl marched

into exile upon leaving her childhood home. Her primary home's furniture and landscaping, for example, mourn her departure as if she leaves for some dark doom, as Jane exclaims to the estate's housekeeper, "Oh, Mary! ...even my honey-suckle seems to weep for me" (21). As she later enters the Wilson home, the narrator comments that she "was introduced to as new a scene as if she had been transported to a foreign country" (22). Throughout the remainder of the novel, Sedgwick additionally portrays Mrs. Wilson's home in various terms that evoke notions of exile and imprisonment. One instance occurs when the narrator, describing the scant provisions Jane's aunt provides for her, compares the Wilson home to a heathen temple that offers foreigners nothing more than meager shelter and the "right of asylum," allowing them simply to "perish" under the temple's roof (40). A bit later, Mary bitterly laments the massive change Jane had to endure when leaving "a home and mother" to live in "such a workhouse" with "such a task-woman" (52). Most depictions of the Wilson home, in fact, liken it to a foreign prison for Jane, claiming that "she felt like a prisoner, the doors of whose prison-house have been thrown open to him, who sees the inviting world without, and who is called upon, in the spirit of martyrdom, to close the door, and bar himself from the light and hope" (72). Jane eventually breaks free of Mrs. Wilson's "prison-house" and, at the novel's close, returns to her childhood home, but only after she marries the man who purchased it.

With a somewhat more complicated storyline than *A New-England Tale*, *Hope Leslie* features a few central removal scenes, and while Sedgwick includes male characters in some of these, the novel's female protagonists still remain central in these various portrayals. The first removal scene interestingly appears as a backstory within the

narrative, as Magawisca, a Pequot captive assigned to serve the Fletcher household, graphically details it to the Fletchers' teenage son Everell. As the pair guards the Fletcher house from a possible attack by Magawisca's father Mononotto, Magawisca relates her story of the fire and blood-soaked massacre recently inflicted by English settlers against her people, the reason her father seeks vengeance.¹⁹ She begins by immediately underscoring the way in which the English unleashed their terrific violence against her people while they yet remained in their dwellings, recalling, "It was such a night as this—so bright and still, when your English came upon our quiet homes" (48). She then recounts in graphic detail the horrors of that night, as the English ambushed their people, largely made up of women and children, and mercilessly slaughtered and burned them, with the repeated emphasis that this took place in and around their homes:

Then was taken from our hearth-stone, where the English had been so often warmed and cherished, the brand to consume our dwellings. They were covered with mats, and burnt like dried straw. . . . Some of our people threw themselves into the midst of the crackling flames, and their courageous souls parted with one shout of triumph; others mounted the palisade, but they were shot and dropped like a flock of birds smitten by the hunter's arrows. Thus did the strangers destroy, in our own homes, hundreds of our tribe. (50–51)

Magawisca concludes her narrative by describing the way in which the English pursued into a swampland those Pequot who had somehow survived the initial onslaught and how the English continued to murder fleeing women and children. She finalizes her story by indicating that those who remained of the tribe after this attack were "driven to distant forests—forced on earth to the misery of wicked souls—to wander without a home" (55). Here we find that Mononotto and others of his tribesmen survived the massacre due to their presence at a council of chiefs, but because of the English settlers' brutality, they find themselves "driven from their homes and hunting-grounds, into shameful exile"

(59). In her telling of this fateful night, Magawisca repeatedly emphasizes the reality that her people now find themselves without homes, as her father and their people wander the land and take up residence at times with neighboring Native tribes while she and her brother endure captivity as servants of the Fletcher home. One savage night wrought by English hands removes Magawisca and her people from their childhood home and transforms them into exiles for the novel's duration. The text even ends with Magawisca in a small boat, vanishing from sight into the mists to join her people in their journey away from home toward western lands.²⁰

The second removal in *Hope Leslie*, Fletcher's choice to remove his family to the colonial frontier (just outside of Winthrop's Boston), technically appears in the text prior to the attack and subsequent exile Magawisca recounts, but chronologically, the Fletchers' move occurs after the Mystic River massacre. As previously mentioned, Martha Fletcher could only meekly submit to her husband's decision, making her removal from home somewhat coerced, though we never receive from the narrator a complete picture of Mrs. Fletcher's feelings regarding this circumstance. Commentary on a letter she writes to Fletcher while he visits Boston to receive Hope and Faith, for instance, provides readers with an idea of her characteristic reticence to express her thoughts, indicating, "She was too generous to communicate all her fears, (about which a woman is usually least reserved) to her husband" (36). Sedgwick does make graphically clear, however, that this removal results in as violent a scene as the one Magawisca illuminates, as Mononotto avenges his people's deaths and his family's captivity at the Fletcher homestead. Just as the English invade the Pequot camps and force Magawisca to watch the brutal killing of her family and community, so again she must watch as her

father directs his fury, as the English did, at the home of his enemy. The narrator likens the scene to an apocalypse, exclaiming that “suddenly, as if the earth had opened on them, three Indian warriors darted from the forest” and quickly create a “bloody scene” by bashing Fletcher’s infant son’s head on the doorstone and plunging a knife into Martha’s heart (65, 67). Despite his vengeful rage, though, Mononotto does what the English did not do for his people: in the midst of this brief attack, he shows mercy and calls an end to the killing. “We have had blood enough,” he cries to his brothers, and they exit the scene with the house still standing and Everell and adopted sister Faith still alive. Mononotto takes the two Fletchers with him into the wilderness, transforming them temporarily into exiles, but just as he is about to execute Everell to atone for his own son’s death at the settlers’ hands, Magawisca self-sacrificially rescues Everell, losing her own arm in the process, and allows him to return home to his father.²¹

A third significant removal in *Hope Leslie* involves the eponymous Hope, Faith’s elder sister who stayed with Fletcher in Boston as he conducted business and recovered from illness, subsequently absenting them both from Mononotto’s attack that occurred just hours prior to their arrival home. Despite the enormous loss Fletcher endured, he chooses to remain with Everell and Hope at his frontier home, which then becomes, given her young age, Hope’s childhood home, the place in which she spends her most formative years. This changes years later, however, when the colony’s governing authorities determine that Hope’s will had grown too independent for a Puritan woman, a consequence believed partly owing to Fletcher’s excessive leniency with her. After “a private interview” with one such leader, Fletcher removes Hope to John Winthrop’s home in Boston (the historical Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay Colony) to effect “a

temporary transfer of his neglected authority to less indulgent hands” (125). While this removal does not come as the result of graphic violence, such as in the case of Magawisca and her people, Fletcher acknowledges it as coerced, telling Hope, “Neither you, nor I, have any choice” (118), and Sedgwick later likens it to an imprisonment of sorts (similar to Jane Elton’s in *A New-England Tale*). The narrator, for instance, portrays Hope’s spirit by comparing her to the wildness of nature, such as the “mountain rill ... sportive, free, and beautiful” or “the bird that spreads his wings and soars above the limits by which each man fences in his own narrow domain” (126, 128). Sedgwick presents Hope’s new guardian Governor Winthrop, however, as a man “impatient to put jesses on this wild bird ... while she is on our perch” and longing to put Hope under the “stricter watch” of “the modest authority of a husband” (161–62), not of her choosing but of his. As Romero notes in *Home Fronts*, “In an age of what Sedgwick calls ‘undisputed masculine supremacy,’ Hope fails to demonstrate the ‘passiveness’ that the Puritans define as woman’s chief virtue. Sedgwick describes Hope as someone whom the Puritans perceive as, like the natives, in need of ‘civilizing’ restraints.”²² As a result, Hope finds herself taken from her childhood home and placed in a household foreign to her in spirit with people bent on assimilating her to their ways of life and thinking. Although Hope’s new guardians find themselves unsuccessful in completely taming her, she does ultimately choose to marry Everell at the novel’s close, an act which, given that “age of undisputed masculine supremacy,” places her under that husbandly authority hoped for by Winthrop.

Involving several families in its complex storyline, *The Linwoods* likewise includes various removals from home, most of them, as might be expected, a result of the

Revolution. For instance, in addition to Herbert Linwood and Eliot Lee both voluntarily leaving their childhood homes to fight for the patriot cause, Sedgwick also features a rather violent removal scene involving Herbert and Isabella's aunt Mary Archer and her two blind children, Ned and Lizzy. Mrs. Archer and her children live with a few servants in the countryside outside New York City, and although Isabella urges her to move her family into the city for their safety during the war, Mrs. Archer refuses to budge. Eventually a band of "skimmers" (marauders who plundered country homes during the Revolution) attack their home one night, steal some small possessions, and abduct Lizzy as incentive for Mrs. Archer to fetch them her more valuable possessions stored in the city. A nearby Eliot Lee pursues the skimmers and ultimately rescues a near-death Lizzy, but not before a fire, either carelessly or intentionally started by the skimmers, consumes the Archer residence, leaving Mrs. Archer no choice but to move herself and her children to the city. Although Sedgwick does not comment much on their home or state of mind within the city, a letter Mrs. Archer writes to Isabella prior to the attack indicates how she would feel about this move and reprises Sedgwick's common theme of the childhood home surrounded by nature. "Nature is to them," Mrs. Archer writes of her children, "a perpetual study and delight" (198), as she cites Ned and Lizzy's connection with their childhood home as the main reason she resists leaving. She describes in profuse detail several natural elements that surround the home, all the while explaining her children's intimate knowledge of it all and claiming how a move would compare to an imprisonment for them all, another common Sedgwick theme. "Could I pen them up in a city," queries Mrs. Archer, "where they will never walk into the fresh air but to be a spectacle, and where they must be utterly deprived of the ministration of nature through

which God communes with their spirits?" (199), asking this soon after admitting that "the shackles of city life" would prove "galling" to her own spirit as well (197). While Ned and Lizzy's blindness does make the link to their childhood home unique, as familiarity with their surroundings poses a great benefit to their everyday lives, Mrs. Archer's words here still ring with ideas that resound in others of Sedgwick's writings, such as attachment to a childhood home and the nature that surrounds it, as well as a feeling of imprisonment upon leaving that beloved home.

Sedgwick's Home-Fleeing and Homeless Women

While scenes of coerced removal permeate these novels, Sedgwick additionally often highlights in her works fringe women characters who either flee their homes as victims of seduction or who present as homeless altogether and exist on society's margins. These women's stories frequently do not comprise the texts' main plots, but their flights and homelessness do help expose unsavory aspects of some of the novels' more central characters. Mary Oakley's story in *A New-England Tale*, for instance, does much to shed light on Mrs. Wilson's son David and "his libertinism" (100). Mary's subplot largely follows a traditional nineteenth-century seduction tale,²³ in that a tragic accident orphans Mary, and her loving, albeit overly-indulgent, grandparents then raise her. Mary's beauty and coquettishness attract the attentions of several men at a nearby college, but David Wilson, "more artful, more unprincipled than any of his companions" (100), proves the one successful at seducing her, resulting in a pregnancy and his abandonment of her. Believing she will not survive the birth and not wanting her grandparents to learn of her deeds, Mary effects a disguise and leaves "for ever the

protecting roof of her kind old parents” to find David and beg protection for their child (100). When a week later she confronts him at his mother’s house, David turns Mary away to seek shelter at old John’s mountain cottage, and soon after the old man finds her the following day, having newly given birth in the mountains near his home, she and her infant die. While Mary’s flight from home offers Sedgwick the chance to underscore a didactic story for young girls that sounds the dangers of flirting and disobeying parents, as authors of these tales often did, Sedgwick instead uses Mary’s sub-plot not only to reveal the depth of David Wilson’s seediness but also to reinforce the novel’s main message: namely, that duty and charity are the necessary outgrowths of sincere religion. Sedgwick largely advances this message by contrasting Jane’s humble, compassionate, service-oriented faith with Mrs. Wilson’s stingy and spiteful Calvinism, and she additionally uses Mary’s home-fleeing to reemphasize Mrs. Wilson’s hypocrisy, essentially laying the blame for David’s wrongs at his mother’s feet:

Perhaps there are some who cannot believe that any being should be so utterly depraved as David Wilson. But let them remember, that he began with a nature more inclined to evil than to good, that his mother’s mismanagement had increased every thing that was bad in him, and extinguished every thing that was good—that the continual contradictions of his mother’s professions and life, had led him to an entire disbelief of the truths of religion, as well as a contempt of its restraints. (101)

Not only does this excerpt support the cultural notion that wives and mothers bear full responsibility for boys’ and men’s moral formation, but it also highlights the stark contrast Sedgwick draws between Jane and Mrs. Wilson: while Jane displays her religion by humbly serving others throughout the novel, Mrs. Wilson’s actions do not match the faith she professes. John’s words at Mary’s deathbed additionally encapsulate this lesson regarding duty and charity over religious professions, as he tells Jane, “Ah, Miss, the

great thing is how we live, not how we die,” when she asks if Mary had repented before breathing her last. “I don’t place much dependence on what people say on a death-bed,” John continues, later remarking, “No, Miss Jane, it is the life—it is the life, we must look to” (103–4). So while Mary’s story comprises only a couple chapters in the novel, her flight from the “protecting” home of her childhood reveals depravity and hypocrisy, providing Sedgwick another opportunity to underscore the novel’s main theme.

Hope Leslie likewise features a seduction tale that reveals the unscrupulous nature of male character Sir Philip Gardiner, a man who sails from England to Massachusetts Bay under the guise of a pious Puritan, insinuates himself into Governor Winthrop’s circle of friends, and becomes infatuated with Hope. Gardiner travels with a young, apparently male page, Roslin, whom we later discover is the despondent Rosa, a girl whom Gardiner had seduced in England and then allowed to come with him provided she always disguises herself as his male servant.²⁴ Sedgwick mentions that, though “depraved,” Gardiner “felt some motions of compassion as he looked on this young and beautiful creature” (213), yet not enough to alleviate her disgrace by marrying her or to forego forcing her to participate in his plans to entrap Hope. These plans interestingly reflect the plot of Susanna Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple* (1798), another famous seduction narrative, for just as Rowson’s Montraville takes a wavering Charlotte from her English home to live with him in America, sleeping with her on their passage across the Atlantic, so Gardiner means to abscond with Hope and carry her back to England, likewise hoping to seduce her while aboard the ship. Rosa’s presence, however, complicates Gardiner’s plan, for she refuses to play the passive fallen woman and resists his request that she wait on Hope during their voyage. In the argument between Gardner and Rosa that ensues

after she refuses to do as he asks, Sedgwick significantly connects Rosa's tale to the imagery of exile found elsewhere in her writing, as Gardiner, attempting to persuade Rosa to help him, likens her to Hagar from the biblical Genesis account.²⁵ When he (incorrectly) tells her that "the good Patriarch's affections manifestly leaned to the side of Hagar" (apparently likening himself to the Jewish patriarch Abraham), Rosa responds, "Yes, yes—and I remember too what her fate was—the fate of all who follow in her footsteps—to be cast out to wander forth in a desert" (339). Through this exchange, Rosa underscores Sedgwick's earlier comment about home in *Hope Leslie*, that "home can never be transferred" (17), and applies it to the bleak reality for women in such disgraced situations as her own. Due to her fallenness, she cannot return to her childhood home, and as society views her as irredeemably stained, she must "wander forth in a desert" and snatch at any protection she can find, even that provided by the man part-responsible for her exilic circumstances and who, like the Bible's Abraham, favors another over her. Unlike other more traditional fallen woman narratives, though, Sedgwick allows Rosa an agential role in her tale's conclusion. As Gardiner pushes and prods her into the ship's depths as he simultaneously ushers the woman he believes to be Hope with them,²⁶ Rosa, hoping to stop Gardiner's nefarious plan and also end her own exile, impulsively throws the lantern she carries into an open barrel of gunpowder, causing an explosion that immediately destroys the ship and everyone on it.

The seduction tale in *The Linwoods* ends relatively more happily than Mary Oakley's and Rosa's, as the seduced woman, Bessie Lee, does not fall sexually to her seducer, who still abandons her, and she does not die at her tale's conclusion. Similar to Mary's and Rosa's stories, however, Bessie's sub-plot largely serves to expose the selfish

and unfeeling character of her seducer, Jasper Meredith, who hopes to marry protagonist Isabella Linwood and become rich on the inheritance he believes she will receive. Prior to Meredith's pursuit of Isabella, as he studies law in Boston near the Lee home, he seeks Bessie's attentions as a "selfish gratification" (49) to soothe the wounded pride he receives from his classmates, who despise his feigned neutrality to the war. The narrator's claim that Meredith's self-absorption absolves him of a "deliberate attempt to insnare her affections" rings with sarcasm (49), for he later confesses in a letter to his mother that he consciously seduces Bessie, knowing she will likely fall in love with him though he harbors no love for her. Bessie does become enamored with Meredith, and his abrupt departure for New York crushes her, leaving her despondent and eventually driving her mad. With brother Eliot now away fighting for the Revolutionaries, she clandestinely embarks from her childhood home alone to find Meredith in New York and return the gifts he bestowed on her, believing this will break her attachment to him and that God will protect her on her journey. She encounters dangerous people along the way, but her madness saves her each time, as someone always seems present who pities her deluded condition and rescues her from others. When she finally arrives in New York (with the Marquis de Lafayette's aid, no less), Bessie confronts Meredith with Eliot and Isabella present, announcing her wish to return to Meredith "those charms and spells by which my too willing spirit was bound" and to show Isabella "how, in my better mind, I yield him to you" (368). In this scene, while decidedly not in a "better mind," Bessie oversteps convention, detailing freely and yet without spite how Meredith had seduced her with gifts and flirtations, unknowingly condemning him with her words when explaining, "Yet... he never *said* he loved me. It was only my over-credulous fancy"

(370). This revelation finally convinces a wavering Isabella to refuse Meredith's romantic attentions for good, making way for the virtuous Eliot Lee to win her heart. And unlike women in other seduction tales, Bessie gradually recovers her mental and physical soundness, though she still chooses not to marry but to live out her days in service to suffering others.

Bessie's mad wanderings somewhat reflect those of another homeless woman, in fact one with a similar name, in Sedgwick's earliest novel: "crazy Bet" from *A New-England Tale*. Initially described as "a middle aged woman, whose mind had been unsettled in her youth by misfortunes" (13), Bet's mental instability sparked when, twenty years before the narrative begins, her fiancé drowned the day before their wedding. Due to this experience, her character obsesses over death and comforting those who mourn, such as in her first scene in which she consoles a grieving young Jane Elton and later when she leads an adult Jane to the dying Mary Oakley. Added to this, she continually watches over the graveyard's headstones, removing the weeds that grow around them and bedecking them with pine instead, and is depicted as "never without some badge of mourning" as she ranges the countryside (16). The graveyard now seems the closest place to a home for Bet, for she inhabits no permanent residence throughout the narrative but instead "was allowed to indulge her vagrant inclinations, in wandering from house to house, and town to town," finding "a welcome wherever she went" (13–14). Similar to *The Linwoods'* Bessie, Bet exhibits a heightened spiritual intensity in her words and actions throughout the novel, and also similar to Bessie, others around her often believe this spirituality to emanate from a deluded mind, with some even determining it the work of a dark possession. While she often enters into unrestrained

spiritual reveries that seem to corroborate these assumptions, such as her frenzied singing of scripture while in the mountains near old John's cottage (96), many of her religious observations successfully predict events to come. Her rebuke to Jane's aunts as they argue over who must take in Jane after her mother's death, for instance, rightly foretells the outcomes of both Jane and her Aunt Wilson by the story's close: "Shame, shame, upon you!" Bet upbraids them, continuing, "has pride turned your hearts to stone, that ye cannot shelter this poor little ewe-lamb in your fold? Ah! ye may spread your branches, like the green bay tree, but the tempest will come, and those who look for you shall not find you; but this little frost-bitten bud shall bloom in the paradise of God for ever and ever" (15–16). According to the novel's conclusion, this prophecy comes to fruition, with Jane's compassion and dutiful service toward others proving her a true child of God—a "bud" that will "bloom in the paradise of God"—rather than self-righteous Mrs. Wilson, whose hollow religious professions will not gain her admittance to God's eternal kingdom.

In addition to playing pivotal roles within their narratives, all of these women in their home-fleeing or homeless statuses exhibit a certain kind of freedom not possessed by their fellow, more conventional women protagonists. We especially see this in Bessie and Bet, whose madness, according to Robert Daly, allows them "to go beyond conformity to local conventions" and gives them "a freedom to wander physically and mentally."²⁷ Bessie's and Bet's madness, for example, largely evokes sympathy from those they encounter, enabling Bessie to pass from her home near Boston to New York virtually unharmed and Bet to roam the countryside at will, finding shelter in various houses and towns. Both of these women likewise express themselves freely in their

madness, overriding typical female conversational conventions and attitudes. Bessie, for instance, speaks openly in front of Eliot and Isabella about all the ways in which Meredith seduced her, unconventionally revealing intimate details of their relationship as she returns the gifts he gave her, details that would ultimately lead to Isabella's rejection of Meredith. Bet likewise oversteps convention, often interrupting other people's conversations to insert her own blunt (yet often insightful) opinions, such as when she interrupts Mrs. Wilson's lengthy explanation of Jane's chores by popping her head in through the window and scolding, "Go on, ... and fill up the measure of your iniquities, load her with burthens heavy and grievous to be borne, and do not touch them with one of your fingers" (39). Some scholars contend that Sedgwick poses these women's freedoms as negatives and even a bit dangerous. "I point out that Sedgwick casts Bet's role as an outcast as problematic because most of the town maligns her," submits Catherine Forsa. "Bet may have freedom to do what she chooses, but she is not Sedgwick's model for readers; it is not practical to emulate Bet's behaviors, many of which are rooted in her displays of emotion." Susan Harris agrees with this, maintaining that Bet presents "an example of the dangers of uncontrolled emotion and of a religious sensibility unconstrained by church doctrines. ...Bet exists on the margins of the community and as such stands as a warning against excess rather than as a model for the ideal citizen." Comparing Bessie's unstable mental condition with contemporary discourses on the French Revolution "in which the psychological and political overlapped," Philip Gould suggests that, in this context, "Bessie is not simply a danger to herself; her unbalanced faculties symbolize social and political chaos too."²⁸ Yet while Sedgwick may not intend for these women to represent models for ideal womanhood or citizenship, one cannot

deny that she also uses the freedoms they enjoy in positive ways at times, such as to expose some characters' deceitfulness and hypocrisy. In some ways, these characters' outspokenness mirrors her own as an author.²⁹

Breaching the Home's Boundaries

While Sedgwick engages the language and imagery of exile in different ways and additionally features several varied scenes of removal and homelessness in her novels, this language and these scenes do share a notable connection. Just as the word "exile" today generally connotes a notion of violence or coercion, so all of Sedgwick's scenes of removal, home-fleeing, and homelessness interestingly involve or proceed from brutal attacks on actual home-spaces or women (whom nineteenth-century culture metonymically identified, both spiritually and physically, with the home and home-spaces) or result in what Sedgwick portrays as cruel and coercive situations. Few of her novels' homes, in fact, escape from at least some form of menacing or even outright violent incursion into their boundaries. We see this most particularly with Mononotto's exile and Magawisca's captivity in *Hope Leslie*, which arises from the English settlers' massacre of the Pequot people and motivates Mononotto's subsequent attack on the Fletchers, during which Pequot warriors kill Martha Fletcher and several of her children and take Everell Fletcher captive. Sedgwick significantly sets both of these grim scenes not in vacant countrysides or empty forests but within and closely around the Pequot and Fletcher home-spaces. She even underscores her setting choice through the way Magawisca repeatedly remarks that the English ambushed the Pequot in their own homes, as well as through the infant Fletcher son's brutal death on the doorstone of the Fletcher

homestead.³⁰ Similarly, while the Revolution endangered many homes as fighting engulfed much of the colonial countryside, Sedgwick additionally spends two chapters in *The Linwoods* detailing a vicious skinner attack, which likewise takes place within a home-space as the skinners plunder Mrs. Archer's home, kidnap her blind daughter, and burn her house to the ground. Other examples of violence and coercion in connection with removal scenes include Jane Elton's (from *A New-England Tale*) and Hope Leslie's, which, while not bloody and physically brutal, portray the girls' forced removals from their childhood homes into home-spaces that Sedgwick describes as foreign, fettering, and prison-like. Additionally, the gruesome drowning death of Bet's fiancé in *A New-England Tale* leads to her mental instability and perpetual homelessness, and the seductions of Mary Oakley (*A New-England Tale*), Rosa (*Hope Leslie*), and Bessie (*The Linwoods*)—which qualify as assaults on the era's ultimate representatives of home, women—cause these women to flee their childhood homes and result in several people's deaths and Bessie's temporary destabilization. Sedgwick even directly juxtaposes her discussion of the Puritan men's "voluntary exile" in leaving their English homes with their wives' necessary (forced) submission to this chosen exile. As these many scenes demonstrate, in fact, Sedgwick finds varied ways to link violent and coercive experiences, especially involving women, to her novels' home-spaces and her discussions of home and exile.

Despite the era's efforts to image home as a safe, protective, and stable refuge from the rough world outside its walls, a refuge in which, according to poet John James Piatt, "young brides" breathe "a bower of roses evermore,"³¹ Sedgwick instead depicts home-spaces as vulnerable and penetrable, even the childhood home she exalts at the

beginning of *Hope Leslie*. With each violent attack and each coercive removal she renders in her works, Sedgwick represents the relative ease with which home's boundaries can be breached. In this regard, she also vividly demonstrates a reality known well by all of the era's women: the picture of home as a stable and secure refuge over which women preside proves simply an illusion, a cultural veil that never hides completely the precarious and unstable place home can truly be, especially for women at this time. Just as Beecher and Stowe's *The American Woman's Home* highlights how one can never insulate a home completely from outside elements, women had long understood that four walls could not insulate them from life's violence, that home was just as often the site of rather than the refuge from death, war, social tension and upheaval, for women often found themselves frontline workers in these fields, caring for the sick and wounded, laying out the dead for visitation, and hosting politicians, preachers, and other cultural leaders, all within the so-called security of the home. Sedgwick not only captures this reality in her removal scenes and language of exile, but her plot lines also nod to some specific national anxieties that inevitably seeped into home's private sphere, further exposing the porousness of its boundaries. Ivy Schweitzer, for instance, observes that much of *Hope Leslie* reflects concerns over "whether the Republic, after its first half century, would recognize women, Indians, and people of color as fully fledged citizens," as states during the 1820s had begun "giving franchise to all white males (as well as some naturalized immigrants)." Claiming that *A New-England Tale* forwarded an "idealistic presentation of the role of self-determination in republican governance," Emily VanDette suggests that the Nullification Crisis of 1832–33 persuaded Sedgwick to "make exigent qualifications" to her earlier ideas regarding self-

determination when writing *The Linwoods*. VanDette contends that the danger of the national union failing through South Carolina's possible secession during the Nullification Crisis provided "an opportunity for Sedgwick to ponder to what extent the rationalist right to self-government must be sacrificed for the sake of preserving the national union," seen in how the parent-child relationship of Mr. Linwood and Herbert reflects, according to VanDette, the relationship between the federal and state governments. Charlene Avallone additionally argues that *The Linwoods* reflects national anxieties over the issue of slavery: "Published in the middle of the decade that spanned Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion (the largest U.S. slave revolt ever) and reactionary measures North and South, the novel rehearses history to speak to this contemporary crisis in which whites' anxiety and racial bias fed one another." Avallone posits that Sedgwick attempts to smooth over these anxieties by offering a "sentimental model of national union, 'bound together by one sentiment' and the joint service of liberty."³² From concerns over citizenship, national unity, and slavery to many others, Sedgwick's novels continually demonstrate how all these anxieties and tensions permeated her characters' home-spaces, often catalyzing the violent and coercive episodes she portrays there.

This penetrability of home again exhibits what Doreen Massey describes in *Space, Place, and Gender* as "the presence of the outside within" (mentioned in my second chapter), the idea that home's boundaries often prove illusory—merely pretend shields with which people attempt to define themselves and others based on who resides inside rather than outside the place those boundaries enclose. We see this kind of identity-making in nineteenth-century America where the culture often defined women not as individuals with a variety of skill sets, abilities, and life experiences, but as a

nondescript demographic of wives and mothers, largely based on their relegation to home's seemingly bounded confines.³³ Notwithstanding women's occupations and accomplishments outside the home, many believed women's work inside the home, their employment as wives and mothers, should take preeminence over any other activities, as they must first and foremost fulfill their cultural role as homemakers. In the same way, home's boundaries also provided the basis for men's counter-identity as breadwinners by way of their work outside of the home, a more multi-varied and individualistic identity. Massey, however, maintains that home, instead of bounded, has "always in one way or another been open; constructed out of movement, communication, social relations which always stretched beyond it."³⁴ In other words, home's boundaries cannot meaningfully demarcate anyone's identities, as the porousness of those boundaries makes distinguishing inside from outside impossible; home is indelibly marked by the communication and interaction between both inside and outside. And in the essay "Double Articulation," Massey extends her arguments across time, submitting that "there has never been a historical moment untouched by the world beyond;"³⁵ a time has never existed when boundaries completely shielded home from the world outside it, when a composite of both inside and out did not define home's spaces. Many of Sedgwick's contemporaries would have argued differently, seeking to forge people's identities using home's boundaries as their foundation (not only between men and women but also in a geographical sense between white people and people of color), but Sedgwick's language of exile and scenes of removal conversely reveal the meaninglessness of these identities by exposing the illusoriness of home as a securely bounded space. If home's boundaries are not only porous but can also be easily breached, are breached continually even, which

Sedgwick repeatedly demonstrates in her novels, then the counter-position between those outside and those inside holds little significance.

Amy Kaplan has likewise pointed out the way in which some nineteenth-century domestic writers highlight the reality of home's vulnerability, contending that they do so in order to widen domesticity's civilizing influence in society. "Many domestic novels open at physical thresholds, such as windows and doorways, that problematize the relation between interior and exterior," remarks Kaplan in her article "Manifest Domesticity," observing of these narratives that "the home and the female self appear fragile and threatened from within and without by foreign forces." From this observation, Kaplan then asserts,

These novels then explore the breakdown of the boundaries between internal and external spaces, between the domestic and the foreign, as they struggle to renegotiate and stabilize these domains. This negotiation often takes place not only within the home but also within the heroine. The narrative of female self-discipline that is so central to the domestic novel might be viewed as a kind of civilizing process in which the woman plays the role of both civilizer and savage.

Kaplan submits that nineteenth-century domestic fiction seeks both "to expand female influence beyond the home" and "to police domestic boundaries against the threat of foreignness both within and without," positing that these writers exhibit an imperialistic impulse to domesticate the world outside home's walls while simultaneously maintaining home's security and women's home-based identity, all by applying conventional domestic ideology to all of life.³⁶ Regarding this argument, I agree with Kaplan that some women writers do seem bent on extending domesticity's "empire of the mother" beyond home's borders. Yet while Sedgwick's novels do upend the notion of home as safe and securely bounded from outside elements, Sedgwick does not, however, turn to traditional domesticity to stabilize home nor her heroines. She shows, in fact, less interest in shoring

up home's boundaries and women's domestic identity and much more interest in seeking out new identities for women that rely less on the domestic ideology her culture advocated. Rather than attempting to "civilize" her heroines with self-discipline and "civilize" the world by extending domesticity's influence outside the home, Sedgwick instead displays her heroines' individuality, their unique intelligence and personhood, through traditional as well as unconventional (and even rebellious) acts both within and outside of the home that many times put these domains in communication with each other.

Sedgwick's Ideal Citizens

While Sedgwick essentially fashions *Home* as a guidebook to raising good citizens and reflects in it many of Republican Motherhood's ideals, the text's virtuous protagonist Mr. Barclay also provides readers with a clue as to how Sedgwick might be forwarding an alternative identity for the heroines in her other novels. Barclay participates in frequent conversations regarding the new Republic and its citizens' functions within it, and during these conversations, he fervently expounds the qualities that he believes distinguish the ideal citizen. "Talent and worth are the only eternal grounds of distinction. To these the Almighty has affixed his everlasting patent of nobility," remarks Barclay to his friend Anthon when explaining why their new nation should eradicate old notions of aristocracy and genteelism. He later asserts, "Knowledge and goodness;—these make degrees in heaven, and they must be the graduating scale of a true democracy. ... The ladder is knocked down, my friend, and we stand on nature's level" (*Home*, 39–41). Here Sedgwick uplifts what much Revolutionary discourse, in the

form of speeches, pamphlets, plays, and poetry, exalted as the cornerstone of the patriot cause: the idea that equality should form the basis of society and government.³⁷

According to Barclay, wealth and genealogy should not be the standards by which we determine the ideal citizen; instead, everyone, regardless of parentage or economic status, begins on “nature’s level,” or equal footing. From there, Barclay submits that we should look at the measure of people’s talent, worth, knowledge, and goodness as indicators of their estimation, and those who excel in these qualities, he (and Sedgwick) maintains, thus distinguish themselves as ideal citizens. Barclay appears to speak these things only of white men, as, after all, these conversations mainly debated citizenship, a status that excluded women (and people of color) at that time. The novel as a whole, too, does not appear much out of bounds with the era’s social order that largely recognized women not as leaders outside of the home but as the virtuous nurturers of those leaders from within the home. Throughout *Home*’s narrative, for instance, Sedgwick establishes Mrs. Barclay as a true model of domesticity and Republican Motherhood, a woman who prides herself in her “humble, womanly” role of guiding her children’s “domestic affections, and instructing them... in their every-day home duties,” while her husband “tries to make them feel their privileges and duties as American citizens” (64). Yet Sedgwick’s characters in *A New-England Tale*, *Hope Leslie*, and *The Linwoods* who most embody the qualities in which Barclay contends male citizens should excel are her heroines, women who not only possess some traits in line with traditional domesticity but who also exhibit keen intelligence, cunning, bravery, and independence, traits typically not associated with the domestic sphere. These women, rather than attempting to “stabilize” the home-space through their “self-discipline” and “civilizing” efforts, as Kaplan mentions, instead

employ their unique gifts both within and outside of the home to assert an individualistic personhood that demonstrates how domestic space alone cannot define women's identities.

While Jane from *A New-England Tale*, Hope from *Hope Leslie*, and Isabella from *The Linwoods* all display traits that align with the era's domestic ideology, they also each step outside of this ideology at times, as well as home's boundaries, in ways that exhibit an individualistic, rebel spirit commingled with good motives—what Nancy F. Sweet refers to as a “virtuous dissent.”³⁸ For example, *A New-England Tale* portrays many instances in which Jane Elton, though displaced from her childhood home to that of her Aunt Wilson, models domestic prowess and a quiet and submissive spirit, keeping with domesticity, in her response to her aunt's hardness and hostility. Arguably the most defining moment for her, however, comes when old John urges that she make a clandestine nighttime visit to his and his wife's mountain cottage, for he hopes she “may save life” by comforting fallen Mary Oakley and subsequently confronting the seducing David Wilson on Mary's behalf. Contrary to the submissive “patience in tribulation” she commands when dealing with her aunt (43), this act requires her goodness to join hands with insurgency, as she must rebel against her aunt's authority by stealthily escaping the house in the dead of night. In addition to Jane's need for mustering her resolve to disobey, Sedgwick also underscores the courage she must conjure up to meet crazy Bet in the cemetery and follow the unstable woman through the mountain passes, noting how Jane had to bolster her “womanish thoughts with a manly spirit” (91). Sedgwick emphasizes Jane's “manly” bravery several times, in fact, at one point noting how she undauntedly traverses a mountain pass that “had only been penetrated by a few rash

youths of daring and adventurous spirit” and how she possesses “almost supernatural courage” while “fearlessly” following Bet (95). This central event, appearing in the middle of the book, marks a turning point in the narrative, as this active fearlessness begins to characterize Jane from this point forward, even as soon as she returns from her quest. For instance, she resorts to defiance rather than passive compliance when confronted the next morning by her aunt, who accuses her of stealing money actually stolen by David. “But hear me, ma’am,” Jane responds, “all connexion [sic] between us is dissolved for ever; I shall not remain another night beneath a roof where I have received little kindness, and where I now suffer the imputation of a crime, of which I cannot think you believe me guilty.” Though she admits, “I know not where I shall go,” she nonetheless resoundingly states, “I am not friendless—nor fearful” (112–13). Whereas she passively weathers an earlier instance of her aunt’s misdirected anger by means of a quiet submissiveness indicative of traditional domesticity, the active courage and defiance she exhibits when visiting old John and afterward when defying her aunt demonstrate “manly” characteristics that overstep conventional domestic ideology. All of these qualities define Jane’s identity in the book, asserting for her an individual personhood rooted in an amalgam of traits not solely based in the domestic realm.

Hope Leslie offers a couple of heroines in Magawisca and Hope who both demonstrate a composite of qualities that span the spectrum between domestic and unconventional womanhood, yet Sedgwick’s intent with Magawisca in this regard seems to center more on offering her as the ideal Native and, through her, displaying how “civilization” might enhance Native Americans’ natural gifts.³⁹ Hope presents another story, however, as Sedgwick endows her with traits both in keeping with and counter to

domesticity that forge for her a more individual personhood. Hope's submissive attitude toward adoptive father Mr. Fletcher, for instance, even when unhappy with his directive that she remove to Boston with the Winthrops, speaks to domesticity, as well as her (at times begrudging) submissiveness to Governor Winthrop and his wife. Hope also displays a self-sacrificial spirit characteristic of sentimental domesticity when caring for Barnaby Tuttle's wife throughout her difficult illness and, more poignantly, when sacrificing her own romantic affection for Everell to pair him with her friend Esther when believing them in love. Yet even while including these common domestic traits, Sedgwick largely portrays Hope throughout the novel as the inverse of domestic: independent-minded, adventurous, and good-heartedly non-conforming. When describing her after having grown into a young woman, for instance, Sedgwick compares Hope to women in the nineteenth century in a way that illustrates her unconventional personality as a contrast to "restrained" domestic identity:

Nothing could be more unlike the authentic, 'thoroughly educated,' and thoroughly disciplined young ladies of the present day, than Hope Leslie; as unlike as a mountain rill to a canal—the one leaping over rocks and precipices, sportive, free, and beautiful, or stealing softly on, in unseen, unpraised loveliness; the other, formed by art, restrained within prescribed and formal limits, and devoted to utility. (126)

In addition to identifying her with the wildness of a "mountain rill," other characters often compare Hope to an untamed bird, such as Governor Winthrop when convincing Fletcher to transfer Hope to Boston to better control her (162). Earlier in this conversation, in fact, Winthrop remarks to Fletcher that he "must allow ... that she hath not ... that passiveness, that, next to godliness, is a woman's best virtue" (160), the passiveness, in other words, of domesticity. Many of Hope's actions throughout the narrative highlight the active and adventurous side of her personality, such as offering to

suck venom out of a snake bite and escaping a pack of bawdy sailors by pretending to be a Catholic saint, but Sedgwick mainly underscores Hope's independent character through her orchestration of two major events in the novel: the jail-breaks of Nelema and Magawisca. In the narrative's first half, for example, Hope stealthily frees Nelema, an old Native American woman who heals Hope's friend, Master Craddock, but then stands accused of witchcraft and condemned to die because of it. Hope later, at the text's conclusion, concocts an elaborate cross-dressing hoax to free Magawisca from prison when the magistrates accuse the latter of "brewing a conspiracy" among several Native tribes against the settlers (245). In both instances Hope "took counsel from her own heart" (124) and deemed them moments for "virtuous dissent" against authorities that she believed acted unjustly, and the resultant actions she takes, influenced by a mix of both domestic and unconventional traits, evince an individual personhood that incorporates and yet steps beyond a traditional domestic identity.⁴⁰

Virtuous dissent also understandably forms a major theme in *The Linwoods*, a novel that celebrates the Revolutionaries' insurgent spirit against the British, yet Sedgwick additionally uses this notion of righteous rebellion to display heroine Isabella's unique, individual personhood through her evolution from loyalist to patriot. At a key moment when Isabella's loyalties begin to change, in fact, she gives voice to this sentiment, telling Sir Henry Clinton that the British aristocracy's bigoted attitudes, including his own, against the colonists has led to their mutinous actions. "Have a care, Sir Henry," Isabella warns, "such sentiments from our rulers engender rebellion, and almost make it a virtue. I am beginning to think that if I had been a man, I should not have forgotten that I was an American" (156-57). We still see Isabella's domestic side,

even as her political sympathies begin to turn away from those of her father,⁴¹ in how she remains lovingly loyal to him, illustrated by her submission to his authority and in the way she nurses him through his illness with gout. Mrs. Linwood points this out to hopeful suitor Jasper Meredith, remarking, “Indeed, she is a first-rate nurse—so devoted, too—she has not left her father’s bedside till now for five days and nights.... I often say, All a woman need know is how to take good care of her family and of the sick.” Yet Isabella’s mother keenly understands that Isabella’s mind comprehends more than just these things, as Mrs. Linwood adds to her previous statement, “However, that and something more Isabella knows” (237). Sedgwick repeatedly highlights this throughout her heroine’s evolution in the novel, often noting her “fine” and “superior mind,” one to which even the great General Clinton must yield (160, 299), and her transformation from loyalist to patriot portrays, not only in her thinking but also in her conversations with others, her capability of playing a significant role in the nation’s political life.⁴² Isabella’s mind, however, proves not the only sign of her unconventional personality, as she, similar to Hope Leslie, also takes part in a jail-break, helping to free brother Herbert from Sir Henry’s prison and return him to General Washington’s ranks. So vivid is Isabella’s unconventional individuality in the text that she presents a striking contrast to her mother, whom Sedgwick calls “a model of conjugal nonentity” and whom Mr. Linwood labels “a poor, subservient, domestic drudge” (21, 237). And yet Sedgwick still indicates, through Eliot Lee’s words, how Isabella represents a unique blend of independence and domesticity. When Isabella tells him, “I think you like me for, what most men like not at all—my love of freedom and independence of control,” he replies, “Yes, I do; ... but I should not love it if it were not blended with all the tenderness and softness of your sex.

...I do homage to your genius, talent, and accomplishment, but I love your gracious, domestic, home-felt virtues” (398). In *Isabella* (as well as *Jane and Hope*), Sedgwick forwards a version of womanhood not only based within domesticity’s confines and a domestic group identity but one that also oversteps those boundaries to embrace both domestic and unconventional traits to advocate every woman’s unique and individual personhood.

For all three of these heroines, the exhibition of their individual personalities both demonstrates and is made possible by a communication between the private and public spheres, between “inside” and “outside” home, for the porous boundaries between inside and outside that can beget precarious and uncertain situations, such as domestic upheaval and removal, also make possible interpersonal connections that provide these women with opportunities to assert their individuality and unique personhood. In other words, rather than incorporating domestic upset in these novels to allow domesticity, via the heroines’ submission and self-discipline, to shore up the cracks in home’s boundaries, Sedgwick often uses these fissures as opportunities for her heroines to display their unique personhood through interactions they have with people both within and outside of the home.⁴³ Jane Elton’s removal to her aunt’s, for instance, affords her the chance to test her courage in sneaking out and braving the mountains to John’s cottage, which not only allows her occasion to comfort Mary Oakley but also fortifies her resolve to assert her own agency with her aunt and with Edward Erskine, whose indiscretions bring her to refuse him as her future husband. Similarly, the removals and domestic upheaval affecting Mononotto’s tribe and Fletcher’s household bring Hope Leslie into contact with Nelema and Magawisca, both with whom she forges formative relationships that

subsequently lead her to defy governing authorities by freeing both women from jail. And the Revolutionary War's impact on Isabella Linwood's family, bringing Mr. Linwood to banish from home his son Herbert due to their divided political loyalties, offers Isabella Linwood opportunities to showcase her "superior mind" through interactions with Sir Henry Clinton, a successful rescue of her prisoner brother with the help of spy Lizzy Bengin, and a meeting with General and Mrs. Washington. In all these instances, as well as others, domestic upheaval and removals not only demonstrate home's precarity but also furnish Sedgwick with ways to highlight her heroines' individual personhood, identities rooted not simply in the indistinct group identity domesticity assigned to wives, mothers, and would-be wives and mothers, but formed from a composite of traits both domestic and unconventional.⁴⁴

Sedgwick's representations of individual identity for women, however, do entail a few tensions that, while not the focus of this chapter, I want to mention briefly here. Just as Judith Fetterley aptly remarks that "what is admirable about *Hope Leslie* [and I would add Sedgwick's other novels as well] cannot be separated from what is problematic,"⁴⁵ I find that Sedgwick's forwarding of individual personhood for women at times becomes entangled in a couple of contradictions. For one, as much as we find her heroines overstepping the boundaries of home and connecting with others in ways that exhibit their unique and unconventional personalities, all of these novels also ironically feature an element of return that potentially undercuts this overstepping and signals a regression back to the era's status quo. General examples of return include the Barclays returning to their country residence at *Home*'s conclusion, Magawisca and Faith returning to their tribe at the end of *Hope Leslie* (though the tribe ultimately moves west from their home),

and Bessie Lee returning home to her mother in *The Linwoods*' closing pages. Sedgwick's heroines, however, enact very specific returns at these novels' conclusions, returns that each interestingly involve wedding bells. For instance, in *A New-England Tale*, Jane Elton returns to her childhood home by wedding Mr. Lloyd; Hope returns to the Winthrop home in *Hope Leslie*'s final pages, with nuptials to Everell in her future; and *The Linwoods* concludes with Isabella returning to her father's home, where she eventually receives his blessing to wed Eliot Lee. While these closing marriages predictably follow the common template for nineteenth-century sentimental novels, they still prove surprising given Sedgwick's comments in a May 11, 1833, journal entry: "A married woman past thirty in America is the same nonentity that a French girl of sixteen is—but the one is sustained by hope. She is looking into a world in which she is to be an actor. Our poor married lady has played out the play, and what [is] so dull as a theater when the curtain has fallen!"⁴⁶ These sentiments also subtly peek into *Hope Leslie*'s opening pages as well, in which she draws a direct correlation between a husband's bidding to his wife and God's command to the biblical Abraham, noting "meek submission" as the only response in those situations and thus implying married women's lack of agency (15–16). For all the time Sedgwick spends on developing heroines that push past this kind of "nonentity" status into a more individual personhood, these women's concluding returns do not bode well for their future agency and identity.

The second contradiction involves the irony that, while Sedgwick forwards an individual personhood for women that puts them on more equal footing with men's multifaceted identities, she seems to forward this only for white women in her novels; the women characters of color still find themselves mainly identity-less. Several scholars, in

fact, have gone into such great depth to identify various ways in which this is apparent in Sedgwick's writing that I share their arguments here, especially regarding *Hope Leslie's* Magawisca and Rose, the Linwoods' African American servant in *The Linwoods*. For instance, Maureen Tutill argues that, while Magawisca "embodies the best traits of the Indian," her position as a threat to the settler community and her eventual vanishing at *Hope Leslie's* conclusion demonstrate Sedgwick's approval of her era's Native American removal policies. "She shapes an American identity of her own vision," Tutill claims of Sedgwick, "that the Indians who lived in her midst, or within whose midst she lived, had natural rights as human beings and were owed a requisite amount of respect." Tutill continues, however, "*Hope Leslie* serves as an eloquent exposition of those rights, but only within the confines of Sedgwick's personal worldview that dictated the necessity of a separation between white and Indian cultures."⁴⁷ Maria Karafilis and Laurel Hankins likewise discuss Sedgwick's inclusion of the "vanishing Indian" trope, common in much nineteenth-century literature, as does Judith Fetterley, who contends that Sedgwick's use of the trope "participates in the ideology of removal, the 'inevitable' and 'natural' disappearance of the Indian." Fetterley proposes that, after "creating a text that potentially argues for the equality of race," Sedgwick "ultimately abandons that potential to participate in the ideology of removal" to make her "argument for gender equality look less radical by comparison."⁴⁸ Regarding *The Linwoods'* Rose, her character necessarily stands out in a novel about the Revolution, during which patriots used the discourse of equality as their rallying cry while slavery ironically continued largely unabated in the colonies (as in the South while Sedgwick penned the novel). Sedgwick, however, only briefly expands on slavery once in the text, when recounting how an eight-year-old

Isabella struck a deal with her father for Rose's manumission, exchanging her diligence in schoolwork for the slave's freedom, though Rose yet remained a servant in their household.⁴⁹ While Rose's "mind was freed from galling shackles by the restoration of her natural rights" (*The Linwoods*, 171), Sedgwick does not provide her with a new identity. Sedgwick endows Rose with both courage and strength, seen particularly in her role in Herbert's jail-break, but never allows her to venture beyond the identity of servant, which seems to validate Mr. Linwood's initial resistance to her manumission: "she had no reason to complain," for "she *was* free in every thing but the name—far better off than nine tenths of the people in the world" (169). Writing of both Magawisca and Rose, Ashely Reed propounds that Sedgwick isolates these characters, who "are neither full members of white communities nor supported by racial or religious communities of their own," and Reed further claims that Sedgwick "sacrifices" them as tools for promoting white women's agency.⁵⁰ For all that these novels do in forwarding individual personhood for white women characters, Sedgwick's women of color, though admirable, indeed remain rather identity-less.

* * * * *

Similar to the heroines she portrays in her novels, Sedgwick also encountered painful domestic upheaval in her life, from her parent's deaths when she was still a young lady to the deaths of her sister Eliza and brother Harry, occurring only five years apart, to the house-hopping she experienced as she shuffled from one sibling's home to the next in her adult life. This upheaval, however, does not represent the only way in which her life

reflects that of her heroines, for Sedgwick also exhibits an amalgam of character traits and experiences that, similar to her women protagonists, portray both traditionally domestic and unconventional qualities for her era. Not only did she publish domestic and domestic advice fictions as a by-choice unmarried woman, but she also gained much notoriety and traveled quite a bit due to her accomplishments while at the same time living with her different family members. The unconventional in Sedgwick's life also takes on a political aspect, as Charlene Avallone, in "Catharine Sedgwick and the Circles of New York" (2006), underscores Sedgwick's involvement in New York's "national political and cultural influence" as a participant in several "conversational communities," such as that of the "Knickerbocker writers and artists, Democrats, Unitarians, reformers, and literary salons." These conversational communities, Avallone explains, represented gatherings Sedgwick helped host "which featured what Sedgwick called 'rational' socializing, based in conversations and literary activities rather than dancing, dining, and fashion."⁵¹ These gatherings combined the domestic with the unconventional as well, for Sedgwick hosted them largely in domestic spaces, and yet they featured activities and conversations not generally associated with the era's forms of domestic socializing and included such people as politicians and society leaders mixed with activists and artists. Sedgwick represents similar gatherings as these in *The Linwoods*, in fact, as Isabella, though exhibiting some domestic traits, also hosts and attends dinners and gatherings with notable political leaders such as Sir Henry Clinton and General George Washington, and she does not shy away from speaking her mind on political matters. Sedgwick, then, wrote from experience when using domestic upheaval in Jane Elton's, Hope Leslie's, and Isabella Linwood's lives to showcase the fusion of both traditionally domestic and

unconventional character traits evident in these women. Perhaps she thought of her own uniqueness and individuality when forging those of her women characters, forwarding the personhood and identity for them, as well as all her era's women, that she desired others to recognize in her.

CHAPTER IV

“WHERE CHANGES DO NOT COME”: HEAVENLY PERSONHOOD IN SUSAN WARNER’S *THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD*

“Events control us—not we events.” These ominous words conclude Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s October 12, 1836, journal entry in which she reflects on her previous relationship with William Jarvis, a suitor from decades earlier whom she recently learned had just committed suicide. Here Sedgwick recounts how she previously refused his declarations of love and offer of marriage because her “feeble attachment” to him began “dying away under absence” and how he subsequently married another, whom she labels “a commonplace girl—a *poor thing*,” after only a few months time. Sedgwick closes this entry by pondering the direction of Jarvis’ life and how this marriage might have affected him and then tentatively remarks, “I am more and more a fatalist,” a position that, on the surface, seems to explain the declaration that opens this chapter. Her reflections in this entry and throughout her journal, however, specifically regarding Jarvis’ choice to marry “a commonplace girl” and her own choice not to marry him or anyone else, imply the notion that our choices, whether for good or for bad, play at least some part in the events that she asserts eventually control us. We see all over her journal, in fact, how she wrestles with the effects her choice not to marry wrought on her emotions and home-life. Due to this decision and her lack of financial independence, Sedgwick did not possess a home of her own, claiming in a May 18, 1828, journal entry, “In the families of all my

brothers I have an agreeable home. My sisters are all kind and affectionate to me. My brothers generous and invariably kind—their children all love me.” Earlier in the entry, though, she ruminates over one difficulty resulting from her choice to remain single and live with her siblings, a difficulty she returns to many times in the journal: she must watch as her siblings transfer their primary affections from her to their spouses and children. “It is difficult,” pens Sedgwick here, “for one who began life as I did—the primary object of affection to many—to come by degrees to be first to none—and still to have love remain in its entire strength and craving such returns as have no substitute.” On August 5, 1830, she bemoans, “Oh this *second best* to all is a hard condition—the want of it is that depression with me, brings on a sort of paralysis of mind and heart,” and again, on December 2, 1837, “It is the chief misery of single life, its keenest suffering, that the sister in early life, the object of fondest love, . . . must yield her place to one and another. . . .” She never explicitly expresses regret for her choice not to marry, but her wrestlings with the pain of being replaced and of being a constant witness to this replacement suggests a soul who does not feel “at home” in her brothers’ homes.¹ That she fills her novels with the language of exile and scenes of removal and writes nostalgically of the childhood home comes as no surprise then, for her own adult home-situation and her longing for childhood loves and spaces likely influenced, at least in some part, the way she wrote about home.

Susan Warner, an American woman author who began writing in the late 1840s and penned numerous novels, children’s books, and religious publications, likewise experienced in her teen years an exile of her own that would play a significant role in her early work. While a child, Warner’s family enjoyed financial prosperity and comfortable

living among New York's social elite, but this all changed swiftly when Warner's father, a successful Manhattan lawyer, lost much of their fortune during the Panic of 1837, a U.S. financial crisis that set off a lengthy depression. Following this ruinous turn of events, the Warner family removed from their high-class Manhattan home to a residence on New York's Constitution Island, a jut of land on the Hudson River's east side and across from West Point.² Anna Warner, in her biography of her sister Susan, chronicles the destabilizing effect this move inflicted on their household, observing

...our affairs were on a steady progress downhill. From winter and coachman and cook to the skill of our own hands (chiefly) was a broad step; oars and saw and hatchet succeeded our frisky black ponies; while from dainty silks and laces, we came down to calicoes, fashioned by our own fingers; and from new bonnets with every turn of the season, to what headgear we could get. All this mattered very little to me; but for my sister in the book of her young womanhood, it must have been hard.

As a young girl of ten or so, this move did not affect Anna in any significant measure, as she notes here, but Susan, being a young woman of eighteen at this time, felt more keenly this separation from society, made great not only by physical distance but also by their descent in class. Susan confesses in a September 1st journal entry, a few months after their move, "I do not look forward to the approach of winter and the season of our stay in the city, with any pleasure. That is no longer home," sounding almost as if she felt more at home in their new living situation than in the city. Anna's comments just pages later, however, indicate that Susan more likely implies here that she no longer felt welcome in Manhattan society: "But the banishment of silk dresses entailed a much heavier loss; that of intercourse with other people. If you have 'nothing to wear,' few want you.... And for a good while we had little to do with visits or visitors. But I think it tried by sister more than anyone guessed."³ Today we might argue that far worse things could happen to a

family than to drop a notch or two on the social scale, but for a teen who had already lost her mother years earlier during her younger sister's birth, coming into womanhood at such a time of physical and social removal produced a profound destabilizing effect that, while apparently not very visible to others, would appear in her writing years later.

Chapter Three discusses how home could be a precarious place in the nineteenth-century, particularly for women, and domestic upheaval due to financial collapse ranks as a common cause of such precariousness in many cases. Financial difficulties, in fact, impelled several women writers into their authorial careers as means of supplementing their families' dwindling incomes or even supporting themselves in their spouses' absence. When Charles Sigourney's business began to fail, for instance, his wife, Lydia Huntley Sigourney, looked to writing poetry as a way of bolstering the family's resources. She eventually became America's first woman poet to earn a full living from her writing and was able to support herself comfortably when her husband died years later. Both Helen Hunt Jackson and Fanny Fern similarly found in their writing enough income to support themselves after their first husbands' sudden deaths, with both women shrewd negotiators regarding the publishing of their works.⁴ Just as these women (including Sedgwick) took up their pens to increase the financial stability of their households, so, too, did Susan Warner. Her sister Anna (who would later contribute with her pen as well) recalls the time at which Susan's first novel, *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), began to take shape, explaining how an especially difficult winter prompted the following early spring comment from their Aunt Fanny: "Sue, I believe if you would try, you could write a story." Anna continues,

Whether she added ‘that would sell,’ I not sure, but of course that was what she meant. From the early days of her own self-confidence, no one of us had ever questioned my darling’s power to do anything she chose.

My sister made no answer. But as she finished wiping the dishes, and went back and forth to put them away, the first dim, far-off notion of the ‘Wide, Wide World’ came into her head. Very misty at first, very brief; hardly going beyond the one thought of a desolate child tossed out upon the world; but I think the opening words were written that very night. No wonder she began with a lawsuit!⁵

We see from this passage that not only did the circumstances of Susan Warner’s exile compel her first authorial foray, but they also feature obliquely in the book’s plot itself, as the book opens with a young girl who finds her world rocked by financial troubles brought on by an unsuccessful lawsuit of her father’s.

Instability indeed factors heavily in *The Wide, Wide World*’s plot as it likewise did in Warner’s early life, yet writing added only scant stability to the family’s circumstances. Susan never experienced the financial success enjoyed by the likes of Sigourney and Jackson, and she discovered early on that authorial success would not stabilize her life.⁶ Her personal journal and letters to family members demonstrate in various places that she instead learned to find peace and constancy for her thoughts and emotions largely in religion, namely her faith in the Christian God and in Jesus Christ. In a letter to her Aunt Fanny, for instance, during a stay in Boston the year or so before she began her first novel, Warner writes,

A long argument yesterday morning about the source of a Christian’s peace. Mrs. B. maintaining that it proceeded from a *holy life*, and I on the contrary insisting that though inseparably *connected* with such a life, peace has its *source* elsewhere; quoting, as a just expression of my opinion on this point, a remark of the Scotch David Dickson, which I met with the other day in a little book:—‘I have taken all my good deeds and all my bad, and have cast them together in a heap before the Lord, and have fled from both to Jesus Christ, and in him I have sweet peace.’

Several years later, in a June 3rd, 1860, journal entry, she recounts, “Trying all day to get a clearer, more assured and calm state of feeling—and I know not how or why, towards evening it came—more peacefully sweet than I have known for some time. I thank my God, who by whatever means gave it. And by his grace I will keep it, to live, even here, near him.” Warner believed, in fact, that one could forever find “calm” in God and Christ, as in the next year, in a January 7th journal entry, she affirms, “‘All is temporary, but the bosom of Jesus.’ Once know that, and the place of rest is found for all time.”⁷ While her writing brought relative stability to her family’s finances, this religious faith provided stability in all other areas of her life. And just as shadows of her own exile make their way into her first published book, so, too, do notions of her religious faith, as she blankets the pages of her text with her belief that God could bring peace and rest to people even in the midst of life-rocking circumstances. Warner counters the domestic upheaval imaged in *The Wide, Wide World* by consistently promoting heaven, “the place of rest,” as an enduring and unchanging home for Christians, a belief that brings the novel’s heroine not only a sense of peace in the midst of sorrows and difficulties but also a more stable sense of self and personhood, as she learns to ground her identity in her religious faith.

***The Wide, Wide World* and Domesticity**

As I have previously intimated, the sense of unease and instability the Warner family endured at this time did not extend only to them, as a wide range of tensions and troubles marked mid-nineteenth-century America and made life difficult for many. “The period in American history during which Warner wrote,” explains Sara Quay, “was

marked ... by ‘a powerful sense of loss,’ a result of geographical distance between family members and loved ones as well as of incurable illnesses and early, often unexpected death.”⁸ At this time, Westward expansion as well as industrial advancement prompted many Americans to take on relatively mobile existences, traveling from one material opportunity to the next. This, combined with financial failures and the commonality of illness and death (which also prompted removal at times), resulted not only in a sense of loss but also a sense of destabilization, a reality for many people that Warner portrays explicitly in the life of Ellen Montgomery, *The Wide, Wide World*’s heroine. At the novel’s outset, we discover that Ellen’s father, Captain Montgomery, has encountered financial difficulty due to his law practice and plans to move himself and Mrs. Montgomery to Europe so he might engage in “some government or military business” there.⁹ As the Captain refuses to bring Ellen with them and his wife cannot stay in America due to an illness requiring a more favorable climate, Ellen finds that she must move from her childhood home and reside for an indeterminate period of time with an aunt (her father’s sister) whom she has never met, a discovery that rocks Ellen’s near ten-year-old world.¹⁰ The remainder of the novel follows Ellen on a trek from her beloved mother and her comfortable New York City home to the uncomfortable rural farm of her cheerless but efficient Aunt Fortune and, along the way, outlines the way in which Ellen seeks to recuperate the sense of home and peace she loses during this move. Throughout this lengthy coming-of-age story, we observe her go through the type of loss described by Quay, so common in this time, for not only is Ellen removed from her childhood home, but she also endures the premature deaths of both her mother and her new friend and mentor, Alice Humphreys. While we see in Warner’s text a female Bildungsroman

portraying a young girl's battles with submission and self-discipline and her conversion to Christian faith, the novel also vividly illustrates, as Sedgwick's novels did, the ubiquity of domestic upheaval in American women's lives during this era, in spite of how the culture attempted to project home as grounded and safe.

In her introduction to the second edition of her seminal work *Woman's Fiction* (1993), Nina Baym summarizes the *woman's fiction* categorization she uses as a premise for her original work: "These novels," she explains, "all tell about a young woman who has lost the emotional and financial support of her legal guardians ... but who nevertheless goes on to win her own way in the world." Baym then observes that the young woman's "'own way' ... seldom involves more than domestic comfort, a social network, and a companionable husband; what makes the success is her overcoming of obstacles through a hard-won, much tested 'self-dependence.'"¹¹ This basic premise fittingly describes *The Wide, Wide World's* basic framework (Baym, in fact, discusses the novel in her book), as Warner's text not only highlights Ellen's lessons in obedience and self-control but also significantly underscores notions of domestic comfort through its depictions of various home-spaces and homemaking rituals. Nineteenth-century domesticity, then, has understandably become a common way scholars approach the novel, especially in considering possible explanations for how Warner portrays home in it. In her influential treatment of the text, Jane Tompkins, for instance, argues that the novel advocates women seeking to employ the highest degree of domestic prowess possible, as home-spaces comprise women's "one material advantage" by which to assert authoritative power in creating "the experience of domestic bliss." She additionally argues that Ellen's acts of submission in the novel also demonstrate a type of womanly

power in that, because they comprise “the mastery of herself,” they exhibit “an assertion of autonomy” that “bypasses worldly (male) authority.”¹² Brandy Parris, however, maintains that Ellen learns submission for other people’s benefit, positing that, through the emotional labor Warner makes Ellen do to allow others to feel comfortable and at peace in her presence, the text approves of and supports the “rules” of sentimental domesticity as well as the nineteenth-century idea of “feeling right.”¹³ Catharine O’Connell makes a similar argument, claiming that domestic women constituted the intended readership for this novel, yet while she avers that the text positions Ellen in line with cultural views of domesticity, she also suggests that “the novel’s privileging of female subjectivity” and “its simultaneous compromising of other, competing sources of narrative and cultural authority” conflict with its advocacy of domestic ideology.¹⁴ And Quay interestingly focuses on domesticity by examining the objects found within the novel’s domestic spaces, positing that the way these objects become invested with value based not only on the nostalgia attached to them but also on the domestic comfort they can bring says something about how their possessors define ideas of home.¹⁵ Much of this scholarship regarding the novel’s domestic focus, then, corroborates Baym’s essential framework for woman’s fiction, as these writers mainly agree that Ellen displays some sense of subjectivity or autonomy in how she strives to master her thoughts and actions.

Approaching *The Wide, Wide World* through the lens of domesticity does make sense given how the novel falls in line with several tenets of nineteenth-century domestic ideology, yet Warner also develops throughout the novel’s entirety a theme regarding home that steps beyond these notions. In response to the domestic upheaval and sense of

destabilization so common in her era, she continually forwards heaven as an unchanging home for Christians—in fact, their one and only true home—that not only offers hope for a happy and peaceful afterlife but also provides comfort and a stable identity while here on earth. Tompkins and other scholars often still approach this theme within the context of domesticity, claiming Warner’s discussions of heaven have more to do with women imbuing earthly domestic spaces with a heaven-like bliss.¹⁶ Warner’s Calvinist bent in the novel, however, indicates that we should take this theme quite literally and explore it from a Calvinist perspective: as the Christian belief in heaven as a literal place that God inhabits and that serves as a Christian’s one true home.¹⁷ Several scripture passages in the Christian Bible forward this belief, including 2 Corinthians 5:1–2, which uses domestic language to reference how Christians long for a permanent “building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” as opposed to a temporary earthly “tent” in which they “groan” (ESV).¹⁸ Hebrews 13:14 expresses a similar idea, as it reads, “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come,” which extends the sentiment described just chapters earlier in Hebrews 11:13–16. Here the writer explains how the Israelite patriarchs “acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” and searching for a different “homeland,” similar to how Warner presents Ellen in her novel. Hebrews’ author then compares the patriarch exiles to all those who similarly see themselves as earthly exiles because they “desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one,” just as Warner establishes heaven as the home Ellen truly desires (though she does not immediately come to this realization). Jesus likewise evokes the idea of earthly exile in John 15:19 when he tells his followers that they “are not of the world,” claiming a chapter earlier that he goes “to prepare a place” for them (these conversations take place

the day just prior to his death). All of these verses affirm the existence of an eternal, heavenly dwelling prepared by God for his people and residing in a lasting, celestial city, descriptions that connote the stability and security lacking in nineteenth-century homespaces where removal and loss always threaten to destabilize people's lives. For Warner, then, who proclaimed "the bosom of Christ" as "the place of rest ... for all time," the belief in heaven as a Christian's true home forms an understandable answer to Ellen's (and Warner's own) quest for stability and peace.¹⁹

Not only does forwarding heaven as a literal and unchanging home for Christians accord with the Bible, but it also aligns with beliefs that Warner's own church at the time would likely have taught. During the year she published *The Wide, Wide World*, Warner held membership at New York's Mercer Street Presbyterian Church under its pastor, Dr. Thomas H. Skinner. The writings of Jonathan Edwards, a Calvinist and among the best-known of America's eighteenth-century preachers, greatly influenced Skinner's theology and teachings. Sharon Kim notes that Warner possessed at least two of Jonathan Edwards' works by way of Skinner's recommendation, suggesting that not only did Warner command "a formidable knowledge of the Bible," but she had likely also read Edwards. Kim, in fact, submits, "While Warner does not mention Edwards directly, Edwards would have shaped her understanding of Christianity through her personal readings, her denomination, and her minister," who "often incorporated Edwards's writings into his own."²⁰ Edwards expounded on heaven quite thoroughly, even delivering an entire sermon in 1738 with heaven as its focus, titling it "Heaven, a World of Charity, or Love." Here he explains what he sees as heaven's many characteristics, opening by maintaining that God himself lives in heaven:

Here I remark that the God of love himself dwells in heaven. Heaven is the palace or presence-chamber of the high and holy One, whose name is love, and who is both the cause and source of all holy love. ...Heaven is a part of creation that God has built for this end, to be the place of his glorious presence, and it is his abode forever; and here will he dwell, and gloriously manifest himself to all eternity.²¹

Edwards' teaching not only establishes heaven as God's residence, however; in his funeral sermon for minister and missionary David Brainerd in 1747, Edwards submits that the resurrected Christ lives in heaven as well. "And therefore there is a certain place, a particular part of the external creation, to which Christ is gone, and where he remains," declares Edwards, indicating, "And this place is that which we call the highest heaven, or the heaven of heavens; a place beyond all the visible heavens." As he continues elucidating heaven's many attributes, Edwards also references the exilic imagery from Hebrews 11 to identify heaven as the one true home of all Christians, claiming, "And thither it is that the souls of departed saints are conducted when they die. ...This is the saint's home, being their Father's house: they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and this is the other and better country to which they are travelling."²² All throughout Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, Edwards' ideas here infuse its pages. We continually see these same ideas about heaven as the saint's true home expressed through the several characters who surround Ellen Montgomery, as they evangelize her and, once she reaches conversion, encourage and comfort her with these beliefs, offering them to her as a source of emotional stability and a sense of self.

Searching for Mother and Home

The belief in heaven as her true home develops progressively for young Ellen throughout much of the novel, as Warner's text records a journey for her heroine that is

both literal and spiritual and that takes its time before culminating in Ellen's awakening to Christian faith and a belief in heaven that will provide her the peace and stability she desires. Just as Ellen adopts *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), John Bunyan's uber-popular allegory about a Christian's journey through various spiritual trials on his way to the "Celestial City," as her favorite book second to her Bible, *The Wide, Wide World* similarly evokes a Bunyanesque quality in its chronicling of Ellen's spiritual journey over the four or five years we follow her.²³ Both Ellen and Christian, in fact, embark on their journeys in similar ways: In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian becomes aware from reading a book (likely the Bible) that he carries a heavy burden (representing his sin), and this burden signifies to readers the unregenerate condition in which Christian persists until his burden falls off at a cross he encounters along his journey. Ellen also begins her quest as unregenerate, and Warner demonstrates this condition to readers through a scene that similarly involves a book. Just prior to their parting, Mrs. Montgomery purchases Ellen a new Bible and, before inscribing its opening pages, introduces Ellen to her belief in heaven as a lasting home in which she hopes to see her daughter again someday. "We have no continuing city here," she tells her child, referencing Hebrews 13:14 before explaining, "But there is a home, Ellen, where changes do not come; and they that are once gathered there are parted no more for ever; and all tears are wiped from their eyes. I believe I am going fast to that home; and now my greatest concern is, that my little Ellen—my precious baby—may follow me, and come there too" (52). Her words here imply that Ellen has yet to become a Christian and that her child's conversion forms the deepest of her desires, imaged also in the verses she enters in her daughter's Bible:

The pen played a moment in her fingers, and then she wrote below the date—
"I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me."

This was for Ellen; but the next words were not for her; what made her write them?

“I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.”

They were written almost unconsciously; and as, if bowed by an unseen force, Mrs. Montgomery’s head sank upon the open page, and her whole soul went up with her petition.... (53)²⁴

This scene, following directly on the heels of her comments about heaven, implies that Mrs. Montgomery includes the first verse to encourage Ellen to seek God and submit her love to him but that she inscribes the next as an affirmation to herself that God will one day answer her prayer for Ellen to claim God as her own, again suggesting that Ellen remains unregenerate at this point. When the mother and daughter finally part and Ellen embarks on her journey to Aunt Fortune’s, Mrs. Montgomery’s last spoken words in the novel form a prayer for her daughter that God would “make her his own—and bring her to that home where parting cannot be” (78). All these things illustrate that, though exhorted with notions of heaven fairly early in the text, Ellen, as an unregenerate soul, has miles to travel before coming to the same belief.

At the time Ellen finally parts from her parents and childhood home, the narrative describes Ellen as “a child of very high spirit and violent passions, untamed at all by sorrow’s discipline” (78), intimating that this parting represents the first sorrow to try her spirit. Both her physical search for home as well as her spiritual journey begin at this point, for she must remove not only from a beloved domestic space in which she found safety and comfort but also, and much more significantly, from the refuge of love and stability her mother provides for her, a more difficult separation than the former. As she sails away from New York City, for instance, she looks on the fading cityscape and meditates on what she leaves: “In that confused mass of buildings at which she was gazing ... was the only spot she cared for in the world; her heart was there. ...It’s a bitter

thing, that sailing away from all one loves” (81). While these words illustrate Ellen’s lamentation over leaving a specific location, the way she moments later expresses her profound sense of loss in cries for her mother’s presence demonstrates that her relationship with her mother constitutes a large part of “all one loves” for her. The text in fact remarks “how constantly in her heart the poor child was reaching forth longing arms toward her far-off mother” who, like a home-like sanctuary, “would have been a sure refuge and protection from all this trouble” (82–83). Her nostalgic grief throughout much of the novel likewise centers mainly on her desire to see or hear from her mother and not on memories of her city residence, suggesting that her sense of loss stems from separating from her mother and not removing from a place. That Ellen conflates her mother with the ideas of refuge and protection often associated in nineteenth-century culture with domestic spaces corresponds, in fact, with how Doreen Massey theorizes “that place called home” (which I outline in Chapter Two), as she defines any *place* as an entity “formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location.”²⁵ Massey goes on to explain that when people experience a sense of instability and upheaval due to removing from a home-space, much of this sense of loss actually issues from a rearrangement of social relations, implying that people’s concept of home is inextricably tied to the social relations they experience within the place they call home, that home is never just a location or structure. To be sure, Ellen here faces changes in both location and relationships, but the latter change affects her at a much deeper level, as, at this point in the novel, she locates her true home in the one person in whom she has always found refuge and grounding: her mother.²⁶

“In a novel whose first word is ‘Mamma!’” observes Dana Luciano, “there is never a question, for anyone other than Ellen, that the mother is going to be lost.”²⁷ Though death does not take Mrs. Montgomery until Ellen has lived apart from her for months, Ellen will never again, from the point of their separation, return back home to the physical sanctuary that is her mother; Ellen has essentially already lost her. And unfortunately for Ellen, her Aunt Fortune presents no likely substitute for this home-mother that she loses, as Ellen quickly discovers from her aunt’s abrupt and unwelcoming reception upon her arrival at her aunt’s farm: “She did not kiss me!” complains Ellen, “she didn’t say she was glad to see me!” (123). Not only does Warner describe her room at Aunt Fortune’s in spare, unflattering, and uncomfortable terms—“the floor was without the sign of a carpet, and the bare boards looked to Ellen very comfortless” (124), but Aunt Fortune interestingly matches this description as well.²⁸ She offers no consolation over the separation and loss Ellen experiences, and she and her niece additionally butt heads throughout much of Ellen’s stay at the farm, as Aunt Fortune vents her various frustrations with life (many involving social class) on her niece, which Ellen generally meets with equal frustration and resistance. One encounter, however, epitomizes these conflicts between the two and tellingly involves the mother who personifies all of Ellen’s deepest longings. Early into her stay on the farm, Ellen learns that her aunt has opened the first letter from her mother for which she has so anxiously waited, in her eyes a severe violation of privacy given how she conflates her mother with the private space of home. After the hostile confrontation that ensues between the two, ending with Aunt Fortune threatening to open every piece of mail she receives, Ellen runs from the farmhouse and into the open air of the country.

Having failed to find a comforting home in both the farmhouse and in her relationship with Aunt Fortune, Ellen turns instead to the solace she discovers in the constancy and cycles of nature, a new relationship for this young city girl. We see her turn to this constancy even prior to arriving at the farm, as she looks to the skies for consolation when discovering herself a stranger to everything on her journey from the city: “She had lived long enough in the place she had left, to feel at home there,” the text reads, “but here she came to no street or crossing that she had ever seen before; nothing looked familiar; all reminded her that she was a traveller. Only one pleasant thing Ellen saw on her walk, and that was the sky; and that looked just as it did at home; and very often Ellen’s gaze was fixed upon it” (102). Now having fought with her new guardian and feeling more than ever the wide chasm between herself and her mother, Ellen forms an even deeper bond with nature that, as intimated by the title of Chapter XV, “Mother Earth Rather Than Aunt Fortune,” begins to mimic the comforting, refuge-like relationship she once enjoyed with her own mother. In this chapter, Warner personifies nature as a maternal figure to Ellen, not only in the chapter title but also in how the outside soothes her in her distress: “‘Peace,’ was the whisper of nature to her troubled child” (176), an indication that, just as Ellen finds encouragement in nature, nature, too, claims Ellen as her own. In this scene, as Ellen journeys half-way up a mountain the locals call “The Nose,” the text also interestingly repeats the conflation between the maternal relationship and a sense of home, for just as it depicts a personified “mother” nature soothing her “troubled child,” it likewise employs language evocative of domestic spaces in describing the small mountain ledge on which Ellen chooses to rest. “Carpeted with moss, and furnished with fallen stones and pieces of rock” (177), this place and her

new relationship with a mother-like nature form a home-like sanctuary for the sorrowing young girl whose current residence offers no such home-like comfort. And the way in which her tears flow in this place like a “pent-up storm” with “floods of grief” (178) additionally illustrates how Ellen likewise takes on some of her new mother’s characteristics, as she allows her heartache to flow freely there.

Not only does this mountain ledge provide Ellen with her first feelings of relief since leaving the city, but this mountain known as “The Nose” also constitutes a central figure in Ellen’s search for home in three ways: from a literal, geographical standpoint; from a more figurative, connotative standpoint; and finally, and most significant in regard to ideas of heaven, from a spiritual, biblically-allusive standpoint. Geographically speaking, even prior to the above scene, Warner has already afforded readers with a glimpse of this mountain, as Mr. Van Brunt (Aunt Fortune’s farmhand) uses “The Nose” to help Ellen situate the farm’s geographical location in relation to this mountain on her first trip to her aunt’s by way of Van Brunt’s ox-cart. Even twilight’s dusky darkness during the ride does not shroud this giant landmark, and as Ellen assents that she can see what Van Brunt points out to her, so begins her first geography lesson of a region with which she will become quite intimate. Warner, in fact, uses the mountain to situate the geography of other residences as well, and so throughout the novel, the mountain stands at the center of much of Ellen’s travel, as she runs (or rides) back and forth between her aunt’s house and other places either situated along the way to or resting on this central figure. The mountain’s literal centrality also provides a grounding point for readers as well, for we also better understand the novel’s geography by using “The Nose” as a reference point to locate all other places as we follow Ellen in her search for home.

Ellen's constant movements on and surrounding the mountain (as well as those of other characters') highlight the mountain's conversely immobile presence, which, though a fairly obvious thing to observe, proves a significant attribute regarding connections the text makes between stability and conceptions of home. While the mountain's literal presence forms a central figure in the novel's geography, the connotations generally associated with mountains likewise comprise the correspondence Warner draws between nature and Ellen's longing for a stable and secure home. The mountain's immovability, for instance, evokes the qualities of strength and, above all, stability that Ellen, in her separation from her mother, feels she has lost and for which she (and many others in the nineteenth century) sorely yearns in her quest for a new home. As she grieves this loss and despairs that she cannot find the same stability at her aunt's, she locates instead a home-like space in nature, unsurprisingly (and not coincidentally) on The Nose's immovable face. The way in which a personified nature gathers her in and offers itself as a surrogate maternal sanctuary to her, as well as the way the immovable mountain itself becomes a home-like space, connects the attributes of strength and stability, connoted by the mountain, with the mother-child relationship and notions of home, again linking these things together. Ellen remembers her childhood home and mother as certain and secure refuges, even despite how her separation from them proves the opposite, so this correspondence between nature and immovability demonstrates why Ellen's new relationship with nature represents her first step toward finding a new home. As further illustration of this connection between stability and nature, Warner also links the same connotations generally associated with mountains to other natural elements in the text, such as the constancy Ellen finds in the skies during her different journeys, a constancy

that also brings her consolation when her close friend Alice lays dying. Overcome by the scene of her friend's imminent death, Ellen looks on the night sky through the house's glass door and meditates on how the moon and stars "shone calmly on" in "their purity and steadfastness": "How long they have been shining! thought Ellen;—going on just the same, from night to night, and from year to year—as if they never would come to an end" (519), unlike other things in her life. These ideas of steadfastness and certainty, then, linked to the novel's several depictions of nature but none more so than to the mountain at the center of everything, lay the groundwork for the text's central spiritual metaphor that leads Ellen to adopt the belief in heaven as her true home. This metaphor maintains that only the Christian God, an immovable rock and refuge to his followers, can provide the lasting stability people desire.

That Ellen first discovers a home in nature and specifically in a mountain fits well a novel in which religion and heaven form dominant themes, for several of the biblical writers employ nature's many attributes to illustrate various spiritual tenets, even the very characteristics of God and of heaven.²⁹ One of the most common natural formations to which the biblical authors liken God and to which, according to these writers, God also likens himself is the figure of a great rock or mountain, a metaphor seen pervasively throughout the whole Bible but especially in the Old Testament. The beginning of 1 Samuel, for instance, records the prayer of a formerly barren woman named Hannah, who prays so earnestly for a child that the temple priest believes her drunk. When she gives birth to a son soon after her prayer, she later worships God and declares, "There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God" (1 Samuel 2:2). "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer," King David of Israel

begins in Psalm 18 after God rescues him from a blood-thirsty King Saul; he then sprinkles in additional home-like terms, declaring, “my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (Psalm 18:2).

Additionally, where another of David’s psalms evokes the immovability of a mountain, proclaiming, “He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken” (Psalm 62:2), he petitions God in the psalm just prior, “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy” (Psalm 61:2–3). By proclaiming God as a rock, all of these verses associate with him the connotations of strength and immovability that characterize mountains, so Warner, in making *The Nose* such a central figure in her text, likewise uses this same spiritual metaphor to establish God as the only one able to provide stability for any of the novel’s characters, largely through the image of heaven.

Just as the novel displays a correlation between that last psalm and how Ellen feels led to turn aside to the protecting, home-like space of *The Nose* (to “the rock that is higher than” she), so Warner additionally embeds throughout *The Wide, Wide World* several other allusions to the biblical metaphor of God as a rock. Ellen’s friend and mentor Alice, for instance, references Isaiah 32:1–2, which foreshadows a king and his princes who will be “like the shade of a great rock,” just prior to exhorting Ellen to “flee to the shadow of that great rock” whenever despair threatens (210). Ellen obeys this advice in a literal sense, more than once in fact, as we often glimpse her making “the best of her way to the mountain” (398) during difficult times, but she also heeds it later and more significantly in a spiritual sense, as when Alice tragically dies. In the midst of her grief at this loss, Ellen indeed finds comfort from “that great rock” as Alice’s brother

John reminds her, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help” (523), a reference to Psalm 121:1–2: “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”³⁰ Warner uses allusions such as these to link the connotations of strength and stability correspondent with the novel’s central mountain to the ultimate strength and stability with which the Bible characterizes God, demonstrating how the mountain represents the unshakeable refuge that God will eventually become to Ellen upon her conversion. The Bible, in fact, even extends its rock metaphor to notions of heaven, as the prophet Isaiah, for instance, links God’s celestial kingdom to the figure of a mountain when he prophesies, “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it” (Isaiah 2:2). The Bible thus not only likens God to a great rock but also likens heaven to “the highest of the mountains,” a conflation of location and person that Ellen would understand, as she likewise conflates her childhood home with her mother. Warner, in fact, shows how Ellen transfers this tendency to her spiritual life after conversion, as the text most often displays Ellen’s dependence on God as a refuge through her belief in heaven as her most certain and unchanging home. Warner, then, employs the Bible’s rock metaphors by way of positioning a mountain at the center of her novel so as to forward God and his immovable heavenly kingdom as the only sure and stable home Ellen will find, the only thing that will truly satisfy her longing for home.

Ellen’s new maternal and domestic relationship with nature and the mountain also results in her acquiring two spiritually important relationships with differently-aged women in the novel, relationships that aid Ellen in her spiritual journey and bring her to a

belief in heaven as her true home. She meets both women on The Nose, though at different times, and while these women both additionally reside on the mountain, their houses' differing locations mark their differing levels of spiritual progress: the higher up the mountain the house rests, the more spiritual the woman who inhabits it. Though the women reflect different phases of spiritual progress, they both continue Mrs. Montgomery's work in educating Ellen with regard to Christianity and encouraging her with thoughts about heaven. Her friendship with Alice forms the more intimate of these relationships, as this young woman, whom Ellen first encounters when venting her sorrow on that poignant mountain ledge, transforms quickly from a chance acquaintance into her teacher, mentor, adopted sister, and surrogate mother, a relationship that, as previously discussed, automatically carries with it notions of home. Warner depicts Alice's mountain house as bright, welcoming, comfortable, and surrounded by the beauties of nature (already a home to our young heroine), and Ellen immediately finds herself "at home" in Alice's "most excellent of easy-chairs" (194). John Seelye describes this domestic space as "an equivalent to the lovely place Ellen found on the mountainside where she first met Alice,"³¹ and yet the fact that the house rests on that same mountain, given what The Nose's centrality in the novel suggests, indicates something even more significant than the comfort of the space itself. In situating Alice's home half-way up the mountain that reflects the steadfastness of both God himself and his heavenly kingdom, the novel presents Alice as having already progressed some way in her spiritual journey. Her residence on the mountain, in other words, parallels her position in the Christian's earthly journey toward a home in heaven someday, a home that she also boldly claims as her own. "I think I am going home, Ellie—before you," declares a dying Alice to Ellen,

and when the latter questions her statement, she continues, “Yes, home, I feel it to be; it is not a strange land; I thank God it is my home I am going to” (505). Alice states this confidently enough, and yet she earlier confesses to the older of Ellen’s two women mentors (who is also her own mentor) that she struggles to be content in God even through her illness, demonstrating how her part-way placement on the mountain reflects her part-way spiritual progress.

Ellen’s friendship with Alice also leads to a relationship with the much older and more spiritually wise Mrs. Vawse, the grandmother of Ellen’s young acquaintance, Nancy (whom Ellen meets soon after her arrival at the farm), as Alice proposes that she and Ellen go to Mrs. Vawse for tutoring in the French language. Warner portrays Mrs. Vawse’s house as oddly-shaped and spare but still clean, happy, and comfortable, yet similar to Alice’s domestic space, the placement of the older woman’s house on the mountain, nearing its top, likewise identifies her spiritual maturity in the Christian journey. Her house’s situation, in fact, and the way in which the text describes this situation, allude to two different biblical stories: that of Noah in Genesis 6–8 and the wise man from Jesus’ parable in Luke 6:47–49.³² As for the first of these stories, the writer of Genesis recounts how God chooses to bring a cataclysmic flood to cover the entire earth as judgment for what he sees as humankind’s wickedness and corruption. Not desiring to make a complete end of all life on earth, however, God directs Noah, a man who follows him faithfully, to build an enormous ark in which to protect his own family and samples of the world’s various animal life from the flood. After the waters begin to recede months later, Genesis 8:4 records that “the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat,” though much time would elapse before Noah and his family could disembark the craft. Alice’s

description of Mrs. Vawse and her odd house atop the mountain nods to this biblical story, as she explains to Ellen that Mrs. Vawse “has been tossed from trouble to trouble—a perfect sea of troubles—till now she is left like a wreck upon this mountain top. A fine wreck she is!” (205). By associating Mrs. Vawse’s house with Noah’s ark, Warner creates an association between spiritually faithful Noah and Mrs. Vawse, implying that she exhibits the same spiritual qualities as the godly ark-builder.

In a similar fashion, the novel further describes Mrs. Vawse’s house as “perched so snugly, in a niche of the hill” (224), somewhat built into the rock as it were, which additionally evokes images of the wise man in Luke 6:48, who, when building his house, “dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.” This story again involves a torrential flood that violently assails the wise man’s house, but the house does not fall because the man prudently built its foundation into a rock, holding it secure. Mrs. Vawse herself alludes to this parable when asking Ellen how she likes her “house on the rock,” assuring Ellen of its stability against whatever storms may come by remarking that her “house is too strong for the wind to blow it away” (227). This correspondence between the wise man’s house and Mrs. Vawse’s again implies that the old woman shares the same characteristics as Luke’s wise builder. By drawing a connection between these two Bible stories and Mrs. Vawse’s mountaintop house, Warner then characterizes Mrs. Vawse with the same attributes of faith and wisdom exemplified by the men in these stories, a faith and wisdom also apparent in the spiritual conversations she holds with both Alice and Ellen throughout the novel. Jane Tompkins also notes that the frontispiece of *The Wide, Wide World*’s first illustrated edition “shows a ship tossing on a stormy sea,”³³ which links Ellen’s own tale of domestic upheaval with the story of storm-tossed Mrs.

Vawse, suggesting that Ellen’s losses and difficulties might eventually culminate in a mature Christian faith.

Earthly Shadows and Heavenly Substance

All of these things—Ellen’s newly formed relationship with nature, her immovable mountain refuge, and the biblical metaphors and stories made present to her in the words and lives of those women who reside on that mountain—aid and encourage Ellen in her spiritual journey and prepare her to recognize heaven as her true home through conversion to Christianity. They accomplish this for her by functioning as what Colossians 2:17 calls “shadows of the things to come”: they display in part and imperfectly the ways heaven exists in whole and in perfection. Throughout Colossians 2, for instance, the apostle Paul discusses circumcision and other rituals outlined in the Bible’s Old Testament, claiming that Christians need not abide by those practices any longer, for they “are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” (Colossians 2:17). In other words, Paul posits that those rituals essentially acted as foreshadowings of the coming Christian life that Jesus ushered into the world and, even more, the still coming heavenly kingdom which his followers will someday enter. Jonathan Edwards expands on this idea when explaining his belief that “the God of love himself dwells in heaven,” observing how the several places that the Old Testament says God inhabits, such as the Jewish temple’s “holy of holies,” are merely “types” (or shadows) of his true residence. “But heaven is his dwelling-place above all other places in the universe,” Edwards maintains, “and all those places in which he was said to dwell of old, were but types of this. Heaven is a part of creation that God has built for this end,

to be the place of his glorious presence, and it is his abode forever.”³⁴ Now known as *typology*, a Christian doctrine that asserts that certain rituals and elements in the Old Testament serve as “types” of things in the New Testament, this idea of shadows and substance plays a large role in *The Wide, Wide World*’s framework, as Warner uses nature’s constancy and the mountain’s stability as shadows of heaven’s eternal substance.

Alice’s brother John, in fact, engages Ellen in conversation about this very idea. While spending a Christmas break at their friends’ (the Marshmans) estate, John directs Ellen to look out of a study window and asks her to describe what she observes. Of the natural elements Ellen identifies, she again references the constancy of the skies, remarking that “the sun is shining on everything, just as it did the day we came.” At this, John explains to her, in quite apocalyptic terms, what he believes the Bible teaches will happen to this natural world during the end of days: “I know that a day is to come, when those heavens shall be wrapped together as a scroll—they shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment—and it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up” (370).³⁵ In other words, while Ellen looks on nature as constant and stable in its seemingly endless cycles (as opposed to other things, such as her home, which she has discovered are susceptible to upheaval), John argues that in earth’s last days, even nature will move and cease its constancy as it undergoes apocalyptic destruction. Though Ellen affirms her belief that this will happen, she yet laments the “disagreeable” nature of this idea, to which John responds that the things in nature only exist as reflections of a better version to come, submitting, “The new heavens and the new earth will be so much more lovely and pleasant that we shall not want to think of these” (371).³⁶ According to this reasoning, the novel’s central mountain, in its (temporary) strength and unmoving

stability, functions as a mere taste of the city to come, a shadow of the even stronger and ever more immovable eternal home for Christians in heaven. Not only do characters such as Mrs. Montgomery, Mrs. Vawse, and, most significantly, Alice and John Humphreys, encourage Ellen to believe in God and this heaven as her true and forever home, but her several experiences with nature and *The Nose*, as heavenly shadows and types, also whisper to her the substance of this eternal residence.

While Warner includes these many shadows and types that prefigure God's celestial kingdom, as well as kindly friends that model and teach its virtues, Ellen still does not completely accept heaven as her true home until illness and disease severs the last thread of hope connecting her with her mother and her childhood home. When a country neighbor unwittingly alludes to her mother's death, a reality Aunt Fortune for some reason keeps from her, Ellen immediately "runs up the mountain" to find Alice and discovers the truth there, which sends Ellen into a "kind of stupor" (411–12). She remains in this condition for some weeks, but though she loses her appetite and finds no pleasure or interest in the people and activities she previously enjoyed, the text details how she begins to exhibit greater interest in her Bible and its "sweet comforting words to the weak and the sorrowing." While the final loss of mother and home upends any sense of stability she yet possessed, Warner illustrates how, during this initial time of heart-rending loss, the verses Ellen reads bring her to see more and more how Jesus, heaven's representative, will provide the stability and security for which she longs:

As it wore on, there came to be one thing in which Ellen again took pleasure, and that was her Bible. . . . She loved to read about Christ—all he said and did; all his kindness to his people, and tender care of them; the love shown them here and the joys prepared for them hereafter. She began to cling more to that one unchangeable Friend from whose love neither life nor death can sever those that believe in him; and her heart, tossed and shaken as it had been, began to take rest

again in that happy resting-place with stronger affection, and even with greater joy, than ever before. (412–13)

Ellen's gradual recognition of Jesus as that "one unchangeable Friend from whose love neither life nor death can sever" corresponds with her mother's earlier description of heaven as a place "where changes do not come" (52), again a conflation of person and location, very like Ellen's first notions of home, that makes her more and more comfortable with looking to Jesus and heaven as her ultimate "happy resting-place." Her full conversion to Christianity, then, unsurprisingly occurs just pages later when John reads from *The Pilgrim's Progress* about Christian receiving a mark on his forehead after unburdening himself at the cross, a mark John describes as "the mark of God's children" (417). When this prompts Ellen to question her own spiritual standing and, on John's encouragement, she subsequently examines her heart and life to see if they accord with the Christian scriptures, she rereads the verses her mother inscribed in her Bible and sees them in a transformed light: the verses acquire deeper meaning to her, and she becomes convinced that they have come true in her life.³⁷ This essentially represents Ellen's spiritual regeneration in the novel, as her examination of what the Bible teaches about God and heaven leads her to a transformed understanding of all she has observed prior to this, such as her mother's words, nature's shadows, and her friends' spiritual exhortations.³⁸ These all bring her to a belief that God has chosen her as his own and provided for her an unshakeable home in heaven with him.

In all of this, Warner presents an understanding that home as a location, even a home in heaven, is inextricably connected to relationships with people, that, just as Doreen Massey contends, the interpersonal interactions and relationships a person experiences at the location of home plays an integral role in a person's sense of that

location as home. Warner illustrates this in the novel by showing how, even though not yet in heaven, Ellen's new acceptance of heaven as her coming true home transforms her existing relationships according to this new perspective. At the moment of her Christian conversion, for instance, the text chronicles how Ellen becomes immediately aware of a renewed and deeper relationship with her mother. "There seemed to be a link of communion between her mother and her that was wanting before," the narrative observes. "The promise, written and believed in by the one, realized and rejoiced in by the other, was a dear something in common, though one had in the meanwhile removed to heaven, and the other was still a lingerer on the earth" (418–19). Here Warner suggests that, up to this point, the mother-child bond between Mrs. Montgomery and Ellen, one that proved so intimate and home-like especially for the latter, actually reflected an imperfect and incomplete image of the "communion" they both share upon Ellen's conversion. Their initial relationship offered a shadow of the much deeper mother-daughter union to come, the substance of shared belief, and this newly found communion completes what was previously lacking in their first relationship. While her mother's death initially stirs up a disturbingly tempestuous storm on the seas of her life, Ellen's belief that she and her mother now possess a common faith and both call heaven their home calms and stabilizes the waves surrounding her and brings her peace and hope.

Not only, too, does conversion transform the relationship between her and her mother, but it additionally gives her a changed outlook on all other people as well, both the living and those gone from this life. Ellen, for instance, discovers newly enriched relationships with those old friends and mentors, such as Alice, John, and Mrs. Vawse, who share in and taught her these new beliefs, and through them she experiences as well

an improved relationship with her Aunt Fortune. When after her conversion she returns to the farm to care for her ill-stricken aunt, Ellen strives to mimic *The Pilgrim's Progress's* Christian by humbly serving Aunt Fortune and maintaining, as best she can, the farm and house, an enormous task for which her aunt rewards her with new respect and acceptance. "Things were never after that as they had been before," recounts the narrative. "She was looked on with a different eye. . . . She was no longer an interloper, in everybody's way; she was not watched and suspected; her aunt treated her as one of the family, and a person to be depended on. . . . Ellen now went out and came in without feeling she was an alien" (453). This improvement indeed brings her satisfaction and relief, and yet the transformation in her understanding of relationships that arguably brings Ellen the most peace and stability comes in her changed perspective on people who have already passed from earthly life, for she now believes that she will meet them again in heaven if they shared in her Christian beliefs. Warner repeats this idea several times in the novel, in fact, especially at those times when Ellen feels most keenly a separation from loved ones. After she learns of her mother's death, for example, John soothes her sorrow by quietly commenting that her mother "has reached that bright home where there is no more sin, nor sorrow, nor death." Through "excessive" tears, Ellen responds to this by remarking, "Nor parting either," to which John exclaims, "Nor parting!—and though *we* are parted from them, it is but for a little; let us watch, and keep our garments clean, and soon we shall be all together, and have done with tears for ever." Claiming belief in a heavenly reunion that will take place between her and her mother proves "a great relief" and stabilizing force to Ellen, who "grew not only calm, but more peaceful at heart than months had seen her" (415). This sentiment, too, will comfort Ellen at other times in the

text, such as when she must watch her friend Alice die. While on her deathbed, Alice attempts to lessen Ellen's pain at their parting by telling her, "You have been my dear comfort, my blessing—we shall love each other in heaven, Ellie," and after she passes, John reminds Ellen to "think that sweetly and easily she has got home; and it is our home, too" (518, 524). Toward the novel's end, too, when with her mother's family in Scotland Ellen worries she will forever remain separated from John Humphreys, she often declares to herself the refrain, "Well! I will see him in heaven!" and carried on in that hope (656). In this way, her acceptance of heaven as her home brings comfort and stability in the midst of both removal and death, as she trusts those separations will not last forever and will instead result in a happy and eternal reunion with all those whom she loves.³⁹

Ellen's relationship with nature, that first entity to offer her a consoling home soon after she removes from the city and her mother, also transforms in the light of her new convictions, as she now believes that these natural elements function as those shadows and types of the absolute stability and comfort only found in God and heaven. When Alice is dying and Ellen, as previously mentioned, seeks comfort from the night sky's constancy, she concludes in her new Christian insight that the sky only serves as a prelude to the ultimate constancy heaven will bring:

Ellen looked up again at the moon and stars. . . .How long they had been shining! Thought Ellen;—going on just the same, from night to night, and from year to year—as if they never would come to an end. But they *will* come to an end—the time *will* come when they stop shining, bright as they are; and then, when all they are swept away, then heaven will be only begun; that will never end!—never! And in a few years, we who were so happy a year ago, and are so sorry now, shall be all glad together there—this will be all over! (519)

She later preaches something similar to herself when looking out on Scotland's unfamiliar night streets "that kept reminding her she was a stranger in a strange place."

After Alice passes away and Ellen succeeds her as caretaker of the Humphreys' home, Ellen discovers that Aunt Fortune had kept from her several letters that Mrs. Montgomery had sent before her death, one of which relates her mother's desire that she remove to Scotland to live with relatives there. Ellen very reluctantly submits to this last request, understanding it her duty to do so, but once in Scotland, she feels confused, alone, and out of place with the Lindsays, who, despite the love they show her, do not share her Christian beliefs. Feeling empty due to this lack of spiritual communion, Ellen often turns to the sky, "*that* at least was home like," noting that the same sky also presided over her American friends so far away. This act comforts Ellen once more, not so much the act itself as in how it now encourages her "that there was One near her who would not change; that Scotland was no remove from him; that His providence as well as His heaven was over her there; that there, not less than in America, she was His child" (592). While in past scenes prior to her Christian conversion, contemplating nature brought her temporary and imperfect consolation, gazing at it and considering it now as a regenerated believer brings her a complete and lasting peace as she recognizes in it a reflection of her stable and secure God and home in heaven.

Ellen's Heavenly Personhood

When discussing *The Wide, Wide World* with regard to Ellen's battle to control herself and bring her thoughts and actions into obedience under God's authority, Jane Tompkins suggests, "To Warner's audience, steeped in the Christian tradition of self-denial and submission to God's will, Ellen's suffering, as she gradually gives up the right to *be* herself, is necessary. It is not only necessary; it is desirable." Catharine O'Connell

offers a similar comment regarding Ellen's suffering, maintaining, "The more we see Ellen suffer, the more powerfully she dominates the novel, even while the 'lesson' she is learning from her suffering is self-erasure." From these perspectives, the religious submission and self-discipline illustrated in novels such as Warner's invariably equal "self-erasure" or the surrendering of one's subjectivity, though Tompkins also argues that Ellen's "submission is not capitulation to an external authority, but the mastery of herself, and therefore, paradoxically, an assertion of autonomy."⁴⁰ Following God and accepting heaven as one's true home from the Christian point of view Warner advocates, however, does not entail a loss of identity but rather strengthens a Christian's individual sense of self and personhood, which in turn deepens the stabilizing effect a belief in heaven offers. Warner forwards this idea in a couple of ways: one, by showing that, at conversion, God adopts Christians into his family and makes them his children and heirs; and two, by highlighting the heavenly citizenship status that God offers to all his followers regardless of race or gender.

Florian Coulmas, in describing the essentials of identity development proposed by Sigmund Freud, explains that children develop their subjectivity and sense of self through socializing and identifying with others: "By striving to be like people in their environment, assimilating their views, values, and ways of acting, children identify with them, the first models typically being parents and siblings." Coulmas then introduces Erik Erikson's concept of *identity crisis*, offering that this kind of crisis often results when a person experiences "complicated relations with others in early life" which interfere with the process of subject development, and he identifies its symptoms as such: "Individuals suffering an identity crisis are insecure, do not always know where they belong, and, in

extreme cases, are uncertain who or what they are.”⁴¹ This description aptly fits Ellen Montgomery upon arriving at her aunt’s farm, as Warner portrays her forced removal from her childhood home and mother as a traumatic event that not only destabilizes her sense of home but also intrudes on her identity development and upends her sense of self. After Ellen’s conversion over half-way through the novel, however, we see that her belief in God and heaven as her true home not only brings her a feeling of belonging and stability but also instills in her a more grounded subjectivity and sense of personhood. This happens first of all in how she believes that, through conversion, God has brought her into his own family. Warner underscores the significance of family to Ellen initially and often through her intimate relationship with her mother, and the break Ellen suffers in this union likely triggers her identity crisis in that this relationship mainly constituted the process by which she had begun to understand herself in relation to the world around her. From the point at which Ellen arrives at Aunt Fortune’s farm, then, she does not only look for a stable new home; she also searches for a way of understanding herself, largely in the context of family. While Warner introduces nature as the first to offer a maternal stand-in for Ellen, the real sense of personhood she will develop by the end of the novel begins with her acceptance into the Humphreys family. Because Alice, John, and their father share the same Christian beliefs her mother holds, Ellen finds herself comfortingly drawn to this family, as these beliefs played such an integral role in the subject development that took place when she lived with her mother. Alice becomes like a mother to her, John and Mr. Humphreys likewise adopt her as their sister and daughter respectively, and Ellen happily accepts them as her family as well, so much so that her

subject development picks up where it had left off as she begins to incorporate their beliefs into her self-identity just as she had done with her mother.

Not only does Ellen's adoption into the Humphreys family help shape her sense of self due to their common belief system with her mother, but the shared beliefs themselves offer Ellen an even more significant sense of individual personhood by teaching that, through conversion, God himself chooses her for his own family. Jonathan Edwards, for instance, propounds this doctrine when he relates in Brainerd's funeral sermon, "The saints, by virtue of their union with Christ, and being his members, do in some sort partake of his child-like relation to the Father.... The spouse of Christ, by virtue of her espousals to that only-begotten Son of God, is, as it were, a partaker of his filial relation to God, and becomes the king's daughter." He also, in *Charity and Its Fruits*, asserts of all Christians,

All shall be nearly related to God the supreme object of their love, for they shall be his children. And all shall be nearly related to Christ, for he shall be the head of the whole society, and the husband of the whole church of saints, all of whom together shall constitute his spouse. And they shall all be related to each other as brethren, for all will be but one society, or rather but one family, and all members of the household of God.⁴²

The metaphor Edwards uses here, that of Jesus as the bridegroom and his Christian followers as his bride, appears several times in the New Testament, introduced by John the Baptist and Jesus in the Bible's four gospels and Paul in his letter to the Ephesians. It also appears in the Old Testament, when Isaiah prophesies that God, as a bridegroom, will rejoice over his people, the bride.⁴³ Edwards extends this metaphor to argue that if Christians constitute the bride of Jesus, God's son, that would then essentially make them God's daughter-in-law and, in connection to each other, brothers and sisters in God's family. The apostle Paul also teaches that, upon conversion, God adopts Christians into

his family and calls them his children, such as in Romans 8:14–17 when he posits that Christians “have received the Spirit of adoption as sons,” and “the Spirit himself bears witness that . . . we are children of God.”⁴⁴ Warner portrays how Ellen fully embraces this belief as part of her sense of self by the end of the novel when, while battling sadness and loneliness in Scotland due to her separation from her adopted family the Humphreys, she finds peace and comfort by telling herself that “there was One near her who could not change” and that in Scotland, “not less than in America, she was His child” (592). Instead of seeking consolation in her memories of times with the Humphreys, she “happily, joyfully” stabilizes herself by making a statement of identity in relation to God’s family. She asserts the personhood she has discovered in her child-to-father relationship with God and her membership in heaven, “the household of God,” significantly identifying herself first and foremost as a part of his family. This identification ranks supreme over any other she holds.

For nineteenth-century Calvinists like Warner, God’s adoption reflects a very individual choice on his part, as they did not believe that God chose all people for his children but chose only certain people and those according to his own personal (and mysterious) reasons, not on the basis of any shared group identity. This likely advocated an attractive sense of personhood for women of the era who believed themselves among God’s elect, as this belief stresses a subjectivity rooted, not in the group identity of wives and mothers so often assigned them by their culture, but in a personal God choosing them each individually to be his own children. Additionally, the apostle Paul’s teaching in Romans and Galatians (noted above) regarding God receiving Christians to be his own children also suggests that, because his children, these Christians also become God’s

heirs, inheriting his heavenly kingdom. Edwards expounds this idea when claiming, “Christ, as God’s Son, is the heir of his kingdom, and the saints are joint-heirs with Christ; which implies, that they are heirs of the same inheritance, to possess the same kingdom, in and with him, according to their capacity.”⁴⁵ This Christian teaching would, again, have held charm for many nineteenth-century women, for this era rarely afforded women the opportunity to inherit property or possessions. As a part of God’s family, however, this privilege extended not only to men but also to women, for although Paul states in Galatians 3:26 that “in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God,” two verses later he shows that “sons” actually covers both men and women, offering that in God, “there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This represents a radical and appealing personhood for female Christians like Warner and her young heroine, Ellen Montgomery.

While her identity as a child of God ranks supreme over all others, Ellen still fiercely embraces one other identity marker while in Scotland—her American nationality, which comes a close second to the identity she claims in her Christian convictions and even underscores the individual personhood she finds in her belief in heaven as her home. At one point during her stay, for instance, her Uncle Lindsay begins to challenge her stance on the American Revolution, contending that Americans “are a parcel of rebels . . . that no good Briton has any business to like” and proclaiming that, if a soldier in the English army, he would gladly have fought against those rebels. Ellen responds with a bold declaration of allegiance to her native country, remarking, “And if I had been in the American army, I would have fought you with all my heart, Uncle Lindsay” (598).⁴⁶ As she continues to defend America and Americans to the Lindsays, arguing that the

Revolutionaries displayed justifiably righteous resistance toward the English, she demonstrates how her American nationality has become a significant part of her sense of self. She takes so much pride in identifying herself with her birth-country that, when her uncle commands her to “forget that you were American” and renames her a Lindsay rather than a Montgomery, she refuses in her heart to obey: “there are some things he cannot command; nor I neither—I am glad of that! Forget, indeed!” (603). Her nationality plays such a strong role in her sense of self, in fact, that it becomes somewhat enmeshed with her Christian identity. America, for example, represents the place in which resides the family with whom she experiences shared religious beliefs, beliefs that her mother also taught her there and that contributed extensively to her young identity development, while Scotland claims the Lindsays, who do not understand and often question her intense Christian devotion. The communion she shares with the American Humphreys, largely due to their common beliefs, becomes the central reason why Mr. Lindsay directs her to forget America, a command that mirrors the way he also often adjures her to lay aside the gravity of her religion. Her Christian devotion and her American identity, too, prove the only two ways in which she defies her Scottish family, in that she not only refuses to forget her American heritage; she also refuses to give up her daily morning hour spent in spiritual meditation though her grandmother commands it. For this she uses the same patriotic idea of “duty” as her justification, determining, “It is just as much my duty, a duty that no one here has a right to command me against. I will do what I think right, come what may” (639).

Even though Ellen frequently and vehemently identifies with her native country, that same country, however, declined to offer her, or any other woman for that matter, a

great tenet of personhood: citizenship. While she claims and defends her birthplace with notable pride and fealty, America generally does not reciprocate that sentiment, but the Calvinist beliefs to which she holds offer an alternative by granting citizenship in heaven to any Christian, man or woman. While not a citizen of any earthly nation, Ellen's belief in heaven as her true home assures her that an even "better country" awaits her (seen in Hebrews 11:13–16, as previously noted) and promises that God has procured her citizenship there, as Paul teaches in Philippians 3:20: "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Margaret Fuller, in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), identifies a similar turn toward religion by ancient Greek women who were likewise denied citizenship by their home nation: "The female Greek, of our day, is as much in the street as the male to cry, 'What news?' We doubt not it was the same in Athens of old," she remarks. "The women, shut out from the market-place, made up for it at the religious festivals. For human beings are not so constituted that they can live without expansion. If they do not get it in one way, they must in another, or perish."⁴⁷ Here, Fuller argues for America to extend citizenship to women by offering this example from ancient Greece, as she contends that citizenship is necessary to people's sense of personhood and identity and claims that, if denied this by their nation, they will necessarily "perish" if they cannot find it elsewhere. For Ellen, for whom religion already largely grounds her sense of self, locating citizenship in her Christian beliefs and identification as God's child represents a logical choice.

Though Ellen never uses the word "citizen" to describe her identity in relation to heaven, she still wields the weight of such an identification, as when she boldly defies her grandmother's injunction that she not rise early to spend time in morning religious

meditations. When Mrs. Lindsay confronts her regarding her disobedience to this command, she justifies her actions by explaining, “Grandmother, there is One I must obey even before you,” boldly claiming this as would a citizen whose allegiance belongs to her ruler first and foremost. When her grandmother pushes her on this, her identity as heavenly citizen emboldens her even more, as she righteously responds, “I think it is right to disobey if I am told to do what is wrong” (639), implying that if told to do anything contrary to what God, her heavenly country’s ruler, requires, she will defer to his authority every time; his law as ruler is her law as citizen. The sense of self and personhood that heavenly citizenship provides her, then, gives her the confidence to stand against her legal earthly guardians when they contradict this allegiance, for she locates her identity not in her membership within their family but in her membership within God’s family and her citizenship in heaven. Coulmas, too, identifies the important role that this notion of citizenship plays in a stable sense of self, explaining, “A sound personal identity consists of bodily constitution and command thereof, mental capabilities, family and wider social relations, and cultural heritage, all woven into one cohesive thread.”⁴⁸ By the end of the novel, in fact, Ellen will exhibit all of these characteristics, illustrating how her Christian conversion develops in her a sense of personhood and self by way of membership in God’s family and an inheritance and citizenship (“cultural heritage”) in that “better country,” her home in heaven. Warner, then, showcases this “sound personal identity” through the novel’s final scenes in Scotland, during which Ellen displays the strength of will necessary to maintain her sense of self in the face of her Scottish family’s resistance.

* * * * *

When Warner published *The Wide, Wide World* in 1850, her publishers sent it to print without its final chapter, a chapter that Mabel Baker finally published in 1978 in her biography of the Warner sisters: *Light in the Morning: Memories of Susan and Anna Warner*. As an explanation for why this chapter did not originally appear with the first text, a note in the Feminist Press edition of the novel offers the possibility that somehow the book's manuscript went to the publishers minus the final chapter and that, on recognizing this, they suggested its omission because of the text's already great length and the feeling that the last chapter "did not contribute substantially to the novel."⁴⁹ This Feminist Press edition appends the final chapter to the rest of the text, however, and presents the novel in its complete form. Whereas it originally ends with Ellen in Scotland, patiently awaiting reunion with John Humphreys after briefly meeting him there, the final, originally unpublished chapter portrays Ellen and John as a recently married couple returning to America to a house that John has prepared for them. While this conclusion might seem to negate the idea that Ellen finds a stable home and identity in no place other than God and heaven, a conversation between the married couple as they observe two framed pictures indicates how it actually reinforces that idea and demonstrates the way in which this new domestic space proves only a shadow of heavenly things to come. In this conversation, John explains what he sees as the most significant difference between the two pictures, one a copy of "Correggio's recumbent Magdalen" and the other a picture of the heads of the Madonna and child. He observes to Ellen that the Correggio "is only the material outside, with indeed all the beauty of delineation," whereas the Madonna and

child instead images “the immaterial soul.” When Ellen presses him on this comparison, asking if he does not see beauty in the second picture, he expounds his belief that the second picture’s beauty exists in the way in which it, like “a clear glass,” displays the beauty of what lies behind it: a spiritual immateriality. “What makes these very features so lovely,” he remarks, “but the exceeding loveliness of that which shines through them?” Presenting here another example of the shadow and substance concept, Warner again forwards the ideas she presents throughout the whole novel, suggesting that if one sees beauty or strength or stability in things like nature or a mountain or, in this last chapter, a comfortable domestic space, these only serve to reflect the greater beauty, strength, and stability that characterize God and his coming kingdom. The idea John presents in this conversation, too, might also indicate the way in which Warner desires for readers to consider her book: while some might feel the “beauty of delineation” to be lacking in its style and form, John’s remarks inform readers that the novel’s true beauty lies in how it, like “a clear glass through which what is behind may be the more easily and perfectly seen,”⁵⁰ allows the reader an unobstructed view of God’s attributes, as well as those of heaven. In this way, her novel performs the same function as the natural elements it presents: it serves as a shadow of the Calvinist Christian beliefs Warner forwards to offer a stable sense of home and self for the storm-tossed Americans of her era.

CHAPTER V

“A HOME OF MY OWN”: COMMUNITY AND CITIZENLY PERSONHOOD IN HARRIET JACOBS’ *INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL*

“The relationship between life and fiction is often contentious,” submits Robert McGill when detailing a heated exchange between a writer and his ex-girlfriend who believes herself the real-life counterpart to an unflattering character portrayal in one of his novels.¹ While McGill largely directs this statement to how fiction writers can find themselves in hot water with people who feel betrayed by their fictional appearances in those writers’ works, this assertion also applies to how the line between fiction and autobiography can often be fitful and difficult to pin down, especially given that most writers infuse at least some aspects of their own lives into their works. Though Ellen Montgomery’s initial separation from her childhood home bears some resemblance to that of Susan Warner’s own experiences, for instance, we know from sister Anna’s biography of Susan and from Susan’s own letters and journal entries that Ellen is not fully autobiographical. Warner removed from her Manhattan home toward the end of her teen years, whereas Ellen goes to live with her Aunt Fortune around the age of ten, and while Mr. Montgomery evinces little affection for and attention toward his daughter, Warner, by all accounts, enjoyed a happier relationship with her father. Warner never married or went abroad while her exiled protagonist does both, and several other differences between the two exist as well,² demonstrating that, while Warner draws

inspiration for her writing from some of her own life-experiences, *The Wide, Wide World's* Ellen is not the fictional counterpart of Warner herself.

Until the late twentieth century, that line between fiction and autobiography also remained dubious with regard to *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (1861), for a loose association between the book and Harriet Jacobs as its author existed but at that time remained unsubstantiated. While scholars conceded that someone like Harriet Jacobs might have existed, they believed that Lydia Maria Child actually penned the book she claimed to have edited. Jean Fagan Yellin explains how she chose not to include *Incidents* in the texts she examined for her doctoral dissertation on black figures in American literature because, based on the above opinion, she felt it represented a false slave narrative. As she began rereading Child's writing after completing her dissertation, however, she started to question her earlier assessment: "Making my way through the shelf of Child's writings, I felt I knew her well. She had composed novels as well as pamphlets, but I was certain of her commitment to the antislavery cause and thought it highly unlikely that she would have permitted herself to write a novel using the first-person voice of a fugitive slave, for fear of harming the movement." This belief led Yellin to search more deeply into Child's papers until a fortunate tip brought her knowledge of nineteenth-century abolitionist Amy Post, amongst whose papers researchers had found letters from Harriet Jacobs. "These letters convinced me not only that Harriet Jacobs had written a book," remarks Yellin, "but that she had written the book that Child had edited," claiming that the letters' vocabulary and syntax matched that of *Incidents*, and their content discussed Jacobs writing an account of her own history. Having concluded this, Yellin, along with researcher George Stevenson, spent several

years pouring over documents and records in an effort to identify the real people and places of Jacobs' narrative so to demonstrate *Incidents* as autobiographical and not fiction.³ We today see Harriet Jacobs designated as the author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* due to Yellin's and Stevenson's relentlessly meticulous work.

In the preface to her narrative, Jacobs, in the Linda Brent persona she uses throughout her text, explains to readers that "it would have been more pleasant to me to have been silent about my own history,"⁴ dealing as it does with the sexual assault she endured as a slave and with the resultant choice she makes to protect from her master any children to which she might give birth. Jacobs' letter to Amy Post sometime between late December 1852 and mid-February 1853 reflects this same hesitancy to write her story: "your proposal to me has been thought over and over again but not with out some most painful remembrances dear Amy if it was the life of a Heroine with no degradation associated with it far better to have been one of the starving poor of Ireland whose bones had to bleach on the highways than to have been a slave with the curse of slavery stamped upon yourself and Children."⁵ Later in this letter, in fact, Jacobs mentions that author Harriet Beecher Stowe might "do much good" with her history instead and requests that Post send a letter to Stowe inquiring of her willingness to meet with Jacobs and take on the project. Stowe responded to Post's inquiry by seeking from Mrs. Cornelia Willis, Jacobs' employer,⁶ confirmation of the story's veracity and expressed that, if true, she might include it in her then book project *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853).⁷ This irked Jacobs, who not only desired to see her story told "entirely by itself" but also felt insulted that Stowe would seek out Willis about its truthfulness when she herself had not yet related her story to her employer. Through a letter written by Willis, Jacobs informs

Stowe of her objection but offers to recount other “facts for her book” if she would like them. “She never answered the letter,” Jacobs reports to Post in correspondence dated April 4, 1853; “she [Cornelia Willis] wrote again and I wrote twice with no better success it was not Lady like to treat Mrs. Willis so she would not have done it to ... any one I think she did not like my objection I cant help it.”⁸ This episode seems to have given Jacobs the confidence and determination she lacked prior to this, for she soon after began chronicling her own history herself. Though she claims “it would have been more pleasant” for her to avoid retelling it altogether, her “desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage” overcomes her hesitancy and arms her with daring (126). In her narrative, Jacobs does not waver in boldly and openly exposing slavery’s atrocities, especially the destruction it wreaked on both Southern and Northern homes alike, and decrying the personhood withheld from all black people in America.

Jacobs goes further than this, though. In his study of slave narratives, Sterling Lecater Bland, Jr., notes, “In many of the narratives, the reader learns surprisingly little about the inner life of the writer beyond his or her thoughts on slavery. It is as if a veil is drawn or a mask put on to separate the innermost thoughts of the black writer from his or her audience.”⁹ Jacobs’ narrator, Linda Brent, however, does not withhold herself from the reader. She not only uncovers the general brutality inflicted on slaves and the universal personhood denied from her entire race; she also spotlights the destruction of her own childhood home, and later her inability to acquire a home for herself and her children, and illuminates through raw and biting emotion the specific personhood her nation disallowed her individually, personally. She significantly also describes the very

specific parameters of her own personal sexual trauma, as well as details the fairly unique choice that she made to escape it. Though we cannot know if Jacobs experienced the exact emotions her narrator expresses regarding this trauma, we do know, through Yellin's and Stevenson's work, how closely the people, places, and events Brent recounts correlate to those in Jacobs' own life, and we may imagine that slavery's annihilation of her childhood home and the sexual assault inflicted against her by her master James Norcom (Brent's "Dr. Flint") would prompt a much similar response. We also know that for both Jacobs in real life and Brent in the text, domestic upheaval ultimately offers the opportunity for both women to overstep their bounds in two important ways: geographically, in the escape from South to North, and figuratively, by taking up their pens to reveal slavery's savagery and address Northern inaction. For many scholars, this display of literacy as a definitive act of agency represents the way in which Jacobs, through Brent, forwards a specific and individual personhood for herself.¹⁰ Yet while I agree that, through the literary subterfuge Brent enacts both in her letters to Dr. Flint and through the narrative itself, she does wield an agency that bespeaks individual personhood, her most compelling appeals for an acknowledged personhood come instead through her continual cry throughout the narrative for a home of her own and the desire for acknowledged citizenship this cry implies.

"I Never Dreamed I Was a Piece of Merchandise"

Brent's fixity on domestic spaces greets readers with the turn of nearly every page, as she mentions the word *home* itself over one hundred times in her text. She alerts readers to this theme right off the bat, in fact, beginning her story by recounting her

“happy childhood” through depictions of her first home-spaces. “In complexion my parents were a light shade of brownish yellow, and were termed mulattoes,” Brent narrates; “They lived together in a comfortable home; and, though we were all slaves, I was so fondly shielded that I never dreamed I was a piece of merchandise, trusted to them for safe keeping, and liable to be demanded of them at any moment” (131). Here Brent employs language evocative of the nineteenth-century white middle-class ideals heralded by the era’s exaltation of domesticity that portrayed home as a bounded refuge furnished with warmth, safety, and certainty. Corresponding to these qualities, she indicates that she lived in “a comfortable home” with two parents who safe-guarded her and “fondly shielded” her developing identity from the threat that slavery’s reality posed to it. She likewise describes her maternal grandmother’s home, one in which she spends ample time throughout her life in the South, according to much the same picture:

We longed for a home like hers. There we always found sweet balsam for our troubles. She was so loving, so sympathizing! She always met us with a smile, and listened with patience to all our sorrows. She spoke so hopefully, that unconsciously the clouds gave place to sunshine. There was a grand big oven there, too, that baked bread and nice things for the town, and we knew there was always a choice bit in store for us. (146–47)

Similar to how she portrays her childhood home, Brent images here an idyllic domestic haven for herself and her brother, reminiscent of that presented in John James Piatt’s poem “Firelight Abroad” (mentioned briefly in Chapter Three):

...There the mother smiles
Her patient days away in daily love,
With gentle lips and tender-touching hands.
There her blithe children, asking for her knees,
(Illumined by the climbing, dancing blaze,)
Cling warm forever...¹¹

Brent's grandmother stands in for the mother of Piatt's verse, as her love, smiles, and hope could call forth "sunshine" similar to that of the poem's fireside light that warms its "blithe children." Additionally, the words Brent uses to introduce this idyllic space—"we longed for a home like hers"—further demonstrate that she not only remembers her grandmother's home in terms that largely match the culture's domestic ideology, but she also adopts this picture as her enduring domestic standard, as it reflects the kind of home for which she longs throughout much of her narrative.

Brent identifies six years old as the age at which she first understands herself to be a slave, and this age also marks the time at which this slave identity, for both her and her whole family, begins to dismantle the picturesque childhood home she describes in her first pages. At her mother's passing at this time, Brent discovers that she must leave her loved family home and reside with her owner, her mother's mistress, but unlike so many other brutal slave-owning homes, Brent describes hers as "a happy one" in which she endures "no toilsome or disagreeable duties." Her mistress teaches her how to read and write and provides her a life "as free from care as that of any free-born white child," but this care-free life would last only six years again, as her mother-like mistress also dies and, despite promises she made to Brent's dying mother "that her children should never suffer for anything," instead bequeaths Brent to a five-year-old niece. This same mistress also owned three of her grandmother's children, all of whom she likewise apportioned to other relatives upon her death. Brent and her younger brother William now find themselves housed in the cold and cruel residence of Dr. Flint, the father of Brent's young mistress, where they will endure all manner of torture and hardship in the years to come. Adding to this, the following year Brent's father suddenly dies, leaving her and her

brother as orphans and at last stripping from them any tie to their first “comfortable home,” and to heap sorrow upon sorrow, her owners refuse to allow her to attend his wake, as they believe her father “had spoiled his children, by teaching them to feel that they were human beings.” (133–37).¹² She will continue through her next several chapters to delineate how she specifically suffers under this domestic upheaval and the weight of her newly-recognized slave identity, but she will also demonstrate how no black homes, including her newly-manumitted grandmother’s, remain safe from slavery’s infiltration. With bitterness she portrays, for instance, how white patrollers force their way into the house her grandmother owns and ransack it, searching for evidence of slave insurrection, and she illustrates as well how Flint bombards the residence at will to harangue and assault herself and her children. Fortunately for Brent’s future, though, this house and her grandmother remain intact, the last (relative) refuge for her in the midst of what slavery ruined.

The above sadly chronicles only the beginning of domestic upheaval for Brent, for just a few years into her residence at the Flint home, she enters into what Chapter V’s title denotes as “the trials of girlhood” for female slaves. At this point in the narrative, Brent compels the reader to dredge the monstrous depths of what owning people, owning bodies, entailed for both master and slave, as the master who believes himself sovereign over every aspect of the slave girl’s body will inevitably seek possession of it entirely.¹³ Of this universal experience for nearly all young slave girls, she hauntingly explains:

Even the little child, who is accustomed to wait on her mistress and her children will learn, before she is twelve years old, why it is that her mistress hates such and such a one among the slaves. She will become prematurely knowing in evil things. Soon she will learn to tremble when she hears her master’s footfall. She will be compelled to realize that she is no longer a child. If God has bestowed beauty upon her, it will prove her greatest curse. (159)

Brent does not simply describe this experience in universal terms, however, or only in stories of other girls and women; she also openly and graphically relates her own trauma in how, at fifteen, Dr. Flint embarks on what would become years of sexual harassment and assault: “But I now entered on my fifteenth year—a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl. My Master began to whisper foul words in my ear. . . .He peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of” (158). To drive home precisely how Flint’s lust for her becomes all-consuming and uncontrollable, she describes his pursuit in terms reflective of an aggressive wild animal stalking its prey. “My master met me at every turn,” she narrates, “reminding me that I belonged to him, and swearing by heaven and earth that he would compel me to submit to him. If I went out for a breath of fresh air, after a day of unwearied toil, his footsteps dogged me. If I knelt by my mother’s grave, his dark shadow fell on me even there. The light heart which nature had given me became heavy with sad forebodings” (160). Though Brent manages to avoid and repel his advances, even at times on threat of torture and death, Flint exhibits such relentlessness in his hounding that he determines to build a separate house for her four miles out of town where he might have her at his pleasure: a sexualized and perverted version of her ultimate dream—“a home of my own” (190). Flint’s harassment, in fact, not only demonstrates domestic upheaval for Brent in a real physical sense, as his threat to her body and future motherhood presents largely in domestic spaces in the text, but the cottage he builds also images a foul distortion of the white middle-class ideals of domesticity familiar to so many of her readers.¹⁴ Driven to desperation by this plan, Brent considers any way she might escape this degradation, avoid giving birth to children owned by an inhumane master who “never allowed his offspring by slaves to remain long

in sight of himself and his wife” (193), and elude any attempts he might make to sell her off as well. She discovers one way to do this, and though it pains her to recount the story, she describes for readers the “deliberate calculation” she makes to sleep with a white bachelor who had expressed interest in her and had shown her sympathy and kindness.¹⁵ She gives birth to two children by this man, son Benny and daughter Ellen, and yet through this, she garners no protection from her master: Flint responds by abusing her physically and emotionally and still does not abandon his pursuit to possess her fully.

After Brent again refuses Flint’s ultimatum to retire to the cottage he has built for her, he sends her to his son’s plantation and threatens to sell her children, though he adamantly claims over and over that he will rebuff anyone making offers to buy her. When she subsequently learns that the Flints intend to use her children as pawns to disabuse her of any inclinations to run, she thwarts their plans and escapes the plantation by night, hiding first at a friend’s house, next at a slave-owner’s house whose wife was sympathetic to her situation, and eventually in a stifling garret space built above her grandmother’s shed, a space specially customized by her uncle to conceal her from Flint. For seven years Brent’s body remains cramped in this nine-foot by seven-foot garret with a sloped roof only three feet high at its highest point, withstanding torturous insect and rodent infestations, stifling heat in the summer, and bone-jarring cold in winter, as her family watches for opportunities to send her north. Even in this agonizing confinement, though, she finds room for hope, for while “oppressive” and miserable, her concealment there grants her a sense of freedom, a freedom relative to the terror in which she lived at the Flints’: “It seemed horrible to sit or lie in a cramped position day after day, without one gleam of light. Yet I would have chosen this, rather than my lot as a slave, though

white people considered it an easy one” (263). Her depictions of the garret space, in fact, all trend in the direction of oppositional simultaneity, in that she often employs two characterizations for the garret that seem to mutually exclude each other and yet that both fittingly describe it at the same time: what Michel Foucault theorizes as heterotopic space. Foucault formulates heterotopias as “counter-sites,” spaces that “have a function (or many functions) different from (in addition to) the function for why they exist” and “capable of juxtaposing in a single real space several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.”¹⁶ The garret represents this kind of heterotopic space, for while Brent often considers it a “prison” (see Chapter XXIII’s title), asking herself how much longer must she “be condemned” to linger there (270), she also calls it her “loophole of retreat” in Chapter XXI, *loophole* meaning literally a “means of escape.”

Similar to this simultaneous opposition of prison and loophole, the garret space also registers two contradictory resident statuses for Brent at the same time, for while her grandmother hides her on the premises of her own home, lending the garret a domestic connection, Brent now also becomes an exile in this lonely space. The garret features not only as home, both in the sense that her grandmother owns it and in the sense of its position in the land in which she was born, but also as the means of her exile: its protecting walls (borders) separate her from the community that surrounds her. She can hear them and eventually see them through a small hole she bores into one wall, but she cannot engage with them and participate in life with them on any meaningful level; she is both at home and away from home all at once. Even more, within this same conception of geography, the garret walls likewise epitomize in miniature the thin, porous, and vulnerable national borders that separate free Northern states and slave Southern states,

what William Merrill Decker identifies as a “microcosmic site” that reflects slavery’s “macrocosmic national geography.”¹⁷ While within the garret space, Brent resides in relative freedom as a fugitive slave no longer in reach of her master’s authority (though we know that, even in free states, fugitive slaves as well as free black people did not enjoy complete safety), but only slight and easily penetrated walls, similar to the easily transgressed border that marked North and South, protect her from the slave state that surrounds her and the master who hunts her.¹⁸

Not only does Brent underscore the garret as a heterotopic space that features oppositional characteristics simultaneously, but Brent herself also takes on a heterotopic identity, as throughout her narrative she embodies Doreen Massey’s “presence of the outside within” concept. I have discussed this concept already in my second chapter to explain how it challenges the nineteenth-century ideal of home as a bounded and stable refuge, free from penetrability from the “outside.” In this theory, Massey contends that porousness and permeability have always distinguished home’s boundaries and that, because of this, home has always been a space in which outside and inside interconnect and comingle; this comingling, in fact, gives home its identity. Southern white slave owners (and many non-slave-owning white people as well) did not subscribe to this idea, however, but instead used home’s borders “to establish their identity through negative counterposition with the Other beyond the boundaries.”¹⁹ While in my third chapter I discuss how nineteenth-century culture often used the boundaries of domestic space to assign women a homogeneous identity centered on marriage, housework, and motherhood, based on their position within the home (as opposed to men who labored outside of it), in the slave South, white people used national borders to demarcate the

foreign slave Other as brutish and inferior to themselves, as not a part of their own world. By distinguishing slaves as foreign outsiders (even though most slaves in the nineteenth-century were native-born in America), white people could justify brutalizing and oppressing them as a way of protecting both their homeland and their specific home spaces.

Brent notably illustrates how this colonizer's perspective orders the world of the Flints' and other white Americans in her narrative, showing readers how an elusive delineation between shades of skin establishes the ground on which they build their identities. In describing the "welcome" she and her brother receive on their initial entry into the Flints' house, for instance, Brent notes the absence of any home-like greeting or offers of human connection, observing, "When we entered our new home we encountered cold looks, cold words, and cold treatment. We were glad when the night came. On my narrow bed I moaned and wept, I felt so desolate and alone" (137). After this she recounts how Flint starkly designates a hierarchical difference between her and himself, recalling, "He told me that I was made for his use, made to obey his command in *every* thing; that I was nothing but a slave, whose will must and should surrender to his" (147). Later in the text, she will similarly portray, too, how this negative counterposition between white people and black "Others" extended into the North as well, as she details certain events from her stay there as a children's nurse for a white, middle-class family. She chronicles, for instance, an experience at the Pavilion Hotel in which a facility employee requests that she stand behind her young ward's chair during dinner and take her own meal in the kitchen after everyone else finishes. Surrounded by thirty or forty white nurses at the time, she remarks, "I found it hard to preserve my self-control, when I looked round, and

saw women who were nurses, as I was, and only one shade lighter in complexion, eyeing me with a defiant look, as if my presence were a contamination” (340). The word “contamination” here connotes the colonizer’s perspective, one that glares down on the foreign “Other” as a low but dangerous thing, and yet this scene also exemplifies how the colonizer establishes this sense of self and others on the faintest of boundaries: here, the slightest tinge of color on one’s skin. As a slave within this system, Brent had always been that “presence of the outside within” that went unrecognized by Southern whites who lived comfortably in their notions of boundaries that proved them superior to other races, but now within the garret, Brent takes on another iteration of this “presence” as a fugitive slave hiding within those boundaries, covertly surveilling her former owner and master. And like a spy behind enemy lines, Brent will take up her pen in acts of subterfuge within her garret and away from it, and her writing will forcefully expose as arbitrary and illusory the boundaries to which many white people clung. Just as slavery wreaks domestic upheaval in her life, so her writing will effect an ideological upheaval to dominant white middle-class conceptions of home as safe and bounded.

“I Resolved to Match My Cunning against His Cunning”

In her study of literacy and authorship regarding Jacobs’ *Incidents*, Jill LeRoy-Frazier notes how “Jacobs does not place literacy at the center of her narrative’s progress as a means of emphasizing its centrality... toward freedom” in the same manner as other fugitive writers, such as Frederick Douglass.²⁰ Brent simply states that her first mistress taught her to read and write and does not indicate any special epiphanies regarding her condition that this knowledge brought to her young mind at that time, and yet in

retrospect, Brent “blesses her memory” for this kindness and then proceeds throughout her text to illustrate the significant connection that exists between her literacy and her freedom. At her story’s beginning, however, her literacy functions as a burden to her rather than a benefit, as notes and letters demonstrate a potential for causing her harm, especially in connection with her tormentor, Flint. “One day he caught me teaching myself to write,” she recalls. “He frowned, as if he was not well pleased; but I suppose he came to the conclusion that such an accomplishment might help to advance his favorite scheme. Before long, notes were often slipped into my hand” (163). She responds to these notes by feigning ignorance, claiming that she cannot read them, but the man remained undeterred, at times insisting she give him audience as he read them aloud to her and, at others, lashing out in verbal and physical abuse. Flint’s licentious writing does not represent the only threat to her as a result of her literacy, however, for many white people maintained greater suspicions and mistrust of educated slaves, specifically those who could read and write more so than those who could not. Just after Nat Turner’s slave uprising takes place, for instance, the white community, fearing a similar insurrection, organizes a special muster of patrollers to rifle the black community’s houses, looking for any inkling of evidence that pointed to a slave rebellion. Brent explains that, during this muster, as “low whites” ransack her grandmother’s home, they chance upon a short letter written to her by a friend and, unable to read it for themselves, claim it as the proof of insurrection they seek: “We’s got ‘em! We’s got ‘em! Dis ‘ere yaller gal’s got letters!” (205). Interestingly, the white patrollers’ invasion of the black grandmother’s home presents an inverted picture of the very act feared most by the white community: the fear that angry, militant black slaves would breach the walls of their own comfortable white

homes. Thus this scene not only identifies how literacy, even while tied to freedom, could yet pose a threat to the slaves who possessed it; it also portrays the significant role writing will play throughout the text to unsettle homes and challenge the preconceptions held by the narrative's players and readers alike.

Even after Brent remains concealed in her garret home for quite a few years, she observes that Dr. Flint refuses to cease hunting for her, recounting how, every so often, he would attempt to manipulate her grandmother into giving up her location by promising that, if Brent would voluntarily surrender herself, he would allow her relatives to purchase her freedom. Brent discerns this as a lie and a trap laid for herself, and perceiving the power she holds in her position in the garret right under his nose, she decides to effect a subterfuge of her own, remarking, "I resolved to match my cunning against his cunning. In order to make him believe that I was in New York, I resolved to write him a letter dated from that place" (279). She addresses letters to both her grandmother and Dr. Flint, indicating in her grandmother's that she resides in the North and directing that any correspondence be sent to an address she obtains from a newspaper; she then schemes with a friend who vows to transfer the letter to a trusted associate who will then mail the letter from New York. Regarding this use of literacy, some scholars, such as Marilyn C. Wesley, mark it as an act that exhibits agency and brings her at least a partial sense of self. "Within the system of slavery, there exists no site of self-definition or control for the female slave," posits Wesley; "nevertheless, Linda, ...has created and occupied a zone of personal determination, however constricted," Wesley says of the garret, which she argues "creates a space that fashions her own agency" in the form of writing. Daneen Wardrop suggests something similar,

reasoning that because “Dr. Flint already believes that Linda has fled north; she writes the letters primarily to garner power for herself.” Carla Kaplan, however, cites her discomfort with arguments that claim Brent’s writing as agency, asserting, “Jacobs is at great pains to dramatize Brent’s *inability* to ‘subvert’ her status, ‘*assault*’ her master’s domination, wage ‘*effective*’ combat, or ‘reverse’ the power structures that bind her. This inability is the lived meaning of slavery for Linda Brent. It is this narrative’s strongest indictment. To define agency as simply the act of writing is to miss the point of Brent’s performance.”²¹ I contend, though, that not only does Brent’s letter writing prove an act of agency, in that through them she does exert at least some power over Flint’s actions (he does, in fact, respond to them by draining his bank accounts in endless searches for her); they also represent a small act of self-making as well. By dating them ahead in time, having them sent from places in the North, and writing them to look as if she truly resides there, she oversteps the bounds of the garret as well as the slave South by imaginatively projecting herself forward in time and space. These letters, in fact, presage what will eventually take place after seven years in the garret: her escape North and her installment there, where she will once more employ her pen in a much larger enterprise that will unsettle white people’s notions of home across the country.²²

Once Brent escapes North and friends later buy her freedom, she again decides to wield literacy as a weapon, yet instead of writing letters by which to manipulate one man’s thoughts and actions, she composes an entire narrative intended to urge white readers into action on her fellow slaves’ behalf. As she writes, too, she once again reflects Massey’s concept of “the outside within,” for just as she wrote her letters from a small, concealed space surrounded by the slave South, she now diligently works out her life

story by night from an attic space in the home of her white, pro-slavery employer, Mr. Bruce. That she must simultaneously work for her own support makes writing her text arduous, as she explains in her preface, “This has not left me much leisure to make up for the loss of early opportunities to improve myself; and it has compelled me to write these pages at irregular intervals, whenever I could snatch an hour from household duties” (125). This description directly renders what Jacobs’ articulates in letters to Amy Post, mentioning in correspondence dated March 1854 that some visiting friends of hers “saw from my daily duties that it was hard for me to find much time to write as yet I have not written a single page by daylight.”²³ That her employer, Nathaniel P. Willis, matches Mr. Bruce’s pro-slavery sentiment likely forms an even stronger motive for writing at night, as in her earlier letter in which she suggests Stowe as a possible author for her history, she notes Willis’ leanings as another reason she hesitates to write her story herself: “Mr W is too proslavery he would tell me that it was very wrong and that I was trying to do harm or perhaps he was sorry for me to undertake it while I was in his family.”²⁴ Anna Warner further relates that at the same time Jacobs labored over her own text, her employer Willis, also a writer, busily worked on his book *A Health Trip to the Tropics* (1853), in which he offers “observations about contented slaves” and portrays their “merry” lives, residing with their masters in a happy, “extended family.” And Yellin additionally explains that, though Willis boasted connections with publishers and could help with her book project, “Jacobs consistently refused to ask for his aid. She did not even want him to know that she was writing. For years, while living under his roof, she worked on her book secretly and at night.”²⁵ These writing circumstances, then, mimic Brent’s letter writing within the garret space, for not only does pro-slavery sentiment

surround the writer in each venue, but each writer also covertly engages in authorship with the purpose of challenging and unsettling dominant white notions of home existing in both the North and the South.²⁶

In his sixth principle of heterotopias, Foucault outlines the functions of heterotopic spaces, one being “to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory.”²⁷ Brent’s heterotopic writing positions in both the garret and the attic conform to this idea, as both spaces themselves project an illusory quality, hidden as they are from most people’s detection and hiding also the acts of subterfuge within them, as if the words Brent writes appear from nowhere. Brent’s occupation of these spaces also helps her create the illusion that she is both nowhere and everywhere at the same time, as the Flints, after long and persistent searching, still cannot find her and, at the same time, believe that she can be anywhere. Her unique position as “the outside within” these spaces, too, not only allows her to see from both an “inside” perspective (as a slave within the slave South) and “outside” perspective (as a fugitive slave observing the slave South), but also allows her the opportunity to record observations she makes from both places. Labeling the garret her “loophole of retreat” nods to the surveilling aspect of her position there, as it alludes to Book IV of William Cowper’s poem *The Task* (1785):

’Tis pleasant, through the loophole of retreat
To peep at such a world; to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd;²⁸

While not so pleasant as Cowper’s, Brent’s garret “loophole” still similarly offers her observational access to the surrounding community, “to see the stir” but “not feel the crowd.” Regarding this kind of seeing, bell hooks, recalling her childhood home across

the tracks from a white neighborhood in pre-civil rights era Kentucky, recounts, “Living as we did—on the edge—we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. We understood both.” Hooks calls this perspective “an oppositional world view—a mode of seeing unknown to most of our oppressors,” a perspective aptly descriptive of the similar worldview Brent develops while gazing through her garret “peeping-hole” at Southern slave and white communities and watching Northern society from her pro-slavery employer’s home.²⁹ Her narrative not only details the horrors of life “on the edge” experienced by slaves and other black people; it also provides a revealing ethnography of white people at “the center” of dominant society. This ethnography, while detailing slavery’s degradation and brutality, also draws attention to slavery’s corruption of white people as well, revelations from her heterotopic writing spaces that challenge dominant white middle-class conceptions of home but that also, as Foucault notes of heterotopias, expose the illusoriness of the boundary between inside and outside.³⁰

Arguably the most significant way in which Brent’s ethnography does this comes through her depictions of the white slaveholders’ lasciviousness toward their female slaves, glimpsed largely through her own encounters with Dr. Flint but also through her reportage of other slave women’s experiences as well. Regarding Flint’s licentiousness with other women slaves, in fact, Brent comments, “My master was, to my knowledge, the father of eleven slaves,” a common reality among white slave masters, though one that remained unspoken of for fear of these men’s anger (167). She then expounds the shock Northern women encountered upon marrying Southern slaveholders only to

discover too late their husbands' roving eyes and lustful ambitions toward these other women: "Children of every shade of complexion play with her own fair babies," Brent images, "and all too well she knows that they are born unto him of his own household" (168). Brent's renderings of these lecherous men satiating their lust through brutally raping women "of their own household" not only jarringly dismantles Willis' romantic picture of slaves as the happy "extended family" of their masters, but it also dismantles any notion of these households as images of the era's cultural domestic ideal. Further, these descriptions also likewise dismantle the white slaveholders' belief in a boundary existing between "inside" and "outside," between white and black, that provided a basis for white supremacy, for the mixture of blood resulting from sexual unions between masters and their slaves demonstrates that boundary to be porous and permeable. Brent directly addresses this at one point, poignantly articulating of white masters, "They seem to satisfy their consciences with the doctrine that God created the Africans to be slaves. ...And then who *are* Africans? Who can measure the amount of Anglo-Saxon blood coursing in the veins of American slaves?" (180). By exposing here and in other places the "tangled skeins" of slavery's bloodlines (220), Brent forwards a powerful critique of white supremacist foundations, exposing the chimerical nature of the seeming boundary that separates white from black, master from slave; the narrative shows that it simply does not exist.

These slave masters' lechery inevitably leads to the slave mistresses' jealousy, as Brent also frequently highlights in her ethnography of Southern white households. Instead of the Northern woman's shock and dismay at her husband's illegitimate progeny, Brent explains that Southern women approach these situations in a more

business-like manner and “regard such children as property, as marketable as the pigs on the plantation.” These wives sell this “property” to slave traders as quickly as possible so that they do not have to look at slightly darker miniatures of their husbands playing in their sight (168). Their reaction to these children’s mothers, however, takes on a less business-like, much more personal dimension, and again Brent turns to her own experiences to exemplify this universal slave experience. After Brent confides in Mrs. Flint regarding the doctor’s actions, for instance, her mistress initially promises her safety and protection, and yet just after making this promise, Mrs. Flint allows her fiery jealousy to spill over into intense paranoia. Brent chronicles,

Sometimes I woke up, and found her bending over me. At other times she whispered in my ear, as though it was her husband who was speaking to me, and listened to hear what I would answer. . . . You can imagine, better than I can describe, what an unpleasant sensation it must produce to wake up in the dead of night and find a jealous woman bending over you. (166)

To this jealousy and paranoia, however, Brent responds with pity, remarking that she did not blame Mrs. Flint for feeling as she did, as any woman likely would in those same circumstances. Brent additionally indicates, too, that Southern men proved not the only ones who indulged in uncontrolled lust in these households, as she describes how some misbegotten children result from illicit sexual unions between white women and their black male slaves. She reflects, “I have myself seen the master of such a household whose head was bowed down in shame; for it was known in the neighborhood that his daughter had selected one of the meanest slaves on his plantation to be the father of his first grandchild.” Brent continues that often in such cases the master kills the resultant child or sends it quickly and far away to bury the disgrace, but she underscores the irony that no disgrace attaches to a slave master’s unions with his women slaves; instead, those

children “are unblushingly reared for the market” (188). From all these situations regarding Southern white households, Brent concludes that slavery inevitably corrupts everything it touches, declaring, “I can testify, from my own experience and observation, that slavery is a curse to the whites as well as to the blacks. It makes the white fathers cruel and sensual; the sons violent and licentious; it contaminates the daughters, and makes the wives wretched” (189). By withdrawing the veil that lay over slavery’s foulness and sexual treachery, Brent effectively dismantles any notions of Southern white homes as “merry,” idyllic refuges untouched by the Other outside their walls.

While in her preface Brent announces that she writes her narrative “to convince the people of the Free States what Slavery really is” (126), her ethnography does not steer away from implicating Northern white people as complicit in slavery’s degradations and brutalities. In her introduction to the text, for instance, Lydia Maria Child references a sisterhood between black women and white women when approving of Brent’s narrative (128), but, as Hazel Carby observes, much of what Brent writes situates her “white female readers in the position of having to realize their implication in the oppression of black women, prior to any actual realization of the bonds of ‘sisterhood.’”³¹ Brent demonstrates, at several times in fact, how the negative counterposition that justified white supremacy and comprised the root-system of slavery found fertile soil in the free Northern states as well. She describes, for instance, her surprising introduction to Northern prejudice when discovering black people could not ride in first-class rail cars, commenting, “This was the first chill to my enthusiasm about the Free States. ...It made me sad to find how the north aped the customs of slavery” (322-23). Her experience at the Pavilion Hotel (mentioned earlier in this chapter) forms another example of this

Northern racism, and that episode represents just one instance of many from the same trip in which she suffered insult from “that cruel prejudice, which so discourages the feelings, and represses the energies of the colored people” (339). Her most directly scathing indictment of Northern white people, though, features in the bitter comments she aims at the Fugitive Slave Law and the way in which it turned the Northern states into “a ‘nigger hunter’ for the south” (283). She devotes an entire chapter to discussion of this law alone, detailing the manner in which the law tore into black families in the North and threw their homes into “consternation and anguish” (358).³² She later expresses her own anxieties wrought by this law, as it makes her feel like an exile in her own native country: “Oppressed Poles and Hungarians could find a safe refuge in that city; John Mitchell was free to proclaim in the City Hall his desire for ‘a plantation well stocked with slaves;’ but there I sat, an oppressed American, not daring to show my face” (367). In all of these instances and more, Brent implicates Northern white people, even those reading her narrative, in the same white supremacist prejudice Southern slave owners embraced and, by this, reveals that even the ideological and political boundary supposedly separating Northern free states from Southern slave states proved penetrable and porous.³³ Northern white homes, in fact, were no more tightly bounded than Southern homes, for the slavery that corrupted the South contaminated the North as well, seen in how she must pen her narrative under concealment and in secret even in the North, interestingly the same context in which she wrote her letters in the South.

“We Longed for a Home Like Hers”

All of this, then, raises an interesting question: if everything Brent discusses throughout her narrative effectively dismantles the era's dominant white middle-class notions of home, why does her desire for a home of her own continually sound throughout the text? From the start, Brent looks fondly back to her comfortable childhood home; she likewise provides descriptions and depicts circumstances that showcase her grandmother's home as evocative of the ideal exalted by the culture's domestic ideologies, and she admits to desiring a home just like Aunt Martha's. She even concludes her narrative by repeating that desire: "The dream of my life is not yet realized. I do not sit with my children in a home of my own. I still long for a hearthstone of my own, however humble. I wish it for my children's sake far more than for my own" (370). So why repeatedly underscore this desire when everything else in the text demonstrates the illusoriness of such a dream? To answer this question, many scholars turn to the sentimental genre in which Brent positions her narrative. Sentimental fiction represented one of the nineteenth-century's most popular genres and essentially featured texts marked by sweeping emotional expression; melodramatic, often sensational, plotlines; narration that addressed the reader; and often a focus on such themes as domestic spaces and motherhood.³⁴ Some scholars contend that Brent writes in this sentimental mode and sounds her desire for home to connect with Northern white women readers whose lives likely centered around their homes and children. Sterling Lecater Bland posits that Brent focuses on home and motherhood as points of "commonality," but that her fugitive slave status prevents this connection from taking place. Barbara Rodríguez similarly propounds that Brent "constructs a basis for the unified efforts of all women" by establishing "a sisterhood that is experienced through motherhood," and likewise, Laura Laffrado avers

that Brent seeks to offset her “perceived disruptive sexual acts by foregrounding the cherished nineteenth-century middle-class construction of devoted motherhood.”³⁵ Other scholars conversely suggest that Brent writes in the sentimental mode as a way of critiquing domesticity and the true womanhood ideal. Sidonie Smith, for instance, argues, “From her position on the margins, ... Jacobs can ‘see’ inside and outside ‘true womanhood’ and its supporting ideology” and can therefore mount a critique of those things. Hazel Carby goes even further, maintaining that Brent’s narrative “stands as an exposition of her womanhood and motherhood contradicting and transforming an ideology that could not take account of her experience. ... *Incidents* demystified a convention that appeared as the obvious, common-sense rules of behavior and revealed the concept of true womanhood to be an ideology, not a lived set of social relations.”³⁶ In these many arguments, we again see the critical divide I discuss in Chapter Two between nineteenth-century women writers either embracing and advocating domesticity or resisting and critiquing it, but I, however, maintain that in *Incidents*, Brent does a bit of both. I agree with many of the points above, but I also submit that, while Brent’s desire for a home in some ways embraces the era’s domestic standard of a physical comfortable home for her and her family, she also longs for something beyond this hearthstone image, for something that a home of her own represents.

Returning to Brent’s descriptions of her childhood home and also that of her grandmother’s, she draws on several images that the era’s culture utilized to project the ideal domestic space, such as the big oven in her grandmother’s home that evokes the comfortable fireside image often pictured in nineteenth-century domestic advice books. From her nostalgic renderings, Brent’s longing for a home does appear connected to

those dominant middle-class domestic ideals; that she claims to desire it even more for her children than for herself, in fact, suggests the possibility that she longs to recreate for her children the comfort and protection she experienced herself in her childhood homes. Beyond these physical aspects, however, Brent also depicts these homes as the places in which her parents and her grandmother modeled before her their humanity and personhood, recalling how her mother “had been a slave merely in name, but in nature was noble and womanly” and how her father, “by his nature, ...had more of the feelings of a freeman than is common among slaves” (133, 136). In these homes Brent learned that she was not an object to be bought and sold but that, like her parents and grandmother, she was a person with dignity and subjectivity.³⁷ Further than this, in these homes she witnessed the community respect that her parents and grandmother commanded, even and especially from the Southern white community. At her mother’s death, for instance, she notes how her mother’s mistress and the surrounding white community “all spoke kindly of my dead mother” and her nobility, and when her father dies, Brent recounts of the funeral gathering, “There were those who knew my father’s worth, and respected his memory” (133, 137). Brent explains in more detail the respect the white community showed to her grandmother, first in their response to Dr. Flint placing her at auction despite the likelihood that her dead mistress had willed her freedom:

She was a very spirited woman, and if he was base enough to sell her, when her mistress intended she should be free, she was determined the public should know it. She had for a long time supplied many families with crackers and preserves; consequently, “Aunt Marthy,” as she was called, was generally known, and every body who knew her respected her intelligence and good character. Her long and faithful service in the family was also well known, and the intention of her mistress to leave her free. When the day of sale came, she took her place among the chattels, and at the first call she sprang upon the auction-block. Many voices

called out, “Shame! Shame! Who is going to sell *you*, Aunt Marthy? Don’t stand there! That is no place for *you*.” Without saying a word, she quietly awaited her fate. No one bid for her. (139)

Eventually an old woman, the dead mistress’ sister, purchases Aunt Martha for fifty dollars and immediately after this, frees her from slavery. Brent mentions other instances, too, in which her grandmother entertains white community leaders in her home as examples of the esteem she held in their eyes, and a note on the text indicates that Jacobs’ grandmother Molly Horniblow, the real-life counterpart to Brent’s Aunt Martha, purchased the very home in which she entertained white members of the community. As she grows up, Brent witnesses all of these events, sees the ways that her parents and grandmother garner respect and connect with the white community in positive ways, watches her grandmother conduct business from her own home, and also likely grasps the significance attached to her grandmother’s ownership of her own home and how this ties her to that community.³⁸ More than a physical domestic ideal of comfort and protection, this respect and positive interconnectivity, the belonging to a community, this is what home represents to Brent, and this is what she wants for herself and for her children. Her desire for a home of her own transcends the call for a recognized universal equality for all black people; more than this, her desire reflects a deep, personal yearning for what her grandmother’s home specifically means to her: acknowledged personhood tied to belonging and citizenship within the national community.³⁹

In her childhood homes, then, not only does Brent witness personhood, belonging, and community interconnectivity modeled by her parents and grandparents, but she also begins to construct a personal identity and sense of self based on what she sees, an identity that steels her refusal to consider herself as property, insisting instead that others

acknowledge her personhood and community membership. She asserts her humanity in several, and often sarcastic, instances throughout her narrative, but this assertion most directly manifests itself in her many refusals to allow other people to buy her freedom, as this would negate her humanity; it would reinforce the negative counterposition that constructed her identity as property. When her grandmother tells her, for instance, that “she would sacrifice her house, and all she had in the world,” in order to see her granddaughter free, Brent “resolved that not another cent of her hard earnings should be spent to pay rapacious slaveholders for what they called their property,” to purchase what she (Brent) “had already a right to possess” (307). After her escape, when Flint's daughter writes to her in the North, giving her permission to purchase her own freedom, Brent reflects, “It seemed not only hard, but unjust, to pay for myself. I could not possibly regard myself as a piece of property” (353). And when her friends do eventually procure her freedom by paying a Mr. Dodge three hundred dollars (done without her knowledge), she expresses gratefulness for their generosity but exhibits disgust for “the miscreant who demanded payment for what never rightfully belonged to him or his” (369). Amy Post, in her “Appendix” to Brent’s narrative, includes portions of a letter Brent sent to her soon after the above purchase, in which Brent offers a statement that powerfully sums up the indignation she feels at this denial of her humanity and interconnectivity in the community:

“I thank you for your kind expressions in regard to my freedom; but the freedom I had before the money was paid was dearer to me. God gave me *that* freedom; but man put God’s image in the scales with the paltry sum of three hundred dollars. I served for my liberty as faithfully as Jacob served for Rachel. At the end, he had large possessions; but I was robbed of my victory; I was obliged to resign my crown, to rid myself of a tyrant.” (374).

All of these assertions of personhood illustrate an importance to Brent not only that she herself maintains her sense of personhood and humanity but that everyone else recognize her personhood as well, a recognition that steps beyond acknowledgement of equality but that also offers belonging and interconnectivity in community. Just as her parents and grandmother patterned for her lives filled with this kind of dignity, so Brent, too, constructs her identity and sense of self on these things and insists that all others acknowledge it as well.

Despite Brent writing in a sentimental genre that, among other things, often highlighted patient endurance and self-restraint, her desire for the acknowledgment of her personhood and acceptance in the national community pervades the text as an implicit anger that seethes beneath the narrative, an anger she manifests in bitingly sarcastic commentary and direct addresses that tacitly rebuke her readers.⁴⁰ She aims much of her disgust at how the white community proclaimed itself “civilized” when much of this community either inflicted brutish savagery on a whole swath of humanity or condoned that savagery through compassionless attitudes, all the while perpetuating the myth that black people were the real animals that needed taming by their “civilizing” efforts. She describes, for instance, her friend Peter, one who aided in her letter-writing scheme and escape, as brave and keenly discerning, and so she emphasizes the incongruity that the “civilized” world valued him no more than a farm animal: “Yet that intelligent, enterprising, noble-hearted man was a chattel! liable, by the laws of a country that calls itself civilized, to be sold with horses and pigs!” (314). Recounting the atrocities the white patrollers committed during the muster, as they ransacked black houses and beat innocent men, women, and children alike, she also attributes these barbarities to

“civilized” white Southerners. “What a spectacle was that for a civilized country!” Brent exclaims. “A rabble, staggering under intoxication, assuming to be the administrators of justice!”—authorized by “white citizens” who approved of the brutality until their own property was threatened. She additionally includes white Northerners in these accusations as well, as she spends an entire chapter highlighting the paradox of a “civilized” free North supporting the inherently uncivilized Fugitive Slave Law, lamenting, “I could not think it was a right state of things in any civilized country” (363).⁴¹ Undergirding all of these outbursts and grievances, too, we see a desire for the nation to recognize the personhood and humanity of all black people and her indignation at the ironic negative counterposition that prevented her from inclusion into the national (and human) community.⁴²

Brent’s anger at the hypocrisy of a “civilized” nation sanctioning brutality in the name of civilization, though, most sharply manifests itself in the apology she offers her Northern white readers for her sexual “waywardness,” an un-apology in which she essentially, though subtly, accuses them of culpability in her actions. While she explains how her master’s unrelenting harassment and abuse compelled her to enter a sexual relationship with Sands, she also bitterly claims that she might have avoided the choice altogether had the institution of slavery not prevented her from marrying the man she loved, a marriage which, paradoxically, would have accorded with the standard of ideal womanhood that now demanded her apology. As she asks her civilized readers to show her “pity” and “pardon,” she also decries their inaction: “If slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have married the man of my choice; I could have had a home shielded by the laws; I should have been spared the painful task of confessing what I am now about to

relate” (191). She implies this repeatedly in her apology, as she maintains that slavery “confuses all principles of morality, and . . . renders the practice of them impossible” and accuses the reader, “You never knew what it is to be a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or custom; to have the laws reduce you to the condition of a chattel, entirely subject to the will of another” (192–93).⁴³ Her words here evince a seething resentment that she must apologize at all, tacitly emphasizing that she is the victim, not the transgressor. In this way, she also critically challenges the nineteenth-century sentimental fallen woman trope her readers would have supported that stipulated she make this apology. Her implicit anger here focuses attention on the inherent double-standard in it, as she contends that if she has fallen, the burden of responsibility rests on slavery, as well as on all of the “civilized” people who did nothing to abolish it.⁴⁴

While I claim previously that Brent’s anger seethes beneath the narrative, this bitterness comes close to erupting from underneath her words when she describes the moment she discovers her freedom has been purchased, and a man near her verifies it, saying that he saw the bill of sale. All of the resentment she has thus far demonstrated at a civilized nation’s uncivilized treatment of her converge in how she responds to his words:

“The bill of sale!” Those words struck me like a blow. So I was *sold* at last! A human being *sold* in the free city of New York! The bill of sale is on record, and future generations will learn from it that women were articles of traffic in New York, late in the nineteenth century of the Christian religion. It may hereafter prove a useful document to antiquaries, who are seeking to measure the progress of civilization in the United States. I well know the value of that bit of paper; but much as I love freedom, I do not like to look upon it. (369)

Here she emphasizes the irony that a person could be sold in a place described as free, as she bitterly offers that later historians will surely look on this transaction as a testament to

the nation's progressiveness. In a letter to Amy Post soon after her purchase (found in the text's "Appendix"), however, Jacobs qualifies the "freedom" that came with her bill of sale, explaining that "the freedom I had before the money was paid was dearer to me. God gave me *that* freedom." She also in this letter directly addresses why she responds as she does to this newly purchased freedom, stating that it shows how "man put God's image in the scales with the paltry sum of three hundred dollars" (374). In other words, though she exhibits thankfulness to those who paid much to see her free, in her eyes the bill of sale completely negates her humanity and personhood; it shows that she, though an image of God, means no more to her nation than the other consumer "articles" one could buy in the "free city of New York." The bill of sale reminds her that she remains an exile in her native country, one that bars her membership and participation in its community because it denies her human identity. Just a few paragraphs later, as she concludes her narrative by saying that her story "ends with freedom" for her and her children, she again qualifies this freedom, remarking, "We are as free from the power of slaveholders as are the white people of the north," and though she acknowledges that this freedom means "a vast improvement in *my* condition," her words indicate that, while slavery's umbrella of power hovers over the whole nation, she and her children can never be truly free. Just after this statement, then, she tellingly informs the reader of her desire for a home: "The dream of my life is not yet realized. I do not sit with my children in a home of my own. I still long for a hearthstone of my own, however humble. I wish it for my children's sake far more than for my own" (370). That she juxtaposes this desire with her previous comments about freedom demonstrates that her desire for home likely signifies more than simply the "hearthstone" she mentions; a "home of my own" identifies not only a

physical dwelling but what the ownership of such a dwelling represents: membership in a community and citizenship in her country. And even here, an anger seethes beneath her words.

Even for all of the bitterness and indignation present in Brent's words, her narrative also entails an element of hope, one in which she re-visions her native country in a manner that aligns with Massey's theories of home as a place of positive interconnectivity. Buried in many of Brent's rebukes and implicit accusations throughout the text lies a sense of what "ought to be" in a "civilized" nation, an unexpressed but ever-present "but it ought to" statement that follows all of her commentary on the discrepancies she observes and so casts a vision of positive interconnectedness. She decries, for instance, the incongruity of "civilized" men acting in violent, savage ways, but an implied "ought to" clause shows readers what a civilized nation should strive to do: in other words, *These men claim to be civilized but treat people brutishly... but they ought to see that civilization means treating all people humanely and respectfully*. This "ought to" appears again when she rebukes her white readership's inaction toward abolishing slavery, as she implies, *You might condemn me as a fallen woman for what I did only to escape my master's lust... but you ought to have abolished long ago the slavery that determined my actions, making you complicit in what has happened to me*. In a statement, too, that encompasses all of what her narrative challenges regarding her era's dominant white notions of home, Brent laments, "It is a sad feeling to be afraid of one's native country" (351), here again implying, *This ought not be so; all native born people should be welcome and able to participate equally in a country that touts liberty and democracy*. This sense of what "ought to be" not only exposes the national home's

current injustices and white supremacist identifications; it also casts a vision of that home as a place in which people instead acknowledge the boundaries that separate as arbitrary and false and strive for positive interconnectedness and citizenship for all people. Just as Brent represents Massey's notion of "the presence of the outside within" in how she reveals the illusoriness of home's boundaries, so Brent's implied sense of what "ought to be" likewise reflects Massey's conception of home as a place of openness, "constructed out of movement, communication [and] social relations which always stretch beyond it."⁴⁵ This is the kind of home Brent desires and what she urges Northern readers to enact.

While throughout this dissertation I discuss the various ways nineteenth-century women writers use portrayals of domestic upheaval to forward alternative versions of personhood for women, Harriet Jacobs' personhood arguments understandably center on race rather than gender, though they do give the grim perspective of what happens to slave girls and women in particular. Margo Culley notes this phenomenon as common among most black women's autobiographies, observing that "the sign of race seems to override the sign of gender" in their titles. Culley submits, "That is, for white women who need not think of themselves in racial terms, gender becomes the foundational category for self-organization. For most black women, ... the foundational category is race. This is not to deny the reality of multiple or plural subjectivities, but only to argue that all subjectivities may not be created equal."⁴⁶ I will note, however, that many who took part in the women's movement in the nineteenth century also participated in the abolitionist movement, and proponents of both used quite similar arguments for both gender and racial equality. Margaret Fuller, for instance, denounced the way in which many men infantilized women, similar to white supremacist arguments against slaves,

and treated them as if they possessed lower intellect and a need for constant guidance and supervision:

Knowing that there exists in the minds of men, a tone of feeling toward women as toward slaves, ... that the infinite soul can only work through them in already ascertained limits; that the gift of reason, Man's highest prerogative, is allotted to them in much lower degree; that they must be kept from mischief and melancholy by being constantly engaged in active labor, which is to be furnished and directed by those better able to think....⁴⁷

Fuller utilizes this image of women as enslaved to men in several places of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) when arguing that women be given citizenship. Further, some of the same contentions that Jacobs offers in *Incidents* regarding racial personhood could also be forwarded when contending for gender personhood, for as I maintain in Chapter Three (and mention earlier in this chapter), the era's culture often cited home's illusory boundaries to draw a negative counterposition between men and women as well, marking the former as worthy of citizenship and the latter as mere nurturers of that citizenry. The women's and abolitionist movements alike both argued for acknowledgement of women's and black people's humanity and individuality and for the ability to participate fully as members of the national community. For this, many scholars consider Jacobs to be both an abolitionist writer and a black feminist writer as well.

* * * * *

Addressing the way in which Brent's narrative approaches sensitive topics, Lydia Maria Child, in her introduction to *Incidents*, submits, "This peculiar phase of Slavery has generally been kept veiled; but the public ought to be made acquainted with its monstrous features, and I willingly take the responsibility of presenting them with the

veil withdrawn.”⁴⁸ Brent’s narrative, then, proceeds to withdraw this veil by outlining slavery’s gruesome atrocities, drawing particular attention to its sexual horrors. The observations she makes as she represents Massey’s “presence of the outside within,” however, pull back another veil as well, as she exposes dominant nineteenth-century middle class domestic ideals and the boundaries on which they are based to be illusory and corrupting. After her narrative’s publication, in fact, Jacobs will continue to be this presence, travelling back to the South during the Civil War to work behind Union lines with black refugees and reporting to the Northern press what she witnesses there.⁴⁹ Additionally, in all of what Brent does with her narrative, she embodies another reflection of Massey’s “outside within,” as her words, attitudes, and felt “ought to be” visions come to reside within the reader’s mind as well. Through her text, Brent, as a representative of the Other outside, enters the reader’s home, evincing anew the interconnected reality of all places and peoples and thus challenging the reader’s held beliefs in a personal, intimate way. From this space in readers’ minds, she issues an invitation for them to drop their prejudices and dissolve their boundaries, to meet her, as hooks writes, in “that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category of colonized/colonizer.”⁵⁰ She invites them to see home, not as a negative place of inequality, but as it ought to be: a place of openness and community for all people.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION: COMING HOME

All throughout this dissertation, I argue that nineteenth-century women writers such as Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Susan Warner, and Harriet Jacobs highlight or utilize domestic upheaval in their texts as opportunities to forward an individual personhood for women that steps beyond the group identity of wives and mothers assigned to them by the era's dominant domestic ideologies. Though each of these authors feature exile in some form in their heroines' stories, they present women's personhood through these removals in somewhat more varied ways. While Sedgwick largely advocates an individual personhood through her heroines' amalgam of both traditionally domestic and unconventional traits, many of which Sedgwick outlines as characteristics that comprise the ideal citizen, Warner instead turns to religion and heaven as the basis on which Ellen Montgomery structures an identity and sense of self that allow her not only to find stability amidst chaos but also to stake a claim to citizenship even while her nation refuses her this privilege. And Harriet Jacobs, through the persona Linda Brent, even more powerfully champions citizenship for her race as well as for women both in her seething indictment of America's allegiance to slavery and in her cry for a home of her own that brings with it recognition of her unique personhood and participation in a local and (by implication) national community. These personhood arguments, though varied, all trend progressively toward citizenship for women, as Sedgwick gives all her heroines

traits that coincide with her ideal citizen; Warner builds Ellen's sense of self on a religion that promotes the notion of heavenly citizenship for all Christians, male and female; and Jacobs ties community membership to the very home that forms the standard for Brent's domestic desires.

All of these writers also exhibit another interesting characteristic in common: their stories all somewhere feature an element of returning home. In the works I have discussed by Sedgwick, for instance, we see Jane Elton return to her childhood home after marrying Mr. Lloyd in *A New-England Tale*; Hope Leslie, after her exciting adventures organizing clandestine meetings and jail breaks, settles down to a conventional lifestyle in marriage to Everell Fletcher in *Hope Leslie*; Herbert Linwood returns from "exile" after the Revolutionary War and sister Isabella looks to marry fellow returnee, Eliot Lee, in *The Linwoods*; and in *Home*, the Barclays return to William's childhood country home after living for years in the city. As for Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, we find in its recently published last chapter that Ellen Montgomery does indeed return to America from Scotland and also returns to the Humphreys family, though this time as John's wife rather than adopted sister. And though Jacobs does include a small element of return for Brent in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, seen when Brent returns to America from her time abroad with the Bruce's, a much more powerful return occurs in Jacobs' life after she publishes her narrative, as she eventually returns to the South during the Civil War to help black refugees and to report from behind the lines for the Northern press. Interestingly, too, similar to the progressive trend these writers demonstrate in their personhood arguments, the returns they portray also indicate a progression in how the homes to which they return are transformed by their coming

home. While the homes to which Sedgwick's characters return all appear to be largely untransformed and still relatively adherent to the era's domesticity, such as women returning home to become wives and mothers (or men returning home to marry them), Warner includes a hint of home being transformed in the conversation between Ellen and John regarding the two paintings in their new house. These images imply that the home represents a dim shadow of the heaven to come, a heaven that offers citizenship for women as well as men. Jacobs' return to the South, then, presents the most vivid picture of home's transformation, in that she returns not as a slave in chains but as a free black woman author, one who will bring transformation there not only by the refugee work she does but also by the reportage she provides the Northern press. In this progression of home's transformation presented by these writers, then, we see how notions of domesticity begin to change gradually throughout the nineteenth century, and this will only continue as the century draws to a close.

Published in 1894, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's *Pembroke: A Novel*, similar to the texts above, depicts domestic scenes that evoke the ideals exalted by nineteenth-century domesticity and, also in similar fashion, involves one of its main characters returning home at its conclusion, a return that completely transforms that home and the people in it. Freeman sets the novel's first scene with images of domesticity by describing the iconic domestic picture of a family surrounding a fireplace. As her male protagonist, the young Barnabas "Barney" Thayer, comes out of his bedroom on his way to visit his fiancé Charlotte Barnard, Freeman portrays Barney's parents and younger siblings seated in the kitchen "before the hearth fire" performing family devotions as Barney's father reads from the Bible "in a solemn voice."¹ Freeman then adds numerous other domestic scenes

throughout the text, such as the housekeeping rituals that spinster Sylvia Crane performs to prepare for visits from her crush Richard Alger, the many kitchen conversations involving women discussing food prep and other domestic routines, and Barney's mother, Deborah Thayer's manner of "vanquishing" life's trials "not with trumpet and spear, but with daily duties" (95). Freeman even includes a sentimental fallen woman narrative in the novel, with Barney's sister, Rebecca, becoming pregnant by beau William Berry, though this ends not with abandonment or death but with William and Rebecca marrying and raising a family together. Freeman offers her most striking domestic image, however, in the daydreams Barney has while standing in the unfinished house he is building for his future bride. Stopping there on his way to her house at the novel's beginning, he gazes on "the new fireless hearth," pictures the sun coming through the kitchen windows, and considers where Charlotte will place her rocking chair, and as he does, "tears came into his eyes; he stepped forward, laid his smooth boyish cheek against a partition wall of this new house, and kissed it." As he turns to leave on his way to Charlotte's house, he glimpses "a long black shadow" (7) that startles him, a harbinger of the dark times that await him that very evening; he will return to this house that night and live in it without Charlotte until the novel's conclusion.

Barnabas never completes this house within the text's pages, and so the unfinished house, like a ghost of both the future and the past, haunts the novel, becoming its most pervasive and emblematic image. The unfinished house functions as a time-marker within the novel, in fact, as the four major timeframes of Freeman's story each begin with some reference to Barney's house. The first of these timeframes, covering only one day, comprises the first third of the novel and relates, among other things, a

political argument that ensues between Barney and Cephas Barnard, Charlotte's father, and this argument causes Barney to abandon his engagement with Charlotte. We then fast-forward about four months in time to the second timeframe, which recounts approximately a week's events, while the third timeframe, after fast-forwarding some months in time again, describes the happenings of approximately a year. When we finally arrive at the fourth and last major timeframe, we have jumped several years into the future from the previous section and now find that the novel as a whole has spanned at least ten years from the first scenes Freeman introduces. Even through all of these timeframes, no matter if time moves slowly or progressively gains speed throughout the text, Barney's unfinished house never changes, a ghostly figure at each section's opening that marks time's passing even as it seems itself ever suspended in time. In this way, the unfinished house functions similarly to a Bakhtinian chronotope, an "artistically visual" representation of time that Freeman utilizes to mark both its passage and its suspension simultaneously in the novel.² The unfinished house proves not the only thing in the text that remains unchanged, in fact; the town itself appears, for the most part, stuck in time as well, a forgotten relic where "the old stage line had become a thing of the past, and the tavern was scantily patronized" (87). Freeman uses the idea of suspended time pictured by the unfinished house to illustrate how the town's people cling so iron-fistedly to traditions and old ways of thinking (seen most clearly in Cephas and Barney's fight, in which neither man will relinquish his stubbornness) that no progress can take place in their lives or the town. In essence, they all live in a world suspended in time, as does the unfinished house, making it a striking emblem of the town's stagnation.

The unfinished house's image becomes a space through which Freeman enters a political conversation regarding tradition versus progress, a debate that transcends borders and spans much of human history. In an "Introductory Sketch" prior to the novel's first scene, she explains that her story will display the effects of "a deathless cramp of the will" (xlii), a prideful and willful stubbornness that evinces an unwillingness to move forward out of old, ineffective ways of thinking and doing. Freeman in one way demonstrates the political implications of such a "will" through Cephas and Barney's argument, in which they contentiously engage each other over a disagreement regarding a recent presidential election, and neither will concede any points to the other. By presenting this fight as the reason Barney and Charlotte split and thus why Barney never finishes his house, Freeman connects willful stubbornness to the unfinished house and so illustrates how this kind of obstinance, manifested in an unwillingness to move forward in politics as well as in life, eventually leads to stagnation and decay for people as well as whole towns. Not only does this stubbornness prevent Barney from completing his house, in fact; it eventually completely infects him and initiates a debilitating deformity within him: "He could not straighten himself up without agonizing pain. People thought that he never would, and he thought so himself" (322). Some characters believe Barney's disability stems from a "diseased will" that manifests itself in his external bodily "warping," while others believe Barney dwelt so long on "his own real but hidden infirmity" that he now unknowingly expresses it through his physical body (300). In either case, Barney's deformity transforms him into a picture of his own stubbornness in that, over time, he is unable to move out of bed. Taking the fight, the unfinished house, and Barney's illness together, then, Freeman uses this progression to convey how an

unrelenting refusal to let go of pride and established ways of thinking leads first to stagnation and eventually to debilitating decay.

Freeman, however, does not leave things in this state. Toward the end of the novel, when Charlotte learns that Barney is bed-ridden and has no one to care for him, she willingly enters Barney's unfinished house, the one he at one time intended for the two of them, and stays there with him while she tends to his illness. At this point, Charlotte remains an unmarried woman, so to perform this act of caregiving, she oversteps the era's conventions for single women that proclaimed it a disgrace for a woman to live in the same house with a man not her husband, so unsurprisingly, this action brings her censure from not only her parents but other townspeople as well: "Her aunt Hannah came, and her aunt Sylvia, quaking with gentle fears. She even had to listen to remonstrances from William Berry, honestly grateful as he was for her care of his brother-in-law" (325). At first, Barney does not understand these expostulations, but when the church's minister and one of its deacons request a conference with Charlotte, "a knowledge quite foreign to his own imagination" strikes Barney as he recognizes the great sacrifice Charlotte has made to care for him (327). This newly discovered knowledge completely transforms Barney: He immediately tells Charlotte that she must leave the house, and just minutes after she exits, he stands to his feet, grabs his hat, and follows after her. As Barney climbs the hill to Charlotte's house, he grapples with and fights off his stubborn will that would leave him in his bent condition, and when he finally arrives at the door to find Charlotte there with her parents, he "stood before them all with that noble bearing which comes from humility itself when it has fairly triumphed" (329–30). The novel concludes with Barney placing his arm around Charlotte

while her father welcomes him back into their home, depicting a double reconciliation enabled by Charlotte's unconventional and progressive act of stepping back into the unfinished house and transforming it into a space of love and healing.³ Further, Charlotte's return to Barney's house carries political implications as well, for Freeman seems to imply, in pairing the town's stagnation with Barney's unfinished house and Charlotte's unconventional return, that breaking long-held political and civic traditions with unconventional ideas and actions is sometimes necessary for the nation's progress.⁴

Coming Home to the New Domesticity

Though written over one hundred years ago, Charlotte's transformational return home interestingly anticipates a twenty-first-century phenomenon taking place all over the U. S., as in the past decade or so, several women have chosen (and continue to choose) to leave their workplaces and businesses to reenter their homes as transformational homemakers in what has been dubbed the *new domesticity*. "Young women who, had they been of age in the 1990s, might have been boozing it up in the Meatpacking District are now spending Saturday nights baking cupcakes and photographing them for their food blogs," explains journalist Emily Matchar. "The kinds of kitchen work once associated with Depression-era farmwives—making curds and whey, preserving sauerkraut, grinding flour—are not thoroughly unremarkable pastimes for young people flush with today's DIY back-to-basics spirit."⁵ According to its adherents, however, the new domesticity does not simply regurgitate its nineteenth-century predecessor which relegated women to be caretakers of the home and discouraged their participation in business and political matters. Instead, as Valerie

Padilla Carroll notes, “At its core ... the new domesticity is a feminist domesticity that focuses on the empowerment of women as political actors who promote human and ecological justice.”⁶ In other words, similar to Charlotte Barnard, many of the women who choose to return claim their choice involves reentering the home in a way that transforms it from a site of household chores and political inaction to a place in which women effect national and global change by the work they do there, such as sustainable food practices and other routines aimed at cutting costs and minimizing waste. Both Matchar and Carroll identify similar factors that lead to women making this choice, such as disillusionment with the modern workplace, loss of faith in government and food sources, and environmental concerns. Just as nineteenth-century domesticity largely arose from industrialism and changes in social and family structures, Carroll observes, so the new domesticity “emerges from a historical moment of radical economic and social changes,” such as “the shift from an industrial to a service economy in the United States” as well as racial and gender social movements.⁷

Similar catalysts to how both the old and new domesticities arose, however, prove not the only commonality between the two movements. For one, both domesticities come armed with their own domestic advice books and materials to guide women (and men) in the household arts. While the nineteenth century featured Beecher and Stowe’s *The American Woman’s Home* and other similar works, Matchar describes how DIY manuals such as food and gardening blogs and “a slew of hipster home-ec books ... fill us in on lost domestic skills” in twenty-first-century domesticity.⁸ Valerie Carroll focuses her entire article, in fact, on three books that not only discuss the how-to’s of new domesticity but also insist on its radical political potential: Sharon Astyk’s *Depletion and*

Abundance: Life on the New Home Front (2008), Shannon Hayes' *Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture* (2010), and Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Vegetable Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (2008). This leads to the second similarity between the old and new domesticities: claims to how each serves or has the potential to serve important political aims. For nineteenth-century domesticity, many adherents maintained that women as homemakers proved the most fit to have charge of raising a virtuous citizenry; women writers such as Lydia Sigourney even argued as much, contending that women participated in their government in the most noble of ways when taking seriously their duties of raising future citizens. For Carroll, however, the new domesticity focuses on participating more overtly in political and financial issues, positing that it directly challenges the current economic system by advocating "a return to the home for women *and* men to answer the deep problems of capitalism that harms women, men, children, families, communities, and the Earth."⁹ Both the old and new domesticities' political aspirations, then, involve morality on some level, which represents yet another commonality between them. While the nineteenth century crowned women homemakers as the nation's moral guides, advocates of twenty-first-century new domesticity cast the return to home as a morally exemplary act as well: "The homemade jar of jam," Matchar explains, "becomes a symbol of resistance to industrial food and its environment-defiling ways. ... Suddenly, leaving the old-fashioned skills of our great-grandmothers seems not just fun, but necessary and even virtuous."¹⁰

The new domesticity also exhibits one other striking similarity to nineteenth-century domesticity in that much debate swirls around a question of just how it positions women in society and culture. Stéphanie Genz observes that the new domesticity often

garners praise, not only from those who, as explained above, view it as politically empowering and socially just, but also from “‘new traditionalist’ politicians and journalists” who herald it as a “reaffirmation of family values.” Some feminists, however, fiercely criticize it, identifying it, Genz explains, “as a ‘backlash’ that returns women to the subordinate roles of a bygone, prefeminist era.”¹¹ Similar to this, Matchar also mentions the feminist concern that more women leaving the workforce for home means fewer women to advocate for issues such as equal work opportunities and equal pay for women.¹² In addition to (and somewhat coming out of) this debate, a worry arises that, just as the nineteenth century largely assigned to women the essential group identity of wives and mothers based on their relegation to home, the new domesticity evinces the same potential for essentializing women. Either the housewife is a domestic drudge deluded by an oppressive culture (according to some feminists), or she is an empowered political activist changing the world (argued by many proponents of new domesticity to counter those claims). No room seems to exist for the woman who simply wants to be a homemaker, for this conception proves only an illusion: for some feminists, a myth sold in the 1950s to oppress women, and for new domesticity adherents, a figure to resist as to prove allegiance to feminism’s aims. In this we circle back to the either/or binary thinking of those critics of nineteenth-century women’s writing discussed in Chapter Two, the thinking that maintains these writers’ works either embrace domesticity or resist it. Similarly, we also return to the act of using home to categorize women in an essentializing group identity in which nuance goes unrecognized. In these ways, the new domesticity appears as polarizing as the old.¹³

All of this indicates to me that, among other things, no matter how much time has passed since the days of Sedgwick, Warner, and Jacobs, women still cannot seem to get away from being defined or defining themselves by their affiliation with home. As the debate above attests, even though feminism has largely won women the right to choose where they spend their time, women now yet find themselves defined by their choice to return home or to remain away from it. I do not propose a solution to this issue, nor do I necessarily believe a solution to be imperative, that women must discover some way of breaking this identification with home. I do suggest, however, that, because women's identity largely involves some kind of link to home, we should acknowledge the significance that representations of home have in women's writing. Whether we see these representations in nineteenth-century works by authors such as Sedgwick or Freeman, or in the ghost-house of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), or in the homelessness of Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping* (1980), we need to recognize that these depictions of home will carry with them significant identifications for women and statements regarding their personhood. I argue that understanding representations of home in this way will not only give us insight into the writers of these works and the cultures in which they wrote, but it can also help us guard against a tendency to see home as a bounded and essentializing place and instead see it as Massey theorizes: an "open" place, "constructed out of movement, communication, social relations," and, above all, connection with others.¹⁴

NOTES

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1. Susanna Haswell Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers; or, a Struggle for Freedom*, 1794, in *Plays by Early American Women, 1775–1850*, ed. Amelia Howe Kritzer (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 70.

2. *Ibid.*, 94.

3. Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, 1900, 2nd ed., ed. Donald Pizer (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1991), 2. Subsequent references to this edition will appear parenthetically in the text.

4. Priscilla Wald nods to Carrie's apparent confusion, observing that she "will accordingly spend the entire novel searching for 'a place,' the term she uses for a job but by which she also, less consciously, means a location in which she will make sense." See Wald, "Dreiser's Sociological Vision," in *The Cambridge Companion to Theodore Dreiser*, ed. Leonard Cassuto and Clare Virginia Eby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 186.

5. I include a more detailed explanation of Soja's Thirdspace theory in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

6. Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996), 67–68, 6, 11, 60–61.

7. *Ibid.*, 5.

8. Jennifer Costello Brezina additionally observes that Dreiser giving his heroine such a big stage presence exemplifies how many nineteenth-century American novels "problematize the public/private split by using female characters in public space to embody the powerful cultural shifts that modernity and rapid urbanization were bringing to American society." See Brezina, "Public Women, Private Acts: Gender and Theater in Turn-of-the-Century American Novels," in *Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature, 1830–1930*, ed. Monika M. Elbert (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2000), 225–26.

9. Soja, *Thirdspace*, 70.

CHAPTER II

1. William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, ed. Don L. Cook (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982), 175.

2. William Dean Howells, "Editor's Study," *Harper's Magazine* 74, no. 443 (April 1887): 824–26. Howells later revised this essay and included it in his book *Criticism and Fiction* (1891), a collection of his several "Editor's Study" writings.

3. Howells also advocated for several women writers of his era, including Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Gary Schamhorst, "William Dean Howells," in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature: Volume C, Late Nineteenth Century, 1865–1910*, eds. Paul Lauter et al., 6th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2010), 233.

4. Nathaniel Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor, January 19, 1855, in *Letters of Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor, 1851–1864*, vol. 1 (Newark: The Cateret Book Club, 1910), 75.

5. Nathaniel Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor, February 2, 1855, in *Letters of Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor, 1851–1864*, vol. 1 (Newark: The Cateret Book Club, 1910), 78. While writing scornfully of most women writers, Hawthorne includes in this letter his admiration for Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall* (1855), claiming she wrote "as if the devil was in her; and that is the only condition under which a woman ever writes anything worth reading" (78). Leland S. Person, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne*, also observes that, while Hawthorne formulated little good to say of the era's women writers, he "understood the power of radical women," seen in his novels' strong female characters and in Margaret Fuller's influence on his writing. Yet despite this, Dana Nelson, writing in *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing*, remarks that by the mid-1970s, "nineteenth-century women's writing was understood—despite and indeed *because* of its popular success—through Hawthorne's dismissive lens: no analysis required." Person, *The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23–24; Nelson, "Women in Public," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing*, ed. Dale M. Bauer and Philip Gould (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 48.

6. Fred Lewis Pattee, *The Feminine Fifties* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1940), 3, 8, 53, 126. Pattee seems to lash out most severely at Fanny Fern, labeling her "the most tearful and convulsingly 'female' moralizer of the whole modern blue-stocking school" (110) and calling into question Hawthorne's expressed admiration for her (see note 5).

7. Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789–1860*, 1940 (New York: Pageant Books, Inc., 1959), vii, 299, 282, 289, 294, 322.

8. Henry Nash Smith, "The Scribbling Women and the Cosmic Success Story," *Critical Inquiry* 1, no. 1 (Sept. 1974): 48, 50, 58, 51, 57, <https://doi.org/10.1086/447777>.

9. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 1977 (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 7, 10, 4, 6, 13.

10. Cathy N. Davidson observes the contrary in her research for her book *Revolution and the Word*: "I discovered that all the material evidence available—extant lending-library rosters, subscription lists published in novels, and inscriptions found in extant copies of novels—suggested that men as well as women read even the most sentimental books." Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 29.

11. Helen Waite Papshvily, *All the Happy Endings: A Study of the Domestic Novel in America, the Women Who Wrote It, the Women Who Read It, in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1956), xvii, xv, 210, 11, xiv, 24, 95, 70, xv.

12. Carolyn L. Karcher, "Reconceiving Nineteenth-Century American Literature: The Challenge of Women Writers," *American Literature* 66, no. 4 (December 1994): 781–82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2927700>.

13. Kathleen Anne McHugh, *American Domesticity: From How-To Manual to Hollywood Melodrama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6. Throughout her book, McHugh asserts that, since the late eighteenth century, feminine identity in America has largely been defined by the "domestic discourses" within domesticity and that this association of women with the home has additionally shaped the nation "primarily around gender distinctions" (6).

14. *Ibid.*, 39.

15. Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1973), 155–56.

16. Contrasting the working class with this middle class ideal, Linda McDowell, in *Gender, Identity, and Place* (1999), notes that, although domesticity affected the working class by making many industrial jobs more difficult for women to attain, most working-class families in the nineteenth century could not afford for their women to work only in their own homes. Writing of conditions in England, she points out that "over a third of all women were involved in some form of waged labour in Britain for the hundred years between 1850 and 1950." She further explains that, while many of these women had the additional burden of maintaining their own homes, "for many working-class households gender relations were largely based on cooperation rather than antagonism. Both men and women were fully aware of the inequalities and injustices which produced their poverty and were anxious to find a way to 'get by' and raise their children as best they might within their means." Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and*

Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 75, 79.

17. Glenna Matthews, *'Just a Housewife': The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 34, 6, 11–12.

18. Margaret A. Nash, "Rethinking Republican Motherhood: Benjamin Rush and the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia," *Journal of the Early Republic* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 172, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3124445>.

19. Benjamin Rush to William Gordon, December 10, 1778, in *Letters of Benjamin Rush, Volume I: 1761–1792*, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 221. In this letter, Rush discusses his short stint in what he calls his "political race" and his belief that only by establishing national liberty through virtue can Americans achieve all other great things in education, the arts, and religion.

20. Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—An American Perspective," in "An American Enlightenment," ed. Joseph Ellis, special issue, *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1976): 197, 196, 202, <http://doi.org/10.2307/2712349>. Kerber interestingly cites author Charles Brockden Brown's dismay at this "'charming system of equality and independence' that denied women a part in the choice of their governors" (201).

21. Lora Romero, *Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States*, New Americanists, ed. Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 15.

22. In her introduction to a selection of Judith Sargent Murray's writings, Sharon Harris discusses both the drawbacks and benefits that resulted from Republican Motherhood, including expanded women's education: "While Republican Motherhood, on the one hand, offered women a degree of empowerment and aided their increased educational opportunities, it was also a means of denying women direct political participation in the new republic. . . . The limitations of Republican Motherhood were many, but the strengths of this eighteenth-century ideology were its emphases 'upon better education, clearer recognition of women's economic contributions, and a strong political identification with the Republic.'" Sharon M. Harris, introduction to *Selected Writings of Judith Sargent Murray*, by Judith Sargent Murray, ed. Sharon M. Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), xxvii.

23. Catherine Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen: Women and Intellectual Life in the Early American South* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 19.

24. Lydia Huntley Sigourney, *Letters to Mothers* (Hartford, CT: Hudson and Skinner, Printers, 1838), 13–14, 15. Regarding women crossing into the overt political arena of men, Sigourney claims, "The admixture of the female mind in the ferment of political ambition, would be neither safe, if it were permitted, nor to be desired, if it were

safe. Nations who have encouraged it, have usually found their cabinet-councils perplexed by intrigue, or turbulent with contention” (13).

25. Catherine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home; or, Principles of Domestic Science*, 1869 (Hartford, CT: Stowe-Day Foundation, 1975), 13, 17. Subsequent references to this edition will appear parenthetically within the text.

26. While both Beecher and Stowe's names appear as coauthors of *The American Woman's Home*, Catharine Beecher specifically inscribes only her name at the end of the introduction. In his introduction to the Stowe-Day Foundation edition of the book, Joseph Van Why indicates that Beecher, in fact, penned the majority of the text and probably concluded that adding Stowe, a popular author and mother of seven, as coauthor would add credibility and boost the book's reputation.

27. In the penultimate paragraph of her introduction, Beecher first mentions, “There is at the present time an increasing agitation of the public mind, evolving many theories and some crude speculations as to woman's rights and duties.” The last paragraph then answers this by implying that women's self-sacrifice will gain for them greater glorification than overtly fighting for political rights: “But to intelligent, reflecting, and benevolent women—whose faith rests on the character and teachings of Jesus Christ—there are great principles revealed by Him, which in the end will secure the grand result which He taught and suffered to achieve. It is hoped that in the following pages these principles will be so exhibited and illustrated as to aid in securing those rights and advantages which Christ's religion aims to provide for all, and especially for the most weak and defenseless of His children” (16).

Sklar observes the irony of Beecher's position on women's rights: “Her political assumptions led her to oppose the women's rights movement. Nevertheless her efforts to overcome the marginal status allotted to women constituted a central theme in her career.” Sklar, *Catherine Beecher*, xiii.

28. She also uses other various phrases such as “domestic administration” and “employments of domestic life” that provide a similar vocational aspect to women's work in the home (14, 15).

29. Regarding Beecher's use of science in the book, McHugh comments, “Written at a time when science, education, and a commercial infrastructure were being constructed in a public sphere that greatly exceeded exclusively civic functions, Beecher's work articulates a complementary, not oppositional, construction of the private sphere.” McHugh, *American Domesticity*, 42.

30. Nelson, “Women in Public,” 39. Nelson later expounds on this idea of domesticity as an “ideologically enforced captivity,” indicating, “Early investigation of the ‘cult of domesticity’ was guided by the analogy between women's private sphere and the imprisonment of slavery. It argued that women's consciousness moved toward feminism as the result of a recognition of a common bondage, a common oppression, and

indeed, part of the proof for the rightness of the analogy was supplied from the fact that middle-class women's involvement in antislavery protest grew from their conscious apprehension of that political analogy." This analogy, she further explains, began to break down in later years of the recovery, as scholars "began paying more attention to southern history in general and to African American women's history in particular" (48).

31. Karcher, "Reconceiving," 783.

32. Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820–1870* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 17, 18, 20, 14–16.

33. Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), xi, xvi, 162–63, 171.

34. Judith Fetterley, "Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers and the Politics of Recovery," *American Literary History* 6, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 603–4, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/489830>. Fetterley takes aim specifically at Jane Tompkins, in fact, and her avoidance of discussing the aesthetics of women's works, contending, "Her strategy, however, depends upon historicizing the texts she reads. She seeks to recover the context in which these texts had meaning for the audiences for whom they were originally written, but she does not argue that these texts have thematic significance for readers of our own day. Additionally, she chooses to focus on the relativity of all aesthetic value rather than make the case for the aesthetic value of these texts" (606).

35. Nelson, "Women in Public," 40.

36. Caroline Chamberlin Hellman, *Domesticity and Design in American Women's Lives and Literature: Stowe, Alcott, Cather, and Wharton Writing Home*, Routledge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature (New York: Routledge, 2011), 3.

37. While she points out the antipatriarchal leanings of domesticity, Romero cautions against labeling it a form of feminism (as does Baym): "We need not call domesticity 'feminist' in order to appreciate its antipatriarchal motivations. Contemporary feminism is not reducible to a critique of the patriarchal family; by calling domesticity feminist we prepare ourselves for disappointment over its lack of radicalism at the same time that we obscure the interventionary value that it has." Romero, *Home Fronts*, 20.

38. Romero, *Home Fronts*, 19, 6, 19, 20, 30. Matthews similarly notes how the Woman's Christian Temperance Union cited domestic concerns when eventually campaigning for women's suffrage in the latter years of the nineteenth century, indicating "that women might be unable to defend their homes without political rights." Matthews, "Just a Housewife," 87.

39. McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place*, 72–73, 75, 89. McDowell further observes that recent African American studies have also specifically challenged the early

recovery claim of the home as a prison for women, remarking, “The assertion that the home is a locus of oppression has been particularly criticized by black feminist scholars and writers, who have argued that for them the home has long been one of the only places of escape from the oppressive relations of first slavery and later racist society: what the US feminist writer bell hooks has termed ‘white supremacist capitalist patriarchy’” (89).

40. Dale M. Bauer and Philip Gould, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Writing*, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

41. Hellman, *Domesticity and Design*, 8.

42. Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women’s Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Stacey Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Carol Faulkner, *Lucretia Mott’s Heresy: Abolition and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Jane E. Dabel, *A Respectable Woman: The Public Roles of African American Women in 19th-Century New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Alison Marie Parker, *Articulating Rights: Nineteenth-Century American Women on Race, Reform, and the State* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

Dana Nelson’s “Women in Public” in Bauer and Gould’s *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Writing* also provides a detailed overview of recovery scholarship from the 1960s to the turn into the twenty-first century.

43. Soja, *Thirdspace*, 11, 5, 61.

44. Some modernist critics, such as Henry Nash Smith, identified women writers as part of this group in power (as many were white and middle-class) and posited that they upheld the boundedness of home to adhere to dominant cultural ideologies and to maintain status quo power relations. Massey, however, contends that women, along with people of color, constitute the oppressed Others whom those in power fear and for whom those in power create boundaries. She argues, in fact, that women and the colonized Other have long since shed the illusion of home as bounded, certain and secure, as they have always found home threatened by the instability and upheaval caused by patriarchy and colonization.

45. Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 163, 168–69, 170.

46. Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*, 152.

47. *Ibid.*, 186, 156.

48. Joseph Van Why, introduction to *The American Woman's Home*, by Catharine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1869 (Hartford, CT: Stowe-Day Foundation, 1975), n.p.

49. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 142.

50. Hellman, *Domesticity and Design*, 9. For much more detailed expositions of Beecher's and Stowe's lives and activities, see Kathryn Kish Sklar's *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* and Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

CHAPTER III

1. Rev. Henry Ware to Miss Sedgwick, Cambridge, January 31, 1834, in *Life and Letters of Catharine M. Sedgwick*, by Catharine Maria Sedgwick, ed. by Mary E. Dewey (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1871), 239.

2. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, "Journal," in *The Power of Her Sympathy: The Autobiography and Journal of Catharine Maria Sedgwick*, by Catharine Maria Sedgwick, ed. by Mary Kelley (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 150–51.

3. Dr. Cummings to Miss Sedgwick, August, 1851, in *Life and Letters of Catharine M. Sedgwick*, by Catharine Maria Sedgwick, ed. by Mary E. Dewey (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1871), 221–22.

4. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Home: Scenes and Characters Illustrating Christian Truth* (Boston and Cambridge: James Munroe and Company, 1835), 42. Subsequent references to this edition will appear parenthetically within the text.

5. I will note that Sedgwick's use of the term "exile" discussed here in this chapter most often centers on any kind of absencing (by choice or otherwise) a place deemed an original home, whether that be a person's nation of origination or a childhood domestic space. Because of this, she sometimes applies the term to individuals or groups of people who did not necessarily leave home due to forced expulsion or under political compulsion but possibly by choice or by family obligation, yet she makes little delineation between these different kinds of removals when labeling them all as "exile." This practice coincides with Caren Kaplan's observation that, "All displacements are not the same. Yet the occidental ethnographer, the modernist expatriate poet, the writer of popular travel accounts, and the tourist may all participate in the mythologized narrativizations of displacement without questioning the cultural, political, and economic grounds of their different professions, privileges, means, and limitations." In a similar way, Sedgwick's discussion of exile tends to level all of these different kinds of removals into a more general and apolitical category that, in Kaplan's words, "tends to absorb difference and create ahistorical amalgams." See Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 2.

6. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*, 1827, ed. Carolyn L. Karcher (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1998), 17. Subsequent references to this edition will appear parenthetically within the text.

7. Miss Sedgwick to her brother Robert, Stockbridge, June 2, 1821, in *Life and Letters of Catharine M. Sedgwick*, by Catharine Maria Sedgwick, ed. by Mary E. Dewey (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1871), 121.

8. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Autobiography of Catharine Maria Sedgwick*, in *The Power of Her Sympathy: The Autobiography and Journal of Catharine Maria Sedgwick*, by Catharine Maria Sedgwick, edited by Mary Kelley (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 70–71.

9. Sedgwick experienced quite a few changes herself in the same year she published *Hope Leslie*, possibly prompting this nostalgic discussion in the novel. In a June 10, 1827, journal entry, she notes that her sister Eliza had suffered a stroke, from which Eliza would die four months later. Sedgwick also writes that, due to her brother Harry's financial problems and deteriorating eyesight, she (as an unmarried woman) had removed from his and wife Jane's home to live with her brother Robert and his wife Elizabeth. "For myself," she comments, "I have left forever one of the happiest and dearest homes that ever was given out of a father's house. What recollections of kindness, of love, and of enjoyment crowd on my mind." See Sedgwick, "Journal," 116–18.

10. Barclay's mother "lived prosperously in a city for two or three years" before moving back to her father's parsonage at the death of her husband. The parsonage, however, still represents Barclay's childhood home, as it is the only one he is old enough to remember. See Sedgwick, *Home*, 2.

11. Sedgwick's association of colonial and new American residents with the Old Testament's Israelite nation—God's chosen people through whom He demonstrates His power by moving them through a wilderness to arrive in the land He promised them—fits with a tradition practiced by earlier colonial writers such as William Bradford, John Winthrop, and Cotton Mather. In many of their writings, as well as Sedgwick's, the colonial/American landscape ironically alternates between representing both the dangerous wilderness and the Edenic promised land, with the Puritans and Pilgrims cast as a sojourning Israel. This correspondence of early settlers with God's chosen nation often presents them as sympathetic searchers for home rather than as colonizing usurpers of land. In a December 5, 1821, letter to Mrs. Frank Channing (sister-in-law to Unitarian preacher William Ellery Channing), Sedgwick even uses the imagery to describe her own home-searching experiences: "My life is a good deal like that of the Israelites that came up out of Egypt, save that it is not passed in a wilderness. I certainly am but a sojourner, and in that sense have an existence in actual conformity to the apostolic injunction." Miss Sedgwick to Mrs. Channing, New York, December 5, 1821, in *Life and Letters of Catharine M. Sedgwick*, by Catharine Maria Sedgwick, ed. by Mary E. Dewey (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1871), 145.

12. Susan K. Harris, introduction to *A New-England Tale*, by Catharine Maria Sedgwick, ed. Susan K. Harris (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), vii.

13. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *A New-England Tale*, 1822, ed. Susan K. Harris (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 18. Subsequent references to this edition will appear parenthetically within the text.

14. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1667, in *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1957), 468–69. See also Emily VanDette, notes to *A New-England Tale*, ed. Susan K. Harris (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 191n2.

15. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *The Linwoods; or, 'Sixty Years Since' in America*, 1835 (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014), 197. Subsequent references to this edition will appear parenthetically within the text.

16. Likely uncoincidentally, Sedgwick imbues protagonist Isabella with this same “spirit of freedom,” a trait, according to Isabella, that draws revolutionary Eliot Lee to her: “‘Then,’ said Isabella, somewhat mischievously, ‘I think you like me for, what most men like not at all—my love of freedom and independence of control’” (398).

17. When discussing the ways in which Sedgwick approaches ideas of marriage and singleness in her writing, Maglina Lubovich observes that, with regard to Fletcher’s earlier relationship with his cousin Alice and his choice to leave England for the America, “it is precisely masculine freedom that grants him this right of mobility. Such an opportunity does not afford itself to Alice.” We could add Martha here as well. See Maglina Lubovich, “‘Married or Single?’: Catharine Maria Sedgwick on Old Maids, Wives, and Marriage,” *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 25, no. 1 (2008): 26, <https://doi.org/10.1353/leg.0.0005>.

18. Laurel V. Hankins contends that Sedgwick purposely employs sarcasm and irony in *Hope Leslie* to challenge literature’s status as the best way to promote national identity in the early republic. Hankins remarks, “Throughout the novel, the narrator’s sarcastic interjections and manipulative plot devices never allow readers to forget that they are reading a work of fiction. . . . Sedgwick makes use of a heavy-handed, ironic narrator constantly to remind her readers of this fictional element.” See Laurel V. Hankins, “The Voice of Nature: *Hope Leslie* and Early American Romanticism,” *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 31, no. 2 (2014): 167, <https://doi.org/10.5250/legacy.31.2.0160>.

19. In a note on *Hope Leslie*’s preface, Carolyn L. Karcher comments that Magawisca’s narrative regarding the killing and exiling of her people revises Puritan accounts of “the English massacre of the Pequots at Mystic in 1637,” in which Puritans attribute the settlers’ actions to retribution for “previous Pequot atrocities against the English.” Sedgwick changes this in the novel, indicating that the English attacked first

and unprovoked, a chronology that, according to Karcher, historians now corroborate. Maureen Tuthill, however, suggests that Sedgwick's contemporary white readers would "be slightly suspect" to a Native's perspective on the event. Tuthill argues that Sedgwick should have used Hope's character to "pin blame on the Puritans" if that was her intention, as Magawisca's telling lacks feeling: "...the tone is methodical, emotionless, punctuated slightly by the faint sounds of yelling and gunfire, the burning of huts and the images of Pequots throwing themselves into the fires. It is set in flashback mode—painful, but distant." See Carolyn L. Karcher, notes in *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* by Catharine Maria Sedgwick (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1998), 373–4n2. See Maureen Tuthill, "Land and the Narrative Site in Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*," *American Transcendental Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (2005): 100.

20. This troubling ending for the Pequots in *Hope Leslie* presents, as Hankins has observed, an example of the "Vanishing American" trope found in much nineteenth-century literature, a trope that depicts assimilation or exile as the only two options for Native Americans at this time. She claims this trope identifies one way that Sedgwick's novel demonstrates "inevitable conventionality" in the midst of its more progressive features. See Hankins, "The Voice of Nature," 168.

21. Citing "Magawisca's self-elected sacrifice on Everell's behalf," Ashley Reed maintains that the girl's actions reflect those of Jesus Christ. Just as Christianity holds that the innocent Christ chose to take God's wrath and die in the place of deserving sinners, Reed proposes that "Sedgwick casts Magawisca as a redeemer who voluntarily takes Everell's place and pays for the crimes of the white colonists, whose murder of Mononotto's son was the original sin that prompted this act of revenge." See Ashley Reed, *Heaven's Interpreters: Women Writers and Religious Agency in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 38.

22. Romero, *Home Fronts*, 26.

23. The fallen woman narrative by American writers emerges from beliefs rooted in late-eighteenth-century culture that prized young women's virtue as absolutely necessary for the new nation's success, as these soon-to-be mothers would raise the nation's male citizenry. A focus on women's education quickly branched out into a push to control women's sexuality, and out of this push, some writers and speakers began to employ seduction tales to warn young girls of the dangers of flirting and promiscuity. The traditional narrative, spotlighted in several pamphlets, speeches, and sentimental novels, generally presents a young woman, many times coquettish, who succumbs to the sexual advances of a handsome but often shallow man and becomes pregnant as a result. The man promptly abandons the woman who, separated from family and friends because of her fallenness, gives birth in the most abject circumstances and dies along with her child within days, sometimes moments, of the labor. Often these stories also feature a death-bed repentance by the fallen woman, as she expresses regret for not adhering to what parents and friends had taught her about purity and virtue. This general narrative formed the focus of so many early sentimental novels that, according to Cathy Davidson,

seduction in this era became “a metonymic reduction of the whole world in which women operated and were operated upon.” See Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 180.

24. Carolyn Karcher notes that Sedgwick chooses a line spoken by Rosalind from Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* (1623) for the epigraph to the chapter that reveals Roslin/Rosa’s true identity in *Hope Leslie*, connecting not only Roslin/Rosa’s names but also her masculine disguise to Shakespeare’s Rosalind, who dresses as a man to find her father. Later in this chapter, Sedgwick additionally links Rosa to Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (1623), as Gardiner, when writing his friend about Rosa’s weak disguise, quotes lines from *Twelfth Night* that address Viola, a woman who also ineffectually impersonates a male page. In addition to Rosa’s cross-dressing, both *Hope Leslie* and *The Linwoods* interestingly feature prison breaks that involve cross-dressing characters as well. See Karcher, “Notes,” 387nIII1, 389n7.

25. In Genesis 16, Sarai (eventually Sarah), the barren wife of Jewish patriarch Abram (eventually Abraham), tells her husband to sleep with Hagar in hopes that she (Sarai) might have children through her maid. This union results in a son, Ishmael, but when Sarah years later gives birth to son Isaac, Abraham forces Hagar to leave with Ishmael (Genesis 21). She runs out of water in the wilderness and believes they will both die, but God gives her water and promises to make Ishmael into his own nation. Both Gardiner and Rosa incorrectly recount details from this story, he claiming that Abraham’s “affections manifestly leaned to the side of Hagar” and she asserting that Hagar encountered “not one sign of God’s bounty” in the wilderness (339).

26. The woman Gardiner ushers below the ship’s decks turns out to be Fletcher’s spiteful housekeeper, Jennet, as the men Gardiner sends to kidnap Hope nab the wrong person (346–47).

27. Robert Daly, “Mischief, Insanity, Memetics, and Agency in *The Linwoods*; or, ‘Sixty Years Since’ in America,” in *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Lucinda L. Damon-Bach and Victoria Clements (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 148. Mary and Rosa demonstrate this freedom to a lesser degree than Bessie and Bet do, but their characters still travel in circumstances conventional women of their eras would not. Rosa’s character additionally speaks boldly against her seducer when he asks her to help him with his next sexual conquest, and she takes aggressive action by igniting the ship’s gunpowder when believing Hope in danger of Gardiner’s licentiousness.

28. Catharine Q. Forsa, “A Model Heart: Public Displays of Emotion in Sedgwick’s *A New-England Tale*,” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 61, no. 3 (2015): 429, <https://doi.org/10.1353/esq.2015.0013>. Susan K. Harris, “Introduction,” xviii. Philip Gould, “Catharine Sedgwick’s Cosmopolitan Nation,” *The New England Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (Jun 2005): 254, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30045525>.

29. Though various suitors pursued her, Sedgwick chose never to marry. Victoria Clements suggests that Crazy Bet represents “Sedgwick’s most radical vision of a woman

alone in the nineteenth century,” a social position that Sedgwick herself holds as an unmarried woman. “It seems equally reasonable,” Clements maintains, “to imagine that the exceptional presence of Crazy Bet in this first novel figures both Sedgwick’s enthusiasm for and apprehension about the challenges to prevailing cultural roles for women that were implied by her own choices—to remain unmarried and to raise her voice in fiction in the public sphere.” See Victoria Clements, “‘A Powerful and Thrilling Voice’: The Significance of Crazy Bet,” in *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Lucinda L. Damon-Bach and Victoria Clements (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 42, 49.

30. After Magawisca recounts the Mystic River massacre and Mononotto subsequently attacks the Fletcher home, Sedgwick interestingly juxtaposes the “voluntary exile” of the Puritans that she mentions earlier in the novel with the forced exile experienced by Mononotto and the Pequot remnant, representative of many other contemporary Native American experiences. In one breath she describes the Puritans as “an exiled and suffering people” who came to America “to open the forests to the sun-beam, and to the light of the Sun of Righteousness” and to civilize the land. Yet two pages later, she presents a mournful Mononotto who expresses something opposite to this vision, as he explains how the English “swept away” his people “like withered leaves before the wind,” observing, “there where our pleasant homes were clustered, is silence and darkness” (75–77).

31. John James Piatt, “Firelight Abroad,” in *Poems in Sunshine and Firelight* (Cincinnati: R. W. Carroll and Co., 1866), lines 16–19. Sarah Piatt, John’s wife and fellow poet, ironically wrote of the woman’s role at home in a much less sentimental and much more fraught way.

32. Ivy Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship: Politics and Affiliation in Early American Literature* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 165–66. Emily VanDette, “‘It Should Be a Family Thing’: Family, Nation, and Republicanism in Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *A New-England Tale* and *The Linwoods*,” *American Transcendental Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (2005): 58, 60. Charlene Avallone, “Catherine Sedgwick’s White Nation-Making: Historical Fiction and *The Linwoods*,” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 55, no. 2 (2009): 101, 109.

33. This does not mean the era failed to acknowledge women’s activities outside the home, as modern scholars have shown the many ways in which nineteenth-century women took part in and led various activist groups and movements while other women found it necessary to work to support their families.

34. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 170–71.

35. Doreen Massey, “Double Articulation,” in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, ed. Angelika Bammer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 116. While Massey speaks mainly of geographical places in her writing, such as cities or nations, I contend that these ideas also apply to smaller, individual home-spaces.

36. Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (1998): 600–1, 585, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2902710>. Jane Tompkins forwards a somewhat similar argument when asserting that domestic authors employ the act of submission as a means of power, for it represented a culturally recognized way within domestic ideology for women to possess and expand status.

37. As with much of this Revolutionary discourse on equality, Sedgwick’s Mr. Barclay speaks mainly of class equality, not necessarily equality between all people regardless of race or ethnicity. At the end of this chapter, I will address some of these tensions and limitations with Sedgwick’s notions of the ideal citizen and the new identity she forwards for women.

38. Nancy F. Sweet, “Dissent and the Daughter in *A New England Tale* and *Hobomok*,” *Legacy* 22, no. 2 (2005): 115, <https://doi.org/10.1353/leg.2005.0040>. Referencing *A New-England Tale*, Sweet contends that “Sedgwick gives a portrait of a virtuous dissent” in Jane Elton’s “calm reasoning, her dedication to Christian charity, her decorum, and her good judgment” (115).

39. While Magawisca performs arguably the most heroic (and un-domestic) act of *Hope Leslie* when intervening between her father and Everell at the “sacrifice-rock” and losing her arm in the process (95–97), Sedgwick appears more intent on extoling her as a “noble savage” than on forwarding her as an example of individualistic womanhood. In the novel’s preface, for instance, Sedgwick justifies her characterization of Native Americans by implying that the different living environments between settlers and Natives explain why settlers perceive Natives to be brutish. “The liberal philanthropist will not be offended by a representation which supposes that the elements of virtue and intellect are not withheld from any branch of the human family,” offers Sedgwick, “and the enlightened and accurate observer of human nature, will admit that the difference of character among the various races of the earth, arises mainly from difference of condition” (4). She then throughout the novel underscores Magawisca as the ideal of her race, repeatedly using the word “noble” to describe her, praising her “rare gifts of mind and other and outward beauties” (33), and demonstrating how living with the Fletchers only heightens her intelligence and compassion. Even the warrior-like act of saving Everell from execution seems meant to exalt her as the Native ideal rather than to underscore her own individual personhood. (For a comparison of Magawisca’s sacrifice to Jesus Christ’s, see Ashley Reed, “‘My Resolve Is the Feminine of My Father’s Oath’: Ritual Agency and Religious Language in the Early National Historical Novel,” in *Heaven’s Interpreters: Women Writers and Religious Agency in Nineteenth-Century America*, 25–52 [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020]).

40. These jail-breaks also highlight a couple of other themes running through the novel, such as a distinction between active and passive religion and the tension that exists between the good of an individual versus that of society. Maria Karafilis, for instance, maintains that “Hope’s elaborate machinations in her flouting of Puritan law and in her dangerous and involved schemes to free the Indian prisoners” demonstrate the tension

between “individual and communal goods,” one that will not dissipate on its own but that “must be contested, negotiated, and renegotiated within the territorial spaces of what will become the US nation.” See Maria Karafilis, “Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*: The Crisis Between Ethical Political Action and US Literary Nationalism in the New Republic,” *American Transcendental Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Dec. 1998): 331.

41. Isabella’s political change of heart that defies her father’s loyalist beliefs somewhat mirrors Sedgwick’s own turn from earlier-held Federalist sympathies. Mary Kelley, in the introduction to *The Power of Her Sympathy*, observes that, when young, Sedgwick supported the Federalist party as her father did but later eventually “discarded the political convictions of her father and came to support the more egalitarian democracy he had found so threatening.” See Kelley, introduction to *The Power of Her Sympathy: The Autobiography and Journal of Catharine Maria Sedgwick*, by Catharine Maria Sedgwick, ed. Mary Kelley (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 31.

42. Sedgwick underscores toward the novel’s conclusion the idea that people should acknowledge women’s minds as capable of complex political thought. “There are those who deem political subjects beyond the sphere of a woman’s, certainly a young woman’s mind,” she explains. “But if our young ladies were to give a portion of the time and interest they expend on dress, gossip, and light reading, to the comprehension of the constitution of their country, and its political institutions, would they be less interesting companions, less qualified mothers, or less amiable women! ‘But there are dangers in a woman’s adventuring beyond her customary path.’ There are; and better the chance of shipwreck on a voyage of high purpose, than expend life in paddling hither and thither on a shallow stream, to no purpose at all” (431).

43. This makes sense when considering Mary Kelley’s description of Sedgwick as “an individual who had constituted herself in relation to others.” Kelley surmises of the author, “In her autobiography, in her journal, in her fiction, in short, in all of her writings, she had insisted upon the signal importance of connection in her relations with others. Indeed, she had presented herself as entirely interwoven with others.” See Kelley, Intro to *The Power of Sympathy*, 27, 40.

44. I want to note, too, that several scholars also contend that Sedgwick uses these heroines and novels as a means to wrestle with ways to build and define the new American nation and to consider and suggest how women might fit into this new national plan. For instance, Susan K. Harris submits that Sedgwick’s writings “are elements in her overall goal to determine the most appropriate morals, manners, and social arrangements for the inhabitants of the new nation” and notes how writers such as Sedgwick corresponded “discourses on parenting” with “discourses with governance” to help understand citizens’ relationship to their governing leaders. Similarly, Emily VanDette maintains that the author depicts “the family as a microcosm of the new republican nation” to “explore the style of authority, as well as the political, religious, and social codes that make ‘good’ republican families, nations, and citizens,” and Marissa Carrere likewise argues that “Sedgwick treats the family and the state as intrinsically bound,” asserting that the author attempts to solve “the national narrative” using the family in her

works. Judith Fetterley avers that Sedgwick crafts Hope to “inhabit the same subject position as her brother” to “offer a different basis and hence an alternative model for women’s inclusion in the American republic,” and Nancy F. Sweet similarly contends that Sedgwick positions the “disobedient daughter-heroine” (for Sweet, in the form of Jane Elton) as a character “uniquely suited” to address the tension between individualism and obligation to the common good. And while Amanda Emerson likewise posits that, through her female characters, “Sedgwick points the way for later formulations of American equality based on a civic personhood in which sex has no relevance,” Charlene Avallone claims that, overall, Sedgwick “did not challenge the Democratic party’s limited vision of an American democracy that restricted ethnic and female citizenship.” For these arguments, see Susan K. Harris, “Introduction,” viii, xiv; VanDette, “‘It Should Be a Family Thing,’” 51–52; Marissa Carrere, “Theorizing Democratic Feelings, Disagreement, and the Temporal Child in Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *The Linwoods*,” *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 34, no. 1 (2017): 35, <https://doi.org/10.5250/legacy.34.1.0033>; Judith Fetterley, “‘My Sister! My Sister!’: The Rhetoric of Catharine Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*,” *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (1998): 496, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2902707>; Sweet, “Dissent and the Daughter,” 109; Amanda Emerson, “History, Memory, and the Echoes of Equivalence in Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*,” *Legacy* 24, no. 1 (2007): 26, <https://doi.org/10.1353/leg.2007.0006>; Charlene Avallone, “Catharine Sedgwick and the Circles of New York,” *Legacy* 23, no. 2 (2006): 121, <https://doi.org/10.1353/leg.2006.0000>.

45. Fetterley, “‘My Sister! My Sister!’” 492. Fetterley makes this comment to explain an attempt to avoid both the hagiographic tendencies of the first-phase recovery of nineteenth-century American women’s writing as well as the second phase that critiques those texts as racist, classicist, and the like.

46. Sedgwick, “Journal,” 135.

47. Tuthill, “Land and the Narrative Site,” 97, 109.

48. Fetterley, “‘My Sister! My Sister!’” 509, 513. Laurel Hankins suggests that the use of the “vanishing Indian” trope in historical novels such as *Hope Leslie* and James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* demonstrates “the cyclical nature of history” by implying that “American Indians will not disappear for the first time with Andrew Jackson’s 1830 Indian Removal Act; instead, they are disappearing yet again.” Hankins asserts that this repetition “presents Indian removal as a national character trait that has very little to do with modern progress and industry.” See Hankins, “The Voice of Nature,” 168. Of this common trope, Maria Karafilis submits that Sedgwick has Hope appropriate Magawisca’s Native Americanness toward the end of the novel so as to “nativize” her and “construct her as particularly ‘American,’” thus allowing her to assume Magawisca’s place in the New World while Magawisca fades into the west. Karafilis asserts that this “ironically makes Sedgwick’s egalitarian model of political behavior subordinate to the consolidation of a national literature.” See Karafilis, “Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*,” 339–42. In addition to discussing the

“vanishing Indian,” Karafilis and Fetterley, as well as Ivy Schweitzer, also expound Hope’s difficulty with accepting her sister Faith after Faith’s assimilation into the Pequot tribe. Regarding this, Schweitzer offers that “Hope’s obsession with redeeming her sister from Indian captivity has more to do with her own unexamined assumptions of cultural superiority and inferiority, her uninspected acceptance of ‘nature,’ and her inability to tolerate differences.” See Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship*, 168.

49. Sedgwick notably patterns Rose’s character off of Elizabeth Freeman, the Sedgwick’s servant who became the first African American slave to sue the state of Massachusetts for her freedom and win, yet in making her manumission essentially the result of a young white girl’s ingenuity, Sedgwick drains Freeman’s story of much of its power. Additionally, of Sedgwick’s hesitancy to discuss slavery in her writing, Charlene Avallone observes, “Catharine, in response to Lydia Maria Child’s gift of her *Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833), admitted her own reluctance to write on the ‘dark and fearful subject’ of slavery; she agreed to Child’s request for a contribution to an antislavery giftbook only on the condition that she not be regarded as ‘an advocate of the principles of the abolitionists,’ for many feared them as ‘foolish and doubtful zealots.’” See Avallone, “Catharine Sedgwick’s White Nation-Making,” 105.

50. Reed, *Heaven’s Interpreters*, 52.

51. Avallone, “Circles of New York,” 116, 117.

CHAPTER IV

1. Sedgwick, “Journal,” 151–52, 122–23, 127, 153. Later in life, Sedgwick exhibited regret not for remaining single but for not doing more to establish her own independent home, journaling on July 16, 1849, “I would advise every woman who can, by any effort, secure an independent home to have it. She will increase tenfold her means of doing good. She will avoid dangers and irritations and perchance save heartaches that the world never knows or suspects” (156). More than likely she counts her position as “second best” in her siblings’ affections as one, if not chief, of these heartaches.

2. Susan S. Williams, “Widening the World: Susan Warner, Her Readers, and the Assumption of Authorship,” *American Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (Dec. 1990): 566, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2713165>.

3. Anna B. Warner, *Susan Warner (“Elizabeth Wetherell”)* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1909), 176, 174, 177. Many times Anna Warner refrains from including a year with the dates she gives for her sister’s journal entries and letters, which makes following the timeline of events in her biography difficult at times. Subsequent references to Susan’s journal and correspondence will reflect this difficulty.

4. See Paula Bernat Bennett, ed., *Nineteenth-Century American Women Poets: An Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998); and Fanny Fern, *Ruth Hall: A*

Domestic Tale of the Present Time, 1855, ed. Susan Belasco (New York: Penguin Books, 1997). Regarding publishing for money, Bennett mentions a comment Helen Hunt Jackson directed to publisher James Field regarding her negotiations: “I never ‘write for money,’” Jackson stated, “I write for love, then after it is written I print for money.... ‘Cash is a vile article’—but there is one thing viler; and that is a purse without any cash in it” (169).

5. Anna Warner, *Susan Warner*, 263.

6. Nina Baym explains that though Susan’s and her sister Anna’s early novels proved quite successful, all the money from that success went to pay for their father’s debts and poor business decisions. Baym observes, “Their dream of making a quick fortune and living as ladies for the rest of their lives had evaporated by 1857, and the sisters resigned themselves, although with considerable bitterness at least on Susan’s part, to a lifetime of hard labor and looking after father.” See Baym, *Woman’s Fiction*, 142.

7. Anna Warner, *Susan Warner*, 254, 406, 413.

8. Sara E. Quay, “Homesickness in Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World*,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 39, <https://doi.org/10.2307/464346>.

9. Susan Warner, *The Wide, Wide World* (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2007), 15. Subsequent references to this edition will appear parenthetically within the text.

10. Other scholars have observed, as I have, the way in which Warner’s start to this novel displays tinges of her family’s own personal exile. Similar to Warner, Ellen Montgomery must move from a childhood home she loves to a more rural residence, and both Ellen’s and Warner’s exiles result from unsuccessful lawsuits involving their fathers. For others who note these similarities, see Quay, “Homesickness,” 39; and Isabelle White, “Anti-Individualism, Authority, and Identity: Susan Warner’s Contradictions in *The Wide, Wide World*,” *American Studies* 31, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 32, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40642387>. Jana L. Argersinger goes a bit further than this, positing a more pointed connection between Ellen and Warner in which Ellen’s struggles to obey and submit to authority reflect her author’s “deeply conflicted sense of herself as a female Christian writer and the dissenting current that runs beneath her sentimental narrative.” See Jana L. Argersinger, “Family Embraces: The Unholy Kiss and Authorial Relations in *The Wide, Wide World*,” *American Literature* 74, no. 2 (June 2002): 253–54, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00029831-74-2-251>. Veronica Stewart, however, takes issue with scholars who claim a direct correspondence between Ellen and Warner, contending, “Apart from Anna’s single-minded commentaries on her sister’s piety, nothing in her biography or her sister’s journal entries provides substantial evidence to conclude that Susan Warner lived by the unbearable restraints required of her heroine.” See Veronica Stewart, “Mothering a Female Saint: Susan Warner’s Dialogic Role in *The Wide, Wide World*,” *Essays in Literature* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 61.

11. Nina Baym, introduction to the 2nd edition of *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820–1870*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), ix.
12. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 165–66, 162–63.
13. Brandy Parris, “‘Feeling Right’: Domestic Emotional Labor in *The Wide, Wide World*,” *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 61, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 33–35, <https://doi.org/10.1353/arq.2005.0004>. Parris connects emotional labor to domesticity through her description of “feeling right” as an “elaborate emotional system . . . that structures daily household practices, both physical and emotional, and seeks to regulate interpersonal relations” (34).
14. Catharine O’Connell, “‘We Must Sorrow’: Silence, Suffering, and Sentimentality in Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World*,” *Studies in American Fiction* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 22, <https://doi.org/10.1353/saf.1997.0009>.
15. Quay, “Homesickness,” 45–46. In discussing the several items Mrs. Montgomery provides Ellen with prior to her move, for instance, Quay comments that, from this point on in the novel, these objects “remind Ellen of the values that define the home she is about to lose and the standards according to which the recuperation of that home must stand” (45).
16. Through the lens of domesticity, Tompkins contends, “The religion of the home does not situate heaven in the afterlife, but locates it in the here and now, offering its disciples the experience of domestic bliss.” She furthers this argument by referencing Mrs. Vawse, an old woman who befriends Ellen and who, in Tompkins’ view, demonstrates through her exemplary housekeeping as well as her “autonomy and freedom” that she really views her earthly home as a heaven on earth, despite claiming heaven as her true home. See Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 165–69. Sally Allen McNall likewise touches on the connection in domestic fiction between homemaking and the notion of making domestic space into a heaven on earth, remarking, “The line between home as locus of heavenly bliss and heaven itself, in fact, is often drawn very thinly.” See Sally Allen McNall, *Who Is In the House?: A Psychological Study of Two Centuries of Women’s Fiction in America, 1795 to the Present* (New York: Elsevier, 1981), 52.
17. In her book *Nineteenth-Century American Women Write Religion*, Mary McCartin Wearn exhorts readers of women’s writing to “challenge the notion that feminine religious experience of the era was homogeneous and bounded by a largely unexamined faith in a repressive mainstream Christianity.” Ashley Reed’s study of *The Wide, Wide World* agrees with this, maintaining that “critical accounts of sentimental literature have often mischaracterized the crucial ways in which questions of doctrine animated and informed nineteenth-century debates about women’s agency.” Reed then compares Warner’s novel with Augusta Jane Evans’ *Beulah*, arguing that while both novels come from a Christian perspective, Warner writes from a Calvinist angle while

Evans from an Armenian point of view. See Mary McCartin Wearn, *Nineteenth-Century American Women Write Religion: Lived Theologies and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 8; and Reed, *Heaven's Interpreters*, 55. Sharon Kim likewise avers that Warner writes her novel from a decidedly Calvinist slant. In her article "Puritan Realism: *The Wide, Wide World* and *Robinson Crusoe*" (2003), Kim discusses how "the Calvinist concept of natural depravity, deliberately and pointedly included, shapes [Warner's] presentation of character," in that Warner depicts her heroine Ellen as naturally sinful and unbelieving even as a young child. Kim also posits that "Warner's Calvinist belief in determinism" leads her to highlight Ellen's "dependence . . . upon a sovereign God" rather than focusing on Ellen's own resourcefulness. Later in her book *Literary Epiphany in the Novel* (2012), Kim identifies the uncommonness of Warner's Calvinist theological framework in her domestic text: "Because American sentimental fiction originated among liberal and Unitarian writers who used it as an anti-Calvinist weapon, this genre is overwhelmingly non-Calvinist, if not hostile to Calvinism." See Sharon Kim, "Puritan Realism: *The Wide, Wide World* and *Robinson Crusoe*," *American Literature* 75, no. 4 (Dec. 2003): 786–87, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00029831-75-4-783>; and Kim, *Literary Epiphany in the Novel, 1850–1950: Constellations of the Soul* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 50.

18. I have taken all Bible passages in this chapter from the English Standard Version.

19. Claudia Stokes additionally observes how "the widely held belief that the millennium was imminent" influenced many nineteenth-century Christians' thinking and living, as it kept heaven continually on their minds. Millennialism is a belief based on the figurative language in Revelation 20 that describes a period of time at the end of days during which Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years. Stokes explains that many people of the era harbored belief in postmillennialism, observing that "postmillennialists conceived of the millennium as the worldly perfection of human civilization" ushered in "through social reform and ministry" (Jonathan Edwards, in fact, held this view). While making homes to be like heaven on earth might be considered part of this plan, postmillennialists place the emphasis of ushering in the millennium more on Christians' efforts to evangelize others. See Claudia Stokes, *The Altar at Home: Sentimental Literature and Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 103, 109. On a related note, Kevin Pelletier discusses the way in which many antebellum fictions similarly reference the idea of God's impending judgment as a means to effect change; in this he comments on the way in which Alice talks with Ellen about the coming apocalypse "to encourage Ellen to cultivate a properly loving heart." See Kevin Pelletier, *Apocalyptic Sentimentalism: Love and Fear in U.S. Antebellum Literature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 6.

20. Sharon Kim, "Beyond the Men in Black: Jonathan Edwards and Nineteenth-Century Woman's Fiction," in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. by David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 138–39. John Carlos Rowe also mentions the likelihood of Dr. Skinner's theological influence on Warner's

writing, asserting that “it is not surprising that Susan’s fictional children John Dolan and Ellen Montgomery explicitly work out the child’s ‘common sense’ faith advocated by Skinner.” See John Carlos Rowe, “Religious Transnationalism in the American Renaissance: Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World*,” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 49, no. 1–3 (2003): 47, <https://doi.org/10.1353/esq.2010.0009>.

21. Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits; or, Christian Love as Manifested in the Heart and Life*, ed. by Tryon Edwards (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1852), 467–68.

22. Jonathan Edwards, “True Saints, When Absent from the Body, Are Present with the Lord,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, A.M.*, by Jonathan Edwards, ed. by Henry Rogers, (London: F. Westley and A. H. Davis, 1835), 2:27.

23. I am not alone in noting either a connection between *The Wide, Wide World* and Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* or, similar to this, an understanding that Ellen’s story presents a spiritual or moral journey. John Seelye, for instance, remarks that “Warner ... enfolds Bunyan’s book into her own as an intertextual staff to help Ellen on her way toward the Celestial City,” and LuElla D’Amico indicates that “Warner and Finley [author of the *Elsie Dinsmore* series] perceive their books as guidebooks, akin to *Pilgrim’s Progress*, aimed at a youthful audience who will inevitably take journeys, whether physical or symbolic.” Ashley Reed even extends the connection by arguing a connection between Bunyan and most woman’s fiction (using Baym’s categorization), including *The Wide, Wide World*. See John Seelye, *Jane Eyre’s American Daughters: From The Wide, Wide World to Anne of Green Gables, a Study of Marginalized Maidens and What They Mean* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 103; LuElla D’Amico, “The Journey to American Womanhood: Travel and Feminist Christian Rebellion in Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* and Martha Finley’s *Elsie’s Girlhood*,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.2019.0001>; and Reed, *Heaven’s Interpreters*, 58. Veronica Stewart also posits a connection between Bunyan and Warner but argues that Warner transposes Bunyan’s story in her novel, contending that Christian chooses to leave his family at the beginning of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, whereas Ellen’s separation from her parents comes at the hands of her father. See Stewart, “Mothering a Female Saint,” 63. Sharon Kim, on the other hand, aligns Warner’s text with Puritan realist works, such as Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and Puritan spiritual biographies, and Jane Tompkins avers that Warner’s novels “functioned in the same way as Biblical parables, or the pamphlets published by the American Tract Society.” See Sharon Kim, “Puritan Realism”; and Tompkins, *Sentimental Designs*, 149.

24. The verses Ellen’s mother inscribes are Proverbs 8:17 and Genesis 17:7.

25. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 168.

26. In her description of the nineteenth-century’s cult of the mother, Claire Chantell mentions that the era often attributed home-like characteristics such as love,

comfort and protection to mothers. She argues, however, that “Mrs. Montgomery exploits the mother-child bond for the purpose of religious instruction,” and yet her “sentimental maternalism” still falls short of properly educating Ellen. See Claire Chantell, “The Limits of the Mother at Home in *The Wide, Wide World* and *The Lamplighter*,” *Studies in American Fiction* 30, no. 2 (Autumn 2002): 132–33, <https://doi.org/10.1353/saf.2002.0009>.

27. Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America*, *Sexual Cultures: New Directions from the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies*, ed. José Esteban Muñoz and Ann Pellegrini (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 136.

28. “In Warner’s text,” observes Brandy Parris, “the housekeeper’s character is the character of the domestic space, and her emotional state becomes the home’s predominant emotional state. The home and homemaker become the site of production and circulation of dispositions for emotional expression or control.” See Parris, “Feeling Right,” 47.

29. The apostle Paul, who penned the biblical book of “Romans,” submits that God, in fact, uses nature to reveal himself to humans, explaining, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (Romans 1:19–20).

30. Sharon Kim argues that Warner uses Psalm 121:1–2 as a “structural element” within the novel, noting how Ellen at different times “looks to the hills” just prior to Warner introducing a character to comfort or help her. See Kim, “Puritan Realism,” 798–800. While I agree that these verses prove significant to the text, the mountain’s literal and figurative centrality paired with the several other allusions Warner makes to God as a rock lead me to claim the mountain itself as the more recurrent structural element in the novel.

31. Seelye, *Jane Eyre’s American Daughters*, 111.

32. John Seelye proposes another biblical allusion associated with the position of Mrs. Vawse’s house on the mountain, suggesting, “If Mrs. Vawse is happy in her ‘little house on the rock,’ it is not only because the mountain reminds her of ‘my Alps’ at home: the rock on which her house was built is also the rock of faith on which Christ proposed to build his church.” See Seelye, *Jane Eyre’s American Daughters*, 115.

33. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 184.

34. Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits*, 467–68.

35. John's comment references Revelation 6:12–14: "When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place."

36. Here John references Revelation 21:1: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." John's subsequent explanation to Ellen of the way in which the new heavens and earth will be better reference the next few verses of this passage in Revelation as well.

37. A Calvinist interpretation of these verses—Proverbs 8:17 and Genesis 17:7—would argue that God chooses certain people to be his followers and that their reciprocal obedience and affection proves that they are indeed members of God's elect (the doctrine of election). In Genesis, for instance, God calls Abram out from his people, chooses him to father a new nation, Israel, and promises to be their God throughout generations. He reiterates this promise a few times throughout Abram/Abraham's sojourn, such as in Genesis 17:7. Calvinists believe that scripture passages in the New Testament, such as Romans 4, teach that people who love and follow Jesus also take part in this promise as God's chosen ones. Move over, the conversation John has with Ellen regarding the mark on Christian's forehead displays this Calvinist perspective, for John's words imply that this forehead mark provided proof that God had chosen Christian to be his child. When Ellen asks John about the mark, for instance, he explains, "That is the mark of God's children—the change wrought in them by the Holy Spirit—the change that makes them different from others, and different from their old selves." When Ellen then asks if all Christians have it, he responds, "Certainly. None can be a Christian without it," and when she subsequently asks how she might know if she has the mark, he directs her to determine if her heart and actions accord with what she finds in the Bible and that, if they do, she "may hope that the Holy Spirit has changed you, and set his mark upon you" (417).

38. Sharon Kim explains how Ellen's new understanding of the Bible's teachings after this scene demonstrates how Puritans described their conversion experiences. "It was through the Bible," writes Kim, "not mystical visions or rituals, that the Puritan recognized the voice of God. When a verse became alive and its meaning deeply personal and clear, it showed that a person was spiritually alive, and such epiphanies were significant milestones or turning points." See Kim, "Puritan Realism," 802.

39. Jonathan Edwards espouses this belief in his sermon on heaven, asserting, "Every gem which death rudely tears away from us here, is a glorious jewel forever shining there; every Christian friend that goes before us from this world, is a ransomed spirit waiting to welcome us in heaven. There will be the infant of days that we have lost below, through grace to be found above; there the Christian father, and mother, and wife, and child, and friend, with whom we shall renew the holy fellowship of the saints, which was interrupted by death here, but shall be commenced again in the upper sanctuary, and then shall never end." See Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits*, 475.

40. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 181, 162; and O’Connell, “‘We Must Sorrow,’” 24.

41. Florian Coulmas, *Identity: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 90–92.

42. Edwards, “True Saints,” 29; and Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits*, 493.

43. For these bridegroom/bride references in the Bible, see John 3:28–29; Matthew 9:14–15; Mark 2:19–20; Luke 5:34–35; Matthew 25:1–13; Isaiah 62:5.

44. Paul repeats this teaching in Galatians 4:6–7.

45. Edwards, “True Saints,” 30.

46. “American Presbyterians were vigorous supporters of the Revolution and fervent nationalists,” observes John Carlos Rowe, “maintaining close ties with friends and families in Scotland, Ireland, and England, they contributed a particular transatlantic anti-colonial, anti-monarchical tone to the culture of the new U.S. nation.” See Rowe, “Religious Transnationalism,” 50.

47. Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century, and Kindred Papers Relating to the Sphere, Condition and Duties, of Woman*, ed. Arthur B. Fuller (Boston: John P. Jewett & Company, 1855), 36. Fuller employs a religious argument, in fact, when contending not only for women’s citizenship but also for that of black people as well: “As the friend of the negro assumes that one man cannot by right hold another in bondage, so should the friend of Woman assume that man cannot by right lay even well-meant restrictions on Woman” she maintains. “If the negro be a soul, if the woman be a soul, apparelled in flesh, to one Master only are they accountable. There is but one law for souls, and, if there is to be an interpreter of it, he must come not as man, or son of man, but as son of God” (37). Fuller also discusses here how America often denies women the right to own property, which corresponds to its denial of citizenship to women. The apostle Paul’s teachings likewise connect these two ideas, claiming that not only are Christians heirs of God but, as heirs, also citizens of heaven; these two statuses are inextricably linked.

48. Coulmas, *Identity*, 92–93.

49. Susan Warner, *The Wide, Wide World* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1987), 8.

50. *Ibid.*, 578.

CHAPTER V

1. Robert McGill, *The Treacherous Imagination: Intimacy, Ethics, and Autobiographical Fiction* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), 1–2. The story McGill relates here appears in “That Was Then” (1999), a short story by Hanif Kureishi. McGill recounts that the year prior to Kureishi publishing this story, an ex-partner had publicly accosted him for unfavorably fictionalizing their previous relationship in his novel *Intimacy*.

2. Veronica Stewart, for instance, discusses at length several differences between Warner’s own religious education and that of her heroine, Ellen. Stewart concludes that, because Warner apparently did not give much attention to her church’s religious examination, one which Stewart further identifies as lenient, “it is clear that Ellen Montgomery’s long, tedious training for spiritual conversion under the rigid scrutiny of authority figures in *WWW* does not emerge directly from Warner’s personal religious experiences.” See Stewart, “Mothering a Female Saint,” 62.

3. Jean Fagan Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2004), xv–xx.

4. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* (1861), ed. Kwame Anthony Appiah (New York: Modern Library, 2004), 126. Subsequent references to this edition will appear parenthetically in the text.

5. Harriet Jacobs to Amy Kirby Post, after December 27, 1852, and before February 14, 1853, in *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, vol. 1, ed. by Jean Fagan Yellin, et al. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 190–91. With all of Jacobs’ letters included in this dissertation, I have attempted to retain the spelling, punctuation, and spacing as they appear in Yellin et al.’s volume.

6. At the time during which she wrote *Incidents*, Jacobs lived and worked in the house of Nathaniel P. Willis and his wife, Cornelia Grinnell Willis, as a nurse to their children. Nathaniel, a writer himself, also makes an appearance as “Hyacinth Ellet” in his sister Fanny Fern’s autobiographical novel *Ruth Hall* (1854).

7. Jean Fagan Yellin, “Written by Herself: Harriet Jacobs’ Slave Narrative,” *American Literature* 53, no. 3 (Nov. 1981): 482, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2926234>.

8. Harriet Jacobs to Amy Kirby Post, April 4, 1853, in *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, vol. 1, ed. by Jean Fagan Yellin, et al. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 195.

9. Sterling Lecater Bland, Jr., *Voices of the Fugitives: Runaway Slave Stories and Their Fictions of Self-Creation*, Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies, no. 199 (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000), 39. Other scholars forward similar arguments with respect to Jacobs using a persona to tell her story. Barbara Rodríguez, for instance, suggests, “In *Incidents*, the gesture would conceal Jacobs’s identity as a fugitive

slave and protect those people who helped her escape from slavery. However, the mask, the pseudonym, would also counter Jacobs's efforts to write herself into being." See Rodríguez, *Autobiographical Inscriptions: Form, Personhood, and the American Writer of Color*, W.E.B. Du Bois Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5. "Through Brent," maintains Miranda A. Green-Barteet, "Jacobs is able to separate herself, both physically and emotionally, from the very personal elements of her narrative." Green-Barteet further explains that, while Jacobs' culture would deem her descriptions of sexual assault inappropriate for a book, "by writing as Brent, Jacobs herself has not acted inappropriately;" the persona shields her from the censure she fears. See Green-Barteet, "'The Loophole of Retreat': Interstitial Spaces in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," *South Central Review* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 66, <https://doi.org/10.1353/scr.2013.0016>.

10. For just a few studies about literacy in *Incidents*, see Carla Kaplan, *The Erotics of Talk: Women's Writing and Feminist Paradigms*, 47–68 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Martha J. Cutter, "Dismantling 'The Master's House': Critical Literacy in Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," *Callaloo* 19, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 209–225, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3299351>; Jill LeRoy-Frazier, "'Reader, my story ends with freedom': Literacy, Authorship, and Gender in Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," *Obsidian III: Literature in the African Diaspora* 5, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2004): 152–61, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44511745>; and Daneen Wardrop, "'I Stuck the Gimlet in and Waited for Evening': Writing and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 49, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 209–29, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tsl.2007.0017>.

11. Piatt, "Firelight Abroad," lines 21–26.

12. Jacobs does not record the following in Brent's narrative, but Joy Viveros' note on the text indicates that the year prior to the death of her mother's mistress, Jacobs' father Daniel had come under the authority of his mistress's husband, who refused to honor his father-in-law's will which stipulated that Daniel be allowed to hire his work out to purchase his freedom. He instead forced Daniel back to the plantation, where he died two years later. See Jacobs, *Incidents*, 389 (n 4).

13. In regard to Jacobs' narrative, Katherine McKittrick identifies the black woman's body as a geography that is conquered by the white oppressor, that the black woman's body itself becomes colonized. "Once the racial-sexual body is territorialized," McKittrick contends, "it is marked as decipherable and knowable—as subordinate, inhuman, rape-able, deviant, procreative, placeless." See Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 45.

14. Saidiya Hartman notes similarities, in fact, between Brent's story and the conventional nineteenth-century fallen woman narrative, in which a man seduces a woman without any intention to marry her, sometimes providing a residence for her as a

“kept woman,” and then abandons her after he fulfills his lust. Hartman argues that Brent uses these similarities to her advantage, highlighting how slavery twists even these dark stories: “*Incidents* makes use of seduction and recasts it by emphasizing the degradations of enslavement, the perverse domesticity of the paternal institution, and the violence enacted on the captive body within an arena purportedly defined by ties of sentiment, mutual affection, and interest.” See Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 103.

15. Hartman asserts that Brent’s “deliberate calculation” must be understood within “the context of domination,” that it does not imply “equality or the absence of constraint” but represents a lesser-of-evils choice that carries with it “possible gains ... within the context of domination.” See Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 104.

16. Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jaby Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986): 23, 25. In this lecture, Foucault outlines six basic principles of heterotopias, all of which Brent’s garret reflects in one way or another.

17. William Merrill Decker, *Geographies of Flight: Phillis Wheatley to Octavia Butler* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 97–98.

18. Maria Holmgren Troy argues that the paradoxical scene in which Brent’s grandmother invites two pro-slavery men to Christmas dinner while Brent maintains her concealment just feet away—the “fugitive slave hidden within middle-class comfort”—exposes how antithetical America’s authorization of slavery is. “This scene,” Troy avers, “can also be said to chronotopically flesh out, and sum up, Jacobs’s scathing critique of antebellum American society: the impossible contradiction of the existence of slavery in an allegedly progressive, enlightened, democratic society.” See Maria Holmgren Troy, “Chronotopes in Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*,” *African American Review* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 30, <https://doi.org/10.1353/afa.2016.0006>. For other extended studies of Brent’s garret space, see McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*; Green-Bartet, ““The Loophole of Retreat;”” and Caitlin O’Neill, ““The Shape of Mystery’: The Visionary Resonance of Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*,” *The Journal of American Culture* 41, no. 1 (March 2018): 56–67.

19. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 169.

20. LeRoy-Frazier, ““Reader, my story ends with freedom,”” 154.

21. Marilyn C. Wesley, *Secret Journeys: The Trope of Women’s Travel in American Literature*, SUNY Series in Feminist Criticism and Theory (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 57; Wardrop, ““I Stuck the Gimlet in,”” 218; and Kaplan, *The Erotics of Talk*, 56.

22. Martha Cutter references the fact that Flint rewrites the letter when presenting it to Brent’s grandmother, commenting that Brent “succeeds in her practical aim” with

the letter but “does not succeed in her discursive aim—she does not gain control of her voice, or of her representation of herself. For although Flint believes her original letter, he still rewrites it, coopting her voice.” Brent, though, seems not to mind this cooptation, as she finds humor in Flint's performance, remarking, “This was as good as a comedy to me, who had heard it all” (282). See Cutter, “Dismantling ‘The Master’s House,’” 217.

23. Harriet Jacobs to Amy Kirby Post, March 1854, in *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, vol. 1, ed. by Jean Fagan Yellin, et al. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 213.

24. Harriet Jacobs to Amy Kirby Post, after December 27, 1852, and before February 14, 1853, 191.

25. Anne Bradford Warner, “Harriet Jacobs at Home in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*,” *Southern Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2008): 31-32; Yellin, “Written by Herself,” 482. Comparing Jacobs’ text with Willis’, Warner adds that Jacobs’ *Incidents* “delivers a revisionist portrait of her southern home, against the popular sentimental sketches of the ‘extended’ southern family,” such as Willis wrote (33).

26. Regarding similarities between Brent’s Southern-garret and Northern-attic writing situations, William Merrill Decker also interestingly submits, “The concealment she adopts in her garret refuge extends to the moment in which she inscribes her narrative: her determination to leave her reader ignorant as to her precise whereabouts in the North replicates the ways in which she eludes Dr. Flint’s efforts to map her movements and fix her location.” See Decker, *Geographies of Flight*, 107.

27. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 27.

28. William Cowper, “The Task: The Winter Evening,” Book IV, 1785, in *The Poetical Works of William Cowper* (Halifax: Milner and Sowerby, 1864), 243, lines 88-90.

29. bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), xvii-xviii.

30. hooks alludes to the subversiveness of such a surveilling black narrative when she explains, “Black slaves, and later manumitted servants, could be brutally punished for looking, for appearing to observe the whites they were serving, as only a subject can observe or see. To be fully an object then was to lack the capacity to see or recognize reality.” She later adds, “To look directly was an assertion of subjectivity, equality.” See bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 93.

31. Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 51.

32. Mark Rifkin argues that Brent portrays the Fugitive Slave Law as “an attack on black households” and that casts them as “expendable” and “national interests as de facto white.” He concludes, “*Incidents*, then, alerts the reader to the need for a substantive national commitment to combatting the white supremacist understanding of national well-being as consonant with the destruction of black communities.” See Mark Rifkin, “‘A Home Made Sacred by Protecting Laws’: Black Activist Homemaking and Geographies of Citizenship in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2 (2007): 89, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2007-003>.

33. In addition to all that she writes, Brent’s very reality as a fugitive slave who writes the story of her own escape for a primarily white readership stands as powerful physical proof of the Mason-Dixon line’s porousness.

34. Margo Culley notes a connection between these sentimental characteristics and autobiography: “One feature that distinguishes autobiography from fiction is the persistence, indeed the insistence, with which autobiography talks explicitly about itself. Forewords, afterwords, and a variety of direct addresses to the reader within the texts—all established conventions of nineteenth-century fiction—persist in autobiography long after they have been abandoned in most novels.” See Culley, “What a Piece of Work Is ‘Woman’! An Introduction,” in *American Women’s Autobiography: Fea(s)ts of Memory*, ed. Margo Culley, Wisconsin Studies in American Autobiography (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 18.

35. Bland, *Voices of the Fugitives*, 130; Rodríguez, *Autobiographical Inscriptions*, 70; and Laura Laffrado, *Uncommon Women: Gender and Representation in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Women’s Writing* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2009), 135.

36. Sidonie Smith, “Resisting the Gaze of Embodiment: Women’s Autobiography in the Nineteenth Century,” in *American Women’s Autobiography: Fea(s)ts of Memory*, ed. Margo Culley, Wisconsin Studies in American Autobiography (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 99; and Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, 49.

37. Of homes such as Brent describes, bell hooks submits, “Historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension. Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one’s homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world.” See hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 42.

38. Regarding the significance of property ownership at this time, bell hooks explains the way in which land ownership represented an important heritage for nineteenth-century black farmers, indicating that property ownership cultivated a sense of belonging by tying the owner to the land in an intimate relationship, one that bespeaks citizenship in that land. See hooks, *Belonging*, 41–52.

39. A couple of other scholars also connect Brent's desire for a home to her grandmother's house, but these arguments mainly focus on the ownership aspect of it and the freedoms her grandmother enjoyed because of that. Carla Kaplan, for instance, contends that "Brent passionately describes the pain of exclusion from this rights-based conception of freedom. . . . She is excluded from possessive individualism. . . . A home of Brent's own, then, might seem to provide just the access to personhood—through possession and possessive individualism—which national law . . . would otherwise deny." See Kaplan, *The Erotics of Talk*, 48–49. Mark Rifkin posits that home ownership would demonstrate the government's commitment to protecting black communities: "Jacobs explores the ways that the possession of, and protection within, one's own domestic space indexes a national commitment to one's welfare as an America, reciprocally demonstrating how white wealth as coalesced in homes depends on direct and indirect government support for the expropriation and exploitation of African Americans." See Rifkin, "A Home Made Sacred," 75.

40. Saidiya V. Hartman suggests that Jacobs uses the sentimental genre to soothe readers into her text only to expose the racism that undergirded the moral authority forwarded in their nineteenth-century sentimentality. "Conforming to the reader's desires," offers Hartman, "includes pandering to their sense of moral superiority only to topple the pedestal on which they stand and unmooring them in the storm of events." See Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 107.

41. Margaret Fuller, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, uses this same irony regarding the term "civilized" when arguing for women's equality and citizenship: "I refer to the degradation of a large portion of women into the sold and polluted slaves of men, and the daring with which the legislator and man of the world lifts his head beneath the heavens, and says, 'This must be; it cannot be helped; it is a necessary accompaniment of *civilization*.'" She opens the next paragraph, "So speaks the *citizen*." See Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 132.

42. Jacobs points out this irony in some of her other writings as well. In her first publication, for instance, a letter to the editor of the *New York Daily Times*, she remarks, "Would that I had one spark from her [speaking of Stowe] store house of genius and talent I would tell you of my own sufferings—I would tell you of wrongs that Hungary has never inflicted, nor England ever dreamed of in this free country where all nations fly for liberty, equal rights and protection under your stripes and stars. It should be stripes and scars." See Jacobs, "Letter from a Fugitive Slave," in *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, vol. 1, edited by Jean Fagan Yellin, et al. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 200. We also see her indignation and clever sarcasm in a letter she sends to Amy Post around May 1853; here she refers to Harriet Beecher Stowe's refusal

to allow Jacobs' daughter Louisa to accompany her on a trip to Europe for fear that Louisa would not be able to handle the attention Europeans would show her. "think dear Amy," Jacobs comments, "that a list to Stafford House would spoil me as Mrs Stowe thinks peting is more than my race can bear weell what a pity we poor black cant have the firmness and stability of character that you white people have." See Harriet Jacobs to Amy Post, ca. May 1853, in *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, vol. 1, edited by Jean Fagan Yellin, et al. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 195–96.

43. While here Jacobs calls on "ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, ... whose homes are protected by the law" (191), she possibly makes this statement mainly to evoke a contrast between her readers and herself that highlights the injustice of her situation. Her ethnography of both Southern and Northern white homes suggests she would likely have known that laws did little to protect the white women in them.

44. Brent's challenging of the fallen woman trope mirrors that of other mid to late-nineteenth-century writers who call out its hypocrisy. Frances E. W. Harper, for instance, in her poem "A Double Standard," addresses the hypocrisy of society shunning a seduced woman while her male seducer retains his social status and opportunity to thrive. Julia Ward Howe's poem "Outside the Party" illustrates this hypocrisy in its portrayal of a fallen woman standing in the cold, holding her baby, looking through a window at the marriage party of her seducer and his new bride. Additionally, writers such as Theodore Dreiser and Stephen Crane further challenge the trope with characters like Carrie Meeber (*Sister Carrie*, 1900), Jennie Gerhardt (*Jennie Gerhardt*, 1911), and Maggie Johnson (*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, 1893). See Frances E. W. Harper, "A Double Standard," in *Nineteenth-Century American Women Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Paula Bernat Bennett, Blackwell Anthologies (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 149-151; Julia Ward Howe, "Outside the Party," *Major Voices: 19th Century American Women's Poetry*, ed. Shira Wolosky (Las Vegas: AmazonEncore, 2003), 330-331.

45. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 171.

46. Culley, "What a Piece of Work Is 'Woman,'" 8.

47. Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 33–34.

48. Lydia Maria Child, Introduction by the Editor, in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, 1861, by Harriet Jacobs, ed. Kwame Anthony Appiah (New York: Modern Library, 2004), 128.

49. Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, xv.

50. hooks, *Yearning*, 152.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

1. Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, *Pembroke: A Novel*, 1893, ed. Charles Johanningsmeier (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 1. Subsequent references to this edition will appear parenthetically in the text.

2. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84. Bakhtin theorizes, “In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope” (84). In *Pembroke*, Barney’s unfinished house images this idea, as the house as a time-marker “fuses” space and time together into a “concrete whole.”

3. The novel concludes with this sentence: “And Barney entered the house with his old sweet-heart and his old self” (330). The final two words here leave the progressiveness of Barney’s healing a bit up for debate, as “his old self” could reference the persistence of his old, stubborn will. I argue, though, that because Freeman pictures Barney as wrestling with his will on his way to Charlotte’s house and that he stands before the Barnards with the “noble bearing which comes from humility itself when it has fairly triumphed” (329), Barney appears to have conquered the obstinance that kept him stagnant, at least for the time being. “His old self” likely refers instead to the state he exhibits at the novel’s beginning: in love with Charlotte and looking forward to living in their finished house together.

4. Leah Blatt Glasser also attaches political significance to Cephas and Barney’s argument, connecting it to women’s disenfranchisement. “In essence,” she contends, “the male political system that denies women the right to vote is reflected in the competitive argument between Cephas and Barnabas which allows no room for the values of women.” See Glasser, *In a Closet Hidden: The Life and Work of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 102. In this reading, Charlotte’s unconventional act of staying with Barney might also be implicitly forwarding an argument for women’s enfranchisement and inclusion in governmental positions.

5. Emily Matchar, *Homeward Bound: Why Women Are Embracing the New Domesticity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 2.

6. Valerie Padilla Carroll, “The Radical Possibilities of New (Feminist, Environmentalist) Domesticity: Housewifery as an Altermodernity Project,” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 55, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isw013>.

7. *Ibid.*, 55.

8. Emily Matchar, "The New Domesticity: Fun, Empowering or a Step Back for American Women?" *Washington Post*, November 25, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-new-domesticity-fun-empowering-or-a-step-back-for-american-women/2011/11/18/gIQAqkg1vN_story.html.

9. Carroll, "The Radical Possibilities," 56, 58.

10. Matchar, "The New Domesticity."

11. Stéphanie Genz, "I Am Not a Housewife, but...': Postfeminism and the Revival of Domesticity," in *Feminism, Domesticity and Popular Culture*, ed. Stacy Gillis and Joanne Hollows (New York: Routledge, 2009), 49.

12. Matchar, *Homeward Bound*, 8.

13. Genz proposes a solution to the either/or binary thinking surrounding the new domesticity, suggesting we consider it within a postfeminist frame that allows for flexibility and changeability when interpreting domesticity. Genz chooses postfeminism for this because its "changeable life indicates a move away from binaries, including the dualistic patterns of (male) power and (female) victimization on which much feminist thought and politics are built." See Genz, "I Am Not a Housewife," 53. Some challenge this both/and way of thinking, though, as Genz explains how many women still argue that "having it all"—both career and homemaking—remains an impossibility.

14. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 170.

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