TRAVELING DOMESTICALLY: BRITISH ROMANTIC WOMEN WRITERS
CULTIVATING HOME AND NATION

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“Never go on trips with anyone you do not love.”—Ernest Hemingway

For BWL and SJB, who are my best and most treasured traveling companions. Thanks for making my life, and especially this journey, a much less rocky, and much more enjoyable, road. I couldn’t have made it without you.
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The tension and conflict at the heart of Romantic women’s writing about travel stem from the evolution of one Latin word: *domesticus*. The first definition defines a local sense of home, while the second definition expands that understanding to a broader, more global home. The disjunctions between the private domestic and the public domestic worlds created a complex relationship for women. The socially accepted position of wife and mother did, as Anne Mellor argues, offer a platform for women to enter the public debates of the time; however, I believe my argument begins where Anne Mellor’s ends. Instead of adopting Mellor’s assumptions about the relative comfort women writers felt with the disjunctions between the public and the private aspects of “domestic,” I argue that the tension between these two polar opposites of “domestic” life compelled women writers to find opportunities to negotiate and define their roles within both, often resulting in the establishment of an organic, cyclical relationship between the two that did not require women to be rooted in the home.
One means by which women writers defined this relationship was through writing about travel. In a very literal sense, writing about travel offered women authors the opportunity to examine what “home” should be. Travel was a comfortable, but complex, subject matter for Romantic writers because of its ever-fluctuating and engagingly complex connection to art, culture, and everyday British life. The perhaps necessary generic and chronological limitations of these otherwise foundational works on female travel writing have led us to ignore the many and varied depictions of travel permeating the poetry, novels, and life-writing of the women of the Romantic era. It is my contention that to elide these perhaps less traditional travel descriptions is to ignore the pervasiveness of the cultural impulse to interrogate travel, and its connection to questions of ‘home.’

The women writers I study, including Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Wollstonecraft, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Jane Austen, and Ann Radcliffe among others, felt compelled to incorporate depictions of travel in diverse and expansive ways, utilizing a cross-section of genres. By examining these works, with a focus on how these female writers used the trope and experience of travel, we see the commonalities between these female contemporaries as they negotiate their relationship with the world around them. In these works, we see female authors closely scrutinizing, and unintentionally replicating, the tension inherent in the term “domestic” as they explore the power of both physical and imaginative travel. As they do, they begin to narrate their own journey as female authors—a perilous, powerful, and often liberating tale of social aspiration and limitation, of negotiation and alienation, of imagination and emancipation. Their tales of travel,
metaphorical or literal, self-reflexively narrate their own quest for social and intellectual mobility.

Travel, as defined by these women writers, is education through activity. Literary depictions of travel, then, become reflections and extensions of this edifying process. Rather than merely using travel as a means to evade cultural restrictions, the women I study travel (or narrate travel) as a means of recreating, critiquing, building, disciplining, redefining, and educating their home through the narratives they create. Their travel expands our understanding of travel, from physical mobility to intellectual journeys, and helps us to better understand how Romantic women writers engaged with the public debates and private expectations that presented equal demands on them, asserting the organic relationship between the home and the nation.
The tension and conflict at the heart of Romantic women’s writing about travel stem from the evolution of one Latin word: domesticus. The complex, and seemingly contradictory, definitions of this term led many writers, and many scholars commenting on their work, to try to define their relationship to both home and nation. By the middle of the 14th century, the word domestic was defined as belonging to the country or nation. Despite this early usage, by the early 15th century, Shakespeare had solidified our most common understanding of the term domestic as associated to or belonging to the home and family.\(^1\) These definitions remained in common usage throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, with the last recorded examples of both senses cited by the O.E.D. coming from two pillars of Victorian letters, Dickens and Macaulay.\(^2\) Many readers, even now, remain comfortably oblivious to the abiding tension inherent in these long-standing definitions.

The subtle tension between the two definitions of these terms highlights the heart of what came to be known as The Woman Question in the Victorian era. On the surface, the two definitions seem connected and similar—both focus on the connection to ‘home.’ The first definition defines a local sense of home, while the second definition expands that understanding to a broader, more global home. The liberal use of that

\(^1\) The O.E.D. highlights the preeminence of this home-based definition (“of or belonging to the home, house, or household; pertaining to one’s place of residence or family affairs; household, home, ‘family’) by placing it before the nation-focused definition (“of or pertaining to one’s own country or nation; not foreign, internal, inland, ‘home’).

\(^2\) The works cited by the O.E.D. are certainly not written by obscure figures. For the first, home-based definition, the O.E.D. lists figures like Goldsmith (The Traveller), Issac D’Israeli (Commentaries on the Life and Reign of Charles the First), and Dickens (Barnaby Rudge). The second, nation-focused definition cites Thomas Macaulay’s 1848 History of England.
term, “home,” creates tension for women who, though intimately associated with the home and household, were often denied access to discussions, debates, and decisions inherent to the development of the nation. One of the subordinate definitions of domestic highlights a painful irony for women. Though something “domestic” could be “made at home or in the country” or “home-grown,” those that do the growing have no real access to the world into which they send the products of their labor, whether those were dresses or children.

Anne Mellor has beautifully documented the complexities of a woman’s relationship to her home and her nation, and specifically the way that women writers attempted to define this relationship in writing. Debunking the idea that women were excluded completely from the public sphere, she argues in *Mothers of the Nation* that, in the Romantic era, women actively participated in “publish[ing] their free and reasoned opinions on an enormous range of topics, from the French Revolution and the abolitionist campaigns against the slave trade through doctrinal religious issues and methods of education to the economic management both of individual household and the state” (2-3). She also takes especial care to draw attention to the “erroneous” idea of a “clear distinction in historical practice between a realm of public, exclusively male activities and a realm of private, exclusively female activities” (7). She calls upon scholars to embrace a “more nuanced and flexible paradigm that foregrounds the complex intersection of class, religious, racial, and gender differences in this historical period” (7), beginning with the idea that, by “represent[ing] the interest of women, children, and the family, [women writers] saw themselves as peculiarly responsible for defining the future direction of public policy and social reform” (9). Such responsibility
and representation ultimately led to their “enormous—and hitherto largely uncredited impact on the formation of public opinion between 1780 and 1830” (11) specifically through their roles as mothers of the nation. In Mellor’s estimation, women writers took these socially acceptable roles as mothers, inevitably involving the work of moral and social instruction, and extended them from the local to the global level.

While brilliant and groundbreaking in its recognition of the complex, but not binary, relationship of women to the public and private spheres, Mellor assumes a degree of acceptance and comfort for these women in their position as figureheads of the private domestic world. While she certainly establishes well the reality that Romantic women writers often engaged in debates related to national and international issues, Mellor argues that they did so primarily through their roles as wives and mothers. Their access to these debates came through their relationship to their families; their expertise related to the issues they comment on, and their ultimate success in those discussions, came not because of their position as citizens but only because of roles anchored in the home. While I certainly agree that embracing the socially accepted position of wife and mother as a platform allowed women writers a subtle and surprisingly persuasive power, to assume that women were comfortable with the disjunctions between the private domestic and the public domestic world seems unrealistic.

I believe my argument begins where Anne Mellor’s ends. Instead of adopting Mellor’s assumptions about the relative comfort women writers felt with such disjunctions, I argue that the tension between these two polar opposites of “domestic” life compelled women writers to find opportunities to negotiate and define their roles
within both, often resulting in the establishment of an organic, cyclical relationship between the two that did not require women to be rooted in the home. In a very literal sense, writing about travel offered women authors the opportunity to examine what “home” should be. As Ian Ousby argues, “travel . . . forces us to measure the unfamiliar by reference to the familiar: to define the experience of being abroad, we need a concept of ‘home’” (2). Thus, travel offered women a means of easily accessing a crucial set of ideological debates. Karen Lawrence, in *Penelope Voyages*, sees the potential of travel for women writers, as “the trope of travel—whether in its incarnations as exile or adventure, tourism or exploration—provides a particularly fertile imaginative field for narrative representations of women’s historical and personal agency” (20).

Some critics, like Lawrence, have focused exclusively on the narratives of physical travel; others, like Elizabeth Bohls, have balanced their study of travel narratives with novels that depict the aesthetics of the travel experience.

The perhaps necessary generic and chronological limitations of these otherwise foundational works on female travel writing have led us to overlook the many and varied depictions of travel permeating the poetry, novels, and life-writing of the women of the Romantic era. To elide these perhaps less traditional travel descriptions is to ignore the pervasiveness of the cultural impulse to interrogate travel, and its connection to questions of ‘home.’ Women writers felt compelled to incorporate depictions of travel in diverse and expansive, utilizing a cross-section of genres. Examining these works, with a focus on how these female writers used the trope and experience of travel, allows us to see the commonalities between these female contemporaries. My work attempts to do just that. In these works, we see female authors closely scrutinizing, and
unintentionally replicating, the tension inherent in the term “domestic” as they explore
the power of both physical and imaginative travel. As they do, they begin to narrate
their own journey as female authors—a perilous, powerful, and often liberating tale of
social aspiration and limitation, of negotiation and alienation, of imagination and
emancipation. Their tales of travel, metaphorical or literal, self-reflexively narrate their
own quest for social and intellectual mobility.

Travel was a comfortable, but complex, subject matter for Romantic writers
because of its ever-fluctuating and engagingly complex connection to art, culture, and
everyday British life. Some British citizens had been participating in the Grand Tour for
centuries, an experience that gave upper-class travelers\(^3\) the opportunity to travel on
the Continent as a means of furthering their education. By the end of the 18\(^{th}\) century, a
host of international political issues, highlighted by the French Revolution, as well as
economic and political changes in England, led to the development of a focus on
domestic tourism.\(^4\) Malcolm Andrews, in his *The Search for the Picturesque*, traces the
connection between 18\(^{th}\) century artistic trends and the development of picturesque
tourism, a practice that was both elite and grounded in English nationalism. Baedecker
published the first British travel guidebook, as we now define them, in 1829, but that
work was preceded by Thomas Gilpin’s *Observations on the River Wye*, published in
1782, and Thomas West’s *A Guide to the Lakes, in Cumberland, Westmorland, and*

\(^3\) While I would argue that this traditional practice was primarily offered to men, I cannot ignore the
number of upper-class women who traveled on the Continent, some of whom published well-received
travel narratives. The practice of including a “Grand Tour” as a capstone to education, however, was
often limited to men of means.

\(^4\) Robin Jarvis argues that these changes included “a number of very complex developments in the
eighteenth century, including improved communications and increasing inter-regional trade, the drive to
open up the country to the spirit of rational enquiry, the transformation and extension of the cultivated
landscape through the enclosure movement, and the accompanying change in attitudes to ‘wild’ nature”
(17).
Lancashire, published in 1796. Gilpin is credited with establishing "the vogue for Picturesque tourism in Britain" by providing a list of scenic viewpoints that would allow travelers to experience the most elegant and picturesque prospects and inviting them to see nature in a different way entirely (Andrews 86). In this practice, which sought to take aesthetic theories of art and literature and apply them to the nature they encountered, travelers undertook “domestic tours in search of the home-grown Picturesque” (10). These travelers often employed specific tools to appreciate and recreate these picturesque landscapes, including the Claude glass and a wide variety of sketchbooks and journals. These travel developments were paralleled by an “age of Pedestrianism,” which began in the mid 18th century but by 1810 became as normal and popular as typical horse-driven tours.  

5 See Malcolm Andrews’s *The Search for the Picturesque* and James Buzard’s *The Beaten Track* for an excellent overview of tourist activities and history in England during this time.  

6 Andrews argues that, by the end of the 18th century, the Picturesque taste developed and adapted, making it much more complex than the standard definition, used even now by the O.E.D., of “having the elements or qualities of a picture.” He traces a spectrum of response to a sight, like a ruin, to highlight the complexity of this picturesque taste. This spectrum includes five possible responses: a “sentimental” response; an “antiquarian” response, in which the imagination would rebuild the scene to its former glory; an “aesthetic” response that focuses on the “pleasures of form and colouring” (45); a “moral” response, which would connect the ruin to a larger moral statement, such as the “vanity of Human Wishes” (45); or a “political” response, which would see the ruin as a “potent emblem of liberation from Gothic feudalism” or the “banishment from England of Popish ‘superstition’” (46). Andrews’s discussion of this spectrum of complex Picturesque taste can be found in Chapter 3, “The Evolution of Picturesque Taste.”  

7 The Claude glass, according to Andrews, could refer to two different touring tools: a tool that miniaturized the landscape, eliminating the fine details, or to colored glasses that tinted the landscape, making them similar to the work of Claude Lorrain, for whom the glass was named. While most scholars of Romantic landscapes, whether literary or artistic, are familiar with the colored glasses, Andrews describes the additional tool in more detail: “The Claude Glass was an optical device which took various forms, of which perhaps Thomas Gray’s was the most typical: ‘a Plano-convex mirror of about four inches diameter on a black foil, and bound up like a pocket-book.’ The convexity miniaturised the reflected landscape. Except in the foreground, details were largely lost, and something like a beau ideal emerged, freed from particularities and deformities. Gilpin felt that the mirror was particularly advantageous where the painter was interested in foregrounds, since the convexity sometimes shrunk distances out of sight” (68).  

8 See Anne Wallace and Robin Jarvis for expansive discussions of pedestrianism in the Romantic era.
As Judith Adler argues, this shift to scenic tourism corresponds to a shift in travel practice, in which “travelers were less and less expected to record and communicate their observations in an emotionally detached, impersonal manner. Experiences of beauty and sublimity, sought through the sense of sight, were valued for their spiritual significance to the individuals who cultivated them” (“Origins of Sightseeing” 22). For Romantic travel writers, like their contemporaries engaged in poetry, connection and engagement became key to the successful communication of their experiences. Travel literature, because of this shift, came to represent much more than an objective description of a piece of land. Carole Fabricant has argued, in fact, that the canon of literature related to travel “crystalliz[es] the rituals and assumptions central to the period’s great drama of limited social mobility within a framework of social stability, inevitably revolving around the question of who has access to land and on what terms” (255). Depictions of travel in the literature of the Romantic era reflect the social, economic, political, and legal concerns of the era and, by extension, of the authors who may or may not have had access to those debates. The social import of these works is not limited to their reflection of an author’s ideology; in fact, the body of travel literature “was involved with shaping attitudes, defining needs and aspirations, and modifying human behavior” (Fabricant 268).

Many scholars have been recently engaged in tracing the import of these travel practices, from their historical value to the etymological evolution of terms like “traveler,” “explorer,” and “tourist.” One of the key issues being debated by scholars interested in travel, travel practices, and the narratives that result from them is the definition of “travel” and what it means to be a “traveler.” Paul Fussell argues that travel is work, an
act “conceived to be like study, and its fruits were considered to be the adornment of the mind and the formation of the judgment” (39). Judith Adler argues that travel becomes an art when it is “undertaken and executed with a primary concern for the meanings discovered, created, and communicated” (“Travel as Performed Art” 1368). Travel, therefore, is education through activity. Good travel, then, offers edification to the practitioner, a means by which to cultivate and improve his or her surroundings.

Literary depictions of travel, then, become reflections and extensions of this edifying process. Fussell argues that travel permeates literature at every level: “there seems no literary place too high or too low for the travel obsession to show itself” (58). Though Adler argues that, typically, literary critics don’t like to combine the study of travel writing with the study of travel practices, I would argue that, in this specific case, understanding the cultural context of travel is essential to understanding the Romantic “travel obsession” for women writers. While certainly the use of “travel as a vehicle for symbolically challenging and evading gender restrictions” remains a focus of any scholar studying women travel writers (Adler “Travel as Performed Art” 1380), I argue that the relationship of these women writers to travel is much more complex. Rather than merely using travel as a means to evade cultural restrictions, the women I study travel (or narrate travel) as a means of recreating, critiquing, building, disciplining, redefining, and educating their home through the narratives they create. Their travel expands our understanding of travel, from physical mobility to intellectual journeys, such that “to speak of ‘literary traveling’ is almost a tautology, so intimately are literature and travel implicated with each other” (Fussell 212).
I begin with the travel narratives of Mary Wollstonecraft, Ann Radcliffe, and Helen Maria Williams. In these travel narratives, all of which chronicle trips to continental Europe and most obviously describe the act of female travel, these women writers offer a new perspective to readers about the importance of the domestic world. In their travels, through their focus on the domestic scenes they encounter and their narrative connection between those scenes and larger political, social, or economic issues, these writers remap the world for readers by suggesting that the close connection between home and the nation. In their easy and seamless integration of seemingly disparate worlds, Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, and Williams offer the imaginative freedom for their readers to do the same. By presenting this new portrait of the world to English readers, these female authors suggest the great power each individual, regardless of gender, has to positively influence both home and nation.

In my third chapter, I turn my attention to the popularity of domestic travel by examining Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Grasmere Journal*. Living in the Lake District, Dorothy Wordsworth experienced first-hand the increasingly popular domestic travel movement, which paralleled an increasing shift toward consumption as a means of social definition. In her journal, she demonstrates an intimate domestic focus while reflecting the effect cultural changes had on that previously private, separate sphere. Throughout her journal, Dorothy Wordsworth confronts and rejects the binary opposition between consumption and production, instead arguing that they can exist in a dialectical relationship that indicates the need for both. In so doing, through both her domestic and literary production, Dorothy’s journal connects with larger issues at work among Romantic women writers that not only address the organic relationship between
seemingly binary opposites but also indicate that one’s focus, no matter what you produce, should be on the cultivation and improvement of one’s home and community.

Anna Letitia Barbauld, perhaps more than any other author I examine, demonstrates the ability to negotiate the two pillars of the domestic, advocating for the essential relationship between them. In Chapter 4, I argue that through her position as poet-prophet, she transgresses the role often ascribed to female authors as she extends her poetic vision to discuss the perils of an imperial-minded Britain. She advocates a shift away from the international concerns that motivated the imperial project and a refocus on the cultivation and establishment of a strong, vital domestic identity. Her dystopian vision of the future promises a precipitous fall for the British Empire if their attention remains trained outward, chronicling the distinctly negative effects on home, family, and country of unmanaged, pliable boundaries and borders. Barbauld’s poetic voice, situated at once outside the expected, established role for women writers and inside a male British literary tradition of dissent, replicates and interrogates the notion of what it means to be domestically focused. As she complicates issues of boundaries, Barbauld simultaneously asserts that to be focused on the good of the nation is the definition of a domestic writer.

In Chapter 5, I turn my attention to the work of Jane Austen, considered perhaps one of the most “domestic” of the British novelists. In this chapter, I argue that Austen uses her novels to interrogate the notion of “good travel.” For her, this type of travel revolves around personal growth, a process that then naturally leads to the cultivation of family, neighborhood, and ultimately nation. She emphasizes the essentiality of this type of travel by contrasting it with the faddish scenic tourists in her novels, epitomized
by the vapid community of Sanditon, in the incomplete novel of that name, and the annoying Mrs. Elton of *Emma*, arguing that mobility for profit and social advancement does nothing to create character or improve communities. Austen creates characters that demonstrate the essential good that travel can bring to the individual and, by extension, to the nation. In *Persuasion*, through the character of Anne Elliot, we see the formative self-definition wrought by mobility and intellectual engagement with new experiences, as well as the social invigoration and investment that comes through the naval characters Captain Wentworth and the Crofts. Ultimately, I argue that Austen presents a model of travel that is as much intellectual and imaginative as it is physical. Those who can discipline their imaginations through reason, and use their experiences as a means of educating and cultivating their worlds are the true travelers.

In my sixth chapter, I expand my examination of the Romantic novel by focusing on the very popular Romantic subgenre of the Gothic. The most famous female practitioner of the Romantic-era Gothic, Ann Radcliffe, established specific conventions to discipline and educate readers about the proper use of the imagination. Recognizing the importance of imaginative travel, the ability to extend one’s experience through reading, Radcliffe offers her readers an experience that edifies and encourages the restraint of such imaginative exploits through reason.

Finally, in my conclusion, I demonstrate the persistence of this trope of travel as a way of examining a woman’s relationship to home and nation. Continuing in the tradition of Ann Radcliffe, I argue that Jane Austen and Charlotte Smith create a subgenre of the Gothic, the domestic Gothic, to refocus reader attention on the very real dangers that surround them. Focusing their attention on the social, economic, and
in institutional pressures that created domestic dangers, Austen and Smith encourage readers to not only educate themselves but use their new knowledge to take action. Ultimately, readers must use their imaginative travels as a means of domestic investment, using what they've learned to positively affect homes, neighborhoods, and nation. Expanding our understanding of how women writers look at travel as a means of interrogating cultural expectations, without regard to artificial limitation of genre or destination, allows us to see how deeply engaged and complex their relationship was to the physical and social world. These portraits, left behind in their work, offer us simultaneously a glimpse into how invested these women writers were in facilitating that intellectual, imaginative, and physical freedom for their readers. If reading provided rare opportunities for mobility, these authors sought to provide edifying opportunities for those invested enough to seek them.
CHAPTER TWO
MAPPING THE WORLD THROUGH NARRATIVE: THE LIBERATING AND POWERFUL VOICE OF THE FEMALE TRAVELER

The art of traveling is only a branch of the art of thinking, or still more precisely to express ourselves, the conduct of a being who acts from principle; —but we are stepping out of our province.
—Mary Wollstonecraft, Review of Reverend William Hamilton’s work

The genre of travel writing was certainly not foreign ground for Romantic women writers. Karen Lawrence, in her book *Penelope Journeys*, argues that travel writing “provided a discursive space for women, who sometimes left home in order to write home, discovering new aesthetic as well as social possibilities” (18). These travels “break the law of boundaries” and the narratives stemming from those journeys become a unique artifact of a differing world perspective. In fact, as Lawrence argues, “the gender of the viewer affects the ideology of seeing as well as the tropes projected on to the foreign landscape” (17-18). Eric J. Leed agrees, arguing that such travel, even when represented solely in writing, “functions as a structure for the expression of difference—from feminine restriction, political circumstance, and imperialist expectations—that conveys alternative possibility for development rather than the exploitation symbolized by the contrastive adventure of the male traveler frequently invoked or implied in these texts” (xiii). Essentially, women write travel differently, and

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1 Quoted in Peter Swaab’s article on Mary Wollstonecraft, found in *Mortal Pages, Literary Lives*.

2 Leed goes on to argue that British women travel writers “have used the topos of women’s travel to negotiate an uncertain position between the social status of the male traveler as the agent of empire and the native Other,” ultimately arguing that the exception exists in narratives where women do not define their identity through “encounters with a clearly defined alien Other environment or person” (xiii). I think this is a fairly simplistic, almost binary, view of travel, focusing on how the women who write travel are constantly writing beneath the specter of male travel and imperialism. While those are both certainly formative issues for imperial travel, I would argue that many women traveling in familiar foreign territory such as the European continent felt the freedom to carve out a new means of travel and travel narrative.
those travel narratives embody and resist the confinement they feel in the societies in which they live. Ann Radcliffe, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Helen Maria Williams demonstrate this principle of uniquely gendered vision. Their travel narratives offer a uniquely balanced map of the world for their readers, reshaping the genre into one that melds the world into a harmonious, subtly subversive combination of the foreign and the domestic. As Sara Mills argues, these narratives allow “the woman traveler [to go] beyond subversion to construction of alternative possibility” (xv). These narratives, negotiating a combination of description and critique while remaining anchored by a domestic focus, contemplate and comment on the great issues of public sphere in a liberatingly feminine way.

Radcliffe, Wollstonecraft, and Williams remain loyal to a few key elements common to travel narratives, namely the attention to and commentary on the Burkean aesthetic. Their focus on such ideas is not unusual; Karen Lawrence argues that “[m]uch travel writing self-consciously places itself in a tradition with aesthetic forebears, a tradition of mixed parentage of travel narrative and fiction” (25). In the early pages of her *Letters Written from France*, Williams consciously invokes the sublime in an almost apologetic way, arguing her own incapacity for thorough description of the scenes she experiences. In the course of only a few pages, Williams asserts how “much easier [it is] to feel what is sublime than to paint it” while seemingly giving thanks for not having “missed the most sublime spectacle which, perhaps, was ever represented on the theatre of the earth” (63). This spectacle, a post-Revolution celebratory parade, created a scene “the sublimity of which depended much less on its external magnificence than on the effect it produced on the minds of the spectators” (64). The landscape described
by Williams is certainly non-traditional, as she narrates the city of Paris and the experiences of those that she encounters as a means of chronicling the effects of the French Revolution to British readers. Her approach to this landscape situates her narrative within a long and familiar aesthetic tradition. Readers accustomed to and well-versed in a vocabulary of scenic tourism will draw comfort from her association of a foreign subject matter with the familiar language of poetic landscape. Though she suggests that “only very imperfectly I shall be able to describe the images which press upon my mind,” Williams chooses the common language of the sublime to build a bridge between controversial subject matter and her readers. Hers is not a politically neutral move. In fact, as Julie Ellison argues, “the more sentimental the sublime becomes, the more politically efficacious it can be” (204). Williams uses the sublimity of emotion and landscape to gain the confidence of her readers.

Radcliffe and Wollstonecraft similarly invoke the aesthetic practices familiar to readers, but do so in a manner much more inclined to engage the audience’s imagination. In the early pages of her *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, Ann Radcliffe offhandedly asserts that “it is better, however, to describe than to praise” (5). This attitude seems to reflect the essence of true travel—one captures and recreates the scene without editorial commentary or addition. In one particularly engaging description, Radcliffe presents the view after climbing the belltower of a cathedral:

Towards the west, the prospect, after including the rich plain of gardens near Utrecht, extends over the province of Holland, intersected with water, speckled with towns, and finally bounded by the sea, the mists of which hide the low shores from the sight. To the northward, the Zuyder Zee spreads its haziness over Amsterdam and Naerden; but from thence to the east, the spires of Amersfoott, Rhenen, Arnheim, Nimeguen and many intermediate towns, are seen amongst the woods and hills, that gradually rise towards Germany. Southward, the more mountainous district of Cleves
and then the level parts of Guelderland and Holland, with the windings of the Waal and the Leck, in which the Rhine loses itself, complete a circle of probably more than sixty miles diameter, that strains the sight from this tremendous steeple. The almost perpendicular view into the streets of Utrecht affords afterwards some relief to the eye, but increase any notions of danger, you may have had from observing, that the openwork Gothic parapet, which alone prevents you from falling with dizziness, has suffered something in the general decay of the church. (74-75)

Radcliffe presents as close to a panoramic view for her readers as possible here, a move sure to engage their imaginations as they seek to “see” what she sees. Rather than overtly call attention to the sublimity or beauty of the view, Radcliffe chooses to integrate those elements more subtly into her description. Low mists and the level countryside balance the never-ending view of sea and mountains. The panoramic expanse, itself a sublime and awe-inspiring view, is broken, and alleviated, by the streets of Utrecht. Radcliffe takes care to assert, however, the overall sublimity and majesty of the moment by describing, at last, the height of the parapet on which she is viewing this expanse as well as its decaying state. For the reader familiar with the connotations of hills that “gradually rise” and the “danger” associated with the height from which she views this scene, the aesthetic ramifications of Radcliffe’s description become clear. Her narrative distance allows the landscape, and the reader’s imaginative experience of it, to take precedence.3

Wollstonecraft’s descriptions often take note of “picturesque” elements while simultaneously educating readers about the realities of landscapes they might encounter. She, like Radcliffe, encourages a kind of universal viewpoint to engage her reader’s imagination:

3 Radcliffe’s distance here mirrors the distance that she offers readers in her own novels, many of which used landscape descriptions from her own travels as narrative fodder, as well as Austen’s narrative distance during her description of Anne’s experience at Lyme. See Chapters 6 and 5, respectively, for further discussions of both.
The rocks which tossed their fantastic heads so high were often covered with pines and firs, varied in the most picturesque manner. Little woods filled up the recesses, when forests did not darken the scene; and vallies and glens, cleared of the trees, displayed a dazzling verdure which contrasted with the gloom of the shading pines. The eye stole into many a covert where tranquility seemed to have taken up her abode, and the number of little lakes that continually presented themselves added to the peaceful composure of the scenery. The little cultivation which appeared did not break the enchantment, nor did castle rear their turrets aloft to crush the cottages, and prove that man is more savage than the natives of the woods. (42-43)

Wollstonecraft’s description of the view being seen through “the eye” makes the experience universal, offering readers the opportunity to engage imaginatively with the narrative and, by extension, with the landscape. This narrative choice also removes her from the foreground and instead anthropomorphizes the landscape and its associated abstract qualities, like “tranquility.” Through this perspective, “Wollstonecraft thus removes the sublime from the externalized landscape to the inscape” (Jones 229). While she indulges in these typically Romantic imaginative transports, Wollstonecraft simultaneously disciplines the reader’s expectations. Anticipating their expectation of castles or other constructs more at home in a Gothic novel than in a realistic landscape description, Wollstonecraft encourages them to carefully examine their attitudes and adopt reason. While certainly playful in nature, Wollstonecraft’s commentary offers the very clear message that landscape and travel may be transporting in its power, but the disciplined viewer will never allow that experience to replace reasoned expectations.

While these women firmly ensconce themselves within the genre of travel writing, they present their unique perspective on the foreign worlds they encounter through their focus on the domestic. Rather than allowing the impersonal landscape to remain the focus, these women travelers map a world punctuated and populated by the concerns of the traditional domestic sphere. The shift away from more traditional narrative
approaches makes sense, since “each woman’s gender invests her journey with a
meaning that both comments on and differs from that of men’s journeys” (Frederick and
Hyde xvii). Ann Radcliffe’s early description of a Norwegian prospect becomes an
emblem of this approach. She begins by describing her carriage, the bad roads, the
“meagre” grass, and the corn that appeared “higher, though thinner, than in England”—
thus far a fairly traditional, if perhaps uninteresting, description of her surroundings (7).
Radcliffe’s positive descriptions, no longer focused on the negative elements that don’t
compare to England, come as she sees “some small clusters of trees, and now and
then a wind-mill” (7). More specifically, Radcliffe rhapsodizes over what she finds within
those clusters of trees:

> usually a neat farm-house sheltered within, and included, together with its
garden and orchard, in a perfect green fence; the fields were elsewhere
separated from each other and from the road, neither by hedges or walls,
but by deep ditches filled with water, over which are laid small bridges, that
may be opened in the middle by a sort of trap-door, raised and locked to a
post, to prevent the intrusion of strangers. (7)

The focus shifts from craggy cliffs or a powerful waterfall, the gold standards of the
landscape travel narrative. Instead, a farmhouse, ubiquitous as it may be in the
Norwegian countryside, captures Radcliffe’s narrative attention. Indeed, she shifts
reader focus to that seat of utilitarian domesticity, as the farmhouse becomes the
central focus as she describes what contains and surrounds it. This home, protected
both by nature and man, becomes a symbol of her travels as equally engaging as any
other, perhaps more traditional, landmark that she might have described. Even more
interesting, perhaps, is the fact that Radcliffe can describe the scene to her readers.
Despite its almost castle-like protections, Radcliffe gains access and translates that
access to her readers. Her feminine perspective offers her opportunity to view, and present to readers, what might be withheld from other travelers.

Wollstonecraft does precisely the same thing throughout her *Letters*. In one representative vignette, shortly after she describes the “dazzling verdure” of the Swedish countryside, she skillfully and subtly leads the reader’s imaginative eye on a journey of its own: from lakes to castles to cottages to “a stray cow” to the farms for whom these stray cows are essential. What might have been overlooked or underappreciated in a more traditional travel narrative is now elevated as something of inherent aesthetic and philosophical value. She, like Radcliffe, is offered access to that domestic world. While Wollstonecraft is nothing if not detailed in her depiction of the domestic facets of her journey—we are privy to discourses on the merits of good bed linens, the evils of rye bread, and the horrors of a crowded, dirty inn among others—her description of the people she encounters allows us a glimpse into a world that would otherwise be kept from us. A group of young women, the daughters of one of her hosts, become the focus of one of these moments, as Wollstonecraft describes their interaction with her military escort:

The girls were all vivacity, and respect for me could scarcely keep them from romping with my host, who, asking for a pinch of snuff, was presented with a box, out of which an artificial mouse, fastened to the bottom, sprung. Though this trick had doubtless been played time out of mind, yet the laughter it excited was not less genuine. (15)

Without Wollstonecraft’s unfettered access to the domestic world, and the comfort with which she was admitted therein, we as readers would never have experienced such an undiluted moment of observation. More is communicated in this brief moment of adolescent comedy than the word “vivacity” could possibly describe. We experience by proxy a great degree of freedom in these young women, who feel no compunction about
coyness or flirtation with the male lieutenant. Wollstonecraft’s ability to show us this scene testifies to the parallel freedom she feels to see and to record. Wollstonecraft’s choice to train her reader’s eye if not away from the landscape entirely then at least equally on the elements that make up a domestic landscape reeducates those readers, by powerfully but subtly asserting the importance of real-life experience rather than the abstract and imaginative musings central to popular theories of scenic tourism.

Women, figureheads of the foreign domestic sphere, become important markers of the cultural landscape for Radcliffe. She describes them with an affectionate focus that mirrors her detailed description of the view from the cathedral’s tower. She asserts that she was not taken aback by the “novelty” of the sight of these women, since that was what “we had expected from the first sight of a foreign people” (2). Nevertheless, she demonstrates her fascination with them in the distinction evident in her descriptions of the men and the women that she observes:

The Dutch seaman every where retain the national dress; but the other men of Helvoetfluys differ from Englishmen in their appearance, chiefly by wearing coarser clothes, and by bringing their pipes with them into the street. Further on, several women were collected about their baskets of herbs, and their dress had some of the novelty, for which we were looking; they had hats of the size of a small chinese umbrella, and almost as gaudily lined within; close white jackets, with long flaps; short colored petticoats, in the shape of a diving-bell; yellow flippers, without quarters at the heel; and caps, that exactly fitted the head and concealed the hair, but which were ornamented at the temples by gold filiagree clasps, twirling, like vine tendrils, over the cheeks of the wearer. (2-3)

The degree of detail Radcliffe offers in her description of the women contrasts sharply with the starkness of her description of the men that she encounters. Dress difference certainly accounts for some of this disparity. However, the degree to which Radcliffe can see, and describe, these women indicates an unfettered and unrepentant connection to the domestic that, in Radcliffe’s view, offers a richer portrait of a culture
than that of the traditionally male public sphere. Her descriptive mode paints a picture for her readers, as she seeks to describe in familiar terms the foreign dress.

The comparisons she uses ground the women, and Radcliffe’s readers, in the imagery of nature. Their hats are the size of Chinese umbrellas (with the inevitable connotation that they also protect from the elements like those same umbrellas), their petticoats are shaped like a diving-bell\(^4\) and evoke images of the sea, their shoes resemble flippers,\(^5\) and their hats twirl around their faces like vine tendrils. These women, despite their foreign appearance and faint air of the exotic, become a comfortable extension of the landscape narrative for both writer and reader. In essence, the way that Radcliffe portrays them transforms the women she describes into the natural wonders that populate the cultural landscape. Such scenes are what she hoped to see, and she speaks of the women with a reverence that elevates them from a foreign spectacle to one of nature’s artistic wonders.

Wollstonecraft deepens the vision of the foreign domestic by using it both as an objective means to evaluate a culture and as a touchstone of familiarity in a place wholly unfamiliar to her. After mentally and emotionally taxing travel, as Wollstonecraft

\(^4\) According to the O.E.D., a diving-bell was precisely that: “A strong heavy vessel, originally bell-shaped, with the bottom open, in which persons may descend into deep water, respiration being sustained by the compressed air at the top, or by fresh air supplied by a forcing pump from above.” The O.E.D. cites the earliest usage of this term in 1661, with several examples from the 18th and 19th centuries. I can only assume that Radcliffe is referring to this structure and, therefore, the depths of the sea.

\(^5\) The term flippers is much more problematic than “diving-bell” in this usage. The context clues seem to indicate that Radcliffe is referring to a shoe of some kind, distinguishing it by its different heel from those familiar to her English readers. However, our best resource, the O.E.D., has no such definition in usage at the time. In fact, the best and most contemporary usage indicated is “A limb used to swim with; e.g. any limb in a turtle; in a seal or walrus, esp. the fore-limb; the fore-limb of a cetacean; the wing of a penguin; the fin of a fish.” This definition seems to have been in popular usage by the 1820s, yet it seems an unusual choice for Radcliffe, especially given the context. Most likely, the term here refers to a word used as slang in the fashion world, but that term has fallen out of usage and is, now, difficult to recreate. Take at face value, regardless of the definition, the word does have distinctly animalistic overtones, thus deepening the nature-based focus of the description for both contemporary and modern readers.
approaches the coast, she expresses this longing to connect with the domestic: “This anxiety increased when, turning into the most picturesque bay I ever saw, my eyes sought in vain for the vestige of a human habitation” (9). For Wollstonecraft, in this moment, the picturesque fades in favor of the domestic, placing the home and its inhabitants on a par with the landscape as essential components of the travel experience. The merging of these seemingly disparate pieces continues throughout Wollstonecraft’s narrative, continually elevating the domestic in the eyes of her readers. Letter X is a perfect example of this connection, as she describes each new scene that she encounters by chronicling the homes that she sees. Though she does not enter these homes, they anchor her vision, allowing her to see everything that she sees. This anchor also establishes the means by which she can comment successfully on the world around her. “Women’s journeys are as much about departure as they are about arrival. Home is both the literal and metaphorical point of departure; whatever home might be (and it is frequently awful), it is the fixed point to which other places will be explicitly or implicitly compared” (Frederick and Hyde xix). The balance that Wollstonecraft offers, between the traditional and the domestic landscape, demonstrates the importance the home has for her, as well as training her readers to see the entirety of every scene they encounter, clotheslines and all.

These domestic scenes offer Wollstonecraft comfortable entrance into political and social philosophy, demonstrating the organic relationship between issues of home and nation. While certainly known for her confidence discussing political, social, and intellectual points of contention without fear, Wollstonecraft seems to find these moments even easier when they are connected to the domestic sphere. When
encountered with a foreign scene of domesticity, she almost immediately connects that scene to a larger social context:

We glided among the meadows, and through the woods, with sun-beams playing around us; and though no castles adorned the prospects, a greater number of comfortable farms met my eyes, during this ride, than I have ever seen, in the same space, even in the most cultivated part of England. And the very appearance of the cottages of the labourers, sprinkled amidst them, excluded all those gloomy ideas inspired by the contemplation of poverty. (112)

Here, Wollstonecraft at once invokes and dismisses the stereotypical images of scenic tourism. She calls them to mind to encourage her readers to feel comfortable in this scene, as it is nothing more or less than any other Romantic or Gothic landscape they have read before. Then, she castigates those same readers for expectations of fanciful royal prospects, instead turning their attention to the much more important scenes of real life human habitation. In these cottages and farms, Wollstonecraft sees the reality of the rural lower class, a much kinder and, perhaps, picturesque scene than can be encountered in England. In this moment, she argues that poverty, by its very nature, is not evil or dehumanizing if the domestic world has the opportunity to thrive. By focusing her reader’s attention on these scenes, rather than the ones they have come to expect in a travel narrative, Wollstonecraft not only carves out an opportunity to philosophize on matters she finds important, but also reformulates the travel landscape as one that includes the social and economic context instrumental to its creation.

Wollstonecraft simultaneously uses the domestic scenes she encounters as an opportunity for social critique. Angela Jones argues that the form of the travel narrative is essential to Wollstonecraft’s ability to “roam philosophically as much as she does literally, all the while blurring boundaries between personal and descriptive modes” (209). She uses her standards for cleanliness and order as the measuring stick against
which she assesses every Scandinavian household she encounters, a practice that, while perhaps unfair, offers us a unique vision of the countries she visits. Perhaps one of the most visceral descriptions in her narrative comes as she paints a picture of “a pigstye” that she was forced to stay in:

As there was no remedy I entered, and was almost driven back by the stench—a softer phrase would not have conveyed an idea of the hot vapour that issued from an apartment, in which some eight or ten people were sleeping, not to reckon the cats and dogs stretched on the floor. Two or three of the men or women were lying on the benches, others on old chests; and one figure started half out of a trunk to look at me, whom I might have taken for a ghost, had the chemise been white, to contrast with the sallow visage. But the costume of apparitions not being preserved I passed, nothing dreading, excepting the effluvia, warily amongst the pots, pans, milk-pails, and washing-tubs . . . . I do not now wonder that girls lose their fine complexions at such an early age, or that love here is merely an appetite, to fulfil the main design of nature, never enlivened by either affection or sentiment. (139-140)

From the state of this home, Wollstonecraft feels free to create an assessment of the state of the people and their character. Despite never speaking to them or knowing their particular economic or social circumstances, Wollstonecraft sees in this home an emblem of a larger social problem. Here, in the filth that she sees, is evidence of a lack of domestic investment, a failure to feel affection, and a dehumanizing impulse that leads to premature aging.

The opposite is also true, as Wollstonecraft unabashedly connects the simple, dedicated, and humble domestic scenes to a society’s potential for greatness. In one of the first cottages she enters, she was still better pleased to find a clean house, with some degree of rural elegance. The beds were of muslin, coarse it is true, but dazzlingly white; and the floor was strewed over with the little sprigs of juniper (the custom, as I afterwards found, of the country), which formed a contrast with the curtains and produced an agreeable sensation of freshness, to soften the ardour of noon. Still nothing was so pleasing as the alacrity of hospitality—all that the house afforded was quickly spread on the whitest linen. (11)
The presence of both cleanliness and hospitality makes Wollstonecraft feel comfortable and welcome, the hallmarks of what she considers to be the positive, well-kept domestic sphere. While she recognizes the distinction in circumstance, identifying the coarseness of the linen and rural situation of the cottage, Wollstonecraft focuses on how the inhabitants of this home do all that they can to invest in and cultivate their domestic world. Karen Lawrence recognizes that while “[s]he concerns herself with often mundane details about ordinary people. . . . [i]t is not mere observation but analysis for which she strives” (101). These homeowners show a degree of pride that Wollstonecraft sees as vitally linked to the success of their society, as she notes that “[a]mongst the peasantry, there is, however, so much of the simplicity of the golden age in this land of flint—so much overflowing of heart, and fellow-feeling” (12). In these simple, humble cottages echoes the character of an entire people.

One of the skillfully political ways that these women writers use the domestic as a springboard to critique is through their comparisons of the scenes they encounter to England. Wollstonecraft aggressively argues that such comparisons are “absurd,” saying that “[t]ravellers who require that every nation should resemble their native country, had better stay at home” (49). Instead, she asserts that “[t]he most essential service, I presume that authors could render to society, would be to promote inquiry and discussion, instead of making those dogmatical assertions which only appear calculated to gird the human mind round with imaginary circles, like the paper globe which

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6 I must take a moment here to call your attention to the earlier paragraphs where Wollstonecraft decried the lack of cleanliness and overcrowding of one home only to laud the cleanliness and “rural elegance” of another. To suggest that her observations were colored only by objective aesthetic taste is both arrogant and outlandish. Of course she was comparing her surroundings to what she was accustomed to in England; while these preferences certainly stem from personal taste, they are also driven by experience and upbringing. Customs and cultural practices color her vision throughout, despite her intellectual desire for that not to be so.
represents the one he inhabits” (49). While these women writers certainly emphasize their desire to not perpetuate “dogmatical assertions” through their open-minded vision of the lands they visit, Wollstonecraft’s suggestion does not recognize the degree to which cultural practice and custom become the familiar language through which to translate any foreign experience. Karen Lawrence recognizes the essentiality of this translation work: “This structure of difference between here and there by necessity oversimplifies the opposition between home and foreign, until difference is intentionally mediated by the traveler in the acts of travel and travel writing” (4). Whether intentional or not, Wollstonecraft obviously does exactly what she argues that authors should not do, as do Radcliffe and Williams. Their comparisons, however, promote Wollstonecraft’s suggested inquiry and discussion successfully for their readers through the contrast between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the foreign and the domestic. Comparing the world to England allows their readers to begin to see the world as they see it, and offers them a skillfully subtle, yet accessible, way to comment on the world.

Radcliffe, in seemingly stark contrast to Wollstonecraft, seems to believe in the necessity of comparison as a staple of travel writing. Early in her narrative, she seeks “to defend a practice adopted in the following pages, that has been sometimes blamed for its apparent nationality, by writers of the most respectable authority. The references to England, which frequently occur during the foreign part of the tour, are made because it has seemed that one of the best modes of describing to any class of readers what they may not know, is by comparing it with what they do” (Radcliffe vi). If we take her at her word, her references to England operate strictly as a means to remind readers of home, to ground their reading in a dual-vision of the domestic and the foreign. Were
that the case, such an act would alone have powerful ramifications, asserting that the domestic and the foreign can be married successfully in one narrative. If we look at what she does, however, it’s clear that, intentional or not, these references to England have distinctly political ramifications.

In one particular example, she discusses the influence of the English in Holland and their presence in society:

There are many hundreds of British residents in this place, and our language and commerce have greatly the sway here over those of all other foreign nations. The Dutch inscriptions over ware-houses and shops have frequently English translations underneath them. Of large vessels, there are nearly as many English as Dutch in the harbour; and, if you speak to any Dutchman in the street, it is more probable that he can answer in English than in French. On a Sunday, the English fill two churches, one of which we attended on our return. It is an oblong brick building, permitted by the States to be within the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London, Parliament having given 2500l. towards its completion in the beginning of the present century. There are also many Protestant Dissenters here, who are said to have their offices of worship performed with the ability, simplicity, and zeal, which are usually to be observed in the devotions of that class of Christians. (Radcliffe 11)

If she is aiming to merely paint a scene for her readers, then Radcliffe’s mode of description unintentionally takes into account the power of England’s reach at a time when she was flexing her imperial muscles. The English have taken hold, or are close to doing so, of Dutch society, most especially through their language, which seemingly pervades every corner and labels every building. A British economic and cultural foothold seems just a step behind, as the British nearly match the Dutch representation in their own harbors and churches. However, we are not meant to take Radcliffe at her prefatory word. Her description of churches full of Protestant Dissenters would have immediately brought to mind political agitation and prejudice at home. Contrasted with the contented and peaceful portrait of their worship in Dutch churches, the state of
Dissenters in England, who had experienced some of the worst anti-Dissenting violence in the few years before Radcliffe’s journey, would seem that much more unjust and unnecessary. Radcliffe’s own Dissenting history, while not mentioned here, adds another degree of political intensity to her description. Suggesting to her readers that peaceful religious practice and coexistence can occur outside of British borders leaves them wondering why it has yet to be achieved on their own shores. Subtly, Radcliffe advances an agenda close to her heart while remaining unalienated to readers who may not share her views.

The ambivalent comparisons of Williams and Radcliffe present the most subtle critique of all. Radcliffe rarely criticizes overtly; instead, her protests remain skillfully imbedded within her seemingly innocuous descriptions. Take, for example, her description of a working class Dutchman. He is “indeed, seldom seen unemployed; but we never observed one man working hard, according to the English notion of the term. Perseverance, carefulness, and steadiness are theirs, beyond any rivalship; the

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7 Rictor Norton chronicles this treatment of Dissenters in his biography of Ann Radcliffe: “The previous two years marked the peak of anti-Unitarian violence. In April 1792 mobs attacked the homes and mills of Unitarians in Nottingham; in June the doors of Unitarian meeting-houses in Manchester were battered down; in November the mills of the Unitarian cotton manufacture in Belper belonging to William Strutt were flooded, and his books were burned, because he had tried to distribute copies of Paine’s Rights of Man to his workers” (110). Certainly Radcliffe would have been aware of these events, making her notice of the relative ease with which foreign Dissenters were offered freedom and access to worship even more poignant.

8 This point is a matter of critical debate; however, Rictor Norton’s 1999 biography of Ann Radcliffe works to demonstrate how this background affected her work. He argues, in his chapter entitled “Dissent versus Decorum,” that not only did Ann Radcliffe come from a Dissenting family background, but that her characters reflect a Unitarian attitude. He recognizes that Ann Radcliffe attended the Anglican church, and does not try to argue that her attendance there was hypocritical. Instead, he demonstrates, through the political, social, and religious attitudes evident in her work that “there is little doubt that Ann Radcliffe’s feelings are those commonly shared by her liberal Dissenting culture, and specifically the Unitarian utopic belief in the scientific progress of civilization” (20). I am not altogether convinced by his argument, but I do believe Radcliffe’s family connection to Dissenting advocates and her access to literature written by them, as Norton details, would create at the very least a sympathy, if not an allegiance, to the liberal Dissent of these figures.
vehemence, force, activity, and impatience of an English sailor, or workman, are unknown to them” (48). At first glance, Radcliffe’s choice of a phrase like “never observed one man working hard” would seem to cast the Dutchman in a distinctly negative light. However, the qualities associated with the labor of the Dutch are distinctly positive. The connotations of perseverance and steadiness imply a peaceful and dedicated life, while the connotations of the qualities attached to the English worker—force, impatience, vehemence—translate into an image of a violent and hard life. The surprising switch in this description is subtle—connotation alone makes the case—but the ambivalence here allows a political commentary on the work ethic of two cultures to be present. The same is true in her description of the character of the Dutch:

This, indeed, may be constantly observed of the Dutch: they will never, either in their societies, or their business, employ their time, for a moment, in gratifying the little malice, or shewing the little envy, or assuming the little triumphs, which fill so much of life with unnecessary miseries; but they will seldom step one inch out of their way, or surrender one moment of their time, to save those, whom they do not know, from any inconvenience. (60)

While she praises the Dutch initially for their lack of petty maliciousness, she at once chastises them for their lack of common courtesy or Christian charity. While less clearly a comparison with the British than her previous description of work ethic, the description provides a clear implication. The British, in Radcliffe’s mind, are the inverse of the Dutch. Though prone to petty jealousies or harmful practices, the citizens of her home country are also generous with their time and means. The ambivalent pull between these two poles is evident even in the writing, as the comparisons are balanced by the semicolon and therefore present two equal options to be considered. Radcliffe’s skillful writing leaves the question to be resolved by the reader: is it better to be both petty and generous or to be focused only on oneself? Such interrogation of both domestic and
foreign practices offers readers an intellectual engagement they would not receive in a narrative full of only picturesque landscape description.

Williams similarly uses ambivalent comparisons to interrogate English practices and attitudes. Writing as she is from France, in the happy and hopeful immediate aftermath of the Revolution, Williams often focuses on the political and psychological distinctions between the French and the English.\(^9\) One description focuses on her experience at a rural inn:

In short, one can scarcely imagine a scene more remote from England, in accommodation and comfort, than the country inns in France: yet, in this habitation, where an Englishman would have been inclined to hang himself, was my rest disturbed half the night by the merry songs which were sung in an adjoining apartment, as gloomy as my own. (106)

She begins by seemingly praising English accommodations, allowing that the French inns are so much less in hospitality and comfort. Her recognition that, despite the lack of external comforts, the French people are able to find joy and merriment contrasts sharply with her suggestion that the lodging would drive an Englishman to suicide.

While praising the English, she critiques their focus on the frippery, simultaneously elevating the French character. This skillfully constructed description, through its balanced praise and critique for the French and the English way of life, offers her readers the opportunity to reconsider their previous attitudes.

She creates much the same effect through her commentary on the subject of abolition. While Letters Written from France necessarily deals with the political and

\(^9\) Despite its popularity, one must imagine that British readers would be hesitant to warmly receive Williams’s often glowing descriptions of the French people, since they were culturally accustomed to embracing a love-hate relationship with the French. Her ability, then, to subtly interweave description that could cause the reader to call their own attitudes into question, rather than automatically dismissing the French attitude, is quite skillful.
social ramifications of revolution, this passage remains one of the most forthright calls for political thought related to England’s policies.

But I trust the period will never come, when England will submit to be taught by another nation the lesson of humanity. . . .But it is a sort of treason to the honour, the spirit, the generosity of Englishmen, to suppose they will persevere in such conduct. . . .Europe is hastening towards a period too enlightened for the perpetuation of such monstrous abuses. The mists of ignorance and error are rolling fast away, and the benign beams of philosophy are spreading their lustre over the nations. (84)

Williams’s rhetorical skill is obvious here, as she recasts the issue of abolition as a matter of national pride. She appeals directly to that English pride, in both positive and negative ways, as she suggests that no other nation should come before England in the abolition of slavery. Using her own pride in and knowledge of England, she suggests that it would be antithetical to the just and kind nature to ignore the plight of slaves, as well as ridiculous to imagine that such a wealthy nation as England should have to depend on the labor of exploited workers. She skillfully avoids the issues at the heart of abolition, such as racist attitudes and economic profit, by appealing to the pride that underpins them all. By recasting that pride into English pride, and by subtly threatening the potential loss of England’s might in the world, Williams suggests that England must change. Her passage is beautifully, yet subtly, written. The pervasive attitude of confidence in England, as well as her recasting of a potent political debate into a “treason” to the national character, allows her to comment on the issue without seeming to cede loyalty in favor of traitorous criticism. Instead, she exudes confidence in her homeland, preventing the alienation of her readers and, at the same time, allowing them to see the issue as it has been redefined in her mind. Essentially, through her comparison of the English to other Europeans, Williams enters a political debate while maintaining her focus on the concerns and development of the domestic.
The connection to the domestic became a means for these writers to engage in the public debates of the day, demonstrating the clear connection between the two seemingly disparate worlds of the “domestic.” These women certainly did not think the domestic world any less important than the public one to which they desired access and with which they had a rich history of engagement. Instead, Williams, Wollstonecraft, and Radcliffe consciously use the domestic to at once shield and legitimize their engagement with the public issues that may have seemed controversial. Radcliffe, perhaps the least overtly political of the three, overtly uses her position as she asks permission of the reader to “intrude a few more words, as to this subject, by saying, that where the economic and political conditions of countries are touched upon in a following work, the remarks are less her own than elsewhere” (vi). Hiding behind the façade of her husband’s companionship, and his apparent education in the political and economic situation of the countries that she visits, allows Radcliffe to enter into those discussions with less consequence than were she to go it alone. Within her domestic unit, she is ensconced in the safety of her husband’s care and, therefore, much less threatening. Her assertion that “it is better, however, to describe than to praise,” colors her opinions as reflections rather than assessments. Her later use of these descriptions, skillfully manipulated to demonstrate her assessments, falls in line with her philosophy. From within the confines of her own domestic sphere, and through her descriptions of the domestic worlds she encounters, Radcliffe enters the political debates of her time. She, therefore, maps the world she sees in her unique and subtly critical way, comfortably accessible to readers at home.
Williams and Wollstonecraft echo Radcliffe’s attempts to prevent the alienation of their readers with strong political views through their almost apologetic beginning comments. Helen Maria Williams’s apologetic assertion in her Letters Written in France in the Summer of 1790 warns that “all I shall be able to give you will be a faint sketch, to which your own imagination must add colouring and spirit” (63). Somewhat surprisingly, Mary Wollstonecraft similarly asserts little confidence in her own abilities to begin the project that became her Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, claiming that “it is with some difficulty that I adhere to my determination of giving you my observations, as I travel through new scenes, whilst warmed with the impression they have made on me” (7). The tension that exists between the domestic and the foreign, “between the thrilling possibilities of the unknown and the weight of the familiar, between a desire for escape and a sense that one can never be outside a binding cultural network” is paralleled in the tension between the apologetic and appropriate posturing of a woman writer and the striking ability to narrate with power and authority (Lawrence 18).  

All three of these women writers seem to use the domestic as a way to access the foreign, a means of negotiating that tension by exploiting it as a shield.

Helen Maria Williams seeks to bridge the gap between the domestic world and the political one by reformulating the idea of the political mind as one most assuredly connected to the qualities already ascribed to women. She argues that “my political creed is entirely an affair of the heart” (91):

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10 Certainly, a long tradition of apologetic authorial posturing existed in 18th literature. These women writers would have been familiar with that tradition and an argument could be made that these comments, along with their attention to the Burkean aesthetic, are an attempt to situate their writing within a long literary tradition. Nonetheless, I think the effect is the same.
In vain might Aristocrates have explained to me the rights of kings, and
Democrats have descanted on the rights of the people. How many fine-
spun threads of reasoning would my wandering thoughts have broken; and
how difficult should I have found it to arrange arguments and inferences in
the cells of my brain! But however dull the faculties of my head, I can
assure you, that when a proposition is addressed to my heart, I have some
quickness of perception. I can then decide, in one moment, points upon
which philosophers and legislators have differed in all ages: nor could I be
more convinced of the truth of any demonstration in Euclid, than I am, that,
that system of politics must be the best, by which those I love are made
happy. (140)

Throughout the rest of her letters, Williams evaluates the political, social, and cultural
systems she encounters precisely based on this model—how well it supports and
sustains the domestic harmony and overall happiness of those she loves. She speaks in
glowing terms of the Revolution, defends the French for their vivacity and spirit, and
comes back to England bewildered by the very different perception the British have of
the French, filled with stories of “crimes, assassinations, torture, and death” rather than
the “universal joy” that she experienced (147). As Mary Favret argues, “Reading
Williams’s prose, one recognizes the domestic dimensions of the national stage. The
most profound political questions of the revolution,[sic] were, in fact, questions about the
private life: home, family, affective discourse” (161). Williams, along with her fellow
female travelers, felt comfortable then integrating the two into one cohesive whole.

Angela Jones sees in Wollstonecraft’s Letters a similar move, as she argues that
Wollstonecraft “distinguishes domesticity from the political. . . but only to undercut these
distinctions.” For a writer who has always been known for her political courage,
“political discussion supports the domestic affections . . . by challenging narrow-minded
preoccupation with commercial pursuits which benefit the individual family while eroding
‘public spirit.” Ultimately, Wollstonecraft argues that “domesticity galvanizes national
identity in its irreducible relationship to it, not separation from it” (Jones 217). Williams,
along with Wollstonecraft and Radcliffe, redefines the political into feminine, domestic terms. They travel new paths in their narratives, as Karen Lawrence argues, and “seek both to allot more (and new) territory to women’s province and to replace the static mapping of women as space . . . with a more dynamic model of woman as agent, as self-mover” (18). For their readers, these activities lead to both an expansion of physical and imaginative territory.

The remapping of the world that these narratives undertake allows the authors more freedom to engage in political and social discourse. In demonstrating that the world is a harmonious balance between the domestic and the foreign, their position as intermediaries between those two binary positions allows them to see and narrate every part of the world. Radcliffe, specifically, feels free to engage in some degree in the debate over trade and place of economic success in the life of the Dutch. She defends free trade by arguing that commerce “is the permanent defender of freedom and knowledge against military glory and politics” (12), while simultaneously chastising those who make it of preeminent importance in their lives. Though she had hoped to contradict the opinions of those who had offered a “trite opinion of the influence of avarice in Holland,” she upholds it: “The infatuation of loving money not as a means, but as an end, is paramount in the mind of almost every Dutchman, whatever may be his other dispositions and qualities: the addiction to it is fervent, inveterate, invincible, and universal from youth to the feeblest old age” (56). Wollstonecraft similarly critiques the negative influence of wealth on a culture, as she suggests that the vices that result are “of the most contemptible and enbruting cast” (28). She argues that “it may be delivered as an axiom that it is only in proportion to the industry necessary to acquire
wealth, that a nation is really benefited by it” (28). Both Radcliffe and Wollstonecraft ultimately focus on the inevitable effect of these issues on the development of the cultures they observe. Their attention encourages not just critique of the foreign but evaluation of the domestic. In short, these women suggest that in the process of examining another culture, one should examine one’s own. As such, they argue that “[t]ravel is not just a measured activity, but a reasonable one that requires more than superficial observation” (Jones 221). Their efforts require readers not only to be better imaginative travelers, but also better citizens as well.

Helen Maria Williams’s choice of metaphor to discuss the political failures of the past symbolizes the great power this new type of travel narrative has both for traveler and reader. After she connects past political plans to “ill-constructed misshapen vessels” that were “unfit to combat with the winds and waves” she then imagines a new, more ideal world:

–But it may possibly be within the compass of human ability to form a system of politics, which, like a modern ship of discovery, built upon principles that defy the opposition of the tempestuous elements (“and passions are the elements of life”--) instead of yielding to their fury makes them subservient to its purpose, and sailing sublimely over the untracked ocean, unites those together whom nature seemed for ever to have separated, and throws a line of connection across the divided world. (149)

While overtly discussing the political system, the description also alludes to the power of the thoughtful travel narrative. It, too, can make previously tempestuous elements, like issues of gender and power, subservient to its purpose, uniting together seemingly disparate elements. Creating that “line of connection across the divided world” is what these women seek to do, as they navigate and unify the foreign with the domestic and present to their readers the results. Specifically, these women writers “transpor[t] the language of domesticity, family, and psychological interiority to national issues, often
challenging the assumptions that would impede such translation” (Favret 162). This type of travel, whether in actual practice or in imaginative pursuit, focuses on the merging of two disparate worlds and creating peace where chaos reigned before.

The power of travel comes in the freedom it provides—freedom of experience, mobility, imagination, or narration. Wollstonecraft, throughout her *Letters*, argues for the particular uses of travel, suggesting that when we travel, “we are obliged to examine our prejudices, and often imperceptibly lose, as we analyze them” (31). Travel offers a freedom from the cultural restraints inherited through upbringing or a lack of experience, “giv[ing] substance to philosophical debates about liberty, especially women’s liberty” (Lawrence 77). Since such liberation was traditionally unavailable except through individual excursions,¹¹ these women offer the same benefits to their readers who remain at home. Those who approach the reading process in the same way as a traveler approaches a foreign landscape, with the desire to gain intellectual experience and lose unreasonable prejudice, benefit from the process in a similar way. If a journey is considered “a means of self-transformation and self-discovery” that “inevitably changes the woman traveler, setting her apart from other women who remain behind” (Frederick and Hyde xxiii), Williams, Wollstonecraft, and Radcliffe argue that these experiences should be open to everyone. They embrace the liberating power of the narrative as a means by which to provide these experiences to anyone with access to the written word.

Ever the reasoned critic, Wollstonecraft is careful to later assert the need to maintain some degree of objectivity, both as travelers and readers: “a momentary social

¹¹ In fact, Wollstonecraft often describes her means of travel using the language of freedom, characterizing a boat ride as “emancipation” and the landscapes she sees as “liberation” (7).
sympathy should not be allowed to influence the conclusions of the understanding; for hospitality too frequently leads travellers, especially those who travel in search of pleasure, to make a false estimate of the virtues of a nation” (162). Angela Jones argues the importance of this position, that Wollstonecraft “presents herself as a different kind of traveler. . . . by aligning herself with the men who gaze and who are not gazed upon” (215). The critical, reasoned, intellectual eye should be trained equally at all of the sights afforded to the traveler, creating a measured and balanced picture of the society and providing the ability to critique wisely the sights seen. The reader must do the same.

True travel must ultimately benefit the domestic world of the traveler. Wollstonecraft posits the means by which such benefit can come, suggesting that travelers “bring home improvement to promote their own comfort, which is gradually spread abroad amongst the people, till they are stimulated to think for themselves” (86). Williams suggests that her narrative is but one step in the process of achieving pleasure from the work. She, “well aware how very imperfectly I shall be able to describe the images which press upon my mind,” says “all I shall be able to give you will be a faint sketch, to which your own imagination must add colouring and spirit” (63). The narratives constructed by Wollstonecraft, Williams, and Radcliffe encourage the domestic cultivation of their readers by disciplining their vision and cultivating their imagination. Demonstrating through their narrative the ability for women to successfully merge the domestic world with the concerns of the foreign and public spheres, these writers suggest to their readers that they, too, can expand their vision and positively impact the domestic spaces they inhabit. Helen Maria Williams articulates the impact of
this philosophy when she states that “the most important events which take place in this world depend a little on our influence; and we often act in human affairs like those secret springs in mechanism, by which, though invisible, great movements are regulated” (Williams 79). These three Romantic female travelers position themselves as precisely such secret springs, able to subtly change and control the world around them.

The travel narratives examined in this chapter map a world where the viewpoint of women, grounded in the domestic but freed by experience, provides a reasoned, valuable asset to the world. These narrators, as Mary Wollstonecraft famously records in her *Letters*, ask “men’s questions” which elevates them to “wom[e]n of observation” (15). As Bonnie Frederick and Virginia Hyde assert, “the act of traveling strips away the illusions of women’s condition, revealing their struggle for personal discovery and social change in the face of cultural ideologies constructed to restrict their mobility and independence” (xxviii). The use of the travel narrative to ask and attempt to answer the larger questions of social and political justice helps to revise the genre. Ultimately, these women are encouraging their readers to travel imaginatively with them, as the “traveler becomes representative, her experiences generating philosophical meditations” (Lawrence 80). These writers demonstrate to their readers the power of viewing the world as they do, and the necessity of incorporating the same degree of questioning and intellectual interrogation into their own domestic scenes.

The potential power of these narratives is symbolized by the reception of Helen Maria Williams’s *Letters Written in France during the Summer of 1790*. Because of her travel narrative, “[r]esting in their own armchairs and sofas, the English public viewed a
France represented through the eyes of this female correspondent. They also watched an exile playing hostess to a world in revolution, a woman at home in the theater of politics” (Favret 154).\textsuperscript{12} Mapping the world to a waiting reading public endows each of these women with a remarkable amount of ideological power, which they use to assert the comfortable, natural connection between the domestic world and the public one. As a result of their ability to negotiate the line between the foreign and the domestic, these “[w]omen can write the news of the nation upon their houses, communicating to those locked away from the world, the possibility of freedom” (Favret 168). Mary Wollstonecraft, Ann Radcliffe, and Helen Maria Williams exhibit the freedom to see and write the world in their unique way, thereby securing their own freedom and communicating the potential for that freedom to their readers.

\textsuperscript{12} Mary Favret chronicles the importance of this woman’s work: “Of all her publications, however none was more successful or significant than the eight volumes of Letters From France published between 1791 and 1796, which brought the French Revolution into the libraries, parlors, and sitting rooms of a generation of English readers.”
 CHAPTER THREE
“I STITCHED UP THE PEDLAR”: PRODUCING AND CONSUMING THE DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE IN DOROTHY WORDSWORTH’S GRASMERE JOURNAL

I wrote my journal, or rather my recollections for the sake of my Friends who it seemed ought to have been with us, but were confined at home by other duties.

—Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland

The eighteenth century brought with it upheavals in the relationship between economics and the domestic world. The “[o]bjects which for centuries had been the privileged possessions of the rich came, within the space of a few key generations, to be within the reach of a larger part of society than ever before, and, for the first time, to be within the legitimate aspirations of almost all of it” (McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb 1). The definitions once inscribed by bloodline, title, or inheritance—all domestic concerns—now shifted outside of the home to the marketplace. The opportunities that offered mobility to lower classes were certainly exciting, but this newly democratic, almost infectious consumer spirit became as much an omen as it was an opportunity. The practice of conspicuous consumption in the eighteenth century opened to anyone with the capital to pursue it, forcing English citizens to begin to redefine ideas of class and their position within society through activity rather than through family heritage.

One of the clear ways that citizens began to carve out a position in a newly democratized economic world was through consumption. The new social importance of consumption led to a continuing cycle—the more consumption was adopted as a means of social definition, the more essential consumption became to one’s understanding of self and society. Thus, the philosophy of consumption similarly changed:
What were once available only on high days and holidays through the agency of markets, fairs, and itinerant peddlers were increasingly made available every day but Sunday through the additional agency of an ever-advancing network of shops and shopkeepers. As a result ‘luxuries’ came to be seen as mere ‘decencies,’ and ‘decencies’ came to be seen as ‘necessities’ Even necessities underwent a dramatic metamorphosis in style, variety and availability. (McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb 1)

The changes in spending and consumption fundamentally affected every facet of British society, including domestic habits.

This democratization trend extended, of course, to travel and tourism as well. By the end of the eighteenth century, a new trend in pedestrian travel offered the middle classes and other previously immobilized groups the experience previously open only to the economically elite on the Grand Tour of Europe.¹ The new vogue of pedestrian travel, which encouraged domestic excursions on foot, occurred during the advent of picturesque and aesthetic theories of travel as well as the uncertain and dangerous Napoleonic War years, which left many unable to pursue traditional Continental travel safely. The coalescence of these circumstances offered not only physical mobility to its practitioners, but access to imaginative and aesthetic philosophies previously unavailable to the middle classes. The domestic landscape was open to everyone who desired to experience it. In an ever-shifting social landscape, constantly defined and redefined by social, political, and international pressures, travel became an essential act of self-definition as individuals negotiated, through their consumption of the landscape, the position they believed they held within society.

¹ I am indebted, in my discussion of pedestrian travel, to Robin Jarvis’s Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel, which brilliantly chronicles the cultural and structural changes that led to the ability for Britons to travel as well as to incorporate those changes in the writing of the time.
Domestic travel, aided by the increasing publication of detailed travel guides, opened England to a host of travelers who viewed these familiar, or unfamiliar, landscapes with new eyes and the deep desire to find the most promising prospect.\(^2\)

These domestic travelers, as the name implies, combined the worlds of tourism and domesticity into one rather tense whole. As the countryside of England became increasingly available to travelers of all classes, homes and communities previously separated from a public, economic life became an essential part of the tourist trade. The popularity of published travel guides, along with journals and narratives written by travelers, added another dimension to the permeability of the domestic sphere as well. The vogue of these published works, as Richard Swartz chronicles, transformed travel and travel writing into yet another consumable good.\(^3\)

Dorothy Wordsworth’s literary life reflects the tension resulting from an increasingly changing domestic world. Most especially in her *Grasmere Journal*, Dorothy Wordsworth chronicles the effect such cultural changes have on the domestic landscape.\(^4\) Writing about her life in the Lake District, one popular site of domestic

\(^2\) The development of the domestic travel movement depended upon a host of precipitating factors, including “improved communications and increasing inter-regional trade, the drive to open up the country to the spirit of rational enquiry, the transformation and extension of the cultivated landscape through the enclosure movement an the accompanying change in attitudes to ‘wild’ nature, and so on” (Jarvis 17). Combined with these factors, the increasingly pervasive attitude of consumption changed “the way in which the human body [was] exercised as an instrument of travel” making each act of mobility “deeply revealing of the historically shifting manner in which people conceive[d] of themselves and the world in which they seek an appropriate travel ritual” (Adler 8).

\(^3\) The commodities of a market of “expanding print capitalism” turned the traveler into a two-fold tourist: “Rather than seeing themselves seeing, the tourist sees herself reading tours while on tour. As a result, the tourist, like the touristic text, becomes a ‘repeating machine’ code” (22). Swartz uses “she” as his chosen pronoun to designate a tourist. While I do not imagine he intends any gender-based prejudice here, I do find the choice a perhaps unintentional demonstration of just how connected female readers and writers were to the world of domestic tourism.

\(^4\) While any of Dorothy Wordsworth’s writing would have demonstrated her unique style, the *Grasmere Journal* offers us, according to Susan Levin, “her best known writing” (2). The journal also covers May 1800 to December 1802, a deeply formative time for English cultural change.
tourist activity, Dorothy Wordsworth becomes both the object of tourist consumption and a consumer herself, a position that demonstrates how travel becomes a barometer for understanding complex and shifting cultural attitudes.\textsuperscript{5} The domestic focus of her journals, combined with the distinct lack of delineation between literary and domestic tasks within her entries, reflects and parallels the breakdown between the previously reified polarities of public and private, production and consumption. As Lucy Newlyn points out, “Dorothy’s journal-writing provides a special kind of evidence for the way that style is influenced by place, and place by style” (329). In her daily consumption of the landscape that surrounded her, which she then uses to produce the fruitful domestic life that inspires and stimulates literary production, Dorothy Wordsworth demonstrates how cultural practices, pressures, and changes not only affect where one travels, but how one thinks, writes, and interacts with the community.

The Wordsworth home at Grasmere becomes the symbolic center of these changing travel habits and the cultural attitudes that underpin them, as travel in the Lake District intersected with daily life. Dove Cottage, the Wordsworth home, lies on the main road next to Grasmere Lake, one of a series of places made famous and accessible by the publication of the travel guides of William Gilpin and Thomas West at the end of the eighteenth century. These travel guides, in their accessibility to the middle classes and to previously excluded groups like women, opened the aesthetic travel experience to new populations. So, also, did the shift in the travel experience

\textsuperscript{5} Andrew Hubbell, in his article on Wordsworth and picknicking, makes the connection between Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals and the issue of consumption. While his connection is more overt—arguing about how “the picnic was a consumerist practice that refashioned the self through certain tastes, values, and images” (47)—I cite this example to demonstrate that critics are interested in how the Wordsworth engaged in practices both intersecting with and rebelling against the newly universal conspicuously consumer spirit.
from one focused on “auricular knowledge and discourse, identified with traditional authority” in the fifteenth century to one “devalued in favor of an ‘eye’ believed to yield direct, unmediated, and personally verified experience” by the end of the eighteenth century (Adler 11). This shift from knowledge to experience established a new relationship between the viewer and the viewed, a “power/knowledge relationship. To have knowledge of an object is in part to have power, even momentarily, over it” (Urry 138-139).6 Chloe Chard, in her discussion of women as tourist attractions, recognizes the same dynamic, as travelers “adop[t] the viewing of works of art as a metaphor for the encounter with the foreign” and “confron[t] the topography as a distanced pictorial spectacle” that can be consumed and examined through this privileged viewpoint (113). Domestic travel as a result became both educational and accessible, and Dove Cottage was situated at the heart of that changing social impulse. Though she had “few external constraints on her life,” Dorothy Wordsworth offers an incisive commentary on the intersection of the previously separate worlds of tourism and domesticity (Woof ix).

Though her existence was consistently connected with the marketplace of travel, Dorothy Wordsworth’s Grasmere Journal reflects the intimate domestic world that she consistently attempts to establish at Dove Cottage. The genre of a journal is, itself, an intimate one. We are privy to the inner thoughts, ostensibly, of the writer, ideas that otherwise unavailable for our perusal. The compositional structure of this journal, remarkably different from her approach in the earlier journal written during her time at Alfoxden, demonstrates the fluidity Wordworth sees between her domestic world and

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6 While Urry argues that photography establishes this power relationship, I believe the dynamic he establishes fits the relationship between tourist and the people constructed, in their minds, as tourist destination, even if that interaction is only momentary.
the natural world around her. The first entries of both journals demonstrate this
distinction. In the earlier Alfoxden journal, Dorothy Wordsworth writes clearly,
cohesively, and with a sense of narrative detachment despite her immersion in nature:

The green paths down the hill-sides are channels for streams. The young
wheat is streaked by silver lines of water running between the ridges, the
sheep are gathered together on the slopes. After the wet dark days, the
country seems more populous. It peoples itself in the sunbeams. (141)

As Pamela Woof notes in her introduction, in this entry “[t]here is no action by the writer
and no authorial presence. . . .this first entry is deliberate and careful writing” (xx).
While we certainly see and feel a distinctly Romantic connection in her descriptions of
nature—she clearly respects and loves the land as much as her brother William—we
see it carefully, deliberately, through the viewpoint of a narrator intent on creating
perspective free of people. Anne Mellor echoes this sentiment, arguing that in the
Alfoxden Journal “there is no ‘I,’ only an observing eye, an empathic consciousness that
exuberantly reaches out to the natural environment” (159-160). The sheep “are
gathered” by invisible hands. Despite her assertions that the area “seems more
populous,” a line that cues us to expect the entrance of crowds of fellow nature lovers or
agrarian workers, she backtracks and assigns that anthropomorphistic designation to rays
of spring sunshine. She consciously constructs a world that ignores the very real lives
of the people who live among these landscapes.

The first entry of the Grasmere Journal completely reverses this approach, both
in structure and content. The love for and focus on nature remains, but it is embedded
within the language of domesticity:

Wm & John set off into Yorkshire after dinner at ½ past 2 o’clock—cold pork
in their pockets. I left them at the turning of the Low-wood bay under the
trees. My heart was so full that I could hardly speak to W when I gave him
a farewell kiss. I sate a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, &
after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me I know not why dull and melancholy, the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound. (1)

The first, and perhaps most important, difference between the two journals is the presence of Dorothy Wordsworth herself in the narrative.⁷ She feels free to use the first person pronoun I. The effect of this change is two-fold: she invites her readers into her world, narrowing the narrative distance, and simultaneously offers them some degree of confirmation that her expressions are genuine. The structure and style of her entries reflect the intimate connection between landscape and the domestic world she occupies, a perspective that parallels the growing aesthetic concentration on the picturesque.⁸ Unlike the very deliberate, systematic sentence structure employed in the Alfoxden journal, this Grasmere entry feels like a haphazard stream of consciousness. Lucy Newlyn describes this “experimental style” as one “more radical in its mix of registers, its counterpointing of poetic landscape description with realism” (332). The combination, radical as it may be, is between the aesthetic and the domestic. Readers are given stunningly beautiful description, but only in fits and starts, with punctuation marrying the aesthetics with the casual domesticity that comes to characterize the entire journal. Dorothy’s use of the dash, to announce the meal she sent with them, puts domestic details on a par with the domestic travel, emphasizing the interconnectedness of both worlds. In the Grasmere Journal, Dorothy Wordsworth reflects the cultural

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⁷ Several critics have remarked on Dorothy’s presence within this text, most notably Pamela Woof and Susan Levin.

⁸ Despite her long-standing reputation among scholars as a woman whose worth as a writer exists only in the primary source material her work provided to her brother William and his colleague Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the subtle nuances of her journals demonstrate how deeply integrated Dorothy was within her literary community. Susan Levin demonstrates this integration as well: “Dorothy Wordsworth’s writing literally exists to serve a community” (6).
melding of the public and the private, ultimately demonstrating the possibility of a woman’s successful negotiation of both.

The interconnectedness of the domestic world and the Romantic landscape manifests itself in Dorothy’s seemingly offhanded descriptions of the countryside. Dorothy Wordsworth’s descriptions of the connection between the landscape and homes evolve over the course of her writing. Often, when attempting to describe a particular prospect in the early pages of her journal, she uses the same benchmark of success—how well the landscape would suit a hypothetical home. She pictures cottages, imagining them “commanding two distinct views of the vale & of the lake” or “a prospect divinely beautiful” (4-5). At least once she inserts herself into this visionary rhapsody: “If I had three hundred pounds & could afford to have a bad interest for my money I would buy that estate, & we would build a cottage there to end our days in” (5). The “we,” of course, refers to herself and her brother William. The insertion of her domestic situation into this imaginary realm of domestic landscape demonstrates how integrated Dorothy Wordsworth’s conception of nature was to her domestic life. In her writing, often “[i]n a single phrase . . . Dorothy establishes the vital link between nature and human beings which is her subject” (Newlyn 327). Domesticity, during the Grasmere years, was the lens through which she saw and interpreted the world, given her role as the caretaker of Dove Cottage. That fact is made even more apparent through her descriptions of the natural world that surrounds her.

The imaginative homes of Dorothy Wordsworth’s rambles give way to reconciling the reality of domestic life in the Lake District within her ever-expanding definition of landscape. Rather than reaching for a metaphoric situation of a home in order to
describe the beauty of the scene, the trappings of human civilization now become elements as basic to the landscape as the rocks and trees she rhapsodizes. She sees that “the view was hazy and we could see nothing from the top of the hill but an indistinct wide-spreading country, full of trees, but the buildings, towns & houses were lost” (121). Rather than rejoice in the absence of the homes that may have previously seemed an interruption, Dorothy demonstrates how indispensable such domestic scenes are to her overall appreciation of landscape. Essentially, “she views the natural world in terms of her domestic aesthetic” (Page para. 7).

Her description of her 1802 London trip demonstrates the degree to which she has integrated the domestic life into her aesthetic understanding of landscape. After being met with “various troubles & disasters” in the city, she and William left on a coach. Their exit of the city “made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge” (123). You might expect her to immediately focus on the beauty of the river or the way the light reflects off of the water—the prospects a tourist might seek to describe. Instead, the first thing she notices is how “the houses were not overhung by their cloud of smoke & they were spread out endlessly” (123). While perhaps not a glowing description of their beauty, this description does demonstrate that Dorothy Wordsworth sees homes now as an essential component of landscape, privileging them above the “pure light . . . like the purity of one of nature’s own grand Spectacles” (123). Her travel offers the opportunity to distill her philosophy of landscape; even when she removes herself from her domestic sphere, she is able to see how integral such scenes are to her aesthetic approach to the world.
The final step in the incorporation of the domestic sphere into her landscape aesthetic comes as Dorothy Wordsworth uses scenes of ruined domesticity as larger metaphors for issues of social justice. We are introduced to this through a country scene discovered on a new walk:

The valley which is subject to the decaying Mansion that stands at its head seems to join its testimony to that of the house to the falling away of the family greatness. The hedges are in bad condition, the Land wants draining & is over-run with Brackens, yet there is a something everywhere that tells of its former possessors—the trees are left scattered about as if intended to be like a park, & these are very interesting, standing as they do upon the sides of the steep hills, that slope down to the Bed of the River, a stony bedded stream that spreads out to a considerable breadth . . . (120)

The mansion remains the focus of the description, almost to the exclusion of the natural scene surrounding it. Every “natural” element of the description explains, exploits, or modifies the description of the mansion. All of these descriptions are meant to take us on Dorothy Wordsworth’s internal journey—to see the connection between a ruined mansion and a ruined family, making the implicit connection between the landscape that bears the shattered remnants of the house and the culture that destroyed the family.

In William Wordsworth’s “Michael,” we see a similar thematic focus on the connection between the symbols of ruined domesticity as a result of a corrupting culture. Wordsworth begins his tale with the image of an unfinished symbol of domestic safety and security, the sheepfold:

Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that simple object appertains
A story--unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. (lines 16-21).

The last five lines of the poem return to this image, echoing Dorothy Wordsworth’s focus on the symbols of domesticity to demonstrate greater cultural and social issues encroaching on previously sheltered communities. He states that

great changes have been wrought
In all the neighbourhood:--yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll. (lines 486-490)

William Wordsworth’s external concentration on the perils of the urban life and the consequences to rural labor differs from Dorothy’s “ethic of care” that critics such as Anne Mellor have used to distinguish the female approach to Romanticism.⁹ Her concern with social justice remains intimately connected to the homes, families, and communities for which such issues have the most resonance. Dorothy’s journal entry mourns the end of a way of life, and she does so by arguing that the ruin of a domestic situation simultaneously affects and disturbs the landscape around it.

Dorothy Wordsworth’s understanding of how the domestic scene played a unique yet increasingly important role in the Lake District scenery extends from her experiences living as a tourist destination. An early and almost off-handedly flippant account of one such encounter between tourists and the world of Dove Cottage indicates the regularity with which the Wordsworth home was viewed and consumed as

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⁹ Carol Gilligan was the first to use this term, but Anne Mellor appropriates it and expands upon it in her *Romanticism and Gender*. As she defines it, the ethic of care “insists on the primacy of the family or the community and their attendant practical responsibilities” (3). Obviously, Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals, full of the seemingly mundane details of laundry and cooking, demonstrate this focus.
nothing more than another tourist destination. She records an instance when the consuming tourist gaze penetrates, literally and stylistically, mundane domestic work:

In the morning W cut down the winter cherry tree I sowed French Beans & weeded. A coroneted Landau went by when we were sitting upon the sodded wall. The ladies (evidently Tourists) turned an eye of interest upon our little garden & cottage. We went to R Newtons for pikefloats & went round to Mr Gell’s Boat & on the Lake to fish . . . (9)

The world of domestic cultivation—weeding, pruning, fishing, and the general upkeep of a typical country household—remains shockingly permeable to the prying eyes of passing tourists. “Sitting on the wall that she and William have made, the boundary between inside and beyond, Dorothy participates in both worlds at the moment that the pricey (and regal sounding) carriage goes by” (Page para. 3). Her ability to occupy both worlds at once—to literally sit on the fence between public and private, consumption and production—demonstrates the increasingly liminal nature of those previously discrete categories.

Dorothy’s characterization of these passing ladies—and it is important to note that they are ladies—as “Tourists,” a dismissive but candid categorization, results from her internalization of the generic hallmarks of “Tourism” as it has been established in the Lake District.¹⁰ Many Romantic writers, Dorothy Wordsworth as no exception, viewed this means of road travel, a quickly moving carriage, with a “reverse elitism” that reveals their beliefs in the positive qualities of “a traveller in contradistinction to those who, by virtue of their mode of transport, are mere tourists” (Jarvis 168). Ladies in a “coroneted Landau” then, who turn “an eye of interest” upon the domestic scene that they

¹⁰ Like many critics before me, I refer to Dorothy Wordsworth by her first name not out of any sense of entitlement or familiarity, but simply to eliminate confusion with her brother William since “Wordsworth” now refers to William Wordsworth almost exclusively. This problem is compounded by the fact that, at many points, Dorothy’s entries refer to actions by both her and her brother. Referring to her as “Dorothy” occasionally, then, seems the most feasible and least confusing solution.
encounter, define themselves through their practice as tourists rather than travelers. While the distinction between tourists and travelers may seem necessarily muddy at times, the attitude of conspicuous consumption distinguishes one who sees the experiences as one of personal profit rather than one of community and personal cultivation. That “eye of interest” is the consuming visual gaze of tourists interested in wielding the power of their position over the inhabitants of Dove Cottage, and Dorothy insightfully recognizes it as such.

This journal entry, the only one in the journals that specifically mentions the tourist presence in the Lake District, demonstrates the degree to which English domestic life had been affected by these cultural changes. The construction of the entry itself envelops the interruption of the tourist presence with the conspicuously domestic tasks that fill the day. This inclusion symbolizes the way in which the domestic sphere has had to adjust to incorporate the frequent intrusions. Were the appearance of “Tourists” an unusual addition to Dove Cottage’s daily experience, its mention would certainly merit more than a parenthetical notation. Instead, Dorothy Wordsworth frames the consuming gaze as if to call attention to her domestic successes—the Tourists notice her garden and cottage, not her, and that notice gives some credence to her abilities as homemaker and horticulturist. Nevertheless, this combination juxtaposes the peace of the domestic world with a threatening sense of openness. While the Wordsworths continue living their perhaps antiquated, rustic way of life, outsiders consume their privacy. In this scene, we see many of the tensions inherent in the Romantic era at work: city life versus country life, the modern world versus the old
world, and the economic development of the nation versus the development of the moderate, sustainable home.

Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal compounds this lingering sense of permeability as she chronicles the nearly constant flow of travelers on the road outside of Dove Cottage. In the three-year span covered by the *Grasmere Journal*, she notes the approach of more than twenty beggars, at least three separate itinerant families, and a number of traveling salesmen and soldiers. While twenty beggars may not seem a high number over the course of three years, Dorothy records one day, November 13, 1800, when three different men interrupted life at Dove Cottage. In many cases, these travelers are stopping in the middle of their journey, emphasizing the increased opportunity for year-round travel that an improved transportation infrastructure allows. More disturbingly, this practice redefines Dove Cottage from personal sanctuary to public weigh station, a mere stop on a thoroughfare rather than a place of domestic tranquility. The lines between the public spaces of inns, which mimicked domestic hospitality in an economic context, and the private spaces of traditional domestic life are blurred. The lack of definition maintains and even exacerbates the sense of invasive permeability established by Dorothy’s early entry about the Tourist. Every space can now be consumed for pleasure.

The tension between the stable, domestic, and very private world of the home and the conspicuously consumed, very public scenes of domestic consumption, as well as the way those scenes surprisingly intersect in Dove Cottage, reflect a growing sense of liminality between previously reified distinctions between production and consumption. The Wordsworths were most certainly producers. The journals paint a
picture of a situation one could easily describe as a subsistence lifestyle. We don’t, for example, often read of them spending money in shops but are often favored with accounts of Dorothy’s domestic production activities, like baking, sewing, and gardening. She bakes what they will eat, sews and mends what they already have or will need for the upcoming seasons, and grows only enough, it seems, to feed the inhabitants of Dove Cottage. When not describing her solitary walks, explorations with her brother and other guests, or her encounters with travelers on the road, Dorothy describes activities that allow the Wordsworths to remain self-reliant:

Rose not till ½ past 8—a heavenly morning—as soon as Breakfast was over we went into the garden & sowed the scarlet beans about the house. It was a clear sky a heavenly morning. I sowed the flowers William helped me. We then went and sate in the Orchard till dinnertime, it was very hot. William wrote the Celandine. (94)

Scarlet beans, flowers, orchards—Dove Cottage is a place of literal and, both in the journals and in the poetry of her brother, literary production. This lifestyle of provident living stands in rather stark contrast to the increasingly consumer-driven society that surrounds them.

Nevertheless, the Wordsworths are certainly consumers. One particularly interesting way in which Dorothy Wordsworth consumes is through her gardening. Erinç Özdemir argues, in an attempt to contrast Dorothy’s work with her brother William’s poetry, that “nature is never appropriated; it is simply observed and enjoyed in a sense of deep participation that never asserts the observing ‘I’” (562). While tempting to see Dorothy’s interactions with the landscape around her as entirely benign, I believe Judith W. Page’s description of Dorothy Wordsworth’s garden as a “reverse colony” to be much more accurate (para. 3). Early in her journal, we are introduced to her habit of gathering “mosses and plants” from the wild areas she frequents for transplantation in
her garden or for display in her home. Far from being a unique occurrence, this practice seems to be a regular part of Dorothy’s life in the Lake District. This act of taking something wild and reproducing it within a domestic context is a form of consumption, though perhaps less obvious than the ready-made purchasing power of the typical consumer.

Her goal in gathering these plants remains far from purely transient pleasure or power seeking. Instead, she incorporates these plants within her domestic sphere, essentially using them to produce the Dove Cottage that she seeks. It would be easy to see these two motivations as binary opposites, and to recuperate Dorothy’s activities as merely selfless acts of domestic production. The journal does not allow for such simplistic thinking. Instead, these acts of gathering and transplantation vacillate between creatively ingenious ways of using the landscape and imperialistic souvenir gathering. The complexities of these positions make the distinctions between production and consumption, public and private even more difficult to discern.

Dorothy Wordsworth recognizes her complex relationship as both a consumer and reproducer of natural beauty within the *Grasmere Journal*. We see the evidence of this juxtaposition in the description of her activities:

I found a strawberry blossom in a rock, the little slender flower had more courage than the green leaves, for they were but half expanded & half grown, but the blossom was spread full out. I uprooted it rashly, & I felt as if I had been committing an outrage, so I planted it again—it will have but a stormy life of it, but let it live if it can…I brought a handkerchief full of mosses which I placed on the chimney-piece when C was gone . . . (61)

Dorothy, like the Tourists she describes, surveys the landscape with a consuming gaze, but takes that power relationship one step further by literally consuming the elements of the natural scene. Her entry establishes a hierarchy of appropriate consumption, with
moss as a consumable good while the unique strawberry plant is not. Her regret, made clear through her remorseful description of her “rash” act as an “outrage,” indicates a tension between the rapidly developing consumer culture that surrounds her and her own somewhat archaic life of subsistence domesticity. This tension that manifests itself both “[i]n practice and in her writing” asserts that “horticulture and agriculture, beauty and utility, overlap each other . . . yet both are constructed products of her imagination and work” (Page para. 5). This tension forces Dorothy Wordsworth to construct herself as both a producer and a consumer throughout her journal. She seeks to demonstrate not the opposition between these two positions but the organic relationship between the two.¹¹ Production can lead to consumption, but so can consumption lead naturally to production.

Dorothy parallels the consuming gaze of the Tourists through her literary consumption of individual experiences within the journal. The journal incorporates the individual experiences of stranger and local alike as scenery in a literary landscape, whether for Dorothy or, as was often the case throughout the Grasmere years, for later use by William as he constructed his poetry. Dorothy’s account of the traveling salesman that she and her brother met on one of their many walks reflects her appropriation of that consuming gaze. The entry covers nearly a page, a rarity in Dorothy’s journal, and carefully chronicles their conversation. We learn, in the salesman’s own words, his age, family situation, employment history, and observations on the changing economic climate. This meticulous attention to detail engages the

¹¹ This elimination of binary positions in favor of a perspective that honors a cyclical relationship between the two hearkens back to the overall focus of these Romantic women writers. The seemingly reified binaries that they encounter are often redefined as related positions. We see this relationship also, of course, with the two definitions of domesticity, and, by extension, the ideas of public and private.
reader, making the interaction feel universal. We learn his age, his family situation, and his financial situation within the first few lines of her description. But her choices to include anecdotal details about his life in addition to these specifics—his “great grand daughter a fine Lass 13 years old” or his daughter who “teaches flowering & marking” at a boarding school in Craven—engage readers’ attention. Ironically, these details seem to dispel the sense that we are voyeuristically examining his life, despite the fact that Dorothy’s presentation of the man’s conversation does precisely that. Her choice to chronicle all the details of his life, powerfully resonating with the reader, consumes him and his experience through his writing while simultaneously offering us a momentary opportunity to empathize and connect with his experience. We are offered a glimpse of testimony from someone living a very different life than the Wordsworths.

The traveler, despite the amount of knowledge we have about his life, is completely incorporated into the journal. Her careful attention to details of dialect, recording every “Aye” and unique phrase, sets him apart from her Lake District neighbors while seemingly crafting him as a colorful supporting character rather than a distinct individual. This narrative choice also demonstrates Dorothy’s authorial mastery of the genre, as the “[u]se of direct speech, with its jaunty, song-like rhythm and regional accent . . . makes the writing vivid and immediate” (Newlyn 332). His voice becomes less and less independent as Dorothy literally incorporates the salesman within her journal entry. We learn, for example, about the salesman’s role as “a servant of the Marquis of Granby—’O he was a good Man he’s in heaven—I hope he is.’ He then told us how he shot himself at Bath, that he was with him in Germany & travelled with him everywhere, ‘he was a famous Boxer, sir’ & then he told us a story of his fighting with
his Farmer” (116). We hear the man’s words, but they are always introduced and followed by Dorothy’s own authorial comments or conversational moments. The result refocuses the power of the narrative from the salesman to the woman who shapes and presents it. The traveling salesman becomes more of a testament to her startling narrative power and ability rather than a powerful anthropological or sociological testimony that stands alone. The conversation’s placement, in the midst of an entry full of mundane domestic duties, heightens this effect. The entry, recorded on the 30th of June 1802, begins with a fairly typical description of the health of the family—“William slept ill, his head terribly bad”—and proceeds to chronicle mundane events of a dreary day—“a threatening windy coldish day” that found them walking only “part of the way up the Rays with Coleridge” (115). After her description, she carries on with her daily domestic description, chronicling tea and a letter that she finished. Even in a journal not intended for a reader outside of her domestic circle, Dorothy Wordsworth reflects a consuming gaze. When she sees, she incorporates. Yet the final line of her entry seems to indicate the productive power in her consuming vision. While she envelops the story in her own writing, appropriating it for her own purposes, she ends with a musing half-thought that can only be related to that experience: “A weight of Children a poor man’s blessing” (116). Although this line is not explicitly connected in the narrative to her earlier encounter with the salesman, her return to the thematic focus of his story indicates that she may have benefited from the experience.

As she consumes the encounter, recording it in its entirety, she transforms her journal into an essential historical document that “provide[s] a repository for the community’s oral traditions” which creates “a graphic, detailed record of the levels of
destitution in wartime Grasmere” (Newlyn 334). Her consumption, then, becomes productive not only to her own life but to the community, a characteristic of her writing. As Susan Levin argues, “[t]hese vagrants exist in the journals both as personal possibilities for Dorothy herself and as victims of social change. The way she tells their stories and the support she provides them allow these people to be part of the communal relationships that so concern her” (38). Thus, in the process of cultivating both her own personal success and the health of the community, Dorothy Wordsworth demonstrates the distinguishing characteristic of the valuable physical and imaginative travel Romantic women writers advocate. The tension between these two polarities, and the fluidity of the formerly binary positions of production and consumption, manifests itself clearly in these moments and connects Dorothy Wordsworth with her female Romantic contemporaries. She conflates these two poles, extending the subtle commentary on these cultural tensions to her literary works, even if they were never intended for public view. As a result, Dorothy’s very domestic journal skillfully demonstrates the power writing has to expose and interrogate the complex cultural ideologies seemingly unconnected to the private sphere.

The complex production-consumption cycle established in Dorothy Wordsworth’s domestic and literary worlds extends to her relationship with her brother William’s poetry. Susan Levin argues that Dorothy Wordsworth’s writing “provided raw material for at least thirty-five of William Wordsworth’s poems” (172), a relationship which often leads critics to see her work as subordinated by her brother’s ambition and talent. I would argue that their relationship creates a two-fold consumption cycle or, as Erinç
Özdemir terms it, a fusion or juxtaposition\textsuperscript{12} that provides a new way for readers and critics to “see” William Wordsworth’s use of his sister’s work. Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal entries frequently chronicle the poetic efforts of her brother during his residence at Dove Cottage, but just as often describe her instrumental role in those activities through a domestic lens. One series of entries, in March 1802, demonstrates the interconnectedness of Wordsworth’s domestic and literary lives. After recording that she “was so unlucky as to propose to rewrite The Pedlar,” Dorothy Wordsworth records what can only be described as a busy domestic day:

> Before we had quite finished Breakfast Calvert’s man brought the horses for Wm. We had a deal to do to shave—pens to make—poems to put in order for writing, to settle the dress pack up &c & The man came before the pens were made & he was obliged to leave me with only two—Since he has left me (at ½ past 11) it is now 2 I have been putting the Drawers in order, laid by his clothes which we had thrown here & there & everywhere, filed two months’ newspapers & got my dinner 2 boiled Eggs & 2 apple tarts. (74)

Her literary life remains an imbedded portion of her daily duty. She mentions her literary tasks—pens to make and “poems to put in order for writing”—with the same commonplace sense of comfort that she describes eating eggs and apple tarts. In fact, her use of the pronoun “we” emphasizes her sense of ownership of these activities; we are not sure, in this entry, whether she and William have an equal share in penmaking, poem writing, and dress pack settling or if they, individually, are charged with one of those tasks.

The lack of delineation between the domestic and the literary tasks within the journal parallels the similar breakdown of the binary oppositions between public and private, production and consumption that permeates Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal.

\textsuperscript{12} See Erinç Özdemir, page 579.
She even goes so far as to use the language of sewing to describe the dreaded work on The Pedlar: “I stitched up the Pedlar.” At the most basic linguistic level, Dorothy Wordsworth sees her multiple spheres inexorably and appropriately connected. She produces a domestic landscape full of both traditional domestic roles and untraditional, transgressive literary power. Her ability to maintain both in a harmonious balance remains one of female Romanticism’s most powerful, yet subtle, commentaries on cultural expectations.

Two examples of this Wordsworthian literary consumption-production process come in specific experiences that Dorothy consumes within her journal and that are replicated and revised by William within his poetry. In one of the earliest entries in the journal, the day after her experience with the passing tourists, Dorothy Wordsworth recalls and records an interaction with a beggar woman with a child. She sees the family on a later walk and relates that “I saw two boys before me, one about 10 the other about 8 years old at play chasing a butterfly” (10). William Wordsworth’s poem, “Beggars,” not only consumes the basic premise of Dorothy’s journal entry through his use of description, but literally takes her words: “And soon before me did espy / A pair of little boys at play, / Chasing a crimson butterfly” (lines 20-22, emphasis mine).13 Wordsworth does the same thing in his “Alice Fell,” a poem based on a real victim of a coach cloak accident on the road. Dorothy’s account, taken from a story told by her neighbor Mr. Graham, asserts that “it was a little girl that was crying as if her heart would burst” (70). Wordsworth’s poem not only lifts, again, the content of Dorothy’s

13 Judy Simons, in her reading of the similarities between Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal accounts and William Wordsworth’s poetic recountings of the experiences, suggests that Dorothy’s journal was the only source for “Beggars.”
journal entry but also consumes her language for his own literary use: “’My cloak!’ the word was last and first, / And loud and bitterly she wept, / As if her very heart would burst” (lines 21-23, emphasis mine). As we saw earlier in “Michael,” William Wordsworth shifts the focus from the domestic to the aesthetic and external. As Judy Simons argues, “[w]hereas Dorothy gives the main part in the drama to the child, Wordsworth places himself as the protagonist; Alice becomes the object which generates his sympathy and his humanitarian response” (55). Certainly, Wordsworth refigures and reconstructs the images that Dorothy uses, but he nevertheless employs these images as a means of poetic inspiration because he consumes them from her journals.

These primary and secondary forms of consumption echo the pattern established by Coleridge in his definition of primary and secondary imagination. Coleridge argues in

*Biographia Literaria* that

> [t]he primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. (750)

Dorothy Wordsworth’s choice to record the minuscule details of her encounters with a nearly journalistic zeal operates as the primary imaginative force in the Wordsworths’ dynamic literary and personal relationship. She offers Wordsworth the opportunity to rewrite and adapt the perceptions she records. Dorothy’s first notice of these events, and William Wordsworth’s literary echo of them, demonstrate an artistic interconnection that few critics truly acknowledge. Most critics see Dorothy Wordsworth’s relationship
with her famous brother as one of a victimized, self-denying servant.\textsuperscript{14} Choosing to see Dorothy Wordsworth as an active and essential participant in these literary activities, not as an uncredited, plagiarized force but as one half of an inspirational model, allows us to shift our attention from sympathy for a mistreated sister to respect and admiration for an imminently talented writer. Such a shift simultaneously parallels the shifts between binaries reflected throughout Dorothy Wordsworth’s work. Her portrayal of the world as a series of interconnected and interwoven forces reflects her relationship with her brother, a much more complicated and rich relationship than has previously been recognized. Simplicity doesn’t suit Romantic women writers.

The imagination, then, is rooted in the home. The primary imagination finds its power through the interconnectedness of the domestic and literary landscape, demonstrating the impossibility of a separation between them without a loss of power. The power of the female mind to view, interpret, and communicate the world around her, and the essentiality of that effort to the work of one of the greatest poets, reemphasizes the power of the female imagination as a means of cultural, political, and aesthetic influence. Dorothy Wordsworth took advantage of this impulse, as well as the cultural moment of binary fluidity, to “extend the values of domesticity into the public realm” (Mellor 3). While never intending to be published herself, Dorothy used her position as source and inspiration for her brother’s work to demonstrate the essentiality of the nature of the home and community to the literary landscape.

\textsuperscript{14} See Lucy Newlyn, Judy Simons, and Meena Alexander for examples of these types of readings. Rooted in reintroducing her work into the canonical spotlight, these writers aim to explain why Dorothy Wordsworth has been so little read compared to her brother. While I understand their aims, I believe we do very little justice to the writer when we hypothesize psychological relationships rather than analyzing literary content.
The interconnected relationship between Dorothy and William Wordsworth reflects a tension between a desire to produce and an abiding sense of entitlement to consumption, an attitude common to their time. Ultimately, this impulse to consume people and their experiences, along with the landscapes of domestic British tourism, can dehumanize the subject of that consuming gaze. This change from physical consumption to visual consumption fundamentally redefined what constituted a consumable good, paralleling and extending the expansion of travel. The Wordsworths demonstrate this shifting attitude, as they remain during their Grasmere years staunchly committed to a subsistence lifestyle while demonstrating a fairly constant consumption of abstract experiences and landscapes. With vision becoming the means by which to achieve true knowledge, the new attitudes toward travel offered English citizens an opportunity to exert powerful influence over those they encountered while simultaneously devaluing each citizen as another destination to be consumed. The strange juxtaposition between being both an object to be consumed and a consumer, with the seemingly contradictory powerlessness and agency accompanying each of these positions, reflects the concerns of a society in flux.
That kind of knowledge which is rather fitted for home consumption than foreign exportation, is peculiarly adapted to women.—Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, Chapter XIII

Recent readings of Anna Letitia Barbauld’s *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, a political poem concerned with the ramifications of war and imperial might exerted by Great Britain, take for granted her political stance and national message. Stephen Behrendt, for example, in two different readings of Romantic women poets, uses Barbauld’s *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* as a foil, a way of supporting a point without delving into the details of her depiction. Both Jon Mee and Marlon Ross locate Barbauld within a politically active Dissenting tradition. While certainly accurate, these critics suggest that women fall into two binary categories: stridently political, often alienating themselves from society as a result, or deliberately domestic, staying close to acceptable literary topics and approaches.¹ The allure of Barbauld’s poem, perhaps because of the vitriolic critical response it received and its associated legendary tale of the halting of Barbauld’s poetic career, is now used as a simplistic stick by which her politics are measured. Barbauld is far more complicated than these political polarities indicate, and to elide the complexities of her position, as well as the message of what has become her most famous work, is a dangerous move. If, as Stephen Behrendt argues, “poetry (and art in general) is often a good indicator of both cultural

¹ The same critical attitude is often used in describing Jane Austen, an equally complex author who is rarely seen by critics as outside of this binary distinction of politics and domesticity.
assumptions and individual experience during periods of crisis, when broadly-shared preoccupation reveal themselves repeatedly” (12), readers would be remiss to assume that the anxieties Barbauld depicts within her poem would be simple to identify and understand.

Barbauld’s career around the time of the writing of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* was overtly focused on cultivating the nation. In 1810, she published her collection, *The British Novelists*, a fifty-volume set that included biographical information and critical reviews of some of the nation’s most famous novelists. The project clearly reflects her desire to contribute to and celebrate the British literary tradition. She was well read, and well respected, as an author, having been declared by reviewers as early as 1773 as inferior only to Shakespeare and Milton (Jones 119). To be an educated reader, essential to being a valuable citizen, required an independence of thought that Barbauld demonstrates in her own correspondence. For Barbauld, such an education was not dependent on a strict canon of single-minded authors. In fact, she advocated the opposite in a letter to Maria Edgeworth:

> In this as in all great questions let men of abilities write, and write strongly, on the side that strikes them; by this collision the truth will be struck out. A part of a system is often practicable where the whole may not be so, and the reader, from various views of various authors, strikes out a medium which would be insipid in the authors themselves, but may best suit his particular case. *(Memoir of Mrs. Barbauld* 143)

Barbauld’s repetition of the word “strike” emphasizes the imaginative freedom and action such education requires. To “strike” is “to make one’s way, go” and “to proceed in a new direction.”

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2 According to the O.E.D., both of these definitions were in usage around the time of Barbauld’s writing, with the second related to an excursion providing more examples of eighteenth century usage.
intrepid explorer, establishing a strong connection between imaginative pursuits and the freedom born of mobility. The cultivation of true education requires both the freedom of authors to write and readers to read, but ultimately should result in a “medium,” or a moderate opinion born of those experiences.

Barbauld took this philosophy to heart as she sought out likeminded individuals with whom she could work and from whom she could find inspiration. She saw herself as an exception to the rule of femininity, describing her education as “peculiar” and “no rule for others” while declaring, when approached about the possibility of a ladies periodical, that “there is no bond of union among literary women” (47, 86). This exceptionality allowed her to find comfort in her connection with Milton, who with Shakespeare and Spenser, was by the mid-eighteenth century one of “the poets most strongly associated with the British nation and British liberties” (Jones 119). According to Robert Jones, Barbauld found in Milton a poet who shared her view of the world, a precursor who “provided [her] with a language for articulating the world, one that was both tough and supple. It was also a way of writing verse that was linguistically sophisticated and politically engaged” (132). Milton’s Dissenting views would have coalesced with Barbauld’s, who was raised by a Dissenting family and as a result, as Marlon Ross argues, found “herself in an ironically fortuitous position, possessing a political voice without the drawback of belonging to the corrupt interests of established power” (92). Barbauld’s political poem, warning of the injustices associated with British imperial overreaching and their inevitably negative national consequences, results from

Regardless, the connotation of this term, and its repetition within the letter, are fascinating reflections of the connection between the metaphor of travel and her thoughts on imagination and intellect.
her situation within this Dissenting British poetic tradition, which offered a comfortable and safe promontory from which to advocate change.

_Eighteen Hundred and Eleven_, despite Barbauld’s earlier positive reviews and literary success, was vehemently rejected for its transgressive political approach. Despite reviewers’ praise and respect for her earlier works, the poem’s uncompromisingly negative view of British economic and military overreaching presented disturbed critics. John Wilson Croker’s review, perhaps the most famous of the negative assaults on the poem, demonstrates that offense in a particularly gendered way, arguing the primary flaw of the poem is the audacity of its author:

We had hoped, indeed, that the empire might have been saved without the intervention of a lady-author: we even flattered ourselves that the interests of Europe and of humanity would in some degree have swayed our public councils, without the descent of (dea ex machina) Mrs. Anna Letitia Barbauld in a quarto, upon the theatre where the great European tragedy is now performing. Not such, however, is her opinion; an irresistible impulse of public duty—a confident sense of commanding talents—have induced her to dash down her shagreen spectacles and her knitting needles, and to sally forth. (78)

Barbauld’s content here is not in question. While other critics critiqued her portrayal of an empire in imminent danger, Croker lashes out at Barbauld’s gender. Her “confident sense of commanding talents” is misplaced, precisely because she adopts the Miltonic/Dissenting notion of articulating the world through a distinctly political lens rather than anchoring herself to home and hearth. Her method, which focuses primarily rather than obtusely on the political issues of interest to British society, resonates most sharply because of its prophetic confidence. That this confidence came in the voice of a woman who chose to situate herself comfortably within the pantheon of British bards, implying that women writers can and should be considered as equal to those honored male poets, certainly contributed to Croker’s vehement reaction.
Barbauld's disregard for gendered female poetic roles in favor of overt political commentary coincided with increasing domestic chaos. The poem debuted in, and commented on, a year

in which the King was declared mentally incapable of ruling, the year of the Luddite uprising, of massive unemployment, of terrible food shortages and soaring food prices, of mounting sentiment against the war because of its disruptive effect on trade and finance capital . . . (Keach 573)

In a very real way, the events of the years preceding Barbauld’s *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* demonstrated the connection between the dual definitions of domestic. The events of the nation—political, economic, and military—adversely affected British homes. Barbauld herself, in 1804, reflects this clear connection and expresses the weary tension that characterized English life: “I am told that I ought to be frightened at the impending invasion, and if I were at a watering place perhaps I should, but really the invasion has been got up so often it begins to lose its effect, and I think we are pretty well prepared; besides my being afraid will do no good” (*Memoir* 91). Barbauld’s reaction to a constant state of domestic crisis is far from panic; instead, she turns the crisis into critique in her writing, focusing on how British immoderate and immoral behavior has created the negative environment at home. As a result, she makes every citizen equally culpable by refocusing their attention on how what is happening within their homes and borders can explain the problems that continue to threaten from outside of them.

In her focus on moderation, Anna Letitia Barbauld demonstrates a tension between liberty and restraint, a concern common to women writers engaged in the discourse of travel and one that situates her within a tradition of British male writers as well. Barbauld’s *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* focuses on the corrupted travel of
imperialism and war—travel no longer undertaken for personal edification but for greed and commercial gain—and offers her a vehicle to transcend boundaries ascribed to the woman poet and, even more so, to the female citizen. Her prophetic vision of a fallen British empire advocates moderation, arguing that the failure to maintain strong borders results in the disintegration of a distinct English cultural and political identity. Her role as poet-prophet, however, complicates this message of border control; while she transcends these boundaries deliberately through a forceful authorial voice, she simultaneously reins herself in through careful association with a long-standing British poetic tradition. Her deliberate advocacy of a political agenda of restrained, domestic focus over immoderate imperial aggression mirrors her simultaneous interrogation of the role as female poet in negotiating these relationships.

Barbauld’s focus on the principle of borders, with its associated connection to notions of liberty and restraint, extends Milton’s depiction of space in *Paradise Lost*. Milton describes the area just outside Hell, the area that awaits those that exit the now-open doors of Hell, as a boundary-less, unwieldy chaos. The space is described as

a dark

Illimitable ocean without bound,

Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height,

And time and place are lost; where eldest Night

And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold

Eternal anarchy… (II.890-96)

Every border is eliminated in this description. Beyond simply spatial limitations, temporal limitations are also lifted, forcing those who exist within this sphere to operate in a nebulous sense of timelessness and placelessness. A boundary-less existence
may seem like the height of freedom since there are no inhibitions to movement. However, the language Milton uses demonstrates that excessive freedom is, in fact, the worst kind of punishment. The boundaries of time and place “are lost,” asserting that markers of discrete dimensions are privileges rather than restrictions. Boundaries of time and place help define one’s relationship with the outside world and, therefore, create one’s identity. In an environment of borderless chaos, “eternal anarchy” reigns, emphasizing the integral relationship between peace and moderate restraint.

In dramatic contrast to his depiction of the borderless Chaos, Milton’s description of Eden emphasizes the naturally confined nature of the garden and, by extension, the relationship between borders and safety. The garden is an “enclosure green” with “hairy sides / With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild, / Access denied” (IV.133, 135-37). The garden’s defense is both natural and impenetrable, allowing those within its walls the physical safety that comes with sharply defined borders along with an associated freedom from anxiety. This language of protection through borders continues throughout the description of the garden proper, as Milton describes the “verdurous wall of Paradise” as comprising of “a circling row / Of goodliest trees loaden with fairest fruit” (IV.143, 146-47). The borders that encircle the Garden of Eden are not man-made, but natural; their existence in Milton’s depiction of the closest thing to heaven on earth emphasizes the importance and eternal nature of restraint to human happiness. Eden, the quintessential portrait of a utopian society, is sharply confined by borders that both protect and define. For Milton, and by extension for Barbauld, a successful society can exist only if it embraces and maintains borders.
Milton complicates his portrayal of the importance of physical borders by using the same language to describe imaginative pursuits, indicating that, even in one’s quest for knowledge and personal growth, restraint is an essential component of success. In his invocation to the Muse at the beginning of Book VII of *Paradise Lost*, Milton demonstrates the perils that face the imaginative interloper, and shies away from such overreaching. He uses the language of physical space to describe his flight of imagination, saying, “Up led by thee / Into the heaven of heavens I have presumed, / An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air” (VII.12-14). He pleads with the Muse to “Return me to my native element,” seeming to fear the consequences, for his physical and imaginative health, of existing too long in a boundary-less state.

Raphael, when later speaking about the power of knowledge and its relationship to God, advocates the need for restraint and “knowledge within bounds” (VII.120). He cautions against desire without restraint, and argues that such unrestrained thinking and action will fundamentally corrupt the knowledge that one already possesses:

knowledge is as food, and needs no less
Her temperance over appetite, to know
In measure what the mind may well contain,
Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind. (VII.126-30)

3 Interestingly, many of Raphael’s admonitions to restrain desire and keep knowledge contained are directed at Adam, as Eve either sleeps or takes care of traditionally domestic tasks. Though Eve is portrayed by Milton as consistently curious, Milton suggests that she will be content to hear Raphael’s admonitions through Adam. Barbauld recognizes a kind of gender quality in Milton’s depiction, as both Adam and Eve benefit from Raphael’s instruction, removing any gender hierarchy and arguing that the moderation that Raphael advocates is an admirable human characteristic, not just a male or female one.
The human imagination and desire for knowledge must be kept safely within established boundaries lest it become corrupt. Raphael's implication here seems to be that, without such limitations, the force that endows humanity with knowledge will withdraw. Instead of allowing unrestrained desire to remain unchecked, Adam determines to confine his efforts and "speak of things at hand / Useful, whence haply mention may arise / Of something not unseasonable to ask," a mandate directed to readers of Paradise Lost as well (VIII.199-201). We should keep our imaginations and the exercise of our freedoms restrained to individual experiences to avoid corruption created by an excessive and immoderate thirst for knowledge.

Barbauld as a female poet demonstrates the vexed nature of the artificial distinction between two elements of the domestic. She actively addressed political issues seemingly outside of her "domestic" world while simultaneously situating her own work within a storied British literary tradition. By allying herself with Milton and with other women writers in her concern with liberty and restraint, Barbauld creates a sharply delineated border for herself while transgressing that border simultaneously, a consistent feature of her prophetic voice throughout the poem. In defining herself as a British author, she offers herself some poetic safety; British poets are allowed to speak vociferously of British issues. Nevertheless, her adoption of themes of liberty and restriction as a female poet, as she asserts that she deserves an equal position beside Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, or Spenser, takes on an almost dangerous resonance. Barbauld initiates herself into a community of female writers who assert the need for moderate transgression in order to achieve freedom of genius and authorship,
establishing a tense harmony between such “transgression” and the laudable efforts to build and protect home and nation.

_Eighteen Hundred and Eleven_ traces the causes of Barbauld’s prophetic vision of a doomed and desolate future Britain back to the situations that create weak and pliable borders. War is Barbauld’s primary, and most easily accessible, critique, as the British were engaged in the Napoleonic Wars in the years surrounding the publication of the poem. Barbauld was not the only poet to address the impact that such an extended period of wartime had on the British domestic world, as “poetry played a major role in the ways in which the wars came to be understood, shaping history through narrative and sculpting wartime identities and attitudes” (Bainbridge 2). Simon Bainbridge argues that war poetry has a “particular power” to imaginatively transport its readers to the battlefield, making its political or sentimental message more potent (17). Barbauld capitalizes on this emphasis, as the “loud death drum, thundering from afar” opens the poem, a forceful sound from which “pours the storm of war” (lines 2, 5). The language that Barbauld uses—the drum that constantly sounds, one that “pours” indiscriminately—emphasizes the universality of war and its lack of restraint.

The force of war, by its nature, invades the country with a power that tears down borders not carefully maintained. Britain “feeds the fierce strife” and “Bravely, but vainly”  

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4 Indeed, war and revolution are powerful influences on many Romantic writers. Tracing the effect of these global issues on Romantic writers would require much more than an endnote; pieces by Shelley, Byron, and Wordsworth, among others who are routinely read and oft-anthologized, discuss the political climate at home and abroad. Suffice it to say that war became as common a poetic focus as nature or the imagination during this period in British literature.

5 The task of imaginatively transporting readers in her poem certainly underscores Barbauld’s connection to other women writers who used the mechanism of imaginative travel to educate readers, while simultaneously indicating the wide variety of genres that can be utilized to create this imaginative connection for the reader. This idea of imaginative travel emerges in many of my chapters, but see especially Chapter 6 for an extended discussion of this strategy.
attempts to fight for freedom, but with that effort comes distinctly negative effects for the
British countryside (lines 5-6). War leads to open borders and an empty homeland, as
soldiers leave to fight in foreign lands and the military engages not in defense but in
offense. By 1804, some scholars have estimated, “as many as 20 percent of all adult
males were serving either in the regular army or in one of the other defence forces,
including the volunteers” (Behrendt 16). Shortly before the poem’s creation, in 1809,
“nearly 700,000 soldiers served Britain” at home, abroad, and in the colonies (Behrendt
16). This war effort, combined with rampant imperial efforts entered into by the actively
colonizing Britain, shifts the primary focus away from domestic cares and into
unnecessary, international efforts. The deadly death drum of war and imperial
skirmishes that opens the poem similarly frames the tragic domestic consequences.

Barbauld depicts this national failure, stemming from a lapse in domestic border
defense, in distinctly feminized terms. Haley Bordo argues that the domestic focus in
Barbauld’s body of poetry at once connects and differentiates her from the Miltonic
model. Rather than invoking a muse unconnected to her own world, “Barbauld grounds
the poet in the domestic world: her Muse is a ‘domestic Muse’” (190). I argue that
Barbauld’s dual focus on the effects of war both on home and nation would make this
“domestic Muse” an expansive one, ignoring the tension between the two pillars of the
domestic and instead advocating for an organic relationship between the two. Her
poetic approach demonstrates the ability to be both anchored by the domestic and
anxiously engaged in political, economic, and social debates. Her poem focuses on the
multiplicity of ways that an external, imperial focus results in a Britain that is “fruitful in
vain” (line 23), a sentiment she repeats for emphasis in the opening lines of her poem.
This failure to be fruitful for the nation described as “an island Queen” asserts the deepest domestic weakness (line 40). The island Queen’s association with a feminized Freedom depicted as “[p]rostrate…beneath the despot’s sway” (line 9) is no accidental characterization. In fact, as Marlon Ross asserts, the emotion associated with this feminized figure of Freedom “at the point of rape” brings the reader to rapt attention, offering the poet the best opportunity to pursue a persuasive agenda (105). Her poetic depiction of this assault transfixes her readers imaginatively, creating a parallel experience for them and therefore solidifying the power of her portrayal.

Barbauld focuses her critique by depicting the failure of Nature, similarly and familiarly gendered female, to achieve her ends. “Glad Nature pours the means—the joys of life” across the world, but no one recognizes that restorative act because of their single-minded focus on the war effort and imperialist campaign (line 12). Nature is taking action—Barbauld describes how she “scents” and “clothes” the countryside with produce, using active and particularly domestic verbs—but those efforts are “[i]n vain” because of British arrogance (lines 13-14). Usurping Nature’s power, “[t]he sword, not sickle, reaps the harvest now,” leaving Nature impotent at best (line 18). Beauty is similarly described as powerless and ignored, mourning the failure of the British populace to offer “homage” as it once did to the “cultured arts” and “gentlest grace” once the hallmark of “her virgin race” (lines 27-29). Barbauld embeds a threat within this description of a cast-aside Beauty, as “the rose withers on its virgin thorns” (line 30). When the attention of a people is trained outside its borders, distracted by the “sport” of war or the race for imperial dominance, the culture that they seek to defend or extend through those activities may, in fact, disappear because of their apathy.
If war results in British arrogance and a disregard of nature’s power, it also results in an attitude of overreaching that creates the very real threat of invasion. Barbauld’s assertion that “war’s least horror is the ensanguined field” emphasizes how detrimental war is to contemporary British life. Barbauld describes the typical citizen at home as a “frantic man at strife,” reflecting the inherent and unnatural chaos that stems directly from imperial effort. Barbauld argues, throughout her poetry, that the truly horrifying result of war is “corruption from within perhaps in the very nature of man himself” (Favretti 103). When the borders between humanity and nature break down, and nature no longer has the power to awaken people to the recognition of their own frailties, man attempts to take on a God-like power not in keeping with the humble restraint that Milton advocates. Barbauld asks, in one particularly cutting passage:

\[
\text{thinks't thou, Britain, still to sit at ease,} \\
\text{An island Queen amidst thy subject seas,} \\
\text{While the vext billows, in their distant roar,} \\
\text{But soothe thy slumbers, and but kiss thy shore?} \\
\text{To sport in wars, while danger keeps aloof,} \\
\text{Thy grassy turf unbruised by hostile hoof? (lines 39-44)}
\]

Barbauld calls attention to the ridiculous arrogance and attitude of impenetrability espoused by Britain, believing herself both supreme—as Queen of the world—and in control of her “subject seas.” Britain doesn’t recognize the universality of the death drum, with its invasive borderlessness, and its inevitable ability to affect the empire adversely. Instead, Britain believes that these negative forces will simply “kiss” the shore and “soothe” her as a mother might.
This absurd perception and misplaced confidence bring with it vulnerability, as those who think they’re immune to negative effects are the most unprepared. The word “sport” suggests the audacity of imperial Britain. Barbauld argues that their involvement is unnecessary, an excessive exercise of military liberty that the empire fails to recognize as potentially catastrophic. This attitude, which creates a “tyranny [that] deanimates the social body” and “the prodigality of war [that] causes dessication” (Mandell, par. 17, 19), will inevitably come back to haunt to the originator. Barbauld makes a karmic argument here, emphasizing that what a country does will be done to it; its fruits, the seeds it sows if you will, will be its inevitable harvest. When an imperial power invades and “sports” in war around the world, without taking care to strengthen its own borders, those same sports will soon be taking place on its shores.

War’s most potent effect remains the one it has on families and domestic tranquility. This effect, which works to shift British focus away from the cultivation of its own security, extends beyond metaphor and into long-lasting and very real domestic failure. In her vision of war, the foundation of British social structure, the family, becomes more concerned with the plight of family members outside of Britain than on the way in which they could be contributing to the health of the country. Barbauld demonstrates this shifted focus in her emblematic “soft-one” who becomes a universal representative of the domestic populace left behind. This woman, rather than concentrating on the circumstances immediately surrounding her, instead

the spread map with anxious eye explores,
Its dotted boundaries and penciled shores,
Asks where the spot that wrecked her bliss is found,
And learns its name but to detest the sound. (lines 35-38)
This metaphorical shift would resonate with Barbauld’s readers, who knew that families were psychologically removed from British domestic concerns, but were often physically transported in order to join their loved ones on the battlefields of this “spread map.” “War,” for these families, “was the defining reality of British life” (Behrendt 17). These “penciled shores” are, by their nature, transient and ever changing.

With the family serving as an emblem of the state, Barbauld’s choice of a woman to represent this skewed, external focus becomes essential to her argument about the horrific effects of war. Her choice emphasizes Anne Mellor’s argument that “women participated fully in the public sphere” through their literary engagement with an “enormous range of topics, from the French Revolution and the abolitionist campaigns against the slave trade through doctrinal religious issues and methods of education to the economic management both of the individual household and of the state” (2-3). Moreover, these women, as Mellor argues, “[i]nsofar as they represented the interests of women, children, and the family . . . also saw themselves as peculiarly responsible for defining the future direction of public policy and social reform” (9). In her focus on the domestic ramifications of an imperial agenda, Barbauld argues for such political and social reform.

The gaze of the family parallels and symbolizes the concerns of the state. Trained outward, both are being defined by the concerns of the foreign and are therefore stifling the development of domestic institutions. Even in their greatest success, a nation with an outwardly trained perspective will never truly appreciate the devastating effects of war. In June 1810, Barbauld herself considered these consequences in a letter:

when shall we see the moral of the world’s great story, which astonishes by its events, interests by the numerous agents it puts in motion, but of which
we cannot understand the bearings, or predict the catastrophe? It is a tangled web, of which we have not the clue. I do not know how to rejoice at this victory, splendid as it is, over Buonaparte, when I consider the horrible waste of life, the mass of misery, which such gigantic combats must occasion. (Memoir 131-132)

In *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, Barbauld considers and predicts those consequences, to offer a view, other than the one of cheerful victor, that takes into account the economic, cultural, domestic, and international ramifications of England’s foreign policies. Her choice to balance the depiction of the effects of war between the domestic and the foreign within *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* emphasizes both her call for moderation and a more domestic focus. Barbauld implements in her poem the philosophy she advocates so strongly for her state.

In addition to her depiction of war as an activity that weakens borders, Barbauld calls attention to the borderlessness and fluidity of global trade. The system of global trade encourages businessmen to “invade” other nations with their products and to encourage a parallel porousness of entry into Britain. These “princely merchants” spread the “golden tide of Commerce” singlemindedly throughout the world, ostensibly resulting in the positive benefits of riches and prestige to those involved (lines 57, 62). In keeping with the “eighteenth century notion (initially Giambattista Vico’s, and further developed by Adam Smith and Bernard Mandeville) that destructive passions can be harnessed for the public good,” Barbauld viewed trade and commerce as “a positive drive [that] carries the negative within it” (Favretti 105). We see the triumph of the negative in her depiction of these business practices within *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. British merchants, whose business takes them elsewhere, are replaced with the merchants and wares of other nations, making the pursuit of “Enfeebling Luxury”—
manifested by one’s consumption of luxury items like silks and spices from exotic faraway places—more transparent than ever.

By the eighteenth century, the literary discourse on luxury focused on “luxury as one of the most important principles for the identification of evil in history” (Saglia par. 1). Treatments of luxury also identified the pursuit as “the sign not only of wealth, but of the individual, the society, and the nation that produce much affluence” (Saglia par. 4). Despite its positive potential for Britain, Barbauld describes the “gifts” of Commerce “pour[ed] . . . on every shore” in distinctly negative terms. “Babel’s towers and terraced gardens” and the “pointed obelisks,” both a result of flowering global economies, are not cultivated or developed—they “rise” and “invade,” endowed with independence and agency that hints at a threatening forcefulness (lines 229-230). The abandonment of the “crowded mart and busy street” of Barbauld’s future British empire, bustling and productive at the moment, results from borders opened indiscriminately in pursuit of avarice. Barbauld does not shy away from addressing issues of economic or imperialist ventures; “[a]ssuming the mantle of an Old Testament prophet, Barbauld here utters one of the female poet’s most devastating condemnations of nascent British imperialism as a systematic denial of individual freedom in the name of ‘commerce’ and ‘progress’” (Mellor 80).

Recognizing the powerful economic forces behind these open trade routes, Barbauld takes care to demonstrate that the ease of economic entrance into Britain is ultimately not worth the risk. Diego Saglia argues that the negative attitude toward commerce Barbauld constructs within her other works reverses in favor of a more positive portrayal of global trade within *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. He reads “the
figure of the British trader becom[ing] the symbol and guarantor of national welfare and strength” within the poem, as Barbauld offers “praise” for merchants and trains a “sympathetic eye…to their plight” (Saglia par. 28). As a result of such a depiction, according to Saglia, Barbauld argues that “it is the luxury thus produced that indicates the wealth of the nation and its economic welfare, its cultural activity and artistic wealth” (par. 30). I strongly disagree with this reading, as these “celebratory” passages are clearly laden with the language of impermanence and frivolity. The financial gain resulting from such mercantilist imperialism is “baseless wealth” which “dissolves in air away / Like mists that melt before the morning ray” (lines 54-55).

Indeed, the economic activities of Britain are much worse than transient—they are corrupting. A lack of restraint results in a horrifically disjunctive existence, one of either “Enfeebling Luxury” or “ghastly Want” with no possibility of a moderate position (line 64). This either-or disjunction inevitably results from “heightened class division” and comes “with the inordinate hardship borne by workers and peasants,” inequitable and ridiculously unfair (Keach 574). A “golden tide of Commerce,” without behavioral borders established by citizens committed to moderation, will only leave Britain worse than it found her, cultivating a population addicted to consumer appetites (line 62). The corrupting force of conspicuous consumption creates an environment opposite to that of true travel, which encourages the cultivation of identity and contributes to domestic identity and strength. By connecting luxury and these avaricious patterns of consumption with the doom she foretells, Barbauld brings the consequences, and the potential solution, to individual doorsteps. As Laura Mandell argues, she makes an argument that “insists on people’s responsibility for actions performed by gigantic forms”
of state or government (par. 21). If individuals are responsible for the corruption through their thirst for luxury, then they too can stem the tide of doom through individual, moderate, and domestically focused change.

Barbauld’s prophetic description of a ruined London, complete with American tourist-pilgrims, argues that an open, undefined border stemming from a history of imperialism results in a fundamental loss of domestic identity. The “mighty city,” once the seat of the vast and powerful British empire, has become an open one,

which by every road

In floods of people poured itself abroad;

Ungirt by walls, irregularly great,

No jealous drawbridge, and no closing gate. . .(lines 159-162)

In our multicultural society, where diversity is welcomed and in fact encouraged, this portrayal of London sounds like a utopian rather than a dystopian vision of the future. Reading this description of London solely as one of a proverbial shining city on a hill ignores some of the complexities embedded within its language. Certainly within the London that Barbauld describes, “Where through each vein spontaneous plenty flowed, / Where Wealth enjoyed, and Charity bestowed,” travelers and immigrants would be welcomed (lines 167-68). In her physical description of London, Barbauld portrays a troubling sense of boundlessness that, rather than simply portraying freedom, implies a distinct sense of vulnerability. A road that can allow “floods of people” to exit is also open to those same floods of people entering the city, especially when those roads are unguarded and unrestrained.

Barbauld’s word choice describing the freedom of access to London, “ungirt by walls” and without a “jealous drawbridge” or “closing gate,” demonstrates her
engagement with the continuing thematic focus of Romantic women writers writing about travel—the tension between freedom and restraint. A city without walls is a city free from artificial restraint, liberty that allows all to enter and exit without limitation. That “jealous” drawbridge, perhaps, might have been “jealous” by being discriminatory and isolationist, a position Barbauld is clearly not espousing. A city “ungirt by walls” is free to grow and expand without worry that it might transcend a preconceived or illogically constructed border. Nevertheless, Barbauld’s choice of both “jealous” and “ungirt” to describe these boundaries demonstrate her more vexed attitude toward such unchecked freedom.

The O.E.D. defines “jealous” as being “devoted, eager, zealous.” A drawbridge characterized as jealous is not necessarily a discriminatory one, but one that simply takes its duty of protection seriously and is zealously committed to that stated purpose. The absence of that kind of commitment to protection leaves a city distinctly vulnerable. This looseness is similarly addressed in Barbauld’s use of “ungirt,” which has two primary definitions: “deprived or destitute of something” and “not drawn together; left loose or incompact.” To be ungirt is to be loose, without a definitive outline or border or organization. To be ungirt is to exist in the absence of the protection that only comes with clear restraint and definition. Barbauld’s language casts a threatening shadow over the freedom that the depiction of London’s roads seems to portray. A lack of clear borders leaves the city of London, the heart of Britain, without a clear identity. A place without a border cannot be distinguished from any other place.

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6 This definition is certainly not the only definition of jealous, but it is one of the elements of the primary definition of the word. Another, perhaps in more common usage in the early nineteenth century, is “Zealous or solicitous for the preservation or well-being of something possessed or esteemed; vigilant or careful in guarding; suspiciously careful or watchful.” The implications, I believe, are the same.
Barbauld’s description of her future Londoners clearly reflects a lack of cohesive domestic identity. The streets, so open to entrance from anyone, now carry more people of foreign origin than British-born citizens. This view of London is couched within a description of a Britain that has become “the gray ruin and the mouldering stone” which “sit[s] in dust, as Asia does now” and is characterized primarily by its openness to the visitors who “With duteous zeal their pilgrimage shall take / From the blue mountains, or Ontario’s lake” (lines 124, 129-30). Essentially, London has been invaded by foreign tourists, an invasion that Barbauld echoes in her description of London at its height, when it contains “Streets, where the turban’d Moslem, bearded Jew, / And wooly Afric, met the brown Hindu” (lines 165-166). These parallel invasions, one before the fall of the British empire and one after, indicate that such porousness of boundaries is not a positive portrayal, but a threatening portent of the ruin to come. The people that Barbauld describes are not stereotypically identifiable as British. In fact, she focuses pointedly on their difference, both perhaps in an effort to argue for London’s ethnic diversity as well as to demonstrate its porousness and permeability. London is not distinguished by any one ethnic, religious, cultural, or social identity. Its amalgamation of races, creeds, colors, and faiths, while potentially beneficial, also implies a loss as the combination of heritages seems as vexed as her description of the open London. The London Barbauld describes freely welcomes all—with their attendant, and vastly different, cultural practices and political ideologies—to join and populate a thriving, established community. A city that does so without restraint risks losing its own identity amid a flood of new and competing ideas.
In fact, Barbauld’s multicultural depiction becomes the inevitable consequence of Britain’s imperial pursuits; as the British empire seeks to consume other lands, the people of those lands invade and take over England. This reading is definitely a dangerous one, as it implies a xenophobic and isolationist Barbauld and grates against our modern, inclusive sensibilities. My point is not to encourage this limited view. In fact, a poet like Barbauld, whose politics linked her in the public eye with “radicals” like “the ‘alarming’ Miss Wollstonecraft” (McCarthy 176), would certainly not be averse to the education and horizon-broadening that such diversity would bring to England. I am arguing, instead, that her vexed description of London in the context of the thematic focus of liberty and restraint calls attention to the relationship between physical borders and definitions of identity. When one cannot clearly delineate one’s cultural identity amid a mass of competing others, Barbauld seems to assert, one is already on the road to ruin. Perhaps even more importantly, this portrayal of a distinctly foreign London reflects the lack of attention paid by citizens throughout the world to the needs and development of their own home countries. Citizens cannot develop the cultural, political, and economic identity of their countries if they abandon their homes in search of international adventures.

Barbauld connects her vision of a fallen British empire to historically important, yet now defunct, empires to emphasize the impossibility of a strong cultural and political

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7 I am not, however, ignoring the very vexed relationship Barbauld seems to have with these foreign populations. Perhaps a tinge of xenophobia is present; however, to focus on and claim a polarizing position like this negates the complexity of Barbauld’s depiction and falls into the tempting trap of binary labeling that often accompanies criticism of Barbauld and other Romantic women writers of this era.

8 Richard Polwhele links Barbauld and Wollstonecraft in his infamous poem “The Unsex’d Female,” listing Barbauld as the first of the women to take heed of Wollstonecraft’s battle cry for female independence: “She spoke: and veteran BARBAULD caught the strain, / And deem’d her songs of Love, her Lyrics vain...”
identity within a land void of regulated borders. As William Keach argues, Barbauld models this comparison along the “still influential vein of Volney’s *Ruins of Empire*” as “she links the internal collapse of British power to the decline and fall of previous empires, relics of whose might are to be found incorporated within Britain’s own decay” (572). These ruined civilizations become interchangeable, and the near impossibility of differentiation between once-distinct empires emphasizes how far each has lost its own unique cultural footprint. We see this loss most clearly through the travel of Barbauld’s future tourist-pilgrim:

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with enthusiast love the pilgrim roves
To seek his footsteps in forsaken groves,
Explores the fractured arch, the ruined tower,
Those limbs disjoined of gigantic power;
Still at each step he dreads the adder’s sting,
The Arab’s javelin, or the tiger’s spring;
With doubtful caution treads the echoing ground,
And asks where Troy or Babylon is found. (lines 251-58)
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Ostensibly, this pilgrim is traveling in each of the countries in which these civilizations once existed. Because our only encounter with these tourist-pilgrims thus far has been with those visiting the once-great London, we may be confused at the cultural markers that indicate the pilgrims’ trek into a once-great Troy, Babylon, or Ottoman empire. Knowing, however, that Barbauld sets this travel in London, and remembering her description of the multicultural, multiethnic city of the future, Barbauld’s passage now takes on a new dimension. Rather than chronicling a worldwide pilgrimage to the sites of ancient greatness, Barbauld instead describes an imaginative journey that the
pilgrims take as they tour a London made possible only by a confused cultural identity created by a history of imperial exploration. When Britain’s borders began to break down, so did its ability to create and maintain a cohesive and recognizable cultural identity.

Barbauld’s depictions of the movement of Genius between these ancient and fallen civilizations emphasize the role of boundaries in identity formation. One civilization’s cultural activities seem to bleed into the other, without regard for differences. In fact, because of their lack of borders, these civilizations no longer have a distinct cultural identity at all:

The sons of Odin tread on Persian looms,
And Odin’s daughters breathe distilled perfumes;
Loud minstrel Bards, in Gothic halls, rehearse
The Runic rhyme, and “build the lofty verse.”

The Muse, whose liquid notes were wont to swell
To the soft breathings of the Aeolian shell,
Submits, reluctant, to the harsher tone,

And scarce believes the altered voice her own. (lines 275-82)

The sons of Odin, heirs of the Norse tradition, are now working on Persian looms, creating works that could no longer be considered strictly Norse artifacts. The daughters of Odin “breathe distilled perfumes” which come from that same Far East exotic locale. The entire description of the creation of art—poetry, music, even textiles—is fused with indeterminacy. Why are the sons of Odin watching as a minstrel

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9 Barbauld here quotes Milton’s *Lycidas*, yet another indication of her deep admiration for and connection with Milton’s work.
Bard uses their language to create a raucous “harsher tone”? The Muse even seems alienated by this fusion, as she “scarce believes the altered voice her own.” This altered voice, I argue, results from of a lack of clear cultural identity. Barbauld would, of course, see the connection to authorship. She argues, then, by extension that an author’s voice needs boundaries in order to invoke and maintain Genius, a theme reminiscent of Milton’s caution to readers in *Paradise Lost*; imagination requires careful limitations, and Barbauld finds those through her alignment with a larger tradition of British poetry. Without restraints, without borders, such interactions between civilizations cause discord and conflict that forces Genius away.

Barbauld’s descriptions of the revered figures of Genius that her tourist-pilgrims come to view emphasize the intimate relationship between a discrete cultural identity and confined spaces. The “flight of Genius from Britain” is the “most contested aspect” of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, with contemporary critics “fixated on its national implications;” more recent critics wonder at Barbauld’s use of the figure of Genius, as it “sounds suspiciously like a Romantic and ahistorical agent of change” (Keane 172-173). Critics have read the shift westward of Genius to be a sign of Barbauld’s tacit approval of and admiration for the burgeoning American continent. However, while Barbauld did have affection for and a distinctly idealistic view of the newly born America, she

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10 See Heinowitz, Cole, and Birns as three examples of critics who argue that Barbauld is lauding America rather than critiquing Britain. A burgeoning facet of this scholarship focuses on Spanish-America in Barbauld’s long poem. Barbauld’s inclusion of these sites is certainly interesting. Within the larger context of the poem, however, these examples serve to illuminate the very real potential for British Genius to leave for the more invigorating and democratic countries being developed in the Western Hemisphere.

11 To Maria Edgeworth in 1823, on the occasion of reading two American novels, she said: “I do not wish them to write novels yet. Let them explore and describe their new country. Let them record the actions of their Washington, the purest character perhaps, that history has to boast of, let them enjoy their free, their unexpensive government, number their rising towns, and boast that persecution does not set her bloody
focuses her poetic attention on the escape of Genius from British shores rather than on its welcome reception on others. Genius, I would argue, is a reflection of the relative health of a nation-state, a force requiring a balance of freedom and restraint in order to both operate effectively and cultivate artistic endeavors.

Barbauld demonstrates how Genius is restrained, or effectively confined, in her description of the tourist pilgrimage to “some sculptured urn, / The ponderous mass of Johnson’s form to greet” within “chill sepulchral marbles” (lines 181, 184-185). These sharply confined spaces control and define the identity of the figures of genius—and even the “ponderous mass” of Johnson, both physical and artistic, can be confined in such a manner. Specific places become the fountain of Genius, in Barbauld’s account, emblems of political and military identity:

To every spot shall lead his wondering guests
On whose known site the beam of glory rests:
Here Chatham’s eloquence in thunder broke,
Here Fox persuaded, or here Garrick spoke;
Shall boast how Nelson, fame and death in view,
To wonted victory led his ardent crew. . . (lines 89-94)

Barbauld emphasizes the necessity of a particular, specific place to highlight Genius; her repetition of the word “here” helps us to understand that these acts took place in specific areas and, as a result, are visited and revered in the same way.

The connection between these acts, which England “shall proudly claim” as her own, and the discrete places in which they occur leads to the development of a specific foot in any corner of their exhaustive territories. Then let them kindle into poetry, but not yet, not till the more delicate shades and nicer delineations of life are familiar to them, let them descend to novels.”
British cultural identity. Genius must be claimed permanently by the places for which it helps create identity:

Saints, Heroes, Sages, who the land adorn,

Seem rather to descend than to be born;

Whilst History, midst the rolls consigned to fame,

With pen of adamant inscribes their name. . . (lines 236-40)

These figures adorn a specific land that can be identified on the map. Genius is associated with place and with space, not with the ephemeral borderlessness that comes with an imperialistic, externally focused mindset. The adamant that inscribes the name of this genius emphasizes the permanence of such an act and, therefore, the connection between borders and a long-lasting and distinct cultural identity. Saints, heroes, and sages must come home in order to achieve their long-lasting contribution to society.

One cannot ignore Barbauld’s use of the metaphor of the pen here either. If a cultural event is to be ascribed to a place through the pen, then who better to create that connection than the writers who chronicle such events? Whether historical, literary, or scientific, these writers offer to any culture this Genius-claiming ability—and, as a result, contribute to those acts of Genius themselves. This attitude hearkens back to Milton’s warning that knowledge must be confined and restrained in order to maintain its power. Like that warning in *Paradise Lost*, Barbauld’s depiction here indicates that without a clearly defined area in which to exist, Genius cannot achieve its potential power. Without those boundaries, and therefore without Genius, cultural identity is corrupted into a hodge-podge of artistic endeavors without any definable uniqueness.
Barbauld reflects the corruption of Britain’s once-distinct cultural identity through her depiction of her tourist-pilgrims. These travelers seem to not only be aware of Britain’s great cultural heritage, but to be influenced by it:

Of Hagley’s woods the enamoured virgin dream,
And Milton’s tones the raptured ear enthrall,
Mixt with the roar of Niagara’s fall;
In Thomson’s glass the ingenuous youth shall learn
A fairer face of Nature to discern;
Nor of the Bards that swept the British lyre
Shall fade one laurel, or one note expire. (lines 94-100)

The literary heritage of Britain is as instrumental, in this portrayal, to learning and development for Americans as it has been for British citizens. Nicholas Birns argues for Barbauld’s relative comfort with this changing guard of Genius and literary merit, noting that “London, with its ‘summer ices and her winter rose’ is still beautiful, though a Keatsian autumnal harvest is nonetheless looming” and that those “with whom she feels a political and ideological affinity” are the figures of importance to these new American tourist-pilgrims. “These are all people Barbauld knows and respects: they are also people whose work, literal and imaginative has carried them beyond the British Isles as strictly defined” (551). Birns is right. Barbauld does choose figures of great merit to identify with British Genius. To believe that she maintains a calm, zen-like attitude toward the shifting of that Genius from defining British cultural identity to influencing and solidifying the dominance of a formal colonial power is absurd. Despite her warm feelings towards the young America, Barbauld finds in this shift a deep sense of sadness and a greater sense of irony. The mighty imperial force of Britain ultimately
falls because of its own overreaching, and in its failure sacrifices the cultural bonds that hold these writers, artists, philosophers, and scientists together.

The irony of this legacy, and the purity of the British influence in America, is clear as Barbauld describes the state of art in her future London. The pilgrims, whose sole purpose is to pay homage to the tombs and birthplaces of the figures of antiquated genius they admire, visit an art museum where we are told that “Reynolds [will] be what Raphael was before” (line 208). Thus, as readers, we expect to find a catalog of British artists that will outlast the empire as well, just as we were given in the list of British bards earlier. Yet, we are told that

On spoils from every clime their eyes shall gaze,

Egyptian granites and the Etruscan vase;

And when midst fallen London, they survey

The stone where Alexander’s ashes lay,

Shall own with humbled pride the lesson just

By Time’s slow finger written in the dust. (lines 209-14)

The emphasis here is not on a comparison between the art of Britain and the art of the world or on the importance of world art to cultural education. Instead, Barbauld argues that the British, in their arrogance, have spent so much time dallying in other lands and consuming others’ history that their own cultural identity has been corrupted. In their eagerness to open the borders of other lands to exploration, cultivation, and colonization, Britain has allowed its own identity to be lost amid the new spoils it found and returned as symbols of its imperial might. “These relics function not only as

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12 Percy Shelley, in his long poem *Alastor*, has his protagonist take a similar tour. The commonality of the cataloguing of foreign sites and museum showpieces essential to education is a fascinating look at how pervasive the foreign had become in British notions of upper-class education.
reminders of earlier civilizations gone before but as symbols of Britain’s own corruption. They are mementoes of the imperialistic, acquisitive, and avaricious economic base upon which Britain has laid its foundations and because of which it is doomed to fall” (Bradshaw par. 20). In Barbauld’s future vision of Britain, the National Gallery is transformed from a showcase of British artists into a museum that displays a host of relics salvaged from previous civilizations. Rather than allowing these tourist-pilgrims a glimpse into the Genius of the British culture, this dystopian vision gives them only a glimpse into an identity compromised by a lack of domestic attention.

Barbauld highlights the vexed position of these former colonist tourist-pilgrims paying homage to those imperial spoils. A pilgrim invests in travel that encourages edification; the word itself hearkens back to religious pilgrimages that were not undertaken for commodity-driven aims. Nevertheless, the tourist-pilgrims that populate Barbauld’s vision of a future London, while ostensibly honest in their intent and genuine in their respect, resemble the tourists of the 19th century. These people, who spend a minimum of time and effort to “experience” a place, remain more intent on checking off an “important” place from their list of sites to see than engaging in the process of cultural or historical education. As Christoph Bode argues, the vision that Barbauld presents us of this tourist world clearly invokes the tourist world familiar to her readers: “just as one might stand in front of the pyramids and ruins of ancient Egypt in 1811, so some day American tourists will visit the remains of St Paul’s in London and do daytrips to Cambridge and Stratford, to see the remnants of something that is definitely over and done with, as the fellahs of the Thames make their living as tour guides” (76). The vibrant London familiar to readers, a city that Barbauld describes to Maria Edgeworth as
“food for the mind and the imagination” (*Memoirs* 104), is now stagnant and dead, fodder only for tourists seeking the past rather than artists stimulated by the present.

The ironic juxtaposition between Barbauld’s advocacy for strong and well-secured borders and her narrative approach indicates the constant tension implicit in any discussion of liberty and restraint. For the poet, whose task it is to harness and cultivate Genius, existing within borders established by society may not be feasible. Genius, despite its need to operate within clear boundaries in its efforts to cultivate a distinctive cultural identity, is itself described as a force that resists static confinement. “Secret his progress is” Barbauld tells us, which indicates the inability to confine such progress to the gaze of others (line 216). “No force arrests his foot, no chains can bind” the force of freedom and, by extension, Genius, but the results of these complementary forces are distinctly positive:

the human brute awakes,

And, roused to better life, his sodden hut forsakes:

He thinks, he reasons, glows with purer fires,

Feels finer wants, and burns with new desires. . . (lines 218-22)

The power that causes these positive changes is a power without confinement. The utterly free nature of Genius makes it a dangerous and compelling force, offering the kind of power that Milton cautions against in *Paradise Lost*. Those who seek to channel Genius, to make it most fruitful, must have the ability to both respect its power and restrain its effects. Genius must have the freedom to move at will, but when it alights on a land, the nation must be prepared to harness and contain it effectively in order for it to help cultivate that nation into a productive, well-defined culture. In her role as a
distinctly British poet, situated well within the Miltonic tradition, Barbauld asserts her position as a figure prepared to contain Genius through her writing.

Nevertheless, Barbauld, in her position as this poet-prophet, transcends clearly established temporal and behavioral boundaries and positions. In this prophetic role, Barbauld lays claim to a viewpoint that allows her to see all time—past, present, and future—and to narrate the future with a confidence that transcends ordinary knowledge. The tradition of the female poet-prophet was not a new one; in fact, Barbauld’s embrace of this position, despite its transgressive attitudes towards temporality and content, could be seen as another facet of her position within the British poetic tradition. Marlon Ross calls Barbauld’s position within *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* “double dissent,” arguing that her position as woman and Dissenter offers her the opportunity to at once “das[h] the myth that women must suffer the consequences of political intrigue while remaining politically chaste themselves” and demonstrate that “resistance to power must be enacted as conscientious dissent (grounded in politic words, not action) at the margins of active power” (103-104). In this double dissent, then, Barbauld emphasizes the need for both freedom and restraint. Contemporary critics could not reconcile themselves to her poet-prophet position, or to the idea that within this poem she has “stationed herself at a single fixed point, 1811, from which she can survey the broad expanse of society and time in all directions” (Favretti 100).

Understanding that “[t]he ability to see the world in this kind of broad prospect taken from a single, secured eminence had been claimed by powerful men” is crucial to understanding the transgressive nature of Barbauld’s poetic posture (Favretti 100).

13 See Orianne Smith for an engaging introduction to this tradition.
Prior to *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, Barbauld had been seen and praised by critics as displaying a “literary androgyny” that permeated her work (McCarthy 177). However, in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, Barbauld abandons many of the boundaries governing gendered behavior, a seeming contradiction to her entire philosophy. She does not solely confine her discussion of national ills to the home or the hearth, instead choosing to survey history from the position of timeless prophecy. Nevertheless, her entire focus remains on the cultivation of the domestic good, employing metaphors of femininity to emphasize this connection. She essentially anchors herself to both the home and the nation, not at all uncomfortable with the forcefulness of her approach or the potential transgressiveness of her positioning. Her choice certainly led her critics to be uncomfortable, eliciting vociferously negative reviews that have become the most famous aspect of her work. For her, Genius could not be confined within socially ascribed, gendered expectations or the restraints of time and place. Her position as poet-prophet—which she adopted regardless of social criticism or consequences in an attempt to create a greater good—transgresses the boundaries ascribed to her, effectively alienating her from the critical success that she once enjoyed.

Critics and readers would be remiss not to recognize how Barbauld balances this transgression with a purposeful, measured restraint. She wrote in a cultural environment, as Joel Haefner argues, that was reexamining and restricting the role of a woman writer:

> [T]he backlash to the feminism of the 1790s led to changes in the aesthetic geography available for women writers. It was no longer safe to write within a Bluestocking salon of women or (worse yet) the radical circle around Mary Wollstonecraft; that had become pejorative....One solution was for women to write within a familial environment, a “safe” place because domesticity could be accommodated with writing within one sphere. (267)
Barbauld certainly transcends this model of single-sphere writing, embracing the view that Anne Mellor offers us in *Mothers of the Nation*, of a woman writing about politics because of her vested interest in the education and development of the nation’s youth. However, Haefner’s point about the careful negotiation women writers had to engage in is valid here, and important to recognize in Barbauld’s writing. While the vitriolic critical reception of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* often colors Barbauld as a renegade political voice, her choice to position her most potent political commentary within the domestic lives of English citizens emphasizes her own interrogation of that role. Her argument for balance in governmental affairs constructs a parallel call for a balance in poetry, as she seems to question how well a woman writer can venture into foreign territory without losing her grasp on her immediate circle of influence. If, as Haley Bordo argues, “she performs rather than simply states the ‘truths’ that she aims to advance” (188), Barbauld’s domestic focus within *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* mirrors her own poetic philosophy, recognizing the need for both liberty and restraint in order to achieve the most positive ends. While seemingly paradoxical, the abandonment of social boundaries in order to achieve poetic perspective, Barbauld’s choice to embody the poet-prophet role reflects her great desire to do the greatest domestic good and, thus, allows her to maintain her hold on the domestic while surveying the foreign.

Barbauld’s complex argument—that only within strongly defended and established borders can the transgressive work of poetry and art take place—falls within a particularly Romantic legacy of portraying the truly successful poet, who harnesses Genius and communicates well that act, as separate from the common man. Coleridge, in “Kubla Khan,” demonstrates the fear that the transgressor poses. After he has
created “That sunny dome! those caves of ice!” in air, the poet foresees his permanent exile:

   And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
   His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
   Weave a circle round him thrice,
   And close your eyes with holy dread,
   For he on honey-dew hath fed,
   And drunk the milk of Paradise. (lines 49-54)

For Coleridge, then, just as for Barbauld, the power of Genius makes the poet an overreacher, in the same way that Milton feared in his invocation to the Muse in *Paradise Lost*. Milton begged to be returned again to his previous existence, but Coleridge and, I would argue, Barbauld see the transgressive poet as occupying a distinctly separate space that allows them to transcend boundaries of expectations in order to contribute to British cultural identity. Even though Coleridge’s poet is exiled from the company of those who feared his imagination, he is confined within a discrete space, sharply defined by the circle wound round him thrice. He may be exiled, but he is still operating within a distinctly ordered and defined world, able to see the world around him and attempt to contribute to its development.

Barbauld, for her part, does the same. While she transgresses borders within *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* in order to construct her prophetic poetic vision, she confines her attention to the concerns of her own homeland, on its future, past, and present, in the attempt to create a better and stronger England. Ultimately, that contribution to cultural identity compensates for the controversial nature of her poem. Even while attempting to achieve balance between a domestic connection and the exile
that poetic prophecy requires, Barbauld chooses what is best for the nation regardless of the personal consequences. Coleridge, Barbauld, and even Shelley, who declared poets to be the “unacknowledged legislators of the world,”¹⁴ argue that their position as poet places them automatically on the high promontory looking down, alienated but still invested in the domestic success and development of the country they proudly claim as their own.

¹⁴ See Percy Shelley’s “Defence of Poetry”: “It is impossible to read the compositions of the most celebrated writers of the present day without being startled with the electric life which burns within their words. They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations, for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present, the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire: the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World.”
Could travelling fifty miles produce such an immediate change?—
You were looking so poorly here; everybody seem’d sensible of it.
—Is there a charm in a hack postchaise?
—Letter to Cassandra Austen, April 1805

Critics have long debated Jane Austen’s relationship to the Romantic political
world, often attributing to her work a polarizing political position that engages with
multiple definitions of the term “domestic.” As David Wheeler demonstrates, one critical
model views Austen’s work as characterized by “conservative social values [such as]
family relations, stability, considered judgments, a sense of home, long-established
class hierarchy, [and] an almost sadly nostalgic desire for permanence” (131). The other
position, modeled by critics like Claudia Johnson, argues for Austen’s liberal attitude,
that “her only apparent ‘silence’ on matters political is a creditable choice of strength
rather than a decorous concession to ‘feminine’ weakness or ignorance . . . [that]
permitted her to rewrite the lexicon of conservative discourse” (xxv). Jon Mee sees in
her work a nationalistic narrative, focused on how “domestic virtue in the novels is
intimately connected with a practical concern for the national interest via the idea of
‘female patriotism’” (87). Edward Said famously argues that Austen, within Mansfield
Park, advances the British colonial project by demonstrating how the success of the
English country estate was inherently dependent on the economic enterprises of West
Indian colonial plantations. Like Maaja A. Stewart, I believe the most fruitful critical
attitude toward Jane Austen is found in “locating the hidden and complex relationships
between the apparently non-historical domestic existences of her protagonists and the rapidly changing economic and social institutions of the age" (1-2). Essentially, polarizing Austen leads us nowhere but in circles. Austen’s complexities, and even her contradictions, make her fruitful for critical study; the careful balance between her “extreme domesticity of focus,” as Miranda Burgess characterizes it (Burgess 394), and her interrogation of issues related to both the foreign and domestic worlds argues for a moderate, worldly, wise, and complicated Austen. Her complexity has not been truly appreciated amid the clamor to force her into an uncomplicated political position.

Austen’s novels engage in a long tradition of Romantic women writers’ fascination with travel and tourism, spearheaded, as we have seen, by Ann Radcliffe and Mary Wollstonecraft and continued by Charlotte Smith and Anna Letitia Barbauld, among others. Austen’s unique approach to travel transplants the contemporary international interest in the exotic and foreign onto home ground. Good travelers, Austen argues, are true, often female, patriots, interested in cultivating the nation through experience and education. Thus, Austen’s employment of travel illuminates travel and tourism as an essential act of self-definition, inevitably affecting citizen and nation for either good or ill. Austen does not wholeheartedly embrace all travel practices as edifying or productive. In her works, Austen delineates the difference between traveler and tourist, with travel characterized as an art form and tourism as a domestic evil. As Judith Adler argues, the distinction between travel and tourism exists in its motivations; travel is “undertaken and executed with a primary concern for the meanings discovered, created, and communicated” and “serves as a medium for bestowing meaning on the self and the social, natural, or metaphysical realities through which it moves” (1368). Tourism, by
contrast, is described as merely a “geographical movement . . . merely incidental to other goals” (Adler 1368).

In her use of tourism and travel, Austen instructs readers and reframes the act of travel as a means of both personal and national edification, asserting the organic relationship between the individual and the nation, while demonstrating the peril that selfish tourism poses to a society already threatened by a changing social environment. Austen’s selfish tourists, seen most clearly in the speculating Mr. Parker of Sanditon and the deliciously horrible Mrs. Elton of Emma, offer us the perfect foil to her enlightened, self-aware travelers, embodied most clearly in Anne Elliot of Persuasion. In her sharply contrasted portrayals, Austen asserts the need for a society with a clearer domestic focus, invested in cultivating its people rather than carving out its place in the world, suggesting that true national power comes through its domestic developments.

Jane Austen’s awareness of and disdain for the emerging middle class fascination with scenic tourism is evident in her fiction. The practice, which peaked at the turn of the century, encouraged tourists to “imaginatively recreat[e] landscape by viewing, sketching, and describing it” and to take away from the landscape a memento or souvenir (Bohls 83). This practice contrasts sharply with disinterested aesthetic observation, which requires self-discipline. In the successful aesthetic observation, “one cannot desire to eat it, embrace it, own it, or otherwise draw worldly benefit from it” (Bohls 68). Taking a memento, or a personal piece of profit, from the experience “constitutes an exercise of power, a non-reciprocal mode of vision whose effect is to display and reinforce mastery” (Bohls 87). Tourists who see nothing but opportunity for
social or economic gain from their travels are linked automatically with the kind of opportunistic climbers that Austen skewers so often in her fiction.

The background of popular tourist opportunism, and of the economic speculation inherent in the enterprise, frames Austen’s satiric treatment of the newly built village of Sanditon. Austen describes the village as the epitome of the tourist destination—artificial, self-serving, and disrespectful to the nature it professes to adore—as she contrasts the descriptions of the town provided by the narrator and its founder, Mr. Parker. Mr. Parker, in an obvious sales pitch to appeal to what he assumes is the universal desire for social advancement through tourism, describes the seaside resort as a place of great renown: “everybody has heard of Sanditon—the favourite—for a young and rising bathing-place, certainly the favoured by nature, and promising to be the most chosen by man” (159). The appeal, in Mr. Parker’s mind, is not one of natural situation or health benefit; the true benefit comes in the abstract allure associated with being a part of the in-crowd, a socially mobile member of a young society that prizes what tourism can do for them rather than the natural beauty that surrounds them.

This self-centered attitude becomes even more clear as the impartial narrator describes Sanditon for the reader as a place that “[a] very few years ago” was a “quiet village of no pretensions” that boasted a few “natural advantages in its position” (161). Such a description certainly does not overwhelmingly recommend Sanditon as a landscape to be admired. Rather, because of Parker’s efforts, in which he “planned and built, and praised and puffed,” the village now artificially caters to the overindulged egos, social strategies, and economic speculations of all involved (162). Parker, while portrayed as ignorant and single-minded about a scheme that seems destined to fail,
does not necessarily feel the brunt of Austen’s satiric bite in *Sanditon*. Instead, he is portrayed as the inevitable byproduct of the Romantic faddish desire for tourism, a cultural impulse that eschews the natural for the man-made, the intellectual for the consumable.¹ Tourists, who fixate on these values rather than on individual education or national progress, are Austen’s true dangers to British society.

*Emma* is arguably the most “domestic” of Austen’s works, a celebration of the Englishness of England through its overt focus on the sheltered enclave of Highbury. Austen’s conspicuous interjections, then, of the outside world into the English verdure that she rhapsodizes throughout the novel, become that much more obviously out of place.² In the character of Mrs. Elton, Austen presents how a self-serving thirst for tourist activities can negatively affect character and, by extension, domestic happiness. Mrs. Elton is an outsider, coming to Highbury from the recognized seat of Romantic tourism, Bath, and bringing “with her the outside threat to life and manners in Highbury” (Wheeler 122).³ She emphasizes this contrast between her life and the sheltered

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¹ This impulse is reflected, of course, in the increasing implementation of travel technologies, including the use of Claude glasses to recreate a scene into a landscape worthy of artistic portrayal and the conscious construction of “picturesque” prospects and the publications of accompanying guides, a movement I frame in the introduction.

² One of the most obvious of these interjections is the scene with the gypsies. I certainly do not intend to equate the poverty-stricken existence of gypsies with the frivolity of tourism. However, the foreign, consuming presence of the gypsies, and the threat that they pose to Highbury residents, is a fascinating one nonetheless in this context of the foreign and the domestic. Austen is capitalizing on a tradition of entrenched suspicion of gypsies familiar to readers, one that “is rarely imaged as an isolate, but collectively as a ‘wild brood,’ or as a member of the ‘vagabond tribe,’ and often this figure is female and maternal, available as someone recognizable albeit alien” (Janowitz 214). I would argue that Austen employs this gypsy scene as a deceptively parodic invocation of this fear, in an attempt to capitalize on and interrogate the sharp division between what defines the foreign and domestic. These gypsies are making their homes, however rootless they may be, within the Highbury forest; yet, they remain conspicuously foreign and threatening. Ultimately, I think Austen presents the gypsies as a way of invoking British desire for a stable home environment, a means of retraining readers’ eyes inward. I find Austen’s choice of women and children to embody her gypsy band interesting, perhaps an emphasis that ensures that we, however uncomfortably, link these foreigners with the domestic world.

³ I do not believe Austen intends for us to see Bath in a wholly negative light. While the city does not escape her authorial sharpness, it also serves as the backdrop for sincerity and character development,
nature of her Highbury neighbors by evoking her days full of “delightful exploring” which took her from “Maple Grove to Kings Weston” (310). Her clamor to continue such exploring, to transfer the attitudes of Bath to Highbury and with them the tourist practices, causes her great anxiety: “And such weather for exploring!—These delays and disappointments are quite odious. What are we to do? –The year will wear away at this rate, and nothing done.” (310). For Mrs. Elton, success comes only in the frantic mobility that allows her to make connections to increase her social standing and placate her appetite for entertainment.

Mrs. Elton’s travels have done nothing to serve her character, as we see well in her interchange with Emma about “Surry.”4 Her stubbornness in ignorance proves her bad character:

‘When you have seen more of this country, I am afraid you will think you have over-rated Hartfield. Surry is full of beauties.’

‘Oh! yes, I am quite aware of that. It is the garden of England, you know. Surry is the garden of England.’

‘Yes; but we must not rest our claims on that distinction. Many counties, I believe, are called the garden of England, as well as Surry.’

‘No, I fancy not,’ replied Mrs. Elton, with a most satisfied smile. ‘I never heard any county but Surry called so.’ (250)

Mrs. Elton’s self-important response to Emma’s polite and gentle correction demonstrates Austen’s opinion about the corrupting power of tourism. Mrs. Elton’s

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4 Austen’s choice of spelling here is suspect. The proper spelling of Surrey includes the e. However, multiple editions of the novel use this spelling, so I must conclude that Austen’s choice is deliberate. If so, the misspelling pokes additional, but surreptitious, fun at Mrs. Elton’s ignorance, leaving readers even more likely to see her as a figure more appropriate for mockery than emulation. Another option is, of course, that the spelling choice is a result of a printer error that has continued, especially since Emma also used the erroneous spelling, but I’d like to think Austen is using the spelling to call attention to Mrs. Elton’s ignorance.
consistent impropriety and arrogance stem from her claims to world experience. Such qualities, in the reader’s mind and in Austen’s estimation, make her the most odious of the women in the novel. For Mrs. Elton, a little bit of experience leads to excessive confidence—and an inability to be taught or led, precisely the threat to which Wheeler refers. She proves herself to be unequal to the tasks that fall to women within the English country domestic circle, especially in her “exceptional imperviousness to the labors of politeness” which Austen asserts as a key element of living successfully within British society (Grossman 161). Mrs. Elton’s inability to consider the needs of others or to learn from her experience leaves her ultimately unsuccessful within any element of her domestic world, a sharp contrast to Austen’s portrayal of Emma.

Emma, whose flawed nature does not escape Austen’s critical eye, demonstrates her own aptitude within Austen’s nexus of proper behavior when she expresses disdain for the flippancy with which characters in the novel treat issues of movement and travel. Her “very good opinion of Frank Churchill was a little shaken . . . by hearing that he was gone off to London, merely to have his hair cut” (202), for example, an important moment for their relationship. Emma’s disdain of Frank’s “foppery and nonsense” echoes Austen’s attitude throughout the novel, that “tours” and meaningless travel for selfish gain can only bring negative consequences (202). As Mrs. Elton’s selfishness in tourism foreshadows her inability to manage a successful home, Emma’s notice of Frank’s frivolous travels seems to erode, if only briefly, his domestic future—as the manager and overseer of a successful and profitable estate of his own or, in an even deeper sense, to fulfill his role as first son and heir. These characters fail miserably at the work of being members of Highbury society—that is, at “producing themselves as
polite ladies and gentlemen” with all of the qualities that accompany such a position (Grossman 158).

Austen’s presentation of these selfish tourists works as a cautionary tale against the changes in English society brought on by a changing economic climate. A character’s willingness to engage in the frivolity of tourism, which provides no fundamental development to the tourist and, in Austen’s view, can only corrupt, indicates a corresponding willingness to usher in “the ascendancy of a commercial and professional world [that] lessens the intensity of polite society and relegates its rituals to private life” (Grossman 160). This impersonal, commercialized world encourages the dreaded shift within the “two-stage history of the nineteenth century emergent leisure class: 'conspicuous leisure' first, 'conspicuous consumption' second” (160). If, as Jonathan Grossman argues, Austen is writing about “characters in the process of becoming” during this time of great social shift, then Austen’s attention to and vilification of the tourist, whose goal is simply to consume conspicuously, seems to indicate her own desire that English society remain “a leisured class engaged in the continuous process of perpetuating itself and socializing its participants through the work of etiquette” (162). Such a position does not do Austen credit. Her opinions of social climbers and selfish tourists are clearly negative, but such opinions do not discount a belief in social change. In fact, Austen’s accounts of tourists and travelers indicate that, when approached with a desire for personal growth rather than personal profit, travel—and, by extension, mobility of all kinds—can be remarkably beneficial to individual and nation. Engrained frivolity, not accessible mobility, poses the inherent threat to society.
In her last complete novel, *Persuasion*, Austen asserts the great necessity of travel in fostering personal development. This novel is arguably the most travel- and mobility-centered of her career, made most evident through her inclusion of the physically and socially mobile characters of Captain Frederick Wentworth and the remarkably modern Crofts. We are introduced to Anne Elliot primarily through her regression from any previous personal development. The narrator describes her early on as having been “a very pretty girl” whose “bloom had vanished early,” whose “word [now] had no weight” and who was “faded and thin” (5). She is quite literally wasting away, a vanishing that parallels her lack of fruitful nourishment by both family and outside society. Even Lady Russell, who respects and appreciates Anne, sees her primarily as a girl far too static, someone who “had been too little from home, too little seen. Her spirits were not high. A larger society would improve them” (11). Without the learning experiences that a journey into larger society brings, no one, not even the heroine of a novel, can fulfill her potential.

Anne is confronted by a mirror image of her dwindling and static self during her trip to Uppercross, conveying to her the negative effect that a lack of personal development and freedom of movement creates. Also described as beyond her bloom, Anne’s sister Mary becomes a pitiful figure: “She was now lying on the faded sofa of the pretty little drawing-room, the once elegant furniture of which had been gradually growing shabby, under the influence of four summers and two children” (25). This degeneration is a condition in stark contrast to the Musgrove sisters, who are positively characterized as “in a state of alteration, perhaps of improvement” (27). Like Anne before her, Mary is characterized not only by her virtual immobility, as she lies prone on
the sofa, but also by the deterioration of her surroundings that occurs in tandem with her own personal disintegration. The longer Mary remains without meaningful interaction, the more selfish, illogical, and inconsiderate she becomes. Stasis of any kind, whether self-imposed, as Mary’s is because of her own superficiality and weakness, or rigorously enforced by others, as Anne's is through her family's neglect, proves inherently destructive.

Anne’s almost immediate rejection of her own stagnant state, then, can come as no surprise; her realization, however, that travel is a didactic act of self-definition assures us of her laudable motivations. The narrator describes, directly after her Uppercross observations of her sister’s situation, Anne’s realization that “a removal from one set of people to another . . . will often include a total change of conversation, opinion, and idea” and that “with all this experience, she believed that she must now submit to feel that another lesson, in the art of knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle” (28). Rather than seeing travel as an imposition, giving of herself but receiving nothing in return (as she does before removing to Uppercross), Anne now recognizes the inherent education that comes from literally expanding one’s horizons. Travel becomes a way to gain a wider perspective—an especially important goal for a woman surrounded by a family whose “affairs . . . at Kellynch-hall were treated as of such general publicity and pervading interest” (28).

Austen’s theory of travel requires personal edification through reflection and quiet observation. Anne’s change of heart is not immediate, nor is it intentional. Instead, she remains open to the opportunities that come her way, observant enough to see a larger context for her experiences, and able to put her new knowledge into action. Her
recognition of her need for the edification that comes from travel, and her permanent rejection of the stagnation that characterized her prior life, become essential moments of self-definition. Anne’s embrace of mobility, if even in theory, provides hope for her personal future as well as a future for the class to which she belongs. Through her travel and her decision to define herself through that activity, Anne essentially endorses an investment in her domestic world, both personal and national. By characterizing literal travel as therapeutic, Austen also endorses a metaphorical travel within the classes that ensures that class stagnation and corruption, so clearly embodied by the futilely nostalgic and snobbish Sir Walter and Elizabeth, will not continue unabated.

Anne’s new, unrestrained love of movement, and its associated positive effects on her development, emerges clearly in her first, small trip from Uppercross to Winthrop. Her choice to go on the journey results from “feelings of interest and curiosity,” emotions that accompany any kind of intellectual enterprise (50). The description of her trip emphasizes Anne’s individual, intellectual process of travel:

Anne’s object was, not to be in the way of any body, and where the narrow paths across the fields made many separations necessary, to keep with her brother and sister. Her pleasure in the walk must arise from the exercise and the day, from the view of the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges, and from repeating to herself some few of the thousand poetical descriptions extant of autumn, that season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness, that season which has drawn from every poet, worthy of being read, some attempt at description, or some lines of feeling. (56)

Anne’s concern here is certainly not her social status or even socialization at all, as she purposely absents herself from the “mere lively chat” going on around her (56), a sharp juxtaposition to Mrs. Elton’s ambitious desires for social mobility from her picnic “tours.” Her focus is equally external and internal during this travel; her travel narrative, built upon her unfettered observation of the “tawny leaves and withered hedges,” elicits an
internal counternarrative of poetry and literature, connecting her physical travel to the imaginative travel she had previously experienced through reading. She reads this scene as if it were a poem, demonstrating her intellectual and interpretive prowess as she finds metaphorical meaning in what goes unnoticed by others. To her, as intelligent and observant traveler, “the exercise and the day” combine to allow her to see, in dead leaves and empty branches, the “last smiles of the year” and all their accompanying philosophical implications.

Anne is a keen interpreter, but not one who is easily carried away into rhapsodies of imagination that have no connection to reality. In fact, in her observation of the same landscape that encourages these literary allusions, she balances her metaphorical reading of the landscape with a recognition of the reality that such beauty comes from the real work occurring all around her—“the ploughs at work, and the freshly made path spoke the farmer, counteracting the sweets of poetical despondence” (57). Her similar refusal to romanticize the view of the village demonstrates this same attention to realism. As Anne reaches the top of the hill, and looks down upon that village from a stereotypically picturesque prospect, she sees the scene as one “without beauty and without dignity . . . an indifferent house, standing low, and hemmed in by the barns and buildings of a farm-yard” (57).

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5 Jane Austen will advocate for the temperate imagination in Northanger Abbey and her treatment of the Gothic. See Chapter 7 for a further discussion of this disciplining of the imagination within Northanger Abbey.

6 Anne’s ability to see and narrate the work of the lower class, contrasted by the self-interested ignorance of others of her class, highlights her mobility as well. She maintains a fluidity of imagination that allows her to empathize with everyone. This ability is another facet of her realism as well as another sign of her good character.
Austen uses Anne’s observations as a two-prong jab at contemporary Romantic behavior. Anne is first and foremost an observer of landscape characterized by reason, indicating a well-developed balance of feeling and reason that Mary Wollstonecraft would likely laud. In her realistic observation, Anne also rebuffs typically female stereotypes by demonstrating the potential for a woman to be educated, pragmatic, and still feminine. In addition, and more directly connected to the British tourism industry, Anne’s recognition of the landscape as one of work rather than one of picturesque beauty pokes fun at the trend of picturesque touring. Despite the good view, this position is not a brilliant prospect. There is no view to paint here, no way that a Claude glass could improve this view. Rather than having Anne turn away from it, as the typical tourist of the picturesque would in the pursuit of a prospect appropriate for personal consumption, Austen demonstrates Anne’s ability to learn from any situation.

Through Anne Elliot, Austen advocates a wider and more impressive philosophy of travel. Travel can be individual and can occur anywhere, as long as an educated eye can distinguish merit in the view. However, that travel must be honest and take the views “without beauty and without dignity” along with those majestic and sweepingly sublime views that inspire awe and “poetical despondence” (57). Anne’s ability to narrate both the metaphorically exquisite and the realistically banal demonstrates her intelligence and individual growth. Rather than escaping into a purely literary world that can be as unrealistic, stagnant, and personally unfulfilling as a world without travel, Anne welcomes the realism of her journey and, as a result, is able to put the entire world that she experiences into better perspective. Such an attitude necessarily informs
and improves her ability to engage with and positively influence the world that surrounds her, whether that be within the four walls of her home or within the borders of her nation.

Austen’s narration of the trip to Lyme embodies her theory of travel in action and extends the positive benefits of travel to the reader, through the imaginative invitation presented by Austen’s narrative perspective. The narrator tells us that “[t]he young people were all wild to see Lyme” after Captain Wentworth’s “description of the fine country” (63), and we are told specifically of the other members of the party during the preparations—Louisa’s anticipation, as she “was the most eager of the eager;” Captain Wentworth’s desire to return to see his friend once more; Mr. Musgrove’s concern for the strain a one-day trip would put on his horses. In all of this discussion, Anne’s specific feelings about the journey remain conspicuously distant. We know that she, as one of the least traveled members of the party of young people, must be somewhat excited about the opportunity to visit Lyme, but the narrator’s distance emphasizes the distinction between Louisa, who sees the trip as just another opportunity for excitement and flirtation, and Anne, who now believes travel to be an essential component of her self-development. Austen allows the reader to occupy the role of traveler along with Anne, and to benefit from the experience simultaneously, through this narrative distance. Austen carefully focuses on the natural attractions of the scene, as the narrator tells us clearly that “[t]hey were come too late in the year for any amusement or variety which Lyme, as a public place, might offer” (64). Lyme, then, is separated into two very distinctive scenes—the “public place” with the “rooms,” “lodgers,” and “bathing machines” that Anne’s party ignores, and the naturally majestic scene that is normally subordinated to the man-made “amusements” offered by the tourist community (64).
Austen deliberately invokes, and then rejects, these trappings of the tourist trade to communicate that this trip is not to be a tourist experience for Anne or for her reader.

Without the distractions of selfish tourism, the natural majesty of the scene has the power to arrest the narrative as it arrests the attention of both reader and character. All other typical narrative trappings—character, action, dialogue—are suspended in favor of the view of Lyme, one of the most famous landscapes in Austen’s work:

[The Cobb itself, its old wonders and new improvements with the very beautiful line of cliffs stretching out to the east of the town, are what the stranger’s eye will seek; and a very strange stranger it must be, who does not see charms in the immediate environs of Lyme, to make him wish to know it better. The scenes in its neighborhood, Charmouth, with its high grounds and extensive sweeps of country, and still more its sweet retired bay, backed by dark cliffs, where fragments of low rock among the sands make it the happiest spot for watching the flow of the tide, for sitting in unwearied contemplation; --the woody varieties of the cheerful village of Up Lyme, and, above all, Pinny, with its green chasms between romantic rocks, where the scattered forest trees and orchards of luxuriant growth declare that many a generation must have passed away since the first partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state, where a scene so wonderful and so lovely is exhibited, as may more than equal any of the resembling scenes of the far-famed Isle of Wight… (64)

The only action here is the reader’s imaginative engagement with the panoramic view of the seascape presented by the narrator. No idle chatter of tourists or narrative interjections describing the reaction of Captain Wentworth or the Musgrove sisters interrupt the scene. We are offered here, by proxy, the imaginative experience of the disinterested traveler, who sees not a landscape to be sketched or a poem to be composed, but simply the beauty of nature that “must be visited, and visited again, to make the worth of Lyme understood” (64). The scene becomes an intellectual enterprise in Austen’s hands, a text to be read again and again before it can be truly interpreted; such an attitude solidifies Anne’s (and the reader’s) position as traveler rather than tourist. Anne’s “travel experience . . . provide[s] enduring referents for
thought whose interpretation remains open to change,” a key characteristic of one who is fundamentally changing through the experience of travel (Adler 1369).

Anne’s role as self-aware and self-fashioning traveler endows her with remarkable observational power. Anne’s reaction to and interaction with the landscape, described through the narrator’s indirect discourse, offers a picture of the landscape for an uninformed reader as Anne transcends traditionally gendered aesthetic boundaries. While Edmund Burke’s aesthetic categories of the sublime and the beautiful were well known by Jane Austen’s time, so were the characteristics of the picturesque, which “widened artistic range by reviving themes or imagery not categorized under beautiful or sublime” and dominated the discourse of travel in the Romantic era (Snyder 144). In the Romantic era, when imagery “need[ed] to value profusion, intensity, power, transcendence,” the sublime was quite common for male poets. According to William Snyder, because “their message tends to privilege intimacy over spectacle, domesticity over transcendence, women artists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries find more compatible the understatement, subtlety and integrative qualities of the picturesque” (Snyder 144-145).

Anne’s reaction to the seascape at Lyme demonstrates her rejection of this typically gendered way of seeing. Instead, she is able to narrate the sublime and the beautiful, not needing to depend on the picturesque as a mediating influence. She sees, almost simultaneously, the “sweet retired bay,” a rounded, calm and secluded

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7 Shelley’s “Mont Blanc” is one good example of how male Romantics employed the sublime to meditate and mediate landscape.

8 While it’s rather preposterous to suggest that women writers in the Romantic era never used the sublime (see Joanna Baillie’s “Thunder,” for one obvious example that refutes that assertion), the point that the mediating influence of the picturesque eased some of the concerns about transgressing social and aesthetic boundaries is a valid one.
body of water and the “dark cliffs” with the “fragments of rock” that lead all the way down to the shore. Anne connects two scenes symbolically associated with the two polar aesthetic opposites into one cohesive whole: water, which is not only beautiful in the aesthetic sense but is also a traditionally employed female metaphor, and rocks, which are characteristically awe-inspiring, craggy, fierce and unyielding elements of nature typically associated with the masculine sublime. Her ability to do so argues for her ability to move beyond aesthetic borders typically ascribed to women. As Anne achieves this ungendered vision, Austen, as female author, does the same by providing this expansive, imaginative view for her readers.

Similarly, Anne’s ability to narrate the history and origin of the scene emphasizes her ability to enter an intellectual discourse previously reserved for men. Austen introduces us to this point subtly, as Anne suggests that “many a generation must have passed away since the first partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state” as she surveys the landscape of Lyme. Anne’s interest in these issues indicates a new phase in her intellectual development. She is employing the discourse of history, placing this scene into a tradition of great landmarks and historically important places, elevating its value far above her own as observer by making her presence there seem as but a speck in its long evolution. Her interest also in the mechanisms of the creation of the beauty that she sees—how “many a generation must have passed away since the first partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state”—becomes a geological hypothesis, demonstrating her engagement with the discourse of the

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9 Landscape described by women was common in the Romantic era, as the travel narrative offered opportunities for writing that might not have been available otherwise. The political power of that narrative position, I would argue, was much less recognized, as I discuss in Chapter 2. Austen makes use of both of these trends of Romantic writing in her narration of the landscape of Lyme, but imports it to her fiction.
Indeed, Austen anticipates the geological turn later in the century and transcends the beautiful/sublime aesthetic of the Romantic era, emphasizing her artistic prowess. She simultaneously demonstrates her own body of ungendered knowledge, as she alludes to Mary Anning’s 1811 discovery of the ichthyosaurus at Lyme. Anne’s ability to seamlessly integrate aesthetics, history, and science into a travel narrative indicates not only her growth and development intellectually, but also the great power that such development offers to those who engage in the edifying travel Austen valorizes. Austen’s presentation of this view to her readers through a narrative style that emphasizes their parallel intellectual engagement advocates for the possibility of travel to edify and educate through concrete or imaginative experience.

The intimate connection Austen makes between travel and knowledge grows even clearer in her use of the trope of travel to characterize information of all kinds. Austen, throughout her fiction, demonstrates a deep interest in and belief in the potential for truth to be conveyed through writing, an understandably self-promoting attitude for a novelist in a time of a booming publishing industry. Many of her novels feature letters that occupy an essential narrative role—Lizzy learns of Wickham’s true character through Darcy’s letter, of course, in *Pride and Prejudice* and Colonel Brandon learns, finally, of Eliza’s whereabouts in an express letter delivered during his picnic at Delaford, to name only two examples. However, in *Persuasion*, Austen endows

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10 Charlotte Smith’s “Beachy Head” similarly employs the sciences, in a much more overt way, by including substantial footnotes discussing botany and archeology, among other sciences.


12 Austen was, of course, a prolific letter writer. While only very few of those letters remain, they still fill a volume of over three hundred pages and suggest to us the indispensable role this mechanism of communication played in Austen’s daily life.
information with a new kind of power. Sir Walter describes letters from his daughter Mary, delivered in person by the Crofts, as “convenient passports . . . [which] secure an introduction” for them (107). Information becomes as essential for social mobility, then, as passports are for physical mobility, making one’s imaginative pursuits as important as the physical ones. In Austen’s world, how one distributes and employs information is, like their attitudes towards physical mobility, key to discerning their character. Those most interested in how information can satiate their self-serving desires are the ones who are described as keeping the information moving.

We see this motivation in the self-interested Elizabeth Elliot, who promises to “lay no embargo on any body’s words” (142), as well as in the deliciously gossipy Nurse Rooke, who singlehandedly keeps the Bath information superhighway on track. In fact, Mrs. Smith’s description of Nurse Rooke’s activities as “infinitely superior to thousands of those who having only received ‘the best education in the world,’ know nothing worth attending to” (103) seems to emphatically elevate gossip to the province of essential information. As readers, we take our cue from Anne, who initially seems uncomfortable with this assertion, but ultimately justifies gossip as “well worth listening to” if it comes from sources who are “well read” and who focus on the “ardent, disinterested, self-denying attachment, of heroism, fortitude, patience, resignation—of all the conflicts and all the sacrifices that ennoble us most” (103). If information is like travel, then those who use it with discretion, moderation, and reason as they integrate it into their lives—making wise choices, for example, as Anne does when she learns of the rumors swirling about her impending nuptials to Mr. Elliot—are lauded, while those who simply

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13 This use of the metaphor of a “passport” reoccurs in *Northanger Abbey*; although not related to letters or information, the repetition is interesting in the context of Austen’s interest in and knowledge of travel.
carelessly consume titillating tidbits are inevitably those same characters whose self-interest and avarice are decried throughout the novel. While Mrs. Smith is, on the whole, a sympathetic character within *Persuasion*, she remains suspicious to us as readers as well. Her manipulative use of gossip to extract sympathy and action from Anne, as well as her embrace of any and all rumors that come her way, certainly calls her respectability into question. Nurse Rooke, the source of this information, is characterized as deliciously amoral—we, as readers, love her brassy confidence but we’d never consider her a role model. In contrast, Anne’s ability to negotiate the often-perilous nexus of gossip with aplomb and dexterity confirms her position as a wise traveler, whether imaginative or literal.

Austen likewise connects one’s abilities as a traveler to Romantic reading, furthering the connection between proper physical mobility and balanced imaginative adventures. Anne Elliot is described as a moderate and pragmatic reader throughout *Persuasion*, not prone to excessive sensibility or fancy. Encouraged by Lady Russell, who brings her the latest Romantic poets to peruse and whose efforts draw a sneer from Elizabeth Elliot, Anne is competent to discuss at length with Captain Benwick upon their first meeting “a brief comparison of opinion as to the first-rate poets, trying to ascertain whether *Marmion* or *The Lady of the Lake* were to be preferred, and how ranked the *Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*” (67). Austen speaks from experience, not seeing herself as exempt from this mode of proper Romantic reading. Jane Austen’s own reading was wide and eclectic. At age 10, she was reading her father’s issues of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, and her letters are rife with references to Romantic poetry, Gothic novels, and the assorted non-fiction works that captured her interest.
It makes sense, then, that Austen would cultivate the well-known Romantic literary connection between reading and travel, which led Keats to compare his discovery of Chapman’s Homer to the circumnavigation and discovery of the far flung edges of the globe and to describe his past reading as having “travell’d in the realms of gold.” Her attribution of these qualities of good reading to her good travelers elevates this metaphor. It’s not everyone who can travel intelligently, it’s not everyone who can read moderately, but those who can read well inevitably travel well because their imaginations are developed and their vision keen.

Fanny Price engages in these imaginative travels in Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, a novel almost claustrophobic in its lack of mobility and activity surrounding its heroine. Her reading affords her activity, “the opportunity of stepping out of the traditional female role of performing shallow accomplishments and instead acquiring the function of an active maker of meaning” (Despotopoulou 582). In her attic room, the relics and tools of imaginative transport surround Fanny, turning the room into a place where she can “find immediate consolation in some pursuit, or some train of thought at hand” (106). In her window, two transparencies hang, each described to feature a different famous literary and tourist attraction: “where Tintern Abbey held its station between a cave in Italy” and “a moonlight lake in Cumberland” (107). Austen’s choice to use locations of interest and connection both to tourist practices and famous literary figures like Wordsworth and Coleridge connects this idea of imagination and travel. Fanny “builds her own space of knowledge-making in the East Room, formerly and appropriately the old school room”

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14 This is, of course, a reference to Keats’s poem “On First Looking Into Chapman’s Homer.”

15 By extension, these references also associate Austen’s novel with these figures of Romantic poetic greatness, a subtle assertion of her own literary merit.
and her ability to so successfully comments on her character (Kagawa 138). Edmund
Bertram, describing Fanny’s reading in the attic, employs the language of travel: “You
meanwhile will be taking a trip into China, I suppose. How does Lord Macartney go
on?” (109). By establishing the positive and engaging imaginative travel of Fanny
Price, in a novel that features her almost exclusively confined within a limited and stifling
domestic sphere, Austen argues for a continuum of constructive travel, beginning with
the intellectual ability to transport oneself to other locations imaginatively. With that
ability, moderated and mediated by reason, true travel can occur, involving not only the
experience but also the way in which the experience is internalized. A true travel
experience is nothing more than a reading opportunity, and those who read well are
best equipped to benefit from such moments.

The best readers are sensible readers who restrain their imaginative wanderings.
Fanny Price “was invested, indeed, with the office of judge and critic” during her
household’s ultimately thwarted plan to stage Lovers Vows at home, “and earnestly
desired to exercise it and tell them all their faults, but from doing so every feeling within
her shrank, she could not, would not, dared not attempt it” (118). Though Fanny is a
good reader on her own, her progression and intellectual development are not yet
complete. Fanny’s inability to act on her critical estimations because of her timidity is
emphasized by this scene of indecision. As readers, we inevitably contrast Fanny’s
panicked indecision with the sedate maturity and intellectual confidence of Anne Elliot in
Persuasion, a sensible literary critic who encourages Benwick to moderate his reading.
Understanding how poetry can create impassioned feelings that would not be edifying
or healthy for Benwick’s rather broken heart, she “ventured to recommend a larger
allowance of prose in his daily study” and, when pressed, “mentioned such works of our best moralists, such collections of the finest letters, such memoirs of characters of worth and suffering” (68). Mature, developed imaginative travelers take what has been learned and uses it to cultivate their sphere of influence. Where Fanny fails, Anne succeeds.

Anne Elliot is not only well read, but she is also deeply read, demonstrating an extensive knowledge of multiple genres that could rival any of the men in the novel. Austen’s purpose in demonstrating her literary aptitude is not to boast of Anne’s reading but to call attention to Anne’s continuing ability to consume moderately. She is able to maintain the disinterested attitude essential to the best of travelers within her intellectual pursuits. She keeps herself from being “too” Romantic, and in the process demonstrates that she can navigate any genre, situation, or pursuit with panache. Her confidence in doing so furthers her as a sensible traveler, whether imaginative or literal, and continues to argue against stereotypical views of female behavior.

Anne’s ability to negotiate the sublime and the beautiful, combined with her abilities as a reader and critic, comment on the role of women in Romantic literature. Anne is not confined to the aesthetically limited sphere of the beautiful, or to the mediating sphere of the picturesque, simply because of her gender. Austen’s use of intertwined sublime and beautiful imagery in her depiction of “green chasms between romantic rocks” at Lyme emphasizes that women, while perhaps engaging in distinctive artistry, not only should coexist with male artists, but also should consider themselves partners with these men. Coexistence is not necessarily threatening, but potentially harmonious, as it develops artistic prowess and encourages both genders to occupy
multiple aesthetic positions. This opportunity for artistic growth and freedom can only fundamentally develop the richness of the British literary tradition, therefore benefiting all readers and writers alike. This green growth, new perhaps compared to the ageless rocks beneath, emphasizes the need for cultivation of these attitudes within women. Stagnant and ancient attitudes, like the rocks, are invigorated only by new and vital growth. Austen sees those vital forces in the women of moderate and extensive education and the middle class, both groups poised to significantly contribute to the cultivation of a thriving British society.

Austen refocuses the transformative power of travel internally, by highlighting that the most successful and laudable travelers are those who focus their efforts on cultivating the nation. While she chastises characters like Mrs. Elton and Frank Churchill for their inability to establish a successful domestic situation, Austen emphasizes quite the opposite for travelers in *Persuasion*. After Anne’s growth through travel, she is able to establish her own home with Captain Wentworth, and rehabilitate, at least in part, her relationship with her own family. Sir Walter, while still as shallow and superficially concerned with issues of class and appearance as he ever was at the end of the novel, accepts Anne’s new domestic situation and, by extension, welcomes the Wentworths into his own family, as he “prepare[d] his pen with a very good grace for the insertion of the marriage into the volume of honor” (165). Anne’s success in negotiating this acceptance, so lacking before, results not only from the strength she gained through her travels and diverse experiences but also through Captain Wentworth’s as well. While Sir Walter sees money and prestige as Captain Wentworth’s talents, readers recognize that Anne and Frederick are fundamentally stronger, more developed people as a result
of their respective journeys, and that growth encourages their efforts to mend and construct these domestic fences.

Indeed, the naval travelers that we find in the novel elevate domestic happiness above all else, often using the power of their travels to achieve that end. Sophia Croft, one of the most liberated of Jane Austen’s female characters, is an international traveler, having accompanied her husband on his voyages to far and distant lands. Had her motivation been simply to explore or to gain exotic experiences, she certainly would have come under vicious authorial attack. Her redemption from the rank of tourist comes in her motivation: “I can safely say, that the happiest part of my life has been spent on board a ship. While we were together, you know, there was nothing to be feared. . . . [A]s long as we could be together, nothing ever ailed me, and I never met with the smallest inconvenience” (47-48). Austen presents Sophia Croft’s travels as a wonderful and effective paradox, as she uses her foreign travels to create a home and strengthen her domestic sphere and, by extension, to fundamentally improve English society.¹⁶

Jon Mee argues that, in presenting Sophia Croft as a figure who “directly oversteps the traditional division of private and public into separate spheres on the basis of gender” through her choice to travel with her husband, Austen is arguing that women who make similar choices achieve the role of a female patriot. To be fair, Mee does not argue that Sophia Croft is an essential figure in Austen’s examination of female patriotism. Instead, he argues that Austen is exploring the limits of that

¹⁶ Interestingly enough, in Roger Michell’s 1995 BBC film version of the novel, the final shot portrays Anne’s life with Frederick as the mirror image of Sophia’s—a life aboard ship. Austen does not specifically suggest this ending for Anne, but I believe the implication that the film capitalizes on is clear in the novel. We are meant to see Anne’s future as one of cultivating her domestic sphere just as Sophia does, a further indication of Austen’s love for and elevation of Sophia Croft’s character.
patriotism in her development of this character. Nevertheless, recognizing Sophia Croft’s extraordinary ability to navigate travel and domestic duties—in fact, to marry the two successfully—calls attention to Austen’s assertion that travel can fundamentally improve British society. Such a connection argues for Austen’s recognition that cultivating one element of the domestic world, the home, can only positively influence the other, the nation. Naval officers like Captains Benwick and Harville, who return home to establish or strengthen their families, similarly build British culture by bringing the knowledge and personal growth gained through their naval service back to benefit their families and, by extension, their home country.

In the successful early career of William Price in *Mansfield Park*, Austen argues for the benefits of imperialism to invigorate families and provide futures that cultivate the British domestic sphere. Though his position is originally obtained through the connections of the Bertram family, William works hard and is characterized as a paragon of virtue. Henry Crawford looks to him—and his career—as an exemplar:

> He longed to have been at sea, and seen and done and suffered as much. His heart was warmed, his fancy fired, and he felt the highest respect for a lad who, before he was twenty, had gone through such bodily hardships, and given such proofs of mind. The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast; and he wished he had been a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was. (162)

William’s example serves as, though perhaps not an ultimately fruitful one in Henry Crawford’s case, yet one more way that the travel and edification born of a naval career can be of benefit to English society. Even when away, William’s travels positively affect home.
Austen’s treatment of imperialism demonstrates the complexity of this issue of travel and tourism, of the balance between foreign focus and domestic cultivation. The popular clamoring for souvenirs, a hallmark of the selfish, consumption-based tourism that Austen disdains, is present in several of her novels. Captain Harville’s home in *Persuasion* is lined with the trinkets that represent his naval careers, perhaps emblematic of his state-sanctioned life of piracy as a naval officer. While this small detail within *Persuasion* is perhaps of little critical importance, the international context of travel and empire that frames it creates a decidedly pointed, socially incisive undercurrent within two of Austen’s works, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. *Mansfield Park*, which critics often point to as Austen’s most socially aware novel because of the subplot about the Bertrams’ slave ownership, lands at one end of this spectrum. If, as Vivien Jones argues, *Mansfield Park* is a “condition of England” novel, then Austen is certainly not viewing that condition through rose-colored glasses (226). The shadow of imperialism that Austen casts over the action of the Bertram family underscores both her awareness of global issues and the complications inherent in global travel. Sir Thomas’s absences from the home to deal with problems on his West Indian plantation lead quite clearly to the disintegration of his domestic tranquility. It is during these absences that Maria meets Mr. Rushworth and determines to marry him; likewise, it is during an absence that she meets Henry Crawford and plants the seeds of the affair that will elicit public condemnation for her behavior.

As Maaja A. Stewart suggests, “[t]he Patriarch’s departure from England discloses the weakness in his authority. Specifically, he fails to control female sexuality during his absence” which we see in the actions of the Bertram daughters and, to a
certain extent, in Fanny’s refusal to marry Henry Crawford (127). While Stewart argues for a connection between imperial patriarchy and female sexuality—namely that the absence of the patriarch engaged in West Indian economic pursuits negates his domestic authority—throughout, what interests me most is Austen’s connection between the imperial efforts of British landowners and the disruption or destruction of the domestic sphere. This connection highlights Austen’s concern with the potential perils of open borders and an increasingly avaricious imperial campaign.17

Despite her positive portrayal of naval life in *Persuasion*, Austen does not ignore the negative effects that open imperial ports and an unremarkable naval career can have on domestic life. Fanny, upon returning home from Mansfield to Portsmouth to visit her newly promoted brother, chronicles a domestic world in chaos:

It was the abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety. Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought to be. She could not respect her parents, as she had hoped. On her father, her confidence had not been sanguine, but he was more negligent of his family, his habits were worse, and his manners coarser, than she had been prepared for. . . . Her disappointment in her mother was greater; *there* she had hoped much, and found almost nothing. . . . Her days were spent in a kind of slow bustle; always busy without getting on, always behindhand and lamenting it, without altering her ways; wishing to be an economist, without contrivance or regularity; dissatisfied with her servants, without skill to make them better, and whether helping, or reprimanding, or indulging them, without any power of engaging their respect. (264)

In presenting this view, Fanny “embodies the impartial spectator in order to apply the moral gaze to their decisions” and offers her the opportunity to “defin[e] herself, her experience, and the actions of others” (Despotopoulou 574, 578). Through her eyes,

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17 While Austen’s anxiety about open and fluid borders is subtle, the concern was shared by many women writers of the time. Anna Letitia Barbauld is perhaps the best-known, and her *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* makes this anxiety clear, as I have previously discussed in chapter 4.
readers are able to see the distinctly negative, and alarmingly destructive, effects of imperialism—and understand how distanced Fanny is from that behavior.

Fanny’s father, once a naval officer who now spends his days cavorting with his friends rather than supporting his family with anything other than his pension, symbolizes a naval population gone wrong. Rather than reinvesting his efforts into the society he served, he becomes a drain on it, creating a family full of similarly unproductive citizens. With the exception of Susan, whom Austen characterizes as another Fanny, even down to her invitation to return to Mansfield, and William, whose initiative and work ethic set him apart and earn him his promotion, the Price children are a disappointment. They run wild, with no real restraints, and don’t seem to be set on any kind of path to potential productivity. This domestic chaos stems from the behavior of Fanny’s parents, at once lethargic and chaotic, whose behavior mirrors the chaotic, unwieldy environment of Portsmouth. If “intimate domestic spaces come to express the intimate interiors of the self” as P. Keiko Kagawa argues, then these domestic spaces, influenced by the chaos of naval life or vice versa, create a microcosm of the chaotic society that Austen so fears (134). The connection between Portsmouth, described by Jon Mee as the place that “sets the geographical boundaries of English identity in the novel” (88) and the focus of perpetual incomings and outgoings of troops and exotic goods and its resulting fluidity of population, activity, and appearance, and the chaos of the Price household is not overtly asserted. Austen certainly hints at the potential pitfalls of an active imperial navy.

We see imperialism in *Mansfield Park* as the creator of primarily negative repercussions—while the plantation and the navy bring the income, they create the
schisms that ultimately ensure the ensuing domestic chaos. We are also meant to see
the opportunities that imperial travel offers to figures like Captain Frederick Wentworth
in *Persuasion* as a contrasting portrait of imperial travel and its consequences. The
descriptions of Captain Wentworth’s activities as a naval captain seem more like piracy
than defense or exploration, but Austen presents Wentworth, Benwick, Harville, and
even William Price of *Mansfield Park* as the bright future of a reinvigorated British
middle class. The benefits of imperialism are the material ones, careers that offer men
like Captain Wentworth a living traditionally unavailable to a person of his status. This
material success kickstarts his social advancement, resurrecting a stagnant, withered
upper class so interested in a storied social history that it fails to account for the future.

Austen’s family experience with the navy, as she observed her brothers’
advancement and adversity within the military, colors her portrayal of the naval officers
in her novels. She both supports and subverts the “gendered and imperialist discourse
in which the Royal Navy represented ideal British manliness. In the face of perceived
threats at home and abroad, the myth of a lost national character was revised by
celebrating ‘hearts of oak’ and their naval chivalric virtues: patriotism, self-reliance,
courage, and attention to duty” (Harris 201). Austen is careful to temper her affection for
naval officers with a dose of reality that lauds not the imperialist mandate of their naval
exploits but their efforts at domestic development.

The richness and multifaceted nature of Austen’s portrayal of travel successfully
works to negate any potential binaries created in her strata of travelers and tourists. As
she does throughout her body of work, Austen rebels against a romanticized version of
real-life issues. For every seemingly idyllic Highbury she presents, a seedy Portsmouth
exists; for every self-aware and intelligent Anne Elliot who develops through her mobility, a Mrs. Elton waits to travel only to feed her social-climbing ambition. In presenting Elizabeth Bennet as a clamoring tourist or the dynamic Captain Wentworth as a modern-day pirate while maintaining their distinctly positive characterization, Austen asserts the complex, not binary, relationship of travel and tourism. She clearly sees selfish social climbers who contribute nothing to society as a parasitic threat to be disavowed immediately, whereas travelers, whose upward mobility is a result of conscientious individual success or achievement, should be welcomed as a new and exciting addition to society. Those who concentrate on education rather than entertainment, on cultivation rather than consumption, will become integral to embracing change while preserving traditions. A Captain Wentworth, then, could become the next Mr. Weston and therefore ensure the continuation of the nostalgic Highbury way of life.

Austen is clearly unafraid of complexity or change. In fact, change, when properly managed, can only be beneficial, and the domesticity of focus that Austen advocates results in a focus on the conscious, deliberate act of identity formation. Austen’s concentration on the development of national identity as a result of moderate travel rather than clamoring tourist consumption, which occurs primarily in her later novels, manifests itself only after her own stable roots were established in her move to Chawton Cottage. With her own domestic world well established, Austen clearly felt more comfortable examining the relationship between personal growth and the cultivation of England through exploration and travel. With travelers who are encouraged to cultivate and develop England rather than conspicuously consume its resources for their own amusement, the Britain that Jane Austen loves so much will be substantially
strengthened and at less risk from an encroaching world. In an era of an expanding
British imperial project, Jane Austen asserts that the most successful expansionist act
would be to ensure the cultivation of a strong, vibrant, complex, and imaginative
domestic culture.
Liberty is the mother of virtue, and if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature.
--Mary Wollstonecraft, Chapter II: The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

The Romantics were readers, and the Romantic era brought with it not only an increasingly literate population, born of an explosion in literary production and mechanisms, but also an active dialogue about what such reading meant to a population unaccustomed to such free access. Books were now everywhere; as E. J. Clery notes, “[w]here previously there had been libraries only in London and the principal spa and seaside resorts, now they sprang up in every provincial town . . . ‘not only booksellers and bookbinders, but engravers and picture-framers, grocers, jewelers, confectioners, tobacconists, perfumers, ironmongers, all manner of shopkeepers might also become librarians’” (“The Rise of Supernatural Fiction”136). Other critics echo Clery’s implicit connection between the new fashion of reading and the fashionable places to travel, as circulating libraries were successfully established in “all the watering places and seaside resorts where the wealthy and fashionable congregated” in the late eighteenth century (Erickson 574).¹ Circulating libraries, stocked with the most popular novels alongside conduct books and sermons, converged with the increasing creativity

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¹ Jan Wellington traces the connection between the Gothic novel and the way in which travelers saw and recorded their own foreign travel experiences, an argument that illuminates the inherent connection between imaginative and physical travel. Lee Erickson argues, much like Clery, that the popularity of circulating libraries were often successfully established in “all the watering places and seaside resorts where the wealthy and fashionable congregated” in the late eighteenth century.
of book publishers and periodical editors to create an explosion of literary output such as British society had not seen before. This explosion in accessibility to imaginative travel through reading paralleled the increasing democratization of domestic travel opportunities of the Romantic era.

This popularity brought with it a great deal of debate, most especially about the novels that became the most popular features of the circulating library. These novels were not only of interest to readers but to philosophers, religious pundits, and anyone else interested in how the imaginative exploits of the populace, especially women, would affect society. A novel should, according to one anonymous critic’s late 1790s essay entitled “Terrorist Novel Writing,” “be a representation of human life and manners with a view to direct the conduct in the most important duties of life, and to correct its follies. But what instruction is to be reaped from the distorted ideas of lunatics, I am at a loss to conceive” (184). These “lunatics” emerged within the increasingly popular Gothic, a genre at once fascinating and disturbing to British reviewers. As Sue Chaplin argues, “Romance was a mode of writing perceived by many of its critics to generate disorder and corrupt the vulnerable minds of its predominantly female readership. Romance fiction was textually anarchic, circulating promiscuously via the circulating library and surreptitiously undermining domestic harmony” (177).

This rather extreme perception of the Gothic’s potential effects parallels the anxiety present regarding the print revolution, emblematized by increasingly popular Gothic novels made available through increasingly available circulating libraries. Frank

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2 See E.J. Clery’s *The Rise of Supernatural Tourism* for a detailed explanation of how the Minerva Press contributed to the explosion of the Gothic and changed the way books were sold. The increasing literacy rate and advent of the periodical, well-known aspects of the Romantic era explosion in reading, contributed to an increasingly vigorous and competitive literary marketplace, as well as to the increasing anxiety over what women, especially, should read.
Donoghue asserts that the hierarchy of “good” and “bad” reading established by literary reviewers was essentially an attempt to reinscribe the cultural and social borders being broken down by the increasingly democratized information wave. In essence, “[t]he uncontrolled spread of reading was perceived as a threat that needed to be aggressively contained” (60). Despite these critiques, the Gothic held an almost impenetrable sway over the British literary public. Anna Letitia Barbauld characterized the strange fascination and repulsion towards the Gothic in her 1810 “On the Origin and Progress of Novel Writing”: “Books of this description are condemned by the grave, and despised by the fastidious, but their leaves are seldom found unopened, and they occupy the parlour and the dressing-room while productions of higher name are often gathering dust upon the shelf” (269).

The writers of the Gothic were, of course, fascinated with the imagination, as were many other Romantic writers; the particular employment of the imagination is precisely what brought the Gothic genre under such fire from critics. The critiques came from all sides, often focused on the overuse and overindulgence of the imagination in the pursuit of sensation. One of the most famous references to this passion for the Gothic comes from William Wordsworth in his 1800 Preface to Lyrical Ballads, as he denounces the “degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation” found in the allure of “frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse” which “driv[e] into neglect” the “invaluable works of our elder writers” (205).

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was also quick to condemn such appetites, which he attributed to the “devotees of the circulating library” and refused to call reading. Instead, he said:

Call it rather a sort of beggarly day-dreaming during which the mind of the dreamer furnishes for itself nothing but laziness and a little mawkish
sensibility; while the whole *materiel* and imagery of the doze is supplied *ab extra* by a sort of mental *camera obscura* manufactured at the printing office, which *pro tempore* fixes, reflects and transmits the moving phantasms of one man’s delirium, so as to people the barrenness of an hundred other brains afflicted with the same trance or suspension of all common sense and all definite purpose. (276)

Coleridge’s connection between the imagination under the power of the Gothic and the increasingly popular technology of tourism is fascinating. He uses the image of a “camera obscura” to demonstrate a particular distrust of the visual, equating the Gothic with a kind of imaginative tourism that takes the educational reading experience—the imaginative transport that occurs when a reader must fill in the blanks, so to speak—away from the reader. Wordsworth and Coleridge argue, perhaps without meaning to, the incredible imaginative power of the Gothic, infusing it with the power to “corrup[t] in private, by degrees, subtly insinuating itself into the mind of the otherwise ‘well-disposed’ person” (Chaplin 181). The worst of the Gothic novelists, according to Wordsworth and Coleridge, are those that force the reader into a pedestrian, consumer-based role rather than encourage an active, vibrant participant.

The women writers of the Gothic in the Romantic era, represented by Ann Radcliffe, took these critiques as their charge. Critics of the Gothic believed the genre “penetrate[d] into the heart of the family home,” a stealthy intruder “waiting for the innocent daughter of the house to take it to her closet where she [would] be awakened from her strictly regulated domestic life” (Chaplin 183). Miranda Burgess articulates the female novelist’s attitude, born of a new print environment and the increasingly popularity of the form: “Precisely because of their ‘domestic’ interests, which unite the intimate sphere of the family with the needs of the national area, novelists are the acknowledged legislators, if not of the world, then certainly of Britain” (393). Radcliffe
takes this charge seriously, employing the Gothic to reeducate her readers about the proper use of the imagination. Channeling the power of imaginative travel embodied by this genre, Radcliffe demonstrates the positive potential of the Gothic, establishing in the process a new generic approach, a respected role as a literary celebrity, and a long-lasting influence on her female contemporaries. Those later Gothic practitioners, interested in reforming and refocusing the genre, pay homage to Radcliffe’s establishment of the importance of imaginative travel while simultaneously shifting reader focus to domestic concerns. Their attention to reader education through imagination, and their clear belief in the power of those imaginations to achieve long-lasting social good, testifies to Radcliffe’s groundbreaking approach.

As the most famous and well-respected contributor to the Gothic genre, Ann Radcliffe published her works amid this debate about genre and among other domestic and international upheavals.³ Though most contemporary critics saw in Radcliffe a moderate and acceptable Gothic practitioner,⁴ she was certainly not immune from critique. The editor who published the aforementioned anonymously written “Terrorist Novel Writing” felt free to weigh in on the debate by directing biting satire at Radcliffe:

“It is easy to see that the satire of this letter is particularly levelled at a literary lady of considerable talents, who has presented the world with three novels, in which she hat [sic] found out the secret of making us ‘fall in love with what we fear to look on.’ —The system of terror which she is [sic]

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³ Scott Mackenzie argues for the connection between the terrifying contents of Radcliffe’s novels and the realistically terrifying circumstances of the French Revolution, noting that the parallelism between them amplified the power of the Gothic narrative. Other critics, including Sue Chaplin, have focused on these political connections, arguing for Radcliffe’s radical political agenda within her novels.

⁴ “Novels and Romances” (1803): “Yet, though a great part of our modern novels are flimsy productions, without either good writing or good sense, others mere catchpenny trash, and some immoral or even impious; though the press teems with ‘Midnight Bells,’ ‘Black Castles,’ ‘Haunted Towers,’ ‘Mysterious Monks,’ &c &c with a long train of ghost, phantoms, &c yet I am inclined to think that many excellent precepts and morals are inculcated in by far the greatest part of them; and that the rest are to be censured rather as being absurd, improbable, and illwritten, than tending to corrupt the mind” (218-219). Critics have noted that the reference to the “greatest part of them” alludes to Ann Radcliffe.
adopted is not the only reproach to which she is liable. Besides, the tedious monotony of her descriptions, she affects in the most disgusting manner a knowledge [sic], countries, customs, and objects of art of which she is lamentably ignorant . . . (183)

Radcliffe’s overall reception, however, was one of respect and admiration, earning her the designation of “the Shakespeare of Romance” because of her purposeful but “daring efforts to place her work in direct line of succession from Shakespeare and Milton through the pre-Romantic poets, James Thomson, William Collins, Thomas Gray, James Beattie” (Clery, “Women’s Gothic” 53). She, like Wordsworth, desired for the British reading public to engage their imaginations, as they had with the works of the most famous British bards, in a moderate and productive way. Like Milton, she saw danger in the excessive use of the imagination; within the Gothic genre, Ann Radcliffe, like her fellow novelist Jane Austen, carves out a model of appropriate travel, this time imaginatively. In so doing, she engages with the persistent concern of Romantic women writers: the negotiation of liberty and restraint, both imaginatively and literally.

Radcliffe establishes this influential model of proper imaginative travel in her essay “On the Supernatural in Poetry,” arguing for the distinction between terror and horror and, by extension, for the distinction between her approach and those of the “sickly and stupid German Tragedies” so disgusting to critics. Radcliffe carefully distinguishes between the two methods of approaching the supernatural:

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5 Radcliffe’s desire to be situated within the long-established, well-respected, and predominantly male British literary tradition parallels Barbauld’s efforts, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4.

6 This idea is also discussed in the early sections of chapter 4.

7 The essay was published posthumously, but its argument reflects Radcliffe’s philosophy of the Gothic. Because of its posthumous publication, and the lack of existing primary source biographical information on Radcliffe, there is no evidence of when the essay was written. However, though the dates cannot be clearly connected, it makes sense that Radcliffe was at least aware of the environment of criticism surrounding the genre she embraced.
Terror and horror are so far opposite that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend, that neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked at positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil? (168).

Radcliffe clearly saw herself as occupying the terror camp, which she argues has the capacity to engage the “faculties” and, as a result, create long-lasting benefit for readers. Here Radcliffe associates her fiction, or, perhaps less assertively, these novels of terror, with the positive approbation of Shakespeare and Milton. She simultaneously argues that Edmund Burke, the creator of the sublime aesthetic category that so many Gothic novelists sought to embody, would not argue for horror over terror. Essentially, then, Radcliffe “redefines sublimity as an aesthetic that multiplies differences, and that therefore empowers rather than effaces women” (Heiland 58).

Through this aesthetic philosophy, Radcliffe disengages herself from increasingly sensational and sexual novels, like Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*, and carves out a subgenre focused, like many of her Romantic counterparts, on the proper use of the Imagination. Yael Shapira points out the voyeurism accompanying the horror of *The Monk* overflows with bodies. Live or dead, chaste or sexual, all are depicted with the same brash disregard for delicacy, and all—with perhaps a single exception—are female. Women in the novel are ‘trapped in physicality. Seen from outside primarily through masculine points-of-view, they are repeatedly reduced to erotic surface parts’. . . *The Monk* displays a voyeuristic fascination with the pure body of the virgin, alongside an equally intense preoccupation with the shape-changing, stomach-turning female grotesque. (466)
Viewpoint distinguishes between the acceptable and the unacceptable, between horror and terror. As Shapira suggests, Radcliffe solidifies the distinction between her brand of Gothic and that of Matthew Lewis and his ilk through her use—or shielding of—the body. Those interested in a voyeuristic glimpse at the forbidden are not interested in intellectual or imaginative growth; voyeurism, like tourism, seeks to satisfy an appetite, to promote self-interest, to titillate rather than to contribute. Those, like Radcliffe and Milton, who believe that “obscurity leaves something for the imagination to exaggerate,” and that such imaginative engagement is essential to the reading experience, are interested in long term personal growth rather the temporary thrill of horror (169).

Radcliffe’s clear advocacy of careful, measured imaginative travel that engages the mind and cultivates reason highlights her version of the Gothic.

One of the key characteristics of this Radcliffian Gothic is the didactic use of landscape to engage the reader’s imagination. Radcliffe does not use landscape subtly. In fact, her distinctive approach to scenery descriptions led Keats to joke that he would, in true Radcliffian fashion, “cavern you, and grotto you, and waterfall you, and wood you, and water you, and immense-rock you, and tremendous sound you, and solitude you.” In Radcliffe’s four major novels, the landscape plays such an important role that it nearly resembles a crucial character. Of course, critics have studied this use of landscape in proper imaginative travel parallels the focus on achieving the proper prospect in scenic travel. The connection solidifies the relationship between physical and imaginative travel.

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8 The focus on viewpoint, or prospect, in proper imaginative travel parallels the focus on achieving the proper prospect in scenic travel. The connection solidifies the relationship between physical and imaginative travel.

9 See Keats’s letter to J. H. Reynolds, 14 March 1818.

10 I focus in this chapter on the four most popular novels: A Sicilian Romance (1790), The Romance of the Forest (1791), The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), and The Italian (1796). While I am certain that her earlier novel, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne (1789), and her posthumously published novel, Gaston de Blondeville (1826), feature similar characteristics, I am most interested in the way her most popular, and therefore influential, novels assert a particular brand of the Gothic.
landscape, focusing on topics like the relationship between Radcliffe’s own travels and her fictional descriptions and the ways that Italy’s reputation as a popular travel destination created an additional layer of popularity for her novels.\textsuperscript{11} Radcliffe’s use of landscape shaped the way her readers looked at the scenery around them; “One would, like Washington Irving on a tour of Europe, see a castle through the window of the coach, and instantly a web of Radcliffean romance would be woven around it in the mind of the viewer” (Clery, “Women’s Gothic” 51). This reaction was precisely her goal, as she saw in landscape and proper travel great benefit for the traveler. James Watt argues that “Radcliffe attempted to form her readers, and shape the way that they read her work, by enhancing descriptive passages with references to the landscapes of artists like Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa, most familiar to the leisured elite able to position themselves as aesthetic observers and undertake picturesque tourism on the Continent…” (112). Radcliffe’s description of the picturesque tourism offered for middle class readers a vicarious, democratized travel experience. She encouraged them to transport themselves alongside her characters and, in so doing, taught them not only the guidelines and benefits of true travel but also the power of the imagination.\textsuperscript{12}

Travel through nature in Radcliffe’s novels is always accompanied, regardless of the circumstances that necessitate it, by positive benefits for the traveler who demonstrates the proper moral and intellectual sensibility. In typical Gothic fashion, an impending threat to the heroine requires travel in Radcliffe’s four major novels. How

\textsuperscript{11} See Elizabeth Bohls and Pam Perkins, respectively.

\textsuperscript{12} Frank Donoghue argues that members of the Dissenting tradition “endorsed reading for everyone as a means of conversion” (59). Radcliffe’s belief, then, in the positive benefit of proper reading to the individual coincides with her fundamental beliefs and values.
Radcliffe frames these escapes reflects an interesting philosophy about the role of nature. In *The Romance of the Forest*, for example, Adeline is abducted by the Marquis and taken to a hidden home in the forest which is decorated in the most elaborate and sensual furnishings. The Marquis’s purpose is clear—he has abducted Adeline to seduce her. Although Adeline is initially successful in fighting his advances on the first night, she is keenly aware of her precarious position. Radcliffe frames Adeline’s escape as an escape from sensual excess to natural simplicity, as she quite literally jumps out of the window of a room with a “bed…richly fringed with purple and silver” with “steps…supported by cupids, apparently of solid silver” and “China vases, filled with perfume” into “an extensive garden . . . that afforded her a distinct view of the surrounding scenery” (164). She escapes directly into nature that, despite the high wall that seems to keep her corralled, ultimately offers her the freedom that she desires. She soon departs on an anxious trip across the countryside to escape her captor, who is in close pursuit.

A similar scene occurs in *The Italian*, as nature offers the only means by which Ellena can escape the wrath of the Marchesa and by which Schedoni, the villainous monk, can escape his own murderous inclinations, as well as in *A Sicilian Romance*, as Julia escapes a looming forced marriage by traveling through the countryside. Radcliffe obviously employs the elements of the Gothic as her stock in trade—imprisoned, virtuous virgins, dangerous, roguish figures of patriarchal authority who threaten that virtue, the dashing, passionate young man who seeks to win over the heroine, and the plot twists that force the two apart. Radcliffe frames nature and travel as the answer to
these problems; one can only escape these dangers when one retreats to traveling through Nature.

Radcliffe often uses nature as a counterpoint to excess, to declare the moderating influence of travel and landscape. Radcliffe’s heroines, when on the verge of being overtaken by emotion, find in landscape a tempering influence. Adeline, who by this point in The Romance of the Forest has been held captive by banditti and foisted upon the unsuspecting La Motte family, finds solace and respite in her travels, but only because she takes the time to notice her environment:

The balmy freshness of the air, which breathed the first pure essence of vegetation; and the gentle warmth of the sun, whose beams vivified every hue of nature, and opened every floweret of spring, revived Adeline, and inspired her with life and health. As she inhaled the breeze, her strength seemed to return, and, as her eyes wandered through the romantic glades that opened into the forest, her heart was gladdened with complacent delight . . . (13)

Adeline physically and emotionally recuperates through her interactions with and travels through nature. Her ability to moderate her melancholy through these experiences is a testament to her character. This scene is replicated in all of Radcliffe’s works; heroines are benefited and sustained by nature in ways that her other characters are not. As Angela Keane argues, Radcliffe ensures that

the imaginative investments made in the course of the picturesque journeys have an improving effect on the travelers. . . .the journeys in these texts, however meandering, are always purposive: they are more pilgrimage than recreation. . . .The pilgrimage may be forlorn, but for Emily, its endpoint is liberty and coherent identity, as she dispels melancholic longing in the transition to mourning for the dead, reunion with the living and a coherent repertoire of memories and narratives of her past to give meaning to her future. (41-42).
Ultimately, landscape and travel have physical, psychological, and intellectual benefits for Radcliffe’s characters. Those who benefit from these experiences succeed in moderating their emotions and engaging their imaginations.

Despite the overt focus on the power of the landscape on her characters, the Radcliffean Gothic focuses most sharply on imaginative travel. The structure of Radcliffe’s novels forces the imaginative transport of her readers, an experience Jan Wellington terms “an intense brand of imaginative communion” (147). Each novel is constructed to be as exotic as possible. All are distanced in time and place, often taking place in the seventeenth century and in the European countryside, either in France or Italy. To achieve the true effect of Radcliffe’s narratives, readers must then imagine themselves there, a process that then engages them in a process of recollection and application. Of course, these foreign climes often come with particular connotations for readers—Italy as wild and uncivilized, France as immoral and sensual—and Radcliffe capitalizes on these stereotypes to fulfill her novelistic aims. As Diego Saglia argues, she purposefully invokes these locales in order to endow her novels with an air of the Grand Tour, to make alien what she seeks to make alien and to engage her readers in an imaginative association with her virtuous protagonists, who take on the qualities of English travelers despite their foreign heritage.  

Her narrative structure similarly requires the imaginative engagement of Radcliffe’s readers. While Radcliffe maintains an omniscient narrative point of view, she purposefully limits that omniscience to encourage sympathy for her heroine’s plight and

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13 See the excellent article by Diego Saglia about how Radcliffe incorporates English ideas of the Grand Tour in the structural elements of *The Italian*. He argues that Radcliffe, in characterizing Ellena and Vivaldi as essentially British tourists, capitalizes on the differences between the main characters and the Italian people and culture that they encounter as a way of replicating that Grand Tour in literature.
to enhance the suspenseful terror inherent in the Gothic genre. She, like Addison before her, has confidence in the ability of her readers, that “the Genius of our Country is fitter for this sort of Poetry. For the English are naturally Fanciful, and very often disposed by that Gloominess and Melancholly [sic] of Temper, which is so frequent in our Nation, to many wild Notions and Visions, to which others are not so liable” (106). These fits of imaginative fancy are precisely what Radcliffe relies on as she presents narratives that require the engagement of that natural British fancy. The complexity of her narrative structure allows “political, national, and oppositional voices” to permeate through the interstices, while simultaneously offering readers a comfortable distance from which to experience these imaginative exploits (Mackenzie 416).

Radcliffe often incorporates a nested narrative structure to further distance her narrative from her readers’ contemporary experience and to encourage a multilayered imaginative travel experience. In The Italian, for example, the narrative begins with a traveler’s tale of Italian adventure, the narrative serving as an imaginative souvenir of their travels. A Sicilian Romance begins, similarly, as a tale twice-told—originally recounted by a native to a traveler who then records it in print. These nested narratives require multiple imaginative transports—first to the more contemporary scene, likely more familiar to Radcliffe’s audience because of its proximity in time and space, and then to the more distant scene. One of the more subtle ways that Radcliffe ensures a multilayered imaginative experience is her use of epigraphs within her novels.¹⁴

Focused almost exclusively on the works of respected British poets, often pre-Romantic

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¹⁴ A Sicilian Romance is the exception here—it does not contain epigraphs for each chapter (it does contain a line from Hamlet on the title page) but incorporates allusions within the text to, among others, Pope and Walpole.
but not exclusively,\textsuperscript{15} the epigraphs create yet another layer of imaginative travel that moderates the potential excess of imagination resulting from the Gothic reading experience. By leaning heavily on writers like Milton and Shakespeare, as she does, Radcliffe requires the reader to connect her narratives to these British works and, in so doing, reins in flights of fancy. She simultaneously establishes for herself a position among these poets; like Barbauld, Radcliffe sees safety within the confines of the British literary community and attempts to legitimize her work through the association. As E.J Clery argues, “The epigraphs and casual quotations from the established literature of the sublime is the mark of Radcliffe’s ‘inner worth’ as a writer. Even as she traffics in the critically ‘illegal’ excesses and improbabilities of romance fiction, she creates an authorial persona of the noble outsider in a fallen world of commodified literary production through her display of cultivated sensibility…” (“Women’s Gothic” 54).

Radcliffe attempts to pull her readers away from the ledge of imaginative foreign excesses and back within the stable imaginative fold of the British literary tradition.

Radcliffe argues throughout her novels that imaginative travel, or the power of the imagination to transport, often occurs as the result of reading or language. Radcliffe establishes the metaphorical connection between travel and reading in her description of St. Aubert’s library in \textit{The Mysteries of Udolpho}:

\begin{quote}
The library occupied the west side of the chateau, and was enriched by a collection of the best books in the ancient and modern languages. This room opened upon a grove, which stood on the brow of a gentle declivity, that fell towards the river, and the tall trees gave it a melancholy and pleasing shade; while from the windows the eye caught, beneath the spreading branches, the gay and luxuriant landscape stretching to the west, and overlooked on the left by the bold precipices of the Pyrenées. (3)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{15} She cites Charlotte Smith’s \textit{The Emigrants} (1791), interestingly enough.
Radcliffe pairs the wide expanse of imaginative scenes, found in the “best books in the ancient and modern languages,” with the picturesque and expansive physical scene. Their purposeful connection in the description offers readers a glimpse at Radcliffe’s philosophy that reading and travel are one. While physical travel offers intellectual education, so can intellectual pursuits provide a unique means of travel. We see this connection as Emily uses her imagination to see things that she would normally have been unable to see. She transports herself to the scene of warfare—“In the eye of fancy, she perceived the gleam of arms through the duskiness of night, the glitter of spears and helmets, and the banners floating dimply on the twilight” (166). She connects classical allusions to the scenes in which they occurred—“The scenes of the Iliad illapsed [sic] in glowing colours to her fancy—scenes, once the haunt of heroes—now lonely, and in ruins” (206). The power to achieve this imaginative transcendence comes as a result of Emily’s disciplined mind. Ellena, the protagonist of The Italian, is similarly able to transport herself imaginatively into her “volume of Tasso” as she finds solace in “wandering in the imaginary scenes of the poet” (111). Essentially, Ellena and Emily’s scenes of imaginative transport become a metonymic device for the reader. What they do, Radcliffe asserts, we as readers should do as well.

Books have the power to affect the imagination for good or for ill. Radcliffe engages in the “registers of debate on women’s reading within her narratives” by depicting moments when her heroines, despite their virtue and reason, transgress into territories of excessive emotion (Mackenzie 424). In The Romance of the Forest, Adeline finds a manuscript which “describes the mental torments of an unnamed prisoner, a Gothic novel in miniature and turns Adeline into an avid and suggestible
reader, a model consumer of Gothic” (Clery, “Women’s Gothic” 72). Radcliff describes Adeline’s reactions to the manuscript as “fancy, which now wandered in the regions of terror,” a state of mind that invoked “dreadful ideas, and strange images of fantastic thought” (134). Her imagination takes flight, and leads her to see visions. As a direct result of her reading, Adeline's imagination creates supernatural experiences. The reader, in tandem with Adeline, is led to recreate these supernatural effects as imaginative terror is engaged. Radcliffe’s narrative voice does not endorse this experience as productive or positive, as she does earlier with restrained and educational imaginative transports. Rather, this experience is characterized by both the language of fear—“dreadful” and “strange”—and a lack of direction—“wander.” In fact, the narrator describes Adeline’s imagination as one that “refused any longer the control of reason” just before she has her “supernatural” experience, a comment that calls the whole event into question (134). Is Adeline actually seeing something extraordinary or is she just allowing her imagination to get away from her?

Anna Letitia Barbauld argues that novels create an environment where “our imagination, darting forth, explores with rapture the new world which is laid open to its view, and rejoices in the expansion of its powers. Passion and fancy co-operating elevate the soul to its highest pitch; and the pain of terror is lost in amazement” (129). This imaginative power is what Radcliffe desires. Explorations, elevation, and awe-inspired wonder are all positive results of the Radcliffian Gothic. While certainly, the suspension of disbelief and the entertainment of the imagination remain essential for any Gothic novel's success, let alone wild popularity, Radcliffe establishes that novels should do more than simply satisfy a thirst for the exotic or horrifying. Instead, through
the careful construction of contrasting scenes of productive and excessive imaginative transport, Radcliffe embraces a moderate position in the debate about the Gothic. Instead of arguing for the elimination or embrace of the Gothic, Radcliffe argues for a careful exercise of imagination with a great deal of restraint to ensure its positive effect.

Radcliffe’s moderate philosophy regarding the Gothic and the imagination coincides with the focus of the women I have been studying thus far: the seemingly contradictory but nonetheless inherently connected ideas of liberty and restraint. The Gothic tropes of captivity and escape lend themselves well to this sort of discussion, as figureheads of patriarchal power hold innocent women captive, literally and metaphorically. Julia must escape the potential of a forced marriage, Adeline is literally held captive by a Marquis and becomes essentially a commercial good to be traded between men, Emily is imprisoned within the Castle Udolpho during almost the entirety of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and Ellena is abducted by Schedoni and her lover is held captive by Inquisitors, all to prevent their marriage. Radcliffe’s works are rife with overtly dramatic captivity narratives. More subtly, however, Radcliffe argues for the escape of women from the shackles of conduct book models of education by encouraging the free yet reasoned exercise of their imaginations.

Adeline, in the midst of her second imprisonment of the novel, transcends her physical circumstances to rejoin her lover Theodore strictly through the power of her imagination: “She pictured to herself the dark damp dungeon where he lay, loaded with chains, and pale with sickness and grief; she heard him, in a voice that thrilled her heart, call upon her name, and raise his eyes to Heaven in silent supplication” (217). Of course, these sentimental transports may seem the height of emotional overindulgence,
but what Adeline sees, as the reader well knows, is likely what Theodore is actually
doing, sensitive artistic hero that he is. As well as we know Theodore, we do not
question whether or not he would express concern over Adeline; as well as we know the
Marquis, we do not doubt the horrors of his imprisonment. Thus, as readers we are
impressed with Adeline’s ability to transport herself, through the active use of her
imagination, out of self-pity and into empathetic regret for the suffering of others.

Radcliffe establishes the connection between this type of imaginative vision and
virtue. She characterizes those who are able to enjoy art and landscape through the
measured use of the imagination, as well as simultaneously moderate their emotions
using that same imagination, as implicitly virtuous. Radcliffe, through her moderate
approach to the Gothic, “laud[s] mental cultivation as the route to freedom” (Benedict
90). We see this especially in those who are able to maintain a liberty of thought
amongst the captivity of tradition or pressure of society. In *The Italian*, we are
introduced to the abbess of the convent Santa della Pietà who, interestingly enough,
becomes a model of this type of behavior. Radcliffe describes her as

>a striking instance of the influence, which a virtuous mind may acquire over
others, as well as of the extensive good that it may thus diffuse. She was
dignified without haughtiness, religious without bigotry, and mild, though
decisive and firm. She possessed penetration to discover what was just,
resolution to adhere to it, and temper to practise it with gentleness and
grace. . . . Whatever might be her failings, they were effectually concealed
by the general benevolence of her heart, and the harmony of her mind; a
harmony, not the effect of torpid feelings, but the accomplishment of correct
and vigilant judgment. . . . she conformed to the customs of the Roman
church, without supposing a faith in all of them to be necessary to salvation.
(347)

The abbess essentially embodies the qualities of a good mother, a role she plays
abstractly through her religious position but which Radcliffe offers to her readers as a
model. Despite being essentially described as being a captive within her church\footnote{While the Gothic tendency towards anti-Catholicism is certainly present in this instance, especially in the way Radcliffe contrasts the kindness and liberalism of the abbess against Schedoni and the Inquisitors he seems to be able to hoodwink through his treachery, Radcliffe’s presentation of the abbess as an exception to this wholesale rejection of Catholics remains most interesting to me. She creates this exception through her depiction of the abbess’s ability to think and decide for herself which tenets of her religion she will espouse. We see a similar sort of move with the Inquisitors at the end of the novel, as they listen to reason and display a degree of mercy, which surprises Vivaldi and moves him to tears (see page 407). The description of this situation seems more plot-driven than character-driven; the extended description of the abbess and Ellena’s love for her highlight her behavior as an example.}—we later learn that she must conceal her liberal ideas from “fierce ecclesiastics” who would punish her for her freethinking—the abbess is able to cultivate her reason and to exercise it in every situation. Radcliffe presents her as a model for her heroine, Ellena, and her readers. If this woman can cultivate her imagination and her reason, even within the most oppressive circumstances, so can they.

Without the freedom to engage the imagination, the cultivation of reason and its associated positive traits could not occur. Radcliffe argues, then, against the wholesale elimination of imaginative travel, advocated by many critics who argued for the need for literature to focus solely on the realistic problems and issues facing readers. Instead, as Clery notes, Radcliffe recuperates imagination by making it “a resource for the heroine, allowing her to moderate passions into sentiment, or translate emotion from worldly objects to ideas of the divine” (78). The lessons that Radcliffe seeks to teach her readers depend upon their freedom to experience the novel on multiple levels. Her female readers, especially, must be able to not only have access to the novel but have the ability to experience the narrative imaginatively in order to benefit completely.

Rather than caving to the pressure from critics who saw reading and imagination as inherently dangerous, Radcliffe challenges their criticism by demonstrating how the Gothic can be essential to the cultivation of character.
Radcliffe’s link between the cultivation of imagination and reason offers a check on the excessive sensibility critics warned was encouraged by the Gothic, or what Jan Wellington terms the “emotional economy of the Gothic” (151). Radcliffe, like many of her female contemporaries, sees reason as the key to true intellectual development. In her articulation of these ideas, the imagination is a key step in that educational process. The ability of reason to counter excess emotion, and therefore assert the ability for women to perform effectively outside of stereotypical roles attributed to them, was key to the discussions of female education during the 1790s. Most famous in this discussion is Mary Wollstonecraft, who in 1792 argued in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* the role of reason in checking emotion: “Let the honest heart show itself, and reason teach passion to submit to necessity; or, let the dignified pursuit of virtue and knowledge raise the mind above those emotions which rather embitter than sweeten the cup of life when they are not restrained within due bounds” (83). Emotion is not inherently bad. The limitless indulgence of emotion leads to weakness and ignorance.

While Wollstonecraft’s argument about the nature of women and the equalizing power of education was seen as transgressive in her time, even her most conservative counterparts echoed the principle of cultivating reason. Hannah More, in her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, while focusing on the role education plays in preparing women for their roles as wives, mothers, and disciples, asserts the benefits of reason. She argues that, to be an effective wife and mother, one must be “not merely a creature who can paint, and play, and dress, and dance” but someone “who can comfort and counsel him; one who can reason and reflect, and feel, and judge, and discourse, and discriminate” (112, emphasis mine).
Regardless of political affiliation, female writers interested in the education of women argue for reason as the key to the development of their education. In so doing, these women advocate the ability for women to transcend concerns of home to effectively engage in the discourse of the political, economic, and social issues of their time. Radcliffe, by incorporating a clear focus on the restraining power of reason in the imaginative travel she invokes, elevates the Gothic from purely sensational entertainment to didactic imaginative education.

Radcliffe overtly engages in this process of reader education by constructing models for fictional female education that feature reason as their focus, an effort especially prominent in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. James Watt argues for Radcliffe’s consistent interest in this topic: “Radcliffe’s works from *A Sicilian Romance* onwards are outwardly concerned with the education of their heroines (and readers), and with the proper management of sensibility” (105-106). Brenda Tooley’s argument on the utopian communities within *The Italian* similarly argue for Radcliffe’s investment in this issue, as “the Gothic novel comments upon—either intentionally or not, and perhaps approvingly—a series of sketches and proposals for women’s ‘colleges’ and women’s communities throughout the century and before” (43). Within her four major novels, Radcliffe’s main proponent of the necessity of reason, and its ability to check and restrain emotion, is St. Aubert, Emily’s ill-fated father in *Udolpho*. The early chapters of the novel are full of his meditations on the need for reason, laying the foundation for both Emily’s education and the reader’s expectation of her behavior. We are told that “[h]e endeavoured, therefore, to strengthen her mind; to enure her to habits of self-command; to teach her to reject the first impulse of her feelings, and to look, with cool
examination, upon the disappointments he sometimes threw in her way” and that his
desire, primarily, was for Emily to “acquire that steady dignity of mind, that can alone
counterbalance the passions. (5) We see in St. Aubert’s model of education Radcliffe’s
awareness and invocation of well-known models of female education in Britain. St.
Aubert’s willingness to “witness, with seeming indifference, the tears and struggles
which his caution occasioned her” parallels Hannah More’s suggestion that a good
female education centers on praise for more traditional female qualities, like industry
and humility, rather than for the more emotional, independent qualities of wit or spunk.17

Simultaneously, Radcliffe invokes the Wollstonecraftian model of equality in
education by providing Emily with a clearly balanced skill set. We are told that her
father provides her “a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with
every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English, chiefly that she might
understand the sublimity of their best poets” (6). St. Aubert hopes to cultivate in his
daughter “a well-informed mind” (6).18 Essentially, St. Aubert is raising a good reader,
one who is able to read broadly and complexly, recognize nuances within the passages
she loves because of her balanced education, and apply the reason she cultivates
through her education into other areas of her life. In St. Aubert’s meditation on a good
mind we find Radcliffe’s philosophy on the need for both reason and imagination:

17 See Hannah More’s Strictures on Female Education Volume 1, Chapter 6: “they should be accustomed
to receive but little praise for their vivacity or their wit, though they should receive just commendation for
their patience, their industry, their humility, and other qualities which have more worth than splendour.
They should be led to distrust their own judgment; they should learn not to murmur at expostulation, but
should be accustomed to expect and to endure opposition.” An excerpt of this chapter can be found in the

18 We see a similarly balanced and well-rounded educational philosophy espoused by La Luc in
Radcliffe’s The Romance of the Forest, although his educational philosophy occupies a much more
secondary role in that novel than St. Aubert’s does in Udolpho.
The vacant mind is ever on the watch for relief, and ready to plunge into error, to escape from the languor of idleness. Store it with ideas, teach it the pleasure of thinking; and the temptations of the world without, will be counteracted by the gratifications derived from the world within. (6)

Like Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe perceives the danger of an idle mind, and argues for the need for imaginative transport to engage and discipline it. Rather than “plunge into error,” readers must find ways of finding the “pleasure of thinking.” Correct reading, of the Gothic even, is precisely one such means to achieve this goal.

Throughout *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Radcliffe presents the fruits of this educational labor, or the contrast between Emily’s negotiation between terror and reason and those characters who allow their imaginations to run wild. Emily, while at times prone to her own flights of superstitious fancy, often demonstrates reason and moderation even in the most difficult circumstances. At one point in the novel, while desiring her inheritance and threatening her with continuing imprisonment and sexual victimization, Montoni argues that her signature on legal paperwork is basically unnecessary because her rights have already been superseded. He is quite clearly trying to deceive her, and as readers we understand that most undisciplined minds would fall prey to this type of intimidation. Emily has the capacity to see through his logic and challenge the flaws in his argument. She says, “If I have no right to these estates, sir . . . of what service can it be to you, that I should sign any papers, concerning them? If the lands are yours by law, you certainly may possess them without my interference, or my consent” (393). Emily demonstrates not only her capacity to comprehend and dissect an argument but also a basic knowledge of law and her rights as a female inheritor. Her retort is impressively assertive, certainly, but even more impressive given the weight of the threat hanging over her as she challenges Montoni.
As readers, we do not doubt that Montoni will make good on his threat, as he has proven himself to be a heartless tyrant in earlier pages. Nevertheless, Emily does not dissolve into insensible tears or collapse under the pressure of the situation. She reasons through her problem and, ultimately, becomes the victor as Montoni never gains access to the lands that he so desperately desires. His passionate villainy cannot trump her disciplined reason.

Radcliffe contrasts Emily’s cultivated reason with the superstition and passion of the other characters in the novel. In at least two of her novels, superstition is characterized as a “contagion” which has the power to “infect” the mind (Mysteries of Udolpho 68; The Italian 24). Radcliffe therefore presents many of the characters for whom superstition has supplanted reason as frenzied, irrational, and nearly mad. This is especially true of the servants in her novels; though kind and often instrumental in the eventual freedom of the heroine in peril, these servants are presented with a degree of condescension by the narrator. These lower class figures, we are to infer, have not had the benefit of the rational education that would certainly cure them of their superstitious malady.

Upper class characters are not immune to these emotional excesses. In fact, many of Radcliffe’s heroes are characterized by their overwhelming passion. Vivaldi’s heroism in The Italian is tainted by his willingness to be almost immediately and completely overwhelmed by his senses. He sees Ellena only briefly, becomes immediately transfixed and utterly in love, and pursues her with what amounts to reckless abandon. Radcliffe connects the rest of the novel’s tragic events to this overwhelming passion, arguing that they are the natural consequence of such behavior.
His mother’s nefarious plot and Schedoni’s murderous rage, while certainly not entirely attributable to Vivaldi’s overwrought sensibilities, are provoked by Vivaldi’s irrational emotion. Ellena becomes the victim of all of this excess emotion, caught up in a whirlwind of sensibility. The passionate heroes of Radcliffe’s novels—Valancourt, Theodore, Hippolitus, Vivaldi—are all characterized by the desire to allow love to overtake them, a weakness made even clearer when juxtaposed with the discipline of her heroines. As Barbara Benedict argues, “Emily’s ‘self-command’—her ability to restrain her feelings and listen to her reason—protects her from the contagion of her aunt’s and Montoni’s society and makes her superior to the sentimentally indulgent Valancourt” (90-91). Radcliffe refuses to associate indulgence with her heroines.

She demonstrates this abandonment of indulgence through a common motif in her novels—the potential secret marriage. Despite being faced with imprisonment, an impending and unwanted marriage (often for someone else’s fiscal gain), or any other manner of victimization, Radcliffe’s heroines steadfastly refuse to agree to elope with the lovers whom, for all intents and purposes, they have already determined to marry. One could argue that these refusals are based on outward appearances, since, regardless of the circumstances, a quick marriage would always be looked upon suspiciously. I believe Radcliffe here highlights the cultivated reason of her heroines. While they have affection and love for these men, they refuse to rashly agree to an event so important simply to escape something perilous. Their reason requires steady and deliberate action; to jump haphazardly into marriage, a crucial and socially essential partnership, would be to prove the stereotypes of irrational, emotional, and overwrought women correct.
One of the most expansive ways that Radcliffe advocates for the triumph of reason over emotion is her consistent rejection of the hinted-at supernatural events in favor of a resolution much more reasonable. As James Watt argues, "'Explanation' was often seen to be a structural component of Radcliffean romance which ultimately served as a chastening reminder to readers about the dangers of becoming consumed with the unfolding of the plot, of surrendering rational control of themselves and submitting to an external force" (115). Visions, figures of decomposing bodies, mysterious voices—all of these Gothic supernatural staples, which in the hands of other Gothic writers like Lewis would be exploited for maximum emotional and horrific value, are explained away as the result of too much sensibility in Radcliffe’s narrative. Nevertheless, the explaining away of the supernatural is balanced with the essentiality of imaginative engagement. Clery notes that

[t]he impact of the narrative depends on the temporary ‘hoodwinking’ of reason, to experience ‘the strange luxury of artificial terror’ requires some sort of surrender to ‘the weakness of superstitious credulity.’ . . . The reader progressively moves from the sense of mystery that encourages fearful, false ideas to full knowledge of the facts, intelligibility of causes, means and ends, and confirmation of the truth of reason: in other words, reliving the passage from gothic to modern times, a process here invested with a pleasurable blend of relaxation and control, license and restraint. (“The Rise of Supernatural Fiction” 107-08)

While Radcliffe wants readers to recognize the artificiality of the supernatural at the end of the narrative, she does not wish to strip them of the experience. In fact, as James Watt asserts, Radcliffe seeks to educate her readers through a didactic combination of reason and imagination: “Just as Radcliffe foregrounded the efforts of her central characters to maintain a rational sense of perspective throughout their various trials, so too did her works address the contemporary concern about the ‘disciplining’ of readers.” (111). As a means of encouraging good reading, she transports them in the midst of
the experience but leaves them clear about the lines between fiction and reality by the end of the narrative. A reasonable reader, interested in intellectual expansion rather than sensual satisfaction, will find in this careful negotiation between imaginative freedom and restraint an opportunity for personal growth. The readers who take the opportunity to grow through their reading experiences will, then, be better equipped to contribute constructively to home and, by extension, to nation. Far from being frivolous, as critics accused, Radcliffe’s Gothic creates disciplined, rational, and intellectually experienced readers and citizens.
The journeys depicted by the Romantic women writers I’ve examined break down binaries of public and private by focusing on how the concerns of one intimately affect the concerns of the other. In fact, these women make very public their own private journeys of authorship using the metaphor of travel, demonstrating both the tension inherent in their forays into the public world of political, social, and economic discourse and the exhilarating intellectual freedom that such excursions produce. At the heart of all of these works is a deep desire to extend to readers, many of which were women equally hindered by social and economic factors outside of their control, similar freedom. For those women who could not travel to the continent, as Mary Wollstonecraft, Ann Radcliffe, and Helen Maria Williams did, or even experience the domestic beauty of the country through touring, the effects of which Dorothy Wordsworth chronicles, they could gain a powerful degree of experience simply through the act of reading. Women authors concerned themselves with teaching those readers how to do so productively.

One example of this deliberate reader education comes in the domestic Gothic, a subset of the Gothic genre developed by novelists such as Jane Austen and Charlotte Smith. The aim of this genre was to retrain reader attention more carefully on the frightening tyranny, sexual danger, and stagnation of captivity that lurked in their own homes and neighborhoods. Their novels Northanger Abbey and The Old Manor House play with the idea of “domestic” as a multifaceted focus on the concerns of home and
homeland, employing Radcliffean Gothic characteristics but revising them in order to suit a larger social and political message. These revisions often lead critics to see the novels as hybrid genres or parodies, but not truly Gothic.¹ Both Claudia Johnson and Miranda Burgess have made note of this change in the genre in their discussions of Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*. Miranda Burgess argues that this process bring[s] the most visible conventions of the genre home from Italy, where Radcliffe had used them to distance the English reader from political instability; home from the turf of Wollstonecraft and the English Jacobins, who have assailed in gothic novels and novelized polemic the justice of modern English politics and ancient tradition: home in the sense of a return to the domestic and the national fold. Radcliffe’s gothic scenes become landmarks on a map on which Austen traces, with increasing assurance, the ties between family, fictions, and politics. (399)

Claudia Johnson echoes this sentiment, as she argues that Austen moves the political and social critiques embedded in the Gothic by “domestica[ing] the gothic and bring[ing] its apparent excesses into the drawing rooms” of her readers (47).²

Both Austen and Smith amplify the connection between readers and the novel's subject matter through their settings. Both Austen and Smith nestle their narratives

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¹ See introductions of the two Broadview editions of the novels. They often recognize its complex narrative focus, but resist the argument that the novel is, in fact, a Gothic novel—a transparent and comedic one, but a Gothic novel at its heart, focusing on the very real dangers facing a girl who never ventures far from home except through her reading. The same is true of Smith’s *The Old Manor House*. Keen to see Smith’s Gothic elements, critics are nevertheless quite quick to argue that the novel is much more likely any other genre form, like Labbe’s “property romance,” than a Gothic novel. Regardless of this critical elision, the novels reflect clearly the overall Gothic themes of captivity, tyranny, oppression, imagination, travel and mobility, and education.

² Miranda Burgess and Claudia Johnson, despite their initial coining of the term domestic Gothic, do little to identify the characteristics or changes beyond Jane Austen’s parodic *Northanger Abbey*. Burgess, especially, uses her article “Domesticating the Gothic” to wax philosophical on Jane Austen’s conservative tendencies, arguing essentially that by moving the Gothic to the home, Austen argues for the home as the appropriate site of female power. I find Burgess’s argument illuminating in the sense that she recognizes the adaptation of the genre in Austen’s hands, but her approach towards Austen’s politics unnecessarily polarizing. Johnson’s comment about *Northanger Abbey’s* presence in the drawing rooms and libraries of British homes comes at the end of her chapter on the novel, in an almost off-handedly casual way, and certainly does not become a central focus of her argument. Nevertheless, I am indebted to these critics for their identification of the subgenre, which I seek to expand and define more completely here.
within neighborhoods readers would have been intimately familiar with, often using a
popular place as a reference point. This deliberate focus “firmly announces the
Englishness of its setting and idiom” and removes the abstract veneer of traditionally
Gothic fictionality for readers (Miller 249). Austen, for example, refers to all of her
potentially unknown places or fictional constructs—Blaise Castle, Northanger Abbey,
the Moreland home—through their relationship to Bath. Bath, a popular seat of
Romantic tourism, would have been well known to her readers. Thus, mediated through
that familiarity with Bath, any unknown places would be endowed with that same
familiarity. Smith does much the same thing, frequently connecting the Rayland estate
and neighborhood with London, often through descriptions of physical and ideological
distance. The temporal settings the novel share invoke similarity, remaining focused on
late eighteenth century events that even younger readers would likely have felt
connected to.3 Choosing to ground their narratives in the familiar removes the distance
from the traditional Gothic, allowing it to permeate even more completely into reader
consciousness.

The novels solidify this connection with readers through their protagonists. Neither
Catherine Moreland nor Orlando Somerive fit the traditional model of the Gothic
protagonist. They are ordinary Britons, as is the aim. In fact, ordinary is precisely what
both Austen wants us to picture as she describes Catherine Morland: she “had a thin
awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark lank hair, and strong features” and
came from a family of modest means with a mother who “instead of dying in bringing the

3 I refer here of course to Smith’s conspicuous use of the American Revolution, but Austen makes a
similar, though perhaps more subtle, contemporaneous connection to the publication of Radcliffe’s novel
The Mysteries of Udolpho.
latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on” and a father who “was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters” (37). Catherine exists within a stable, nurturing domestic sphere, certainly contrary to the Gothic standard of an orphaned heroine with no one to protect, love, and guide her but definitely familiar to readers who likely benefit from the same type of nurturing home life. Smith’s treatment of Orlando presents him as an equally ordinary, if not overly sentimental, hero, perhaps in a more heavy-handed narrative way. He “was of a temper which made it impossible for him to practise any of those arts by which the regard of [Mrs. Rayland, his potential benefactress] could be secured” and “passionately fond of reading” (42-43). He is quick to be jealous, optimistic almost to a fault early in the novel, and as prone to misfortune as anyone else—not more and not less. In these protagonists, readers do not see figures far removed from their daily lives. In fact, they may see a bit of themselves in Catherine or Orlando, making the connection between the fictional world created by the author and their own that much more tangible. The careful construction of these metaphorical bridges between the reader and the narrative, achieved through imaginative engagement, allow for each reader’s continuing education.

The domestic Gothic strips away the metaphor and argues that the best reader, the best imaginative traveler, is one who travels domestically and does so rationally. Like Radcliffe before them, these authors focus on the importance of education, both literary and experiential. How one reads reveals one’s character. Unlike Austen’s other laudable heroines, Catherine is precisely the kind of unbalanced, frantic reader that Coleridge and Wordsworth disdain. That imbalance creates a limitation of Catherine’s imagination, “formed solely by reading fiction and, in particular, gothic novels” (Erickson
We learn of Catherine’s near-obsession with these novels early in Austen’s narrative, and the repercussions of her bad reading reverberate throughout the novel. Upon meeting Isabella, Catherine tells her of her affection for Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: “Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it. I assure you, if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for the whole world!” (62). Her single-minded focus remains throughout the rest of the conversation. When Isabella presents her with alternate novel suggestions for her to consider after she finishes Radcliffe’s novel, Catherine seems frantic when she asks, “but are they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?” (62). Austen adapts the Radcliffian distinction between terror and horror here. We are meant to see the frantic way that Catherine consumes and is consumed by the novels she reads as immoderate and, therefore, distinctly negative.

Catherine’s visit to Northanger Abbey is, of course, the pinnacle of this failure of education, as she sees in every cupboard and washing list a mysterious Gothic artifact to be read and misread. Lee Erickson argues that “in *Northanger Abbey* Austen convincingly depicts the social and moral dangers of taking fiction too seriously” (585). In Austen’s novel, this fanciful vision manifests itself most clearly in Catherine’s fixation on the “secret mystery” of Mrs. Tilney’s death. Certain that an abbey, even one that has been renovated into a country estate, must be the seat of horrors and mysteries, Catherine pursues her quest with unyielding fervor. She sees no signs that she is wrong, but only sees a world full of the fictional domestic dangers she has internalized. Her lack of perceptive vision leads her to completely ignore the real domestic dangers present at Northanger: “She is unable adequately to foresee consequences, to infer or
predict character and event from evidence, or, at Northanger, to retrodict, to infer a past of events or plot” (Loveridge 12). As readers, we grow increasingly dismayed by Catherine’s inability to see and view the “real” world rather than the abstract, absurd world of the Gothic. She doesn’t recognize the very real tyranny that Colonel Tilney inflicts on his daughter, understand the harsh life that his late wife endured under his iron fist, or see past the veneer of his hospitality. She doesn’t recognize the tangible danger he poses to her domestic happiness—but we do. If Austen’s novel is, as it has been critically described, “essentially a novel of education” (Miller 239), then that education extends beyond Catherine to readers as well. In Austen’s skillful authorial hands, readers begin to see the dangers lurking behind façade of fictionality. As such, we see that reading is good—but only to the extent that it equips you with tools and experience applicable to daily life.

While Smith and Austen advocate proper education through reading, they also argue the necessity of real-life experiences to temper and develop that intellectual expansion. Catherine Moreland lacks this experience. She only recognizes this absence of fortifying experience when she is confronted by real life problems and situations that can’t be explained through the standard Gothic model. A narrow world is a dangerous world, as Smith demonstrates through her depiction of Miss Ann-Jane-Eliza Hollybourn. Miss Hollybourn seems to have all of the education a well-bred young lady should, but Smith clearly calls our attention to her lack of exposure to the outside world:

[M]asters for drawing, painting, music, French, and dancing, had been assembled around her as soon as she could speak; she learned Latin from her father at a very early period, and could read any easy sentence in Greek; was learned in astronomy, knew something of mathematics, and, in
relief of these more abstruse studies, read Italian and Spanish. Having never heard any thing but her own praises, she really believed herself a miracle of knowledge and accomplishments. (205)

Smith subverts the common understanding of education by injecting a need for experience, which she argues is essential for broadening one's intellectual and rational horizons.

We see this same emphasis in Smith's depiction of Orlando, demonstrating her belief in an educational model without gendered restriction. Before he leaves for America as a soldier, he bemoans to his lover Monimia that he must leave his sheltered existence at all:

[W]hy cannot I remain with thee in this my native country? How happy should I be to be allowed to cultivate one of the smallest of those farms which belong to the Rayland estate, and, comprising in thy society and that of my family all my felicity, have no wish but to live and die without reading that great book which they call the World!—Alas! shall I ever understand its language? Shall I ever become an adept in the principles it teaches? and shall I be happier if I do? (182)

His mournful plea to stay in his homeland cements Orlando as overly sentimental and, in a sense, a failure at familial responsibility. With his older brother frittering away his father's meager fortunes in gaming and lasciviousness, Orlando, as the second son, must support his family. In order to fulfill these familial responsibilities, as readers clearly recognize, he must go into the world. When he returns from his military campaign, and the surprising experiences that those travels have presented, Orlando

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4 Orlando’s love for the country is not a consistently negative trait. He is described early on as one who traveled very little: “Orlando had never been in London but once when he was about sixteen, and had then only attended his mother on a visit for about a week in the spring. . . . He remembered that he was never so happy as when they left it” (299). His sentiments do not change—even after his forays into imperial warfare, Orlando feels most at home in the neighborhood surrounding Rayland Hall. Nevertheless, his need to sacrifice for his family and to further his education remains the compelling force here, and the fact that he hates the idea so much makes his sacrifice more admirable. Smith argues here that being out in the world does not negate your love for your country, but merely allows that love to be balanced by the breadth of one’s experience.
has gained the skills necessary to read the world impartially. He has learned the world’s language, rather than simply the language of romance, and now applies it in the cause of domestic justice. Rather than rhapsodizing about the perfection of England, he sees its flaws clearly. At multiple points in Book IV, after he has returned to Britain from America, Orlando focuses his attention on injustices that come into sharp relief only because of his wartime experiences. He visits prisons and workhouses, sees the suffering of those who are imprisoned, and suffers inhospitality that he never would have imagined. As a result of his worldly education and experience, he can facilitate change only because he can now see where such change is needed. Cultivated realistic observation creates domestic improvement.

Austen and Smith focus their readers’ attention on the institutional injustices and social dangers that face contemporary British citizens in an attempt to create such observational skills in their readers. George Levine argues that the resolution of *Northanger Abbey* hinges on a “rational understanding of the self and of the social order” (339) and Joseph F. Bartolomeo argues for a critique of imperial “British abuses” within *The Old Manor House* (645), thus making the sociopolitical critiques embedded within these novels essential to the reader’s educational experience. The peril associated with the gendered expectations of female roles and behaviors becomes one such issue. Unlike Radcliffe’s embrace of the reasoned romance of courtship, Smith and Austen very clearly depict the marriage market as a corrupt economic enterprise. Mrs. Rayland makes overt mention of this environment as she complains about modern

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5 These interjections do read as if they are Smith rather than the narrator or the character, but they are based on Orlando’s experiences and are attributed to him, so we must assume that Smith wants him to be characterized as one who can see the world clearly rather than through the rosy-hued lenses of romance.
society: “I have heard that the way of these days is to send young women to market like cattle: but there is something perfectly shocking in it to me” (323). Austen and Smith wholeheartedly agree. We learn, for example, at the end of Austen’s novel of General Tilney’s calculated plan to increase his family’s wealth by pursuing a woman in the most advantageous fiscal circumstances. Catherine is a commodity to him:

[T]he peculiar object of the General’s curiosity, and his own speculations, he had yet something more in reserve, and the ten or fifteen thousand pounds which her father could give her, would be a pretty addition to Mr. Allen’s estate. Her intimacy there had made him seriously determine on her being handsomely legacied hereafter; and to speak of her therefore as the almost acknowledged future heiress of Fullerton naturally followed. (235)

The language of inheritance and economics permeates this description, even beyond the concrete discussions of the General’s mistaken assumptions of Catherine’s worth. She is, of course, an “object” that intersects with his “speculations” and “reserve.” He calculates her worth, itself a loaded word, based on her ability to extend his own frivolous economic activities. General Tilney emblematizes British society’s objectification of women as an object of gain. While this theory of women’s objectification is certainly not new, the narrative focus of Austen and Smith nevertheless makes an aggressive statement on gender equality.

Smith’s novel makes the same overt references to marriage as a commodities market, most especially through her description of the engagement of Isabella Somerive to General Tracy. Tracy, nearly forty years her senior, woos the young woman with the aim of merely making her his mistress. He ultimately falls, however, to her artless charms and offers marriage. The men in the novel see very clearly how the relationship entirely focuses on money. Orlando recognizes the “absurdity” of the match, but his father is very clear about “the situation she will be in, if he dies and leaves her
unmarried” (290). As a result, Isabella’s father asks that Isabella make the “pecuniary advantages that attend such a situation” the main focus of her consideration (286). Thus Isabella is left to choose between poverty and an absurdly mismatched marriage, and not surprisingly agrees to the engagement. Smith describes Mr. Somerive’s ambivalent reaction to the news: “It seems as if he at once rejoiced in having his daughter so well established, and yet feared that to the dazzling advantages of rank and fortune she might sacrifice her happiness” (295). The first priority for everyone, even the caring paternal mind of Mr. Somerive, is financial security and fiscal gain.

A woman’s ability to be traded, bought, or sold, like the cattle to which Mrs. Rayland referred, earlier remains Smith’s most potent point. If a society’s focus remains wealth, privilege, and consumer goods, the worth of a soul is calculated only through potential financial gain. Smith communicates the systematic dehumanization of women as a means of calling attention to not only this issue but to a larger, disturbing trend in British society. Essentially, these authors argue, the foundation of the home creates the foundation of society. If marriage and the family are created based on terms of economic speculation and potential profit, these novels posit that society is centered on a shifting, insecure obsession with getting and spending. Austen and Smith, as they focus reader attention on the uncomfortable issues at work in homes and families throughout England, educate their readers and call them to action. For women readers, especially, these authors beg them to be aware of their very dangerous domestic circumstances.

The intersection between one’s home and one’s nation and the need for constant attention to those relationships become increasingly clear in the domestic Gothic. Smith
consistently argues for the connection between a weak domestic structure and a corrupt social system. The first sons of both *Northanger Abbey* and *The Old Manor House* are plagued by their immoderate desires to consume, threatening their roles as landed inheritors. Frederick Tilney, the General’s heir apparent, moves through Bath as a destructive force, taking what he wants when he wants it. While Austen portrays his father, General Tilney, as a conspicuous consumer of exotic goods, first son Frederick Tilney fashions himself as a social consumer, dallying in a serious flirtation with the engaged Isabella Thorpe without regard for boundaries and without any intentions of marriage. Philip Somerive spends his inheritance, his sisters’ dowries, and any ready money his father has in the course of his “education,” which consists more of gaming tables than intellectual stimulation. The actions of these sons put their families at risk. The Tilneys, while not in financial peril, stand to lose their reputations because of Frederick’s behavior, and his mockery of the courtship process casts a pall over his ability to ever establish a secure home through which he can inherit and pass on the Tilney name. We see the potential results of thwarted inheritance in the Somerive family’s Chancery suit. When the heir is left powerless or unable to properly maintain the legacy given him by his family, the community reaps the negative effects. When Orlando returns home, Rayland Hall is boarded up, the small homes surrounding it leased to new families, and a general sense of rootlessness and stagnation pervades. When first sons cannot carry on their domestic duties, often because of their immoderate desires, England suffers.

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6 He has a pinery at Northanger Abbey that grows 100 pineapples a year. In Austen’s time, this amount would not only have been excessive but nearly ridiculous consumption, and she would expect her readers to see it that way.
Asserting the essential role that the domestic sphere plays in the direction of the nation, Smith argues that education and moderation lead to true domestic peace. Mrs. Somerive becomes the emblematic British domestic figurehead, and her imperial attitudes reflect the problem that Smith tries to highlight:

[Though none had a more tender heart or a more liberal mind: but having heard only one side of the question, and having no time or inclination to investigate political matters, she now believed that the Americans were a set of rebellious exiles, who refused, on false pretences, ‘the tribute to Caesar,’ which she had been taught by scriptural authority ought to be paid. (261-262)]

Ignorant assumptions, second-hand information, and hasty conclusions form the basis of Mrs. Somerive’s beliefs. While she has the capacity to remedy these through a balanced and rational examination of the facts, she chooses not to pursue it. If the home is an organic extension of the state, Smith seems to argue, precarious philosophies form the foundation of this state’s imperial project. Smith’s narrative voice interjects just after this description to present us with a different perspective. Instead of condemning the Americans, this voice condemns the British for their ignorance. The narrator asserts that such attitudes are born of a “national pride . . . learned by the successes of the preceding war” that has taught them to “look with contempt on the inhabitants of every other part of the globe; and even on their colonists, men of their own country” (262). Pride rules British foreign policy, nurtured by the ignorance of its citizens and inherited from father to son, mother to daughter. The successful domestic sphere, home or homeland, cannot be developed based on unsound policies and arrogant pride. Women, as the figureheads of this domestic sphere, must do their part to eradicate these evils in order to cultivate a stronger England. Smith and Austen
provide the voice for this assertion and, through their authorial efforts, a program of reeducation and empowerment, especially for their female readers.

The structure of these novels systematically links domestic cultivation with economic prosperity and social justice. Both novels begin in a country neighborhood, the quintessential symbol of the British domestic sphere, and circle back to end there, regardless of the travels that transpire in the middle. This focus highlights the interconnectedness of travel and the home; whatever one experiences, one must come back and cultivate the domestic sphere as a means of cultivating one’s nation. All of the injustices that Austen’s characters have faced—Eleanor and Henry at the mercy of their tyrannical father, Henry and Catherine being kept apart by the General because of her modest means—are made whole through marriage. Eleanor’s marriage to a titled man allows her not only freedom but the power to sway her father’s mind with regards to Henry’s marriage to Catherine. In the domestic Gothic, all eyes focus back to the needs of the domestic sphere. When those needs are successfully met, conflicts vanish and problems are solved.

Smith mirrors this structure and focus within *The Old Manor House*. The narrative begins with the description of “an old Manor House in one of the most southern counties of England” and ends with scenes of a happy, harmonious family occupying that same home at the end of the novel (37). Smith’s novel takes this focus to the extreme, however, by bookending foreign travel for multiple characters with these scenes of domestic tranquility. Orlando’s fortunes only begin to change when he arrives home on

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7 Warwick also travels far and wide in the hopes of establishing his domestic interests; it is only when he returns to England, however, that he inherits his family’s fortune and finds a successful career as a playwright.
English soil, at which time he “kissed the beloved soil the moment he reached it” (395). Orlando demonstrates his focus on and love for the domestic world while he is away. Even thousands of miles away, Orlando maintains his domestic ties. After their marriage, Orlando and Monimia are able to begin to rebuild their families and community. Phillip and his family are reunited shortly before his death. Isabella and Warwick return, restoring both to “life” only as they are restored to their respective families.  

The family can fix the nation. So argues Smith, as she demonstrates how Orlando’s strong domestic ties offer him the power to remedy social ills. Orlando finds the will that names him the rightful heir to the Rayland estate, thereby nullifying the long-lasting Chancery suit that nearly bankrupted his brother, only after his marriage. Upon inheriting that estate, he embarks on a campaign of what can only be termed social work, establishing financial support for widows, veterans, and the abused Mrs. Lennard. Only through proper domestic relationships can the ills of the world be solved; those social ills can indeed be addressed through the compassion and generosity of even the most ordinary British citizens. Both Austen and Smith imaginatively train their readers’ eyes back to the domestic sphere to accomplish two goals. They seek to expose the very real dangers, the perilous circumstances, that threaten British homes and families, but they do so to empower their readers to take

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8 Like Orlando, Isabella and Warwick were feared dead at sea. Warwick capitalizes on this rumor to avoid creditors. When he is found by Orlando and reestablishes himself within the Somerive family, his fortunes begin to turn around.

9 In what can only amount to a rather strange, and yet effective, turn, Smith redeems the horribly oppressive Mrs. Lennard, who spends much of the first three hundred pages of the novel abusing Monimia, by making her an abused wife herself. Orlando rescues her from her husband, who has declared her insane to keep her from testifying against him in the Chancery suit, and establishes her back in Rayland Hall. Essentially, he brings her home.
action. Readers, even ordinary readers, who are educated and rational have the power to change their circumstances. Just as Catherine ultimately discovered General Tilney’s true nature and Orlando reinvigorated a dying neighborhood, a reading public armed with information, compassion, and reason can positively affect their homes and communities.

If the family can fix the nation, so can its authors. By offering women a portrait of a world that recognizes the organic connection between home and nation, that suggests that a focus on the domestic is the answer to social, political, and economic ills, and that permits imaginative expansion through rational education, these women authors offer to their readers a path to empowerment. Rather than being hindered by their circumstances, by social expectations, or even by the perceived rigidity of the boundaries between private and the public, readers can see in these depictions of physical and imaginative travel a roadmap for productive citizenship. If the imaginative travel that one embarks upon doesn’t allow closer examination of English problems, of what use can it ultimately be to a society in need of aid? Ultimately, these women writers demonstrate how each woman, author or reader, can find the freedom to contribute to both home and nation by redefining their relationships with those very different, but intimately connected, domestic spheres.

For critics, the roadmap these women writers offer suggests an expansion of our own critical vision. We have spent decades investigating how women writers were received, how they were published, what politics they espoused, and how they responded to their authorial predecessors and contemporaries. What remains in the interstices of those often-insightful studies is a chorus of women adopting one trope—
travel—to negotiate their position within a world determined to force them into a rigid relationship with their home and nation. Their efforts, spanning genres and political divides, demonstrate a richness and complexity of thinking about the domestic world that asserts the bridge that women built, and crossed often, between their roles as wives and mothers and as citizens and authors. Rather than remaining stymied by our own intellectual borders of time period and genre, we should continue to look at the ways in which women writers conversed about issues in deceptively subtle yet culturally resonant ways. As perceptive readers, we have often seen the ways in which women writers sought for freedom by creatively evading established, rigid attitudes. As critics, perhaps we should do the same.
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