SCENIC VIEWS AND PATERNALISTIC OBLIGATIONS: DEPICTIONS OF LANDSCAPE IN THE VICTORIAN REALIST NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

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With the many details that fill Victorian realist novels, the frequent descriptions of scenic country views that interrupt and halt the action of the narrative could be dismissed as part of realism's illusion of comprehensive and objective reporting. However, I suggest that the realist novel uses landscape depictions as a vehicle for exploring the tensions between its wish to relieve the suffering of the rural poor and its desire to preserve the countryside as a site to be enjoyed by the privileged. By representing the countryside in terms of landscape, the novels showcase what is pleasing about land that has not been developed for purposes of industry, yet landscape, as a representative and interpretative mode, is grounded in ideologies that validate and reinforce the oppressive power structures that are largely responsible for the hardships that the novels wish to alleviate. I argue that the realist novel attempts to solve this paradox by shifting the way landscape is represented and interpreted, thus changing the way the countryside itself is perceived, in order to posit a new understanding of the relationship between social leadership and control over the land. This project examines how mid-century realist novels employ landscape as a means of linking the pleasures of land ownership with a paternalistic obligation to care for the local poor in an attempt to solve the problems of rural poverty and social instability**.** These novels are sympathetic to the plight of the poor, yet they are also invested in the preservation of the country estate, not only in terms of maintaining the existing physical structures that make up an estate and its grounds, but also with regard to its roles as an institution of land ownership and as a seat of political power. I suggest that this problem drives

how land is represented in many realist novels: by depicting the enjoyment of landscape as being linked with a paternalistic responsibility to provide for the poor, the novels attempt to mitigate the social problems of the countryside, which are rooted in the landholding institution, while still preserving the relative sociopolitical stability provided by the landholding model and the accompanying aesthetic properties of landed estates and undeveloped countryside.

Chapter one examines Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* as an example of how the landed gentry's desire to manipulate the structure of private land through "improvements" resulted in their virtual appropriation of all open lands in the countryside. In chapter two, I claim that Dinah Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* and Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* depict the estate as a reward for good behavior as opposed to an indicator of lineage, and the novels work to change the meaning of landscape by infusing the enjoyment of scenic views with a sense of paternalistic duty; however, they are unsure of how to handle the large manor house, both as a physical entity in which the characters live and as a symbol of the estate in general. The third chapter argues that Charlotte Yonge's *The Clever Woman of the Family* presents the preservation and appreciation of landscape as being a crucial means of battling the ills of capitalism, particularly the gentry's increasing loss of control over the land and the exploitation of the poor that stems from the free market, yet the novel ends up mobilizing the picturesque as a conscious fantasy in order to avoid rather than solve the problems it identifies. In the last chapter, I claim that Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* exposes how the layout and design of private estate grounds serve to restrict genteel women's bodies and minds, whereas uncultivated areas are both visually and materially unstructured and thus do not restrict the women's movements and thinking; but when the needs of the rural poor require that the open land be developed, women must sacrifice their freedom outdoors in the interest of the greater social good.

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INTRODUCTION

With the many details that fill Victorian realist novels, the frequent descriptions of scenic country views that interrupt and halt the action of the narrative could be dismissed as part of realism's illusion of comprehensive and objective reporting: the "reality effect," as Roland Barthes termed it. Or perhaps, as Alison Byerly has suggested, in explicitly evoking landscape paintings through their use of language and imagery, such passages are intended to be read as deliberate narrative artwork that serves to make the rest of the novel, written in plainer language, seem more real by comparison (4). Yet these interpretations do not take into account the special significance that rural land and landscape depictions held in nineteenth-century England, particularly in the context of social unrest and economic uncertainty that affected the countryside around mid century. I want to suggest that the realist novel uses landscape depictions as a vehicle for exploring the tensions between its wish to relieve the suffering of the rural poor and its desire to preserve the countryside as a site to be enjoyed by the privileged. By representing the countryside in terms of landscape, the novels showcase what is pleasing about land that has not been developed for purposes of industry or other practical purposes, yet landscape, as a representative and interpretative mode, is grounded in ideologies that validate and reinforce the oppressive power structures that are largely responsible for the hardships that the novels wish to alleviate. I will argue that the realist novel attempts to solve this paradox by shifting the way landscape is represented and interpreted, thus changing the way the countryside itself is perceived, in order to posit a new understanding of the relationship between social leadership and control over the land.

I am situating my dissertation within criticism of landscape aesthetics, specifically those works that examine 18th- and 19th-century English landscape theory and explore the social,

political, and economic consequences of the enclosure movement via close-readings of popular landscape depictions. Raymond Williams pioneered this approach in *The Country and the City* (1973), the seminal work in which he discusses how enclosure led to the disenfranchisement and exploitation of the rural poor; in doing so, he tarnishes the glory of large estates and manor homes while debunking myths that cast the English countryside, and particularly the pre-enclosed countryside, as an Edenic paradise. Other influential studies in this area, such as the works of Ann Bermingham, John Barrell, and Elizabeth Helsinger, have gone on to interpret landscape in the historic context of enclosure and its socioeconomic and political consequences, and, building on Williams's work, they examine the seeming disconnect between landscape paintings and depictions that romanticize the countryside and the harsh realities of rural poverty and social unrest that afflicted England. Much of the work that has emerged as part of this critical trend essentially argues that landscape depictions either signify a form of dominance over the land and its people, or that they subversively expose oppression while seeming to conform with cultural norms. These studies and their methods have provided the foundation for my own work, but I want to suggest that when applied to the landscape depictions in realist novels, the conclusions they offer do not provide a satisfying analysis befitting the content of the passages in question, nor do they illuminate how a novel's depiction of landscape fits into what is understood as realism's larger moral aims. The landscape depictions—what I am calling those passages in a novel that consciously draw upon the language and imagery of landscape paintings in order to represent a view as it is presented by the narrator and/or seen by one or more characters—in these novels are largely positive, and the novels appear to be sincere, rather than ironic or subversive, in their celebration of scenic views. The novels thus place importance on the land as a source of aesthetic enjoyment, yet the desire to preserve and enjoy these aesthetic qualities

frequently clashes with the broader social, economic, political, and philanthropic issues with which realist novels are concerned, especially with regard to access, ownership, and utilization of rural land. Reading landscape depictions in terms of a straightforward dominance/subversion binary does not illuminate how realist novels are addressing and attempting to negotiate these tensions. In order to achieve a more thorough analysis, my dissertation examines depictions of landscape within the historical contexts of landholding and social paternalism, in tandem with the moral project of the realist novel, via close readings of key passages.

By identifying the novels I've chosen as being realist, I imply that "realist" has a particular meaning, both in how it connects the novels and why it is important to my project. As George Levine points out in *The Realistic Imagination*, nineteenth-century English literary realism is difficult to characterize as its early core values—the commitment to truth-telling and the rejection of novelistic conventions—eventually became conventions themselves, compelling later writers to reject earlier novels and forge new approaches for representing what they saw as truth (7). Yet despite differences throughout the period with regard to the novelists' changing subject matter and their literary techniques, Levine posits that realism can be defined as "a self-conscious effort, usually in the name of some moral enterprise of truth telling and extending the limits of human sympathy, to make literature appear to be describing directly not some other language but reality itself" (8). For my project, I am most interested in this "moral enterprise" of the realists, specifically with regard to their efforts to expose the wrongs being done to oppressed rural populations while exploring the complications of remedying these problems. To this end, I have chosen novels that take place in the English countryside, at least in part, and grapple with

problems of rural poverty in connection with questions of land access and ownership.[1] These novels do not highlight the plight of the rural poor as the focus of their plots, and the threatened and actual violence that they show as resulting from this poverty is not treated as an exceptional occurrence. Rather, they treat rural poverty as part of the everyday subject matter with which the realist novel is concerned in order to demonstrate that it is a pervasive and even expected problem: in other words, realist novels that take place in the countryside don't have to be *about* the problems of rural poverty because these problems are treated as a given—an obvious factor in how the plot will develop. In contrast to earlier novels in which the rural poor are largely decorative, if they appear at all, the realist novel renders the poor visible and ordinary, showing how they live among the gentry and how their suffering, when it erupts into violence, affects every stratum of society. The moral project of the realist novel regarding the rural poor, then, is also a social one in that it calls for the relief of the poor not only for philanthropic reasons but also for purposes of social stability.

While earlier novels associated landscape views with reverence for the people who owned the land (as I discuss in Chapter 1), the mid-century realist novel employs landscape as a means of linking the pleasures of land ownership with a paternalistic obligation to care for the local poor as a means of solving the problems of rural poverty and social instability**.** This reading corresponds with contemporary thinking on the issue. In the early nineteenth century, there was a revival of eighteenth-century paternalist thinking in England, which took the form of widespread faith in the feasibility of feudal-style reciprocation between large landholders and those who lived and worked on the land: i.e., the landholder would provide a living, moral guidance, and political representation in return for labor or rent, loyalty, and trust from those

[1] *The Egoist* does not address rural poverty directly, but its comedy of manners style purposely evokes the feel of an earlier novel (like *Mansfield Park*), and thus it can be read as drawing on, and perhaps parodying, the extreme insularity of the earlier novels in order to make a point about social progress. I discuss this further in Chapter 4.

beneath him. As the success of capitalism was pushing England toward an increasingly *laissez-faire* economy, and as the traditional order was being threatened by the political demands of the working classes, the economic successes of the middle classes, and the overall decline of the aristocracy's wealth and power, social paternalism began to have an almost a nostalgic appeal for those who felt threatened by the changes brought by industrialization. The idea of a feudal order was still active politically in that the working classes retained "a great many galling marks of legal dependence," though economically the feudal model was nearly obsolete (Hobsbawm, *Revolution* 16-17). By this time, the institution of the estate was no longer a site of economic enterprise and instead had become merely a system of collecting rent (17). Yet the idea of a socioeconomic feudal relationship of mutual obligation between wealthy landholders and the rural poor was being romanticized as something that had been lost as a result of the Industrial Revolution. The working classes had an increasingly visible and vocal political presence at this time as they lobbied for additional rights and more representation in the government, and their attempts to empower themselves, even when carried out peacefully, were nevertheless perceived as acts of aggression in the wake of the French Revolution, leading to fears of government overthrow and further upheaval of the social order. The result of these sociopolitical changes and economic fluctuations was a widespread sense of insecurity and instability throughout the period, and pushes for change were met with answering pushes for a return to the perceived certainty and stability of the old order—a predictable social hierarchy modeled on patriarchal principles (Nash 14-16).

However, as Kim Lawes points out in her study of paternalism in nineteenth-century Britain, the revival of paternalist thinking was more than either simple nostalgia or a knee-jerk response to the new economy: rather, it was a critical component of how social policy was being

discussed and formed at the time (1). Those who supported paternalism were not looking to halt progress or regress to an earlier economic structure; instead, they wanted to forge a feudalistic relationship between the wealthy (be it wealth gained through inheritance or industry) and the laboring poor that would be similar to the relationship between a landholder and those who lived and worked on his land (8). To give an example of this vein of thought, Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843) argues for the return of a feudal-style aristocracy that takes responsibility for governing and guiding the masses. Regarding the role of the aristocracy during the medieval period, Carlyle writes,

> That Feudal Aristocracy, I say, was no imaginary one. […] They did all the Soldiering and Police of the country, all the Judging, Law-making, even the Church-Extension; whatsoever in the way of Governing, of Guiding and Protecting could be done. It was a Land Aristocracy; it managed the Governing of this English People, and had the reaping of the Soil of England in return. (246-7)

Carlyle contrasts this aristocracy of the past to the current holders of wealth and power, whom he calls the "Working Aristocracy" (the industrialists) and the "Idle Aristocracy" (the landed nobility). He criticizes the Working Aristocracy for being too focused on money at the expense of humanitarian concerns, and he urges factory owners to cut into their profits in order to provide, for instance, good wages, a wholesome work environment, and even green spaces for workers and their children "to take a breath of twilight air in" despite the financial gains that could be made by eschewing such things (265). On the other hand, Carlyle implores the "Idle Aristocracy, the Owners of the Soil of England" to become useful again by resuming their roles as social and political leaders: "I say, you did *not* make the Land of England; and, by the possession of it, you *are* bound to furnish guidance and governance to England! […] True

government and guidance; not no-government and Laissez-faire […]" (177). Carlyle goes on to warn that ignoring the needs of the discontented working poor could result in a revolt similar to the French Revolution.

While Carlyle focuses on the social and economic roles of the wealthy, he grounds his justification for why the landed should support the poor in the fact that land is a common rather than a created resource, and he implores the industrialists to cut into their profits so as to share at least a small portion of green space with their workers. This idea of the poor having a claim to the land, however minor, and the wealthy being obligated by moral and social concerns to address it, marks a shift in thinking about land ownership that sets the Victorians apart from their predecessors. The idea that landholders are indebted to the poor in some way was further delineated by John Stuart Mill in his *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). Mill argues that land, unlike property in the form of goods and wealth, is unique for two reasons. First, land is not manmade, and thus it should be seen as belonging to humanity as a whole as opposed to being owned by specific individuals. Second, unlike wealth and manufactured goods, which can be endlessly reproduced and distributed without forcing others to give up their own portions, there exists only a finite amount of land; so when individuals claim more than their fair share, others will necessarily be deprived. Mill goes on to suggest that, because enclosure allowed a handful of men to benefit at the expense of the rest of the community by robbing the poor of common land, he believes that duties consequently have been attached to landholding, "erecting it into a sort of magistracy, either moral or legal," in an attempt to reconcile the landowners' feelings of guilt over the disinheritance of the poor with their own sense of what is fair (238). While Mill ultimately sees private landholding as an unjust "privilege" and a "monopoly" that is often abused by those in power, and though he saw the sociopolitical aspects of paternalism as

infringing on the autonomy of the working classes, he nevertheless concedes that private landholding is a "necessary evil" for the sake of agriculture and other types of large-scale cultivation. He insists that all land, especially privately held land, must be utilized in a way that best benefits the community as a whole.

Read together, Mill's and Carlyle's ideas on the moral and communal obligations of landholding shed light on why realist novels are conflicted over the landed estate as the means for dividing, distributing, and assigning ownership to land in the countryside. The emphasis on the poor population's right to the land that emerges in both Mill and Carlyle indicates a growing contemporary awareness of how the enjoyment of private land, particularly when it is potentially productive land that is either groomed or left unproductive for purely aesthetic reasons, can be understood as a form of oppression. It is clear that the novels are sympathetic to the plight of the poor, yet they are also invested in the preservation of the country estate, not only in terms of maintaining the existing physical structures that make up an estate and its grounds, but also with regard to its roles as an institution of land ownership and as a seat of political power. When depicting the countryside, realist novels typically offer passages that relish the countryside's picturesque beauty, its open green spaces, its stillness, its abundant wildlife and vegetation, the areas for walking (both marked and unmarked), and the opportunities for privacy, quiet conversation, and reflection that accompany such a setting. The country estate, in turn, allowed its inhabitants to live among the pleasures of the outdoors, providing access to grounds that had been groomed specifically to create pleasing views and facilitate pleasurable activities, along with allowing proximity to uncultivated wilderness areas, both of which are depicted by the novels as offering distinct benefits and ways of enjoying the countryside. As large-scale farming and industry were overtaking the countryside, the institution of the estate ensured that a good

portion of land would be preserved for the visual and recreational enjoyment of the privileged. In providing a caretaker of sorts in the form of the landholding classes, the estate offered a degree of protection for the sanctuary-like qualities of the countryside, along with the enforcement of regional organization that helped to ensure, for instance, that areas of production did not encroach upon those areas that were valued chiefly for their aesthetic qualities. It also provided a source of political and social stability at a time when increased pressure to extend voting rights was eliciting fear of complete social upheaval, especially as the traditional source of leadership, the aristocracy, was crumbling. Yet, as the passages from Mill and Carlyle make clear, the desire to preserve and enjoy the aesthetic qualities of the countryside clashes with the broader social, economic, political, and philanthropic issues with which many realist novels are concerned. My dissertation suggests that this problem drives how land is represented in many realist novels: by depicting the enjoyment of landscape as being linked with a paternalistic responsibility to provide for the poor, the novels attempt to mitigate the social problems of the countryside, which are rooted in the landholding institution, while still preserving the relative sociopolitical stability provided by the landholding model and the accompanying aesthetic properties of landed estates and undeveloped countryside.

However, the depiction of landscape comes with its own set of difficulties. Much of the time, the word "landscape" is used to mean simply the land and its features, such as in the phrase "the English landscape." While this usage includes a subtle aesthetic interpretation in that it gestures to the land's appearance, it nevertheless takes for granted or ignores what a landscape entails with regard to the conscious framing of an outdoor view for the purpose of interpreting or representing it as an aesthetic object. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, it ignores or takes for granted the social, economic, and political nuances of what it means to represent or

interpret land in this way. As W.J.T. Mitchell argues in *Landscape and Power*, landscape is "a cultural practice" that not only embodies power relations but also acts as an instrument of power in its own right (1-2). For example, landscape represents the privileged perspective of the wealthy and landed: landscape paintings were initially produced for landholders, and the paintings depicted sights and views that were inaccessible to all but those in the landholding class. The paintings were designed to glorify the landholder through the magnificence of his estate and property, so they drew the eye to key focal points and featured sweeping views that suggested the consequence of the spectator, who was understood to represent the landholder, extended as far as the eye could see. Much seminal scholarship on landscape has also investigated the ways in which looking at landscapes is a gendered act, specifically a masculine act of visual dominance and possession over the land.[2] Indeed, the prevalence of the "male gaze" is a tenet of modern landscape theory because the default perspective for landscape art has been recognized as that of the privileged white European male. For instance, Elizabeth Helsinger has argued that, due to the pervasiveness of the privileged male gaze and the politics it embodies, women (and other marginalized populations) are implicitly excluded from participating as spectators of landscape views (25). The understanding of the inherent maleness of the landscape view shapes even those readings in which gender issues are minimized in favor of other theoretical approaches. When landscape scholars do not explicitly discuss the "male gaze" as a force in its own right, it is nevertheless taken for granted as being a component of the default perspective of landscape views, both in the sense of what is being depicted and for whom

[2] See, for instance, Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land*; Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*; Alison Byerly's *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth Century Literature;* and Elizabeth Helsinger's *Rural Scenes and National Representation.*

it is being depicted.[3] When applied to English travelers in foreign lands, this dominance extends to imperialism and the subjugation, erasure, and/or sexualization of native peoples.[4] Until the rise of the picturesque, however, the English countryside and its humble rural scenery were not seen as being an appropriate subject for landscape.

Because rural landscapes were admired for their picturesque elements, and the picturesque was theorized in terms of landscape paintings, the two terms were essentially conflated during the nineteenth century, and thus the picturesque is a crucial component of any discussion of landscape depictions of the English countryside. One of the problems of discussing the picturesque in a nineteenth-century novel is that, despite the term's popularity as a descriptor and its association with a certain type of rural imagery, a single accepted meaning for "picturesque" was never established, and the Victorians thus inherited an especially imprecise and contested concept. Indeed, Dabney Townsend has observed that there is no "satisfactory theoretical treatment of the picturesque in the aesthetic literature of the eighteenth century" (366), and Ann Bermingham suggests that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the word picturesque "had become so overused that it had become virtually meaningless" (84). In other words, rather than establishing the picturesque as a legitimate aesthetic category, as they were attempting to do, the work of landscape theorists largely served to confuse the meaning of the term. In the early stages of the picturesque movement, leading critics argued over, for instance, what subject matter merited picturesqueness, whether the picturesque should stand on its own or be a subset of the beautiful, and if the picturesque was exclusively a visual experience or if it

[3] Critics such as John Barrell, W.J.T. Mitchell, and Ann Bermingham have demonstrated that even the most conventional landscape art can be read as undermining, critiquing, or challenging the default perspective, yet these alternative representations must be read against the dominant perspective in order to reveal how they are subverting it; so even a landscape depiction that does not seem to offer a dominating male perspective is still read as a response to such a perspective.

[4] See, for instance, Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land* and Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes.*

required something more, such as supplementation of the image through one's imagination or an emotional connection to the image.

Despite the initial lack of consensus on the term's precise meaning, the picturesque continued to shape contemporary thinking on land and landscape due to the popularity of the movement, and it went on to be an especially important concept for Victorian writers who were interested in the dynamics of representing rural land. The history of picturesque theory has already been thoroughly outlined and discussed by numerous scholars,[5] so I will give a only a brief summary of the approaches of the founding contributors—William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Richard Payne Knight—in order to establish how literate Victorians would later understand what the concept of "picturesque" entailed. Through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, these theorists' writings were published in the form of long essays, and each essay went through numerous editions, indicating that the texts were widely read and were likely discussed in places of study as well as in English drawing rooms.[6]

William Gilpin opened the discussion of what constitutes picturesqueness with the publication of *An Essay on Prints* (1786), the first in a series of writings in which he explores and theorizes the picturesque as its own aesthetic category in conjunction with Edmund Burke's concepts of the beautiful and the sublime. Gilpin drew from classical landscape paintings to develop his notion of the picturesque, which he chiefly characterizes as rough and irregular in opposition to the smoothness of beauty, and rural and quaint in opposition to the magnificence

[5] These accounts necessarily overlap and repeat much of the same information, but each of them emphasizes a different aspect of landscape theory's story. For instance, David Marshall's *The Frame of Art* examines the picturesque as part of a larger discussion of aesthetic experiences; Nancy Armstrong reads the history in light of its role as a precursor to realism; and Stephen Hebron presents the picturesque as part of how the Romantics shaped the way the English countryside was (and is still) perceived.

[6] To illustrate the idea that the theories and debates about landscape were known to popular audiences, Jane Austen's characters famously discuss the merits of certain scenic views and landscapes during casual conversation in *Northanger Abbey*, for example, and in *Mansfield Park*, characters explicitly refer to contemporary landscape design theory when planning renovations to their estates, as I will discuss in Chapter 1.

and unfamiliarity of the sublime. Gilpin went on to delineate the concept of the picturesque (and how to find it outdoors) in the form of trendy guidebooks for travelers. The guidebooks encouraged Gilpin's many readers to look at the countryside in terms of specific aesthetic components that appeared in recognizable patterns of spatial organization.

Late in the 18th century, Gilpin's ideas began to attract the attention of other leading theorists interested in landscape principles, and a public dialogue was opened in which Gilpin's model was challenged, refined, and measured against established aesthetic theories. In *Essays on the Picturesque* (1796), Uvedale Price proposed that one can learn to "[see] with the eyes of painters" by studying their works. Price believed that acquiring the painter's method of seeing, which allows one to "[distinguish] and [feel] the effects and combinations of form, colour, and light and shadow," would teach one to identify and prefer picturesque views automatically when one was outdoors (xiii). Price railed against the contemporary trend of hiring professional improvers, such as "Capability" Brown or Humphry Repton, to redesign one's land in order to make it more visually spacious and congruent, because they called for the destruction of "the costly and magnificent decorations of past times" and, in doing so, abolished much of the visual variety that he understood as being key to picturesque views (232).

Price in turn provided the basis for Richard Payne Knight's take on landscape theory, particularly the ideas he develops in *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805). While both Price and Knight suggest that knowledge of landscape painting conventions and techniques is key to enjoying the outdoors, Knight indicates that such enjoyment requires more than just learning to see with a painter's eye. He claimed that picturesque objects, such as decayed trees, fish markets, or peasants' tattered clothes, are inherently repellant. Yet people who are knowledgeable about painting can find pleasure in them because, in the mind of the

informed spectator, such objects "[call] forth those powers of imitation and embellishment" by painters, leading to a "principle of association" between what is seen outdoors and the paintings one admires (152). This "principle of association"—the act of connecting in one's mind what one sees outdoors with paintings that one finds pleasing—indicates that, for Knight, enjoyment of the picturesque is rooted in more than just an object's aesthetic merits: it also stems from the spectator's memory of paintings he has enjoyed and how he imagines a given picturesque object or view has a connection with those paintings.

In sum, while the landscape theorists overlapped in their claims, corrected each other, contradicted themselves, and ultimately ended up confusing the exact meaning of the term "picturesque" in ways that cannot be discussed within the scope of this project, they also did some common work. They situated the picturesque as being familiar, rural, and quaint, and they placed aesthetic value on undeveloped land and objects that were aged and dilapidated. They established knowledge of the picturesque as dependent on landscape paintings[7] by insisting that a familiarity with the genre's patterns, color use, and spatial organization was crucial for finding and identifying the picturesque in the outdoors. The theorists encouraged their readers to go outdoors and look at the land as if it were a landscape painting, which was a fairly new concept as rural, rustic land had not been considered worthy of aesthetic contemplation until enclosure began to change the look of the countryside. The theorists also taught their readers how to see the land in this way by explaining how to identify common aesthetic components and spatial patterns and how to use well-known paintings as visual guides, thus training spectators to see and

[7] While the theorists each point to the works of various landscape painters for examples and illustrations of their ideas, Claude Lorrain's paintings are generally understood to be the template for looking at nature as if it were a landscape painting. In *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840*, John Barrell suggests that eighteenth-century spectators became "so saturated in Claude's way of seeing and composing landscape" that "no other way of looking [at nature] except Claude's could easily be imagined" (16, 13).

understand the land as being organized in a specific way. Furthermore, by presenting the picturesque as a kind of aesthetic enjoyment that could be learned from guides and "found" relatively locally, the theorists made the picturesque accessible to a popular audience, which led to its reputation as a middle-class movement (Townsend 365).[8]

The picturesque was initially theorized as a specific aesthetic category, but due to its popularity and accessibility, it ended up transforming the prevalent perception of the English countryside. Its literature set the terms for how to look at rural land and what to value aesthetically, and in doing so, it communicated certain social and cultural values as well. The picturesque sensibility idealized the pre-enclosed countryside, which helped to foster the idea of uncultivated and undeveloped land as being primarily a refuge from the unsightliness of modern industry and agrarian capitalism. Picturesque depictions and interpretations of dilapidated cottages, mills, and other structures encouraged nostalgia for feudalistic relationships between the landed gentry and those who lived or worked on their estates. The plight of the rural poor, when sentimentalized as part of picturesque scenery, made an appeal for paternalism as a means of governing those who could not care for themselves. And although the picturesque was considered a "democratic" movement (Bermingham 85), its grounding in landscape paintings served to diffuse a traditional understanding of the countryside as wholly belonging to large landholders, thus reinforcing privileged, patriarchal patterns of land ownership and access.

The accessibility and popularity of the picturesque, combined with its celebration of dilapidation and ruins, led to the eventual association of the term with images that romanticized

[8] This was an unintentional result for Price and Knight, however, as they theorized the picturesque as being accessible only to the privileged upper classes: i.e., those who already had a thorough understanding of aesthetics and art, who had an imaginative connection to picturesque imagery *as* imagery (and not, for instance, as the location of one's daily work), who had the mobility necessary for seeking out picturesque views and paintings, and, for Knight especially, who had ownership of property. As Ann Bermingham puts it, "Price and Knight saw the picturesque primarily as a taste granted to only a few and inaccessible to vulgar minds" (71).

rural poverty and its trappings, produced according to popular taste and consumer demand. As Nancy Armstrong notes in *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, whereas the picturesque aesthetic had once been associated with "an ideal world apart" from the strains of modern life, it had by mid century taken on connotations of banal sentimentality, uninspired conventionality, and falsity (66). As Victorian realists put a further damper on such images by showing them to be immoral and untruthful, the art public could no longer easily reconcile enjoyment of them with humane sympathies and artistic standards. Despite the poor reputation the picturesque had received by mid century, the Victorian art critic John Ruskin did not want to discard the concept altogether. Instead, he worked to reclaim the picturesque as a legitimate contemporary genre by arguing that higher picturesque images—in contrast to the more common lower, superficial picturesque—are infused with a moral truth that gives them aesthetic value. In volume IV of *Modern Painters* (1856), for instance, Ruskin compares J. M. W. Turner's depiction of on old windmill to one by Stanfield Clarkson. Ruskin argues that the appeal of Clarkson's image is located solely in the objects being represented, meaning that it portrays the ruined mill as an aesthetic object without acknowledging or caring about the human consequences of its ruin, whereas Turner's image attains nobleness in how it gestures to the story of those who are (or were) dependent on the mill, thus illuminating the "pathos of character hidden beneath" the image (7). Again, it is this moral component—a need to bring awareness to the human condition behind imagery that is deemed as being aesthetically enjoyable—that distinguishes Victorian thought on landscape from that of earlier writers.[9]

[9] Of course, the Victorians were not the first to contemplate the conditions being endured by the "picturesque" rural poor. Earlier writers such as William Cobbett and John Clare had written extensively about the harsh conditions of rural poverty and how enclosure had robbed laborers of their land, and the taste for picturesque images and touring in the late eighteenth century had brought new attention to the trappings of the poor and disenfranchised. However, pre-Victorian art and writing that looked to expose rural poverty and mourn the loss of the unenclosed countryside was primarily trying to stir the audience's sympathies regarding the lot of the rural poor rather than presenting the countryside as having aesthetic qualities

Chapter One of the dissertation, titled "Land and Estate as Inherited by the Victorians: The Gentry's Appropriation of the Countryside in *Mansfield Park*," examines Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) as an example of how the landed gentry's desire to manipulate the structure of private land through "improvements" resulted in their virtual appropriation of all open lands in the countryside. While too early to be considered a Victorian novel, *Mansfield Park* nicely depicts the attitude toward the rights of landholders that was gaining acceptance at the time, and it is this understanding of ownership that was inherited by the Victorian landholding classes. In the novel, land functions as an embellishment for the manor home and a marker of one's status, and there is no acknowledgement of a debt or moral obligation to the rural poor. Accordingly, all signs of rural laborers have been erased from the countryside as any reminders of the debt caused by enclosure would ruin the illusion of a self-sustaining landholding class that, consequently, can justly treat open land as its own dominion and its private land as an accessory that is free of responsibility to the larger population. My reading of *Mansfield Park* serves as a point of contrast within my dissertation that foregrounds the ways in which Victorian realist novels tend to engage with, modify, and challenge earlier ideas about the countryside.

My second chapter, "The Meritorious Landholder and the Manor House Dilemma in *Bleak House* and *John Halifax, Gentleman*," will argue that the novels work to inculcate a new understanding of what it means to own land in the countryside by linking the pleasures of landholding with a paternalistic sense of sociopolitical responsibility, thus reconciling the realist novel's desire to preserve the institution of the country estate with its moral concerns regarding how the propertied tend to abuse their economic and political power. I suggest that Dinah Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856) and Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852) illustrate a

cultural shift from the perception of the estate as being permanently linked to a family bloodline to being a piece of transferable, saleable property. The novels propose an ownership model that places estates into the hands of those with moral merit instead of those that have only an impressive pedigree in order to counteract the trend of destructive excess and self-interest that has all but destroyed the landed nobility. As these novels depict the estate as a reward for good behavior as opposed to an indicator of lineage, I argue, they also work to change the meaning of landscape by infusing the enjoyment of scenic views with a sense of paternalistic duty. However, in attempting to revise the ambition of the landholder to moral awareness and paternalistic obligation, these novels seems unsure of how to handle the large manor house, both as a physical entity in which the characters live and as a symbol of the estate in general. I will suggest that the manor house not only signifies the extravagance and self-interest of the nobility, which these novels reject as being immoral, but it also represents a means of fully enjoying the pleasures of the outdoors, which the novels do not want to relinquish. Consequently, the manor house and its symbolism becomes something of a burden to the landholding characters, and the novels struggle with how to dispose of the houses without destroying the estate and its pleasures, including the scenic views that are best enjoyed from the vantage points that the houses provide.

The third chapter of the dissertation, "Landscape, the Picturesque, and the Encroachment of the Middle Classes in *The Clever Woman of the Family*," looks at the problem of aesthetic pleasure and paternalistic responsibility from a different perspective, and it attempts to find a solution that allows the gentry to adapt to the new socioeconomic circumstances and maintain its position. Charlotte Yonge's *The Clever Woman of the Family (*1865) presents the preservation and appreciation of private landscape as being a crucial means of battling the social and economic ills of capitalism, particularly the gentry's increasing loss of control over the land and

the exploitation of the poor that stems from the free market. The novel recognizes how the problems of rural poverty are embedded in the conflict over ownership of the countryside, particularly as middle-class buyers who are eager to own pieces of the countryside are encroaching on land and landscapes that used to be considered a birthright of the gentry. The Curtis family must choose whether to give in to social pressure and develop the land they keep for aesthetic purposes, thus helping to relieve both local poverty and the housing crisis caused by the influx of middle-class renters, or whether they should keep it as a haven for themselves amid the socioeconomic changes happening around them. However, the solution the novel proposes ends up mobilizing the picturesque as a conscious fantasy, one that does not actually solve the problems of poverty or middle-class encroachment but instead allows the Curtis family, as they enjoy their landscape view, to imagine they have done so.

The fourth chapter, titled "The Enclosure of Common Lands for Social Stability in *Shirley*," will suggest that, in contrast to the approaches that attempt to compromise between enjoying land as an aesthetic object and fulfilling one's moral obligations to the rural poor, Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849) indicates that the pleasures of unproductive land are a luxury that must be sacrificed for the greater social good, and women are the ones who must make the sacrifice. The novel presents the village's undeveloped lands as a haven in which genteel women can temporarily escape the rigid social roles and expectations to which they are so strictly held. As a companion piece, George Meredith's *The Egoist* (1879) illustrates how the layout and design of private estate grounds serve to restrict genteel women's bodies and minds, with the property's decorative bounding structures, walking paths, and arranged scenic views ensuring their total confinement. I will demonstrate that, within these novels, private, developed land embodies and reinforces the constrictive social mores that dictate what is appropriate

behavior for genteel women, whereas uncultivated areas are both visually and materially unstructured and thus do not restrict the women's movements and thinking. However, when the needs of the local poor require that the open land be developed, the women must sacrifice their freedom outdoors for the greater social good as the open land presents a threat to stability.

My dissertation contributes to discussions of landscape aesthetics and the ways in which the politics of landscape engage with the broader social, political, and economic issues that are represented within landscape depictions. This project also offers readings of Victorian realist novels that challenge the ways in which the depictions of land are typically understood in these works, which in turn offers fresh perspectives on how the novels approach contemporary arguments about the moral obligations that come with control of the land. This project adds to these veins of criticism by investigating how realist novels typically acknowledge and draw upon landscape as an ideology of domination and the picturesque as one of sentimentalization, even as they work to resist these meanings and repurpose the concepts in order to change the perception of rural land. My readings of these novels offer a new way of understanding how their descriptions of land and landscape not only shaped the way the layout of the countryside was perceived but also contributed to the contemporary political and socioeconomic discussions regarding ownership and access to land, particularly those entangled with problems of rural poverty.

CHAPTER ONE

LAND AND ESTATE AS INHERITED BY THE VICTORIANS: THE GENTRY'S APPROPRIATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE IN *MANSFIELD PARK*

Raymond Williams has argued that the English countryside was restructured according to the interests of large landholders during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. As the enclosure movement transformed unprofitable, nonstandard patches of land into grid-like areas of productivity, the look of flat, rectangular pieces of land became associated with labor and commerce; these topics were distasteful to country gentlefolk, who liked to pretend that they were above the vulgarities of money-making. At a time when traditional distinctions among the classes were breaking down and the rural elite were attempting to define themselves socially—i.e., upwardly-mobile capitalists were striving to gain social rank and acceptance into the best circles while old family names were struggling to maintain their standing and supplement their dwindling inheritances—it makes sense that landholders would want to distance themselves from productive land both visually and physically in order to emphasize their separation from the laboring classes as a way of reinforcing their own gentility. Serving as a foil to the straight lines of plowed fields that signified labor and production, undeveloped land became associated with leisure and the consumption of goods.

Indeed, Ann Bermingham has pointed out, as the enclosed countryside began to look more symmetrical and artificially ordered, the grounds of country estates were redesigned and renovated to look increasingly uncultivated, similar to the pre-enclosed countryside (14). Nancy Armstrong has likewise noted that as a nation develops, wastelands actually become more prestigious than plowed fields because they seem to indicate excess and abundance (58). Uncultivated land gained new aesthetic and nostalgic value for the rural elite at this time, and it is clear that at least part of the reason is because it provided visual relief from the distasteful

aspects of agricultural and industrial production while also serving as a memento of a supposedly extinct, overly romanticized (and, as Williams points out, utterly imaginary) pastoral age in which England had been free of the ills brought on by industrialization and capitalism.

Prior to enclosure, rural landholders tended to prefer well-ordered formal gardens and grounds, but the prestige accorded to undeveloped land after enclosure prompted landholders to begin arranging their private grounds to mimic the irregular lines and clustered vegetation of unspoiled nature (Williams 124). Bermingham has noted that, by the mid-eighteenth century, the modern country estate required large tracts of "completely nonfunctional, nonproductive" land in order to produce the desired appearance for estate grounds, especially as land "as its own ornament and aesthetic effect" was the single most important element of contemporary estate design (13). By enclosing, standardizing, and repurposing what had been common lands on the one hand, and by hiring professional gardeners to artificially contour private grounds on the other, these landholders manipulated the physical structure of the land in order to serve their own aesthetic, economic, and social purposes. Moreover, after enclosure compelled the largely migratory agrarian poor to become stationary wageworkers, wilderness and undeveloped areas were accessible only to those who had the freedom and the wealth to travel beyond local, privately-owned lands. So while uncultivated areas had been communal and open to all prior to enclosure, they were essentially transformed into exclusive retreats for the privileged during the nineteenth century. This exclusivity, along with the contrast between the monotonous look of productive land and the variety of colors and shapes offered by open areas, made unproductive land newly appealing to the elite classes.

In order to illustrate how the landed gentry's desire to manipulate the structure of private land through "improvements" resulted in a virtual appropriation of all open lands, I'd like to turn

to Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814). Throughout the novel, the urge to "improve" a property by making large-scale alterations to natural features that are purportedly displeasing aesthetically is contrasted with the seemingly more genuine capacity to enjoy the existing layout of the outdoors. The exaggerated aversion to the condition of the grounds at Sotherton Court that is expressed by Mr. Rushworth and Henry Crawford as evidence of their refined sensibilities (or so they think) represents the shift in thinking about land ownership as identified by Raymond Williams: instead of being seen as a source of common sustenance for the whole community and, consequently, its maintenance as a moral responsibility for the landholder, land has become little more than an ornament for the manor home and a marker of one's social and economic status**.** Accordingly, in *Mansfield Park*, all signs of rural laborers and the other targets of exploitation that support the gentry's luxurious lifestyle have been erased from the local countryside as these markers of labor would ruin the illusion of a self-sustaining landholding class that, consequently, can justly treat open land as its own dominion and private land as an accessory that is free of responsibility to the larger population.

In *The Country and the City*, Williams contrasts Austen's depictions of the English countryside and its people with the socially-conscious observations of William Cobbett, who was writing around the same time, and argues that Austen concentrates on the changes of fortune among the landed families while inadvertently overlooking the exploitation of the rural laborers and farmers, catalogued by Cobbett, that was happening just outside the proverbial park walls. Williams sees Austen's omission of the laboring classes in her novels as being due to both her limited experience beyond the domestic sphere and her intense interest in the intra-class mobility among the ranks of landholders and their extended families. While Austen might have thought she was writing about 'the poor' when she created, for example, the Prices—a family that has

only two servants, and bad servants at that—Williams suggests that she is nevertheless writing about people who are all from the same stratum of society; and, as he points out, "where only one class is seen, no classes are seen" (117). Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) famously extended Williams's analysis by calling attention to Austen's failure to fully sketch out the consequences of the gentry's dependence on global as well as domestic labor. Said points out the implicit relationship between the comfort enjoyed at Mansfield Park and the exploitation of Antigua's native peoples, and subsequently much criticism of the novel has explored how willful ignorance and the omission of particulars about what happens on the plantations underpins the characters' (and perhaps Austen's) acquiescence to the slavery system. I would like to build on these insights by arguing that Austen's omission of laborers in the novel allows her to develop a contrast between the mind-set of the morally ambiguous "improvers" and that of the characters who appreciate less-affected nature, and it allows her to do so without having to fully address the moral implications of the rapid privatization of the countryside and her characters' acquiescence to this system. However, similar to her treatment of slavery in the novel, Austen's novelistic cognizance of the increasing boundedness and exclusivity of the countryside indicates her discomfort with this system, even if she does ultimately regard it as a necessary evil.

Much of *Mansfield Park* takes place outdoors, and while several scenes are set in what might seem to be open expanses of land, Austen persistently draws attention to the fact that the characters are in fact traversing private property, and she undercuts any sense of openness through her diction. For instance, when all the young people (and Mrs. Norris) visit Sotherton, the trip starts out as an adventure for Fanny, who has never before been able to ride so far. She is soon in territory that is unknown to her, and she is "very happy in observing all that was new,

and admiring all that was pretty" (72). It seems as though this passage would present a prime opportunity for Fanny to enjoy (and for Austen to depict) some sweeping views of the countryside that would include, for instance, rolling hills, vast fields, and wooded areas. This moment also presents an opportunity for Fanny to get a glimpse of the larger world beyond the proverbial park walls for the first time, at least as an adult. However, as she rides along, Fanny instead sees only a disjointed series of markers signifying cultivation, and thus signifying privately held land: "the bearings of the roads, the difference of soil, the state of the harvest, the cottages, the cattle, the children […]" (72-3). As Fanny notices only minor estate elements (cottages, cattle) while her eyes could be roving over a much broader plane of sights, it is clear that her perception itself is bounded by the tenets of the estate. As a result, she sees the countryside in terms of finite properties containing assets that belong to landholders rather than as a stretch of open land, yet this seems to be an unconscious perspective on her part as she is ostensibly admiring only "all that was pretty." Given that family names are usually attached to estate components such as these, the absence of family names in Fanny's observations indicates that she is not looking at the assets of particular families, which would have suggested a more deliberately economic evaluation of the properties, and it emphasizes that she is exploring unknown territory, which one would expect to be accompanied by a sense of discovery on the part of someone unused to traveling. Yet the use of the definite article ("*the* harvest," "*the* cottages"), along with the odd use of certain singular nouns, implies that Fanny both feels an immediate familiarity with the area and perceives it as a single property. While it is not clear how many estates they pass during the ten-mile ride to Sotherton, if any—the wording is vague enough that Fanny could be admiring unseen parts of the Bertrams' estate, property belonging to another family (or families), or both—the blend of ambiguity and certainty in the language

reflects a class-based attitude of assumed general ownership. That is, though Fanny does not see herself as a landowner, she takes it for granted that all the land she sees belongs to *someone,* and the sense of familiarity that comes through the language suggests that, even if she does not know exactly who owns the land, she assumes that the family is similar enough to the Bertrams that she does not look on them as complete strangers.

Moreover, any impression that the group could be exploring open land is quickly dispelled by Maria, who proudly points out Rushworth's considerable property as soon as it comes into view:

> She [Maria] could not tell Miss Crawford that 'those woods belonged to Sotherton,' she could not carelessly observe that 'she believed it was now all Mr. Rushworth's property on each side of the road,' without elation of heart; and it was a pleasure to increase with their approach to the capital freehold mansion, and ancient manorial residence of the family, with all its rights of Court-Leet and Court-Baron. (73-4)

The narrator has already made it clear early on that it is Mr. Rushworth's estate that makes Maria's heart skip a beat rather than Mr. Rushworth himself, but this quote demonstrates a different aspect of the attraction. As Humphry Repton, a contemporary of Austen's and a prominent designer of estate grounds, scornfully observed in *Designs for the Pavilion at Brighton* (1808), the trend of displaying one's possessions "has introduced the fashion of considering the importance of a place by its extent, rather than by its variety; and describing it rather by its number of acres, than by its beauties!!" (363).[10] Rushworth is a participant in this

[10] A number of studies of *Mansfield Park* have examined the novel in conjunction with Repton's writings on landscape design, particularly because Austen specifically names him and, by making him Rushworth's idol, implicitly lampoons him throughout the novel; however, as Stephen Clarke has noted, Rushworth's oversimplified interpretation of Repton's ideas about estate design, along with his extreme plans for implementing them, are rather

trend in that he is apt to brag about quantifiable features of his estate, such as the acreage of his land, and compare them to those of his peers as a way of assessing the magnitude of his assets. For instance, as he contemplates hiring none other than Repton, who is mentioned a number of times throughout the novel, to design improvements for his grounds, Rushworth points out, "Smith has not much above a hundred acres altogether in his grounds, which is little enough […]. Now, at Sotherton, we have a good seven hundred, without reckoning the water meadows […]" (49). The fact that Rushworth is most enthusiastic about the number of extra acres the water meadows might add to the tally of his land, rather than any beauty or even utility that the meadows might contribute to his grounds, confirms Repton's observation and indicates that Rushworth is interested in renovating his grounds in order to impress others rather than to make his home more attractive or comfortable.

Maria is likewise concerned about how Rushworth's estate appears to others, but she approaches the problem from a different perspective. While Rushworth eagerly calculates and announces the number of acres he owns, Maria's boasting instead emphasizes the visible spread

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unfair to Repton (62). While so many scholars have examined the layout of Sotherton and the novel's use of Repton, their studies tend to read the estate grounds and the improvement plans as metaphors or proxies for the novel's overarching concerns with morality and the preservation of traditional values. For example, Alistair Duckworth has argued that Austen presents the institution of the estate as an analogue for the traditional values that Austen wishes to preserve. In a similar vein, Stephen Clarke suggests that Sotherton ultimately represents "old-fashioned formality and old-fashioned values […] that are now embalmed" (63), and Ann Banfield posits that neoclassical esthetic ideals underpin the relationship between estate and character, which serves as the novel's structural framework and its moral system. Conversely, David Marshall has suggested that the novel's preoccupation with landscape design and the picturesque should be understood as a narrative tool for exploring the consequences of separating true sentiment from the expression of sentiment. Karen Valihora extends Marshall's analysis by probing how the novel's interest in the picturesque, and its attendant values of impartiality and disinterest, signifies the intersection of aesthetic thought with moral principle. My reading, on the other hand, foregrounds how the characters' ways of seeing, interpreting, and interacting with rural land reveal how, within the novel, the English countryside is perceived and represented as being essentially private property, and I suggest that this attitude is representative of a broader contemporary sense of class ownership with regard to the countryside.

of Rushworth's land, which suggests that a spectator's perception of the estate's extent is more important to her than its quantifiable size. For instance, in the above-quoted passage where Maria is reported as saying, "those woods belonged to Sotherton," the term "woods" is deliberately imprecise with regard to the size and layout of the group of trees to which she refers. The very definition of "wood" is vague in that it is grounded in inexact descriptions of an area's characteristics and comparisons to other types of treed areas.[11] In this context, the phrase "those woods" indicates a presently visible yet inestimable amount of land, perhaps rendering a large wooded area into one of infinite size within the minds of the observers.

By following her observation that the woods "[belong] to Sotherton" with the remark, "it [is] now all Mr. Rushworth's property on each side of the road," Maria also conflates the estate's manor home and grounds with property that is remote from it. Within the novel, "estate" and other similarly broad words are most often used to indicate a property as a whole, particularly with regard to its economic aspects: i.e., "recent losses on his West India Estate" (20), "Four thousand a year is a pretty estate" (107), "addressed by a man of half Mr. Crawford's estate," (288). But the proper names of the estates (Sotherton, Everingham) are most often used to signify the more intimate, familial aspects of a property as well as the social and political influence attached to it, all of which are embodied by the manor house and the grounds immediately surrounding it. In linking the name Sotherton with all visible property, then, Maria is attempting to stretch the symbolism associated with the manor home to encompass all of Rushworth's property. While property that is relatively distant from the manor home is still considered part of the estate, it does not have the same visual and psychological impact that the

[11] According to the *OED*, the definition of the word reads, "A collection of trees growing more or less thickly together (esp. naturally, as distinguished from a *plantation*), of considerable extent, usually larger than a *grove* or *copse* (but including these), and smaller than a *forest*; a piece of ground covered with trees, with or without undergrowth" ("Wood," *OED*).

manor home exudes. As Raymond Williams puts it, the manor house represents "a visible stamping of power, of displayed wealth and command: a social disproportion that [is] meant to impress and overawe" (106). Clearly, Rushworth's plan to cut down the avenue of trees behind the house, and Maria's dissatisfaction with the house's lack of "a better approach" (74), are related to this symbolic function of the manor house as they want the house to be not only aesthetically striking, particularly in the front, but also visible from afar.

For Maria and the rest of her social circle, the manor home functions as an acute symbol of the political and social power that comes with the possession of land, and she is frustrated that hers is located at the bottom of a hill as this diminishes the visible display of possession and power that she wants it to convey. In order to compensate for this disadvantage, she is trying to substitute the property that *can* be seen for the concealed manor home by claiming areas that extend well beyond the familial area of the manor home and its grounds as "Sotherton." By linking the name Sotherton with broad, inestimably large expanses of private land that seem to encompass the observer—indeed, as Maria is quick to point out, Rushworth owns all visible property "on each side of the road"—Maria hopes to transfer the prestige and distinctiveness of the classic manor home to all the property of Rushworth's estate, thus making up for the house's inadequacy while increasing the social and political value of his remote property. Maria wants Rushworth's property to be recognizable as *his* property in the same way that a manor house is recognizable as belonging to a certain family, and she wants spectators to feel the awe that one is supposed to experience upon seeing a manor house throughout the entire estate. Maria's motive in connecting this visible yet remote expanse of land with Sotherton is further confirmed by the narrator's diction in this passage. We are specifically told that the house is a capital freehold mansion with rights of court as well as an ancient family residence, which emphasizes both how

deep-rooted the estate's social and political influence is as well as how broadly it extends throughout the countryside, yet these details are not catalogued as being part of Maria's direct remarks. Instead, they are provided by the narrator, and given that they are provided at this particular point in the narrative, they can be read as a reflection of the kind of unconscious ideological connection Maria wants spectators to make between the vast land of Rushworth's estate and her own importance as his future wife.

While Maria wants all of Rushworth's land to be instantly identifiable as belonging to him, she is limited in the ways she can publicize his ownership of land located beyond the grounds of the manor house. As the party travels to Sotherton, for instance, she must physically point out which properties belong to Rushworth in order for the group to recognize them as such, and her generic identifiers (i.e., "those woods") and her lack of descriptive details suggest that there is nothing especially distinctive about the land they are seeing. Consequently, Maria must work to establish an unintuitive imaginative connection between Rushworth's lands and his name (and that of Sotherton) with the hope that the people of the county will eventually begin to make the association automatically, as there are no other markers signifying the land as his. However, Maria does not have the same problem with the grounds surrounding the manor house despite the fact that the house's location at the bottom of a hill prevents it from being the archetypal pinnacle of the estate. While Rushworth cannot stake a claim to his grounds with the visual presence of the manor house, he can do it physically with barriers that are intended to both regulate access to certain areas of the estate and control how the estate is viewed and experienced by a given spectator.

After touring much of Sotherton's manor house, the group decides to go see the estate grounds. All the young people "as by one impulse, one wish for air and liberty" walk outdoors,

and once on the lawn, they walk about "in happy independence" (80, 81). However, their relief in being freed from the confines of the house is immediately undermined by the narrator's description of the grounds: "The lawn, bounded on each side by a high wall, contained beyond the first planted area, a bowling-green, and beyond the bowling-green a long terrace walk, backed by iron palissades, and commanding a view over them into the tops of the trees of the wilderness immediately adjoining" (81). The depiction is organized according to the lawn's bordering structures and highlights the presence of these structures by setting them off in dependant clauses ("bounded on each side by a high wall," "backed by iron palissades") that mimic the purpose of the structures in how they obstruct the cadence of the sentence. While the description appears to set up a view with a smooth outward trajectory by placing the lawn in the foreground and moving toward the wilderness, the diction forces the view to be broken into pieces that must be examined individually, suggesting that Rushworth's walls, fences, and activity-specific lawn grooming (the bowling green versus the terrace walk, etc.) similarly divide his estate grounds into a series of sectioned-off and well-defined areas, which acts to prevent free access throughout Sotherton and in turn prevents a spectator from taking in a cohesive view of the grounds. Moreover, while the description indicates that the grounds contain a good view of the woods ("commanding a view over them [the palissades] into the tops of the trees of the wilderness immediately adjoining"), even this view seems to be intentionally clipped in that it stops at the "tops of the trees" instead of encompassing all of the wood, or even a whole tree. The wording of the sentence also implies that it is the terrace walk itself rather than a spectator that "commands" the view, which seems to further strip the young people of their agency as spectators once they enter the grounds.

As the characters go on to explore the grounds, the narrative foregrounds their encounters with the various gates and other barriers that regulate access to Rushworth's land. When Fanny, Edmund, and Mary decide to walk on the terrace, for instance, the heat drives them to the shade of the woods almost immediately, yet they find that the entrance to the wood is blocked by a gate. Mary remarks, "Here is a nice little wood, if one can but get into it. What happiness if the door should not be locked!—but of course it is, for in these great places, the gardeners are the only people who can go where they like" (82). Mary's comment suggests that it is common for the grounds of a large country estate to have gates throughout the property, and her assumption that the door is locked indicates that such gates are intended to regulate access throughout the manor, as opposed to being mere decorative props or quaint remainders of outdated security measures. Her observation that only gardeners can go where they please is clearly intended to be humorous, yet she inadvertently gestures toward the complex power dynamics surrounding access to the land. It might seem problematic that the gardener—a mere servant—apparently has the ability to roam throughout the property while the upper-class characters are more restricted in their movements, and Mr. Rushworth's inability to enter his own park a few pages later demonstrates that his gates and barriers do an imperfect job of regulating access to his grounds, but the larger issue at stake is the necessity for permission to enter the premises, which is signified by these structures. The gardener might have permission to pass through any of Rushworth's gates, but he can do so only in his role *as* the gardener, not as a visitor. This distinction is made evident by the narrative's failure to assign the gardener a proper name, even when he appears in the account of Mrs. Norris's day and she discusses the very personal matter of his grandson's illness with him (94).

Rushworth's guests must also secure his permission to enter certain regions of his grounds. For some areas, Rushworth implies permission by leaving the gates unlocked, but for a locked gate, he expects his guests—including Maria, his soon-to-be wife—to allow him to unlock it himself. When he, Maria, and Mr. Crawford reach the locked gate to the park, for instance, Rushworth asks Maria and Crawford to wait for him while he fetches the key, and he becomes angry when he returns to find that they, along with Julia, have climbed over the fence and went on without him. It is clear that Rushworth's dismay is not due to the ineffectiveness of the fence at keeping people out of his park. Edmund and Mary's easy discovery of an unfastened side gate to the park demonstrates that Rushworth is not scrupulous about keeping his gates locked, and if he were chiefly concerned about the security of his property or the safety of potential visitors to the park, he would have at least ensured that all the gates surrounding it were locked. For that reason, it is evident that the otherwise ineffective gates and fences primarily serve as a material symbol of Rushworth's status and privileges as a landholder, signifying his ownership of the property and his subsequent right to develop and adorn the land, as well as his right to regulate access to it, as he sees fit. In this context, respect for the boundaries denoted by a landholder's fences amounts to respect for the landholding institution itself, so Rushworth is understandably troubled when his guests—and particularly Maria—choose to ignore the locked gate and scale the fence.

For example, as Crawford considers the park with Maria, he observes, "Your prospects […] are too fair to justify want of spirits. You have a very smiling scene before you" (89). Maria replies, "Do you mean literally or figuratively? Literally I conclude. Yes, certainly, the sun shines and the park looks very cheerful. But unluckily that iron gate, that ha-ha, give me a feeling of restraint and hardship. I cannot get out, as the starling said" (89). This passage seems

to invite a straightforward reading that posits the fences as a blunt symbol for a woman's position in marriage, yet it is important to note that Maria is specifically referring to the visual impact of the fences rather than their capacity for containment. In differentiating between what she perceives as the literal and figurative meanings of prospect and scene, Maria suggests there is a discrepancy between the pleasant appearance of the estate grounds and the reality of the bleak future she envisions for herself as Rushworth's wife, and she attempts to separate the visual prospect afforded by the park from the imaginative prospect of life with Rushworth, which she interprets as being represented by the fences. However, in making this distinction, she inadvertently undercuts her own remark by indicating that the fences are separable from the essence of the estate grounds generally and the park specifically, when it is evident that the iron gate and the ha-ha, along with the other bordering structures, are actually crucial components of the grounds' intended appearance. As I suggest above, the various fences serve as a type of functional adornment that ostensibly provides a material barrier but, due to unlocked gates and deficiencies in design, do a rather poor job of physically deterring potential intruders. Clearly, Rushworth instead expects the fences to operate as a psychological barrier and relies on collective respect for the rights of the landholder, signified by the fences, as a way of discouraging uninvited guests from entering certain areas of his property.

Indeed, the idea of fences and gates having psychological as well as material effects was an essential component of contemporary landscape theory. For example, Humphry Repton, who published a number of influential writings on landscape design throughout his career, frequently addressed the difficulties of balancing the practical need for fences with their psychological impact on the spectator. Repton believed that one of the primary functions of the estate grounds, and particularly the pleasure gardens, is to provide the landholding family (and invited guests)

with an area in which to refresh and stimulate the mind, and according to him, one's perception of the expanse of the area is more important than its actual dimensions. In fact, he argues that it is wiser to cultivate a small area that one can keep impeccably groomed and abundantly adorned with interesting objects rather than to designate a larger and necessarily plainer area for walking, because in a garden "richly clothed with flowers, and decorated with seats and works of art, we saunter, or repose ourselves, without regretting the want of extent" (*Designs* 366).

Accordingly, Repton indicates that the mere sight of a fence, even one that is quite a distance from the spectator, can spoil one's enjoyment of the outdoors by both evoking feelings of captivity in the spectator and destroying the illusion of an unbroken countryside. In *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816), he writes, "The first of the great requisites in English gardening is, to banish all appearance of confinement, and to give imaginary extent of freedom, by invisible lines of separation […]" (483). Elsewhere, in a chapter devoted to the appropriate placement of fences on a property, he observes, "The mind feels a certain disgust under a sense of confinement in any situation, however beautiful," and he goes on to caution the reader about the use of sunken fences, which can often result in "*imaginary* freedom [that] is dearly bought by […] *actual* confinement, since nothing is so difficult to pass as a deep sunk fence" (*Observations* 198-9). Repton's concern about the imaginative freedom of the spectator indicates an understanding that fences can affect a spectator's impression of a scenic view in ways that go beyond being a potential eyesore: they visually reinforce the idea that a given stretch of land is privately owned and controlled, therefore conveying to the spectator that certain areas are inaccessible to him and that his movements are limited to the areas that have been approved for him by the landholder. Repton believed that such an impression would be off-putting to a spectator who wanted to enjoy the

beauty and openness of the outdoors, especially given that a country residence was seen as a place where one could escape from the congestion and the restrictive layout of the city, but he also recognized that the spectator needed to feel that he was within a secure area in order to thoroughly enjoy himself.

As a particularly striking example of Repton's commitment to fostering the illusion of an open area that is nevertheless safe from perceived intruders, Repton's plan for a dwelling called the Fort nicely illustrates how the landed gentry's seemingly contradictory desire for secure freedom shaped contemporary estate grounds design. Situated on a hill that overlooked the city of Bristol, and surrounded by a series of chasms that were remnants of basements that had been dug for never-finished additions to the city, the Fort was in danger of being abandoned as a suitable residence for a landholder primarily because "it was not only exposed to the [sight of] unsightly rows of houses in Park-street and Berkeley-square, but it was liable to be overlooked by the numerous crowds of people who claimed a right of footpath through the park, immediately before [the house's] windows" (*Fragments* 137). Since the major problems with the Fort were a view obstructed by unsavory dwellings and a lack of privacy within the pleasure ground, Repton's solution was to build a walled bank that would hide the path from the view of people on the pleasure ground while also concealing the pleasure ground from anyone using the footpath. As Repton puts it, the bank is designed "to carry the eye over the heads of persons who may be walking in the adjoining footpath," while the wall "not only hides [the footpath users] from the house, but also prevents their overlooking the pleasure-ground" (137-8). Repton's emphasis on the attractive prospect of mutual invisibility between gentry and commoners, as well as his plans to plant trees in order to obscure the view of Bristol's row houses, suggests a

desire among landholders to virtually exclude the lower classes from the countryside in order to reserve the land and its beauties for their own pleasure.

Repton is annoyed that the Fort must suffer the presence of a public footpath running through its park, and it is evident that he expects his reader to be annoyed as well, which seems to assume a shared belief in the sanctity in the institution of private land ownership: for Repton, it is a travesty that public right-of-way overrides the landholder's need for privacy in the estate park. While Repton cannot destroy the footpath, he can hide it by altering the shape of the ground, digging shallow valleys to replace gentle slopes in some areas and heaping earth in others, in order to disrupt the line of vision from below the house without disturbing that of the house's inhabitants. In short, Repton not only proposes to hide the evidence that poor people live near the estate, but he essentially wants to hide the estate, along with a portion of the countryside, from the too-close gaze of the poor. By building a wall along the footpath—a wall that is concealed on the estate side but is highly visible to those walking on the path—Repton can assure the landholder of security and privacy while still providing the illusion of uninterrupted expanses of open land and a sense of relative isolation from the bothers of the city. Conversely, the footpath users' enjoyment of the countryside will be significantly curtailed as a once extensive panoramic view will be ruptured by a visually impenetrable (and likely physically impenetrable) wall, carrying the restrictive architecture of the city into the countryside and reducing the footpath's available view to a fraction of the rural scenery that the inhabitants of the Fort enjoy. Based on Repton's plans for the Fort, it is apparent that contemporary estate ground designs were as concerned with preserving the countryside as a retreat for the landed class, by concealing the presence of neighboring commoners and denying them both visual and physical access to large tracts of land, as they were with constructing pleasing views for the landholders.

While Repton generally advocates the concealment of fences and other bordering structures for the sake of unbroken views and a feeling of general openness throughout one's property, he also recognizes that the repellent effect of a strategically-placed fence could be useful, if not necessary, for achieving certain objectives. For example, he opposes the contemporary trend of blurring the boundaries between different areas of an estate, thus allowing what he sees as distinct components of the grounds, such as the park, the shrubbery, the lawn, the pasture, and the kitchen garden, to blur visually into one large area. He writes, "[…] instead of that invisible line, or hidden fence, which separates the mown turf from the lawn fed by cattle, it is more rational to shew that the two objects are separated, if the fence is not unsightly […]" (*Inquiry* 329). In a later writing, he similarly observes, "[…] it cannot surely be disputed, that some fence should actually exist between a garden and a pasture; for if it is invisible, we must either suppose cattle to be admitted into a garden, or flowers planted in a field; both equally absurd" (*Fragments* 416-7). Repton's investment in the estate grounds as a space that should privilege beauty over utility, at least to a reasonable degree, compels him to dictate that even a purely functional fence should be "not unsightly," but in these passages he is most concerned with what the sight of the fence conveys to a spectator with regard to whom or what belongs on a given tract of land as well as for what purpose the area is used. While a concealed fence could serve to keep cattle out of the garden, Repton argues that the spectator requires the fence to also act as a visual indicator that reinforces a sense of order: specifically, the idea that proper estate grounds consist of a series of well-defined zones that are each reserved for a particular purpose. According to Repton, if, for instance, the garden does not *appear* to be protected from cattle, it does not matter if it is *actually* protected: what matters is the visual evidence that specific

boundaries are being protected and enforced by the landholder, and the psychological impact this image has on the spectator.

Furthermore, Repton's concern that a failure to mark certain boundaries will result in what he describes as absurdity suggests that the appearance of disorder within the grounds of the estate could lead to something more serious than the landholder's looking unfashionable or slovenly: he indicates that aesthetic disorder within the estate grounds in the form of unmarked, unenforced boundaries could result in social disorder as there would be no distinction between open land and private land, thus allowing people of all classes to roam through the countryside as they please. For example, Repton insists that the entrance-gate to a private park must be particularly eye-catching because, as he writes, "If the gates [to one's park] are of iron, the posts or piers ought to be conspicuous, because an iron gate hanging to an iron pier of the same colour is almost invisible; and the principle entrance to a park should be so marked that no one may mistake it" (180). The phrase "that no one may mistake it" suggests two meanings: first, that the gate should be visible to someone trying to find the entrance to the park, but also that the gate should be conspicuous so that it clearly marks the beginning of what is private property, distinguishing it from public land.

Similarly, in the case of the Fort, Repton laments the inevitable "air of confinement" that a fence will impose on the family and invited guests who venture into the part of the park that lies beneath the public footpath, but he nevertheless maintains that, due to the unfortunate layout of the park, the fence is an "absolute necessity" (138). In insisting on a fence that will impart an "air of confinement," rather than proposing a design that would incorporate a less conspicuous fence for the sake of the landholder, as he does in many of his other outdoor plans, Repton indicates that it is not only important that the footpath users' view of the house is blocked, but

also that they see it is being blocked specifically by a fence erected by the landholder: clearly, the fence is intended as a visual signal to the commoners using the footpath, reinforcing that they are confined to the path and are not welcome to traverse the land as they please. While the fence will also be an eyesore when visible to the landholding family, Repton indicates that the results will be well worth the sacrifice in that it will provide the family with a higher level of privacy and security while reinforcing the social division between the family and the footpath users.

To return to *Mansfield Park*, then, it is evident that Henry Crawford is drawing on the evocative overtones of the fence's intentional psychological effect, as described by Repton, when he goads Maria into jumping over the gate into Rushworth's park. While Rushworth is interested in Repton's theories on estate grounds design, and in improving his grounds accordingly, it appears that he never considers removing or concealing any of the very conspicuous fences that are so frequently encountered during walks throughout Sotherton's grounds, despite the physical and aesthetic inconveniences that these structures impose on a spectator. Similar to the circumstances Repton describes at the Fort, Rushworth likely feels that the strong visual signals conveyed by his fences outweigh their unsightliness in that they firmly broadcast his power as a landholder. However, while Repton focuses on minimizing the psychological effect of fences on the landholding family and their legitimate guests, Rushworth seems to want his fences' influence to extend to Maria, her family, and their friends. Rushworth perceives that he is generally thought to be a weak man, and his lack of confidence in his own judgment, even with regard to how to beautify his own property, suggests that he might even share this opinion of himself; yet the one advantage he has over anyone in the group is his income and his estate, so it seems fitting that he would want to flaunt what power he does have, particularly for Maria's benefit, by embellishing his grounds with prominent fences in spite of

the aesthetic consequences. Indeed, the fences have especial significance for Maria in that they represent not only Rushworth's social and political influence as a landholder but also his patriarchal power as her future husband, and they embody both the reason she wants to marry him and the reason she dreads becoming his wife.[12]

Maria evidently looks down on Rushworth and cannot fear that he will be a harsh or demanding husband, so the feelings of "restraint and hardship" she articulates in the earlier-quoted passage must stem from her having to acquiesce to the legal and cultural marriage practices that encourage a woman to privilege the attractiveness of a man's estate over the personal attractiveness of the man himself, then oblige her to spend the rest of her life tied to that man, regardless of whether she loves or even respects him. Maria expresses her frustration by drawing a parallel between the blot of being married to Rushworth in an otherwise agreeable situation to the blot of the fences on an otherwise enjoyable view of the grounds; yet as Repton's theories demonstrate, the fences are an integral component of estate grounds in that they help to enforce and propagate the ideologies that uphold both the institution of private property itself and the right of the landholder to divide and utilize a given tract of land exactly as he pleases. Without fences, and the psychological and physical boundaries that they impose on welcome and uninvited spectators alike, there could be no Sotherton. Correspondingly, without the practices of primogeniture and entailment, which ensure a limited number of large estates rather than an indefinite number of smaller ones, and without the various social and legal customs that prevent gentry from acquiring prime English land outside of inheritance and marriage, large ancestral places like Sotherton either would not exist or would lose much of the prestige they carry, thus

[12] In "Papas and Ha-Has: Rebellion, Authority, and Landscaping in *Mansfield Park*," Inger Brodey examines this moment in the text alongside Repton's writings, but she focuses on how the characters' responses to Rushworth's fences reveal their attitudes toward patriarchal authority. Brodey concludes that Austen's depiction of Sotherton is indicative of her own ambivalence about authority in that Austen desires stability and order while nevertheless distrusting "legalism" and "the reliance on external constraints" to govern behavior (93).

removing much of the incentive for acquiring an estate as Maria has done. In short, Maria sees Rushworth as the blot on her acquisition of Sotherton as if he were separable from the estate, but similar to the fences bounding the property itself and the landholding institution that they represent and enforce, the archetypal great estate is inseparable from the laws and customs that compel Maria to choose a man like Rushworth as her husband.

Accordingly, Crawford, who is reportedly a follower of Repton himself, undoubtedly understands the layered significance of the fence for Maria as well, and he exploits her feelings of entrapment in order to manipulate her: he says, “And for the world you would not get out without the key and without Mr. Rushworth's authority and protection, or I think you might with little difficulty pass round the edge of the gate, here, with my assistance; I think it might be done, if you really wished to be more at large, and could allow yourself to think it not prohibited" (89). Crawford taunts Maria by expressly likening Rushworth’s “authority and protection”—two words that smack of patriarchal privilege—to the gate’s key, implying that Maria is willingly submitting to Rushworth’s governance when she could easily bypass the physical and behavioral boundaries that Rushworth has set for her. Thus in scaling the gate, Maria aims to demonstrate that the fence—i.e., Rushworth—has little to no power over her while also establishing a greater amount of freedom for herself with regard to both her physical mobility (being more "at large") and her intellectual independence ("allow [herself] to think it not prohibited"). However, Crawford's odd phrasing, which is peppered with subjunctive clauses that stress the words “think” and “might,” emphasizes that it is Maria’s *perception* of the gate’s purpose that matters rather than the gate’s material effectiveness at enforcing boundaries: the issue at stake is not whether Maria is physically able to overcome the barrier but rather whether she perceives the gate as a legitimate boundary that she is obliged to respect.

In choosing to scale the fence instead of waiting for Rushworth to open the gate, just as she later chooses to run off with Crawford instead of staying with Rushworth, Maria expresses not only her indifference to Rushworth but also her contempt for the principles that underpin the landholding institution: both actions can be read as literal and symbolic breaches of the societal code that protects the interests of landholders and ensures the continuity of the large country estate. When Maria rejects Rushworth and violates her marriage vows, she indicates that a man's personal attractiveness outweighs the appeal of a large estate, and she thus flouts the social values that favor land and income as the top criteria for a good marital match, which in turn threatens to devalue and destabilize a system that invests so much political and social power in landholders. It seems fitting that by the end of the novel, Maria is unable to convince Crawford—a man who sees himself as an expert on the charms of well-planned estate grounds and is a property holder himself—to marry her. Consequently, she is banished from the English countryside that she had essentially discarded when she relinquished her right to Sotherton, and her father relocates her to a "remote and private" unnamed country (424). Maria has been removed from the vicinity of Mansfield Park not only to protect the Bertrams' social circle from both the embarrassment of interacting with her and the potential dangers posed by her influence on impressionable young ladies, but also to protect the interests of the landholding class as a whole. Additionally, because Maria no longer has a place in polite society, she no longer has a place in the countryside either. As the passage on the excursion to Sotherton demonstrates, the characters tend to perceive the countryside as a series of private properties rather than as stretches of open land, and even land that contains no apparent markers of ownership is assumed to belong to someone, specifically someone of the Bertrams' rank. It then follows that Maria

would have to remove to another country, which can be read as a non-English countryside, in order to find a place isolated enough from the society from which she has been expelled.

Indeed, it is unsurprising that Maria must be exiled from the countryside given that the region is depicted as belonging entirely to the gentry. Most of the outdoor scenes in the novel take place on the grounds of a family estate, and even when the characters are traveling on public roads, as they do during the trip to Sotherton, they do not encounter anything or anyone that would indicate that the countryside serves any purpose beyond providing pleasure for the landholding class. Raymond Williams has argued that "land [in Austen's novels] is seen primarily as an index of revenue and position; its visible order and control are a valued product, while the process of working it is hardly seen at all" (*CatC* 115). I would like to add that the illusion of a countryside that exists solely as a sanctuary for the upper classes is a "valued product" as well. For instance, in the aforementioned passage that describes the trip to Sotherton, Fanny encounters evidence in the form of cottages and children that lower classes of people also inhabit the countryside, yet the diction of the passage indicates that she recognizes the people and their living quarters only in their role as components of an estate—as part of "all that was pretty"—rather than as entities in their own right (72-3). Fanny's tendency to lump the cottagers and their homes into the same category as cattle and soil does not necessarily suggest insensitivity on her part, but rather it gestures toward how cottages and tenants were perceived as belonging to the estate: for her, the cottagers are under the care of the landholder in the same way that the land and the animals are, and thus do not constitute a separate population nor merit special consideration. Similarly, with the exception of Fanny's vague observations regarding cattle and soil, rural land would appear to produce nothing of practical value: we are not shown crops, laborers, mills, or other signs of productivity that one would expect to be present in the

countryside, and we hear about them only indirectly. Apparently, Mansfield Park produces only the roses that Fanny is obliged to cut and carry to Mrs. Norris's house.

All productive labor in the novel happens offstage, so to speak, and it is treated as a mysterious, volatile process that must be managed by the male landholders and spoken of in largely euphemistic terms: Sir Thomas, of course, spends much of the novel in Antigua "for the better arrangement of his affairs" (28), and Crawford brags to Fanny about his intent to return to Norfolk and "put everything at once on such a footing as cannot afterwards be swerved from" (375). Moreover, the landholder must travel to the labor site occasionally so as to reinforce his authority and establish order, but this act can also be read as an attempt to periodically reassure the family that labor is something that happens far away from home, in remote locales with which they need not concern themselves. These conspicuous journeys to the labor site, along with the indefinite accounts of what happens during the time the landholder spends there, indicates a desire among the gentry to keep evidence of the labor that sustains their way of life distant and hidden so as not to spoil the illusion that the countryside is anything other than a pleasurable retreat for themselves.

Even when the novel does acknowledge the local presence of laborers and the work that they necessarily perform, it is described for the most part with either paternalistic or aesthetic implications. When Crawford tells Fanny about the mill and the cottagers on his estate, for instance, he explains how he has "introduced himself to some tenants" and has "begun making acquaintance with cottages whose very existence […] had been hitherto unknown to him" (369). It is unclear what he has accomplished, or what he intends to accomplish, with regard to "performing [his] duty" to his tenants, but Fanny nevertheless responds by praising his efforts to "be the friend of the poor and the oppressed," which brands the exchange as a terminal

discussion of paternalistic charity rather than as an opening to further thinking about the situation of the laborers (369). Similarly, during the trip to Sotherton, Maria comments on the various sights they pass along the way, particularly once they reach Rushworth's land, and upon seeing the housing conditions of Rushworth's tenants, she flippantly observes, "Those cottages are really a disgrace" (74). On its own, her statement could be construed as a moral judgment on Rushworth's treatment of his tenants, but it is situated among several aesthetic judgments, such as her remarks on the "handsome" church spire, the "tidy looking" parsonage, and Sotherton's park, which is "not ugly" at its entrance, and consequently must be interpreted as a purely aesthetic judgment as well: instead of indicating a wish on Maria's part to better the situation of the cottagers, or at least some concern on their behalf, her remarks indicate only a wish to make the estate look more attractive.

Throughout the novel, Maria is portrayed as a superficial and ultimately immoral woman, but Austen does not use the above passage as an opportunity to underscore these qualities by comparing Maria's perception of the cottages with a more sensitive assessment from the narrator. Instead, the narrative briefly acknowledges the cottagers' presence and the fact that they live in less-than-ideal conditions, and then moves on. While not endorsing Maria's attitude, the passage does not attempt to criticize her either, which suggests a willful blindness on the part of the narrator. Even Fanny, who serves as a moral compass of sorts, does not trouble herself about the poor beyond applauding others' efforts at charity, though she too sees the cottages. Indeed, the novel consistently depicts the rural poor as a problem that the gentry must solve, be it through paternalistic charity or renovations that will make them less of an eyesore, rather than as fellow beings with whom they must share the land, and in this way the narrative can be read as reflecting the attitudes of the characters themselves: Fanny, the Bertrams, and the others clearly

are aware of the presence of lower-class people who live on or nearby their estates, yet due to the privileges and rights awarded to the gentry through the institution of private property, the poor are seen as only a source of labor and as dependents for whom they must care, not as cohabitants of the countryside.

While the novel rather impartially represents the gentry as having a sense of complete ownership over its own family properties and a collective, class-based ownership of the countryside as a whole, it nevertheless supports Fanny's appeals for preserving the existing structure of outdoor areas. Fanny's seemingly innate passion for the outdoors contrasts with both the apathy exhibited by some characters, such as when we are told that Mary Crawford sees only "inanimate nature, with little observation" when she is outdoors (73), as well as the insincere enthusiasm displayed by the would-be "improvers," such as Mr. Rushworth, Mrs. Norris, and Mr. Crawford. Although the philosophy underpinning contemporary "improvement" dictates that conscious arrangement of the terrain and vegetation will result in a higher enjoyment of natural beauty through unobstructed lines of sight, Fanny's desire to leave estate grounds unchanged nevertheless seems rational instead of blindly conservative, especially when considered alongside Rushworth's readiness to destroy established ecological formations for the sake of implementing trendy outdoor designs that seem to have no aesthetic meaning for him. When Fanny cries out against the idea of cutting down an entire avenue of trees at Sotherton, for instance, she declares the proposed alteration a "pity" even though she has never been to Sotherton and has no idea of how thinning or removing the avenue would affect the layout of the property, so it is evident that she supports preserving the trees for the sake of preservation alone and objects to the idea that the beauty of nature can be enhanced by human intervention (50). In the context of a discussion on radical Reptonian estate improvements, especially given that the

novel's leading advocates of "improvement" are the most dimwitted, pitiless, or morally suspect characters of the bunch, Fanny's preference for existing forms of nature seems to place her as the only reasonably cautious person at a table of people who should be more invested in caring for the land than she is.[13] Even sensitive Edmund gently mocks Fanny by smiling as he converses with her, suggesting that he thinks her distress over the doomed trees is overly romantic and a bit absurd.

In preferring to preserve the existence of long-standing trees and other established vegetation and landforms over updating a property to reflect current aesthetic taste, Fanny's stance would seem to directly contradict the principles of contemporary estate improvement in that "improving," as Rushworth's plans and Crawford's suggestions demonstrate, usually involves large-scale property renovations and subsequent destruction of present resources. However, Humphry Repton and other advocates of estate improvement also stressed the importance of producing the illusion that man-made land formations and vegetation were formed naturally, even to the point that Repton thought it necessary to caution his readers against attempting to make their parks look *too* uncultivated by, for instance, omitting roads, walkways, and other conveniences that mark the land as a "habitation of men" (*Sketches and Hints* 78). In fact, rather than branding himself as chiefly a corrector of nature, Repton envisioned one of the main purposes of his work as undoing the excessively symmetrical, artificial style of earlier property plans: while in prior designs, "every expedient was used to display the expensive efforts of art, by which nature had been subdued," Repton strove to "studiously conceal every interference of art, however expensive, by which scenery is improved" (84-5).

[13] In "*Mansfield Park* and Estate Improvements: Jane Austen's Grounds of Being," Alistair M. Duckworth makes a similar but broader argument, claiming that, in making Fanny and Edmund—whom he brands as the "anti-Reptonian" characters—the new "guardians of the estate" at the end of the novel, Austen suggests that a desire to preserve the trappings of the estate should be understood as a metonym for a desire to preserve "an entire cultural inheritance" (26).

Repton's above remarks highlight two important points with regard to the novel. First, his emphasis on concealing any indications that an estate has been updated further illustrates how the landed gentry attempted to distance themselves from the rural poor both psychologically and visually, even though the sustenance of the estate as an institution depended increasingly on labor-based income as old family inheritances dwindled. The overly symmetrical appearance of the older estate designs, such as that of Sotherton, not only would have indicated that the tastes of the landholder were outdated—or perhaps worse, that financially he lacked the ability to make the necessary renovations—but straight lines would also recall the look of plowed fields, which would link the estate visually with productive land. Such a connection would serve as a distasteful reminder of the purposely distant sites of labor that likely provided the bulk of the estate's wealth, and it could jeopardize the family's social standing in its indication of intimacy with the inferior classes. As Repton puts it, "[…] although it is not necessary that a lawn near a mansion should be fed by deer, yet it is absolutely necessary that it have the appearance of a park, and not that of a farm; because, in this consists the only difference betwixt the residence of a landlord and his tenant, the gentleman and the farmer […]" (*Observations* 211). In placing key terms in opposition to each other, such as park/farm, landlord/tenant, and gentleman/farmer, Repton's diction sets up a dichotomy between those who labor and those who do not, which suggests that replacing the look of symmetrical lines with that of uncultivated land on one's estate is important not just for purposes of fashion, but also in order to maintain divisions among the classes and to confirm one's standing as part of the landed gentry.

In this light, Rushworth's fervent desire to renovate his property, despite his marked lack of aesthetic sensitivity, takes on a new dimension: rather than blindly following trends, he is looking to reestablish the now-obsolete visual boundaries that separate him from his social

inferiors and his property from public land. The symmetrical lines that characterize Rushworth's partitioned and expensively manicured grounds had at one time signaled leisure, wealth and social consequence, but they are now associated with labor and the production of goods. While Edmund, who is appreciative of nature's splendor, contemplates designing his own improvements for the Parsonage because he "would rather have an inferior degree of beauty, of [his] own choice" than allow a professional improver to make renovations based on trendiness alone" (50), Rushworth is more interested in ensuring that what he finds aesthetically pleasing is appropriate for someone of his standing; in short, the reader can assume that Rushworth would approve of any renovations that Repton might propose (as he approves of all the suggestions given to him by Crawford, who serves as Repton's stand-in) because he is determined to be pleased by what men of his class are supposed to find aesthetically pleasing.

The second point that Repton's above remarks highlight is that Fanny, in disliking the trend of improving estates and the resultant destruction of established vegetation and landforms, seems to favor the older style of symmetrical, "unimproved" estates, which in turn suggests that she prefers manicured outdoor areas to those that appear to be uncultivated. Given that Fanny is largely perceived as a conservationist and a nature-lover, the idea that she could prefer the artificial regularity of the old style of estate design seems contradictory, yet she has been familiar with only a manicured version of nature throughout her time in the countryside. To return to the example of her dismay at the thought of Rushworth cutting down the avenue of trees, for instance, she does not actually lament the loss of the trees themselves: "Cut down an avenue! What a pity! Does it not make you think of Cowper? 'Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited.' […] I should like to see Sotherton before it is cut down, to see the place as it is now, in its old state […]" (50). In omitting any mention of trees, Fanny's language suggests

that she is focusing on the loss of the avenue as an entity, not on the unnecessary destruction of healthy vegetation. She also uses the word "it" a few sentences later without clarifying the pronoun's referent, which initially causes the phrase "before it is cut down" to appear to refer to Sotherton rather than the avenue. This grammatical construction not only calls additional attention to the avenue by compelling the reader to recall the earlier sentence for the correct referent, but it also implies a certain interchangeability between Sotherton and the avenue, suggesting that for Fanny, established vegetation and landforms are not just ornaments of the estate but rather are the estate: they distinguish the estate *as* an estate. In Fanny's eyes, the concept of the estate is congruent with the symmetrical lines of the older style of grounds design.

Even the poetry Fanny chooses to quote, Cowper's *The Task* (1785), can be read as esteeming the old style of estate design as well. In his essay on landscape gardening in *Mansfield Park*, Stephen Clarke points out that much of what Cowper's poem celebrates about the countryside is that which is "mannered and designed," such as the lines that commemorate a surviving avenue of chestnut trees: "Not distant far, a length of colonnade/ invites us. Monument of ancient taste,/ Now scorn'd, but worthy of a better fate […]" (Clarke 63; Cowper I.252-4). Clarke argues that the novel posits the older style of estate design as an embodiment of the "old-fashioned formality and old-fashioned values" that are being lost among all the modern improvements and the modern morals, which clearly troubles Fanny, and he suggests that it is the sentimentality and "unaffected freshness" of Cowper's descriptions that most appeal to Fanny as a way of articulating her aversion to drastic estate renovations (63). However, I would argue that the above lines suggest that Cowper is commemorating the formality of the old estate style in its own right rather than the vegetation or the moral values the avenue might represent: he compares the avenue to a "colonnade" and calls it a "monument of ancient taste," which

specifically draws attention to the avenue's structural and aesthetic qualities and calls to mind revered Roman architecture rather than an endangered or defunct moral code. In indicating that contempt for the old estate style is akin to contempt for ancient monuments, and that destroying a remnant of the old style is like destroying such a monument, Cowper suggests that the avenue is more valuable as functional art rather than as nature; also, given that the basis of his sorrow is that the avenue is now "scorn'd," his resentment appears to be directed toward philistines rather than people who fail to value trees in their own right.

In lauding the old style of estate design, Cowper is essentially endorsing the manicuring of private property so that it is immediately recognizable as inhabited upper-class land. As Repton points out, the earlier style of estate design not only flaunted the wealth of the landholder but also indicated that, within the bounds of the estate, "nature had been subdued," suggesting that the excessively symmetrical look ultimately was intended to communicate the magnitude of the landholder's power (*Sketches and Hints* 84). Fanny, too, prefers land that looks like upper-class land, though her preference is not consciously materialistic, nor is it rooted in a relish for displays of power: rather, she has known nature only as it has existed in the form of an estate park, so it follows that she would favor a more ordered and manicured version of the outdoors. Despite the fact that the narrative provides very little information about the layout of the grounds at Mansfield, where Fanny has developed her understanding of nature and the countryside, Tom Bertram's extravagances and the family's subsequent shortage of funds, along with the failure of any character to comment on the layout of Mansfield among so much conversation about estate improvements, suggests that, while not as artificially ordered as the grounds at Sotherton, Mansfield has not been modernized to look distinctly uncultivated, either. In the only sustained description of Mansfield's exterior, which is given from Mary Crawford's point of view, we are

told that the house is "so well placed and well screened as to deserve to be in any collection of engravings of gentlemen's seats in the kingdom" (42). Mary's observations point to the careful planning that must have gone into the design of Mansfield in order to produce such an ideal placement of the house and the trees that screen it, and her belief that an engraving should be made of the house and grounds implies that the property was arranged and has been maintained with an eye to aesthetic appeal as well as practicality. Thus Fanny's experience of the outdoors has been mediated by the grooming and ordering of nature that was standard for a property such as Mansfield at the time despite the fact that, when considered alongside the overly symmetrical design of Sotherton or the drastic plans for property renovations suggested by Henry Crawford, Mansfield's grounds would have likely seemed artlessly beautiful by comparison.

More importantly, though, Fanny herself consciously associates Mansfield with both visual and behavioral order and stability, but she does not realize that such an orderly home is not a given until she visits Portsmouth. She expresses this idea explicitly when she compares her parents' home to Mansfield: the Prices' house is "the abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety," where nobody is "in their right place" and nothing is "done as it ought to be" (354); at Mansfield, however, "no sounds of contention, no raised voice, no abrupt bursts, no tread of violence was ever heard," and "all proceeded in a regular course of cheerful orderliness" (357). Fanny's intense yearning for orderliness once she arrives in Portsmouth suggests that an established order with regard to an expected daily routine, as well as proper locations for people and objects, was something that she took for granted at Mansfield. She has learned that the way of life at Mansfield, which she had previously understood as being natural and ordinary, is actually the result of a deliberate cultivation of manners and appearance on the part of the Bertrams. This insight foreshadows another realization that Fanny makes about the nature of her affection for

the countryside**:** although her marked enjoyment of the outdoors seems to be an inherent and unaided part of Fanny's personality, her time in Portsmouth reveals that it is actually a result of a privileged upbringing, specifically with regard to her access to rural land and her acquired way of appreciating certain arrangements of vegetation and landforms.

While it is evident throughout the novel that Fanny admires the beauty of Mansfield Park, the narrative provides no real description of the house and its grounds besides Mary Crawford's observation that Mansfield deserves to be in a collection of engravings. Mary's remark situates the estate grounds within the idealized form of a popular printed landscape image, indicating that Mary evaluates the attractiveness of Mansfield according to the organizational and representational standards of landscape painting. It is important to note that Austen, in providing no other images of Mansfield, compels the reader to envision the estate in terms of a landscape painting as well, which suggests that she is drawing on the idea of landscape paintings as having standard, well-known systems of order and representational conventions; otherwise, the allusion would not make sense. However, by not supplementing the engraving reference with additional details about the estate grounds, Austen also calls attention to the disassociation between the objects or patterns that are actually present in a given view, and how such objects and patterns can be modified, erased, or even invented. In pointing out that one's enjoyment of a landscape image stems only in part from the visual objects themselves (or, in the case of prose descriptions of scenic views, the objects that are described with visual details), Austen implies that the rest of one's enjoyment, and even the very transformation of the view from a series of disjointed objects into a coherent, meaningful image, comes largely from one's own imaginative engagement with the image rather than from the inherent merits of the objects being viewed.

Indeed, in a discussion of the differences between landscape paintings and scenic views of the outdoors, which he refers to as "real landscapes," Humphry Repton likewise emphasizes that imagination is a crucial component of the ability to appreciate a striking view. Repton defines landscape as "a view capable of being represented in painting" which "consists of two, three, or more, well marked distances, each separated from the other by an unseen space, which the imagination delights to fill up with fancied beauties, that may not perhaps exist in reality" (*Sketches and Hints* 97). Repton's description highlights how the idea of landscape itself entails not only the standard structural directives and expected aesthetic points of interest but also requires the spectator to supply a degree of invented or exaggerated detail. This imaginary component of Repton's definition of landscape is rather surprising given his evident desire to predict and control exactly how a spectator will experience a given outdoor sight in relation to any number of variables, such as the viewing position, the time of day and amount of sunlight, the extent of the field of vision, and the changeable quality of the objects.[14] Moreover, his phrase "fancied beauties that may not perhaps exist in reality" points to a component of desire for an imagined something that is visually and materially unattainable, either because the object of desire cannot be seen from the spectator's position, or because it simply does not exist. The fact that even Repton acknowledges the roles of desire and imagination in his otherwise carefully-orchestrated views indicates that the act of appreciating a landscape requires a spectator to imaginatively provide a portion of the image from his private store of wants and interests in order to achieve the intended effect of the landscape, whether the landscape was painted or planted by a designer, or if the spectator just happened upon a pleasing view during a casual ramble in the countryside.

[14] For more on Repton's discussion of the unique challenges associated with landscape gardening as opposed to landscape painting, see Chapter VII, "Concerning Approaches," of *Sketches and Hints*.

Accordingly, Austen aims to demonstrate how much detail can—and must—be supplied by the imagination when the idea of a landscape painting is invoked, regardless of what concrete information is available: while the concept of a landscape painting provides a subtle, perhaps even unconscious organizational framework for the interpretation of a pleasing view, the spectator still shapes the prospect and selects what details to notice, ignore, or even imagine according to his or her own expectations. As an example of this process, I'd like to examine two distinct moments in the novel: one in which Fanny looks out a window onto Mansfield's grounds, and one in which Henry Crawford describes seeing Mansfield's parsonage for the first time. Both scenes involve the characters describing and reacting to pleasing views, but Fanny's enjoyment seems to be spontaneous and authentic while Henry's appears to be artificial and self-serving. Yet a close reading of the passages demonstrates that, though their responses seem to be dissimilar, both characters nevertheless draw upon landscape paintings as a way of giving their observations organizational and contextual meaning, and both use their imaginations to flesh out the image according to what each of them wants to see; thus, Fanny and Henry are actually interpreting their respective views in comparable ways.

While Fanny's appreciation for nature often seems to be artless, other characters—specifically, those characters in favor of large-scale land "improvements"—use landscape paintings as a framework for interpreting and evaluating outdoor views in a much more obvious fashion. They unapologetically impose a sense of order on a given piece of land even if no such order was planned in its design, or if it was designed with some other method of order in mind. For instance, in the passage where Crawford relates the story of how he happened to come across the family parsonage, Thornton Lacey, he describes the experience of seeing the parsonage for

the first time in a way that is reminiscent of a landscape painting as he deliberately directs the mind's eye to notice key details in a certain order:

> I was suddenly, upon turning the corner of a steepish downy field, in the midst of a retired little village between gently rising hills; a small stream before me to be forded, a church standing on a sort of knoll to my right—which church was strikingly large and handsome for the place, and not a gentleman or half a gentleman's house to be seen excepting one—to be presumed the Parsonage, within a stone's throw of the said knoll and church. (217)

In providing spatial details regarding how the points of interest relate to each other as well as to his own position, Crawford not only structures the image around the sights that he deems most worthy of notice, but he also guides the mind's eye to perceive the sights in the particular order and within the positions of his choosing ("before me," "to my right," etc.). He mimics the estate-design concept of the "approach," which is derived from the organizational principles of popular landscape paintings and dictates that a manor home must appear as if it is part of a striking picture upon one's carefully orchestrated first glimpse of it, by describing the parsonage as suddenly materializing within a frame of stock rural icons, such as the stream that makes up the image's foreground and the little village that is situated as the backdrop. Crawford's use of noticeably flowery phrases like "downy field," "retired little village," and "gently rising hills" indicates that he is intentionally romanticizing and softening the image in a way similar to how a landscape painter might depict the scene. Additionally, while landscape art always assumes a spectator in that the depiction, whether in the form of a picture or in language, deliberately constructs a particular point of view, Crawford goes one step further and underscores his role as the spectator through his explicit use of the first person: by inserting references to his own person

within a description from which he could be virtually erased—which would have allowed each of his listeners to imagine himself or herself as the spectator, as landscape depictions most often do—Crawford instead persistently reinforces that he has control over the image.

After describing the parsonage as he encountered it, however, Crawford goes on to describe how he imagines it being improved:

> The farm-yard must be cleared away entirely, and planted up to shut out the blacksmith's shop. The house must be turned to front the east instead of the north—the entrance and principle rooms, I mean, must be on that side, where the view is really very pretty; I am sure it may be done. And *there* must be your approach—through what is at present the garden. You must make you a new garden at what is now the back of the house; which will be giving it the best aspect in the world […]. The meadows beyond what *will be* the garden, as well as what now *is*, sweeping round from the lane I stood in to the north-east, that is, to the principle road through the village, must all be laid together of course; very pretty meadows they are, finely sprinkled with timber. They belong to the living, I suppose. If not, you must purchase them. Then the stream—something must be done with the stream […]. (218-9).

Crawford's vision of the parsonage nicely illustrates how the concept of improvement, which can be interpreted as a desire to apply the organizational and aesthetic principles of landscape painting to large-scale outdoor spaces, is rooted in a calculated reimagining of nature that, somewhat paradoxically, is intended to produce a precisely ordered arrangement of vegetation and landforms that nevertheless appears to be organic and artless. His nonchalant recommendations for complete rearrangement of long-established land features, along with his

unhesitating willingness to uproot and rearrange the terrain to his liking without regard for the renovations' effects on the townspeople—such as the blacksmith whose shop he is so eager to conceal from view—smack of a sense of indisputable entitlement to the land, which seems to provide his only source of pleasure with regard to the enjoyment of such scenic views. Rather than appreciating any beauty in the existing imagery, he focuses on how the various elements of the image could be rearranged in order to comply with the standards dictated by the contemporary trends in garden design about which he is supposedly so well-informed. While his failure to explain the purpose, aesthetic or otherwise, behind any of his proposed renovations could be read as additional evidence of his arrogance, it also has the effect of making his recommendations seem rather arbitrary instead of being guided by an overarching aesthetic theory: without, at the very least, a clear motive to make such drastic renovations, Crawford's suggestions to rotate the house toward the east and relocate the garden, for instance, come off as being especially superficial and impractical, especially given the Bertrams' recent financial problems. Crawford's apparent lack of enjoyment in the view of the parsonage in its own right indicates that he is more interested in how the execution of land improvements advertises and furthers the political, social, and cultural power of the landholding class rather than in the overall aesthetic effect of such improvements. For him, the principles of contemporary estate design, such as those put forth by Repton, provide not a guide for implementing and appreciating a specific type of artistic expression but rather a code by which a landholder's influence and status can be measured.

In contrast to Crawford's aggressive, opportunistic approach to evaluating the merits of a scenic view, Fanny appears to seek out such views for the sole purpose of relishing them. One of the reasons Fanny's appreciation for nature seems so genuine and organic is that, despite the

varying degrees of orderliness and symmetry she encounters during her limited travels through the countryside, her "rhapsodizing" about the beauties of nature, as she calls it, has a distinct lack of organization and coherence, which causes her observations to seem artless rather than studied. For instance, in the passage where Fanny, Edmund, and Mary discuss what motivates a man to enter the clergy, the three of them are described as "standing at an open window […] looking out on a twilight scene" (97), and the beauty of the image stirs Fanny to describe what she sees:

> Here's harmony! […] Here's repose! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry only can attempt to describe. Here's what may tranquilize every care, and lift the heart to rapture! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene. (102)

The number of deictics in the passage, such as Fanny's repetition of "here's," indicate the spontaneity of Fanny's observations by drawing the reader's attention very specifically to Fanny's perspective and emphasizing the immediacy of what she is seeing. While at first glance her description of the view seems to be extensive, the passage's noticeable lack of concrete detail, which would have elucidated the referents of the deictics, along with Fanny's reliance on abstract ideas such as "harmony" and "repose" to communicate what, in this context, one would expect to be sensory information, convey Fanny's sense of the richness of the view without having it appear that she is consciously structuring the image. It is clear that Fanny is appreciative of this pleasing view of the outdoors, but she does not impose any kind of order on the view and does not even clarify the main features of the prospect.

However, in characterizing the object of Fanny's gaze as a "scene," Austen also draws on the theatrical connotations of the word to suggest that the characters all see a common, distinct image that, due to its easy recognition as such, could have been staged for the benefit of the spectator.[15] The view outside is again referred to as a "scene" a few paragraphs later, when Mary leaves Edmund and Fanny alone at the window: "[…] his eyes soon turned like hers towards the scene without, where all that was solemn and soothing, and lovely, appeared in the brilliancy of an unclouded night, and the contrast of the deep shade of the woods" (102). By reiterating that the view outside is like a "scene" throughout the passage, and by employing painterly terms such as "brilliancy," "contrast," and "shade," the passage deliberately evokes the idea of a landscape painting, especially given that the view is conveniently framed by a window, and thus indicates that, though Fanny seems to be responding impulsively, the image she is seeing nevertheless encompasses those standards of organization, perspective, subject matter, and level of detail that are associated with the same types of landscape paintings from which Crawford takes his ideas about what constitutes a good view.

The discrepancy between the sense of order that is implied by the allusion to a painted scene and the lack of order present in Fanny's description of the view calls attention to the inherent visual emptiness of Fanny's depiction. While initially the reader is given the impression that a certain view of the outdoors has been described, a closer look at the passage shows that it offers only an abstract idea of a view, and it becomes apparent that any specific details about

[15] In *The Frame of Art*, David Marshall examines the passage where Fanny looks out the window and similarly emphasizes the significance of the view outside being referred to as a "scene"; however, he reads the moment as being indicative of how Fanny transforms her own sentiments into "self-consciously theatrical set pieces" (74-5). Building on Marshall's reading in her essay "Impartial Spectator Meets Picturesque Tourist: The Framing of Mansfield Park," Karen Valihora interprets this moment in the context of reading Fanny as a kind of picturesque tourist who leads the reader through the novel. Valihora argues that, in *Mansfield Park*, Austen investigates the picturesque as a way of exploring "the detachment, distance, and impartiality implied in the third-person narrative" (90), and she suggests that the scene at the window exemplifies "a view that is framed and mediated by an external principle" (107).

what Fanny is seeing, which one had assumed to be part of the passage, were actually supplied by the reader's imagination and her understanding of what such a view might look like. In performing the extent to which the reader's concept of a pleasant view (and, incidentally, a "twilight scene") is entrenched in the popular conventions associated with landscape paintings, the text suggests that, similar to how Crawford looks at the land, Fanny's perception of the view is also shaped by the prevalence of this model, but more subtly.

Moreover, the above passage also reinforces Repton's claim that the enjoyment of an outdoor view entails fulfilling a spectator role that is both passive and active, especially with regard to the use of one's imagination. Fanny alludes to this process through her diction when she asserts that there would be less wickedness and sorrow in the world if more people "attended to" the "sublimity of Nature" and thus "were carried out of themselves by contemplating such a scene." Fanny's reference to the sublime, which in this context can be read as meaning the phenomenon of a sight in nature so striking that it seems to overpower the spectator, along with the passive structuring of her phrase "were carried out of themselves," suggest that the image itself acts on the yielding spectator; yet Fanny's use of the verbs "attend to" and "contemplate," which both point to a seemingly passive process that nevertheless demands action on the part of the subject, also indicates that the spectator must imaginatively and actively engage with the image rather than simply staring at it. The assertion that the successful contemplation of a view will lead to one being carried out of oneself, and thus to less sorrow and wickedness in the world, seems to imply that, for Fanny, such problems are largely rooted in self-absorption, and the degree of reflection inspired by a pleasing view can aid in shifting one's thinking into a less destructive channel. Yet, she does not indicate where one's thoughts are supposed to turn instead, nor does she delineate exactly how the appreciation of such a view is supposed to help

counteract wickedness and sorrow, especially when the object of contemplation is merely a stretch of privately-owned, manicured land which would likely offer little fodder for profound thought.

The ambiguity embedded in Fanny's phrasing—i.e., the idea of being 'carried out of oneself' could refer to experiencing a relatively selfless feeling, such as empathy, or it could signify an even deeper form of self-absorption—and the vagueness of her logic regarding why looking at a scenic view can be morally beneficial indicates two key points. First, although Fanny perceives that contemplating a view can help one to develop more noble sentiments, which helps to distinguish her way of looking at the land from that of Crawford and the other would-be "improvers," her failure to clarify how and why this process occurs, or even the nature of what one is supposed to contemplate while enjoying a view, is symptomatic of the novel's overall reluctance to address the moral issues of landholding, particularly with regard to the economic consequences of enclosure. As the novel's moral compass, Fanny is compelled to at least acknowledge the plight of the rural poor, but she does so in a way that evades assigning blame to the landholding classes: as in the aforementioned exchange with Crawford about his visit to his tenets at Norfolk, Fanny expresses approval for any impulse or action that ostensibly benefits the poor, which situates her as being properly philanthropic, but she refrains from discussing either the less praiseworthy actions (and inactions) of the landholders toward their cottagers or the economic model that consolidates land among a few families and leaves laborers so utterly dependent upon their employers. It would seem that a passage on scenic views and the development of higher moral sentiments would be a convenient and obvious place for the novel to address more explicitly the consequences of enclosure, especially as the rural poor are brought into the narrative primarily as components of larger discussions about land. The novel's

haziness on how the contemplation of a scenic view can lead to less wickedness and sorrow in the world thus suggests that it is struggling to reconcile its discomfort with the situation of the rural poor with its understanding of the merits of having unbroken scenic views right outside one's window.

Second, Fanny's failure to elaborate on what it means to be 'carried out of oneself' suggests that it is a highly personalized experience that cannot be shared with others in a meaningful way, yet she also takes it for granted that Edmund (and, implicitly, the reader) will nevertheless understand what she means by the phrase. While the enjoyment of a view can be an experience shared with others due to the widespread use of landscape paintings' organizational structure as a way of pinpointing a certain, common image among an essentially infinite number of potential images identifiable from a given outlook, the passage suggests that the execution of the process of appreciation itself and one's ensuing interpretation of a scenic view are nevertheless particular to the individual. In other words, Fanny assumes that everyone has the ability to appreciate a view, and that a number of people can appreciate the merits of the same view, but as the differences between Crawford's and Fanny's interpretations of similarly scenic views demonstrate, each spectator must imaginatively supplement the image and engage with it in order to find meaning. While the novel presents the scenic view as a common object of contemplation among spectators, and while landscape paintings provide a vocabulary and a frame of reference for a common aesthetic interpretation of the view, the act of appreciation itself—the ability to be carried out of oneself, as Fanny puts it—presumably requires the spectator to supplement the image through her imagination in order to find the kind of meaning that could, for instance, amend a person's predilection toward wickedness or her feelings of sorrow.

Given that appreciation of a scenic view is dependent upon the spectator's imaginative interpretation of the image, it becomes clear that, for Austen, such a view is not necessarily pleasing in its own right, and in fact, the ability to enjoy one can be seen as a reflection of privilege, particularly with regard to having access to scenic views in the first place. Fanny becomes painfully aware of this fact shortly after she returns to her family's home in Portsmouth for what turns out to be an extended visit. While she is greatly distressed about having to live in such dirty, noisy, and cramped quarters, she seems to suffer the most from the lack of greenery and open spaces in Portsmouth and the harried pace of life that allows little time for the pleasure walks to which she had become accustomed at Mansfield. For example, when Crawford comes to visit the Price house, he urges Fanny, Susan, and Mrs. Price to "take their walk without loss of time" as "a fine morning so often turned off, that it was wisest for everybody not to delay their exercise" (366). His diction reveals his assumption that the women all take a daily walk ("their walk" rather than "a walk"), and his reasoning shows he believes that the purpose of the daily walk is not only to get exercise but also to enjoy the outdoors; otherwise, it would not matter whether the morning were fine or not. Mrs. Price, however, quickly corrects him by pointing out that she rarely stirs out of doors except on Sundays because "she could seldom, with her large family, find time for a walk" (366). This passage demonstrates how the simple act of taking a walk outdoors, which at first would seem to be an equal-opportunity source of pleasure for rich and poor alike, is actually a luxury reserved for those with leisure. Mrs. Price makes it clear that walking for pleasure is an indulgence that she cannot afford, specifically because she does not have the income to hire more servants that would in turn give her free time. For the Bertrams and the Crawfords, walking provides enjoyable exercise within what is a largely sedentary lifestyle, but for the Prices, it is primarily a means of transportation for purposes of work.

Accordingly, though Mrs. Price eventually agrees to let Fanny and Susan go on the walk, it is on the condition that they make practical use of the time by running errands in town.

Even if the Price women did have time for daily pleasure walks, Mrs. Price suggests that the city is not an ideal location for the activity as it lacks the spaces and the scenery that make a walk in the country so pleasant. When Crawford petitions for a walk with Fanny and Susan, for instance, Mrs. Price admits that her daughters are "very much confined," but she goes on to point out that the young women "[do] not often get out" because "Portsmouth [is] a sad place" (366). Here, "very much confined" alludes to the multifaceted quality of the Price women's confinement: along with being confined to the house by the work that they must do, and confined within a house as it is too small for a large family, the women are also imaginatively and physically confined even when they are outdoors as the city, in being a "sad place," evidently cannot offer terrain and sights that would serve as a refreshing reprieve to someone who has been wearied by daily work.

Indeed, Fanny realizes that she had taken for granted the availability and accessibility of flora while she was at Mansfield, particularly during the springtime, and she mournfully reflects at length on the differences between going outdoors in the city versus in the countryside:

> It was sad to Fanny to lose all the pleasures of spring. She had not known before what pleasures she *had* to lose in passing March and April in a town. She had not known before, how much the beginnings and progress of vegetation delighted her.—What animation both of body and mind, she had derived from watching the advance of that season, which cannot, in spite of its capriciousness, be unlovely, and seeing its increasing beauties, from the earliest flowers, in the warmest divisions of her aunt's garden, to the opening of leaves of her uncle's plantations,

> and the glory of his woods.—To be losing such pleasures was no trifle; to be losing them, because she was in the midst of closeness and noise, to have confinement, bad air, bad smells, substituted for liberty, freshness, fragrance, and verdure, was infinitely worse […]. (393)

Fanny starts off by describing what she likes about springtime in the countryside in very general terms, such as the "progress of vegetation" and "the advance of that season," which, in the lack of specificity, would seem to imply that, in her mind, such pleasures are not proprietary to certain areas or people. Yet as she continues her description, she begins linking each beauty to a specific piece of property and its owner—the flowers of *her aunt's garden*, the leaves of *her uncle's plantations*, the glory of *his woods*—and thus indicates that living in Portsmouth has altered her understanding of the constitution of the countryside with regard to the idea of private property. While Fanny's observations about the land during her trip to Sotherton have made it clear that she is acclimated to the concept of the countryside as consisting of a series of private properties—that is, the idea that all the land she sees belongs to *someone*—she now understands the components of the land, such as the flora and the fauna, as belonging to specific people as well.

Furthermore, Fanny's time in Portsmouth has shown her that private property entails limited access to land with regard to individual properties and their components as well as to the countryside as a whole: without the Bertrams' permission, she cannot travel to Mansfield, and in not being welcome at Mansfield, she is prevented from enjoying, for instance, the gardens, the plantation, and even the country sunshine that she regards as being so different from the "stifling, sickly glare" of the sun in the city (400). Fanny is sent to Portsmouth because Sir Thomas is angry with her, and though she is initially excited to return to her family, she soon wants to go

back to Mansfield and becomes frustrated that she cannot return to the countryside at will. Fanny's feelings of frustration are rooted in her growing awareness of how dependent she is upon her uncle's favor in order to go to the countryside, both in the sense of her having a place to stay and of having a means of getting there: without the aid of Sir Thomas, Fanny's only means of transportation is accepting a ride from the Crawfords, which would place her under an uncomfortable obligation to a suitor whom she does not want to marry. Fanny becomes especially frustrated when she contrasts her position of dependency with the relative mobility enjoyed by Maria and Julia: "*They* might return to Mansfield when they chose; travelling could be no difficulty to *them* […]" (394, emphasis Austen's). Maria and Julia not only have the incomes to support the various costs of traveling, but their social positions also ensure that they are welcome to travel throughout the countryside, as well as in London, because they can visit among friends, family, and acquaintances of their class; of course, Maria becomes acutely aware of how tenuous this privilege is once she ruins her character by running off with Crawford, after which she is banished to a "remote" location in another country, where she has "little society" outside of Mrs. Norris (424).

While Fanny had felt a sense of "liberty" in the countryside as a resident of Mansfield, and thus as a member (albeit an honorary one) of the class that owns the land which makes up the countryside, she now realizes that, as a member of the urban working class, she is essentially barred from these same lands in a way that is similar to how Maria is eventually barred from them: i.e., when Fanny loses the favor of Sir Thomas, she loses her access to the English countryside and its beauties. In reflecting on how she "had lost ground as to health since her being in Portsmouth," Fanny comes to understand that the charms of life in the countryside—the open spaces, the greenery, the fresh air, and so on—are not only pleasurable but also vital to her

overall well-being (373). However, she also begins to realize that access to the countryside is a luxury that cannot be enjoyed by everyone. The novel indicates that the countryside has become privatized via not only the landholders' legal ownership of enclosed land that is reachable by horse, carriage, or foot, but also the virtual appropriation of less-accessible, undeveloped wilderness areas by the visual alignment of private estate grounds with the look of nonproductive land; Fanny's predicament, then, ultimately serves to illustrate how access to the countryside is regulated by the landholders' ability to grant or withhold permission to enter what once was open countryside, but now has become *their* land. Indeed, Fanny's eagerness to return to Mansfield is tempered slightly by the thought that she will have to leave behind her sister, Susan, who has not been invited to Mansfield. The thought of abandoning Susan in Portsmouth "distressed [Fanny] more and more" (382), especially as Fanny believes that the girl has a disposition similar to her own and thus could benefit similarly from living in the country; yet Fanny does not consider for a moment giving up Mansfield permanently in order to remain at her parents' home and continue educating Susan.

Fanny's choice to leave Portsmouth in the end, and the reader's implicit approval of her choice, is perhaps made easier by Austen's ostensible depiction of the Prices as being more or less content with their lot, whether it includes Fanny or not. At first, the novel seems to suggest that some people are born with delicate sensibilities and sensitivities, like Fanny, while others are satisfied with a coarse, disorderly, and vulgar existence, such as the Prices; one gets the impression that, with the exception of Susan, either the Prices have no idea of what they are missing at a place like Mansfield, or that they would not appreciate the quiet pleasures of country life and would prefer to remain in town if given the choice. As it turns out, Sir Thomas invites Susan to Mansfield anyway, so Fanny is absolved of any guilty feelings about returning to the

countryside without her sister, and the reader is spared the difficulty of pitying Susan's fate while feeling happy for Fanny at the close of the novel. Had Austen decided to leave Susan in Portsmouth, however, the novel would not have wrapped up so neatly: both Fanny and the reader would have had to confront directly the uncomfortable fact that the privatization of the countryside necessarily privileges some people at the expense of others, and that Fanny—the novel's moral compass—ultimately chooses the luxury of private access to the countryside at the expense of those who must labor for a living, including her family, who are denied access so that the countryside can remain a haven for the leisured wealthy.

Austen softens this fact by allowing the newly-deserving Susan to tag along to Mansfield while minimizing the reader's emotional investment in the uncouth Prices, yet her more sympathetic depiction of Mrs. Price, who plainly wishes she had the time and the open spaces necessary for refreshing daily walks, indicates Austen's underlying discomfort with a system that precludes the laboring classes from enjoying the beautiful views and the health benefits that come with access to the countryside. Austen attempts to ameliorate her uneasiness about this system by suggesting at the very beginning of the novel that the characters are more or less responsible for their respective fates: Frances Ward *could have* married well, especially with the influence of Sir Thomas, and thus she *could have* had the comforts of a Mansfield Park, but she instead chose to elope with a common man who could not provide her with such a place. Austen acknowledges that some are born into their circumstances without choice, such as Fanny, but she also suggests that the deserving will be lifted from environmental and aesthetic confinement by good fortune and the benevolence of the wealthy, which ultimately helps to validate the privatization of the countryside: i.e., not everyone can live at a place like Mansfield Park, but the gentle people who need such a place in order to thrive will earn their way there, just as Susan

earns a place at Mansfield by modeling Fanny's behaviors. However, the novel's strong stance against marrying for money (or, as in Mary Crawford's case, being too concerned about the financial prospects of one's intended) suggests that Austen recognizes how problematic her model is, especially as Fanny's dilemma about marrying Crawford is rather similar to her mother's situation in the opening of the novel in that she clearly recognizes Crawford as her means to a home of her own in the country: "Were *she* likely to have a home to invite [Susan] to, what a blessing it would be!—And had it been possible to return Mr. Crawford's regard, the probability of his being very far from objecting to such a measure, would have been the greatest increase of all her own comforts." (382). Yet while the novel suggests that it might have been a mistake for Mrs. Price to marry her husband against the wishes of her family, Fanny is completely vindicated in her choice to refuse Crawford against the wishes of her uncle.

Everything seems to work out at the close of the novel in that the good-hearted and aesthetically sensitive characters end up living on the country estate while the boorish and the morally corrupt characters are barred from it. But the lack of a surefire novelistic formula for attaining a place on the estate, along with inclusion of the morally questionable Sir Thomas and the useless Lady Bertram at Mansfield while the pitifully overworked Mrs. Price is left in Portsmouth, nevertheless indicates Austen's ambivalence toward her model of personal choice and just deserts. The novel ends on a happy note, and all the characters appear to be appropriately placed, yet this cheerfulness depends largely on the removal of the less fortunate Prices, and specifically Mrs. Price, from the last chapter: while William is reported as displaying "continued good conduct, and rising fame" (431), the narrator is silent on Mrs. Price's unending drudgery and the unpromising conditions in which Fanny's younger siblings continue to live. Indeed, Austen could have mollified the reader in the last chapter with a brief indication that the

Prices would be taken care of too, for better or for worse, but the narrator instead proclaims, "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore every body, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest" (420). As the fortunes of the Portsmouth Prices are not mentioned in the final chapter, it would appear that the narrator is dismissing them as deserving the guilt and misery upon which her pen will not dwell, yet she is happy to elaborate on the fates of Maria, Mrs. Norris, Mr. Crawford, and the other less-than-upstanding characters. Though ostensibly placing blame on the Prices for their condition, it is clear that the narrator is silent about the Price family because reporting their fates can bring the reader no satisfaction: to indicate that they lived happily and contentedly would be untruthful, yet to suggest that they went on living in misery and squalor would seem more sad than appropriate, especially given the newly-deserving Susan's narrow escape from the home. Austen's inability, or her refusal, to incorporate the Prices into her happy ending signifies the larger social problem at stake that plagues the novel: when the dichotomy of "deserving" and "undeserving" people begins to break down, how can one justify denying certain populations access to the countryside for the benefit of others? Rather than addressing this problem directly, the novel instead acknowledges that such a problem exists and then quietly moves on.

In "Jane Austen and the Enclosures," Robert Clark argues that Austen, in having come from a family that readily enclosed land for financial gain, and having lived on enclosed land and benefited from enclosure directly, not only fully understood the consequences of enclosing the countryside but accepted that the displacement of some was necessary for preserving the "continuity of values and ways of life [that were] of deep importance to the country at large" (123). Clark indicates that Austen willfully averts her novelistic gaze from the consequences of

enclosure because “it is in neither her personal interest nor her class interest to notice” (123), but I would like to suggest instead that Austen skirts the problem of displacement *because* she notices, and as a benefiting member of the landed gentry, it makes her uncomfortable. By focusing on the dangers of estate improvements rather than the plight of the displaced, Austen is able to shift the discussion on the consequences of enclosure from one of the moral good and humanitarian obligations to one of the aesthetic good and historic preservation; as a result, Fanny can serve as the novel’s moral and aesthetic compass without having to address the ethical quandary that enclosure would inevitably present to a good-hearted woman who has a weakness for beautiful estates and sweeping views of the countryside. However, Austen’s depiction of the Prices does gesture toward her cognizance of this problem in implying that their boorishness is at least partially a result of their environment: Fanny criticizes the noise and disorder of the home and her family’s lack of manners, yet she sees how different they all look and act on Sundays, which is the day of leisure, and in comparing her mother to Lady Bertram, it grieves Fanny to consider that “where nature had made so little difference, circumstances should have made so much” (372). It is evident that Austen sees the social injustices, the physical and mental ailments, and the economic problems that have been brought about by enclosure and the privatization of the English countryside, yet it seems that she cannot find a way to address these issues without either sacrificing some people to the mechanisms of the system or endangering all that she loves about life in the countryside. *Mansfield Park* enacts this sacrifice: Austen does not sacrifice the Prices boldly, and she barely touches on the plight of the displaced rural laborers and the impoverished cottagers, but the novel acknowledges their existence and carries on nevertheless.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MERITORIOUS LANDHOLDER AND THE MANOR HOUSE DILEMMA IN *BLEAK HOUSE* AND *JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN*

The previous chapter suggested that the landed gentry's post-enclosure appropriation of open rural lands resulted in a prevalent sense of entitlement to the countryside, rather than one of common ownership and moral responsibility. As Raymond Williams has noted, for instance, Jane Austen represents the English countryside as a "network of propertied houses and families," and the rest of the countryside is reduced to being "weather or a place to walk" (166). This chapter, in turn, will argue that the mid-century realist novel works to inculcate a new understanding of what it means to own land in the countryside by linking the pleasures of ownership with a paternalistic sense of sociopolitical responsibility, thus reconciling the realist novel's desire to preserve the institution of the country estate (in spite of the changes being brought about by industrial capitalism) with its moral concerns regarding how the propertied tend to abuse their economic and political power. Specifically, I will examine Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852) and Dinah Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856), which are both set around the time of the 1832 Reform Act, as examples of how the mid-century realist novel attempts to shift the perception of landed estates from being exclusive pieces of land that are permanently linked with a family bloodline to being pieces of purchasable, transferable property. This shift allows for greater public access, both to the land itself and to what it signifies, due to the new political climate and the growing wealth and power of the middle-class industrialists. While these novels generally approve of the change as an antidote to the destructive excess and self-interest of the nobility, they are not calling for a radical dismantling of the institution of the estate itself; rather, they propose a model that places estates (and the accompanying roles of leadership within the community) into the hands of those who merit them instead of those that

have only an impressive pedigree. I will argue that these novels use representations of land, especially land that had once served as a private haven for the privileged, in order to demonstrate how competent and deserving men of the middle class can step into the leadership roles that were formerly held exclusively by the landed aristocracy, thus challenging contemporary thinking on the dangers of allowing those of low birth to have political and social power.

However, in attempting to revise the attitude of the landholder from one of indulgence and excess to one of moral awareness and paternalistic obligation, the mid-century realist novel seems particularly unsure of how to handle the large manor house, both as a physical entity in which the characters live and as a symbol of the estate in general. In the previous chapter, I discussed the psychological, political, and social domination that is symbolized by the estate, particularly with regard to how this symbolism is embodied by the manor house. This chapter, in turn, will suggest that the manor house became a point of tension mid-century as it signifies the extravagance and self-interest of the nobility, which the realist novel rejects as being immoral, but it also serves as a visible symbol of paternalistic leadership via the institution of the estate, which the realist novel does not want to relinquish. Consequently, the presence of the manor house becomes something of a burden to the realist novel both symbolically and plot-wise, as my readings of *Bleak House* and *John Halifax* will demonstrate.

This chapter will open with a reading of *Bleak House* (1852), where I will contrast the novel's treatment of Chesney Wold, the estate of the baronet Sir Leicester Dedlock, with that of Bleak House, the estate of the philanthropist John Jarndyce. I will suggest that Chesney Wold represents the dying estate model, the significance of which had stemmed from lineage and conspicuous excess, but it now seems sadly obsolete, especially when compared with Mr. Rouncewell's bustling iron factory. The renovated and renamed Bleak House, on the other hand,

represents the new model in which the estate becomes a useful channel for paternalistic charitable acts; yet in rewarding the humble and disinterested landholder, this model seems unable to provide a person who is visibly in charge of the estate, which is a crucial aspect of providing paternalistic leadership to the lower classes toward which the realist novel tends to gravitate.

I will then turn to *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856) and give a reading that posits the novel as a model of the estate that attempts to blend the brand of visible leadership that was traditionally provided by the nobility, which this novel represents as dying off in a manner similar to that in *Bleak House*, with the modesty, empathy, and philanthropic impulses of the diligent laborer-turned-gentleman. Though John tends to associate a pleasing view with fantasies of ownership rather than with landscape paintings, the narrative nevertheless is full of depictions of land that are described in terms of landscape paintings, which indicates that the novel is aligning these acts in ways reminiscent of Austen's pre-Victorian landscape representations. However, I will argue that the novel presents one's ability to enjoy a scenic view as being proportionate to one's duty to provide moral guidance and charitable aid to those dependent on him; in other words, as John gains increasing command of the land, both in terms of the scenic views he can enjoy and the amount of property he owns, his paternalistic responsibilities increase as well. John solemnly assumes the responsibilities that are thrust upon him as a wealthy landholder, which includes buying an estate in order to "widen [his] circle of usefulness" and "guide and help the people." However, John's love of owning land does not lead to a desire to be ostentatious, so I will conclude by discussing how buying the Beechwood estate and moving his family into its large manor house is represented as a regrettable necessity, and even a sacrifice, rather than as a mark of success.

Both novels, while written in the 1850s, take place around the time of 1832 Reform Act. While it is clear that the novels are gesturing toward the contemporary political unrest that eventually led to the passing of 1867 Reform Act, their being set roughly during the period of the First Reform Act is significant for several other reasons. First, both novels examine how the success of domestic industry (mills, ironworks, and factories situated locally, as opposed to the invisible labor that financed the Bertrams in *Mansfield Park*) has resulted in a new, powerful demographic whose interests were not being represented adequately by Parliament. Correspondingly, the 1832 Reform Act redistributed Parliamentary representation so that the number of MPs would be more proportionate to the populations they were representing; i.e., many seats in the House of Commons that had belonged to the now near-empty (and often corrupt) "rotten boroughs" were either abolished or transferred to areas covering the newly populous industrial towns. Although these changes to the voting demographics have been characterized as being a ploy by political managers to make minimal concessions to the middle classes while actually working to revive and bolster the power of the large landholders (F.M.L. Thompson 20), the Act nevertheless gave non-pedigreed people more of a voice in the government.

Second, both novels consider the consequences of giving the working class a political voice and, on the other hand, what happens when they are denied representation. The First Reform Act had extended the franchise to men holding property worth at least £10, and while this was still an unattainable level of wealth for many laborers, the Act nevertheless extended the vote to thousands of men of common birth. In looking back to the time surrounding the First Reform Act without treating the Act as something broadly controversial, nor even making it a focal point of their plots, both *Bleak House* and *John Halifax* imply that a further extension of

the vote to the working classes is inevitable. Despite the perceived educational, cultural, and moral shortcomings of the working class demographic, the novels also suggest that such a change need not be disastrous, especially when compared with, for instance, the insurrection that led to the overthrow of the French monarchy in 1848 and the resulting revolts that rapidly spread across Europe.

In the aftermath of these revolts, it became clear that those who wanted to maintain some semblance of the established order had to learn "the politics of the people," at least to the point that the working classes could be placated, in order to keep their positions and not face the consequences of complete social upheaval (Hobsbawm, *Capital* 25). Indeed, Eric Hobsbawm suggests that the election of Louis Napoleon as president of the new French Republic in 1848 served to demonstrate to the rest of Europe that "the democracy of universal suffrage […] was compatible with the maintenance of the social order" as widespread unrest did not lead to the people electing leaders who wanted to overthrow society (26). Accordingly, *Bleak House* presents Robert Rouncewell, the son of Sir Leicester's servant who becomes a successful ironmaster and a candidate for Parliament, as being "a responsible-looking gentleman" who is intelligent, ambitious, and well-mannered, though Sir Leicester nevertheless (and unfairly) sees him as the embodiment of mob violence and the reason the traditional social order is crumbling. *John Halifax*, in turn, includes a scene in which working-class men (as tenants of houses owned by large landholders) are able to vote in an election, and with proper guidance, they elect a level-headed, morally upright man who happens to be a member of the landed nobility.

Finally, both novels explore the direct relationship between holding property and having social, political, and economic power, and the First Reform Act, in separating men who could vote from those who could not according to the cash value of their property, made this

distinction even more concrete, particularly in the context of the nobility being forced to parcel off and sell their ancient family estates as they could no longer afford to keep them. Prior to the nineteenth century, enclosure had forced the rural poor off what had been common grounds and consolidated the countryside into large tracts of land held by the nobility, but the economic upheavals in the early to mid-nineteenth century, which were brought about by the booming business of industrial manufacturing, along with the unsustainable lifestyle of the nobility, led to entailments being cut off and family properties being divided up and sold, often to people of more humble origins.[16]

In short, the newly wealthy manufacturers, iron masters and mill owners, along with the more modestly situated yet relatively well-off farmers and other working men, were able to benefit from the misfortunes of the aristocracy in that, by purchasing land, they were also able to purchase a portion of the sociopolitical power that had belonged exclusively to the nobility. While the landed nobility was loath to accept members of the "commercial aristocracy" and the "industrial bourgeoisie" as their equals, the First Reform Bill essentially divided the population into those with what was deemed a significant amount of land, and thus political clout, and those without it. Accordingly, when mid-century realist novels discuss land—how and when it is described in the narrative, how it is perceived by the characters, how it is owned, divided up, and utilized by the different classes that are represented in the narrative, and so on—they are exploring the shifting sociopolitical dynamics that had been brought about by both the passing of the 1832 Reform Act and the move to an economy grounded in local industrial production. Thus it is significant that both novels being examined in this chapter have settings in which land is largely accessible by foot (with regard to how far the characters can see as well as the lack of physical barriers preventing them from walking to and within those spaces, if they choose), and

[16] Eric Hobsbawm discusses this process in his "Land" chapter in *The Age of Revolution.*

both represent ownership of the land as being unfixed as its possession is either contended or the properties are available for purchase.

Bleak House

While *Bleak House* might seem like an especially odd choice for a study of rural landscape depictions as it is read principally as an indictment of Chancery and the English judiciary system, the novel also examines the dissolution of the aristocracy and the accompanying obsolescence of hereditary wealth and power, particularly with regard to landed estates. The novel's exploration of this shift in the economic, political, and social power of the nobility, particularly in its representation of Chesney Wold, is pertinent to a study of Victorian landscape depictions because the English countryside had been appropriated largely by the landed gentry following enclosure, as I demonstrate in the previous chapter. I want to suggest that *Bleak House*, in turn, portrays how the aristocracy's loss of inherited power coincides with their loss of dominion over the land, both implicitly and legally, and how the model of inherited power is being replaced by a meritocratic model in which the new paternalistic ruling class is removed from the corrupting influences of inherited power and wealth. Indeed, in being named *Bleak House,* which refers to both the decaying landed estate inherited by John Jarndyce and the small cottage that he buys as a wedding gift for Allan and Esther, even the novel's title is suggestive of how the social model is shifting from one that abets a sense of entitlement among those of a certain birth to one that favors individual merit and paternalistic guidance of the less fortunate. Moreover, in being named for the house, the novel's title also calls attention to the problem of what should be done with the large manor house itself as the inheritance model, of which the large house is both a symbol and a remnant, continues to collapse; this is particularly

evident towards the end of the novel when "Bleak House is thinning fast," as Jarndyce points out a number of times.

However, surprisingly little has been written overall, and especially in recent years, about the novel's position on the problem of what should be done with the existing landed estates, and particularly the large manor houses, within its proposed social model of merit-based moderate wealth and paternalistic altruism. In an article from 1970, Alice van Buren Kelley considers why Dickens chose the title *Bleak House*, and she argues that the idea of a "bleak house" can be read broadly as a metaphor for the various settings of the novel, and even England itself; she goes on to note that the decay of Chesney Wold as a physical structure reflects the decay of the aristocracy as an institution (255-6); however, Kelley does not go on to interpret Dickens's use of this symbolism beyond identifying it. Other earlier criticism that addresses the institution of the landed estate tends to focus on the novel's representation of industrialists as the economic and political successors to the aristocracy, but it does not address the inevitable accompanying changes to how land must be distributed and utilized, specifically in the contrast between an estate like Chesney Wold and Rouncewell's iron factory.[17] More recent works that address Dickens's representation of landed estates tend to compare the novel's depiction of a specific decorative or architectural component of the manor home with historical research on that

[17] For example, in a 1971 article published in *Essays in Criticism*, Anne G. M. Smith takes up the topic of the aristocracy's decay, but she directs her argument at another article published in the same journal a few years prior to her own, "The Ironmaster and the New Acquisitiveness" by Trevor Blount. Blount indicates that Rouncewell's character, as the novel's representative of the rising industrial class, should be read as nothing more than a replacement for the Dedlocks, or "the old privilege translated into different terms" (418). Smith, on the other hand, suggests that Rouncewell and Sir Leicester should be read as "counterbalancing figures," with Rouncewell being put forward as a positive example of his class's "inventiveness, its dynamism, its capacity for hard work and efficiency, and above all its progressiveness" (160-1, 162). While Smith's analysis of Dickens's language is interesting, she limits her argument to establishing that Dickens admired and approved of men of Rouncewell's class. A few years later, Harvey Peter Sucksmith also takes up the topic of the Ironmaster's role in the novel, but his article focuses on demonstrating Dickens's admiration for Wat Tyler, and thus Dickens's sympathy for the Chartist movement, without addressing what I see as a key component of such a reading: the Chartists' demand for the elimination of the property requirement for members of Parliament, and thus the problem of property distribution as it is taken up by the novel.

component's social, political, and/or economic role, using their findings to interpret the novel's broader stance on key issues involving the imminent collapse of the aristocracy.[18]

Other studies have discussed the depiction of land in *Bleak House*, but they do not specifically address how Dickens uses language to construct (or withhold) a scenic view of a given piece of land in the novel. For example, in *Dickens and Landscape Discourse*, Jane Berard opens her study by claiming that Dickens purposely represents the English countryside, including landed estates like Chesney Wold, as being lifeless and dreary in order to counter the public taste for "Edenic, idyllic" landscape paintings that erased evidence of the suffering brought about by a "cultural system which […] governed the power relations within capitalism" (82). However, her study tends to use "landscape" merely as a synonym for "land" or "setting" without discussing how Dickens employs the concept of landscape through language, and aside from a nod to Claude Lorrain and a brief summary of how poets ranging from Philip Sidney to William Wordsworth and John Clare wrote about freedom via descriptions of the countryside, she does not indicate that her work (or Dickens's, for that matter) is informed by any particular theory or understanding of what constitutes a "landscape." While these studies have been helpful in shaping my thinking about *Bleak House*, none of them specifically investigates Dickens's depiction of the relationship between land ownership and paternalistic responsibility. Although critics have overlooked the significance of how Dickens represents the shifting

[18] In her essay "Glass Windows: The View from *Bleak House*," for instance, Katherine Williams suggests that the novel's depiction of windows is significant because they function both as narrative framing devices and as historical indicators of the increased use of glass as a common architectural material. Williams goes on to argue that the novel's treatment of windows, particularly in light of the contemporary spectacle of the Crystal Palace, indicates Dickens's ambivalence about the emerging modernist belief that political and social transparency is possible in political and social relations. In a slightly different vein, Regina B. Oost examines the representation of portraiture versus photography in the novel as commentary on the breakdown of the aristocracy, specifically with regard to portraiture's new affordability to the moneyed middle classes and its new visual availability through cheap reproductions, along with the ability of photography to create "likenesses" that previously could be made only with paint. Oost goes on to argue that the Dedlock family portraits express "decline" rather than potency since they are depicted as "vanish[ing] lifelessly" into the walls of Chesney Wold, which suggests that the fading portraits also reflect the fading of the manor house and the power it once represented (149).

dynamic of land ownership and, consequently, the problem of the obsolete manor house, it is crucial for understanding how the mid-century realist novel attempts to correct the failings of the existing hierarchical, patriarchal, ruling-class model of leadership without radically changing the model itself. *Bleak House* acknowledges the unsuitability of the now-obsolete aristocracy to act as the ruling class by gently mocking Sir Leicester's archaic notions of proper behavior and his insistence on rigid boundaries among the classes, yet the novel does not advocate anything as radical as breaking up the Dedlock family wealth and property and distributing it among the deserving poor.

In fact, as the problems with the litigation of *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce* illustrate, the novel treats massive wealth and property, and especially inherited or gratis wealth and property, as corrupting forces. This understanding of inherited wealth can be further clarified by looking at John Stuart Mill's justification for taxing inherited wealth at a higher rate than earned wealth:

> It is not the fortunes which are earned, but those which are unearned, that it is for the public good to place under limitation. With respect to the large fortunes acquired by gift or inheritance, the power of bequeathing is one of those privileges of property which are fit subjects for regulation on grounds of general expediency; and I have already suggested, as the most eligible mode of restraining the accumulation of large fortunes in the hands of those who have not earned them by exertion, a limitation of the amount which any one person should be permitted to acquire by gift, bequest, or inheritance. (739)

While Mill is concerned with the overall disparity in wealth and quality of life across the English population, he is hesitant to place a higher tax on *all* wealth as he does not want to discourage prudence in spending and ingenuity; instead, he focuses on curbing inherited wealth because it

rewards the receiver simply for being related to (or favored by) the one who worked for the wealth, and not because he did anything of value himself. *Bleak House* addresses similar concerns and suggests that a model of inheritance (for wealth, status, and political clout) is not only impractical but also dangerous. Sir Leicester, the product of several generations of inherited wealth and power, is archaic in his thinking and trivial in his concerns. He is unfit to be a leader, but his shortcomings become comedic rather than tragic within the novel only because he has very little real power. The modern counterpart of a family legacy represented by the *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce* suit, in which people can use legal channels in order to claim unearned wealth and status, is shown to be much more treacherous as the lure of easy money and leisure ruins the lives of several people, most notably Richard.

Despite the aristocracy's failings as represented by the Dedlocks, the novel makes it clear that a ruling class is still necessary by depicting the overall irresponsibility and selfishness of those with the means but not the motivation to do beneficial work—such as Richard, Mr. Skimpole (who has medical training), and Mrs. Jellyby—as well as the sheer helplessness of the less fortunate characters, such as Charley and Jo, who clearly need to be supported, educated, and guided by those in a position to do so. Similarly, government-backed charities, like all government agencies in the novel, are inefficient and ineffective, as is evidenced by poor Jo's inability to get admitted into a shelter that will care for him:

> At first it was too early for the boy to be received into the proper refuge, and at last it was too late. One official sent her [Liz, a woman trying to help Jo] to another, and the other sent her back again to the first, and so backward and forward; until it appeared […] as if both must have been appointed for their skill in evading their duties, instead of performing them. (432)

The main problem with private paternalistic leadership, as it is presented in the novel, is how to ensure that those at the top of the meritocracy—the proposed new ruling class—have the material means to act as benefactors and guides to those in need without having so much that they live extravagantly and risk being corrupted by their wealth. This involves precluding people like Esther and Allan from residing in the large manor homes that not only serve as concrete symbols of excess but, due to the tenets of contemporary estate design, also purposely isolate the residing families both visually and physically from the from less fortunate people that live among them. Yet the novel also refuses to dispose of Chesney Wold and the original Bleak House: while Dickens could have made a clear statement by destroying one or both manor houses by the end of the novel, or by perhaps converting them into communal homes for the sick or the needy, he instead chooses to abandon them, leaving them largely empty and beginning to decay. In continuing to stand despite their evident obsolescence, the superfluous manor houses represent the novel's inability to resolve the problem of how to reconcile its understanding of the flaws inherent in the feudalistic social model with its desire to nevertheless preserve it somehow.

While *Bleak House* highlights how the aristocracy is failing, it does not demonize the traditional nobility as some other novels, including *John Halifax, Gentleman*, do. Although Sir Leicester is wealthy and arrogant, he is presented as pitiful and insignificant rather than villainous. The irrelevance of his social and political standing is encapsulated by his ongoing property dispute with Mr. Boythorn over the rights to a small pathway that runs through the park of Chesney Wold. The feud is clearly presented as a comic storyline, yet the land dispute alludes to the more serious issue of the landed gentry's former appropriation of the countryside and how the politics of land division and distribution are changing. In *Mansfield Park*, the countryside was presented as belonging wholly to the landed classes as laborers and the rural poor are

omitted from the novel, creating the illusion that only people like the Bertrams inhabit the area. In *Bleak House*, however, the various stratums of society are visible and vocal, and the wealth of the rising industrialists allows non-pedigreed people to legally own land that used to belong exclusively to men of Sir Leicester's class. As *Mansfield Park* demonstrates, previously even rural land that had no known owner was assumed to be owned by someone of pedigree, but during the mid-nineteenth century, the aristocracy no longer had the wealth nor the social clout to dominate the land as they once had. Thus when Sir Leicester fights with Boythorn about the rights to the pathway, they are really arguing about whether the aristocracy still has dominion over the countryside.

Sir Leicester begins the feud by writing to Boythorn and asserting that "the green pathway by the old parsonage-house, now the property of Mr. Lawrence Boythorne, is Sir Leicester's right of way, being in fact a portion of the park of Chesney Wold; and that Sir Leicester finds it convenient to close up the same" (119). The ambiguity of Sir Leicester's sentence construction, which makes it unclear whether the "property" spoken of refers to the green path, the parsonage house, or both, seems to acknowledge Boythorn's right to the land while simultaneously undercutting that right in indicating that Chesney Wold, while distant from the parsonage, still subsumes it. In other words, though Sir Leicester never sees nor has occasion to use the pathway that is adjacent to Boythorn's residence, he wants to close it up as a way of both demonstrating the expanse of Chesney Wold, which he understands as reaching well into town, and forcing his perceived social inferiors to respect the entire park as his private property rather than appropriating it as common land. Hence Sir Leicester gives no reason for closing the path other than that doing so is "convenient" for him, which makes it clear that he is closing it according to his whim as a powerful landholder and not because doing so will be beneficial to

anyone, common or titled. However, Boythorn in turn asserts the rights of the new class of landholders by emphasizing that Sir Leicester lacks the feudalistic authority that a man of his class once held; Boythorn states that Sir Leicester "[…] should not shut up my path if he were fifty baronets melted into one, and living in a hundred Chesney Wolds, one within another, like the ivory balls in a Chinese carving" (119). Boythorn underscores the meaninglessness of Sir Leicester's position by comparing the potential magnitude of a baron and his estate multiplied with that of a decorative ivory puzzle ball, thus indicating that the feudal estate is aesthetically pleasing but ultimately functions as nothing more than a showpiece (Gabriel 27).

When Boythorn informs Sir Leicester that he will not allow the pathway to be closed, the argument shifts from taking place via letter to taking place on the land itself: Sir Leicester erects barricades along the pathway, and Boythorn just as quickly tears them down. As Boythorn tells it,

> The fellow [Sir Leicester] sends a most abandoned villain with one eye, to construct a gateway. I play upon that execrable scoundrel with a fire-engine, until the breath is nearly driven out of his body. The fellow erects a gate in the night. I chop it down and burn it in the morning. He sends his myrmidons to come over the fence, and pass and repass. I catch them in humane man traps, fire split peas at their legs, play upon them with the engine—resolve to free mankind from the insupportable burden of existence of those lurking ruffians. (119)

While comedic, this passage enacts and literalizes the mid-century struggle for access to the countryside that was going on between the landed gentry and the rising moneyed classes. *Mansfield Park* represents the structures that enclose private property, such as fences and walls, as being fairly effective at keeping out intruders due to both the physical barriers and the

psychological barriers (i.e., intimidation) they present. Sir Leicester's barricades, however, are shown to be useless as Boythorn, who has access to a number of hand tools and simple machines—instruments that are representative of industry and labor—can easily destroy the gates Sir Leicester erects, especially as he has no deferential respect for the Dedlock family name, and thus has no respect for the gates that represent that name. Though Boythorn, being a peer of Mr. Jarndyce, does not belong as solidly to the rising middle class as someone like Robert Rouncewell, who is a successful iron master and the son of Sir Leicester's servant, Boythorn nevertheless represents the interests of this class in that he is fighting for the right to common access to the land—access that had been traditionally withheld from those not born into the aristocracy.

At the end of the novel, with Lady Dedlock in the family mausoleum and only a small host of desperate and pathetic relatives to carry on the family legacy, it is clear that the Dedlock reign has permanently ended. Sir Leicester has become obsolete in the emerging social hierarchy in which self-made wealth—which is depicted as the result of initiative and hard work—is valued above noble lineage and an idle, if genteel, way of life. Even the political power that used to belong to men of noble birth is shifting to those with growing wealth, regardless of their family lineage; this fact becomes painfully evident to Sir Leicester when he hears that Robert Rouncewell has been invited into Parliament. As Sir Leicester mourns what he calls "the confusion into which the present age has fallen" (392), and as he watches the old social order crumble, taking with it his wife and almost all he holds dear, the deterioration is again enacted literally, but this time it takes place on his body instead of on his land: by the end of the novel, Sir Leicester is left defeated, debilitated, and nearly blind. Boythorn's aversion to Sir Leicester quickly turns into pity, and though he is willing to forget the land dispute as a show of

good will, Sir Leicester takes the concession as a sign that Boythorn is being condescending, and Boythorn is compelled to commit flagrant trespasses, post placards on the pathway, and publicly speak out against Sir Leicester in order to assure the feeble baronet of his remaining influence, thus allowing him the "dignity of being implacable" (873).

Similar to the collapse of the Dedlock family, the manor house at Chesney Wold has begun falling into decay as well. While it used to be a show house and a visible symbol of the Dedlock family's prominence, it has been mostly closed up and now serves as nothing more than a "waste of unused passages and staircases" (875). Yet the novel does not destroy the manor house to suggest the beginning of a completely new order, nor does it give the promise of a future and perhaps more commendable purpose for the building, which might have indicated a contemporary, more relevant role for the nobility and what is left of its inherited wealth. Instead, the house remains standing yet is conspicuously devoid of life, thus serving as a concrete symbol of how the institutions of noble birth and the landed estate, while continuing to exist, are immaterial and even quaint within the new social order. The Dedlock manor house and estate stand as remnants of a past in which birth alone determined whether one would be among the powerful or whether one would be among the dependent, and the sheer magnitude of the Dedlock property, especially when compared with the dwellings in Tom-All-Alone's, points to how those in power have treated themselves to excess rather than paternalistically supporting less fortunate people. Indeed, when discussing the contrast between the size of "great houses" and the small farms and cottages that surround them, Raymond Williams has observed that large manor homes ultimately serve as visual testaments to the "robbery and fraud there must have been, for so long, to produce that degree of disparity" (*CatC* 105).

Accordingly, it is significant that the novel depicts Robert Rouncewell, a prominent representative of the rising middle classes, as *not* aspiring to directly replace the old nobility by, for instance, buying the Dedlock property, restoring the manor house, and using his earned wealth to live in opulence as those with inherited wealth used to do; nor does he directly challenge and subsequently overthrow the nobility by, for instance, directly ousting Sir Leicester from Parliament, which would seem to imply a complete rejection of the traditional social model. The novel instead chooses to amend the old social model by placing deserving people who eschew the idea of a moneyed life of leisure—people who understand both the value of labor and the importance of providing opportunities for others to improve their own circumstances—into the positions of influence that used to be held by the aristocracy, creating instead more of a meritocracy in which the grand estates have no purpose nor any appeal for those who can now afford them. However, as Chris Vanden Bossche points out in his article on popular agency in the novel, Rouncewell is not idealized as the perfect replacement for the failing aristocracy, either: while we know Rouncewell is industrious and values education, we are never shown how he treats his workers or whether he engages in meaningful philanthropic work, so it is unclear whether he would be a good leader in the paternalistic social model (22). Thus while the novel highlights the need for a change in leadership, it does not oversimplify the solution by suggesting that the self-made industrialists are necessarily the perfect men to take on the social and political position formerly held by men of Sir Leicester's class, especially because charitable paternalism is such an important component of the proposed model.

While not idealized as a perfect leader, Rouncewell does embody and represent the shift in popular sentiment regarding expanded political representation and the possibilities for social mobility, which Sir Leicester views as being nothing better than "the obliteration of landmarks,

the opening of floodgates, and the uprooting of distinctions" (392). As a result, the Dedlock house has become a "labyrinth of grandeur, less the property of an old family of human beings and their ghostly likenesses, than of an old family of echoings and thunderings which start out of their hundred graves at every sound, and go resounding through the building" (875). This quote demonstrates two ideas. First, the image of the house as a "labyrinth" suggests that it has gone from being a visible symbol of the Dedlock family's power and influence to being a vessel that entraps them: though the "grandeur" of the house used to provide them with a kind of social currency, it now marks them as obsolete and represents how their values differ from those of the larger populace. This figurative entrapment is highlighted when Sir Leicester begins failing to secure votes for his political party despite offering bribes to the constituency.

Second, given that family portrait paintings of each generation ("ghostly likenesses") served to both demonstrate the nobility of one's lineage and give visual proof of one's place within that lineage, this passage not only emphasizes the lack of life in the Dedlock home—a house "with so many appliances of habitation, and with no inhabitants except the pictured forms upon the walls" (563)—but it also indicates that the aristocracy, while being the predecessors of the Robert Rouncewells of the world, are not the *ancestors* of such men. In other words, because Rouncewell, a man who has no place in a gallery of generational portraits, has established himself independently by gaining his wealth and influence from sources that have no connection to inherited wealth, Sir Leicester thus has bequeathed nothing to Rouncewell either literally (wealth, education) or figuratively (precedent, guidance): the portraits, while once representing wealth and power, now stand as testament to the fact that Sir Leicester and his kind essentially have been cut off from the new succession of wealth and power in society. Moreover, in reducing the family's existence to mere "echoings and thunderings," the passage suggests that,

though the Dedlocks still have a perceptible social presence, it has been reduced to one that has no concrete nor lasting effect.

While Chesney Wold represents the decay of the aristocracy, Bleak House, on the other hand, represents the new, morally-grounded estate model. After inheriting a crumbling estate formerly known as the Peaks from his great-uncle, John Jarndyce renovates the manor house and turns it into a channel for philanthropy. However, this manor house eventually becomes a burden too as Ada and Richard move away to start their own lives, leaving the large house feeling empty, and Esther becomes torn between her love for Allan Woodcourt and her promise to become the "mistress of Bleak House." In a bizarre twist of events, Jarndyce solves the dilemma by creating a second, miniature version of Bleak House from a cottage, and he gives it to Esther and Allan as a sign of his blessing on their wish to marry. By specifically transforming the cottage into a miniature "Bleak House," the novel indicates that the paternalistic symbolism of the large manor house is important to maintain, even if such houses are too extravagant for the philanthropic, paternalistic aims of its model meritocracy. Hence in making the cottage a replica of Bleak House, Jarndyce plainly intends for Esther and Allen to carry on the tradition of treating their home as a center for philanthropic paternalism as he has done, yet he wants them to live modestly due to what he perceives as the corrupting power of inherited wealth. As a result, the original Bleak House is relegated to being a satellite home of sorts. At the end of the novel, Jarndyce informs the widowed Ada that the older Bleak House now "claims priority" as her home, yet the new, smaller Bleak House clearly becomes the novel's central location, both as a gathering place for the characters and as a channel for charitable acts, leaving the original house conspicuously empty and thus rather superfluous.

Perhaps the biggest change that comes with both the disintegration of Chesney Wold and Jarndyce's symbolic move from Bleak House manor to Bleak House cottage is the novel's loss of obvious, if flawed, patriarchal figureheads. John Jarndyce, who is identified as "Jarndyce of Bleak House" throughout the novel, acts as the literal and symbolic head of his manor, and his home essentially serves as the surrounding community's center for moral guidance and charitable aid: even poor Jo is brought to Bleak House for a brief stay when no one else will take him in, though he is lodged in the stables rather than in the main house. However, Jarndyce's disillusionment with Chancery (and governmental agencies in general) makes the business of governing and arbitrating distasteful to him. Jarndyce can afford to give generously and freely, which suits him for philanthropic work, but he sometimes gives unwisely, as in the case of Mr. Skimpole: in short, while he can guide and set a good example, he is incapable of disciplining others and makes poor decisions regarding suitable recipients for aid. Furthermore, while he is generally known as being a generous man, Jarndyce shies away from recognition for his good work and prefers to give anonymously. All of these traits prevent him from being an ideal candidate for the kind of principled feudalistic leadership that the novel proposes.

Sir Leicester, on the other hand, seems to have the opposite qualities: he revels both in being recognized as belonging to the nobility and in being shown deference by those he perceives as his social inferiors, and he is not afraid to use the authority of his rank in order to correct or discipline people (such as Boythorn) when he deems it necessary. However, while he is not portrayed as being miserly or coldhearted, he does not appear to do much philanthropic work either, aside from ensuring that the children of the local laborers get a limited education that he believes is appropriate for their station in life. In sum, Sir Leicester appears to enjoy the prestige and power of being a feudalistic-style lord, but he is less interested in paternalistically

caring for the people beneath him. Yet due to the rising availability of factory work, contemporary laborers of the time were not as dependent on the local nobility as laborers had been in previous times, and as a result, Sir Leicester's style of leadership comes off as being simply pretentious, outdated, and essentially ineffective.

In placing these two men alongside each other, the novel seems to suggest that it is not possible for a single leader to have the humility and compassion necessary to be properly philanthropic *while also* being commanding enough to be an effective modern arbitrator and authority figure. Yet the novel still posits that such a man, who can be seen as an updated version of the old feudalistic lord of the manor, would be an ideal leader for the contemporary problem of governing the newly independent laboring classes with compassion and good judgment. The novel's approach to a solution is in Esther and Allan's placement in a miniature version of the manor house, but due to the confusing family hierarchy that emerges as a result (i.e., Who is now the head of the family? Which Bleak House is the main family property? In inheriting a Bleak House, are Esther and Allan considered to be the successors of Jarndyce, or does their movement away from the original manor signal a new, separate family line?), there is still no clear patriarchal figure. Moreover, the novel's overall resistance to the inheritance of wealth and power along family lines make these complications even muddier: in a way, the confusion of the family hierarchy brought about by the new Bleak House befits the disarray of the Jarndyce family tree and the accompanying problem of determining appropriate inheritance recipients, all of which is encapsulated by the mess of *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce.* Thus the novel ends without providing a clear solution to this problem. Accordingly, both Chesney Wold and Bleak House manor—symbols of both the old kind of patriarchal feudalism and the novel's inability to put forward a modern counterpart—are more or less abandoned, yet they remain

standing as a testament to the novel's desire for a modern feudalistic leader that will govern with patriarchal authority and compassion without the corrupting wealth and self-indulgence of the aristocracy.

John Halifax, Gentleman

Despite its contemporary popularity, relatively little criticism been written on *John Halifax,* though the novel has attracted increased critical attention in recent years. Much of the recent criticism has focused on how the novel explores what it means to be a "gentleman" and the accompanying implications for upward class mobility. For example, Kiran Mascarenhas has pointed out that, while it is clear that John is of genteel heritage ("good stock") despite his lowly situation, the novel nevertheless challenges conventional contemporary thought in advocating the idea that men are not born into gentlemanliness, especially given that John "takes an active hand in the fall of the aristocracy" (258). In a reading that finds the novel similarly subversive, Lynn Alexander discusses how Condition-of-England writers and artists attempted to depict the suffering of the working classes while mitigating the accompanying images of violence and uprisings by purposely relegating their male workers to the domestic (i.e., peaceful, feminine) realm, thus stripping these characters of potentially menacing connotations. Silvana Colella, on the other hand, reads the novel as a mild endorsement of gentlemanliness via capitalism, arguing that *John Halifax* promotes a "vision of disinterested generosity" while still demonstrating the benefits of self-interest, thus naturalizing self-interest at a time when the pursuit of profit was discouraged by much social and cultural criticism (397). In a slightly different vein, Valerie Sanders's recent article suggests that the novel can be read as a contemporary exploration of the

difficulties self-made gentlemen encounter in trying to raise their sons to be both hardworking and gentlemanly, and her reading contrasts John's success with the failures of his son, Guy.

In parsing the novel's treatment of gentlemanliness, the abovementioned essays help to shed light on Craik's vision of class mobility, particularly with regard to the social effects of capitalism and the viability of placing working-class men into positions of leadership and power; such considerations are an important component of my own approach. My reading, however, will not consider John as a model of capitalistic gentlemanliness so much as a model of capitalistic feudalism: rather than focusing on how John's financial successes win him acceptance into higher social circles, I will examine how the novel represents John as taking on more sociopolitical responsibility within the community as his economic successes, which come largely from investments in his mills, allow him to buy up land and eventually acquire an estate, making him a patriarchal figure in the community. I will argue that John's love of the outdoors signals his suitability as a member of the new ruling class within the novel's model of capitalistic feudalism. Indeed, the novel suggests that in learning to appreciate land's concrete uses as well as its sociopolitical significance and aesthetic qualities, John is actually learning how to be a competent leader in his community as his respect for the land coincides with respect for what it supports and symbolizes. His multifaceted appreciation for land also serves to demonstrate the self-made gentleman's ability to fill the sociopolitical roles formerly held by the aristocracy, including that of acting as cultural preservationists for art and beauty.

In using variations of the term "feudalism," I do not intend to invoke it in the strict sense of medieval society, but rather in the way that Eric Hobsbawm describes the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century sense of a "feudal order" in England that resulted from landholders enjoying the benefits of being at the top of the socioeconomic hierarchy while non-landholders

were compelled to depend upon them for political representation. As Hobsbawm points out, in the years leading up and into the rise of localized industry that drew laborers away from traditional agriculture and toward wage-work in localized factories and mills, the "feudal order" was more of a political and social construct than an economic system (*Revolution*, 16-17). Hobsbawm claims that the inefficiency of the traditional agrarian structure had caused "noble and gentle incomes [to] limp increasingly far behind the rise in prices and expenditure," leaving titled families unable to support the laboring class economically as they had in the past, yet the nobility still enjoyed the "inalienable economic asset" of birth and status, which, along with their status as landholders, allowed them to remain as the ruling class (16). So while the nobility still enjoyed all the privileges of rank, they were no longer taking on the responsibility of supporting those beneath them socioeconomically; the outcome of this model is evident in *Mansfield Park*, where the laborers and rural poor are invisible, and the Bertrams appear to live a life of isolated privilege among others of their class.

Yet the economic asset of a good name can only last so long if there is no income to pay the family debts, and many landholders had to begin parceling off and selling their estates as they could no longer afford to keep them. By depicting the financial collapse of titled families alongside the growing success of middle-class industrialists, the mid-century novel highlights the sociopolitical and economic importance of owning land, particularly in the context of widespread social tension over the issue of extending the franchise. As voting rights were being awarded according to the value of one's land, the middle classes were literally buying power away from the aristocracy when they bought up the old estates. Given this context, the manner in which the novels represent land and the outdoors is especially significant. For example, in an essay on English landscape drawings, Ann Bermingham argues that following the French Revolution,

open prospects—broad, sweeping views that appear to go on indefinitely and have few or no features to lead the eye away from the horizon—were distinctly associated with "the leveling tendencies of democratic governments and revolutions" (83). Indeed, several prominent authorities on landscape art, such as Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price, explicitly linked one's taste in landscape design with one's political sympathies: while broad expanses of open land were associated with democracy and the overthrow of established institutions and social hierarchies, the more varied and visually disconnected picturesque aesthetic was seen as symbolizing and celebrating how disparate elements are necessary for both a good picture and a balanced society (85).

John Halifax is saturated with references to how much the characters, and especially John, take pleasure in being outdoors: they go for frequent walks, and Phineas specifically points out how much they enjoy the surrounding scenery as they stroll. However, while we are often told that John is enjoying a view, and while he often expresses that he is enjoying a view, there are very few broad, sweeping descriptions of what he is seeing: either the descriptions of the outdoors are given in abstract and generic terms, or one aspect of the view is depicted while the rest is left undescribed for the reader. In light of Ann Bermingham's argument about the French Revolution's effect on taste in English landscape art, the novel's method of representing scenic views becomes especially significant, particularly given that the novel expressly discusses the French Revolution as a "remarkable historical crisis" upon which "most English people looked back with horror," and one of the novel's subplots involves the unhappy discovery that the Halifax family's governess is the daughter of a man who was a key player in the Reign of Terror (401). With a plot suggesting that the title of "gentleman," which refers to the general sense of being respectable as well as its more narrow designation as a sociopolitical leader, can be

acquired by one who was born into the working class, the novel risks appearing to advocate a vision of radical democracy in which the sociopolitical hierarchy is demolished in favor of a leveling of distinctions among the classes. However, by omitting passages that describe broad, sweeping views—what Bermingham refers to as "open prospects"—in a story so grounded in the significance of owning land, the novel avoids aligning itself with the ultra-liberal and democratic ideals that had become associated with such a perspective.

For example, John says, "Who would guess now that I who stand here delighting myself in this fresh air and pleasant view, this dewy common, all thick with flowers—what a pretty blue cluster that is at your foot, Phineas!—who would guess that all yesterday I had been stirring up tanpits […]?" (142). John indicates that the view is pleasant and that the common is full of flowers, but instead of going on to describe the view in more specific terms, the narrative draws the reader's attention away from the open prospect to a single cluster of blue flowers at Phineas's foot. Similarly, during a time when Phineas and John go to Enderly, Phineas points out how much John enjoys the view: "His figure was outlined sharply against the sky, his head thrown backward a little, as he gazed, evidently with the keenest zest, on the breezy Flat before him" (130). Phineas goes on to describe what John looks like rather than the view he is enjoying so much. Later, when they are looking at the view together, John describes it as follows: "What a broad green sweep—nothing but sky and common, common and sky. This is Enderly Flat. We shall come to its edge soon, where it drops abruptly into such a pretty valley. There, look down—that's the church" (131). The use of deictic words ("this," "there," "that"), while giving spatial cues about how the visual components of the view are situated, also effectively shuts out the reader from sharing the view by attaching the special cues to locations that are specific to where the two men are standing.

Later in the novel, there is a moment where John, Ursula, Phineas, and the children walk to Enderly, and the children are hesitant about climbing a winding road in order to see the view over Nunneley Hill into the valley below. In order to coax them into climbing the ascent, Phineas goes to Ursula and "[helps] her describe the prospect to the inquisitive boys" (324). So while we are told that there is a view and it is even described, the reader is not privy to the depiction. When Phineas does describe the same view over Nunneley Hill, he does it via enclosed references that give the reader very little information: "This seat on the wall, with its small twilight picture of the valley below the mill, and Nunnely heights, with that sentinel row of sunset trees, was all mine […]" (324). Although Phineas is describing how pleasing the view is, he does not give sufficient details to allow the reader to envision it: he gives no colors, few concrete spatial cues, and his descriptive phrases ("sentinel row," "twilight picture," "sunset trees") are too abstract to evoke a specific image. The possessiveness he articulates ("all mine") is reflected by the overall privacy of the description: though he indicates that the view is beautiful and that he enjoys it, Phineas essentially keeps it for himself and does not share the image with the reader.

Yet even if a grand view is not described, the above passages indicate that John is enjoying the kind of open prospects that Bermingham discusses: throughout the novel, he surveys the sweeping commons, stands on hilltops to look across the horizon, and walks across Nunnely Flat until he reaches the edge, where it drops off into a scenic valley. In conveying that John is looking at open prospects without depicting them, the novel can represent John in a position that evokes a "patriarch of the valley" image, as he puts it, where he admires the English countryside with appropriate reverence, without the act being associated with radical democracy. This distinction is particularly important as he was born into the working class, and the act of

him looking at open prospects in a possessive stance could be falsely read as desire to overthrow the ruling class. In fact, as the novel stresses how land ownership is conflated with sociopolitical and economic power in both a symbolic and a literal sense, an appreciation for the outdoors and its sweeping scenic views can be understood as ultimately signaling John's appreciation and respect for the established order that places landholders at the top; such a reading is supported by his dignified deference to his social superiors, his scrupulousness about making sure that he remains within his social and political boundaries, and his staunch defense of property rights.

However, the old social model placed men into positions of leadership based on noble birth alone, and given the inconsistent quality of the nobility's moral uprightness and suitability for leadership, the novel suggests that this model has failed. The new feudalistic model being proposed by the novel maintains the hierarchical structure, including that of keeping the bulk of society's wealth and power among landholders, but it rewards, among other attributes, a comprehensive appreciation for the socioeconomic and aesthetic functions of land, along with an understanding of what the landholder's responsibility is with regard to ensuring that his land fulfills those functions for both his own family and the community as a whole. In other words, the novel works to strike a balance between respecting the established hierarchical framework of English society while also indicating that the requirements for membership in the top tiers could be adjusted without affecting the integrity of the structure itself. Thus in being shown appreciating a scenic view, John is demonstrating his esteem for the basic principles that govern society, including that of a social hierarchy in which the wealthy and powerful govern the poor and uneducated, while also indicating that he has the necessary qualities to be among the ruling class despite his origins.

John's connection to the land, and his gradual success as a landholder and patriarch, suggests that a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of how land is used not only signals leadership potential in a person, but it actually helps to cultivate that potential in that it provides a visual, tangible counterpart to the principles that govern society. At the beginning of the novel, John has a very organic relationship to the land as he has no home of his own and sleeps outside on a bark heap. When Phineas asks why he does not find lodging somewhere, John answers that he does not care for the quality of the places he can afford on two pence a day and goes on to observe, "Better keep my own company and the open air. […] You don't know how comfortable it is to sleep out of doors; and so nice to wake in the middle of the night, and see the stars shining over your head" (61). John's preference for sleeping in a bark heap rather than in a bed highlights the extent of his organic, concrete connection to the land, and while his observation that he enjoys looking at the stars indicates that there is a slight aesthetic component to his enjoyment, John is mainly focused on the physical comfort that he gets from sleeping outside.

In a similar vein, John focuses on the tangible, concrete aspects of the view from Abel Fletcher's garden when he first sees it. Although Phineas expects John to go into "ecstasies" upon seeing the garden, John's reaction is quite cool: aside from remarking that it is a "nice place," John's initial observation is that the grass plot is "very even" and probably "thirty yards square" (44). When Phineas asks him how far he has walked that day, John goes on to describe the view in relation to how the land affects him physically: "From the foot of those hills—I forget what they call them—over there. I have seen bigger ones—but they are steep enough—bleak and cold, too, especially when one is lying out among the sheep. At a distance they look pleasant" (44). As a young and impoverished rural laborer, John's experience of the land thus

far has been largely physical in that he engages with the land in a very hands-on way: when he can get work, he acts as a hired hand, "hop picking, apple gathering, [and] harvesting" (37); when he travels, he does so on foot and thus feels the land beneath his feet with each step; when he retires for the night, he sleeps on the ground outdoors. Despite his preference for being outside, the adjectives John uses (steep, bleak, cold) point to the harshness of a life that requires one to engage with the land on such a physical level, and his lack of a descriptive vocabulary with which to convey what the hills look like indicates that he is unused to looking at land as an aesthetic object. Accordingly, John seems surprised that the same hills he has experienced as being severe can nevertheless be pleasing to the eye ("At a distance they look pleasant") when considered as something other than a physical barrier with which he must engage. John is similarly fascinated by the appearance of the Severn River from a distance, which until then he had only seen up-close: "He stood there gazing at it a good while—a new expression dawning in his eyes" (45). This moment can be read as a turning point in the novel, marking when John begins to understand that land features can be viewed as aesthetic objects in which he can take a purely noncorporeal pleasure that is separate from his more concrete connection to them.

The physical nature of John's initial contact with the outdoors is important as it grounds his experience not only in the tangible features of the land—i.e., what it feels like to sleep on bark, to walk the steepness of the hills, and split timber with his hands—but also with the bleaker, more challenging aspects of engaging with the land, specifically as a poor laborer. Although he expresses a preference for living in the open air, his appearance betrays the hardships he has faced as one who works outdoors: his hands are "grimed with bark dust" (57), his clothes are shabby from the "repeated drenchings" he had suffered during the wet autumn (52), and before he got a job at the tanyard, he was visibly emaciated. This organic experiencing

of the land seems to temper his later aesthetic and economic appreciation for it by showing him what is endured by those who work the land, especially as such hardships are not perceptible when seen from a distance that is either physically or aesthetically imposed; in turn, John is able to empathize with the working poor while still protecting the interests of landholders. Moreover, while John eventually learns how to look at the land as an aesthetic object via scenic views, walking the land and learning about it in the direct manner of working with his hands allows him to also understand the functions and potential of the land in a way that higher-born men in the novel (and specifically Lord Luxmore) do not. This more comprehensive understanding gives John a unique perspective on the various uses for public and private property and, as I will suggest, the larger ramifications of those uses as well.

The novel opens with Phineas's recollection of the first time he sees John, a moment he describes as a "picture" in which John is the "principle figure" (32). However, in the long description that follows, John is *not* presented as the focus of the image:

> […] the narrow, dirty alley leading out of the High Street, yet showing a glimmer of green field at the farther end; the open house-doors on either side, through which came the drowsy burr of many a stocking-loom, the prattle of children paddling in the gutter, and sailing thereon a fleet of potato parings. In front, the High Street, with the mayor's house opposite, porticoed and grand; and beyond, just where the rain clouds were breaking, rose up out of a nest of trees, the square tower of our ancient abbey—Norton Bury's boast and pride. On it, from a break in the clouds, came a sudden stream of light. The stranger lad lifted up his head to look at it. (32)

The description organizes the image from the lowliest of High Street's sights (the dirty alley, the humble homes) to the most grand (the mayor's house, the abbey) without treating any one of them as the focal point, resulting in a degree of spatial confusion. While it is relatively clear how some of the landmarks stand in relation to one another—i.e., we are told that the green field is visible at the end of the narrow alley and that the alley is flanked by the homes of the working poor—the overall image is muddled as the description jumps from the middle-ground (the alley and houses) to the foreground (the mayor's house) and then to the background (the abbey). John can be seen as the "principle figure" of the picture only in that he appears last, which, due to the broader organizational scheme, suggests that he is the grandest sight of all, yet he is not actually part of the image because, like Phineas, he is presented as a mere spectator, and an anonymous one at that. While the description contains specific spatial and sensory details about the other aspects of the image, John remains unnamed and undescribed, excepting his motion of lifting his head to look at the stream of light. In fact, if the image can be said to have a focal point at all, it would likely be the stream of light that falls upon the abbey as Phineas's description privileges it as a "sudden" occurrence that attracts his attention as well as John's.

While the above depiction can be read in a number of ways, especially with regard to the relationship between Phineas and John, its most important aspect for the purposes of my reading is how it establishes John as a spectator of scenic views early on in the novel. Even though Phineas imagines John to be the focal point of the image, John is able to shift from being a component of the view to being a spectator via the deliberate act of looking at the view himself. He is not depicted as necessarily enjoying the view—he lifts his head to look at the stream of light without any noticeable reaction to it—but in gazing at the same image that Phineas is admiring, he removes himself from the role of aesthetic object and takes on that of a fellow

spectator. As John Barrell has noted, the idea that working-class men were intellectually incapable of enjoying art in an aesthetic sense influenced 18th-century thinking about the use and purpose of art. According to Barrell, the contemporary belief, which was grounded in classical writings, was that because men who worked in a mechanical trade were concerned with the concrete aspects of material objects, they could regard objects only as "concrete particulars" and not "in terms of the abstract and formal relations among them" (*Political Theory* 8). Similarly, Raymond Williams has observed that when it became fashionable to look at the countryside as an aesthetic object—to take in a scenic view and evaluate it as one would a landscape painting—the elite and educated found it necessary to begin dividing such observations into the "practical" and the "aesthetic" (120-1). The resulting "self-conscious observer," as Williams puts it, represents how the moneyed and landed classes appropriated what was deemed to be legitimate enjoyment of the beauties of the outdoors by insisting that an "elevated sensibility" is necessary to separate the aesthetic aspects of the natural world from the more utilitarian ones. Thus, while the educated and leisured self-conscious observer could look at a field and see both its economic possibilities as well as its aesthetic qualities, an ordinary laborer would supposedly be able to see only a work site. Williams argues that it is not the division of land into the utilitarian and aesthetic categories that matters; rather, it is the fact that the observer "needed and was in a position to do it, and that this need and position are parts of a social history, in the separation of production and consumption" (121). For Williams, the self-conscious observer embodies the divisions between the classes and yet another way that the rich stole from the poor: not only did they take land from the poor for their own economic and political ends, but they also refused to recognize that a laborer could enjoy the beauty and visual complexity of a scenic view in the same way an educated man could. Thus when a character stops to enjoy a scenic view and acts

as a self-conscious observer in a novel, he can be read as reinforcing the aristocracy's position of inherited privilege and power.

Craik's novel, however, challenges Williams's concept of the self-conscious observer as it links John's appreciation for scenic views with both his respect for the land-based socioeconomic hierarchy and his ability to move through that hierarchy in order to become a landholder himself. Barrell's discussion of the civic humanist theory of painting points out that the laboring classes were seen as being unable to comprehend abstract ideas and thus were deemed unable to enjoy the aesthetic qualities of material objects; this idea was extended to also suggest that a laborer would also be incapable of meaningful public service as he would be unable to think beyond his own immediate wants in order to act instead for the public interest (7). However, John's act of consciously enjoying scenic views subverts the idea that one must have been born into the leisured upper classes in order to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of material objects, which in turn suggests that one does not need to have been born into the upper classes in order to be a good leader. This perspective reinforces the novel's approval of the dissolution of the purely hereditary aristocracy in favor of what is essentially a meritocracy, similar to the model proposed in *Bleak House.* As John, who is clearly the self-conscious observer of the novel, puts it, "[…] I belong to the people. But I nevertheless uphold a true aristocracy—the *best men* of the country—do you remember our Greeks of old? These ought to govern, and will govern, one day, whether their patent of nobility be birth and titles, or only honesty and brains" (293).

Even Lord Luxmore, the novel's representative of the old aristocracy founded upon inherited wealth and a sense of entitlement, sees that "in these chaotic days of contending parties, when the maddened outcry of 'the people' was just being heard and listened to, it might be as

well not to make an enemy of this young man [John], who, with a few more, stood as it were midway in the gulf, now slowly beginning to narrow, between the commonality and the aristocracy" (268). While the sociopolitical shift is framed as a narrowing of a gulf between those with inherited titles and those without, the novel does not actually advocate the termination of class distinctions; rather, it seeks to have these distinctions between sociopolitical leaders—the "aristocracy"—and the commonality be determined by merit rather than birth and wealth alone. As the novel reimagines the aristocracy as being comprised of the "best men," meaning those who have a more comprehensive understanding of sociopolitical dynamics and take on the responsibility of ensuring that the community as a whole thrives, it represents this quality in John with his appreciation for scenic views: much as he is able to balance pursuing his own interests with taking responsibility for ensuring the financial and political health of his community, he is also able to balance his aesthetic appreciation for tracts of land with his social, political, and financial understanding of the land's importance.

For instance, although Phineas is of a higher social rank and is much better educated than John, his disability prevents him (both physically and within the novel's ideological framework) from marrying and taking on patriarchal and paternalistic responsibilities; accordingly, he does not look at land in the same way that John does. Physically, Phineas is simply unable to travel to many of the locations that place one in a position to take in a scenic view. Even when he is transported to such a location, however, he still does not take in a sweeping view and instead focuses on individual components of the view, primarily those in the foreground. When Phineas wants to show John his garden shortly after their initial meeting, for example, Phineas does not have the physical strength to walk up to the clematis arbor, which overlooks the Avon and presents a good view of the garden, so John must carry him to the spot; yet even when they

arrive at the arbor and Phineas begins to describe the view, it becomes clear that he does not see it as a single sweeping image:

> A large square, chiefly grass, level as a bowling green, with borders round. Beyond, divided by a low hedge, was the kitchen and fruit garden—my father's pride, as this old-fashioned pleasaunce was mine. When, years ago, I was too weak to walk, I knew, by crawling, every inch of the soft, green, mossy, daisy-patterned carpet, bounded by its broad gravel walk; and above that, apparently shut in as with an impassible barrier from the outer world, by a three-sided fence, the high wall, the yew hedge, and the river. (44)

In describing the view, Phineas breaks it down into its component parts, which is reflected by his diction: his description is peppered with dependent clauses and an excessive use of adjectives ("the soft, green, mossy, daisy-patterned carpet,"), resulting in a halting cadence that compels the reader to perceive the view in a similarly piecemeal fashion. His description also foregrounds how the view is bounded in that each sentence mentions a border, barrier, or division of some kind. Furthermore, Phineas points out that his primary way of experiencing the land is by crawling "every inch" of it, indicating that he perceives the outdoors at an almost microscopic degree (as opposed to the macroscopic level necessary for taking in a broad view consisting of several visual components).

Similarly, when Phineas and John live at Enderly, John delights in taking rambling walks along the Flat and taking in the "panorama" of a view that can be seen from the spot he calls his "terrace," while Phineas, on the other hand, experiences the countryside on a much smaller scale: he describes going outside and lying on the ground in the same spot each morning, where "often a square foot of ground presented [him] with enough of beauty and variety in color and form, to

criticize and contemplate for a full hour" (147). So while Phineas clearly enjoys being outdoors as much as John does, his tendency to concentrate his attention on a small area nearby his person and focus on individual components of a larger image reflects the degree to which his disability prevents him from thinking too far beyond his own needs (and thus from taking on a role of public responsibility), as John eventually does.

While John's realization that land can be an aesthetic object begins in Phineas's garden, the scope of his scenic views quickly grows to encompass much larger areas. When he has been working long enough to be able to rent a small attic room, for instance, he expresses delight not over the concrete comforts of finally having a bed, or private quarters, or even simply a roof over his head; rather, upon showing the room to Phineas, he exclaims, "I declare I shall be as happy as a king. Only look out the window" (64). Phineas goes on to narrate that the window provides access to the roof, which in turn offers a vantage point for the "finest view in all Norton Bury," and he characterizes the view as "a picture, which in its incessant variety, its quiet beauty, and its inexpressibly soothing charm, was likely to make the simple, everyday act of 'looking out o' window' unconsciously influence the mind as much as a world of books" (64). While John still says nothing about the view himself, his understanding that the placement of the window is an asset indicates his new interest in looking at land features as aesthetic objects, especially given that he connects his forthcoming happiness, and not some more practical function, with what is visible from the window and on the rooftop. Moreover, the novel presents John's learning to read as being not only a source of enjoyment and of a position-bettering education, but also a conduit for his moral development, particularly with regard to his study of the Bible; thus Phineas's comparison of the effect of regularly looking at a scenic view to that of reading books

suggests that both activities, while pleasant, also come with greater overall awareness and, consequently, greater personal responsibility.

After the above scene, the novel skips ahead to six months later, after John has been awarded a promotion at work for teaching himself how to read and do arithmetic. He meets with Phineas for a walk, and they go to a small hill called the Mythe from which the Avon River is visible. John describes it as follows: "What masses of white foam it makes, and what wreaths of spray, and see! ever so much of the Ham is under water. How it sparkles in the sun" (67-8). While John is still considering only the river by itself (rather than several land and sky features all together, which would make up a single sweeping view), the simple yet poetic quality of his diction in this passage demonstrates how his aesthetic sense is developing, especially in how his language here contrasts with his earlier, much more matter-of-fact description of the steep hills visible from Phineas's garden. John includes the flooded Ham among the "pretty" components of the view he is enjoying, and he goes on to remark, "You can't think how fine this is from my window; I have watched it for a week. Every morning the water seems to have made itself a fresh channel. Look at that one, by the willow tree—how savagely it pours!" (68). In connecting the view from his bedroom window to what he sees from the Mythe, John also demonstrates that he is beginning to understand how different prospects affect the appearance of a given object.

The delight John takes in noting how "savagely" one of the channels pours across the plain nearly suggests an unarticulated appreciation for the sublime, especially as he quickly connects the power of the water with the potential for serious flood damage to the town. However, it is this tendency to pair the enjoyment of a scenic view with a resulting concern for the condition of the land and its inhabitants, and especially the interests of property holders, that

identifies John as material for the position of a paternalistic landholder as the role is imagined by the novel**.** When the rapid spring thaw causes Norton Bury to flood, Phineas's narration of the event glosses over the humanitarian aspects and frames it as a largely economic crisis: "Bridges were destroyed—boats carried away—houses inundated, or sapped at their foundations. The loss of life was small, but that of property was very great" (74). Bridges, boats, and houses are all structures that serve crucial purposes for the people who use them, and thus these structures could be read as being representative of the human suffering that likely resulted from the flood; yet in minimizing the fact that people died in favor of focusing on how much property damage was caused, the passage suggests that the boats, bridges, and houses should instead be understood as symbols of the loss of capital and investments. John's persistent worries about the possibility of flooding (which are entirely dismissed by Phineas) thus foreshadow the damage done to Norton Bury by the floodwaters while also indicating his economic concerns with regard to how flooding would affect the town as a whole, and specifically the property and assets of Abel Fletcher, despite the fact that John has no property himself and thus has very little personal stake in the matter as of yet.

John's concerns about the economic effects of the flood also foreshadow his role in suppressing the food riot at Fletcher's mill and reflect how the riot is presented primarily as a question of property rights, with humanitarian interests factoring in as a secondary concern. In prioritizing property over human life, the novel appears to confirm Karl Marx's understanding of how private ownership of land within a capitalistic economy inevitably corrupts the property holders. In the first volume of *Capital*, during his discussion of the rise of industrial capitalism, Marx argues that the expulsion of the rural population from the countryside through enclosure led to the dissolution of feudalism, which in turn allowed the capitalistic economy to take hold in

England. He ties this shift in rural land distribution to the escalation of industrial production in areas that had become newly populated with the expelled rural poor, who in turn became an abundant source of cheap manual labor. Whereas in the past, Marx suggests, the rural poor had been relatively independent and self-sustaining, enclosure compelled them to begin selling their labor as opposed to producing for themselves:

> In spite of the smaller number of its cultivators, the soil brought forth as much or more produce, after as before, because the revolution in the conditions of landed property was accompanied by improved methods of culture, greater co-operation, concentration of the means of production, &c., and because not only were the agricultural wage labourers put on the strain more intensely, but the field of production on which they worked for themselves became more and more contracted. With the setting free of a part of the agricultural population, therefore, their former means of nourishment were also set free. They were now transformed into material elements of variable capital. The peasant, expropriated and cast adrift, must buy their value in the form of wages, from his new master, the industrial capitalist. (817)

While Marx appears to grant that this economic shift allowed for a degree of social and economic mobility through accumulation and investment, much in the way that both Abel and John are able to overcome their social disadvantages in order to become manufacturers and landholders, he also points out that such mobility only comes at the price of exploiting one's fellows: "Doubtless many small guild-masters, and yet more independent small artisans, or even wage-labourers, transformed themselves into small capitalists, and (by gradually extending exploitation of wage-labour and corresponding accumulation) into full-blown capitalists" (478).

This exploitation, Marx claims, is inevitable as the capitalist, in having no relationship with his workers beyond the payment of wages, finds it in his best interest to extract the maximum amount of labor from his workers at the smallest cost to himself in order to make the best profits. In couching the flood as a primarily economic disaster while minimizing the loss of human life, the novel at first seems to support Marx's claims: the loss of capital is portrayed as being the most important consideration. Accordingly, the food riot at Fletcher's mill is also presented as being largely an issue of property rights rather than one of humanitarian interest or morality, despite the fact that the rioters are visibly emaciated.

Yet in calming the rioters by giving them charity in the form of a meal and notes redeemable for flour, John's approach demonstrates that paternalism is actually a shrewder business strategy than the mere pursuit of profit in that he is able to save the mill, preserve the bulk of the grain, and placate the laborers, all at minimal cost to Abel. The novel thus posits paternalistic responsibility as the key to ensuring that the industrialists—who have replaced the corrupted, crumbling nobility as society's leaders—will not become cruel to those economically dependent on them, despite their pursuit of ever-greater profits. Accordingly, the food riot scene validates the novel's desire to maintain the institution of the landed estate in that it demonstrates its economic feasibility, and it shows that the rights of property holders can be further protected if the laboring poor are raised into a better, less desperate condition.

Moreover, John's ability to interpret a pleasing view from multiple perspectives—i.e., the economic, the aesthetic, and the sociopolitical meanings that can be attached to a given piece of land—reflects his belonging in the new "aristocracy" that has arisen as a result of the contemporary shift from an economy grounded in inherited wealth and offsite labor to one of domestically-based industry. As is demonstrated by the traditional aristocracy's inability to

adapt to the new model in order to maintain power, not everyone is equipped to understand and thus govern within the economic, sociopolitical, and aesthetic challenges presented by the shift to a domestic industrial economy; the novel illustrates this idea by showing how the various characters perceive and behave toward key pieces of land. For example, the food riot is introduced with Phineas's observation that, as summer begins to wane, Jael notices that people have begun "to watch with anxious looks at the thin harvest-fields" (101). The fact that Jael—a servant—points this out suggests that it is the wage-earning classes that are anxious about the bareness of the fields; this idea is reinforced a few lines later, when Phineas goes to sit outdoors: "Dr. Jessop came in, and I stole away gladly enough, and sat for an hour in my old place in the garden, idly watching the stretch of meadow, pasture, and harvest land. Noticing, too, more as a pretty bit in the landscape, than as a fact of vital importance, in how many places the half-ripe corn was already cut, and piled in thinly scattered sheaves over the fields" (102). The disconnect between how Jael and Phineas respectively interpret the appearance of the thinned fields—Jael emotionally, Phineas with a superficial aestheticism—indicates a broader disconnect between the moneyed classes and the laboring classes: Jael apprehensively looks at the fields of prematurely harvested corn, seeing forthcoming hunger and want, whereas Phineas looks on them with leisured idleness and sees only "a pretty bit."

Abel, on the other hand, sees economic significance in the thinned fields, but, as Marx would predict, as an industrial capitalist, Abel sees the shortages only as an opportunity to make a bigger profit and thus keeps his grain locked up, waiting for even higher market prices before milling it into much-needed flour. In presenting these three perspectives on the appearance of the thinned wheat fields, the novel underscores how each character's interpretation of the view reflects not only his or her socioeconomic status but also how he or she relates to the surrounding

community, which includes the well-off but is mainly made up of laboring poor: Jael feels compassion and makes sacrifices of her own in solidarity, Abel is unmoved and sacrifices having luxury items at his table only so that his neighbors will not gossip about him, and Phineas, restricted to the house and the surrounding grounds by his ill health, is all but oblivious to the famine and resulting social unrest and instead evaluates the appearance of the fields aesthetically. The thinned fields can be read as a symbol of the broader difficulties of functioning within a capitalistic economy, and each of these three perspectives on the fields—the sympathetic/empathetic, the isolated aesthetic, and the detachedly economic—represents a single component of the more comprehensive view that is necessary not only for effective sociopolitical leadership on the part of the new capitalists, but also for the capitalists' own economic success as well. Indeed, the consequences of the food riot demonstrate that, alone, none of these perspectives adequately reflects the number of factors that must be taken into account in order to fill the traditional role of social, political, and cultural leadership that has been left open by the disintegration of the nobility. By focusing only on the economic opportunity afforded by the shortage, Abel ends up losing the anticipated profits, and he nearly loses his home and his mill due to the anger of the rioters; by focusing only on the aesthetic aspects of the thinned fields, Phineas ends up losing part of his outdoor sanctuary as the rioters knock down his garden wall, effectively forcing him to notice the human consequences of the small harvest; and Jael, in reacting emotionally, feels sorry for the hungry men but nevertheless becomes angry and violent-minded when the rioters threaten to break into the Fletchers' home, and her eagerness to take up a pistol (despite the Quaker doctrine of nonresistance) suggests that, while failing to feel any empathy for the laborers is ineffective, neither does being guided by feeling alone as it makes one overly reactive. Only John is able to juggle all three perspectives successfully, as is

evidenced by his ability to pacify the rioters while still saving Abel's property and, in quieter times, enjoying the view of the fields while understanding their socioeconomic significance.

The supreme right of the property holder over other moral considerations is ultimately upheld by the novel, even in the case of extreme human starvation: John demonstrates this when he chastises the rioters by pointing out, "Even so—it was *his* [Abel's] wheat, not yours. May not a man do what he likes with his own?" (118). The novel goes on to claim that the rioters themselves are convinced by this argument as "there is always a lurking sense of rude justice in a mob" (118). It is important to note that it is the rioters—the working poor—who force the thinned fields to be considered with a more balanced perspective. If the working poor were removed from the equation, neither Phineas nor Abel would have been checked in their individual interpretations of the fields, and Jael would have no reason to care about the state of the harvest beyond that of her own welfare. In short, while men like Abel own the land and control when and how the wheat will be used, and while the rights of property trump even those of human life, the novel suggests that the industrialists are prevented from being tyrannical—at least economically—by both the influence of the laboring classes and by their own moral consciences.

While prioritizing property over human life might seem to go against the novel's larger project of naturalizing the idea of the hard-working, morally-upright, paternalistic landholder, it is nevertheless compatible with John Stuart Mill's model of morally-grounded property holding. In *Principles of Political Economy*, Mill argues that land itself should be seen as belonging in common to all of humanity, but he adamantly defends the right of property holders to do what they wish with the profits they gain from their use of the land: "The rents or profits which [the landholder] can obtain from [his land] are at his sole disposal […]" (239). In acknowledging the

property-owner's right to do as he wishes with his own property, *John Halifax* posits a similar model of landholding that complies with the increasingly capitalistic economy in recognizing that, unlike models dependant on family inheritance and strict feudalism, the landholder has no legal or social obligation to support those who are dependent on him economically, nor must he distribute his wealth in a particular way: in short, he has no responsibility beyond paying the wages of his workers. Indeed, while ostensibly sympathetic to the plight of the hungry, the novel is somewhat Malthusian in its attitude toward the working poor overall: as Phineas narrates, "Norton Bury was not a large place, and had always an abundance of smallpox and fevers to keep the poor down numerically" (104).

Yet, as the food riot scene demonstrates, the novel also suggests that the landholder has a vested interest, even in the absence of a moral responsibility, in not ignoring the needs of those who are beneath him socioeconomically. Accordingly, Mill's model stipulates that, while the landholder can do as he wishes with the profits (including any produce) he garners from the land, his use of the land itself must still somehow benefit the community as a whole by either providing a service/commodity or upholding common access to the land: "[…] but with regard to the land, and everything which he [the landholder] does with it, and in everything which he abstains from doing, he is morally bound, and should whenever the case admits be legally compelled, to make his interest and pleasure consistent with the public good" (Mill 239-40). In contrast to John's more paternalistic approach to protecting and enforcing the rights of landholders while ensuring the well-being of the population in general, Lord Luxmore demonstrates the sense of entitlement among the nobility that is ultimately causing their downfall. John's better suitability as a public leader, as opposed to the high-born and politically powerful Luxmore, is highlighted by the difference in how they regard land and how their

subsequent actions concern the public good: while John is always thinking of how his actions will affect the community as a whole, Luxmore acts only according to his own interests. For example, after John successfully lobbies to prevent Luxmore's corrupt candidate from being elected to Parliament, Luxmore retaliates by rerouting the stream that provides power for John's mill at Enderly. By depriving the mill of its power source, Luxmore not only affects John's livelihood but also that of the mill's workers.

This moment in the novel foregrounds one of the key shifts in the period with regard to how private land use is interpreted: in *Mansfield Park*, using a stream to feed decorative fountains on an estate would not have been seen as a moral issue, largely because the novel would not have acknowledged that anyone depended on or had rights to the stream beyond those whose property it touched. The issue of how rerouting the stream might affect workers would not have been a concern because the workers are absent from that narrative. However, the Victorian realist novel, which strives to represent society in a more comprehensive manner, takes into account the laborers because, unlike in Austen's narrative, they are now visible. This idea is perhaps best illustrated by the moment when John goes to the Luxmore Arms where, because the voters have been bribed, Gerard Vermilye is about to be elected to Parliament. The room is described as follows: "Sir Ralph Oldtower, who was sheriff, sat at a table, with his son, the grave-looking young man who had been with him in the carriage, near them were Mr. Brithwood of the Mythe, and the Earl of Luxmore" (294). The run-on sentence suggests an attempt at representing the gentry as dominating the room: they are the first thing described as John enters the parlor, and the string of clauses suggests a fullness, or a larger-than-life inability to be contained. However, the next paragraph begins with, "The room was pretty well filled with farmers' laborers and the like" (294). The succinctness of this sentence contrasts with the

preceding one describing the gentry, which serves to jar the cadence of the passage. As the passage continues, the laborers appear to slowly encroach upon the dominion of the gentry. For instance, although the passage does not at this point mention that the laborers are making any noise, Brithwood snarls, "Less noise there! […] Silence, you fellows at the door!" (294). As this exclamation seems unprovoked in that no mention has been made of the crowd being noisy, Brithwood's reprimand suggests that he is fearful of the crowd's potential to become a mob.

As the passage goes on, the laborers become increasingly noticeable: "A murmur arose from the crowd of mechanics and laborers" and continues to get more audible until "a loud cheer [breaks] from the crowd at the door and under the open windows, where, thick as bees, the villagers had now collected" (296-7). The passage goes on to note that "They, the unvoting, and consequently unbribable portion of the community—began to hiss indignantly at the fifteen unlucky voters," and Sir Ralph "listen[s] uneasily to a sound, very uncommon at elections, of the populace expressing an opinion contrary to that of the lord of the soil" (297). The passage opens with the gentry controlling the room but ends with them being overwhelmed and outnumbered by the commoners, who seem to be so numerous that they spill out of the parlor. The diction of the passage represents the way that the aristocracy is compelled to take notice of the laborers and how such commoners are beginning to affect political decisions. It is interesting that Sir Ralph characterizes the gentry as "the lord[s] of the soil" because it gestures toward how wrapped up land is in political matters: men needed to own land to vote, and the voters (who are characterized specifically as farmers and laborers) work in the soil. It seems to give the phrase new meaning, alluding to the shift in power that is taking place. This narrative encroachment of the commoners upon the gentry takes place in tandem with John's choice to exercise his rights as a freeman of his borough.

To return to the issue of the stream being rerouted, the novel makes it clear that it is John's appreciation for the importance of both private ownership and public usage of land that qualifies him to be a leader and part of the new, merit-based aristocracy model being proposed. John's concerns about how his workers will manage on the reduced pay that would accompany the mill being shut down for three days a week contrasts with Luxmore's use of the stream to produce decorative fountains on the grounds of his estate: John's use of the stream, while serving his own interests, also serves those of the community, whereas Luxmore's use serves only himself, and for a vain reason at that.

While the descriptions of the countryside in *Mansfield Park* emphasized its purpose as a site of leisure for the privileged, land in *John Halifax* is beautiful and functional. Indeed, when Lord Luxmore reroutes the stream, its aesthetic value decreases at the same rate as its functionality: Phineas narrates, "Very often Muriel and I followed him [John], and spent whole mornings in the mill meadows. Through them the stream on which the machinery depended was led by various contrivances, checked or increased in its flow, making small ponds, or locks, or waterfalls. We used to stay for hours, listening to its murmur […]" (325). Though the first description acknowledges the artificiality of the stream ("contrivances"), Phineas also indicates that he and Muriel find it pleasing to the senses as well. The stream thus mingles economically profitable mechanisms and structures with more organic aspects of the outdoors that can be enjoyed solely for their aesthetic value, suggesting that land has a dual purpose in being functional and beneficial to the community while also being pleasing to look at.

Accordingly, when Luxmore diverts water from the stream in order to power his private fountains, the stream is stripped of both its functionality and its aesthetic pleasantness: Phineas notes, "[…] the water courses along the meadows, with their mechanically forced channels, and

their pretty sham cataracts, were almost low or dry. It ceased to be a pleasure to walk in the green hollow, between the two grassy hills […]" (332). What had been a flowing stream with "small ponds" and "waterfalls" has become a body of "mechanically forced channels" and "sham cataracts," which suggests that the practice of modifying natural formations (such as streams) in order to profit from them will succeed only if the balance between function and beauty is maintained; otherwise, both aesthetic and economic profit are lost. Moreover, the ambiguous use of the word "courses," which, when applied to water, evokes both the noun describing its paths and the verb that indicates a rushing motion, causes the reader to stumble: it first appears that the word is being used as a verb ("the water courses along the meadows"), yet the subsequent clause reveals that it is being used as a noun ("with their mechanically forced channels"). This wordplay serves to emphasize the new emptiness of the stream: while the first clause calls to mind rushing water, the following one snatches away that image by clarifying that "courses" is being used as a noun, and the narrative essentially enacts the draining of the stream with grammar and diction.

The novel contrasts John's understanding of the use and purpose of land with that of Luxmore again during the economic crash brought on by speculation. Sir Herbert is appalled that Luxmore would allow his estate to fall into "disgraceful decay," and moreover that he had begun cutting down the pine woods around Luxmore Hall. Sir Herbert exclaims, "'Woods, older than his [Luxmore's] title by many a century—downright sacrilege! And the property being entailed, too—actual robbery of the heir!'" (378). Sir Herbert's indignation over Luxmore's actions points to both the monetary value of the estate ("robbery") as well as its symbolic value ("sacrilege"). Even Lord Ravenel, while not protesting his father's actions, still wants to take Maud and Walter to see the "magnificent firs that were being cut down in a wholesale massacre,

leaving the grand old hall as bare as a workhouse front" (443). The word "wholesale" denotes the large scale of the felling while also suggesting that Luxmore is treating the trees as mere goods to be sold as opposed to respecting the non-monetary values of their aesthetic and symbolic qualities. "Massacre," in suggesting an indiscriminate butchery rather than deliberate action, accordingly indicates that Luxmore is able to clear the trees because he does not see any value in them beyond how they can benefit him immediately as timber that he can sell. Comparing the hall to a workhouse suggests that the Luxmore estate has had the grandeur taken from it; in other words, the symbolism of the estate is quickly stripped away when the owner no longer fulfills his duties to those beneath him.

As Luxmore has no respect for the symbolism and the gravity of his position as a landholder, and Ravenel recognizes himself as being unfit to take on the role, they arrange to have the entail cut from the estate just before Luxmore's death, thus "making the whole property saleable, and available for the payment of creditors" (458). The estate is accordingly liquidated after Luxmore's death, and Lord Ravenel succeeds to what is now considered an "empty title," suggesting that attaining the rank of earl is meaningless if one has no family estate to back it. Likewise, the fact that the estate can be broken down and converted into currency for the payment of debts indicates that, within the novel, the estate has become little more than another saleable good in a capitalistic economy. Eric Hobsbawm has noted that as the success of industry produced a sector of newly wealthy men, entry into the landholding class was "relatively easy" in England if one had enough wealth, yet "the link between estate-ownership and ruling-class status remained" (*Revolution* 16). In other words, while the link between owning an estate and having ruling-class status originated when there had been a broad educational and economic divide between those born into noble families and those who were not,

the success of the industrialists and the concurrent decline of the agriculturally- and rent-based economy led to an upset of these established social values: instead of being born into the ruling class, which had been composed of the same esteemed family names (more or less) for generations, one could now simply purchase an estate and thus buy a place in the ruling class, regardless of one's origins or suitability for social or political leadership. While Hobsbawm's analysis implies that the newly-rich industrialists were immediately welcomed into the upper classes simply because they had money, mid-century novels like *John Halifax* and *Bleak House*, on the other hand, imply that there was a good amount of social anxiety over the idea that low-born men could buy their way into political and social prominence by purchasing the estate of a fallen noble family, especially in light of the fears about democracy brought about by the French Revolution.

As an institution, the estate, along with its feudalistic and paternalistic associations, is most often represented symbolically by the iconic manor house. However, the manor house is also representative of the destructive excesses of the nobility and, as many noble families were subsequently unable to maintain their estates, it can be read as signifying the troubling purchasability of power in the capitalistic economy as well. In order to disconnect the new merit-based paternalistic estate model from these negative associations, the mid-century novels strip the houses of independent symbolic meaning, instead presenting the houses as vessels whose meaning comes solely from the actions of their occupants. In the above discussion of *Bleak House,* I point out how the decay of Chesney Wold reflects the decay of the Dedlock family's relevance within the new social model, and while someone like Rouncewell, the successful ironmaster, could have purchased and restored the house as a way of indicating his place within the reorganized social hierarchy, it is instead essentially abandoned and left to rot.

Despite the political and socioeconomic value of old family estates and their contemporary purchasability, as Hobsbawm has pointed out, the house itself appears to have no independent worth within the novel; instead, it serves as no more than an uncared for relic of the past.

Similarly, *John Halifax* does not represent Beechwood Hall, the "great house of Enderly," as a symbol of John's financial success; rather, the home is taken on almost as a sacrifice so that John can be more accessible to the people who depend on him. As John and Ursula discuss the possibility of moving, he muses, "Whether now that our children are growing up, and our income is doubling and trebling year by year, we ought to widen our circle of usefulness [by taking Beechwood Hall], or close it up permanently within the quiet bound of little Longfield" (363). This perception of the manor house as an accessible and functional space contrasts with the more common representation of it as an isolated space that is used primarily for leisure activities, such as the house in *Mansfield Park* and Chesney Wold in *Bleak House*. The novel goes on to minimize the usual perks and reasons for taking on a manor house: when John's children express excitement over how the house is such a good investment, the opportunities for shooting and fishing they will have on the property, and the prospect of being visited as the family of "John Halifax, Esquire, of Beechwood Hall" (365), John gently points out that those are not among the reasons why he wants to take the house.

Instead, John observes that, as one who was once poor, he believes he is best equipped to help the poor, and he will be better able to do so as a landholder in a position of influence than as a man in modest circumstances. In fact, he points out that, as a large landholder, he will increase the family's responsibilities and concerns along with their income, and he anticipates no new pleasures that will be as sweet as what they are giving up by leaving their small house. John's son, Guy, responds by arguing that the family *should* enjoy the pleasures that owning an estate

affords, such as having fox hounds and throwing balls, and he sees it almost as a duty that the family should live within their means and not below them, especially, as everyone in town knows that they are the wealthiest family in Enderly (370). John, however, remains firm in his belief that the family should not alienate their less well-off neighbors by flaunting their own fortune, and they continue to live unostentatiously, with the exception of hosting a lavish coming-of-age party for Guy; however, along with the local nobility, the party guests include "both gentle and simple […], towns people and country people, dissenters and church folk, professional men and men of business" (378).

As the relative heterogeneity of the guest list suggests, John uses the extravagant party not to parade his wealth but rather as a means for both demonstrating and reinforcing the qualities that make him a suitable leader in the new feudalistic model, especially as he also gives a dinner for the very poor in the mill yard earlier the same day. The party takes place during the stock market crash of 1825, and the narrative emphasizes how the crash devastated "thousands, of all ranks and classes," leaving many hungry and desperate. In this context, John's act of serving dinner to so many people from different strata of the social hierarchy takes on a special significance; in short, the large manor house is important only in its capacity to literally and figuratively allow John to provide for more of the community than he could at Longfield. While the symbolism of the manor house could have been revised and reappropriated for the purposes of the novel, just as the feudalistic estate model is, it is instead rendered almost invisible in the narrative, which emphasizes its role as a means to achieving more good rather than as a sign of success.

The main reason John is unaffected while nearly everyone else suffers during the stock market crash is that, rather than speculating with his money, John instead invests it in buying

land: “He stopped, gazing with a sad abstraction down the sunshiny valley—most part of which was already his own property. For whatever capital he could spare from his business he never sunk in speculation, but took a patriarchal pleasure in investing it in land, chiefly for the benefit of his mills, and those concerned therein” (376). While the image of a large landholder gazing over his many acres of land usually evokes a impression of possession and domination, John’s approach is specifically characterized as one of “patriarchal pleasure,” indicating that his motives in buying up the countryside are grounded in protecting it (and its people) rather than exploiting it for his private gain or pleasure. Unlike Williams’s self-conscious observer, John does not gaze upon the land as a way of separating himself from the people who work and live upon it. In contrast to the sheltered walks on the estate grounds taken by the Bertrams in *Mansfield Park*, for instance, John does not limit his travels to areas where he need not look upon laborers and the signs of a working-class presence; instead, he tramps all over the countryside, and he particularly enjoys looking on those spots where land features (such as streams) are utilized in a way that preserves their beauty while also producing something beneficial to the community as a whole. Indeed, as I suggest earlier, it is the combination of walking the land—knowing it physically—and learning to appreciate it aesthetically that makes John into a strong paternalistic leader. One of the ways the novel conveys this idea is through the contrast between the way John enjoys scenic views versus the limited scale on which Phineas sees them, as I discuss earlier; nevertheless, Phineas is still able to enjoy the aesthetic qualities of the outdoors in his own way, and he relishes the beauty of things that are accessible to him, such as individual trees and small patches of grass.

The women in the novel, on the other hand, are never shown enjoying the aesthetic qualities of a scenic view. The entire Halifax family clearly enjoys being outdoors, but the

women seem to have a much more limited approach in that they never stop to admire a scenic view in its own right; rather, their enjoyment of the outdoors is simply a complement to some other activity. For example, Ursula seems to look at the land in a purely utilitarian manner. Early on in the novel, while she is still Miss March, Ursula takes frequent walks in the countryside, yet she always takes the same path along the Flat and has never been in the beech wood, which contains fern glades, woodbine tangles, and a gurgling stream (161). She is completely unaware of these features until John and Phineas point them out to her, which suggests that she takes her walks purely for running errands and getting exercise rather than simply enjoying the countryside and its scenery. Similarly, when Lord Luxmore reroutes the stream and causes it to dry up, forcing John to implement his steam engine, Phineas laments that it "ceased to be a pleasure" to walk along the stream anymore, and he goes on to list how the loss of the stream has affected his overall enjoyment of the area (332). Ursula, however, only remarks that, "It looks desolate, but we need not mind that now" (341).

Ursula's above remark reflects her perception of the stream as having a purely practical value in that she is able to dismiss the desolation of the empty bed once John's mill no longer depends on the power generated by the stream. While the experience of learning to see the aesthetic qualities of land is valuable for John as it serves as an allegory of sorts for how to be an effective social leader within his community, Ursula appreciates the components of a scenic view only for their practical applications, ostensibly because, as a woman living in the heavily patriarchal and paternal social model being proposed by the novel, she has no need for honing leadership skills of her own. Indeed, the narrative often emphasizes how Ursula and John generally agree, but when they do not, she is quick to defer to his judgment. She also takes pride in anchoring her own identity in his, such as when she declares that, despite her genteel pedigree,

she refuses to be visited as anything but the wife of John Halifax. Accordingly, her daughters interact with the outdoors in a similarly limited manner: Muriel is blind and thus cannot enjoy the outdoors visually at all, and while Maude likes taking long walks, she tends to use them as an excuse for visiting with others, such as Lord Ravenel, rather than enjoying the views she encounters in their own right. In short, the novel does not spend much time exploring how female characters perceive the land because it is irrelevant within a socioeconomic and political model that grounds power in male land ownership. In this model, women are properly attached to strong men who guide their families in a just, compassionate manner, and the better men extend out that familial leadership in order to guide the community a whole; good women listen to their husbands and fathers, who in turn listen to the men who are above them in the feudalistic social hierarchy.

The relationship between women and the land is slightly different in the model proposed by *Bleak House*. While the women in *John Halifax* often spend time outdoors, the women in *Bleak House* tend to remain indoors, but when they do go outside, the occasion is depicted as being significant and sometimes fatal. For example, Esther goes to stay at Mr. Boythorn's empty house in the country as she recovers from her debilitating illness, and she goes for daily walks outdoors not just to enjoy the scenery but also as a vital part of her therapy. Esther also meets the woman who turns out to be her mother, Lady Dedlock, during a walk in the woods that is thwarted by a sudden rainstorm. Later on, they are able to speak frankly about their relationship for the first and only time when Lady Dedlock finds Esther alone outdoors. Lady Dedlock is also known for taking moonlight walks, ostensibly for her headaches, and what is seen as her peculiar habit eventually leads to her being accused of murder, which then prompts her to flee from Chesney Wold to a miserable death at the gates of a graveyard. On a related note, Chesney

Wold is supposedly haunted by an earlier Lady Dedlock who died while taking her daily walk outdoors (with difficultly as she had been lamed), and her ghost is said to still pace on the terrace outside. As a final example Hortense (Lady Dedlock's maid) expresses anger at her mistress by stamping barefoot across a wet field in the rain.

In all of the above instances, the women go outdoors in order to develop or express themselves without the social, physical, and psychological constraints placed upon them when they are inside their houses. However, as the fates of the Lady Dedlocks suggest, the constraints of the home are also a type of security, and when a woman leaves them, she is freer yet more vulnerable, even if she remains on the grounds of the estate. In other words, the women in *Bleak House* seem to find the act of being outdoors freeing despite the fact that they remain on the private property that is a key component of the patriarchal, hierarchical structure from which they are ostensibly seeking respite. However, the novel also calls attention to the struggle for dominion over the land that is taking place between the old aristocracy and the rising middle class, and the feud between Sir Leicester and Mr. Boythorn about ownership of the path by Boythorn's house is thus suggestive of a larger problem of uncertainty regarding land ownership. While land in *John Halifax,* for instance, has clear boundaries of ownership despite the fact that so much is saleable (and thus available for purchase by John), ownership of property is variable and often indeterminate in *Bleak House*: Sir Leicester wants to extend the grounds of Chesney Wold as far as possible, but Boythorn insists that there is a definite boundary where that estate ends and his own property rights begin; there is an overall lack of ownership and thus responsibility for Tom-All-Alone's, which allows it to breed all kinds of pestilence that affects the areas surrounding it, effectively extending the slum into the larger community indefinitely; John Jarndyce erects a second Bleak House, suggesting both a transfer and an extension of the

scope of the original estate property; and of course, the novel hinges on the *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce* lawsuit, which illustrates the fundamentally imprecise and unfixed nature of property ownership.

Perhaps it is this state of flux and indeterminacy with regard to who owns the land that allows the novel's women to temporarily break free of their domestic roles in order to do things such as express anger, think introspectively, explore their relationships with each other, and heal themselves. For example, while taking her therapeutic walks during her stay at Mr. Boythorn's, Esther also takes pleasure in being able to enjoy the beauties of the outdoors. Unlike Ursula Halifax's purpose-driven walks, Esther actually stops to admire scenic views she encounters: "There was a favourite spot of mine in the park-woods of Chesney Wold, where a seat had been erected commanding a lovely view. The wood had been cleared and opened, to improve this point of sight; and the bright sunny landscape beyond, was so beautiful that I rested there at least once every day" (507). This is one of the few moments in the novel where a character stops to look at a scenic view, and it is the only moment involving an outlook that has been designed and molded solely for the pleasure of the spectator. In taking the position of the spectator, which was likely designed by and intended for a man, Esther is able to "command" a view and see spaces that stretch well beyond the boundaries of her domestic life. Significantly, it is at this moment that Lady Dedlock approaches her in order to confess that she is Esther's mother, and the two have a tender moment before social constraints force them apart and back into their respective roles as Sir Leicester's wife and John Jarndyce's ward. *Bleak House* proposes a revised feudalistic social model that posits merit rather than birth as a qualification for leadership, but this model nevertheless maintains the patriarchal component of the social hierarchy. However, the blurry lines of property ownership within the novel transform land into a liminal space in which women are temporarily freed from their place in the social hierarchy, and while such

breaks are presented as being beneficial, they are also dangerous in that, by leaving the confines of the patriarchal social hierarchy, they are also leaving its protections, as Lady Dedlock's death demonstrates. When Esther takes the position of the commanding spectator, she does not inhabit the role of the paternalistic patriarch, surveying his land and his people, as John Halifax does; rather, she uses the moment as an opportunity to physically inhabit the space at the top of the social hierarchy, thus temporarily releasing her from the duties and constraints of her actual place within it and allowing her to feel a bit of freedom. Rather than containing the countryside via the framing tools provided by the intentional setup of the scenic outlook, Esther instead allows the view to transport her from her own constraints via the scope and scale of what the image presents to her.

CHAPTER THREE

LANDSCAPE, THE PICTURESQUE, AND THE ENCROACHMENT OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES IN *THE CLEVER WOMAN OF THE FAMILY*

As capitalism and the decline of the aristocracy were transforming rural land into less of a birthright for the pedigreed and more of a purchasable product for those with wealth, some realist novels, such as those discussed in the previous chapter, posited a model of merit-based landholding that coupled the pleasures of owning land with paternalistic responsibility in order to address the problem of the displaced rural poor. This chapter will look at Charlotte Yonge's *The Clever Woman of the Family (*1865) as an example of a realist novel that is more ambivalent regarding the shift of land and the accompanying power to the upwardly mobile classes, and it instead attempts to find a solution that allows the gentry to adapt to the new socioeconomic circumstances and maintain its position**.** *Clever Woman* explores how the encroachment of the middle classes into the countryside served to complicate the politics of landscape, particularly through the popularity of the picturesque, as the newly moneyed were appropriating these modes of seeing as a means of gaining ownership of the countryside. I will argue that the novel presents the preservation and appreciation of private landscape as being a crucial means of battling the social and economic ills of capitalism, particularly as the picturesque framework allows for a feudalistic style of charity that seems necessary amid the exploitation of the poor that stems from the free market. However, the novel also recognizes that resistance to the forces of capitalism is futile, so the model it proposes for preserving the position of the landed gentry ends up mobilizing the picturesque as a conscious fantasy, in which the gentry enjoys the imagery as proof of their continued success without questioning whether the success is real.

In this novel, the sensitive landscape painter, Mauleverer, convinces Rachel Curtis, a pedigreed woman who resists traditional feminine roles and longs to do something useful with

her life, to embark with him on a charitable undertaking. Against the advice of her friends and family, Rachel partners with Maulever, but he ends up being a swindler, and the project ends in disaster for all involved. Rachel blames herself for being so headstrong, and she suffers a nervous breakdown. Although she has always been opposed to marriage, her weakened state leaves her unable to resist Alick Keith's proposal, and she only begins to recover from her breakdown once she is married. *The Clever Woman of the Family* might seem like an odd choice for this study in that the plotlines regarding land ownership and representations of the countryside are secondary to that of Rachel being tamed by her new husband. On the surface, the novel is a simple cautionary tale of a woman who has overstepped feminine boundaries and needs a man that can rein her in and guide her; however, a closer look reveals that the novel is much more complex both structurally and ideologically than it is generally given credit for, especially with regard to issues of land ownership and how land is perceived. Yonge's novels are largely dismissed as being conventional and didactic at the expense of having literary merit. This was true even during Yonge's own time, as fellow writers such as Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins rejected her as a serious novelist because they saw her as incapable of thinking beyond a narrow set of ideas (Shakinovsky 78). Recent criticism has tried to address this problem by, for instance, reading Yonge as exploiting literary convention in order to open space for individual reader interpretation and development of unconventional social models and characters; other scholars have argued that conventional novels are worthy of being studied regardless of whether they can be interpreted as being subversive or feminist.[19] While

[19] For instance, Susan E. Colón looks at how Yonge's novels can be read as parables that invite the reader to interpret them outside the bounds of conventional morality. Talia Schaffer has suggested that Yonge's novels should be read as having an ideological structure that, while consciously utilizing parallelism between familiar and foreign spaces, is also unconsciously undergirded by a paradigm that posits horticultural handicrafts as a metaphor for how foreign spaces might be Anglicized and tamed. June Sturrock has suggested that Yonge proposes church involvement not as a mere consolation for spinsters but rather as an interesting and necessary alternative to marriage that gives women the opportunity to do meaningful work. Catharine Vaughan-Pow calls attention to how Yonge's

enlightening different aspects of Yonge's work, these approaches do not adequately address the novel's overall ideological and structural complexity, particularly with regard to the treatment of land and landscape.

Clever Woman presents a unique perspective on how socioeconomic issues intersect with aesthetic ones, particularly with regard to scenic views of the countryside, and it is significant that, after briefly introducing the reader to Rachel and her sister, the novel opens with detailed information about the family's estate, including where it is located, what it is worth, and what its views are like:

> Of that home, Grace and Rachel were joint-heiresses, though it was owned by the mother for her life. It was an estate of farm and moorland, worth some three or four thousand a year, and the house was perched on a beautiful promontory, running out into the sea, and enclosing one side of a bay, where a small fishing-village had recently expanded into a quiet watering-place, esteemed by some for its remoteness from railways, and for the calm and simplicity that were yearly diminishing by its increasing popularity. It was the family fashion to look down from their crag at the new esplanade with pity and contempt for the ruined loneliness of the pebbly beach […]. (41)

Immediately, the novel is situated as being undergirded by a story about control over the land, and the endangered privileges of landholding by the nobility emerge as one of the main points of tension. As the only remaining country gentry in an area that is quickly becoming a popular middle-class resort, the Curtises have visual confirmation of how the socioeconomic status of those dependent on inherited wealth is shifting in favor of those who have become wealthy as a

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ostensibly domestic fiction nevertheless grapples with global sociopolitical issues and looks at Yonge's treatment colonialism as a paradox of nation-building.

result of industrial and market involvement. Mrs. Curtis attempts to keep her daughters away from the society of the resort as much as possible, and while the narrator allows for the possibility that "perhaps there was more of timidity and of caution than of pride in the mother's exclusiveness" (41), her marked displeasure over how the resort has ruined her view of the ocean indicates that she resents the new residents largely for inhabiting land and ruining a scenic view that used to belong to her family.

The diction of the above passage accordingly reflects the change in the demographics of the countryside by foregrounding the gap between the seclusion that Mrs. Curtis perceives as being a right of her station, and the desire of the middle classes, represented by the resort and its visitors, to enjoy the traditionally upper-class leisure activities and pleasures that they perceive as being part of what they have earned in the new economy. The house is described as being "perched" on a promontory, indicating that it sits above the rest of the town and is in a position of visual dominance, and the Curtis land "enclos[es] one side of a bay," which brings to mind the enclosure movement and how it placed the privilege of rural land ownership completely into the hands of the aristocracy. As the highest point in town, the house allows the family to literally look down on those who are socially beneath them. This language suggests that the family, while enjoying visual and social dominance over the town, do not actually engage with the townspeople in any significant way, treating them instead as part of their view. Yet "perched," in evoking a temporary resting place, also implies that the manor house and what it signifies are in a somewhat precarious position with regard to their permanence.

The description also points out that the Homestead is an "estate of farm and moorland," which suggests a self-sufficient, if contradictory, feudal isolation by characterizing the estate as a property dedicated to traditional agriculture ("farm") while also being largely uncultivated and

undeveloped ("moorland"). By failing to elaborate on the type and scope of the farming, the narrative is able to gesture toward the sentimental idea of an old-fashioned feudal relationship between the family and the townspeople without calling attention to specific economic aspects, such as what labor is performed and by whom, as this would undermine Mrs. Curtis's fantasy of isolation from her social inferiors. This reading is supported by Raymond Williams's critique of grand manor houses, discussed in Chapter 1, that had grounds designed to create an illusion of "a rural landscape emptied of rural labour and of labourers; a sylvan and watery prospect […] from which the facts of production had been erased […]" (125). However, while Williams refers to the wealthy wanting to block from sight the exploited people upon whom their wealth was built, *Clever Woman* demonstrates how this dynamic has shifted by the mid-nineteenth century: rather than wanting to hide from view an exploited population in order to create the illusion of a self-sustaining landed nobility, thus allowing the nobility to treat both open and private land as belonging solely to them with no sense of obligation to the lower classes, Mrs. Curtis wants to block from sight the trappings of the population that is encroaching upon her territory, both socioeconomically and with regard to land ownership, as a means of maintaining the illusion that she can sustain her way of life without either bending to capitalism or acknowledging an obligation to share the family lands.

The estate is presented in a similar manner: by characterizing the estate with the inexact value of "worth some three or four thousand a year," the narrative communicates the general financial position of the Curtises without making it appear that they are overly concerned with it, which is befitting of the nobility in that it seems to separate them from the money-making middle classes. Indeed, the very name of the estate—"the Homestead"—suggests that it is perceived by the family as being the only possible estate of significance in the area, negating the prospect that

other families might rise to importance and erect their own estates. To further break down the description of the estate, it is noteworthy that it consists largely of a run-on sentence with a number of clauses, which serve to obfuscate what exactly is being described: "It was an estate of farm and moorland, worth some three or four thousand a year, and the house was perched on a beautiful promontory, running out into the sea, and enclosing one side of a bay, where a small fishing-village had recently expanded into a quiet watering-place, esteemed by some for its remoteness from railways, and for the calm and simplicity that were yearly diminished by its increasing popularity." This description could have been easily divided into three shorter, clearer sentences that would have blended with the novel's overall syntax style, but the sheer length of the run-on serves to mimic the sweeping scale of the family's sense of their position as the area nobility. The seemingly unending string of clauses, which describes first the estate and the manor house, then the promontory and its relationship to the sea, then finally the fishing village turned watering-place, both overwhelm the reader with information and blur the distinctions between what is family property and what is part of the view from the family property, suggesting that the family perceives all of it as belonging to them.

However, this blurring of distinctions also confirms Mrs. Curtis's concerns about the encroachment of the middle classes: their visibility has ruined the family's fantasy of complete dominion over the area, which had been symbolized by the undisturbed view that they used to enjoy. Whereas the family used to have a view of a quaint fishing village, they now see the village being commercialized into an increasingly popular vacation spot for the middle classes. The watering place does not have the same visual appeal as the old village did, especially as the sight of the village served to reinforce the family's sense of their social position, whereas the resort signifies a challenge to it. Accordingly, the next sentence in the passage reads, "It was the

family fashion to look down from their crag at the new esplanade with pity and contempt for the ruined loneliness of the pebbly beach […]." "*Their* crag" reinforces how the family's sense of social and visual ownership over the area conflicts with the middle classes' desire to begin exerting ownership themselves, which is symbolized by the "new esplanade." The esplanade acts both as a practical means of making the pleasures of the beach accessible to the new population and as further visual evidence of the new population's existence, and the Curtises look down on the walkway both figuratively ("with pity and contempt") and literally. The description goes on to note that the family mourns the beach's "ruined loneliness"; "ruin" and "lonely" are both words associated with the picturesque aesthetic and are typically suggestive of structures that are decayed and no longer in use. Yet here they are being used ironically to describe the visual effect of a new walkway, indicative of development of the land and extended common access to the beauties of the beach. Because the picturesque was considered a middle class movement, the contrast between diction, in evoking the picturesque, and the subject of the new walkway calls attention to how the middle classes have spoiled certain aesthetic pleasures by commercializing them and making them accessible to large populations.

The passage also suggests that Mrs. Curtis wants to preserve the layout and appearance of the land as a means of sustaining the visual illusion of isolation from her social inferiors—an illusion in which her land and her way of life are not being encroached upon by the middle classes and she does not have a responsibility to support the local poor. Her attempt to sustain this illusion of socioeconomic isolation is evidenced by her refusal to allow young ladies from the resort to walk upon her land and sketch her views. When Mauleverer apologizes to Mrs. Curtis for having inadvertently trespassed on her land, the narrator remarks,

> These incursions of the season visitors were so great a grievance at the Homestead that Mrs. Curtis highly approved his forbearance, whilst she was pleased with his tribute to her scenery, which he evidently admired with an artistic eye. Love of sketching had brought him to Avonmouth; and before he took leave, Mrs. Curtis had accorded him permission to draw in her little peninsula for which many a young lady below was sighing and murmuring. (208)

Mrs. Curtis controls access to her grounds as a means of enforcing her sense of class privilege, especially as the passage reiterates that it is the young ladies who are "below" Mrs. Curtis (both geographically and socially) that are being denied permission to sketch there. Phrases like "her scenery" and "her little peninsula" emphasize Mrs. Curtis's sense of ownership over not only the land she owns, but also the views visible from her property. Similarly, the spot the artist has chosen to sketch is called Spinster's Needles, which is a view of "two sharp points of red rock that stood out in the sea at the end of the peninsula, and were especially appropriated by Rachel and Grace" (210). "Appropriated" is an interesting word choice in that it conveys that the Curtis family perceives the view as being their private property while also implying that they have *taken* it and made it their own, as opposed to owning it legitimately. Thus the passage demonstrates the family's sense of ownership over the views while also subtly undercutting their ability to make such a claim: even if the Curtis family refuses to acknowledge the middle classes' encroachment onto their land and their privileges, the novel is more clear-sighted about the inevitability of change.

When the Curtises find out Mauleverer is not a born gentleman but is an artist, they give him special privileges that they explicitly would not have accorded another working- or middle-class stranger. In presenting Mauleverer as a landscape painter, the novel calls attention to both

his unique social position and the fact that this position is what grants him access to the Curtis family and their land. As Julie Codell argues in her study of biographical writings on Victorian artists, the popular image of the Victorian artist cast him or her as being thoroughly British, hardworking, morally upright, and a model of "success, decorum, [and] proper manliness or femininity"; this is in contrast to the late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century perception of the artist as a morally-questionable charity case who needed to be patronized and monitored by the aristocracy (3, 8). Successful artists were treated as public figures on par intellectually and morally with professional writers, scientists, and statesmen, and the quality of one's artwork was strongly associated with the quality of one's moral fiber, making artists seem like safe company (2, 8). Consequently, artists had a high degree of social mobility, even among the upper classes, regardless of their pedigree. This mobility is made evident in the novel as Mrs. Curtis permits Mauleverer, who is a stranger, to sketch on her grounds despite the fact that he had been found trespassing on her land.

Along with the artist's unique social position, the traditional relationship between patrons and artists allows Mrs. Curtis to deny the middle-class young ladies the privilege of sketching on her grounds while giving it to Mauleverer without contradicting her social values. Yet despite the tradition of commissioning a painter to produce pictures of one's estate grounds, Mrs. Curtis is reluctant to have copies made of her private views. She allows Mauleverer to sketch on her grounds as a reward for helping to rescue a dog, and she very much admires the first drawing he makes, but she is shocked when he asks for permission to sell the pictures as doing so "hardly agreed with her exclusive notions of privacy" (222). Once Mauleverer sees how taken aback she is, he apologizes and explains that he enjoys using the proceeds of his picture sales in order to help the poor, in the small way in which he is able. Mrs. Curtis immediately retracts her

disapproval and remarks, “If it is for a charity, I am sure some of our friends would be very glad to take some sketches of our scenery; they have been begging me this long time to have it photographed” (223). She goes on to tell Rachel, “I should like to have that drawing myself, it would please your aunt so much, if we sent it to her” (223). Her discomfort with the idea of selling depictions of her private views is mitigated only by the knowledge that such pictures will be purchased by her and not via the open market, that they will be given to her intimates and not distributed to strangers, and that the proceeds will go to charity and not to enrich the artist himself.

The next day, Mauleverer leaves the finished watercolor painting at the Curtis’ door, “handsomely mounted” and “looking so grand and meritorious that poor Mrs. Curtis became much troubled in mind whether its proper price might not be five or ten guineas, instead of the one for which she had mentally bargained” (223). She also worries that Mauleverer will now expect her to buy an entire series of drawings as he is already out making another sketch when she finds the first picture. When Rachel attempts to resolve the issue by asking him outright how much the drawing is worth, she is “met with a profession of ignorance of its value, and of readiness to be contented with whatever might be conferred upon his project” (223). In the end, the narrative does not disclose how much Mauleverer is paid for the painting, or whether he is paid at all, as Rachel gets so wrapped up in discussing the school project with him that she never returns to the topic.

This passage brings up two important aspects of the shift in the socioeconomic power dynamic as it relates to landscape paintings. First, the passage calls attention to how Mrs. Curtis, as the upper-class patron, no longer has firm control over the content, audience, or price of what the artist produces because the art market now has more influence than she does. While

Mauleverer acts as if Mrs. Curtis is in control of what he does with the painting, he easily manipulates her into allowing him to sell it, and while he professes that he will allow her to set the price for the picture, her concerns over how much she will have to pay demonstrate that the market is really in control of the price: Mrs. Curtis knows that she must pay Mauleverer close to what he could get by selling the painting publicly if she is to prevent him from distributing the representations of her private views to strangers. Furthermore, her worries about possibly being obligated to purchase a series of drawings indicate that Mauleverer is ultimately in control of the content of what he paints with regard to the subject and the quantity of images, and if she wants to keep her views private, she must continue to purchase whatever he produces, or she risks the images going to the market for public consumption. With this passage, the novel draws attention to the relatively new position of the artist as being commercially driven. As Codell points out, debates about the role of the market in the production of artwork emerged in the eighteenth century, and there was an "entrenched, residual hostility to commercial demands in art production" during that time (10-11). It was not until the Victorian period that artists were able to openly participate in the market without being seen as charlatans. Codell attributes this shift in cultural attitudes to contemporary growth in the art public, which was brought about by the legal, social, and economic changes that made distinguished art and literature more accessible to the middle and working classes, and the drive for national acculturation through canonical art and literature, fueled by the prevalent Whig belief that "every person had the capacity for aesthetic appreciation or a potential for appreciation that could be educated" (7). Even those who opposed the "contamination" of art by commercial interests, such as Ruskin, nevertheless acknowledged the Victorian artist's "complex and contradictory place in capitalism" (11).

Second, the passage calls attention to how paintings and other landscape depictions can affect the value, interpretation, and even ownership of the land. Mrs. Curtis's scruples about commissioning any representations of her views, including via photograph, despite being "begged" by her friends, suggests that she is uncomfortable with the idea of disseminating such images. Her discomfort brings to mind Nancy Armstrong's discussion of the strength of the "copy" as a semiotic substitute during this period. Regarding the reproducibility and wide dissemination of visual representations, and particularly representations of the countryside, Armstrong argues,

> […] to those early Victorians who first turned to the literature of the picturesque for a style of home and garden that would properly reflect their newly won prosperity [i.e., the middle classes], the countryside provided a model that could be reproduced in part and on a smaller scale to serve as a refuge from one's business in the city. In the hands of photographers […], the substitution of the visual representation for the object represented was complete, and the countryside served as raw material for photographs that consumers could enjoy at exhibitions, in galleries, and even in the comfort of their own homes (33).

Armstrong's point indicates that if Mrs. Curtis allows paintings or photographs to be taken of her estate and her private views, she risks having the aesthetic charms of her property being transformed into something purchasable by the middle classes, thus stripping the property of the exclusivity that she is trying to maintain. Likewise, participating in the art market, even indirectly, would go against Mrs. Curtis's values as the enterprise is linked with capitalism and the loss of her class's former way of life.

While Mrs. Curtis is pleased with Mauleverer's admiration of her views because he is an artist, she denies access to the middle-class young ladies, who are likely sketching as part of the picturesque trend, when they express the same kind of admiration. She refers to their trespassing as an "incursion," suggesting that Mrs. Curtis sees the young ladies not only as trespassers but as enemies poised to conquer her land. In allowing the artist access to her grounds in order to sketch them, Mrs. Curtis is participating in the aristocratic tradition of commissioning an artist to paint pictures of the family estate, but if she allows the middle-class young ladies to sketch as a leisurely pastime, she will relinquish yet another privilege of her class. Moreover, by allowing the women to sketch on her land, she would be permitting them take on the role of spectators of privileged, private, aristocratic landscape views—views in which the young women currently serve as ornamental objects, if vexing and unappealing ones. Given the contemporary historical context of what has been characterized as an "aesthetic democracy" (Dowling xiii), which refers to the arts movement that strove to make art more accessible to a wider public, the novel's emphasis on Mrs. Curtis's protectiveness toward her scenic views is especially significant because it suggests she wants to reserve not just land but *landscape* as a birthright, as something that cannot be acquired on the market. If she allowed the young women to walk upon her grounds and sketch her landscapes, Mrs. Curtis would thus be supporting a "democratization" of ownership of the countryside, essentially promoting the middle-class women to social equals, if not allowing them to take over effective ownership of the countryside outright. Furthermore, by preventing the young women from sketching on her land, Mrs. Curtis reinforces the role of women as consumers rather than producers of landscape: while it is acceptable for a male artist to draw landscapes on her land, it would be deemed socially inappropriate for her to allow a female artist the same privilege.

The conflict over land is not limited to preventing the middle classes from encroaching on the privileges of the landed nobility, though; like other mid-century realist novels, *Clever Woman* also looks at the moral concerns regarding reserving land for purposes of private aesthetic enjoyment when it could be used to help the local poor in some way. The poor in this novel are less visible than the rioting workers in other realist novels, however, and that is the crux of the problem. The novel focuses its attention on the plight of child lace-makers who, due to an oversupplied lace market, work for very little money in miserable conditions. At Mrs. Kelland's establishment, the children work for ten hours a day in what is described as a "black-hole under the stairs," with just enough space for them to sit (100-1). The children's labor is largely unseen, taking place within one of the quaint cottages in the village, and this concealment allows the trade to be romanticized in terms of the picturesque aesthetic and as part of the "conventional pastoral imagery" that John Barrell has identified as what artists and their audiences "wished to believe was the actuality of rural life" (*Dark Side* 23). Lace-making is thus popularly perceived by the townspeople as a charming remnant of a simpler way of life, especially as the lace is handmade when so many goods are mass produced by machines and, as the town continues to grow as a middle-class vacation area, very little remains of the quaint fishing village that people remember. Rachel sees firsthand how the sentimentalization of lace-making creates consequences for the child workers in that it disseminates a fantasy version of rural poverty and excuses those in better circumstances from attempting to remedy the situation: she calls this "the selfishness of willfully sentimental illusions" (322). She also sees how such "willfully sentimental illusions" further serve the interests of the moneyed by allowing them to buy cheap lace without qualms: as the narrator points out, "People who did not look into the circumstances of their neighbours thought lace furnished a good trade, and by no means wished

to enhance its price" (231-2). Rachel is one of the few people concerned about the welfare of the girls, particularly as they are prevented from attending school, and she wants to educate them and help them find better ways of making a living. She understands that there is nothing charming or picturesque about the girls' existence, and she longs for a traditional feudalistic social model[20] in which she, as part of the landed gentry, can provide relief in the form of good employment, education, and leadership to the local poor, but because the lace-makers are employed in a capitalistic enterprise over which she has no control, all Rachel can do is read to them while they work.

One way Rachel could help the girls would be to fund apprenticeships in better paying trades, but she is thwarted by her mother's refusal to develop the family lands for more money. Mrs. Curtis owns the "Burnaby Bargain," a small piece of land that a Curtis ancestor placed in trust over two hundred years earlier for the purpose of apprenticing poor children to a trade. Although the value of the land has risen considerably since the trust was established, the rent collected has remained the same, resulting in artificially low proceeds that can no longer cover the tuition required by expert tradespeople. The only apprenticeship that has low enough fees for the trust is lace-making, so the family's "charitable work" is actually perpetuating the miserable circumstances that it seeks to relieve. Rachel remarks that the Burnaby agreement "belongs to a worn-out state of things" (216), which gestures to how she believes that the traditional feudalistic model no longer works due to the economic changes brought about by capitalism and the free market. Indeed, Rachel laments how "overwork, low prices, and middle-men" have turned lace-making into ill-paying work despite the skill required to produce it, and she declares, "The only means that seems to me likely to mitigate the evil […] would be to commence an establishment

[20] Of course, Rachel's vision of an idealized feudalistic relationship between the landed gentry and the poor is a fantasy as well, as I will discuss later.

where some fresh trades might be taught, so as to lessen the glut of the market, and to remove the workers that are forced to undersell one another, and thus oblige the buyers to give a fairly remunerative price" (224). Rachel's heavy and uncharacteristic use of economic terminology in this passage purposely resists the idea of lace-making as a remnant of a pastoral, romanticized past while also placing blame primarily on the market for the children's misery.

Despite her wish to undo the evils of the market, Rachel believes that developing the Burnaby land and raising its rent to make it consistent with current market values would better carry out her ancestor's intentions in placing the land in trust. The increased rent would fund a good education for the apprenticed children, yet the land sits untouched with rents well below market value only because, as Rachel puts it, "it would break my mother's heart to see it built on" (269). Rachel goes on to remark, "You know how well it [the Burnaby land] looks from the garden-seat, but it always grieves me when people admire it, for I feel as if it were thrown away" (269). Because the undeveloped Burnaby land is best viewed from the specific position of the Curtis' garden bench, the passage suggests that Rachel is describing a landscape, even though she does not identify it as such. Accordingly, the Burnaby view is a class privilege—one must have permission to access the Curtis' property and the leisure to linger on a garden seat in order to enjoy it—and it features land that has been left undeveloped for aesthetic purposes, which serves to represent and reinforce the status of the family, especially in an area where housing shortages have made land particularly valuable. The Burnaby land thus encapsulates the tension between the landed gentry's desire to preserve certain lands for their private aesthetic enjoyment in the form of landscape views, particularly amid increased pressure to share such privileges with the upwardly mobile middle classes, and their moral obligation to assist the local poor.

Despite her mother's fondness for the Burnaby land and what it represents about the family's social position, Rachel sees it only as waste, as something "thrown away," because she believes such aesthetic pleasures are an unnecessary indulgence, particularly when they come at the expense of aid for the poor. For her, the landscape view serves as a symbol of suffering rather than as a source of pleasure, and she looks at other types of scenic views in these terms as well. When she remarks that she longs to travel, for example, she specifies that she wishes to go to Scotland only for the purpose of better understanding an educational model practiced there, and the only other places she would like to visit are "the Grand Reformatory for the Destitute in Holland, and the Hospital for Cretins in Switzerland" (164). Alick, her future husband, teases her by responding, "Scotch pedants, Dutch thieves, Swiss *goitres*—I will bear your tastes in mind" (164). The joke is that Rachel has no "taste," per say: while others travel to such locations specifically to enjoy landscape, she rejects aesthetic pleasure in favor of visiting sites that cater to marginalized and poor populations, suggesting that the two activities are mutually exclusive. For Rachel, one can be interested either in scenic views or in aiding needy populations because she sees the aesthetic not only as a waste of resources but also as a symbol of how the poor suffer the sake of pleasures for the moneyed.

When Rachel gets the opportunity to open a charitable school in partnership with the landscape painter Mauleverer, whom she believes to be a fellow philanthropist, she is thrilled that she will finally be able to offer support to the lace-making girls in the paternalistic style she desires. The plan is to enroll the girls in the new school and apprentice them to learn woodcutting, a practical skill that will allow them to earn a living wage, while also giving them an education appropriate for their station. After some fundraising and personal sacrifices, Rachel opens the school and apprentices three former lace-makers, who will be supervised by a matron

and taught by Mauleverer. The school's location in another town prevents Rachel from overseeing the students herself, so after a few weeks, Mauleverer brings her a pair of woodcuts as a sample of the learning and work being done by the girls. Because Rachel is invested in combating the picturesque imagery that depicts lace-making as a charming occupation, she is especially pleased that the woodcuts feature an exposé of lace-making conditions, and she is thrilled to show them off to her skeptical friends as proof of the good work being done at the school:

> They [the woodcuts] were entitled "The free maids that weave their thread with bones," and one, called the "Ideal," represented a latticed cottage window, with roses, honeysuckle, cats, beehives, and all conventional rural delight, around a pretty maiden singing at her lace pillow; while the other, yclept the "Real," showed a den of thin, wizened, half-starved girls, cramped over their cushions in a lace-school. The design was Mr. Mauleverer's, the execution the children's […]. (322)

The narrator notes that, upon seeing the woodcuts, Fanny Temple gives "much admiration, declaring that no one ought to wear lace again without being sure that no one was tortured in making it, and that when she ordered her new black lace shawl of Mrs. Kelland, it should be on condition that the poor girls were not kept so very hard at work" (322-3). This line confirms that Fanny had hitherto purchased lace without knowing how it was produced, and while her plan to spare the workers seems naïve, it also suggests that the imagery of the "Ideal" woodcut is familiar enough to her that it does not seem ridiculous or overly exaggerated. The pervasive picturesque fantasy of the happy laborer has allowed Fanny, an otherwise kind-hearted woman, to purchase lace and thus support the system of exploitation of impoverished children without

guilt (322). Fanny's shock at seeing the "Real" imagery contrasted against the "Ideal" demonstrates that she now believes the "Real" image to be the more accurate one, and so the woodcuts are doing exactly what Rachel had hoped they would do: they undermine the picturesque imagery that romanticizes lace-making while also representing the good she has done by rescuing the girls from the capitalist lace system and enrolling them in her paternalistic school project.

It is ironic, then, that the woodcuts end up being part of the picturesque imagery that they appear to be combating. While Fanny, who is known to be gullible, believes in the authenticity of the woodcuts, the rest of Rachel's friends look at them skeptically because they recognize the imagery as being part of the popular picturesque aesthetic with which they are all familiar. When Alick asks Rachel to rub water on the "Ideal" woodcut in order to test its authenticity, the image begins to dissolve and peel away, revealing that the engravings are counterfeit and that the images have been cut from a popular news magazine. The discovery that the woodcuts are fake is a turning point for Rachel as she begins to understand that she has been fooled by the same picturesque imagery that she condemns others for indulging—the "willfully sentimental illusions" that allow the poor to be exploited. While she had thought that the woodcuts were exposing the popular fallacy of the happy rural laborer, they were actually indulging her own version of this fantasy: that of an idealized feudal order in which the ills of capitalism are vanquished by a return to paternalistic support of the poor**.** As Raymond Williams points out in *The Country and the City*, the idea of such a happy relationship having ever existed between the landed gentry and the rural poor is part of a cultural tendency to idealize the past, particularly the pre-capitalist past, as a more natural or moral economy, and he argues that historical versions of this type of feudalism were actually "as hard and as brutal as anything later experienced" in

capitalist economies (37). In light of Williams's observations, it is unsurprising that Rachel ends up discovering that her school is actually a facade for an even crueler lace-making establishment than Mrs. Kelland's: the girls confess that they are routinely starved and beaten for not producing enough lace, and Mauleverer keeps all the school's wealth and comforts for himself.

Even though the images on the woodcuts were cut from a popular magazine, making them a direct product of the popularized picturesque aesthetic, Rachel is unable to recognize them as such due to her disinterest in landscape and scenic views. Because rural landscapes, such as the celebrated view of the Burnaby land, are admired for their picturesque qualities, those who enjoy looking at them are undoubtedly familiar with the picturesque aesthetic and its popular imagery, even if only to lament how the commercial dissemination of such imagery has ruined the picturesque by making it banal. Rachel dismisses the enjoyment of landscape and the picturesque as being a waste of resources and a cause of suffering for the poor, but she does so without ever having studied what she condemns. Thus while she is aware of how the picturesque aesthetic—what she calls "willfully sentimental illusions"—contributes to the exploitation of the lace-makers, she is unfamiliar with its attendant imagery, so when she sees it on the woodcuts, she fails to recognize the images as conventional, commercialized art. Accordingly, when Colonel Keith points out that the images on the woodcuts look familiar, Rachel, believing the artwork to be a genuine representation of the work being done by the girls, insists that they must be "a satire on conventional pictures" because she is too unfamiliar with the genre to recognize the images as complying with the conventions rather than resisting them (323). It is not until the "Ideal" image literally dissolves before her eyes that Rachel begins to realize she has been taken in by the very picturesque imagery that she has been working to combat. The result of this sudden awakening for Rachel is a complete loss of faith in her own judgment.

In this light, the novel is not telling the conventional story of an out-of-control woman who must be broken and tamed by marriage, as it is most often read; rather, it is telling a story of a woman who is victimized because she does not know how to interpret the picturesque aesthetic. The novel demonstrates how this process occurs through her interactions with Mauleverer. Despite featuring an artist character and concerning itself so heavily with aesthetic matters, *Clever Woman* uses relatively little painterly diction and imagery in its depictions of the countryside, and it does not discuss works of art or styles of landscape painting directly. In *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Alison Byerly describes the prominent place that is held by paintings in the realist novel, and she goes so far as to suggest that a defining characteristic of the genre is allusion to and discussion of artwork (2). Byerly points out that realist novels demonstrate an apparent distrust of art that is rooted in how it can be used to deceive, yet they also consciously use painterly diction in order to evoke "a non-literary mode of description and representation" (3). Byerly suggests that the most common purpose of this non-literary mode in realist novels is to call attention to a particular passage and perhaps showcase the writer's aesthetic taste, yet such moments also "tend to efface the narrative voice" by separating the passage from the sphere of realism via the shift to language that is more consciously refined and affected, which in turn serves to confirm the realism of the rest of the narrative by comparison (3-4).

By applying Byerly's analysis to *Clever Woman*, however, it becomes clear that the novel's sparse use of the "non-literary mode" serves a different purpose overall: rather than consciously using painterly diction and imagery as a means of either highlighting key passages or contrasting with the plainer language of the less-refined, more "realistic" parts of the narrative, the novel instead tends to weave them into the narrator's standard manner of

storytelling, causing such moments to blend into the general narrative. Thus instead of interrupting the narrative and effacing the narrative voice, the diction melds with the narrative voice and overtakes it in way that makes it seem as though the language is being generated by the character. A passage that illustrates this is when Rachel walks with Mauleverer (who is at this time still just "the stranger") after they rescue the dog. The narrator makes the reader privy to Rachel's thought process as she sizes up Mauleverer: "Still the gentleman himself was far from objectionable, in appearance or manner; his air was that of an educated man, his dress that of a clergyman at large, his face keen. Rachel remembered to have met him once or twice in the town within the last few days, and wondered if he could be a person who had called in at the lace school […]" (207). Surmising that he might be a fellow philanthropist, she decides that, even though he is "one of the casual visitors, against whom her mother had such a prejudice" (206), she is pleased nevertheless that the incident with the dog had procured her an introduction to him:

> So she [Rachel] thawed a little, and did not leave all the civility to Miss Keith, but graciously responded to the stranger's admiration of the views, the exquisite framings of the summer sea and sky made by tree, rock, and rising ground, and the walks so well laid out on the little headland, now on smooth turf, now bordering slopes wild with fern and mountain ash, now amid luxuriant exotic shrubs that attested the mildness of Avonmouth winters. (207).

In the preceding paragraph, the narrator describes Rachel's thought process while she evaluates Mauleverer. In the above quote, the narrator is still speaking through Rachel's perspective, but now the descriptive details are clearly Mauleverer's: the flowery language of the passage does not correspond with Rachel's usual utilitarian outlook, and she does not use such terminology or

notice such details at other times. Also, the surroundings are described with a distinctly painterly eye befitting a landscape artist, especially given that the description begins with a purposeful framing of the sea and sky.

The pairing of the painterly diction with Rachel's perspective is odd because the syntax makes it seem as though Rachel is the one who is noticing and responding to the imagery rather than simply listening to Mauleverer's praise of it. In other words, the narrative appears to be purposely blurring Mauleverer's perspective with that of Rachel, particularly given that the details could have been attributed to Mauleverer with a simple clarification, such as "*He pointed out* the exquisite framings […]," or perhaps by presenting the passage as a dialogue between the two. The ambiguity of the perspective in this passage illustrates how easily she accepts his interpretation of the view as her own because she does not realize she is performing an interpretation—she believes she is seeing the view through her own eyes when her perspective is actually being controlled by Mauleverer. While Mauleverer has not yet painted a representation of the view, he has nevertheless created a landscape by guiding Rachel to look at the view according to his own way of seeing it. The fact that Rachel does not separate her own thoughts on the view from Mauleverer's interpretation suggests that she has unconsciously assimilated to his way of seeing it, even down to the exact moments in which he reveals a given detail, which is emphasized by the repeated use of the deictic "now": "[…] the walks so well laid out on the little headland, now on smooth turf, now bordering slopes wild with fern and mountain ash, now amid luxuriant exotic shrubs […]." So while Rachel is looking at a visually unmediated view—meaning she is looking at the land itself, and not a painting or a photograph of it—her perception is nevertheless affected by the way Mauleverer presents it to her. She might think she is looking at the view objectively and evaluating it according to her own ideas and understanding, but the

diction of the passage shows that Rachel's perception of it is still being molded by Mauleverer, who represents a commercial interest, and it is happening without her knowledge. For Rachel, this lack of understanding of how her perceptions are being swayed ultimately leads to the breakdown of her faith in her own judgment when she realizes how the images on the woodcuts were able to fool her.

This moment brings to mind Ruskin's discussion of seeing versus knowing in Volume I of *Modern Painters*: Ruskin writes, "For a man may receive impression after impression, […] and yet, if he take no care to reason upon those impressions, and trace them to their sources, he may remain totally ignorant of the facts that produced them […]: (56). These principles coincide with what Ruskin argues throughout his highly influential *Modern Painters*, which was published just a few years prior to *Clever Woman*, but *Clever Woman* presents an alternative model for how it envisions the responsibilities of the artist versus those of the audience. Ruskin sees a good artist as being inherently more perceptive and noble than his audience, and thus the artist must serve as an aesthetic and moral guide to the spectator. Ruskin claims that great landscape painters must do more than simply provide a faithful representation of natural objects in order to create a truthful image: they must also "guide the spectator's mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and […] inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were regarded by the artist himself" (Vol. I, 47). Ruskin does admit that the spectator must do some legwork in order to appreciate high art—ordinary powers of observation and intelligence can be made more acute through cultivation, he writes (53)—but it is the artist's responsibility to produce truthful paintings of appropriate subjects that, in turn, will guide the spectator to a higher plane of thought and understanding.

Ruskin goes on to suggest that great artists, rather than leaving the less-enlightened audience to its own devices, will use a painting to "talk to" the audience and showcase the artist's own keener vision and nobler intelligence, thus allowing the audience to briefly see through more educated eyes and leading them to new sensations and ideas (48). This is not the same as using landscape painting as a vehicle for the glorification of oneself, which Ruskin characterizes as bad art, or the "painter's taking upon him to modify God's works at his pleasure, casting the shadow of himself on all he sees" (xxvi). The difference is that, whereas the bad artist depicts natural objects in a way intended to show off his artistic talents and garner admiration for himself, the good artist, on the other hand, uses his paintings to help the spectator appreciate God's creations from a fresh and more enlightened perspective. In Ruskin's mind, it is in this way that good art, in being mediated by the artist, is more "truthful" than art that merely imitates a given view or object, however perfectly, as he counts such representations as being little better than outright deceptions (20).

Looking at Ruskin's thoughts on the representational responsibilities of the artist versus the interpretive responsibilities of the audience highlights just how different *Clever Woman*'s approach is to the issue. Ruskin believes that a representation can communicate a particular and predictable type of truth to the spectator, and that the responsibility for enlightening the audience lies with the artist: he appeals directly to artists to choose their subject matter and methods of depiction carefully, and for him, bad artists are those who depict subjects that glorify themselves rather than God. *Clever Woman*, on the other hand, focuses more on the responsibility of the spectator to properly interpret an image, especially since so many artists are motivated by something other than a desire to communicate a truth in the representations they produce. The fact that the novel's chief artist-figure is a crook does not necessarily impugn all artists, but it

does call attention to their potential to be manipulative and to the fact that, due to the new art market, they are often motivated by something other than a desire to represent the truth. Throughout the novel, Mauleverer produces pieces of representative art that could arguably meet Ruskin's criteria for truthful depictions: when he admires the view with Rachel, for instance, his observations merge with her own stream of thought in a way that is indicative of Ruskin's description of the artist as guide. Nevertheless, rather than using his power to reveal a moral truth, Mauleverer instead abuses not only the contemporary trust placed in artists but also his artistic abilities of depiction in order to cheat others into giving him money.

In contrast to Ruskin, *Clever Woman* places the responsibility of interpretation on the spectator rather than upon the artist. Regardless of how truthful or unmediated an artistic representation appears to be, it still aestheticizes the subject being depicted by the very act of depicting it, and since every depiction is mediated by an artist who wants to appeal to a given audience, the novel posits that artistic representations cannot be trusted as reliable sources of information, at least in the sense for which Ruskin argues. Artistic representations, such as picturesque images and landscapes, can serve a purpose, the novel suggests, but in order to properly interpret them, one must learn to recognize how aesthetic is an ideological construction. Rachel was victimized by Mauleverer because she couldn't read the meaning of the woodcuts, and the tragedy of the school could have been prevented if she had been able to recognize the images as belonging to the popular picturesque aesthetic, as her friends were able to do. Accordingly, Rachel's friends largely blame her for the tragedy, and not Mauleverer, because Rachel was the one who failed to understand the meaning of the imagery on the woodcuts: Colin and Ermine criticize the "absurdity of her conduct" (400), and they go on to scorn her for having "managed matters so sweetly, that they [the court] might just as well try her as him [Mauleverer]

[…]" (364). Alick is the only one who feels sympathy for her, and he takes action by teaching Rachel how to properly read the imagery on the woodcuts.

Once she understands the significance of the deception and the full tragedy of the school comes to light, Rachel suffers a nervous breakdown that leaves her dependent and docile. Alick convinces her to marry him, and once she is his wife, he begins the process of reeducating her as a means of helping her both recover from her breakdown and recover faith in her judgment. Significantly, this education comes in the form of traveling and introducing her to landscape views. Alick begins by taking Rachel through Wales, where "the enjoyment of the fine scenery might, it was hoped, be beneficial to [Rachel's] jaded spirits" (436), and the chapter opens with a long description of a sunset:

> The level beams of a summer sun, ending one of his longest careers, were tipping a mountain peak with an ineffable rosy purple, contrasting with the deep shades of narrow ravines that cleft the rugged sides, and gradually expanded into valleys, sloping with green pasture, or clothed with wood. The whole picture, with its clear, soft sky, was retraced on the waters of the little lake set in emerald meadows, which lay before the eyes of Rachel Keith, as she reclined in a garden chair before the windows of a pretty rustic-looking hotel; but there was no admiration, no peaceful contemplation on her countenance, only the same weary air of depression, too wistful and startled even to be melancholy repose […]. (435)

The painterly diction of the description is similar in style to the moment when Mauleverer's observations about the view of the ocean get entwined with Rachel's own thoughts, but Rachel is alone this time, and her apathy makes it is clear that the observations are the narrator's alone.

Rather than being used as a means of contrasting with the "realism" of the less flowery language in the novel, as Alison Byerly suggests that such moments often do, the painterly diction serves primarily as a contrast to Rachel's indifference to the view despite its potential as a source of aesthetic enjoyment. The narrator's description demonstrates that the view *can* be enjoyed as a picture from the perspective at which Rachel is seeing it; indeed, the language of the passage ("the whole picture […] which lay before the eyes of Rachel") indicates that the view has been presented to Rachel as neatly as if it had been a landscape painting, and the fact that she and Alick are touring Wales primarily for the scenery suggests that the view could even be one of those outlined and recommended by a guide book. However, as Rachel looks at the view, she does not see the characteristics of a landscape painting as she is unused to admiring and evaluating works of art. Instead, she feels confused as to what she is supposed to find interesting about the view.

For instance, when Alick asks her if she is enjoying the sunset, Rachel simply responds, "I don't know." (436). She goes on to say, "I want to like what you are showing me […]. I—I don't know! I see it is grand and beautiful! I did love my own moors, and the Spinster's Needles, but—. Don't think me very ungrateful, but I can't enter into all this" (437). She concludes by crying "like a child unable to learn a lesson" (437). Rachel's broken language, peppered with repetition and pauses, is representative of how she has no framework with which to interpret the view. Before she lost faith in her own judgment, she depended on an interpretive framework that allowed her to evaluate artistic representations (both tangible, such as a painting, and intangible, such as a scenic view that is perceived as a landscape) in a way that ignored their aesthetic characteristics in favor of more practical concerns. Rachel would look at scenic views within the framework of the land's potential for development and its possible use for charitable

causes. When Rachel looked at the woodcuts, she judged them not by an aesthetic standard but rather by her own understanding of capitalistic labor conditions and, with regard to the woodcuts themselves, as proof of how much better her own feudalistic model was. Now, however, she is trying to look at a scenic view as a landscape—a purely aesthetic object—for the first time, and she does not understand why it is supposed to appeal to her as she has no context for interpreting it. The simile about learning a lesson indicates that, at least at some level, the ability to consider a landscape aesthetically and take pleasure in it must be learned.

The concept of learning how to look at a representation aesthetically, particularly in the form of looking at a scenic view as a landscape, recalls Raymond Williams's self-conscious observer: i.e., one who "is not only looking at land but who is conscious that he is doing so, as an experience in itself," and accordingly divides his observations into "practical" and "aesthetic" (121). However, Williams describes the self-conscious observer as a product of class privilege and exploitation, and this observation sheds light on what happens to Rachel during the process of Rachel's reeducation. For example, she begins to look at her surroundings differently when, at the end of their honeymoon, Alick takes her back to the English countryside to visit his uncle:

> "Bishopworthy is happily defended by a Dukery," explained Alick, as coming to the end of the villas they passed woods and fields, a bit of healthy common, and a scattering of cottages. Labourers going home from work looked up, and as their eyes met Alick's there was a mutual smile and touch of the hat. He evidently felt himself coming home. The trees of a park were beginning to rise in front, when the carriage turned suddenly down a sharp steep hill; the right side of the road bounded by a park paling; the left, by cottages, reached by picturesque flights of brick stairs; then came a garden wall, and a halt. (439)

While Alick's voice is the more prominent one in this passage—indeed, Rachel is not even named—the perspective given is undoubtedly Rachel's: Alick is said to be *explaining*, which indicates that he's speaking directly to her, and the observation that he "*evidently* felt himself at home" (emphasis mine) suggests that we are not being made privy to his thoughts. Despite the perspective being Rachel's, the diction and content of the passage is quite different from that associated with her up to this point in the novel, which suggests that something about her perception of the countryside is changing. The passage is dictated by the movements of the carriage, the view being interrupted by its sudden turns and, at the end, even halted by it. As a passenger in the carriage, Rachel is not in control of what she sees, so she cannot separate herself so as to take on the role of a detached spectator quite yet, and the description of the way to the parsonage is not given as a "picture" in that the sights are not deliberately organized: they are related as they are perceived. Nor are the things Rachel notices described in a way to suggest that they are particularly striking to her, and the narrator does not attempt to make them striking to the reader through vivid, specific, or evocative detail. However, the fact that Rachel is taking notice of the view at all is noteworthy, especially as she has not been aware of such things until now, and she is noticing specifically picturesque details ("a bit of healthy common," "a scattering of cottages," "the trees of a park," etc.). In fact, the passage specifically uses the word "picturesque" to describe the brick stairs, and Rachel perceives a laborer touching his hat to Alick; as Clare Simmons points out in her footnote on this passage in the Broadview edition of the novel, the "touch of the hat" is a sign that "old-fashioned class deference is still in force," especially given the presence of the Dukery (439, ftnt 1). As the scene goes on, Rachel sees a "couple of village lads" who also touch their caps to Alick, along with such sights as a bounding white dog and a snowy cat. The language and imagery suggest that Rachel is beginning to

recognize the aesthetic qualities of rural life, particularly rural labor, and she is seeing them as part of the picturesque.

Once Rachel exits the carriage, she continues to take note of her surroundings, and gradually more sensory and spatial details are added to the description:

> Rachel, alighting, saw that the lane proceeded downwards to a river crossed by a wooden bridge, with an expanse of meadows beyond. To her left was a stable-yard, and below it a white gate and white railings enclosing a graveyard, with a very beautiful church standing behind a mushroom yew-tree. The upper boundary of the churchyard was the clipped yew hedge of the rectory garden, whose front entrance was through the churchyard. There was a lovely cool tranquility of aspect as the shadows lay sleeping on the grass; and Rachel could have stood and gazed, but Alick opened the gate […]. (439)

While the language is repetitive and rather spartan for a scenic view, the amount of detail given in this description contrasts with the basic observations Rachel made while riding in the carriage. The spatial cues (i.e., "to her left," "below it," "upper boundary," "behind a mushroom yew-tree") signal that Rachel is now noticing how the view is visually organized, which in turn indicates that she's beginning to see the view as a picture, or rather as a landscape. The anthropomorphic line "as the shadows lay sleeping in the grass" demonstrates that she is also beginning to see the view more poetically instead of the purely practical and literal terms in which she saw such sights in the past. Most importantly, however, is the realization that she "could have stood and gazed" as it indicates that, unlike the frustration she suffered while trying to enjoy the scenic views in Wales, she is beginning to understand how to appreciate the aesthetic characteristics of a landscape, and specifically a rural, picturesque landscape. In doing

so, she also begins to exhibit characteristics of the self-conscious observer in that her impulse is to stop and gaze, which, in tandem with her attempts at framing the view as a landscape, effectively distances her as a spectator both positionally and intellectually.

Alick eventually presents an alternate plan for setting up the school of Rachel's dreams, which involves working with a new family lawyer, a man who shares Rachel's philanthropic bent and knows how to navigate around the legal restrictions on the Burnaby land without developing it, so as to raise the rent on it and fund a school (433). Shortly before Alick marries Rachel and begins her aesthetic reeducation, he describes a plan that would allow them to implement the school in tandem with a new convalescent home. When Rachel realizes how successful her school could have been if she had not misread the imagery on the woodcuts, she begins to cry, and the narrator describes her feelings: "The prayer of her life had been for action and usefulness, but when she had seen the shadow in the stream, her hot and eager haste, her unconscious detachment from all that was not visible and material had made her adhere too literally to that misinterpreted motto, *laborare est orare*. How then should her eyes be clear to discern between substance and shadow?" (434). By comparing Rachel's impulsiveness to attempting to catch a shadow, the passage nicely sums up the problem of rejecting an education in aesthetic principles in favor of concerning oneself with material problems: i.e., if Rachel had been taught to understand the visual tricks played by shadows, she would have been better prepared to make a practical judgment before jumping into the metaphorical river. The diction of the passage indicates that this is the precise moment when Rachel understands that she needs to learn how to read aesthetic imagery so that she will be able to develop sounder judgment overall, which she characterizes as knowing the difference between "substance and shadow." Her "unconscious detachment from all that was not visible and material" alludes to how, until

this point, she had been unaware of the ways in which the eye can be tricked by picturesque imagery that seems to represent the truth but is actually slanted by the inherent romanticization by which the picturesque is characterized.

The passage also seems to present a paradox in that Rachel desires that her "eyes be clear to discern between substance and shadow" so as to undo the problems caused by her "detachment from all that was not visible"; in other words, she wants to correct what she characterizes as a heavy dependence on visual evidence by further enmeshing herself in the visual. However, the apparent paradox calls attention to the fact that, though she does not quite yet understand it as such, her problem is not so much a dependence on material evidence as it is an inability to decipher the ways in which artistic representations distort their original entities; in other words, she must grapple with how to read how an artistic representation mediates the original entity, not with distinguishing a representation from an original. In the case of the example she gives of a shadow in a river, she believes that she needs to learn how to distinguish a shadow from a fish, but the novel goes on to demonstrate that what she actually needs to learn is why the shadow tricked her in the first place. To apply this logic to the woodcuts, for instance, Rachel likely believes that she should have been able to recognize them as fakes immediately, but what the novel suggests is that she will be better served by learning why they appealed to her and why they looked genuine; had she been able to do so, her sharper eye might have allowed her to prevent the disaster at the school by shutting down or modifying the school well before the woodcuts were ever produced. This is why the novel indicates that Rachel needs to study landscape, and specifically the picturesque imagery of rural landscape.

Yet in a realist novel, it seems as though employing the picturesque mode through a character like Rachel, who is so sensitive to the plight of the laboring poor, would be a regressive

step in that it encourages the spectator to see the trappings of rural poverty and exploitation as sources of aesthetic pleasure. However, as Rachel recovers from her breakdown, she is still interested in helping the poor, and she believes she is growing wiser about how she directs her energies, which will prevent her from making another mistake like the one she made with her school. For instance, in the last chapter of the novel, Rachel talks to her friend Ermine about how she has modified her approach to charity work, and she gives an example of a recent incident:

> It was about the soldiers' wives married without leave, who, poor things, are the most miserable creatures in the world; and when I first found out about them I was in the sort of mood I was in about the lace, and raved about the system, and was resolved to employ one poor woman […]. I was nearly as bad as ever; I could have written an article on the injustice of the army regulations, and indeed I did begin, but what do you think the end was? I got a letter from a good lady, who is always looking after the poor, to thank Mrs. Alexander Keith for the help that had been sent for this poor woman, to be given as if from the general fund. After that I could not help listening to him [Alick], and then I found out it was so impossible to know about the character, or so be sure that one was not doing more harm than—[…]. (542)

She is then interrupted by the appearance of some children, so the thought is left unfinished. Rachel's initial impulse was to jump in and fix the problem, and her comparison of the situation with how she dealt with lace-making suggests that she believes such an intervention could have been equally disastrous. She goes on to realize that it is difficult "to know about the character [of the wives], or to be sure that one was not doing more harm than [good]" in attempting to help

them via donations, campaigns, or offers of employment, which demonstrates her belief that she needs to have a better understanding of the women's circumstances before she can be certain that her actions will result in a positive outcome. By admitting that her knowledge about the military wives is incomplete, Rachel casts doubt upon the source from which she got her first impression of the problem, whether it was from a third party or something she saw with her own eyes. Indeed, the point is that it does not matter where she got the impression as she is now beginning to understand how even seemingly truthful images can be misleading depending on the context in which they are interpreted, and she is not sure that she has the correct interpretive framework. For example, part of the illusion that sustained operations at her failed school was that the children always looked presentable in white pinafores when visitors arrived. On the surface the children looked healthy, and it was not until the pinafores were removed that their emaciation and injuries from having been beaten were revealed. While visitors saw the abused children, the white pinafores nevertheless signaled happy innocence and girlish activities, seeming to confirm the pastoral fantasy held by Rachel and obscuring the actual circumstances in which the girls were living.

However, the fact that Rachel leaves her thought about the military wives unfinished signals something else as well: it calls attention to how she has stopped her work on their behalf without actually having done anything for the women herself. Alick sent aid to one woman in Rachel's name, and although Rachel is aware of how little she knows about the women's circumstances, she is satisfied with the token donation and does not pursue the matter further to learn more about what might be done. She is instead pleased with her own restraint in not charging in to help as she would have done in the past, and she is content to imagine that the matter is resolved. Yet her observation that she "found out it was so impossible to know about

the character, or so be sure that one was not doing more harm," followed by her abandoning of the subject, smacks of the same kind of willful ignorance for which she criticizes the local lace buyers early on in the novel. In this light, her dropping of the matter is not so much due to restraint as it is a deliberate choice not to engage. It seems significant, then, that this moment takes place during a rustic festival, which is described in picturesque and pastoral terms from the perspective of a spot on top a hill that, in the narrator's words, "commanded the scene" (543). Moreover, the festival is a celebration for the opening of a new charitable school that is almost identical to the one Rachel wanted to erect, except it has been built on the Burnaby land and serves the poor by training girls for service through the care of convalescents. The school is not running yet, so no one knows if it will be any more successful than Rachel's attempt, but the festival is represented as being idyllic: the narrator says, "[…] after an orthodox tea-drinking, the new pupils and all the Sunday-schools were turned out to play on the Homestead slopes, with all the world to look on at them" (541). Then the children, all wearing their Sunday best, link hands and play a charming game together. Because this moment is so similar to Rachel's feudalistic fantasy, it seems almost too good to be true, and the ending of the novel seems too perfect and too tidy. Accordingly, the new school has been built on the Burnaby land, making it part of the private landscape view cherished and protected by Mrs. Curtis. One reading of the ending could be that the Burnaby view, as Mrs. Curtis knew it, has been ruined because it has been built upon, which is exactly what she wanted to prevent by keeping the land undeveloped and its rents below market value, but the sacrifice is worth it because now there is a school that will help to relieve the problems of poverty in the village.

However, in light of Rachel's new appreciation for rural landscape and picturesque imagery, the ending can also be read as simply incorporating the school into the private

landscape view and romanticizing it accordingly, thus allowing Rachel to enjoy her fantasy of feudalism from a site of privilege. In this reading, it does not matter so much whether the school is successful: what matters is that, due to the pastoral imagery and picturesque subject material, the school looks as though it is providing care for the girls, and Rachel is pleased and gratified by this image. As Rachel has begun seeing the aesthetic appeal of landscape and the picturesque, and accordingly has started looking at her surroundings through this framework, the novel suggests that it is her perspective that has changed rather than the problems of rural poverty. Just as it is not clear whether the laborers touching their hats to Alick are actually content, or whether it is the effect of Rachel looking at them as part of what she is recognizing as picturesque imagery that makes them seem to exhibit the feudal deference that she imagines has been lost in her own village due to the changes brought by capitalism, it is also not clear whether the new charitable school is as happily ideal as it seems, or whether that is how Rachel is interpreting it in the framework of a rural landscape view. Before her breakdown, she associated landscape views, such as that offered by the Burnaby land, with neglect of the poor and a waste of resources, but now she has learned to enjoy landscapes without thinking about such consequences, as her mother does. When a new genteel acquaintance invites Rachel to go see "a view of the Devon coast done by a notable artist in water-colours" in her home, for instance, Rachel "readily accept[s]," which suggests that she is now seeking out the kinds of private landscape views that are open only to women in her station, and this is presented as part of her recovery (458).

While Raymond Williams tends to criticize the self-conscious spectator as a person of privilege who exploits the laboring classes and their lands, *The Clever Woman of the Family*, through the depiction of Rachel's recovery, posits it as a coping mechanism for the landed gentry

as their customary way of life crumbles and capitalism takes over. The novel recognizes the problems of rural poverty as they are manifested through the capitalist economy, represented by the lace-making establishment, but it also recognizes that the traditional landed gentry is no longer in control of the land, and they no longer wield the social power that used to come with that control. As Mrs. Curtis's dealings with Mauleverer, in his role as a landscape painter, demonstrate, her class does not really own the countryside through landscape paintings anymore either, as artists now largely work for the market in which art production is dominated by middle-class buyers who are eager to own pieces of the countryside in the forms of both landholding and landscape art, and many views that used to be considered a birthright are now in danger of being distributed to a broader, more moneyed public. Rachel, on the other hand, was unconcerned about preserving class privilege but rather wanted to undo the ills of the capitalist economy as they affected the lace-makers by reinstating her vision of feudal-style support for the rural poor, but she inadvertently allows the girls to be exploited in an even worse way. The novel recognizes how these problems of rural poverty are embedded in the conflict over ownership of the countryside, but it seems unable to offer a model with a feasible solution. The family holds on to their private land and views as best as they can, and building the school on the Burnaby land can be read as an attempt to reconcile the problems of maintaining privileged access to private land while mitigating the problems of poverty. Yet the idyllic terms in which the school is presented suggests that it also offers a retreat into fantasy via enjoyment of rural landscape and the picturesque, which allows the gentry to ignore contemporary problems of poverty by viewing them through the framework of pleasing pastoral imagery. While Rachel's first charitable school failed and she was misled because she was unable to read the meaning of the picturesque imagery as it was presented to her by Mauleverer, she has now learned how to

use the picturesque imagery for her own fulfillment, putting to rest her concerns about local poverty because she now sees her vision of old-fashioned feudal harmony, and her mother will still have a view that signifies and reinforces the family's social status. Ironically, as the novel makes clear through Mauleverer's manipulations, it is also the same popular picturesque imagery that the middle classes use in an attempt to claim their share of the countryside, which suggests that both the landed gentry and the moneyed upwardly mobile classes are sharing the same fantasy.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ENCLOSURE OF COMMON LANDS FOR SOCIAL STABILITY IN *SHIRLEY*

The previous chapter argued that in one approach of mid-century realist writings, the preservation and appreciation of private landscape is a crucial means of battling the social and economic ills of capitalism, particularly the gentry's loss of control over the land and the exploitation of the poor that stems from the free market. This chapter, in turn, will examine a different perspective: that the pleasures of undeveloped land are a luxury that must be sacrificed for the greater social good. Specifically, I will discuss Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849) in tandem with George Meredith's *The Egoist* (1879). *Shirley*, which is set during the Luddite uprisings but is understood to be gesturing to the tensions surrounding Chartism, ends with undeveloped common lands being enclosed in order to expand the local mill and provide work and housing for the poor, but the novel suggests that the loss of the open land particularly affects women of genteel classes, thus gendering the issue in an interesting way. The novel presents the village's undeveloped, unmanicured outdoor spaces as a haven for Shirley Keeldar and Caroline Helstone, with the open land allowing the women to temporarily escape the social roles and expectations to which they are so strictly held. *The Egoist*, a comedy of manners that satirizes a the landed nobility's sense of its own importance while critically examining the contemporary understanding of women as property, in turn illustrates how the layout and design of private estate grounds serve to restrict genteel women's bodies and minds, with the Patterne property's decorative bounding structures, walking paths, and arranged scenic views ensuring Clara Middleton's total confinement as she awaits her marriage to Sir Willoughby. I will demonstrate that, within these novels, private, developed land embodies and reinforces the constrictive social mores that dictate what is appropriate behavior for genteel women, whereas uncultivated areas

are both visually and materially unstructured and thus do not restrict the women's movements and thinking; however, when the needs of the local poor require that the open land be developed, the women must sacrifice their freedom outdoors for the greater social good.

Shirley tells the story of Caroline Helstone, a woman who sees marriage to her cousin, Robert Moore, as her only means of escaping the wretched existence of a spinster, and her friendship with Shirley, a female landholder who inherits the estate that contains Robert's mill. Caroline pines for Robert, but he is financially unable to marry, and he is preoccupied with running his mill anyhow. The wartime economy has slowed his business, and he tries to ease his losses by replacing mill workers with cost-effective and efficient machines. The discarded laborers revolt, and while Robert is largely unconcerned, Shirley, as the large landholder, does her best to soothe the laborers' anger while still protecting the mill as part of her property. When the war finally ends and Robert's finances improve, he becomes wealthy enough to marry Caroline while expanding the mill, which will allow him to rehire the discarded laborers and build new housing for them. The ending of the novel leaves the reader with the image of the countryside being altered by industry, ostensibly for the better, as Robert describes his vision of the mill prospering and the barren Hollow filling with laborers' cottages and gardens. While this moment should be heartening in that Robert's plan will solve the problems that have plagued the laborers throughout the novel, it becomes strangely uncomfortable as we learn that these renovations can come only at the expense of the village's undeveloped outdoor spaces: Robert's improvements include transforming the copse into firewood, leveling out the ravine, and paving the green terrace into a street. The mill expansion will provide steady work and sanitary housing for the working poor, yet Caroline protests the plan in spite of her sympathetic and altruistic nature. The narrator, looking back forty years later, acknowledges the overall success of

Robert's project, yet seems ambivalent about this success when she (or he, perhaps) looks at the view of the mill. As readers, we too mourn the loss of the novel's green spaces even though we have been led to pity the displaced laborers throughout the narrative. The novel's ending should be a happy one, especially since it brings Robert's long-awaited financial success, marriage for the lovers, and long-term aid for the suffering poor. So why does it feel like something significant has been lost with the development of these "waste lands"? I want to suggest that it is because Caroline and Shirley will no longer have a place where they can freely walk together.

In the nineteenth century, walking outdoors was seen as an important means of developing the intellect. In her study of walking in the nineteenth century, Anne Wallace discusses the popularity of pleasure walking, tracing interest in the activity from the influence of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and she indicates that by mid-century, pedestrian touring was considered a component of one's overall education (167-8). She describes how excursive walking, particularly in uncultivated areas without footpaths, was seen as an intellectual activity among the upper classes (170). Accordingly, Wallace gives examples from a number of nineteenth-century essayists who wrote about how "the physical act of walking restores the natural proportions of our perceptions, reconnecting us with both the physical world and the moral order inherent in it," which leads walkers to experience "an enhanced sense of self, clearer thinking, more acute moral apprehension, and higher powers of expression" (13). It is in this context that John Ruskin, for instance, insists that spending time outdoors and observing nature firsthand is crucial for learning how to distinguish what is true from what is false. Throughout *Modern Painters*, Ruskin urges the reader to go outside: "Go to the top of Highgate Hill on a clear summer morning at five o'clock, and look at Westmister Abbey" (Volume 1, 210); "Take a blade of grass and a scarlet flower, and place them in the sunlight […]" (166); "Go out some

bright sunny day in winter, and look for a tree with a broad trunk […]. Stand four or five yards from it, with your back to the trunk" (184). As evidenced by these quotes, simply being outdoors is not enough: Ruskin's reader must *go,* which can be read as a directive to walk, before being able to properly contemplate the various recommended sights.

The necessity of walking outside in order to gain enlightenment posed something of a problem for Victorian women as their freedom outdoors was very limited, particularly when they were alone and on foot. For example, Deborah Cherry has pointed out that being outdoors while alone was seen as largely inappropriate for women, except under certain controlled and monitored conditions. Women who wanted to go outside under other circumstances, particularly if they were alone and ventured to the wilderness or other undeveloped areas, found themselves "on the margins of respectability," and they risked being demeaned with "those gazes from which bourgeois women were generally shielded," meaning stares and resulting gossip from strangers and acquaintances alike (169-71). As a way of protecting women from such exposure, walled gardens became a popular way for Victorian women to go outdoors while remaining contained within a "virtuous feminine sphere" (Piehler 20). Walking was likewise considered risky for women as it was associated with sexual promiscuity. Anne Wallace notes that "standard prejudices about women's 'nature' and proper roles in society […] make women's walking, even on local footpaths, unusually perilous to their reputations" (30).

Indeed, both *Shirley* and *The Egoist* allude to how women who are outdoors by themselves get censured when they go beyond the areas that have been deemed appropriate for them. In *The Egoist,* when Clara prepares to go for an hour's walk by herself, Laetitia looks at her incredulously and asks, "Are you walking on the road alone?" (133). Later, one of Sir Willoughby's driving staff reports that he saw Clara while she was walking alone, and

Willoughby wonders to himself, “What was meant by Clara being seen walking on the highroad alone?— What snare, traceable ad inferas, had ever induced Willoughby Patterne to make her the repository and fortress of his honour!” (139). Willoughby approved of Clara’s plan to walk with Laetitia, likely because the older woman would serve as a chaperone as well as a companion, but simply hearing that Clara was seen on the road alone is enough for him to question her honor and his judgment in choosing her to be his wife. In Brontë’s novel, Shirley desires the “wilder solitude which lies out of doors,” but her uncle disapproves of her going out alone because her doing so makes her the subject of gossip in the village: “Twice—three times, the eyes of gossips—those eyes which are everywhere: in the closet and on the hill-top—noticed that instead of turning on Rushedge, the top-ridge of Stilbro’ Moor, she [Shirley] rode forwards all the way to the town. Scouts were not wanting to mark her destination there […] (499). The “eyes of gossips,” which track Shirley’s every move, resonate with the kind of intense surveillance of women that Cherry describes, and the details of which the “gossips” and “scouts” take note emphasize the degree to which women are monitored: not only do they notice her particular path and destinations but also the number of times she takes the same path. As a wealthy and powerful landholder, Shirley gets some privileges and considerations that other genteel women are denied, but even she is subject to monitoring and censure when she goes out alone.

In light of the intense scrutiny to which Victorian women were subjected when they were outdoors, it is understandable that escape to an unpopulated area, when feasible, would be appealing to them. So when Robert announces that he intends to enclose and develop the common lands in *Shirley*, a good portion of Caroline’s dismay stems from her loss of access to those areas. The novel suggests that the main negative consequence of the enclosure project will be the women’s deprivation of the common lands, especially as the laborers will be the ones to

directly benefit from the housing and additional employment that the project promises to deliver. This is a rather odd narrative turn as enclosure is typically understood to deprive the rural poor of their right to open lands, thus further impoverishing them rather than providing aid to them. Consequently, Caroline's dismay in a seemingly happy narrative moment can be read as an interruption of sorts, intended to cast doubt on the beneficial effects of the project: her protests against the loss of the open land call direct attention to how it will affect her access to the outdoors as a genteel woman, but it also brings indirect attention to how the poor will lose their access to the land as well.

Raymond Williams famously argued that when common and waste lands were enclosed, what was lost was the "marginal independence" of the rural poor who depended on having access to the lands in lieu of having their own property (101). Williams frames the damage in terms of the poor's lost independence, however marginal, in order to indicate that they had desires and needs beyond those of basic sustenance and shelter. In fact, research on resistance to mid-century enclosure bills has revealed that part of this independence for the poor included using the common lands for recreational purposes, particularly for taking refreshing walks in open spaces, away from sites of their labor (Wallace 169). So when Robert encloses and develops the common lands, neither the women nor the laboring poor will be able to take walks, admire the views, find a bit of privacy, or indeed do anything but what is sanctioned as the business of the mill. A popular vein of scholarship on *Shirley* explores the parallels between the novel's unmarried women and the unemployed laborers, largely for the purpose of arguing that the magnitude and urgency of the laborers' difficulties gives weight to the problems being faced by the women; indeed, Sally Shuttleworth suggests that the analogy between the two groups is

"central to the structural organization of the novel" for that reason (183).[21] I want to suggest that these novelistic parallels between the laboring poor and the genteel women likewise call attention to the similarities in how both groups' access to the open land is monitored, controlled, and finally withheld in the name of social stability.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the issue of public access to land was getting significant political and popular attention. Liberal thinkers and writers were raising awareness about how raw land, as a finite natural resource, should be considered a unique form of property in that it is merely claimed (and not created) by individuals, and as such, raw land should be seen as belonging equally to all people, with every person being entitled to a fair share of it. This school of thought accused landholders of having an unfair and unearned economic advantage over those who did not have land of their own. However, mainstream liberals did not advocate confiscating land from private owners or transitioning to communal ownership: instead, they lobbied for increased public access to the land (Vogel 110). The political arguments for broadening access to land ownership also drew contemporary attention to how the restrictions of private land affected the mobility and even the thinking of those who did not own land.

For instance, in 1851, Herbert Spencer wrote, "Supposing the entire habitable globe to be so enclosed, it follows that if the landowners have a valid right to its surface, all who are not landowners have no right at all to its surface. Hence, such can exist on the earth by sufferance only. They are all trespassers. Save by the permission of the lords of the soil they can have no room for the soles of their feet" **(**qtd. Vogel 112). By extrapolating the reach of landholding

[21] In addition to Shuttleworth, see, for instance, Albert D. Pionke's "Reframing the Luddites," in which he argues that Brontë draws a parallel between the women and workers in order to champion middle-class paternalism and leadership; Peter J. Capuano's "Networked Manufacture in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*," in which he suggests that Brontë's historical treatment of manufacturing is used to make a connection between women and the machine-breakers; and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, in which they link the hunger of the starving, jobless laborers to the hunger of the "surplus" women who feel that their lives have no purpose.

rights to the extreme of branding all non-landholders as "trespassers"—a label that has both legal and moral implications ("Trespass," *OED)*—Spencer calls attention to the degree of power that landholders have over those who find themselves on private property. He ignores the possibility of public spaces and roads, where even non-landholders would be allowed to set foot, in order to suggest that landholders' control extends beyond the boundaries of their individual properties. In referring expressly to the feet of the people he terms "trespassers," Spencer alludes to the act of walking and suggests that landholders ultimately control how the rest of the population moves throughout the countryside, especially as he elevates the landholders' influence beyond their own properties to the broader level of the "earth" and its "soil." Moreover, in emphasizing that non-landholders need the permission of the landholders in order to walk upon their property, Spencer points to the implicit psychological power held by the landholders: needing to ask permission serves as a consistent reminder to non-landholders of their dependence and social inferiority, especially as receiving permission entails behaving according to the landholders' rules while moving through privately held areas.

While Spencer is advocating on behalf of the laboring classes who do not own land, his remarks can be read as applying to contemporary women as well since they, even when they did hold land, were not considered "lords of the soil" in the same sense that men were. When applied to women, Spencer's remarks take on new meaning that sheds light on the way women are depicted novelistically as they traverse private or developed properties in contrast to how they interact with open lands. Part of what shapes women's experiences in this area is how the layout of private and developed lands is designed to control their movements, their thoughts, and their gaze. Daphne Spain discusses this understanding of spatial arrangement in *Gendered Spaces*, in which she demonstrates how topographic and architectural spatial arrangements

institutionalize gender segregation and reinforce male privilege. Building on Foucault's concept of the Panopticon as the archetypal example of privilege and power asserted through architectural and geographical spatial design, Spain points out how certain edifices and land layouts contain barriers, both concrete and psychological, that prevent women from acquiring the same quality of knowledge to which men have access (10). These places embody "the taken-for-granted rules that govern relations of individuals to each other and society" in how their designs both reflect social mores and enforce them (7).[22] In sum, Spencer's remarks demonstrate how women can be either permitted guests or trespassers on private land, nothing more, and Spain's theory of gendered space indicates that properties are designed to contain women within specific areas, largely to prevent them from gaining the types of knowledge that have been deemed inappropriate for them.

I want to suggest that the attitude regarding private land that Spencer describes, with the addition of the gender considerations delineated by Spain, is ingrained in *Shirley* to the point that it is part of the "taken for granted rules" within the novel, to use Spain's phrasing, and thus is not given emphasis in the narrative. Because the oppression associated with private property is so subtle in *Shirley*, I would like to take a brief look at George Meredith's *The Egoist* in order to highlight some of the contemporary assumptions and attitudes underlying how women interpreted and interacted with private property. Published in 1879, *The Egoist* examines woman's place within the institution of property as it is implemented by the landed gentry. While much of the novel focuses on Clara Middleton's frustration with being considered as a

[22] To illustrate this idea, Spain gives the example of women attending universities in America. To paraphrase her, women were barred from attending universities because higher learning was thought to be bad for their health, so colleges were built for men; this spatial segregation (no women's dorms at prestigious schools, etc.) in turn reduced women's ability to gain admission to these schools (4-5). Thus the knowledge attainable at universities was made inaccessible to women by social mores, and the design of the schools both enforced and reinforced these mores by denying women access to the space.

marriageable piece of property, it also explores her thoughts on the prospect of spending the rest of her life on Willoughby's estate and land. Given the contemporary context of philosophical and political debates on land reform and gender issues amid which the novel was written, it is not surprising that these issues intersect in the novel, and the narrative accordingly examines the ways in which Clara feels controlled not only by Willoughby himself but also by simply being on his land. This perspective makes it a useful companion piece for *Shirley* because concerns about private property are just as central to Brontë's novel, though they are not articulated as explicitly as they are in *The Egoist*.

Once Clara Middleton realizes that she does not want to marry Willoughby, she tries to find a way to escape from their engagement. Not only is she legally promised to Willoughby, who is determined that she marry him, but she's literally trapped on his estate as well: every time she tries to get away, even if she just wants to take a solitary walk somewhere other than on the designated walking paths that run through the estate, she is somehow thwarted and ends up back at Willoughby's house. Early on in the novel, the narrative establishes that Willoughby exercises control over others largely through the way he manages his land and estate. After rushing Clara into their engagement, he insists that she live at his country house (with her father as chaperone) while they prepare for the wedding. Willoughby's wish to keep Clara contained within his estate is attributed to his desire to prevent her from being exposed to ideas other than what he chooses to bestow on her. He fears that if she is exposed to outside people and ideas, he will not be able to mold her and control her to his wishes, which would render her incompatible as his mate. Fittingly, the narrator points out that men like Willoughby "cannot enjoy the sense of security for their love unless they fence away the world" (40). "Fence," in evoking the image of a physical barrier, alludes to how Willoughby's plan requires not only keeping his estate free of unwanted

influences but also making sure that the people that he wants to keep on the estate cannot leave. Willoughby carefully chooses the people he allows onto his estate as friends or employees, and once accepted, he ensures that they become dependent upon in him some way. If anyone subsequently attempts to pursue independence, Willoughby bans the person from both his company and his estate permanently, and he patrols his grounds to make sure the offenders do not return.

In the passage where Clara first tries to tell Willoughby that she wants to break the engagement and leave him, the narrative alludes to the connection between Willoughby's control of his land and his control of others. As they are walking in the Patterne gardens, Clara says, "I am unworthy. I am volatile. I love my liberty. I want to be free…," but Willoughby interrupts her in order to yell at Flitch, a former coachman of his that he sees near his land; he exclaims, "The man you see yonder violates my express injunction that he is not to come on my grounds, and here I find him on the borders of my garden!" (89). Although the interruption and Willoughby's ensuing description of Flitch initially appear to be an attempt to avoid Clara's concerns about their upcoming marriage, it is significant that Willoughby begins to talk of trespassing at this narrative moment. He interweaves his account of why Flitch is not welcome on his land with reassurances to Clara that her desire for freedom is due to her inevitable nervousness about becoming a wife, which suggests that for him, the two topics are interrelated: in telling Clara why she must stay with him on the estate, it seems natural to him that he would also tell her why others must be kept off the estate. This points to one aspect of how he exercises control over his land in order to control others: by handpicking who he will and will not allow on his grounds, he not only controls the movements of those on or around his property but also controls with whom the people on his grounds can interact.

Willoughby tells Clara how Flitch had left service with him in order to try running a shop of his own in town despite knowing that pursuing independent work would get him banned from the Patterne estate permanently. "Of course the shop failed," Willoughby observes, "and Flitch's independence consists in walking about with his hands in his empty pockets, and looking at the Hall from some elevation near" (90). Willoughby's remarks call attention to two points of interest. First, Willoughby mentions that Flitch is not actually on his land but rather is standing "on the borders of his garden," yet he still compels the man to leave. This suggests, in accordance with Spencer's observations above about the nature of private property, that even the areas surrounding private land are monitored and controlled by the landholding class in a way that affects how others can move through the area. Willoughby also points out that Flitch spends time "looking at the Hall from some elevation near," indicating that Flitch, even when not actually on the estate grounds, can still be seen from the estate. This remark reinforces the idea that the reach of Willoughby's monitoring of and control over the land extends beyond his own property lines, and it goes on to suggest that Willoughby counts on the sight of the unemployed and essentially disowned Flitch to serve as a cautionary spectacle of sorts.

Second, Willoughby points out that Flitch's independence has resulted in his "walking about" with "empty pockets." In purposely linking "walking about" with having no money and no place within the estate, Willoughby attempts to give walking a negative connotation so as to discourage Clara from rambling too much. While he approves of leisurely strolls through his park, Willoughby considers taking long walks for exercise or enjoyment to be a "sour business" (26), and his remark about Flitch suggests that he sees walking as an accessory to yearnings for independence and thus as a threat to his control. Clara and Vernon, Willoughby's intellectual friend, on the other hand, love to take long walks, and Clara dreams of hiking through mountains

one day. Indeed, before Clara decides that she must break the engagement, she first requests some time to travel through the Alps before the wedding, but both Willoughby and her father forbid it. She muses, "Five weeks of perfect liberty in the mountains […] would have prepared her for the day of bells. All that she required was a separation offering new scenes, where she might reflect undisturbed, feel clear again" (51). Her reasons for wanting to walk in the mountains are precisely why Willoughby does not want her to leave the estate: while she is not thinking of permanently escaping from him at this point, she recognizes that being restricted to walking on the estate actually limits the scope of her thought, and in order for her to "reflect" and "feel clear again," she understands that she must have "separation" and "new scenes." Her diction resonates with the contemporary ideology that touted the intellectual benefits of excursive walking, and she realizes that getting away from the manicured lawns and deliberate layout of the estate grounds is crucial for imaginative, independent thought that ranges beyond the contemplation of her social duties.

Since Clara cannot travel to the Alps, however, she instead takes an imaginary climb with Vernon during one of their walks together: "They went up some of the lesser heights of Switzerland and Styria, and settled in South Tyrol, the young lady preferring this district for the strenuous exercise of her climbing powers because she loved Italian colour […]" (98). Clara attempts to use the moment in order to speak frankly with Vernon about her concerns over marrying Willoughby, but the illusion of being in the mountains and away from Willoughby's land is not enough to release her from the psychological control Willoughby exerts over her. Instead of articulating her wish to break the engagement, she ends up repeating familiar platitudes about how poorly Willoughby's first fiancée behaved toward him: "She did very wrong. […] Was she not unpardonable?" Clara asks Vernon (99). Likewise, when Vernon

suggests that the end of Willoughby's first engagement ended up being for the best as it resulted in Clara and Willoughby being together, Clara is only able to nod and agree with him, speaking "as the awe-stricken speak" (100). Her response is suggestive of a kind of cognitive paralysis, and the contrast between Clara's fears about marrying Willoughby and what she ends up expressing underscores both how she is stifled by being on the estate and how she is unable to escape its hold imaginatively.

Along with the psychological control that Clara experiences, Willoughby is also able to exert control over the movements of people on his estate via the layout of his land. For example, Clara tries to get away from Willoughby permanently by sneaking away to the train station after breakfast one day, and while we do not see how she gets there, Vernon pursues her trail and, in the process, demonstrates just how difficult it is to traverse the land: he must vault over stiles (a skill which is envied by another man who cannot do the same) and spring across the wet fields as it is too slippery to run on the field-path (218). Clara's uncommon athleticism is emphasized throughout the novel, and given that Vernon is very physically fit as well, his difficulties making it to the train station suggest that a less robust woman would not have been able to clear the obstacles, thus forcing her to have remained within the bounds of the estate. In other words, Clara is able to leave Willoughby's property by a nonstandard route only because she is unusually agile and quick. Along with the decorative and practical "fortifications" that partition Willoughby's land and discourage people from straying off the approved pathways, there is also a deliberate lack of privacy that ensures movement does not go undetected on the property. When Willoughby is searching for Clara, for instance, he and the others are able to gather information about her whereabouts from the following witnesses: Clara's maid, who knows when Clara left the house and what she took with her (which helps alert the search party to how

long she had planned to be gone); the lodge-keeper and his family, who can attest to what gate Clara took, what time she was seen, who she was with, and whether she was seen returning to the park; and a tramp who happens to be sitting on a stile and sees Clara heading toward the train station. The fact that all this information about Clara was gathered from casual observations and not from targeted surveillance underscores the degree to which her movements on the property are constantly monitored and thus can be controlled.

Perhaps because she does enjoy walking so much, Clara is unusually sensitive to how the layout of Willoughby's estate grounds seem designed specifically to entrap her. When Clara and Laetitia, a spinster who greatly admires Willoughby, agree to take a walk on the grounds together, they begin their conversation by commenting on the view. After Clara expresses her indifference to the scenery before her, Laetitia defends it by saying, "We have undulations, hills, and we have sufficient diversity, meadows, rivers, copses, brooks, and good roads, and pretty by-paths" (127). Rather than describing the view she sees before her, or any specific view found on the estate, Laetitia rattles off a list of land features in which nothing is specific or clearly depicted, resulting in a kind of empty image that gives only an impression of fullness. Clara responds by saying, "It is very pretty to see; but to live with, I think I prefer ugliness. I can imagine learning to love ugliness. It's honest. However young you are, you cannot be deceived by it. These parks of rich people are a part of the prettiness. I would rather have fields, commons" (127-8). At first, Clara seems to be rejecting the beautiful scenery from sheer contrariness, but her association of the word "pretty" with "the parks of rich people" indicates that what she actually dislikes is artificially bounded and manicured grounds. For Clara, "ugly," rather than being an aesthetic judgment, seems to mean uncontoured or unadorned. Her concerns about being "deceived" by prettiness indicate that she sees something misleading or threatening

about manicured estate grounds, and the fact that she contrasts them with commons and fields suggests that it is the illusion of openness that she detests. While the grounds appear to allow one to choose where, when, and with whom to walk, Clara has come to realize that such decisions are actually determined by Willoughby and enforced by the layout of the grounds because the design allows him to direct her path via walkways and monitor her movements. Accordingly, when Laetitia points out that private parks like Willoughby's provide "delightful green walks, [and] paths through beautiful woods," Clara exclaims, "I chafe at restraint; hedges and palings everywhere! I should have to travel ten years to sit down contented among these fortifications" (128). Where Laetitia sees clearings made so that she can easily traverse the land, Clara sees restraint in that the pathways and their markers preclude her from walking wherever she pleases.

As Clara and Laetitia walk along the grounds, Clara finally confesses her desire to free herself from Willoughby. Shocked, Laetitia attempts to defend Willoughby by steering the conversation back to praise of his land: she asks Clara, "Now, do you not admire that view?" (130). Clara considers the view that Laetitia points out and sees "rolling richness of foliage, wood and water, and church spire, a town and horizon hills" (130). Clara's interpretation of the view strips away any descriptors that would convey a specific image, so while Clara's construction of the view is organized like a landscape painting in that we get a foreground of foliage, a middleground consisting of woods, a body of water and a church, and a horizon that features a distant town and some hills, no concrete image is conveyed due to the lack of descriptive detail that would have indicated what is special or beautiful about the view. The depiction of Clara's interpretation of the view can be read as purposely omitting detail so that the reader must draw upon stock landscape imagery in order to complete the image, which indicates

that she, in contrast to Laetitia, finds the view to be commonplace and perhaps artificial. Yet while serving as a contrast to Laetitia's enthusiasm, Clara's interpretation also recalls the list of features Laetitia gives in defense of Willoughby's grounds and suggests that the views from the estate are just as empty of meaning as that generic list.

Clara goes on to apologize to Laetitia for her disinterest in the view by claiming, "I cannot separate landscape from associations," (130). Although a view that stretches all the way into a distant town should seem cheering for Clara in that it could suggest both unlimited space and a link to a world beyond the estate, thus allowing her to imagine that she is not so thoroughly trapped on Willoughby's land, she makes it clear that she cannot participate in such a fantasy because, in recognizing the view specifically as a "landscape," she understands that it is just another possession of Willoughby's. As a landscape presupposes a specific spectator position, she knows that Willoughby's grounds have been organized so as to guide her to the spot on purpose (via the course of the walking path), and she understands that rather than offering imaginative freedom, the view is both bounded by the limits of the spectator position and available to her from that spot alone, which links it to Willoughby and thus negates it as a source of imaginative escape for her. Thus rather than being an aspect of the estate that Clara can admire, as Laetitia wishes, the deliberate organization and placement of the landscape view instead reinforces Clara's awareness that she is under Willoughby's control.

Even if the view is beautiful, Clara's disinterest indicates that her experience of it is tainted by the knowledge that, although she is outdoors, she is not free to explore the land beyond the areas that Willoughby has contoured and approved specifically for walking, and she knows that everything she sees is the result of the deliberate design of the estate. Clara exposes how the layout of the country estate, with its fences, hedges, walls, private walks, and other

marks of ownership and boundaries, allows the landholder to not only oversee and manage the movements of people on and around the estate but also influence their thinking as well. Laetitia, whose admiration for Willoughby's grounds is noted several times, initially sees the landscape view as a reflection of Willoughby's inherent nobleness, but Clara's aesthetic rejection of it prompts Laetitia to reexamine the view despite her worry that doing so could "rob her of her one ever-fresh possession of the homely picturesque" (130). The moment marks the beginning of Laetitia's disillusionment with Willoughby, and it is significant that it is tied to her being prompted to look at his grounds in a new way. In characterizing the aesthetic appeal of Willoughby's grounds as being rooted in "the homely picturesque," Laetitia implies that she is already aware of how the estate's scenery and views project a distinctly romanticized representation of Willoughby, but until she consciously acknowledges the illusion, she allows it to guide her thinking about what kind of man Willoughby is. Moreover, the use of the term "picturesque" in this context suggests that the view's inclusion of basic landscape elements and organization (a foreground of foliage, a church spire in the middleground, and so on) can be read as representing a kind of conventionality with regard to social roles and expectations, especially as the view is being used as a means of convincing Clara that it is proper for her to marry Willoughby. When Clara tells Laetitia that she "cannot separate landscape from associations," she makes it clear that she is rejecting the idea that the view is admirable because she rejects the idea that she will find fulfillment in following convention and submitting to Willoughby's rule. Clara reads the design of the estate, including the locations and contents of its scenic views, as an embodiment of Willoughby's influence and authority, and she worries that with access to only outdoor spaces that have been designed with Willoughby's aims in mind, she will eventually

become inured to her surroundings in the same way Laetitia has, thus losing her ability to think clearly and critically.

While Clara recognizes how the aesthetics of landscape complement the politics of the patriarchal estate in the way they serve as a means for landholders to exert control over others, Caroline, in *Shirley*, does not articulate her understanding of this dynamic despite the fact that the politics of land are similarly constructed in Brontë's novel. While a number of studies have considered the novel's depiction of how the women are suppressed and controlled, my approach emphasizes how this social, patriarchal control is enforced and reinforced by the layout of the land. To begin with, the action of the novel never leaves the small village of Briarfield,[23] which is presented as being divided into a series of privately-owned properties that have well-defined boundaries. The result of the novel's narrowly-focused setting is that Briarfield appears to be remarkably self-contained and circumscribed with regard to both its population and its geography, and the pathways within it seem to be direct and invariable in a way that limits how the characters can move through the village. This apparent lack of choice with regard to Caroline's route through the village recalls Clara's frustration with being limited to the walking paths that run through Willoughby's park, yet Caroline does not similarly dwell on how she is restricted because the arrangement likely seems inevitable to her.

When Caroline goes to make visits in town, for example, the narrative does not describe how she gets to her destinations: one moment she is home at the rectory, and the next she is entering someone's abode with seemingly no travel in between. At one point Caroline is wrapped in shawls in preparation for a visit to Miss Mann, and after a brief tangential memory of

[23] Caroline and Shirley do plan to leave Briarfield in order to take a northern tour over the summer, but they must cancel and remain in town as Shirley's aunt and uncle (in)conveniently arrive for an extended visit during that time.

Robert mocking Miss Mann for being an old maid, Caroline is suddenly ushered into the woman's parlor without having been shown traveling there (178); the next day she appears in Miss Ainley's home in a similarly abrupt manner (180). Likewise, on the day she visits Shirley for the first time, Caroline's uncle goes into the rectory's parlor and tells Caroline to put on her bonnet, and in the next moment, she is walking with him "up the broad, paved approach leading from the gateway of Fieldhead to its porch" (194). Because she is not shown traveling to these places but instead simply arrives at them, the act seems nearly automatic rather than as a result of conscious choice.

Given that so much detail is provided about the walks Caroline takes for pleasure through the course of the novel, the omission of descriptive passages at these moments of travel through the village is significant. The fact that she appears at her destinations without narrative commentary on how she arrived suggests that the pathway she has taken is obvious: while Caroline's course from one place to another is not mapped out for the reader, the omission calls attention to itself in a way that both highlights the lack of description while presuming such description is unnecessary. As Anne Wallace has argued, the walks that took one to daily business tended to be "insular and confining" (26). This type of walking, Wallace explains, "set boundaries and did not break them"; such walks would take a person "to labour, to church, to market, to courting," for instance, but these paths also "kept him, both literally and figuratively, in his place" (26). Thus the omission of descriptions of Caroline's walks through the village indicates that there is no room for individual choice or variety with regard to the paths she takes for her genteel errands, which in turn serves to reflect the broader social confinement she faces. Even the language used to describe her arrival at Shirley's—"the broad, paved approach leading from the gateway of Fieldhead to its porch"—reinforces the notion of restriction as to where she

can walk because her way has been predetermined by the design of Fieldhead's grounds: the "gateway" and the "approach" tell her where to enter the property, the fact that it is "paved" tells her where to walk, and the "porch" designates where she will wait until she is admitted into the home. While she could veer away from such guiding structures if she wished, doing so would upset social convention and thus threaten stability in a way similar to how the unemployed laborers do when they march together as a mob, as I will discuss later.

Accordingly, when Caroline does take an alternative way to someone's home, it is presented as a punishable act. While she is walking in the wood of Briarmains, supposedly because she has lost her way, she is discovered by Martin Yorke. Upon seeing her, Martin privately reflects on how he has never met a lady in the wood before, and when he asks Caroline why she is out so late, she claims to be lost and replies, "I never was here before, and I believe I am trespassing now: you might inform against me if you chose, Martin, and have me fined: it is your father's wood" (570). This exchange illustrates how the threat of consequences, both direct and implied, influences how people can move on and among private lands. Along with the direct threat of being fined for trespassing, there is an implied risk to her social standing that is indicated by Martin's observing that he had "never met a *lady* in this wood before" (568, emphasis mine). Martin's remark suggests that Caroline is doubly barred from the Yorke woods as they have been gendered as a male space, which Caroline confirms when she notes "it is your father's wood," and both comments imply that Caroline, as a lady, belongs in parks and on pathways, not in spaces that have not been designated for walking. As Martin leads Caroline out of the wood, he fails to consider that it will be difficult for her to "climb a wall or penetrate a hedge," and he takes her through a short cut that has no gate, which compels him to "help her over some formidable obstacles" (571). Unlike Clara Middleton, whose athleticism allows her to

scale such obstacles on Willoughby's land, Caroline is essentially entrapped by them and requires assistance in order to make it to the gate that will allow her to leave the Yorke estate.

Caroline encounters similar obstacles when she and Shirley run across fields in order to warn Robert about a mob of rioting unemployed laborers that is approaching the Hollow:

> Many a wall checked but did not baffle them. Shirley was surefooted and agile [. . .]. Caroline, more timid, and less dexterous, fell once or twice, and bruised herself [. . .]. A quickset hedge bounded the last field: they lost time seeking a gap in it: the aperture, when found, was narrow, but they worked their way through: the long hair, the tender skin, the silks and muslins suffered [. . .]. On the other side they met the beck, flowing deep in a rough bed: at this point a narrow plank formed the only bridge across it. (340)

The passage specifically foregrounds how the women are hindered to the point of injury by constructed obstacles that have been placed to bound and divide the land: even the beck, which is likely a natural barrier, has become an intentional divider as its shores have been connected with only a dangerously narrow plank. Although Brontë could have summed up Caroline and Shirley's trek across the fields quite briefly, she purposely lingers on this image of the women struggling to cross the barriers, and even the halting punctuation of the passage—with its abundance of colons and semicolons—forms a type of barrier to the reader that echoes the characters' difficulties. The damage done to the women's bodies and clothing illustrates the physical difficulties of overcoming these bounding structures and points to why most people travel on the main pathways, where their direction is fixed and conspicuous. It is significant that the moment in the fields with Caroline and Shirley takes place at the same time that the rioting laborers are marching to Hollow as it is the visibility of the rioters' movement along the main

road that allows the women to anticipate the mob's destination; this further demonstrates how keeping private fields and other private land relatively inaccessible not only deters intruders but also ensures that people walking near the property can be monitored.

While the organizational structure and layout of local private properties dictate where Caroline may walk, the novel suggests that it also directs and influences her thoughts, at least to some degree. For instance, when Caroline tries to reconcile herself to living as an unmarried woman, she begins taking long solitary walks as a means of coping with her unhappiness, but she keeps walking to Robert's home each night and, as a result, keeps returning to thoughts of him:

> Her long and late walks lay always, as has been said, on lonely roads; but whatever direction she rambled, whether along the drear skirts of Stilbro' Moor, or over the sunny stretch of Nunnely Common, her homeward path was so contrived as to lead her near the Hollow. She rarely descended the den, but she visited its brink at twilight almost as regularly as the stars rose over the hill-crests. Her resting-place was at a certain stile under a certain old thorn: thence she could look down on the cottage, the mill, the dewy garden –ground, the still, deep dam; thence was visible the well-known counting-house window, from whose panes at a fixed hour shot, suddenly bright, the ray of the well-known lamp. (186-7)

The diction of the passage calls attention to the fixedness of Caroline's movements once she reenters the village and heads towards the Hollow: she visits "regularly," at a "certain" stile, under a "certain" tree; the counting house and lamp are both "well-known," and she sees Robert's light at a "fixed hour." The use of the passive tense in the phrase "her homeward path was so contrived" leaves Caroline's agency ambiguous, suggesting that she is not necessarily acting according to conscious choice. It is not surprising, then, that Caroline's train of thought is

similarly fixed and repetitive during these walks. As regularly as she watches for Robert's lamp, Caroline weeps over the loss of him and remembers what it was like to be in his company: as she thinks of his features, she imagines that "his heart might welcome her presence yet," and "he might be willing to extend his hand and draw her to him, and shelter her at his side as he used to do" (187). While she does not articulate marriage as what she longs for, the bodily terms in which she thinks of Robert make it evident that she is thinking of him as a husband. The text ties the recurrence of Caroline's thoughts about being with Robert to the fixedness of her walking route, which takes her to the same vantage point with the same scenic view of his home each night.

This passage brings to mind the moment in *The Egoist* where Clara expresses her dislike of the scenic outlook from Willoughby's estate. In both pieces, a landscape view evokes specific thoughts in the female spectator about domesticity and marriage. Caroline's landscape view differs from Clara's in that there is no indication that Robert or anyone else specially chose or arranged the vantage point, yet Caroline, in consistently thinking of marriage with Robert when she goes there, responds to the view of the Hollow in a way that recalls what repulses Clara about Willoughby's grounds. The similarity in the women's experiences suggests that the layout of the land surrounding Caroline's walking path, which winds around Fieldhead (the area's manor house) and leads to the Rectory, serves to influence her thoughts in a way that is comparable to the way the layout of Willoughby's land affects the thinking of those on the Patterne estate. Yet while *The Egoist* suggests that the design of the Patterne estate is expressly an extension of Willoughby's controlling personality, *Shirley* lacks a corresponding figure to which the intent of the land's layout can be assigned. Rather than attributing the controlling aspects of Briarfield's layout to one person, then, *Shirley* instead suggests that the overall

organization of the village reflects the influence of a broader social force that strives to maintain a traditional paternalistic and patriarchal social model.

In contrast to the private and developed spaces of the fields and the mill, Briarfield also contains a number of undeveloped open areas. These unenclosed, unpartitioned spaces tend to be much easier to traverse, and as a result, they can foster communication by providing places in which people can congregate that are separate from the controlled spaces in and around private property.[24] When Caroline and Shirley take their first walk along Nunnely Common and have their first private talk, their conversation begins with the view and what they most admire about it. Both women articulate their preference for the view of natural heath over that of manicured residential grounds, agricultural enclosures, or other types of privately owned and structured land. Indeed, Shirley remarks that, while she likes the Common, she likes the "heath on its ridges" even better because it reminds her of moors, and she fondly remembers a "district traversed" when she was traveling near Scotland which "seemed a boundless waste of deep heath, and nothing had [she] seen but wild sheep; nothing heard but the cries of wild birds" (211). The terms "moor" and "heath" both expressly refer to areas of land that remain unenclosed and are considered waste ground with regard to their potential for development, so Shirley's preference for the heath indicates that, despite being Briarfield's chief landholder and having a vested interest in the income-generating potential of open land, she aesthetically values

[24] Other critics have done readings of this section of the novel and have come to conclusions similar to the reading for which I am arguing. Sally Shuttleworth, for example, suggests that the novel's natural spaces serve as the site of "an alternate female society," and thus the enclosure project signals the loss of the women's identities and their vision of a life in which there are options for women beyond being either married or "surplus" (218). In a reading that pays close attention to the novel's use of amateur botany, Danielle Coriale's "Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* and the Consolations of Natural History" interprets the common lands as a site for "dynamic social interactions" among the classes and "a pluralistic vision of British life," and she thus sees the enclosure of the lands as signifying the sacrifice of these ideals in the name of social peace and prosperity (128-9). My reading similarly emphasizes the characterization of the common lands as a space that is both largely feminine and a threat to social stability, but I ground my reading in the historical context of public and feminine access to outdoor spaces, which these other studies ignore.

land that is uncultivated and uncultivatable. In using language that highlights the heath's undeveloped state ("wild," "waste") and its walkability ("boundless," "traversed"), the passage indicates that Shirley's aesthetic appreciation of the heath is rooted in its being an area where both her vision and her movements are unstructured and unrestricted. Also, while the economic implications of the descriptor "waste," especially when used by a landholder, might suggest that Shirley is critical of how the land has been insufficiently utilized, the phrase "boundless waste" undercuts the economic connotation by suggesting that the waste provides a kind of abundance. In this context, "waste" refers to both the lost economic value of unused land *and* the non-economic gains that result from it. Thus "boundless waste" acknowledges the lost economic potential of the land while in turn indicating that the lack of development is precisely what makes it valuable to Shirley, especially as "boundless" indicates not only the land's literal lack of bounding structures but also suggests limitlessness with regard to its traversability and its imaginative potential.

The openness of the land leads to a similar openness in the women's conversation with each other. At first, Shirley and Caroline's remarks about the view seem to be the impersonal and conventional discourse that would be appropriate for two newly acquainted ladies of their station, but they linger on the view of the heath and the Common for several pages, taking the topic beyond the superficial observations required for polite conversation. We are told that this "very first interchange of slight observations sufficed to give each an idea of what the other was" (211). By indicating that the women's remarks on the view somehow reveal personal and private information about themselves, the narrative suggests that, in contrast to the way the view of the Hollow seems to direct and limit Caroline's thoughts to those of marriage, looking at the unstructured and undeveloped Common invites the women to explore their own ideas and

thoughts as their eyes explore the terrain. The phrase "to give each an idea of what the other was" is purposely nonspecific so as to communicate a sense of possibility and limitlessness, especially as the reader is not made privy to what exactly the women have discovered about each other during this exchange.

Caroline and Shirley's ensuing conversation illustrates how looking at open land allows the women to think beyond the conversational bounds of conventional topics, which in turn leads them to challenge social norms. The women first compare the Scottish moors to the local heath in language that emphasizes the intensity of the colors and the resulting effects on their imaginations. After listening to Shirley's depiction of the Scottish heath, Caroline says, "I know how the heath would look on such a day [. . .]; purple-black: a deeper shade of the sky tint, and that would be livid." Shirley responds, "Yes—quite livid, with brassy edges to the clouds, and here and there a white gleam, more ghastly than the lurid tinge, and which, as you looked at it, you momentarily expected would kindle into blinding lightening" (211). The women describe the view with adjectives that not only indicate the dark palette of colors but also allude to a sense of violence and horror: according to the *OED,* "livid" refers to a bluish color that is reminiscent of discoloration by bruises ("Livid," *OED)*; "ghastly" indicates a pale shade of white that is "death-like" ("Ghastly," *OED)*; and "lurid" means pale or glowing red in color with connotations of being "ominous" or "sensational" ("Lurid," *OED*). Their language is evocative of the gothic, suggesting that the women are aligning their discussion of the heath with a brand of storytelling known for its imaginative plots and descriptions. The link to the gothic is reinforced by their evident enjoyment of the moment despite the foreboding connotations of their language, especially as Shirley manages to build suspense into her recollection of the view ("as you looked at it, you momentarily expected would kindle into blinding lightening"). By framing the

women's remarks about the heath as a piece of gothic storytelling, this passage suggests that the view of the open Common is charged with a potential for narrative and imagination.

Accordingly, Shirley and Caroline's discussion of the view of the Common reads more like a story than a simple description of the view they are seeing. They blend their commentary on the immediate view of the Common with memories of similar views in Scotland and even hypothetical views, resulting in a shared perspective through which they build their narrative and explore the terrain both visually and imaginatively. For instance, as the women cross the Common and marvel at the view of Nunnwood, Caroline describes the wooded area as a haunt of Robin Hood and likens it to an encampment of "forest sons of Anak" (213). By including references to folklore and mythical figures in her description of the wood, Caroline suggests that she is using storytelling and imagination as much as she is using her eyes to interpret and enjoy the view. Linguistically, Shirley and Caroline are able to weave their individual recollections and impressions of scenic views into a single shared experience via empathetic use of the conditional mood ("I know how the heath would look on such a day") and use of the second person ("as you looked at it, you momentarily expected"), thus inserting each other into one another's perspective and blurring the distinctions between which of them is seeing what. Moreover, their discussion conflates the current view with ones they have seen before and ones they can imagine, which complicates what is being treated as the object of their observations.

A landscape is most often presented as a framed scenic view that contains specific focal points and assumes a certain spectator, be it the landholder himself admiring his property (actual or appropriated), or an audience admiring the view as something that belongs to and reflects upon the landholder. Thus by blurring both the spectatorial role and the object of observation while the women contemplate a scenic view, the novel challenges the traditional sense of what a

landscape constitutes, which in turn subverts the patriarchal values that underpin that model. The fluidity with which the women can shift among their own and each other's memories, observations, and imaginings about the heath, especially when contrasted with Caroline's seemingly mechanical thoughts about Robert and marriage when she contemplates her regular view of the Hollow, suggests that looking at and traversing the open land allows them to reflect and speak without the socially mandated constraints that typically govern their behavior. The open land, in being free of the markers that both denote and enforce private ownership and its accompanying economic and social concerns, invites the women to think and imagine beyond the immediate social roles and obligations that limit them in other areas.

As Elizabeth Helsinger points out in *Rural Scenes and National Representation*, landscape and private property are linked in that both are rooted in "an understanding of possession that conveys the right to control the shape, use, and even appearance of the land" (23). Both forms of possession are enacted by imposing order onto the land, be it the order created by a landholder's renovations to his property or a spectator's visual ordering of the land. So when Caroline asks Shirley to "stand still now, and look down at Nunnely dale and wood," the reader expects that the ensuing image will be ordered according to a familiar pattern associated with conventional landscape design, but that is not the case:

> They [Shirley and Caroline] both halted on the green brow of the Common: they looked down the deep valley robed in May raiment; on varied meads, some pearled with daisies, and some golden with kingcups: to-day all this verdure smiled clear in sunlight; transparent emerald and amber gleams plated over it. On Nunnwood—the sole remnant of antique British forest in a region whose lowlands were once all sylvan chase, as its highlands were breast-deep heather—

> slept the shadow of a cloud; the distant hills were dappled, the horizon was shaded and tinted like mother-of-pearl; silvery blues, soft purples, evanescent greens and rose-shades, all melting into fleeces of white cloud, pure as azury snow, allured the eye as with a remote glimpse of heaven's foundations. (212)

The depiction draws on color terminology associated with landscape paintings ("shadow," "shaded," "tinted," etc.) and accordingly emphasizes the variety of colors found in the vegetation and the clouds, including the colors' specific hues, layers, and degrees of translucency. Words such as "horizon" and "distant" provide spatial cues that evoke landscape paintings in this context as well. This use of landscape terminology in a description of a scenic view, prefaced by Caroline placing Shirley in a particular spot and directing her to "stand still *now*" and "*look down"* (my emphasis), indicates that the spectator position has been arranged so as to offer a specific image that is ordered in a particular way. Similar to the moment in *The Egoist* where Clara Middleton is asked to admire the view from a certain spot on Willoughby's estate, it would seem that such a structured view would leave Caroline and Shirley less engaged as spectators than when they are looking at the heath and adding their own and each other's memories and imaginings to the view.

However, a closer look at the passage reveals that while the description has a lot of detail, it lacks perspective and a definite focal point: the spectator's eye is directed from valley, to flowers, to verdure, all without a sense of what falls in the foreground or the background of the image or how they relate to each other spatially. For instance, despite the broad scale of the image, which includes the sky, woods, valley, and meadows, the passage names the particular kinds of flowers that color the meadows. Such detail indicates a close vantage point that would place the flowers in the foreground of the view in order for them to be identifiable. However,

since the women are looking down into the valley and its meadows from the Common, the flowers cannot be in the foreground, so the sense of perspective in the passage is skewed. The lack of smooth visual transitions between the sights is highlighted by the syntax of the description, which contains colons, semicolons, and dashes that interrupt the cadence and separate the elements being considered. This separation results in the view being presented in pieces rather than as a coherent image, which in turn indicates that the women are not looking at the land in a way that imposes a certain visual order onto the view. The lack of order in the image is reinforced by the description of the colors of the horizon "melting" into those of the clouds above: "melting" suggests a downward or outward movement rather than an upward one, so the diction confuses the direction of the mind's eye.

The open, unordered quality of the land also encourages the women to assert the validity of their own knowledge and perceptions in a way that does not happen when they are on and around privately held land. The narrative points to this change when Shirley and Caroline first set out for their walk by noting that it is the act of "traversing the extensive and solitary sweep of Nunnely Common" that allows Shirley to "easily [draw Caroline] into conversation" (211). Accordingly, Caroline, who is typically quiet and humble, soon declares just how much she knows about Nunnwood as she and Shirley begin planning an excursion into the area: "[…] I know all the pleasantest spots; I know where we could get nuts in nutting time; I know where wild strawberries abound; I know certain lonely, quite untrodden glades […]. I know groups of trees that ravish the eye […]" (214). Caroline's repetition of "I know" draws attention to the phrase and points to an uncharacteristic confidence in her own knowledge that is not seen elsewhere in the novel. The link between the women's walk on the Common and Caroline's assertion of her knowledge of the area suggests that, in contrast to how Caroline responds to the

bounds and markers of private land, the lack of psychological and material restraint that is offered by open land allows her to draw upon her own understanding with confidence.

As the women continue to walk, their conversation reflects the open land's lack of restraint upon their thinking in that they begin to critically examine some principles by which they are supposed to govern their behavior. For instance, rather than taking for granted that they should aspire to marry well, or even marry at all, Caroline and Shirley instead discuss their concerns about marriage as an institution. In some ways, this topic is unsurprising as much of the novel addresses the problem of excess women within a socioeconomic model in which meaningful occupation and financial stability are the exception for unmarried women. Accordingly, Caroline often worries about what will happen to her if she does not marry, and though she looks into other options for how she might spend her life, such as becoming a governess, her affection for Robert makes it clear that marriage is nevertheless her first choice and, she believes, her best chance at happiness.

However, when Caroline and Shirley discuss marriage on the Common, they do not approach it from the assumption that, for a woman, being married is necessarily the ideal situation. Instead they question this premise and speculate on whether it is possible for either men or women to find satisfaction in marriage at all: they wonder whether any man is able to retain interest in the same woman after spending every day with her, and they worry that women are deluded about what it is really like to have a husband. Caroline goes so far as to remark, "I wonder we don't all make up our minds to remain single," (217). In suggesting that marriage itself may be the problem (rather than the women who cannot find husbands), Shirley and Caroline undermine the social norms and expectations that are supposed to govern them. It is no coincidence that the women critically examine marriage only while they are walking on open

land, especially given that the discussion immediately ends once Caroline announces, “We are here at the Rectory gates,” as if the gate itself, and thus the return to the bounded private land, compels the women to return to more conventional topics (219). The common lands provide the women with a space outside the boundaries that limit their movements and thoughts when they are in the village proper, and exploring the open terrain both visually and on foot allows them to explore beyond conventional thinking and mores as well.

So when Robert announces that he plans to enclose Nunnely Common and expand his mill into the surrounding areas, Caroline’s dismay is understandable, especially as Robert wants to do more than simply erect buildings and clear the land: he wants to obliterate all traces of the existing land features and replace them with marks of industry and residential development. He tells Caroline, “The copse shall be firewood ere five years elapse: the beautiful wild ravine shall be a smooth descent; the green natural terrace shall be a paved street: there shall be cottages in the dark ravine, and cottages on the lonely slopes: the rough pebbled track shall be an even, firm, broad, black, sooty road, bedded with the cinders from my mill […] (644). The passage emphasizes that the open lands will be reshaped and repurposed in order to make them industrially useful and economically profitable: i.e., the copse will be chopped up and used for fuel, the terrace will be paved to better accommodate traffic, and the ravine and slopes will be turned into housing for the mill’s workers. Moreover, the passage reflects the proposed changes on a linguistic level. Paired poetic adjectives are used to describe the open lands, and they almost read like run-ons as they have no commas to separate them, which can be read as imitating the unstructured and unbounded character of the land. Accordingly, in the descriptions of the proposed changes to the land, the paired expressive adjectives are replaced with single-word, fact-based descriptors, and when multiple descriptors are used, each one is enclosed by

punctuation. For instance, the "beautiful wild ravine" becomes simply a "smooth descent"; "green natural terrace" becomes a "paved street"; and the "rough pebbled track" becomes an "even, firm, broad, black, sooty road."

Robert's determination to completely destroy the green spaces, rather than attempting to preserve them in some capacity as he expands the mill, suggests that he sees the open land as being incompatible with his project of providing a space for the displaced laborers. The language of the passage implies that the psychological effect of open land is to blame for Robert's extreme plans. The adjectives used to describe the existing green spaces, such as "lonely," "wild," "dark," and "beautiful," point to qualities than can be both aesthetic and emotional, indicating that a spectator on open land experiences the land in a way that engages her on multiple levels. On the other hand, the adjectives used to describe the proposed mill expansion ("paved," "sooty," "smooth") provide concrete information that relates only to each feature's industrial usefulness, suggesting that a spectator on the mill grounds will have no thoughts or observations aside from the work being done at the mill. The implication that the enclosure and development of the open land will lead to a corresponding narrowing of the perceptions and observations of those who inhabit the land is confirmed by Caroline and Shirley's experiences: when they are in town, their movements, thoughts, and observations are confined to what has been deemed appropriate for them according to patriarchal social norms, but when they are on the Common, they are able to explore their surroundings as they please (both visually and on foot), which in turn allows them to begin challenging the norms that guide their behavior. In light of this connection, it is telling that the destruction of open land is presented as being necessary before local laborers are relocated to the area, especially because the novel is clearly concerned about what can happen when the poor are uncontrolled.

Historically, the enclosure of common lands has been recognized as cheating the rural poor of land that had belonged to them, but here it is being presented as a solution to their problems. While acknowledging that the expansion will lead to profits for the mill, Robert points out that it will also provide work, wages, and housing for the local poor, many of whom are starving and living in squalor. Yet his language indicates that there is a third motive for his proposed renovations, and it has to do with containment. He says, "I can line yonder barren Hollow with lines of cottages, and rows of cottage-gardens […]. I will pour the waters of Pactolus through the valley of Briarfield. […] I will get an act for enclosing Nunnely Common, and parceling it out into farms" (644). Robert's language stresses how his proposed renovations to the land will result in its being divided, bounded, and ordered: the Hollow will be *lined* with *lines* of cottages and *rows* of gardens, the Common will be *enclosed* and *parceled out*, and while it is not clear if he literally wants to flood the valley, he nevertheless reimagines it as being split by an artificial waterway. The emphasis on how the land will be reshaped and straightened into standardized tracts suggests that Robert is concerned about the visual impact of the land as well as its traversability. Dividing the land into rows of individual properties, with each one marked off and bounded in some way, will regulate the movements of the inhabitants as they will no longer be able to walk wherever they want, and the straight lines of standardized tracts of land will visually order the land and regulate the view as well.

Robert's insistence that the common lands be demolished is understandable in light of what happens in the novel when the rural poor are permitted to gather in open spaces. Many laborers have lost their jobs to machines, which has left them with no wages and nowhere to work. Since the mills have no place for them, the laborers have taken to congregating in open areas and, instead of working, they linger and talk. Unsurprisingly, such behavior among the

rural poor is unsettling to the gentry due to the recent eruptions of mob violence, which also begin with the poor gathering and talking. To elaborate on this idea, the passage in which the local cottagers gather at Fieldhead's dairy can be read and unpacked in tandem with the more violent interclass conflicts that occur at Robert's mill in order to demonstrate why even a seemingly innocent gathering of the poor is nevertheless viewed as a threat by the gentry.

Just hours after the big attack on Robert's mill, the local cottagers go to the dairy at Fieldhead to get milk. When Shirley and Caroline arrive at the manor house, they find "the back-yard gates open, and the court and kitchen seemed crowded with excited milk-fetchers—men, women, and children, whom Mrs. Gill, the housekeeper, appeared vainly persuading to take their milk-cans and depart" (354). Through the use of the words "seemed" and "appeared," the passage emphasizes that Shirley and Caroline are actively shaping and interpreting the view of the yard. The open gate is foregrounded as the first detail they notice about the view, which indicates that it is a significant detail for them, followed by how the yard is crowded with people. The fact that the gate is open suggests that the courtyard is temporarily functioning as open land, particularly as the cottagers are loitering there as if it is their own space, and the ladies' immediate notice of the gate indicates that the situation alarms them.

Yet, instead of being an inherently alarming moment, the scene includes several elements commonly found in the pastoral picturesque—chatting peasants, milk cans, well-fed cows, and even the manor house itself, which is described as being picturesque on account of its "irregular architecture" and "gray and mossy colouring communicated by time" (187)—and the narrator alludes to such a reading by interrupting the description of the yard with a parenthetical aside as the next sentence in the paragraph:

> (It is, or *was*, by-the-by, the custom in the north of England for the cottagers on a country squire's estate to receive their supplies of milk and butter from the dairy of the Manor-House, on whose pastures a herd of milch kine was usually fed for the convenience of the neighborhood. Miss Keeldar owned such a herd—all deep-dewlapped, Craven cows, reared on the sweet herbage and clear waters of bonnie Airedale; and very proud she was of their sleek aspect and high condition.) (354-5).

Immediately after the parenthetical, the narrative resumes its description of Shirley's response to what she sees in her yard. Such interruptions are uncommon in the novel, so it is noteworthy that the narrator breaks in at this moment. The narrator's self-correction from "it is" to "it *was*" reiterates that the story is taking place in the past, and the archaic, poetic language ("milch kine," "sweet herbage," "bonnie Airedale") suggests that, within the aside, this past is being romanticized in the picturesque tradition as a simpler time of paternalistic abundance. In evoking the picturesque, the aside serves as an alternate interpretation of the view of the yard, in which the gathering of the cottagers is a charming reflection of both the landholder's generosity and the cottagers' esteem for their patron. It also serves as a reminder that the cottagers are not trespassing but rather have a right, dictated by local custom, to gather in the yard.

However, Shirley's first impulse upon entering her yard is to break up the gathering of cottagers: "Seeing now the state of matters, and that it was desirable to effect a clearance of the premises, Shirley stepped in amongst the gossiping groups" (355). The formal language and convoluted phrasing ("desirable to effect a clearance of the premises") indicates a shift back to Shirley's perspective, but more importantly, it contrasts with the more poetic language of the narrator's aside in order to signal that Shirley does not see charm or picturesque beauty in the

scene. By congregating and lingering instead of taking their milk and leaving, the cottagers have effectively transformed Shirley's yard into a common, open space that they have appropriated as their own, and this use of her land evidently makes Shirley uncomfortable. She goes on to berate the cottagers with what appears to be good-natured teasing but, as the reader is told candidly, her manner is actually calculated to get results with "numbers [that] belonged to the working-class" (355). When the word "numbers" is used to mean "people" at other times in the novel, it refers specifically to the poor and acts as a synonym for "mob": for instance, at one point Shirley asks Caroline, "Would you, any more than me, let Robert be borne down by numbers?" (267). Indeed, the tendency to automatically conflate the poor with mobs and violence is so prevalent among the gentry that even Caroline comments on it: she says, "[…] I cannot help thinking it unjust to include all poor working people under the general and insulting name of 'the mob,'" (93). When the poor are thought of in terms of potential mobs, any assembling of them is seen as a threat, specifically a threat to property as so many mills and pieces of equipment have been destroyed during recent Luddite uprisings. So when Shirley takes note of her open gate and labels the cottagers in her yard as "numbers," it implies that she perceives them as disobeying the property boundaries that should govern their movements and, consequently, she senses a potential for mobbing and violence.

Along with disapproving of the cottagers gathering in her yard, Shirley also dwells on the fact that they are standing around *talking*. When Shirley asks the cottagers why they have not yet left her yard, one of them replies, "We're just talking a bit over this battle there has been at your miln, Mistress," (355). The cottagers' take on the attack is not clear—they could be weaving a narrative that heroizes Robert and condemns the rioters, for instance—but Shirley does not seem to care about what their interpretation might be: it is the fact that they are

discussing and interpreting the incident all that troubles her. She replies, “Talking a bit! Just like you! […] It is a queer thing that all the world is so fond of *talking* over events: you *talk* if anybody dies suddenly; you *talk* if a fire breaks out; you *talk* if a mill-owner fails; you *talk* if he’s murdered. What good does your talking do?” (355, emphasis Brontë’s). Shirley stresses the word “talk” in order to indicate to the cottagers the inconsequentiality of their discussions. Yet each of the possible incidents she mentions could either incite riots or help reinforce social mores depending largely on how it was represented to and interpreted by the people through such discussions: a natural death versus a murder or assassination; an accidental fire versus arson; a victim of a sluggish economy versus a perpetrator of unjust business practices; or the murder of an innocent versus deserved vengeance. In this sense, the cottagers’ talk has the potential to be quite powerful, especially given the heightened tensions among the classes.

The poor are aware of the power of their talk as well, at least to a degree. For instance, Moses Barraclough, identified by Robert as one of the mob leaders, is known as a great orator among the laboring class, and he is thus considered extremely dangerous as he is able to persuade large groups of men to join the mill attacks he organizes. When Moses takes a group of the displaced laborers to the mill in order to convince Robert to give up his machinery, one of the men says, "I'm not for shedding blood: I'd neither kill a man nor hurt a man; and I'm not for pulling down mills and breaking machines: for, as ye say, that way o' going on 'll niver stop invention; but I'll talk,--I'll make as big a din as ever I can," (137). The laborer's statement is bold in that he claims his talking is more powerful than violence as a means of resistance and as a force for social change. A “din” is a noise “utter[ed] continuously so as to deafen or weary” (“Din,” *OED*), and it implies an amalgamation of voices (rather than that only of the laborer himself) that creates a single noise; so for the laborer to pledge to “make as big a din as ever I

can" suggests that he will use his talking, along with the talking of his fellow displaced laborers, to ensure that the privileged are unable to exist peacefully while the poor suffer. Since the laborers' talk often leads to social unrest and mob uprisings, which is reflected in the connotations of chaos in the word "din," the man's statement also works as a subtle threat of violence against property and privilege, even as he ostensibly rejects violence as a means of accomplishing social change.

So when the cottagers are talking in Shirley's yard, she becomes uncomfortable because she fears that their talk will lead to more discontent and, as a result, more uprisings. When this moment is read alongside Caroline and Shirley's first walk together, it becomes evident that Shirley is also worried because the cottagers are talking while the gate to her yard is standing open. As noted above, the open gate is the first thing Shirley notices when she returns to Fieldhead: she finds "the back-yard gates open, and the court and kitchen seemed crowded with excited milk-fetchers." A closed gate signifies private property: it marks the beginning of a boundary and indicates that the land belongs to someone. It signals that permission must be given before entry is granted, and entry comes with an obligation to follow certain rules and customs. An open gate, on the other hand, signifies that these restrictions do not apply as no permission is needed for entry; it signals that the land is acting as a common space. With the gate left standing open, the cottagers are not respecting the yard as being Shirley's property, and they are likely ignoring the other markers and bounding structures that would normally guide their thinking and behavior.

Gathering and talking on what is being treated as open land could lead the cottagers to begin thinking and speaking more independently, just as Shirley and Caroline did when they walked on the Common. Even though the cottagers are not directly challenging Shirley, their

talking in what is being treated as an open space, in which boundaries and bounding structures are not effectively functioning, could result in their subverting social norms and authority, particularly the authority of Shirley as a landholder. Shirley fears such a lapse when she sees the cottagers loitering and talking in her yard instead of leaving immediately after receiving their milk, as they are supposed to do. Accordingly, when one of the cottagers responds to Shirley's criticism of their talk by asking, "We're no war nor some 'at is aboon us; are we?" (355), the question is especially meaningful. That the cottager is questioning Shirley at all suggests he has a large degree of confidence in his own understanding of the situation and thus is positing himself as an authority figure. His diction emphasizes this idea as the remark is split by a semicolon: rather than being phrased as an outright question, which could be read as a sincere appeal to Shirley for knowledge, the remark is composed of a statement that is followed by a rhetorical question, which perhaps alludes to the oratorical style of Moses Barraclough, the mob leader. Such a connotation would be troubling to Shirley since the displaced laborers, led by Barraclough, questioned Robert and asserted their own authority in a similar manner just before the attack on the mill. During that episode, for instance, one of the displaced laborers tells Robert, "[…] I know it isn't right for poor folks to starve" (137), with his use of "I know" anticipating Caroline's repetition of the phrase as she walks with Shirley on the Common. Another laborer chides Robert with the accusation, "[…] you have not that understanding of huz and wer ways […]" (134). The laborer's use of his vernacular, especially as he initially addresses Robert in the formal diction more familiar to the genteel classes, serves to reinforce his claim that he has a kind of knowledge of which Robert is ignorant, thus placing himself in a position of authority over the mill owner.

Moreover, the cottager's question to Shirley subtly undermines the established sociopolitical hierarchy by equalizing the cottagers and the gentry: "We're no worse than some that are above us" implies that they should all be held to the same standard, and it also denies any difference between the behaviors of the two classes. If this scene is read as echoing the earlier moment shared between Shirley and Caroline on the Common, the cottager's question invites a comparison between the cottagers' talking and that of the women: ultimately, he wants to know why some people are able to meet in open spaces for unhampered thought and discussion, while others are forbidden from doing the same. Shirley, being good at handling "numbers," immediately shuts down the discussion with an answering rhetorical move: she takes the cottager's claim to the extreme and declares that the poor are actually better than their social superiors. Shirley lectures the cottagers on how they, as "models of industry," should not be wasting their time by "*talk*[ing] scandal" (355-6): she says, "Fine, rich people that have nothing to do, may be partly excused for trifling their time away: you who have to earn your bread with the sweat of your brow are quite inexcusable" (355). Shirley inverts the relative positions of the working poor and the gentry with regard to how their time is employed: even the unmarried gentlewomen without professions find occupation in caring for others, particularly in dispensing charity, while many discarded manual laborers truly have nothing to do. She grounds her critique of the cottagers in the pre-industrial model of the village economy, but as a landholder with a mill on her estate, she knows firsthand that the sluggish wartime economy and the introduction of machines have severely limited the amount of work available to the lower classes, leaving many of them starving and desperate. Shirley's use of phrases like "models of industry" and "earn your bread" are painfully ironic given this context, but her flattery of the cottagers nevertheless succeeds in convincing them to leave her yard. After the cottagers file

out, Shirley "close[s] the gates on a quiet court" (356), thus reinstating the bounding structure that protects her grounds and transforming the yard from a common space back into a piece of her private property.

Shirley's eagerness to eject the cottagers from her land and quiet their talk suggests that she too sees a similarity between her discussion with Caroline on the Common and the cottagers' talk in her open yard. This parallel, by aligning the women's talk with the threat of rebellion and violence, serves to call into question the harmlessness of Shirley and Caroline's discussion with regard to the potential consequences to the social order, thus foreshadowing the novel's ending. Moreover, the possibility that the cottagers will likewise question and challenge social norms while on her land concerns Shirley because, as the recent riots have demonstrated, there is no guarantee that the poor will return to respecting property boundaries and observing the accompanying behavioral norms once they have begun to operate outside them. Shirley and Caroline questioned and challenged social norms as they walked on the Common, but they resumed respecting the tenets of society, as embodied by property boundaries and private land, once they reached the gates of the rectory: their conversation returned to the conventional, they allowed their steps to be guided by the provided paths, and they resumed the roles and duties expected of them. The recent riots, on the other hand, demonstrate that the poor are not similarly compelled to resume their respect of property boundaries, nor the tenets that those boundaries embody, after they have left them.

To clarify, when the displaced laborers were still working at the mill, for instance, they each had a space in which they belonged within the bounds of private property, and their movements and thinking were guided by the parameters of their employment. However, once they are ousted from their jobs in favor of machines, they have no stake in upholding a system

that does not support them. When they were Robert's employees, the laborers respected the physical and psychological boundaries communicated to them by the layout of the mill: i.e., they entered and left the mill by the appropriate gate and only at the times when they had permission to do so; they did the work assigned to them and accepted that both the equipment and the results of their labor did not belong to them; and they bowed to the authority of the mill owner. But once they are ousted from their positions in the mill, the displaced laborers are free of the specific mill boundaries that used to guide them, and they no longer have an incentive to respect property boundaries in general as they have no stake in that system.

Accordingly, during the riot at Stilbro' mill, the displaced laborers break down the gates to the mill and tramp through the yard as they please, intent on gaining entry without Robert's consent. When the gates to the mill are broken down, they fall with a crash that Caroline describes as being "like the felling of great trees" (343); this remark brings to mind the great trees that populate the private wooded areas of manor homes, such as that belonging to the Yorkes upon which Caroline trespasses. The connection suggests that Caroline fears the homes of her class may be the next targets of mob violence, especially as she overheard the rioters discussing whether they should break into the Rectory as they made their way to the mill. So when Shirley's cottagers leave open her gate and congregate in her yard, thus failing to heed the gate as a bounding structure and respect her land as private property, the women fear it may be the beginning of more uprisings and mob violence, even if the gesture is read as being merely symbolic of a shift in attitude. When Shirley successfully shoos the cottagers from her yard and closes the gate, then, she confirms that the cottagers will still acquiesce to property boundaries and the accompanying behavioral codes as they apply to the laboring poor. Closing the gate also puts in place yet another structure that will affect how Shirley and Caroline can view and move

across the land, but as long as the laboring poor treat it as a boundary, it also gives the women a bit more security.

Historically, Luddites gathered on the outskirts of villages in order to plan their attacks and practice their drills, so they were associated with the undeveloped and unenclosed lands that would lie on the outskirts of towns. One early study of Luddism describes how rioters would be found practicing martial drills "on the heaths and moors," and people travelling late at night who had to "pass near wild moors and unfrequented places" would often hear the men drilling, with "the word of command and the measured tramp of many feet" (Peel 35, 66). This quote evokes the passage in *Shirley* where Caroline and Shirley, huddling behind the shrubs in the rectory garden, listen as the mob marches along the road toward Robert's mill: "It was not the tread of two, nor a dozen, nor of a score of men: it was the tread of hundreds" (337). The difference between the information in the study and the novel's depiction of the rioters is where the men are located: Shirley and Caroline hear the tread of the mob just outside their garden, not while they are walking among the heath and moors.

In fact, the novel's displaced laborers mob, march, and congregate only in the village. Even when Robert is shot by one of them while he is out riding, the incident happens *after* he crosses into the village, just as "Stilbro' Moor was left behind" and "plantations rose dusk on either hand" (543). The novel does imply that Luddites have made some use of the village's common lands: Caroline and Shirley allude to it during their walk on the Common, when they discuss how the wood was once one of Robin Hood's haunts, with "mementos of him still existing" in the area[25] (213). Yet the novel never actually shows the displaced laborers using the common, undeveloped lands surrounding Briarfield for martial drilling or any other purpose.

[25] Ned Ludd, the leader of the Luddite movement, was popularly likened to Robin Hood, and letters attributed to him were often signed with addresses such as "Robin Hood's Cave" or "Sherwood Forest" (Thompson, 601).

Shirley and Caroline do not even see peasant shacks, charming or otherwise, dotting their scenic views when they walk on the Common. Such a representational omission is surprising because Luddites were so widely known to use the moors for their meetings and training, and the rural poor often made their homes on the common lands. I would suggest that the novel purposely does not depict the laborers gathering, training, or living on the common lands outside the village in order to convey that it is unknown exactly *what* the poor do when they are on undeveloped, unenclosed land as these areas are difficult to monitor and regulate. Given the intense social unrest threatening Briarfield, such unknowns are particularly worrisome, and they underlie why Robert feels the need to obliterate the existing land features and enclose the common lands instead of simply modifying the existing layout when he expands his mill.

On the surface, Robert's project is largely altruistic in that he appears to be sacrificing bigger profits for the sake of helping "the houseless, the starving, the unemployed" (644), and Caroline's protests over losing her favorite walking spots seem selfish in comparison. However, a closer reading of the narrative reveals that the enclosure project is largely about dividing and containing the poor: the potential mobs will be disbanded, the laborers will be kept in their "lines of cottages" and "rows of cottage gardens," and the open lands will be bounded and parceled into farms. At the end of the novel, he narrator informs the reader that Robert's project was successful, and forty years later, the land still bears his mark: "the manufacturer's day-dreams [are] embodied in substantial stone and brick and ashes—the cinder-black highway, the cottages, and the cottage-gardens; […] a mighty mill, and a chimney, ambitious as the tower of Babel" (645). The language of this description gestures to the achievement of the desired psychological effect of the renovations, with the wishes of the manufacturer literally embodied in the layout and composition of the land (and no trace of the laborers' wishes), and the reference to the tower

of Babel indicating that the poor have been divided and prevented from talking to each other. The limited traversability of the land makes it more difficult for the laborers to congregate and talk, and the visual impact of the proposed renovations serves to channel the laborers' thinking toward their work, similar to how Caroline's thoughts are channeled toward marriage when she walks in the village.

Accordingly, while Caroline's dismay over the loss of the open land might like a selfish disregard for human suffering, she is actually mourning the loss of the space in which she and Shirley were able to move, talk, and reflect without the boundaries—both the social mores and the bounding structures that reinforce those mores—to which they are otherwise subjected. While enclosure is typically portrayed as taking land from the rural poor, here it is being presented as taking land from women of the gentry, specifically beautiful land that affords them pleasant places for walking and thinking. The poetic descriptions that characterize the Common and the natural terrace, the heaths and moors, the copse, the ravine, and the other land features that make up the undeveloped lands outside Briarfield suggest the magnitude of the aesthetic sacrifice being made by the women, but the narrative indicates that the women are also losing their only bit of freedom as well. Because the layout of the village, along with the bounding structures that mark and divide individual properties, guide the women's movements, thinking, and behavior while they are in town, the time they spend on unbounded, undeveloped land serves as respite from those restrictions. When they are on the Common, they walk where they want to walk instead of following paths, they admire the views and perspectives that they find pleasing rather than those that are arranged for them, and they are able to talk and think beyond what is conventional and deemed acceptable for women of their class. The loss of the open lands means the loss of those freedoms for them.

It is significant, then, that once Robert determines that he will enclose and develop the common lands, Caroline acquiesces silently and does not speak for the remainder of the narrative: she only smiles at Robert in response and "mutely" offers him a kiss (644-5). The novel suggests that the enclosure of the open land is necessary for the greater good of society, both with regard to the well-being of the laborers and the security of private property in the village, but these benefits must come at the cost of women's freedom outdoors. This style of unfortunate compromise, laden with the sense that something significant is being lost, is characteristic of realist novels that attempt to reconcile the opposing interests of preserving the countryside while adapting to the housing and employment needs of the laboring classes. Yet in this instance, it appears that Caroline's consent to the sacrifice of her freedom outdoors is also her acknowledgement that women's access to open, undeveloped lands is part of the problem being solved by the enclosure project. Developing the common lands will not only contain the laborers and keep them in view, but it will also prevent the women from escaping the eyes of the village. While Caroline and Shirley enjoy their private time on the Common, away from the eyes of the "gossips and scouts" who monitor their every move otherwise, they themselves participate in a similar policing of the land when they return to Shirley's dairy and disperse the cottagers due to concerns about potential uprisings against the status quo. Yet the threat presented by the talk of the village poor while they are gathered in an open space indicates a parallel threat posed by the talk of the women when they walk along the common. While the women do return to observing social codes and mores upon their return to the village, the fact that their thinking strayed at all, particularly in their questioning of marriage, presents a threat to social and domestic stability. The ending of *Shirley* suggests that Caroline and Shirley, after sampling the subversive line of thinking available to them outside the boundaries and scrutiny of

the village, ultimately decide that such freedom is too dangerous for the interests of social stability. Instead, they consent to the destruction of the common lands and get married, disappearing into their husbands' identities as "Mrs. Robert" and "Mrs. Louis" (646). Meanwhile, their men implement the vision of an increasingly capitalistic society properly tempered with traditional paternalistic, patriarchal values, keeping both the village women and the laboring classes contained and under control. The novel presents this model as having the best chance at achieving peace and prosperity in volatile times.

While walking on the open land allowed Shirley and Caroline to question social norms and consider ways in which a woman could have purpose outside marriage, the novel suggests that such radical thinking is too dangerous in the midst of class tensions and social upheaval; so the land is enclosed and developed, and, rather than continuing to challenge the status quo, the women end up marrying and revert to the traditional social model for the sake of stability. Indeed, the inability to implement a working social model that preserves privileged access to the countryside while also taking into account the needs of the rural poor in a capitalist economy is a theme that runs throughout the realist novels discussed in this dissertation. The novels either indicate the necessity of reverting to an earlier social model in order to protect the interests of the landholding class, or they depict their characters as being unable to move past the old models in a lasting way. This tendency is most evident in *The Egoist*, which was published in 1879 but reads like a much earlier novel (such as *Mansfield Park*) given its insularity regarding class conflict and other contemporary social issues. This insularity, which contrasts with the reach of typical mid-century novels regarding social, political, and economic issues, is part of the novel's general mocking of Willoughby's sense of his own importance, but it can also be read as a comment on how the landed nobility must live in a carefully controlled bubble in order to

imagine that they still have dominion over the countryside: Willoughby must shut away the outside world and keep those who live on his estate dependent on him in order for his estate and his landscape views to remain relevant.

In this light, *The Egoist* has a lot in common with *The Clever Woman of the Family* as both novels feature the implementation of a paternalistic and picturesque fantasy vision as a coping mechanism for the landed gentry as they face the loss of their traditional way of life. In depicting how Rachel's attempt to alleviate local rural poverty while preserving the family land fails so miserably that she suffers a nervous breakdown, *Clever Woman* recognizes that there is a social problem at stake without being able to offer a satisfactory solution: instead, Rachel, like her mother, ultimately retreats into a fantasy vision of picturesque imagery in which she has fulfilled her paternalistic duty to the poor. The utopian vision of the charitable school at the end of the novel indicates that the problems underlying the poverty have not actually been addressed, but Rachel is nevertheless satisfied because the picturesque imagery of her landscape view makes it seem as though they have been. It is essentially an updated version of the social model presented in *Mansfield Park*, where instead of ignoring the existence of the poor, these mid-century novels instead acknowledge the problems of rural poverty but admit that they do not have a way to fix them. I would suggest that the conscious disregard of such social problems, which are grounded in the legacy of enclosure and the exploitation of the rural poor for the sake of the institution of the estate, is largely what distinguishes *The Egoist* from *Mansfield Park*: while *Mansfield Park* takes for granted that the landed gentry owns the countryside outright, *The Egoist* subtly parodies this insularity and indicates that, as Willoughby's dependents begin to disperse and his remaining friends refuse to continue supporting his social tyranny, Willoughby's patriarchal fantasy is unsustainable, and his rule as the lord of the soil will be short-lived.

Bleak House and *John Halifax, Gentleman*, on the other hand, attempt to solve the problem by merging the interests of the landholding class with those of the rising industrialists and self-made men, thus combining the work ethic and empathy of men who have struggled with the leadership traditionally provided by the landed aristocracy. However, it is significant that in both texts, the presence of the manor house (and, by extension, what it symbolizes) is what prevents this model from succeeding as neither novel is able to fully incorporate it. In *Bleak House*, the large manor homes are left empty and crumbling as the novel concludes without an obvious patriarchal figure to do the work of governing and guiding the laboring classes with compassion and discerning judgment. The novel identifies the lack of leadership and social volatility that has been brought about by the dissolution and subsequent cultural irrelevancy of the aristocracy, but it is unable to identify a replacement that could step into this leadership role without being corrupted by the attendant wealth and power necessary to make it effective. The novel tries to move forward with regard to its social model, but in attempting to preserve the leadership formerly provided by the aristocracy while excluding the corrupting influences of inherited wealth and power, it cannot find a solution, and ultimately it cannot move past the legacy of the manor house. *John Halifax* is more successful in positing a model in that John, as a self-made man with a respect for authority, turns out to be an ideal candidate for leadership: he is able to temper his power as a wealthy industrialist and landholder with his compassion for the laboring poor, and he is even able to acquire a large manor house without it affecting his humility. The only problem is there is no one to take over for him once he dies: the novel suggests that his sons, and particularly his eldest, do not have the moral strength to take on the role of the benevolent patriarch, especially as their principles are tested and ultimately altered as a result of the family's move to the large manor house. Thus while the novel posits John as a

solution to the leadership of the corrupt aristocracy and the greedy industrialists, it has no plan for how his brand of leadership can be passed along to the next generation in order to ensure good leadership continues. In short, the novel acknowledges that John's passing along his wealth and land to his children leads back to the trap of inherited wealth and power, making its proposed social model no different from that which led to the problems it is trying to solve. Thus the solution to the problem dies with John at the end of the novel, and his children are left with the manor house and the estate, with no indication from the narrative as to how things will turn out for them, and nothing has actually changed with regard to the problem of how land, wealth, and political power are distributed among the population.

Even the ending of *Shirley* suggests that the manor house, and thus the institution of the landed estate, has become superfluous: as the narrator discusses the look of the present-day Hollow, his (or her) observations consider only how the mill has endured and expanded over the years. The mill, rather than the estate, is what organizes the land and dominates the view at the end, and it is where the power and wealth are now located. The open green spaces are gone and have been replaced with the trappings of successful industry. The mid-century realist novels discussed here search for a social model that will allow for the preservation of the institution of the estate and its privileged scenic views while also making amends to the rural poor (in the form of paternalistic support) for having been cheated of their share of the land. However, each of the novels fails to find a working solution, and their depictions of the land instead serve as a vehicle to explore the underlying social, political, and economic reasons why these solutions, along with the estate itself, must fail. This underlying discourse is not obvious when depictions of land and landscape are read only as decorative detail within the novels, but by close reading these depictions and analyzing them according to the historical, political, and aesthetic contexts in

which they take place, they provide new ways of understanding how the novels not only engaged in but helped to shape thinking on these issues.

By positing social models that nevertheless attempt to preserve the estate as the site from which the countryside is organized and controlled, realist novels are essentially participating in the picturesque tendency to mourn and romanticize a lost rural past. In this light, the depiction of the estate as an entity that regrettably no longer works, even after the realist novel's attempts to reconfigure and adapt it to new socioeconomic and political circumstances, is not so much a call for a return to old-fashioned paternalistic care of the poor as it is a lamentation of a fallen social model. Thus the moral enterprise of the realist novel, which is invested in combating picturesque imagery that romanticizes rural poverty, ends up being subordinated to the sentimental project of memorializing the grand estate, along with the model's potential for happy feudalistic relations among the classes, as something that has been lost as a result of the shift to a capitalistic economy. In this reading, the realism of these mid-century realist novels, particularly with regard to how they depict land, is actually an indulgence in the kind of conscious fantasy that realist novels ostensibly combat in rejecting the picturesque as an appropriate means of representing the countryside. The difference is that, by admitting that the models must fail, the novels eventually acknowledge that the fantasy is unsustainable even as they temporarily indulge it.

These novels can be read as participating in the picturesque fantasy of an idealized rural past through their representations of land and the estate, yet they do not present the same type of fantasy that Raymond Williams criticizes in his discussion of the self-conscious observer of landscape. For Williams, the self-conscious observer, who also represents the interests of the estate, is privileged, English, and male. The self-conscious observer believes that his ability to

admire a scenic view is indicative of his inherently heightened sensibility and his overall superiority. He looks on the land as one who owns it, and he imposes a certain visual order on the land that both reflects and reinforces his power as a landholder. This understanding of the role of one who consciously enjoys a scenic view suggests a specific method for reading landscape depictions in realist novels, yet Williams's approach does not work with the novels discussed in this study, at least not in a straightforward way. These novels lack the exemplary moment in which a wealthy male landholder looks proudly on a view of his land; instead, the novels' self-conscious spectators are largely genteel women, and the male spectators are not the pedigreed but those of humble origins. The titled landholding men simply are not shown admiring scenic views, and when they do look at the land, it is for some purpose other than enjoyment. Perhaps this discrepancy between Williams's theory of the spectator and how the novels depict the enjoyment of landscape is indicative of how the novels, while mourning the loss of the estate, are also exploring alternative models of order so as to prepare for the social and political changes being brought about by capitalism and the increased pressure for women's and workers' rights, which would come to a head later in the century. As this dissertation has demonstrated, the spectators looking at landscapes in these novels do not see them in the same way that Williams's archetypal self-conscious observer does: they impose different types of visual order on the land, and they assign different meanings to the imagery. In resisting the traditional mode of landscape, the novels provide alternatives to the vision and control exercised (and abused) by the noble patriarch, and thus they undercut and challenge this traditional site of authority even as they mourn the loss of the estate as an institution.

However, the realist novel's reliance on landscape as its means of representing the countryside and exploring issues that pertain to access, ownership, and utilization of rural land

ultimately prevents it from moving past the old attitude of entitlement, such as that portrayed in *Mansfield Park*, that it critiques and attempts to correct. As Alison Byerly has pointed out, realist novels are filled with passages of painterly language and imagery that are intended to be read as narrative artwork, yet in the case of landscape depictions, this use of artwork serves to keep the novels grounded in the oppressive power structures that they wish to expose and challenge. Consequently, the novels are unable to perform the kind of social transformations and compromises they envision with regard to the treatment of the poor and the preservation of the estate. In the end, these novels either offer problematic, unworkable solutions to the old model of landholding that preclude them from escaping its ideological hold, or, as *The Egoist* demonstrates, they satirize their own efforts to move past the old model and its attendant attitudes at all.

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