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"EVER LEARNING TO DWELL": HABITABILITY IN NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

Ву

Christine Renee Wilson

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

"EVER LEARNING TO DWELL": HABITABILITY IN NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

By

Christine Renee Wilson

My dissertation begins with a concern in contemporary literature and scholarship that, as we enter the twenty-first century, a meaningful experience of space and place is doomed to extinction. Critics such as Leo Marx and Roderick Nash have equated the centrality of place with a uniquely "American" literature. American texts about place, however, are increasingly anxious that the place in question is disappearing and that an emotional, psychological, and historical connection to place is no longer possible. I argue that literature — viewed through the lens of space theorists like Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Martin Heidegger, and Michel Foucault — offers a way to transform the relationship between subjects and space by considering, accepting, revising, and resisting gendered spaces and regulations. This relationship is thus made sustainable, livable and, more importantly, "habitable." My readings of literary texts (e.g. Sarah Orne Jewett's Deephaven, Wallace Stegner's Angle of Repose, Toni Morrison's Paradise, and contemporary haunted house narratives) illuminate how space theory often fails to account for the importance of gender and the ways texts can resist and subvert spatialized gender praxis. By taking a diverse historical, textual and theoretical approach to the question of the relationship between the subject and space, "Ever Learning to Dwell" counters much of the work in literary criticism that either gestures nostalgically towards a lost "place attachment" or dismisses the importance of a subjective connection to space altogether.

This dissertation is dedicated to

Madeleine Sue

Born January 24, 2007

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INTRODUCTION

The seed of this dissertation is Martin Heidegger's idea of dwelling explained in his 1951 essay "Building Dwelling Thinking." Throughout the writing process, I found myself returning to three Heideggerian principles: that dwelling is a crucial part of human life, that dwelling necessitates a respect for space, and that humans are "ever learning to dwell" (349, 352, 363). The first premise affirms that the desire to inhabit spaces emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually is legitimate, and the second serves as a reminder that inhabiting space should be an ethical process. Heidegger's final injunction that mortals must "ever learn to dwell" alludes to the complications of occupying space and emphasizes that dwelling is a process, not simply an endpoint. I turn to literature to investigate "ever learning to dwell" because it allows me to examine the individual, personal process of dwelling.

The texts I analyze foreground the literary nature of the experience of space and suggest that reading, writing, and the imagination transform space so that it is habitable. Like Heidegger's dwelling, habitability is, at the core, about how the subject makes space his or her own. Habitability is more specific than dwelling, though, because it incorporates a specific method of changing and mutating space. Michel de Certeau, in *The Practices of Everyday Life*, uses reading and writing as a model for "habitability," claiming that readers mutate the author's text in order to make it "habitable" (xxi). I take this idea a step further to argue that writers use their texts to mutate space and in so doing, make space "habitable." Habitability emerges in texts when space fulfills the subject's psychological, emotional, and social needs. Initially, habitability sounds

utopian, but it is not necessarily an endpoint or objective because habitability is constantly shifting based on the changing needs of the subject and space. Nor is it indicative of an "ideal" relationship between the subject and space, since habitability must continually negotiate the competing needs of multiple subjects, not to mention the often conflicting interests of the subject and space (inasmuch as space can be said to have interests).

Current thought on a healthy and ideal subject-space relationship emphasizes harmony, balance, and respect between the subject and space. I share these ideals, but the texts I look at show some of the limitations of searching for a perfect space or subject-space relationship. They acknowledge the conflicts, tensions, and complications of inhabiting space and create habitability even when balance, harmony, and mutual respect are impossible. The characters approach habitability pragmatically; they make unlivable space livable. Their habitability is makeshift, untidy, sometimes ethically problematic, and sometimes refreshingly progressive. Each chapter offers a model (or models) of habitability, but none of them show perfect subject-space relationships.

Each chapter begins with a different spatial crisis and then explores the ways characters produce habitability by using writing to undo, live with, or transform damaged home space. I focus on home spaces because they are the most likely sites of habitability. The first chapter addresses wild space that refuses to conform to its inhabitant's (conventional) expectations. This chapter proves my argument that habitability can be either ethically positive or negative. Caroline Kirkland's *A New Home – Who'll Follow?* (1839) read in conjunction with its sequel *Forest Life* (1842) creates habitability based on dismissing rigid gender roles and the traditional comforts of home such as stability and

domestic refinement. The narrator of Wallace Stegner's Angle of Repose (1971), on the other hand, uses writing to create a habitability that reinforces the patriarchal control of gender and gendered space. While Kirkland uses writing to negotiate the relinquishment of the subject's control over space, Stegner uses writing to dominate space. The second chapter focuses on how the cultural construction of domestic space conflates space with femininity and vice versa. This chapter maps out three different models of habitability that resist and revise that conflation. Sarah Orne Jewett's *Deephaven* introduces a model of habitability based on flexible domestic space, and Marilynne Robinson's Housekeeping and Toni Morrison's Paradise, appropriate Jewett's model of fluid domesticity to create habitability in very different situations. Together these texts show that a new space is not needed for habitability, but that a revised subject-space relationship is necessary. The third chapter tackles ecologically damaged space and illustrates the way linking the body and space facilitates habitability and saves space at the same time. Mary Austin's Lost Borders explores the struggle between economic and ecological needs, habitability within domestic and natural space, and an individual and communal sense of place. Austin's narrative gives space a body to realign spatial and gender power dynamics. Terry Tempest Williams's Refuge: An Unfamiliar History of Family and Place explores how a close body-space connection saves both the self and space. Gretel Ehrlich's Islands, the Universe, Home synthesizes Austin and William's approach to the body-space relationship. Finally, the fourth chapter brings together the concerns of the former chapters — uncontrollable space, gendered space, and competitive habitability — through the unexpected venue of contemporary haunted house narratives.

This chapter shows that habitability can emerge in even the most unlikely of situations but that, sometimes, habitability is more destructive than unlivable space.

Theoretical Conversations

To situate my dissertation contextually and theoretically, I ask two central questions: 1) What subject-space relationship creates sustainable habitability? and 2) What is the relationship between literature and space?

To answer the first question, I bring space theory, domestic theory, ecocriticism, and ecofeminism into dialogue with one another. My understanding of the different kinds of space and possible relationships within space is heavily indebted to Henri Lefebvre's work in *The Production of Space*. Because I am discussing personal space, I look to domesticity theorists to illuminate the link between personal space and identity. Finally, for the examination of the ethics of habitability, ecocriticism and ecofeminism are particularly useful. I share ecocriticism's dedication to producing a sustainable subject-space relationship, even as I depart from its emphasis on close, personal connections with natural space. I build on ecofeminism's consideration of natural space and gender to explore the way habitability is often a process of re-writing the body.

I. Henri Lefebvre's Spatial Triad and the Need for New Space

Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* attempts to create a "unifying theory of space" and argues that the common conception of space as simply an "empty container" is misguided. Instead, space is produced by a variety of social forces. His spatial triad of conceived space (representations of space), lived space (representational space), and

perceived space (spatial practice)¹ affords a specific vocabulary for talking about the different kinds of space and, even more importantly, the different kinds of relationships between the subject and space. Conceived space involves the abstractions and verbalizations necessary for a cognitive approach to space. Within this kind of space, the subject dominates space because the subject's conceptions of space override the actual space. Lived space is the space of everyday life, as well as the space of the imagination. In this case, space is dominant over the subject's experience. Finally, perceived space relates to the sensory perception of space, and within perceived space, the subject-space interaction is more balanced. The subject interacts with each kind of space, although at different levels.

In addition to the spatial triad, I use two more Lefebvrian terms to describe how the subject is relating to space — domination and appropriation. Dominated space is "transformed — and mediated — by technology, by practice." The prevalence of "slab[s] of concrete or a motorway" shows that domination is becoming the most prevalent way of relating to space in the twentieth century. An appropriated space, on the other hand, is a "natural space modified in order to serve the needs and possibilities of a group." Monuments, buildings, streets, and houses are all examples of appropriated space (Lefebvre 165). Appropriating space implies an incorporation of all the elements of spatial triad (Lefebvre 166).

The most reliable way to determine whether the subject dominates or appropriates space is to examine the affective content of the relationship. Lefebvre's description of how to dominate space emphasizes the violent nature of this subject-space relationship:

¹ To make things clearer, I will use the lived/conceived/perceived space to refer to Lefebvre's spatial triad, rather than the corresponding representational/representations of/ spatial practice.

"In order to dominate space, technology introduces a new form into a pre-existing space — generally a rectilinear or rectangular form such as a meshwork or a chequerwork. A motorway brutalizes the countryside and the land, slicing through space like a great knife. Dominated space is usually closed, sterilized, emptied out" (Lefebvre 164). In effect, domination of space occurs when conceived space (that focused on geometrical division into "rectangular forms") takes over lived and perceived space. It is a space that is abused, rather than used. Appropriated space, however, is a much more thoughtful and even gentle use of space — space is still modified, but it is done in a way that allows the existing space to retain some of its original qualities while still meeting the needs of communities and individuals. Appropriating space suggests a harmony between the subject and space and embodies a balance of lived, perceived, and conceived space. Lefebvre does not argue that appropriation is preferable to domination, or vice versa. Instead, he contends that the subject needs to be able to appropriate interior, domestic spaces while dominating exterior, public spaces.

Lefebvre, along with numerous other space theorists, acknowledges the importance of domestic, lived space and, furthermore, attempts to describe and analyze the components of dwelling and spatial practice. It is easy, however, to get frustrated with these texts because they rarely leave the domain of abstract thought. For example, even though Lefebvre reiterates the importance of the body and space, as well as lived space, few actual bodies enter his text at all. The reader is not taken into houses where one might see lived space being enacted, nor does "home" or the house enter the discussion in any substantial way (with the notable exception of Gaston Bachelard, of course). By focusing exclusively on urban space, these analyses also largely ignore

spaces that have been gendered as feminine. My analysis seeks to remedy this by exploring texts that enter the home and create habitable spaces.

II. Home is Where Identity Is

"Home" space entwines with the idea of "self" in each of these texts. Culture produces the link between identity and self, and when the space in question is the home, issues of gender emerge. In the nineteenth century, the "cult of domesticity" fused gender identity with spatial regulations. The appropriate performance of housekeeping duties collided with the performance of gender. The everyday maintenance of a household — sweeping the floor, dusting knickknacks — becomes imbued with significance beyond simply maintaining tidiness.

Scholars of domesticity offer two primary interpretations of domesticity and its relationship to gender. For scholars like Nina Baym, Ann Romines, Nancy Woloch, and Jane Tompkins domesticity is empowering rather than restrictive. It would not be accurate to say that these critics attempt to recuperate domesticity, but they do try to interrogate the complex social and cultural work of domesticity and the domestic novel (primarily written by women for women in the nineteenth century). Nancy Woloch argues, for example, that while the role of women in the domestic sphere may be "enclosed, limited, [and] private space" it is still "an improvement over having no space at all" (117). Jane Tompkins points to the cultural functions of domesticity and more specifically the domestic novel. In her article, "Uncle Tom's Cabin and Literary History," she explains that, "the popular domestic novel of the nineteenth century represents a monumental effort to reorganize culture from a woman's point of view; that

this body of work is remarkable for its intellectual complexity, ambition, and resourcefulness" (503-4).² This interpretation of domesticity reads it as nurturing, rather than disempowering, for women but it does nothing to undermine the "separate spheres" paradigm, nor does it question the spatial ramifications of domestication. A more traditional understanding of domesticity suggests that women are prisoners of domestic spatial regulations. Nancy Cott explains, "Defining it [the domestic sphere] as her province, the canon of domesticity made woman's household occupation her vocation. The very attempt to immobilize woman's role in the home transformed her household into a discrete, specialized, and objective work role" (74). The texts within this dissertation maintain sympathy with the first position, in that they affirm the importance of domesticity for creating habitability, but they acknowledge the second position, too, by rewriting domesticity and especially the link between gender and domestic space.

The twentieth-century texts I study confirm that the management of gender through the regulation of space is still salient well after the cult of domesticity hit its peak. For the characters in both the nineteenth and twentieth century texts, habitability necessitates the resistance of both spatial and gender regulations, and therefore the characters who are able to create habitability most successfully dissociate personal identity from spatial identity. In popular culture, the link between home and self has become increasingly commonplace, and myriads of books are available on how to make one's house as "mirror" of the self. But, as a reading of Winifred Gallagher's book,

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Whether we agree with Tompkins's specific claims about domesticity's ability to "reorganize culture from a woman's point of view" (whatever that might mean) is less important than recognizing that domesticity is being emphasized as an important and valuable cultural construction, and that furthermore, women's relationship to domesticity is interpreted as significant. Rather than dismissing domesticity outright as a "prison" for women, Tompkins's acknowledges the potentialities of domesticity for women.

House Thinking shows, the relationship between "home" and identity is actually far more complex.

Central to the book's multi-faceted and room-by-room exploration is the idea that home space should provide the subject with a coherent identity. Gallagher explains, "With some informed thought, however, we can ensure that although its shape shifts, home helps knit up our changing selves into a coherent identity, connect our past to our present and future, organize our days, and carry us forward on what Samuel Johnson called 'the smooth current of domestic joy'" (xix). Gallagher implicitly posits that identity is both fluid and fragmented by time and a chaotic world. Identity is broken, in other words, and to become whole again, it needs domestic mending. She assumes that the house functions as more than a shelter and bolsters and heals an incoherent self.

Domestic space, if properly "thought" can "knit" together the various pieces that compose an identity and becomes an intimate part of the subject. The trope Gallagher uses to describe the ideal home — a "womb with a view" — emphasizes the intimacy between the subject and domestic space.

Meant to conjure images of the epitome of comfort, nurturing, and security, the phrase "womb with a view" actually suggests a divided identity. A womb, intensely interior, evokes an inevitable exteriority as well. It can only be occupied for a finite amount of time before the inhabitant must enter the external world, and thus the time within the womb, while formative, is temporary. The emphasis of the "view" in Gallagher's phrase further stresses the idea that a house is not hermetically sealed but rather allows the inhabitant to be on the border between the internal and the external. The allusive relationship to E. M. Forster's *Room with a View* and Virginia Woolf's "A Room

of One's Own" reinforces the idea of an interior realm that works in tandem with external forces and stimulation. It is also implicitly on the edge of another border — between self and other — because the womb is simultaneously part of the self and at the same time home to an other. Calling the home a "womb with a view" undermines the idea that the home will necessarily stitch together a fragmented identity. Gallagher's seemingly simple metaphor establishes a complex relationship between subject and space that involves a number of breached boundaries.

Gallagher's phrase also ties the home to the physical feminine body, a trope that appears again and again in the narratives examined. Her work suggests that the link between home and identity is nurturing and leads to habitability (though, of course, she does not use those terms), but the texts I examine come to the opposite conclusion. In most of the narratives, the relationship between femininity and space is tautological — women are associated with domestic space and domestic space is associated with women. Control of one becomes control of the other; the attempt to control the feminine, within these texts, is expressed through the regulation and domination of domestic space, and vice versa.

III. Place Attachment

Domestic theorists link identity with home space in order to benefit the subject.

Ecocriticism also argues that identity and place are intertwined, but they focus on how this connection benefits space. Ecocriticism is concerned with the study of literature and the (loosely defined) environment. In practice, this means that ecocritics investigate everything from contemporary nature writing to birding guides from the nineteenth

century to the way the human-environment relationship is portrayed in canonical literature. Whereas space theorists are often concerned with describing and analyzing how subjects *do* interact with space, ecocritics are more interested in how subjects *should* interact with space. The concepts "sense of place" and "place attachment" form the implicit basis of how ecocritics think the subject should relate to her environment.

Lawrence Buell defines place attachment in his most book, Future of Environmental Criticism. It is the bond that occurs between humans and places, real or imagined and is based on both spatial and temporal aspects. He envisions placeattachment as spatially oriented in a set of concentric circles, with the home place occupying the center position, and other places (such as work and second homes) lying in the outer circles (70). Temporally, place attachment is formed through an accumulation of personal experience and knowledge of the history of a particular place (71). Finally, place attachment is formed through "imaging" or imagining, and this is what allows one to have an attachment to places that one has never even visited (70). But while place attachment is personal, Buell also emphasizes that to be useful, place attachments have to be socially recognized as well: "To that end, it can't just be 'my' memory place, but also 'ours': shareable: an alchemical transformation of spaces all over the map into places of lived experience worthy of care" (76). While social recognition may be important, sense of place is still essentially formulated as an intensely individual phenomenon, with the individual in question at the very center of the circle. It is the individual's home, the individual's personal experience, and the individual's imaginings that form the basis of "place attachment."

Place attachment is crucial for ecocriticism. Lawrence Buell calls place "an indispensable concept for environmental humanities" because of it is productively indeterminate — it "opens up" and potentially offers a form of resistance to modern tendencies to erase particularity (Future 62, 66). Ecocritics invoke sense of place and place attachment in hopes of "bringing human communities back into a more responsible set of relationships with the earth" (Preston xiv). Many ecocritics (implicitly or explicitly) agree that a sense of place is vital for environmental reform, and they emphasize and admire sense of place within literary works.³ In practice, this means that ecocritics often approach literature about place as if it should provide positive models of place attachment for readers to emulate. In nature writing, place attachment is equated with security and safety, and even self-awareness. The logic is that a personal connection to a particular place will inspire love, respect, and caretaking of that place. Even when sense of place is critiqued (such as in much of Faulkner's work, or in Jane Smiley's A Thousand Acres), the issues that are focused on are insularity (often embodied by incest) or provincialism.⁴ The problem with current subject-space relationships, for ecocritics, is

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The Ecocriticism Reader, for example, features articles that argue (broadly speaking) that a close connection between humans and space and a keen attention to natural space is essential for environmental health, such as Scott Russell Sanders's "Speaking a Word for Nature," Leslie Marmon Silko's "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination," and Vera Norwood's "Heroines of Nature: Four Women Respond to the American Landscape." Lawrence Buell's The Environmental Imagination is trying to remedy a problem that he sees in American literary history (that it has emphasized that the "representation of the natural environment as a major theme while marginalizing the literature devoted most specifically to it") by reviving interest in "environmentally oriented work" (Environmental Imagination 9). Implicit in his argument is that an attention to place and natural space matters, and that it is better to pay attention to these issues than to ignore them. In creative works, figures like Gary Snyder, John Muir, Wendell Berry, and Terry Tempest Williams are well known for their claims about the importance of subject-space relationships.

⁴ Often the humans in these texts are "too close" because the space in question is metaphorically too small and limited. Buell acknowledges this critique, saying that he is aware that "devotees of place-attachment can easily fall into sentimental environmental determinism" (66), and that too much place attachment can result in "maladaptive sedentariness, inordinate hankering to recover the world we have lost, xenophobic stigmatization of outsiders and wanders" (68).

that subjects no longer have a connection to place, and therefore see no reason to respect or protect the environment.

Wallace Stegner's essay "A Sense of Place" suggests a clear formula for cultivating place attachment (which he call sense of place). He explains:

Back to Wendell Berry, and his belief that if you don't know where you are you don't know who you are. He is not talking about the kind of location that can be determined by looking at a map or a street sign. He is talking about the kind of knowing that involves the senses, the memory, the history of a family or a tribe. He is talking about the knowledge of place that comes from working in it in all weathers, making a living from it, suffering from its catastrophes, loving its mornings or evenings or hot noons, valuing it for the profound investment of labor and feeling that you, your parents and grandparents, your all-but-unknown ancestors have put into it. (205)

Stegner's definition favors history, personal and communal, as a mechanism of attaining a sense of place. It centers on a symbiotic interaction between humans and the environment that occurs over time, preferably over generations of time. Although Stegner emphasizes history and memory as a way to connect to place, individual affect is not unimportant. The use of the terms "suffering," "loving," and "feeling" are individually based, affective relationships with space. Like Buell, Stegner also favors a sense of place that is the result of extensive lived and perceived experience of a place — it is clearly not an effect of conceived space. The end result of all this suffering, loving, and feeling is that the subject

in question will incorporate the place into her own personal identity, presumably to the benefit of both self and place.

For Buell and Stegner, the problem with current subject-space relationships is that subjects no longer have place attachments. Instead, people are ungrounded, wandering through a world of what Linda McDowell calls non-places — those spaces that are indistinguishable from each other and in which subjects are reduced to anonymous numbers (6). Lefebvre would describe this disconnection as a conflict between conceived, lived, and perceived space. His argument is that conceived space overshadows lived and perceived space, to the extent that it damages the subject (Lefebvre 11). Space theorists and ecocritics, then, locate the origin of damaged space similarly: an inappropriate relation between the subject and space. Their solution to this problem is different, though. Space theorists tend to look to a new space of some sort that will allow for a different relationship between the subject and space, while ecocritics are apt to argue that subjects need to return to the co-dependent relationship with space that existed when more people made their living from working the land. My dissertation presents habitability as an alternative to producing a new space or returning to a former way of relating to space.

IV. Ecofeminism & Ecological Thinking

If space theorists argue that subjects need a new space, and ecocritics advocate changing the contemporary relationship to space, ecofeminists offer a re-conceived relationship to space as the solution to the subject-space crisis. "Ecofeminism" (used loosely) refers to a variety of different strains and movements that center around the question of the

gendering of environmental destruction.⁵ Ecofeminism contends that it is not possible to understand and cope with environmental damage without accounting for the gendered nature of this destruction and, furthermore, that feminism should take into account the impact of environmental degradation on women. Mary Mellor explains:

Ecofeminism brings together the analysis of the ecological consequences of human 'progress' from the green movement, and the feminist critique of women's disproportionate responsibility for the costs and consequences of human embodiment, to show how relations of inequality within the human community are reflected in destructive relations between humanity and the nonhuman natural world. (viii)

The relationship between the body and space are central to ecofeminists. Affinity ecofeminism argues that women are tied closely to nature through "blood, birth, and sexuality" (Mellor 58), and that furthermore, that women are potentially empowered by this link.⁶ Ecofeminists who view the relationship between women and nature as socially

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⁵ The term itself emerged in the 1970s from French scholar Francious d'Eaubonne, and it was then used to describe activist movements, a type of philosophy, and later a kind of literary criticism.

Too often affinity ecofeminism is considered representative of all ecofeminism, and as a result, it has been neglected, ignored, or strategically avoided by a variety of scholars, even by those who are seemingly doing work that is intimately related to ecofeminist concerns. Feminists, for example, have not welcomed ecofeminist thought because of the complicated historical association of women and nature. The earth was (is) identified as feminine, and simultaneously women were (are) identified as "closer" to the natural and the bodily. Thus, a loop is created whereby women were denigrated for their alleged inability to move beyond their bodies into the realm of rationality (since they are allegedly closer to nature), and in turn, when nature was symbolically feminized, it donned the associated characteristics of availability and passivity. (The reverse is also true – when women are characterized as "natural" they can also take on the characteristics of property). Stacy Alaimo describes feminist reaction to think linking succinctly: "If women's perceived proximity to nature is responsible to nature is responsible for her oppression, then her liberation, it would seem, is contingent on her distance from nature" (4). Thus, feminists have often decried ecofeminism for allegedly endorsing this essentialist and dangerous link.

Yet, many of the objections made by feminists and other scholars have been responded to admirably by ecofeminist scholars, and much, if not most, of the recent work on ecofeminism has revised and moved away from affinity ecofeminism. Alaimo's *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as a Feminist Space*, for instance, presents a compelling and well-considered argument that shows how natural

constructed and not biologically determined still agree that environmental degradation often affects women disproportionately because of the power relations and gender roles that often dictate women's interactions with natural space (Warren 2; Mellor 58).

Given ecofeminism's focus on the link between the body and space, it is surprising that when ecofeminists offer solutions to subject-space problems, they concentrate on changing conceived space (instead of lived and perceived space). For example, Carolyn Merchant argues that nature "died" when the philosophy of mechanism (otherwise known as the Scientific Revolution) began to dominate thought in the mid-17th century (192). Within this philosophy of nature and natural space, nature was transformed from an organic, living being to a machine, and this "mechanism could function as a subtle sanction for the exploitation and manipulation of nature and its resources" (Merchant 102). That very exploitation and manipulation of nature, according to Merchant, went hand-in-hand with an increased exploitation and manipulation of women too. Val Plumwood also argues that philosophy is at the root of the question, but she contends that the philosophy of dualisms (such as nature/culture, man/women, mind/body) "structure

space and feminism are not opposed by exploring how the boundaries between culture and nature are permeable and fluid. Noel Sturgeon, in *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*, directly counters accusations of essentialism in ecofeminism. She shows that essentialist connections between women and nature have been invoked at strategic historical and political moments (11), and that an understanding of strategic essentialism is critical for both ecofeminism and feminism (10). Furthermore, she argues that it is much more productive to understand why essentialism arises and further to understand the potentials promised by ecofeminism, rather than dismissing ecofeminism for its alleged essentialism (Sturgeon 18).

In other words, ecofeminism as a whole is not concerned or invested in positing an essential "connection" between women and natural space, and in fact, many ecofeminists are dedicated to undermining that alleged connection. Nor are most ecofeminists interested in articulating "women's" perspective of the natural world or arguing that women an environmentally better relationship with the natural world that is based on care-giving and nurturing. Issues of gender are becoming more intertwined, in fact, with questions of domination as a whole. Many ecofeminists now argue that all systems of domination are linked, and that it is not possible to fully understand the mechanisms and processes of domination without carefully considering these links. Sturgeon explains, "Primary among ecofeminism's strengths is a political theory that attempts to deploy at once a number of radical analyses of injustice and exploitation focused on racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, imperialism, specieism, and environmental degradation" (18). Karen Warren's five-part ecofeminist philosophy echoes Sturgeon's position by focusing on the links between various forms of domination – not just women and nature (43).

otherwise different categories of oppression" (3). Plumwood's argument is clearly not identical to Merchant's, but both assert that changing the subject's conceptions of space can effectively change the way the subject lives and acts within and toward space.

Lorraine Code's model of "ecological thinking" offers a potentially more ethical way of thinking about the subject's relations to space. Whereas place attachment describes a very particular, individual relationship with space, ecological thinking offers a general theory of how the subject can relate to space. She explains that ecological thinking does not simply mean thinking about ecology or the environment but is rather a transformation of traditional Western epistemological practices (5). Ecological thinking "proposes a way of engaging — if not all at once — with the implications of patterns, places, and the interconnections of lives and events in and across the human and nonhuman world" (Code 4). Particularity is essential for ecological thinking, whether in the sense of a particular geographical location or a particular person or a particular animal. Whereas Western scientific epistemology often tries to eliminate experiential evidence in favor of general, replicable data, ecological thinking combines the subjective, particular modes of knowing in conjunction with quantifiable evidence. Significantly, ecological thinking underscores the importance of location as "constitutive" of knowledge and subjectivity (19).

Place and space matter to this kind of knowing, and they matter in a way that is not dependent on the *kind* of place in question; ecological thinking is just as applicable to (sub)urban environments as natural ones, domestic spaces as natural ones. Furthermore, being an ecological thinker does not require a stasis or stability but instead acknowledges that situation and context affects what and how one knows. At the same time, it demands

a commitment to responsible knowledge and interaction with space. An ecologically thinking subject is "self-critically cognizant of being part of and specifically located within a social physical world that constrains and enables human practices, where knowing and acting always generate consequences" (Code 5). As with habitability, ecological thinking is not necessarily ethical or unethical. Code acknowledges that ecosystems are concurrently "as cruel as they are kind" and that "ecological thinking is as available for feeding self-serving romantic fantasies as for inspiring socially responsible transformations" (16). In reaction to this acknowledge she suggests the need for "vigilant monitoring," especially self-monitoring. If ecological thinking lives up to its potential, it is "about imagining, crafting, articulating, endeavoring to enact principles of ideal cohabitation" (24). At its best, habitability is a result of character's self aware commitment to ecological thinking. But even when characters are dedicated to thinking ecologically, rarely do their actual attempts to create habitability conform exactly to this model.

In terms more familiar to my work, ecological thinking involves a relationship between the subject and space that balances the spatial triad. As I understand it, ecological thinking is a synthesis of conceived, lived, and perceived space. It is a kind of conceived space because it is a carefully thought out space dependent at least partially on mental and intellectual contemplations of space, but particular, concrete bodily relationships dictate these mental maps of space. Lived space, if considered in terms of the imagination and even sacred uses of space, implicitly is associated with ecological thinking because in order to think ecologically, one has to live and imagine space, or least seriously consider how space is lived and imagined.

Literarily Experiencing Space

Space theory, particularly Lefebvre, and ecocriticism address the question of literature's relation to space most explicitly. Both are suspicious of literature and the relation it has to space, and therefore my approach to literature as constitutive of a personal experience of space represents a marked departure from these theories.

The ecocritical view of literature cannot be understood without first understanding the premises and assumptions behind the movement. The first assumption is that literature and space are two completely different, if not fundamentally incompatible, entities. Cheryll Glotfelty's description of the field in her introduction to The Ecocriticism Reader says, "Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and nonhuman" (xix). The image of a figure straddling the gap between literature and "the land" suggests that these two things are inherently divided, as does the repetition of familiar binaries of nature/culture and human/nonhuman. The precept that ecocritics are trying to bridge this gap further emphasizes that there is a division between the two, and furthermore, that literature and space may work oppositionally. When ecocritics talk about the relationship between literature and space, it is almost always in terms of literature's relationship to "real" space, as opposed to imagined or textual space.

Ecocriticism's second premise is that literature, and literary criticism, should help solve the current spatial crisis, whether we describe that crisis in terms of environmental

⁷ Glotfelty's introduction is widely acknowledged as providing one of the first cohesive introductions to the then-emerging field of ecocriticism.

degradation or the subject's detachment from place. Again, I turn to Glotfelty.

Following the assertion that we have "reached the age of environmental limits," Glotfelty explains:

Many of us in colleges and universities worldwide find ourselves in a dilemma. Our temperaments and talents have deposited us in literature departments, but, as environmental problems compound, work as usual seems unconscionably frivolous... How then can we contribute to environmental restoration, not just in our spare time, but from within our capacity as professors of literature? (xxi)

Underlying this description of literary criticism is the premise that literature should also preserve and protect (natural) space. In practice, this has frequently meant that ecocritics critique literary works based on their division from real space or their troubling ecological ethics.

Just as ecocritics privilege "real" space, they also emphasize the "real" readers of literature. Ecocritics tend to view literature's purpose regarding space in the following ways: 1) As a re-presentation of the tangible world, 2) As the creation of a vicarious experience of space, 3) As a model for how the subject *should* relate to space, and 4) As influencing the subject's relation to space via rhetorical devices. In each case, the reaction of the reader is paramount. In the first and second case, space is portrayed in a way that allows the reader to have an accurate or vivid experience of space. In the third model, the reader learns how to relate properly to space by reading about exemplary subject-space relationships. (This closely links to Buell and Stegner's ideas of the use-value of place attachment in literature.) In the final model, literature persuades the reader

Carson's Silent Spring. Released first in serial form in the New Yorker and then as a book through Houghton-Mifflin, Silent Spring topped the New York Times bestseller list by November in 1962. Silent Spring mapped the effects of the (mis)use of pesticides and herbicides, arguing that the environment was being damaged, and that furthermore, these chemicals were infecting humans as well. Carson's book persuaded readers that chemical abuse was a problem and provoked a flurry of responses from citizens, government officials, and chemical companies. Carson is now credited with prompting the ban of DDT, the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency, and even with writing one of the most important books in the twentieth century (Murphy 183). Again, the focus here is on the effects literature has on the readers and subsequently on the ways that readers relate to space.

Lefebvre and ecocritics converge around the assumption that literature can be dangerously abstract and that therefore it can be damaging to lived space (or what ecocritics call "the world"). Lefebvre argues that literature resides within conceived space and therefore plays a part in dominating lived and perceived space. On one level, Lefebvre's assertion makes sense because reading and writing generally fall into the realm of thinking and conceiving, and therefore would be part of conceived space.

Lefebvre (often) equates verbal signs with abstraction, and argues that capitalist culture's overemphasis on the "written text" results in "awesome reductionistic force vis-à-vis 'lived' experience" (52). He makes an exception to this objection for literature that simply "describe[s]" claiming that this kind of text resides within lived space (39).

Within the paradigm of ecocriticism, Lefebvre would approve only of strictly representional literature.

Ecocriticism establishes a precedent for studying issues of space in literature and suggests that literature has an important role in that study. Furthermore, ecocritics have provided a much-needed analysis of how literature can affect actions and attitudes outside of the text. But, what both ecocritics and Lefebvre overlook is that textuality does not have to be interpreted as dichotomous to space. My work suggests that space and textuality are not so distant from one another, and that, in fact, the subject brings the two together by using literature to transform space. Part of the problem with limiting literature to discussions of non-textual space and readers is that it forecloses the examination of the role imagination plays in negotiating and transforming space. It cleans up the messiness of literature, at the expense of wiping away potentially productive complexities.

I define literature broadly to include the actual written text itself, its reader, as well as the acts of imagining, writing, and reading that take place within the text. When I talk about the transformation of space through literature, I almost always focus on the way literature works for characters within the text. That is, characters in the novels I examine overtly use reading and writing to transform their own spaces, and in turn, produce new spaces through this writing. Occasionally, I also address the readers of novels and their sense of "habitability" when reading. My focus on characters's creation of habitability is not meant to suggest that subjects outside the text should use these characters as "models" for how to create habitability. Rather, the relationship between subjects, space, and literature within these novels addresses some of the gaps within

ecocriticism and space theory, such as the creation of a practical, but imperfect, habitability and the role of the literature as a transformative agent.

Texts

I structure my chapters according to theoretical concerns, which accounts for the tendency for each chapter to traverse time and space. All four chapters address a different spatial crisis, and in the process, tease out different aspects of habitability. I chose primary texts based on how their characters use the literary to interact with space. My objective is to allow these texts to take part in a transhistorical conversation that illuminates the central concerns of my project.

For example, Caroline Kirkland's A New Home – Who'll Follow? and Forest Life are the foundation for my argument, not because they mark the chronological beginning of the texts I examine, but because they lay the groundwork for my argument that writing can be used to transform space so that it is habitable. I pair Kirkland with Wallace Stegner because Lyman Ward, of Stegner's Angle of Repose, uses a process of creating habitability that is very similar to Kirkland's, but the habitability he creates produces a very different kind of space. This chapter thereby yields two interrelated claims: that characters can use writing to negotiate damaged space and that habitability is not utopian.

Mary Clavers, the narrator of Kirkland's *A New Home* and *Forest Life*, migrates from New York to Michigan in the 1830s and faces a space that she finds un-habitable in virtually every way. (Her view of what is un-habitable is highly subjective — she objects to Michigan space and inhabitants because she views them as unsettled, wild, and undomesticated. Clavers, in other words, views Michigan as a space that should be

colonized.) One of the ways she negotiates this un-habitability is to write about her experiences, and in the process of recasting her life in Michigan, she transforms her own conceived space to the extent that she eventually finds her lived and perceived space habitable. The result of Clavers' habitability is an appropriated space where the boundaries between the natural and domestic, and the masculine and feminine break down and become fluid. Her spatial habitability anticipates the models proposed by twentieth-century writers Marilynne Robinson and Toni Morrison.

Stegner's Lyman Ward is a wheelchair-bound historian who, like Clavers, finds his space un-habitable. Also like Clavers, he negotiates this un-habitability by writing. But instead of focusing on his own experiences, he rewrites the life of his grandparents, Susan and Oliver Ward, who settled in the West in the nineteenth century. His interest is specifically in his grandmother, Susan Ward, and the reader gets to know her through the inclusion of her letters and Lyman's interpretation and retelling of the events of her life. This framed narrative is not used to transgress the boundaries between natural and domestic space, nor is it meant to reconfigure gender roles. Instead, Lyman uses a pioneer woman's narrative to reconfirm his own assumptions about pioneering space, as well as his own gender assumptions and desires. Through the process of rewriting their lives, Lyman produces a habitable space for himself, but the kind of space he finds habitable differs greatly from Clavers. Lyman creates dominated space and affirms the traditional gendering of space and spatialization of gender. Rather than resisting gendered spatial regulations through writing, as Clavers does, Lyman uses writing to reinforce and bolster these regulations.

The second chapter deals more explicitly with the crisis of gendered space that emerges implicitly in Kirkland's and Stegner's work. Sarah Orne Jewett's Deephaven. Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*, and Toni Morrison's *Paradise* use the common figure of the ship and water to sabotage the very definitions of the domestic, and with that, the definitions of gender and sexuality as well. The characters in each of these texts begin their creation of habitability by resisting spatial regulations and regulators. In Deephaven, the regulators and regulations are more implicit than explicit, and the defiance is subtler as well, whereas in *Housekeeping*, the domestic regulators are clearly embodied by the characters of Lucille, the interfering neighbors, and the sheriff. These texts converge around their use of the trope of water and ships as spaces that defy domestic and gender regulations. Like Robinson's text, Morrison's spatial regulators are clear — the Morgan twins, and Reverend Pulliam, for example. These regulators have far more power and jurisdiction than those in *Deephaven* or *Housekeeping*, however, and they use this power to attempt to destroy the "monstrous" feminine and domestic space of the Convent.

All three of these novels initially seem to embrace the relationship between women, domesticity, and homemaking. Women dominate the texts, and the everyday mundane life of "keeping house" accounts for most of the action. Read together, however, these three texts create an ungrounded domesticity that undermines the link between gender and home space. Furthermore, through the failure of the newly created habitable spaces, these novels argue that habitability cannot be based on a particular space or kind of space but must instead emerge from a particular subject-space relationship.

If the first two chapters focus primarily on the subject's role in creating habitability, the third and fourth chapters accentuate the role of space in the process of creating habitability. Unscrupulous miners and gold-seekers damage space with their ecological misdeeds in Mary Austin's Lost Borders, and to counteract this damage, Austin's unnamed narrator shifts the emphasis from the subject to space. Lost Borders takes the notion of focusing more on space a step further and makes space into character — a powerful, evocative "desert woman." Austin is often read as endorsing an ideal ecological ethic, but her texts do not reflect balance and harmony. Instead, they expose the competitive nature of habitability and the conflicts involved in the act of producing habitability. The subject's need for habitability sometimes contradicts the needs of space. Sometimes subjects have to compete with each other for habitability, and one subject's habitability forecloses the possibility of another's habitability. Terry Tempest Williams uses a similar trope to save space, too, but she approaches the subject-space connection as cooperative, rather than competitive. Protecting space becomes synonymous with protecting the subject. Austin and Williams's perspectives merge in Gretel Ehrlich's Islands, the Universe, Home when she ties together the body and space while still acknowledging the competitive aspects of the subject-space relationship.

The final chapter turns to contemporary haunted house narratives because these texts pull together many of the issues addressed in the first three chapters such as gendered space, the boundary between natural and domestic space, and competing habitabilities. Haunted houses resist the subject's attempts to create habitability, and when subjects do manage to make these houses into homes, they reproduce and reinforce the violence implicit within the framework of the haunted house. Though habitability is

impossible in *The Amityville Horror*, Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, and Anne River Siddons's *The House Next Door*, together these texts expose many of the dominant cultural assumptions about the nature of domestic space. In Stephen King's *The Diary of Ellen Rimbauer* and *Rose Red*, as well as Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*, habitability is achieved through a mystical merging between the subject and house. This individual habitability, however, undermines communal habitability. This chapter explores the darker side of habitability and some of the destructiveness that can result from creating a home.

CHAPTER ONE

Writing Home: Habitability in Caroline Kirkland and Wallace Stegner

Separated by time, geography, gender, and history, Mary Clavers and Lyman Ward could hardly seem more different. Clavers is the narrator of Caroline Kirkland's *A New Home*- Who'll Follow? (hereafter A New Home) and Forest Life. She writes about her experiences as a "woman pioneer" in the West of Michigan in the 1830s. In contrast, Lyman, the narrator of Wallace Stegner's Angle of Repose, lives in California and writes in the late 1970s. He, too, writes about the experience of pioneering when he creates a novel based on his grandmother's reminiscences about her life in Idaho, Mexico,

Colorado, and California in the late nineteenth century. The commonality of pioneering, however, is less important than the way these two disparate figures foreground writing as a method of home-making. Each text begins with characters trapped in an un-habitable situation because their conceptions of space clash with their actual living space. Clavers and Lyman, despite their differences, approach this problem similarly by writing a new space.

Exploring texts and characters that are so unalike offers the opportunity to demonstrate how writing can be used to solve a spatial crisis and create habitability in diverse situations. Because the habitable spaces produced are so distinct, even contradictory, it is also possible to show the varied nature of habitability. Habitable spaces are those that meet the psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs of subjects. But, as an analysis of Kirkland and Stegner show, habitability is far from utopian. While

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⁸ For analyses of the pioneering aspects of Kirkland's work, see Janet Floyd, Annette Kolodny, and Brigitte Georgi-Findlay. For Stegner, see Janet Occhino and Rachel Borup.

it can be created through appropriation and an ethical subject-space relationship, it can be produced just as well through domination and an ethically questionable subject-space relation.

Mary Clavers's New Home

A New Home is Kirkland's narrative of settling and living in the West, in a place now known as Pinckney, Michigan. Told from the perspective of Mary Clavers, this collection of tales and sketches is full of sage advice for those out East who might be considering moving westward. It was wildly popular when it was written, so much so that even the Michiganders Kirkland describes read the text, much to Kirkland's chagrin. Not surprisingly, her neighbors did not enjoy being the victims of Kirkland's much admired satire and wit, and many critics and biographers have pointed out that Kirkland's life in Michigan after she published her book was the "reverse of agreeable." Just three years after the publication of A New Home, Kirkland published a two-volume "continuation," Forest Life. The latter sold relatively well when it was published (Kolodny, Land Before Her 154), but critics have largely ignored it since then.

A New Home and Forest Life introduce the reader to a self-proclaimed pioneer woman in the awkward position of a "homemaker in transit" (Floyd, Writing 5). This kind of homemaker must navigate between fond memories of former Eastern homes and the (often harsh realities) of new Western homes. Clavers makes it clear that the

decision to leave Michigan (Osborne 51). See also Kolodny's *The Land Before Her* and Sandra Zagarell's introduction to A New Home.

⁹ Kirkland believed that if she changed the name of Pinckney to Montacute and altered the names of major characters, no one would recognize the sources of her inspiration. She also thought it was unlikely that the residents of Pinckney would buy her book. Her assumptions were incorrect, and even when her neighbors did not read the book itself, they heard about it. This was often even worse (Osborne 45). The publication of *A New Home* offended Kirkland's neighbors to the point that their ire influenced the Kirklands's

restricted material conditions of the West make it nearly impossible to establish an acceptable domestic environment, something that must have been especially disappointing given the cultural emphasis on the proper creation of the ideal home (Cott 63). She laments, "Comforts do not seem to abound in proportion to landed increase, but often on the contrary, are really diminished for the sake of it: and the habit of selling out so frequently makes that *home*-feeling, which is so large an ingredient in happiness elsewhere, almost a nonentity in Michigan" (ANH 25).

For Clavers, habitability depends upon the presence of home-feeling, and the stakes of this term are at the center of much of the Kirkland scholarship. While Clavers's desire for the emotional comfort of home is innocent enough on the surface, critics are quick to point out that this impulse has larger, and darker, implications. Annette Kolodny interprets Kirkland's narrative as providing an alternative to masculine pioneer narratives of settlement, but scholars such as Lori Merish, Brigitte Georgi-Findlay, Janet Floyd (Writing the Pioneer Woman), Laura Smith, and Edward Watts point out the various ways that Kirkland's text(s) enact domestication in the name of "civilizing" the space and inhabitants of Michigan. The consensus is that Kirkland's classist assumptions and desire for Michigan to conform to the standards of Eastern domesticity overpower any innocence her longing for home-feeling might contain. But, a close reading of the term "home" in A New Home and Forest Life reveals a shifting definition of home and domesticity that challenges these interpretations. Literary quotes, embedded narratives, and embedded narrators counter Clavers's definition of home. Habitability emerges through these alternative definitions of home.

The parallels between Kirkland and Clavers lead most scholars to read A New Home and Forest Life as autobiographical. Kirkland moved to Michigan in 1835 to teach at the Detroit Female Seminary, and in 1836, she and her family went to Pinckney, Michigan. Because Clavers's narrative traces the same path, for most critics, the distinction between Caroline Kirkland and Mary Clavers collapses. I, however, tend to agree with Caroline Gebhard's divergent interpretation of the relationship between Kirkland and Clavers. Gebhard argues that Clavers is a "self consciously constructed literary persona" and that it is more accurate to classify A New Home as fiction rather than autobiography (164). Gebhard contends that Kirkland uses Clavers to help cope with the trauma Kirkland experienced in the forests of Michigan (163). The trauma Gebhard refers to is the death of two of Kirkland's children — Sara(h). 10 who fell out of a window in Detroit, and Charles, who was born in Pinckney and died when he was only a few months old (Gebhard 161). Clavers barely mentions her children at all. In fact, the reader does not even know that she has children until almost halfway through the text. Never is it mentioned anywhere in the text that Clavers loses any of these children; the book remains consistently light humored. From these discrepancies, Gebhard concludes that A New Home is not meant to be an autobiography, and I agree. The more interesting part of Gebhard's argument, for my purposes, is that she suggests that Kirkland provides a "new home" for herself by writing away her grief (174). That is, Kirkland uses her text as a psychological and emotional coping mechanism.

My argument about habitability operates on the same principle, but on the level of characters instead of the author. I claim that Clavers finds her space unsatisfactory and

¹⁰ The spelling of Sara's name is disputed. Gebhard spells it without an "h," while Erica Kreger spells it with one. This discrepancy is indicative of a larger uncertainty about the details of Kirkland's life (Gebhard 160).

uses writing to modify and transform that space. It stands to reason that Kirkland may have been negotiating not only her grief but also her dissatisfaction with Michigan space. It is also possible, then, that Kirkland's views of home and gender differ from Clavers's and that, furthermore, Kirkland chose to counter her narrator's voice with other perspectives on the site and gendering of "home." These matters of intentionality are speculation on my part, and so, while I find the congruence between Kirkland's and Clavers's scenes of writing intriguing, I restrict my argument to textual analysis.

Throughout A New Home and Forest Life, Clavers highlights her role as a writer, reminding her reader at every turn that the events included are a work of literature. In her first chapter alone, she addresses her reader directly or explains her authorial choices no fewer than nine times. In A New Home, Clavers's objective for emphasizing her authorial status seems to be an attempt to distinguish herself from other "Western" writers like Charles Hoffman and to insist on her status as a "woman writer" (Zagarell, "Introduction" xvii), but in Forest Life, Clavers introduces another function of writing — the creation of a communal space between reader and writer. She explains, "People write because they cannot help it. The heart longs for sympathy, and when it cannot be found close at hand, will seek it the world over" (FL 1: 9-10). Writing functions as a method of connecting different spaces, "of seeking the world over" because it forms a link of shared experience (in this case of Michigan space) between the writer and reader. As much as a shared community is something the lonely Clavers sought, it is not the most significant way writing creates habitability in these texts.

Before embarking on an exploration of how writing produces habitability, it is helpful to establish Clavers's dominant view of home and her objection to homes in Michigan. Clavers's definition of home is contingent upon the enforcement of domestic regulations and relies on spatialized gender roles.¹¹ Her views of home emerge when she explains why women are the "grumblers in Michigan" (ANH 126).

Woman's little world is overclouded for the lack of the old familiar means and appliances. The husband goes to his work with the same axe and hoe which fitted his hand in his old woods and fields, he tills the same soil, or perhaps a far richer and more hopeful one – he gazes on the same book of nature which he has read from his infancy, and sees only a fresher and more glowing page, and he returns to his home with the sun, strong in heart and full of self-gratulation on the favourable change in his lot. But he finds his homebird drooping and disconsolate. She has been looking in vain for the reflection of any of the cherished features of her own dear fireside. She has found a thousand deficiencies which her rougher mate can scarce be taught to feel as evils. (146-7)

The presence or absence of home-feeling is clearly gendered. While the natural space of Michigan "fits" men, as their axes and hoes fit them, there is no such affinity between women and the domestic space of Michigan. For men, the new space of Michigan offers nothing but hope and comfort, which is starkly contrasted with women who long for what is familiar (and by implication, what is Eastern). Clavers's reliance on both gendered

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Gender relates to space in two primary ways – gendered space and spatialized gender roles. By "gendered space," I mean the way that certain spaces are considered masculine or feminine. Henry Lefebvre adheres to Western notions of gendered space and maintains that feminine space centers around the "household" (148). Similarly, Doreen Massey notes that the local is coded as feminine and, accordingly, is "deprioritized and denigrated" (10). Conversely, masculine spaces include those outside the home, such as the workplace. Though in everyday life, these spaces are and were inhabited regularly by men and women, these spaces are still associated with gendered stereotypes. Spatialized gender roles, on the other hand, refer to the way space dictates gender roles. For example, when women are regarded as domestic beings, their successful performance of gender roles often are determined by how well they occupy and regulate the domestic sphere (i.e. housekeeping and decorating the home).

space and spatialized gendered roles exhibits itself through her assumption that women are necessarily part of the "little world" by the fireside, while men are part of the outside world of fields, soil, and sun. Men are at home in natural space, and women are at home in domestic space. The problem is that domestic space in Michigan is woefully inadequate. As Watts points out, this deficiency is not due to the unfamiliarity of the space, or the fact that it is disconnected from the loved ones back East (170, 174); rather, Michigan space is unsatisfactory because it lacks the modern conveniences of an orderly household — the "time honoured cupboard" is merely "a few oak boards lying on pegs" and the oven has been replaced by a "tin reflector" (146). The spatial crisis in Michigan, for Clavers, is specifically a feminine one — it is feminine space that is imperfect. The origin of the crisis is the mismatch between conceived space and lived and perceived space.

What I have just shown coincides with the dominant interpretations of Kirkland's work. Clavers's ideal solution for the feminine spatial crisis is that those living in the West will transform space so that it more closely resembles that in the East. Part of Clavers's (and probably Kirkland's) purpose in writing *A New Home* and, arguably, *Forest Life* is to convince readers that the current spatial and cultural arrangements in Michigan were inadequate and should be remedied by way of making them resemble Eastern "civilization" (Smith 175, 177). Writing, then, could create habitability for Clavers through its ability to persuade readers to change their views and daily habits. But, writing functions much more subtly than that in these texts, too, because it is also

¹² The gender difference is not put just in terms of space but also in terms of refinement. Merish points out that Kirkland suggests that women "naturally" want more than men do, and that this distinction "represent[s] the struggle between men and women as a struggle to define and control the domestic landscape" (50). David Leverenz explains the differences between men and women in Kirkland's text similarly (163).

through writing that Clavers introduces her readers to definitions of "home" that blur the boundaries between domestic and natural space and dismantle rigid spatialized gender roles.

The first time that Clavers introduces the idea that the natural and domestic sphere may not be entirely distinct and that, furthermore, feminine and masculine views of space might not be completely different is when she includes two lengthy quoted passages in her work. I include these two passages together so that it is clearer how they work together to create an alternative version of home. First, in a gesture toward "fairness," Clavers includes a quote from Nathaniel Willis, who she calls "a brilliant writer of our own." From Willis: "I think we have an instinct, dulled by civilization, which is like the caged eaglet's, or the antelope's that is reared in the Arab's tent; an instinct of nature that scorns boundary and chain; that yearns to the free desert" (ANH 148). A page later, a related quotation from William Hazlitt appears: "We are always at home with Nature... Thus Nature is a sort of universal home, and every object it presents to us an old acquaintance, with unaltered looks; for there is that constant and mutual harmony among her works" (ANH 149). Both of these passages serve as a counterpoint to sentiments that Clavers has expressed throughout her text. First, Willis and Hazlitt appeal to an inherent and universal feeling in human beings, something unspecific to gender. This contradicts Clavers's earlier insistence that men and women experience space, particularly natural space, differently. Furthermore, the reason these authors praise nature and natural space is that it allows for a sense of freedom that civilization tries to infringe upon. This marks another point of contradiction, since Clavers spends a great deal of time extolling the virtues of civilization (and good housekeeping skills) and lamenting the lack of it in

Michigan.

Even more important, though, is the way these passages relocate "home" from domestic to natural space. Home-feeling, which heretofore has been associated with domestic niceties, collides with natural space. Hazlitt's conflation of the "familiar" and "old" with nature solidifies this link. (One will remember that Clavers's earlier passage connects natural space with "new" hopefulness and domestic space with a longing for "old" familiarity.) In relocating home to "Nature," gender loses its spatialization, as both home and nature are equally masculine and feminine concerns. Though Clavers says that she is just including these passages to be fair in her assessment of Michigan life, what is really at stake in this section is the attempt (albeit unintentional) to allow the reader to consider an alternative location, and thus alternative definition of, home feeling.

The idea of "nature as home" is not unique, but Clavers is doing something unusual with her move toward natural space. Ecofeminists like Lorraine Anderson and Vera Norwood note the tendency for women's texts about nature to center on spaces of home, literally by studying backyards or gardens, or metaphorically by making the woods or the sea "home" (Anderson 5; Norwood xviii). The reasoning behind claims like these is that, historically, women did not have the same access to wilderness spaces as their male counterparts did, so that women instead turned toward more local and close-to-home spaces. Stacy Alaimo interprets the relationship between women and natural space differently, arguing that women writers often appealed to nature "as a space apart from the domestic" that can function as a "model for female insurgency" (16). Clavers's linkage of natural space and home is different from both of the above instances. Clavers does not transfer "home" from domestic to natural space because it is something her

female characters are more familiar with or have better access to, nor does she suggest that natural space offers respite from the constraints of domestic life. Rather, she recognizes the blatant inadequacies of Michigan domestic space (at least in her eyes), finds it unlikely that the home-feeling she so craves can be located there, and thus resorts to a different sort of space as the site of home. Though Clavers says that "one soon learns to think nature no step-mother" (ANH 148), I suspect that a necessary but unwanted replacement is exactly the role natural space plays in this text. In other words, Clavers's linkage of home and nature is not ideological but rather a practical, strategic attempt to produce habitability.

Clavers's inclusion of the Willis and Hazlitt quotes lays the groundwork for Clavers's suggestion that characters will achieve habitability if they can accept and embrace the connection between home and natural space. The tale of Cora and Everard Hastings, in *A New Home*, develops this idea more fully because they are simultaneously some of the "happiest people" Clavers knows (169) and proponents of the idea that the forest is their "home." Cora and Everard are young lovers who elope with each other and, unbeknownst to their families, move to Michigan to "carve out for themselves a home in the wilderness" (158). Once in Michigan, they look for the perfect spot for their new home: "Ere long he found a spot, so wild and mountainous and woody, as to be considered entirely impracticable by any common-sense settlers; so that it seemed just the very place for a forest home for a pair who set out to live on other people's thoughts" (161). Cora and Everard, happily oblivious to common sense, settle in to their "forest

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¹³ Kolodny interprets the story of the Hastings as Kirkland's search for the ideal "American Adam and Eve." Unlike the originary couple, the American version has to fall before being able to enter the relatively paradisiacal life in a "frontier garden" (*Land Before Her* 141). To a degree, this reading seems accurate, given that the Hastings have to undergo many trials before they are allowed to achieve habitability.

sanctuary," a term which suggests a blending of domestic space (since "sanctuary" is a term that was continually associated with domesticity in the nineteenth century (Woloch 131)) and natural space. As Clavers's narrative double (Leverenz 161), it is particularly significant that Cora's ideal home must be literally located in the midst of natural space because it suggests that Clavers's search for home feeling within domestic space is misplaced.

The Hastings's enthusiasm for their "natural" home vacillates, to be sure. Cora initially regrets the lack of amenities in her home. A long walk in the woods quickly consoles her though. A more serious threat to her happiness is the illness of her husband and baby, which is intensified by her (geographical and emotional) estrangement from her family. Moreover, Clavers clearly disapproves of the Hastings' lack of practicality — she bemoans their choice of volumes of poetry over Lydia Maria Child's *The Frugal Housewife* (ANH 160), and she gently mocks their affection for wild spaces. Yet, at the end of their narrative, Clavers has to admit that even though the two had some difficulties, they are happy in the "wilderness," despite its dangers and inconveniences (ANH 169). Clavers's acknowledgement of their affective satisfaction is akin to admitting that they have found habitability — they have made their space psychologically, emotionally, and socially satisfying. And they have done so by redefining "home."

A similar redefinition of home occurs in *Forest Life* through the story of Florella Sibthorpe, Clavers's second double. A number of factors make the Sibthorpe narrative significant. First, Clavers unabashedly praises the Sibthorpes, whereas she scolded the naughty Hastings. Also, Clavers includes the Sibthorpes's letters in her narrative, so that

she is not telling their story and the readers can access the Sibthorpes's experience without the mediating effect of Clavers. This imparts the Sibthorpe narrative with an authority that is absent for the Hastings. Finally, the Sibthorpes redefine both the space of home and spatialized gender roles. Of all the characters investigated, Florella Sibthorpe offers the clearest illustration of finding home-feeling. She is happy and content in Michigan, and her "home" is a blend of domestic and natural space.

Furthermore, she and her husband adopt gender roles loosely, countering Clavers's insistence on rigidly spatialized gender distinctions.

From the very beginning of the Sibthorpes's introduction, the reader is cognizant of the fact that this couple will destabilize the spatialized gender roles that prevail in the rest of the text. Florella enters the text when Mr. Sibthorpe gives Clavers a series of letters explaining why he and his wife settled in Michigan. From these epistles, it is apparent that the Sibthorpes are not the traditional pioneering couple. Mr. Sibthorpe, though vaguely appreciative of natural space, was not reared with the same "book of nature" as the pioneer men Clavers discusses in A New Home. Instead, he is more concerned with domestic matters. He spends a good deal of time describing the various mishaps that take place in their attempt to establish a home in Michigan, complaining that it is impossible to find acceptable domestic help or competent laborers (FL 2: 72, 85). When he describes a visit from a city friends, his concerns are constructed as feminine. He describes his "awkward consciousness of the narrowness of our present accommodations" and admits that they are living in a "half-savage state" (FL 2: 101). His feminization is completed by his apologizes for his "already femininely long" letter and later for his "lady-like letter" (FL 2: 72, 125). His style of writing establishes Mr.

Sibthorpe as crossing the boundary between the masculine and the feminine. He unsettles spatialized gender roles because he subverts the assumption that gender is inextricable from the space one occupies.

Unlike her husband, Florella Sibthorpe finds home-feeling in natural space, and she is given the freedom to be fully sentimental and unreserved about her connection to this space. Florella does not, and does not need to, apologize for her untraditional behavior (unlike Cora Hastings, for example, who must atone for her "silly" romanticism). She begins her first letter with a profuse apology for not writing sooner, citing her enjoying of the natural world:

But as to writing, this wild seclusion has so many charms for me, this delicious summer weather so many seductions, that my days glide away imperceptibly, leaving scarcely a trace of anything accomplished during their flight... Nothing before me but huge trees, between whose ancient mossy trunks no ray of any but soft green light can reach the moist sward below...as if we were, along in the august presence of Nature, with nothing to limit the flights of fancy, and with an unbounded leisure which seems to promise time for everything. (FL 2: 74-5)

This lengthy passage indulges in the kind of sentimentalism that Clavers is unable, or unwilling, to reveal earlier in the text, and it matches Clavers's penchant for vivid description. It diverges from Clavers's tendency to follow picturesque descriptions with tales of (minor) disaster — for Mrs. Sibthorpe, there is no serpent in this paradise. Florella has both the home-feeling and habitability. Her space meets her needs, emotionally, physically, and psychologically.

Florella reveals an alternative model of habitability and home-feeling that ultimately critiques Clavers's view of the cultural project of domesticating Michigan space. Clavers depends upon changing space in one way or another to create home-feeling, but Florella presents a model of habitation that involves *not* changing space and *not* enforcing rigid spatialized gender regulations. Though Clavers may not find Florella's habitability or definition of home-feeling something that she can participate in, by dint of her inclusion of the letters, she recognizes Florella Sibthorpe's success at creating a habitable Michigan space.

For all of Florella's accomplishments, however, her model of habitability is far from utopian, especially from an ecological standpoint. Her home-feeling relies on the pastoral, a mode of writing (and conceiving of) space that is ecologically suspect. Leo Marx defines the pastoral as a "variation upon the contrast between two worlds, one identified with rural peace and simplicity, the other with urban power and sophistication" (19). He explains that the American pastoral idealizes the "middle state" between natural and urban space (Marx 88). Carolyn Merchant illuminates the problem with the pastoral notion of natural space, explaining:

The pastoral mode, although it viewed nature as benevolent, was a model created as an antidote to the pressures of urbanization and mechanization. It represented a fulfillment of human needs for nurture, but by conceiving of nature as passive, it nevertheless allowed for the possibility of its use and manipulation. Unlike the dialectical image of nature as the active unity of opposites in tension, the Arcadian image rendered nature passive and manageable. (9)

Merchant argues that the pastoral is a method of "conceiving" of space in a particular way. The pastoral assumes that natural space is open to manipulation, without concern for nonhuman nature. Though Florella regards natural space affectionately, she, like Clavers, domesticates it in order to make it manageable. Her attitude toward the appropriate relationship between the subject and space is thus not that different from Clavers's, despite their divergences in terms of spatial boundaries and spatialized gender. Writing Michigan as pastoral makes her space habitable.

At this point, we have explored how Clavers uses writing to explore alternative definitions of home (and habitability) through her use of literary quotes and literary doubles. She documents how other characters can gain habitability by adopting flexible spatial practices and fluid definitions of home. Clavers herself also goes through a similar shift, adapting to the altered domestic space of Michigan and accepting, even praising, some of its limitations. Part of the changes between Clavers's persona in *A New Home* and *Forest Life* can be accounted for by noting that Kirkland was lambasted for her depictions of her neighbors and thus softened her tone, as well as the fact that Clavers becomes a self-proclaimed insider rather than a "foreign tourist" (FL 1:4). As an insider, Clavers begins writing regionalism rather than local color.¹⁴

The difference between writing local color and writing regionalism is not purely academic because it is indicative of an attitudinal transformation that allows Clavers to attain a provisional habitability. Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse note that regionalist works, like those of local color narratives, are almost always told from the perspective of an outsider. The difference is that regionalist narrators are simultaneously insiders and

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Osborne notes the regionalist character of *Forest Life* (56), but he does not carry this analysis much further. He does not, for example, compare regionalism to local color, nor does he examine the theoretical significance of this generic shift.

this "confer[s] value on and establish[es] empathy with the regionalist subject by writing as if looking from the inside out rather than the outside in" (107). Regionalist writers, in other words, are outsiders who are also insiders, who listen with an empathetic ear. They do not make scathing (albeit amusing) observations about their subjects.¹⁵

Analogous situations in A New Home and Forest Life illustrate the difference between local color and regionalism, especially insofar as regionalism leads to an increased likelihood of habitability. In A New Home, on their way to their own Michigan cabin, the Claverses stop for the night at the Ketchums (one of their neighbors). Clavers explains, "I do not remember experiencing, at any time in my life, a sense of more complete uncomfortableness than was my lot." At the root of her unease is that space is not partitioned appropriately. Natural space, for example, invades domestic space. The beds looks as if they "by no very violent freak of nature, have grown into their present form" since they are still covered partially by bark. The windows are uncovered, and the outside air is free to parade into the interior of the cabin. Even the roof provides an incomplete barrier, since Clavers can see the twinkling stars above her head. These spatial incursions, Clavers reasons, are apt to bring "death on its dewy wings." Claustrophobia also pervades the scene — there are three beds, two chests, a spinning wheel, and a host of other sleepers crammed into the very small space of the cabin. The sensation of suffocation is intensified when a quilt is hung to enclose a sleeping room for Clavers, and once again, death is posited as a likely effect ("it is wonderful that so few

¹⁵ Fetterley and Pryse suggest that there is something inherent within the form of the sketch that allows the writer to be "free to say" things that she could not within a more traditional form, like a novel or short story. The sketch, they reason, is freer from "public scrutiny," and furthermore does not necessitate a plot that is prescribed by gender (170, 172). While I do not disagree with their argument, it is important to note that the sketch, as a genre, has been gendered (even by Fetterley and Pryse) and thus does not necessarily escape the confines of gender expectations. Furthermore, local color depends on the form of the sketch just as much as regionalism does, and thus this genre should not be viewed as a panacea.

houses are burnt down in this country") (ANH 37). A variety of spaces collide in this scene. Domestic and natural space merge, public and private space become one and the same, and even personal, bodily space is violated. Clavers's description suggests that space should be neatly and cleanly divided, so that natural space remains outside of the house, the living space is distinct from sleeping space, and individual space is free from the invasion of other "sleepers." In order for Clavers to attain any sort of home-feeling, these sorts of unruly domestic spaces must be controlled, at least on the page, if not in practice.

When the Clavers esare confronted with a similar scene in *Forest Life*, Clavers reacts very differently. The Claverses are in their buggy when a thunderstorm hits, and they are forced to take refuge in the Gastons's nearby cabin. The space of this cabin is also described carefully, but to different ends. Gone is the dismay that domestic guidelines are not being adhered to; Clavers almost admires the way the same object and space is used for multiple purposes. She explains, with pride, that the same poles in front of the fire are used to dry everything from wet clothes to pumpkins for pie to apples for decoration (FL 1: 89). When another party arrives (the Margolds), also seeking shelter, we see the true shift that Clavers has undergone. When Miss Margold asks, "Why, papa, is this a *house?*" Clavers disapproves of Miss Margold's rudeness and accounts for the domestic scene by explaining that the cabin belongs to a rather impoverished family (FL 1: 96).

The sleeping situation is even more crowded than the one experienced in *A New Home*, but the tone of Clavers's description has changed remarkably. She explains, rather than judges, the situation, noting that there are a large number of people with only

two beds and that the conversation about the situation contained "not a few remarks calculated rather to wound the feelings of our civil entertainers." When they reach the conclusion that the two beds should be pushed together for the women and the children, and that the men can sleep in chairs and on the floor, Clavers is perfectly content with the arrangement of space.

Her description reveals that her own sense of the domestic space of Michigan has changed dramatically. She is no longer concerned that the boundaries of spatial propriety are breached. Not surprisingly, Miss Margold is not so tolerant, but when she complains, Clavers allows the Gastons a voice to defend themselves. In *A New Home*, the inhabitants of Michigan are not given a chance to speak, let alone stand up for themselves. That Mr. Gaston is given the opportunity within Clavers's text to tell Miss Margold exactly what he thinks shows that Clavers's mode of writing has shifted — she is no longer invested in critiquing Michigan and trying to make it fit into her own conceptions of space; she is now interested in letting Michigan, and its inhabitants, speak for themselves.

In A New Home and Forest Life, Mary Clavers self-consciously uses writing to explore various definitions of home, and through this investigation realizes that habitability and home-feeling emerge from adapting to, rather than changing, new spatial conditions. Habitability is produced by an acceptance of the interrelated nature of domestic and natural space, as well as the accompanying flexible spatialized gender roles. Cora, Florella, and eventually Clavers reconcile conceived space with lived and perceived space, and by doing so, they are able to settle in Michigan. Their creation of habitability is not without fault, nor is it entirely sustainable. It is makeshift and

provisional. But, on the spectrum of Lefebvre's domination or appropriation, it moves habitability toward a subject-space relationship based on appropriation. Wallace Stegner's character Lyman's model of habitability, also produced through writing, does the opposite — it generates habitability by dominating of space.

Lyman Ward's Gendered Habitability

Stegner's Angle of Repose won a Pulitzer Prize in 1971, but since then it has received relatively little critical attention. The novel is told from the perspective of Lyman Ward, a first-person frame narrator. Lyman is writing a novel about his grandparents's lives and experiences of settling in the West, and most of Angle of Repose takes place in the past. Lyman bases his novel on the pictures, letters, and written reminiscences of his grandmother, Susan Ward. In their own ways, Lyman's grandparents are both writers too. Susan is primarily an illustrator, but she also writes local color pieces about life in the West for Eastern magazines. Oliver Ward is an engineer and spends a great deal of time making maps. All three writers in this novel use their craft to address spatial inadequacies. They use writing to try to control unruly lived and perceived and reestablish the dominance of conceived space. The habitable space that emerges from this text is, not surprisingly, ethically problematic.

As with Kirkland's *A New Home* and *Forest Life*, the context surrounding Stegner's novel mirrors the writing situation within the novel. In what now is a well-known incident of "borrowing," Stegner used Mary Hallock Foote's letters and personal papers as a basis for the creation of his character, Susan. Likewise, Lyman uses Susan's papers to recreate her life. In both instances, the process of (re)writing more closely

resembles overwriting. The end products — *Angle of Repose* and Lyman's novel — reveal more about Stegner and Lyman than they do about Foote or Susan. The reading and scholarly public scrutinized the former particularly harshly.

Critics identify two key problems with Stegner's use of Foote: he fails to cite his source (except for a brief note at the beginning of the text), and he makes significant changes without indicating what is fact and what is fiction. Stegner quotes directly from Foote's letters (without letting the reader know that he is quoting), and much of the direction and geography of his novel are taken directly from her work. Consequently, critics accused Stegner of everything from outright plagiarism (Walsh) to at least unethical conduct. While the first critique arises from Stegner sticking too closely to Foote's letters and life, the second condemns him for diverging from Foote's biography. Stegner changes the ending of Foote/Ward's life by suggesting that her adulterous relationship with her husband's assistant leads to her daughter's early death. Foote's youngest daughter did die prematurely, but it was at seventeen from appendicitis. Moreover, there is little evidence to support the claim that she had an affair. As Linda Karell points out, the average reader (if she even knows that Mary Hallock Foote is the basis for the character Susan Ward) believes that if the first part of the novel is based on Foote then the second part is too (81).¹⁶

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¹⁶ To understand the claim that Foote was misrepresented, it is necessary to know the circumstances under which Stegner received and used the Foote materials. Originally, Stegner accessed the Foote materials through his student, George McMurray. McMurray had gotten Foote's personal papers and letters from her family, and he planned to do his doctoral dissertation on Foote's life. The family agreed to give McMurray Foote's papers as long as he would provide them with transcripts of his final product (Benson 352). McMurray told Stegner about his lucky find, and when it became apparent that McMurray was not going to complete his dissertation, Stegner, with permission from the family, took the papers and letters. Janet, one of two sisters in possession of the materials (and Foote's granddaughter), told Stegner that he could use the papers in any way he wished. Janet's sister, Evelyn, however, thought that Stegner was going to write an Irving Stone-like novel/biography, where the conversations and interior monologues are fictionalized, but

The bigger problem with Stegner's use of Foote echoes the problem with Lyman's use of Susan — they both exhibit a disturbing tendency to dismiss the feminine as insignificant and inferior. Karell articulates the question that seems to underlie most of the concerns regarding gender and Stegner: "Would Stegner have felt as entitled to borrow the work of a male writer, albeit an unknown one?" (79). It is impossible to answer this question with any certainty, but it is clear that Stegner did not respect Foote's work. He claims that she was not significant enough to merit a biography, for example (Hepworth 69). As we will later see, Lyman makes similar claims about Susan. While it is, unfortunately, outside the scope of this chapter to trace the changes Stegner made to Foote's narrative, it is nevertheless important to note the similarities between Stegner and Lyman's writing circumstances.¹⁷

Lyman finds his lived and perceived space un-habitable because he suffers from a degenerative bone disease that results in the amputation of one of his legs and confines him to a wheelchair. Depicted vividly in the text, Lyman's lived space is unlivable. His body is so altered that he finds it impossible to be at home in his body, his house, or his community. More important than his actual disability, though, is the way that it realigns the power dynamics with the people around him. That is, because of his disease, Lyman finds himself feminized and, accordingly, deprived of the power he is accustomed to having based on his gender. (It is worth noting that Lyman's perception of a loss of power is highly subjective and largely constructed by his own misogyny and gynophobia.)

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the main details remain the same (Benson 353). The issue for Evelyn, and other members of the family, was that they felt Stegner's tawdry ending of the novel impugned their ancestor's name and reputation.

¹⁷ The argument could be made that Stegner exhibits a misogyny and gynophoby similar to Lyman's, for example.

The clearest evidence that suggests Lyman feels that his illness feminizes and infantilizes him is his obsessive tendency to call himself a "baby." Being a "baby" is not related directly to gender, but it is connected to power — he has to depend on others to take care of him. His feminization emerges through his conviction that losing his leg is a metaphorical castration. He claims, for example, that he would be fine if his ex-wife had left him "when I was still a man" (144). Furthermore, Lyman is confined (mostly) to his home, a space he identifies as feminine. His restricted spatial access, for him, completes his (un)gendering.

What makes his feminization so debilitating, though, is his mistrust and suspicion of the female body. Again, of his ex-wife, Lyman quips: "Perhaps the menopause frightened her, perhaps it unsettled her. They can write on my tombstone that I was undone by female bodily chemistry" (442). Ostensibly, Lyman is joking, but beneath his humor lies the belief that the mysteries of the female body caused his wife to leave him. Lyman's relationship with his assistant, Shelley Rasmussen, is also telling in this regard. Lyman complains that Shelley wears pants (267), lets her hair hang loosely down her back (45), and "sprawl[s]" around (267). Shelley, in other words, is at ease with her body, and this comfort unnerves and even angers Lyman. He associates female sexuality with a refusal to respect his (male) authority. He notes, for example, that Shelley's "boldness" allows her to resist being "put in any subordinate position" (48). The problem for Lyman, then, is that his spatial conditions prevent him from performing his gender role in a way that he feels is acceptable.

To counter his present life, Lyman writes, believing that it will provide him with a home and habitability. On one level, writing functions as an escape from his current life.

He says, "I'd like to live in their [his grandparents] clothes for awhile, if only so I don't have to live in my own. Actually, as I look down my nose to where my leg bends and my right leg actually stops, I realize that it isn't backward I want to go, but downward. I want to touch once more the ground I have been maimed away from" (17). Writing is his way of "living in the clothes" of his grandparents, and he uses writing to literalize the idea of gaining a new body by being able to put on "new clothes" and "touch the ground." He conflates writing with living, so that writing about something is equivalent to actually doing that something. Lyman again collapses the distinction between reading, writing, and living when he claims that he is "going back to Grandmother's nineteenth century, where the problems and the people are less messy" (170). ¹⁸ Clearly, his grandparents's lives are more habitable for Lyman than his own, and the way he accesses those lives is through writing.

It is more appropriate to say that Lyman finds habitability within the act of writing. He alludes to this when he explains, "As I detach myself and turn, I can see the study door and the windows in line with it, the pines stirring beyond the window, the desk waiting, and its piles of books and folders and papers and photographs — home of a kind, life of a kind, purpose of a kind" (201). His desk, books, folders, papers, and photographs stand in metonymically for the act and product of writing itself. Lyman is not, in fact, seeking the space of his grandparents, but rather the "space" created by writing about his grandparents. Or, more aptly, the space of writing about his grandparents. The question thus becomes: what does writing offer Lyman that he finds so habitable? The short answer to that question is that writing gives Lyman

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Lyman's turn to his grandparents' lives is also an investigation of his own connection the past, which seems particularly pertinent given his inherited bone disease.

power and control. How he uses that power and control demands a lengthier explanation.

To begin with, Lyman constructs writing as gendered and as an activity that is most appropriately engaged in by an objective male. As a male writer, then, Lyman perceives himself as occupying a position of power. When he explains how he makes his authorial decisions about what to include and exclude from his grandmother's reminisces, he says:

A historian scans a thousand documents to find on fact that he can use. If he is working with correspondence, as I am, and with the correspondence of a woman to boot, he will wade toward his little islands of information through a dismal swamp of recipes, housekeeping details, children's diseases, insignificant visitors, inconclusive conversations with people unknown to the historian, and recitations of what the writer did yesterday. (379)

Women writers, in other words, do not know how to distinguish between what is important and unimportant. They are apt to create "dismal swamp[s]" and myriads of other unpleasant terrains that the unfortunate (male) historian. Out of this murk, the historian hopes to find just one "fact" that he can use. Lyman's denigration of female writing allows him, as the historian, to take the position of the objective (and thus privileged) knower. Unlike his daily life, in which he is subject to the maladies of the body, in writing, his intellectual power reigns supreme.

Lyman's depiction of writing has spatial consequences as well. Part of what

Lyman is dismissing is everyday, lived space. To Lyman, it is inconceivable that

"domestic" concerns might actually be as important, or maybe even more valuable, than

facts. Favoring conceived (over lived and perceived) space in writing also allows Lyman to escape from what he views as unlivable lived and perceived space. Through his efforts as a historian, Lyman can rid the narrative almost entirely of lived space, thereby simultaneously removing the threatening presence of women and "women's" space.

Space and gender are inextricable from one another for Lyman; lived space belongs to women, and conceived space belongs to men. His dismissal of a particular space is linked, then, to the rejection of the gender he associates with that space, and vice versa.

Given his disdain for all that is feminine, his fear of his own femininity, and the supposed difficulty of dealing with female writing, it is at first surprising that Lyman chooses to take on a woman's point of view in his novel. If Lyman were hoping to escape from his current feminization through writing, it would make much more sense for him to tell the story from his grandfather's perspective. This is especially true because Oliver Ward is an adventuring engineer — a capable, competent westerner who Lyman clearly admires. But Lyman chooses Susan. Doing so allows him to exhibit control over the feminine. That is, by choosing Susan as his narrator, he can literally control everything that she says and does, a feat that he clearly fails to accomplish in his real life. Her body, her thoughts, and her art are all within his domain, and he can create her in the image of his ideal woman.

Lyman creates Susan with special care, ensuring that she embodies his idea of Victorian femininity. She is concerned with housekeeping, and she willingly submits to Oliver's authority, even on matters that she is clearly more knowledgeable. For example, when she is first solicited to submit a literary sketch for publication, she quickly writes a short piece and hands it to Oliver. He is skeptical and tells her that she should "take out

that stuff about Olympian mountains and the Stygian caverns of the mine. That's about used up, I should say." Until this point, Lyman has made it clear that Oliver is not literary; he does not read for entertainment, he does not write, and he is uncomfortable with talking and language in general. Yet, when he voices his critique, Susan responds, "meekly, astonished at herself" and quickly rewrites the sketch (127). Since Oliver is not a writer, literary critic, or even a reader, his authority on these matters seems to be solely based on his gender. As a male, he is apparently inherently able to recognize "poor" female writing. Lyman's (supposed) ability to assess writing mirrors Oliver's judgment.

Lyman concentrates especially hard on writing Susan as a modest, Victorian woman. In fact, he displays a nearly obsessive interest in his grandmother's sexual purity and reticence. He refuses to write about Susan and Oliver's wedding night because he insists that he respects his grandmother's privacy and modesty (68). Later, he describes his grandmother as embarrassed and uneasy when her husband looks at her with desire: "...her skin was prickly with the touch of his eyes as she walked the baby up and down, she felt the pliancy of the uncorseted body under her nightgown, she fully understood the sensuousness of her barefoot walk" (181). Susan, according to Lyman, is uncomfortable with her own body and the idea of sexuality. She is Lyman's remedy for Shelley Rasmussen.

His ability to control Susan, and more importantly "the feminine," is exactly what makes writing a habitable space for Lyman. When he writes Susan and Oliver as traditional female and male, he reinstates the conventional gender power dynamics (where the masculine dominates the feminine) that have been upended in his own life. A comparison of Lyman's depiction of Susan and Susan's depiction of herself in her letters

exposes the extent of Lyman's overwriting. For example, Susan writes to her dearest friend, Augusta:

Your note came this afternoon just after Bessie and I had been getting your room ready and making your bed — our bed where I thought I should lie tonight with my dear girl's arm under my head... I only want you to love me... So I hurried after supper and changed my dress and pulled my ruffle down low in the front to please my girl (what, Grandmother?) and rush into the garden for a bunch of roses — your June roses, blooming late just for you (we have been hoarding them and begging buds to wait a few days longer for your coming) — and then down to the night boat. (57)

Lyman's shocked interjection shows his disapproval, but the voice of Susan is even stronger here, and what the reader sees is not the timid, modest, Victorian lady that Lyman tries to reify in his re-interpretation of her life. One can hardly imagine this woman as self-conscious about "the uncorseted body." In fact, Susan's gesture of pulling down her dress emphasizes her immodesty, not to mention her defiance of normative sexuality. Yet, for the most part, Lyman ignores the evidence that suggests that Susan is not as demure as he would like to imagine. ¹⁹

An examination of Susan and Oliver's scene of writing illustrates how Lyman's rigid spatialized gender roles manifest themselves spatially. It also reinforces his idea that writing can be used to control unruly spaces and experiences. Like Lyman, Susan uses writing to cordon off that which she finds unpleasant. Also like Lyman, what she

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¹⁹ Even when faced with evidence that Susan likely committed some form of adultery, Lyman disavows it, saying that he "cannot imagine such a complete breakdown in my grandmother" (508). He prefers to believe, instead, that the affair was unconsummated.

Oliver decides to go to Deadwood, she "polished phrases that would make his four-day stage ride and his leaky tent and his job for George Hearst seem an adventure. And in the process of framing the West and her husband in words, she began to leave them behind" (195). The term "polishing" emphasizes that Susan's writing is part of her feminine gender role; she is engaging in an act of metaphorical housekeeping when she cleans up her husband's experiences. She makes Oliver's life more habitable for herself and for her readers. Even more than that, though, her writing creates boundaries and a sense of containment when she "frames" Oliver and the West. Through this process of enclosure, Susan effectively positions herself outside of the frame and is thereby disconnected from both Oliver and the Western space that she is only too happy to leave. The "frame" of words divorces her from the West. Her spatialization further fortifiess Lyman's idea that the Victorian lady should be "protected" from the West.

Lyman's retelling of Susan's visit to Oliver's mine more fully expresses how

Lyman creates Susan as the paragon of Victorian womanhood and how writing functions
to dominate lived and perceived space. Susan's mine visit is one of the few times that
she leaves the (feminine) space of the home for any extended period of time and enters
the (masculine) space of the mine. Lived and perceived space are allowed to intrude
upon Susan's psyche. Susan is invited into the mine because it will provide her with
"something interesting for [her] sketch" (130). Though the intention is to give her
material to draw, it is clear that while she is actually in the mine, she should use words as
her medium of representation. Virtually every sight is subject to the inquiry of what kind
of "picture" it might make, or how Susan might add it to her "sketch." The sketches,

verbal or visual, are vastly different from her usual material. Sensory perception and bodies are fragmented by the dirt of the mine, as well as by the continual downward movement: "The hold had already squeezed shut, wiping him out from the head downward. Smudged face, white eyes, yellow pocket of light, obscure body and legs and ore cart, were gone... It was as if a shutter had opened and a wild face had looked in for an awful moment and then been shut back into its darkness" (139). This brief "sketch" creates a vivid picture that show how the mine (or the viewer) divorces the human from the body — the person who is seen is not so much a human being as a collection of body parts that is glimpsed only for a moment before disappearing into the background again.

As Susan encounters lived and perceived space directly, she increasingly becomes disoriented and overwhelmed, until she is "half convinced that the sound she had heard there was phantasmal, that this lonely boy with his loaded car was all there was, that her vision of busy little men swarming through the dark was a product of her overheated imagination." A vivid version of lived and perceived space emerges from this section because Stegner bombards the reader with sensory information. The rock changes from "yellowish" to "greenish black." The air continually becomes more stifling and filled with the lingering odor of creosote (139).

The narration of this incident contends that Susan's disorientation is a function of her gendered reaction to the space of the mine. The men around her are unaffected by the horrors of the mine, carrying on their conversations and business without noticing the terror the mine induces in Susan. Susan's sympathies for the miners are interpreted and dismissed as womanly sentimentalism. She is portrayed as allowing her body to overtake her rational mind, and at the end of her experience, she is described as "shaken,"

dependent, nearly abject" (141). In other words, Susan is constructed to reaffirm the traditional concept of the feminine — overly emotional, overly bodily, and unsuited for anything but the sheltered life of domesticity.²⁰ This suits Lyman's purposes because it validates his idea that women should be spatially restricted and affirms that Susan is, indeed, an ideal Victorian lady.

Susan is relieved of her anxiety only when she converts lived and perceived space into conceived space. She uses writing to subdue the sensory information around her. This transformation is embodied by the transition from the sense of smell and touch to vision. When Susan looks instead of feels, she is no longer overwhelmed by claustrophobia, the sensation of water drops on her arms, or the fumes of creosote. When she looks instead of feels, she can frame the miners just as she framed Oliver:

How living the faces were, and how eloquent the postures... What things the vagrant inadequate light did to a brown cheek, a mustache, the whiteness of teeth, the shine of eyes looking downward out their corners at her. It was like nothing she had ever drawn...yet this scene, lurid and dimly fearful, spoke to her...they might be buried but they were fiercely alive. She stood memorizing them, hoping to draw them later. (142)

The result of her return to conceived space is indicated by the fragmentation that ensues.

Rather than pictures of whole men, she describes the various pieces that make them up.

Individuality is erased when the men are treated as a collection of parts — white teeth,

space laden with violent connotations, particularly in relation to the power dynamics of gender. Susan is brought into a space that has, historically and symbolically, been associated with violence against and the domination of women, which also may play a part in Susan's reaction.

nation of women, which also may play a part in Susan's reaction.

²⁰ It is significant, too, that the space that is so anxiety-inducing is a mine. A mine is the embodiment of dominated space because it is literally a space that has been "sliced" open (to use Lefebvre's terminology), and it has been altered beyond recognition through technology. Carolyn Merchant traces the gendered implications of mining to Pliny, suggesting that mining is a form of invading "Mother Nature's womb" (30) and, furthermore, equivalent to "mining the female flesh for pleasure" (39). A mine, then, is already a

brown cheeks, shining eyes — and primitivism tinges the scene. Lefebvre illuminates the dangers of focusing solely on vision when he says, "That which is merely seen (and merely visible) is hard to see — but it is spoken of more and more eloquently and written of more and more copiously" (286).

It is not surprising, then, that Susan sums up her "impressions" verbosely:

How can I say? There are wonderful pictures, if one had the skill. I'm afraid they're beyond me... Oh, those men with candlelight shining off their eyeballs, and that awful cavern of a place where they work, and that tapping through the rock as if men buried alive were trying to make others hear! I suppose I shouldn't find it so picturesque. It's awful, really—isn't it? They seem so like prisoners. (144)

Susan successfully transforms the "living" and "lurid" men of the mine into "pictures." Even worse, she turns them into the picturesque, suggesting a pleasing vision of something unusual meant for the consumption of detached viewers. Susan's use of writing to dominate space and its inhabitants mirrors Lyman's own writing of habitability.

Oliver Ward shares Lyman and Susan's penchant for using writing to produce habitability. After seeing Susan's visit to the mine, it becomes clear that Oliver's daily spatial life is un-habitable. Susan notes that Oliver spends anywhere from fifteen to twenty-four hours in the mine on a regular basis. What allows him to spend so much time in these cold, dark, and confined places for such extended periods of time is mapwriting. Oliver is able to cope with this space only by focusing on the representations of space that he is creating, rather than the lived and perceived space he is experiencing.

Transforming the lived space of the mine into visual representations allows Oliver to ward off any of the potentially ill effects of this space. It stands to reason, then, that Oliver's reactions to the mine may not be that different from Susan's, but he has managed to control these reactions by focusing on the conceived space of maps.

Oliver's mapmaking is an untraditional form of writing, but writing nonetheless. Oliver's chosen genre matches his gender, just as Susan's choice of local color matches hers. Oliver is like a historian, of sorts. He takes all of the information around him and converts it into "facts." Maps, rightly or wrongly, are perceived of as objective, not subjective. As a mapmaker, he is firmly situated within a conventionally masculine form of writing. Lyman's gender paradigms are once again substantiated by his construction of Oliver's writing situation.

The abstraction of Oliver's maps can be dangerous, as geographer J.B. Harley points out. Harley notes that this threat may be inherent in the maps themselves: "In other words, the lack of qualitative differentiation in maps structured by the scientific *episteme* serves to dehumanize the landscape...Space becomes more important than place: if places look alike they can be treated alike. Thus, with the progress of scientific mapping, space became all too easily a socially empty commodity, a geometrical landscape of cold, nonhuman facts" (99). A few of the things that are lost in Oliver's maps are the "wild face[s]" of the miners, the dirt and grime, and the "tak tak" sounds of "Tommyknockers" (Stegner 140). Like Susan, Oliver loses the human element and the human impacts of the mines. These things fall outside the frame of his maps, and as he draws boundaries and delimits spaces, he brings lived and perceived space into submission. The evidence of the map's domestication of space is apparent when Susan

hangs up some of his surveys for "decoration" (247). The maps have domesticated space and thus the maps are now suitable for domesticity.

Habitability, as Lyman sees it (and demonstrates through his own writing as well as Susan and Oliver's), can emerge only when the wild and unruly elements of lived and perceived space have been brought under control. Lyman bases his version of habitability on ideology more than practicality, and hence his gender prejudices strongly influence his writerly transformation of space. Lyman's model of habitability is not important because it shows the dangers of habitability "gone wrong"; it is important because it shows that, fundamentally, habitability is not (necessarily) utopian, ideal, or even admirable.

Ethical Habitability

For both Kirkland and Stegner, habitability is inextricable from spatial control. For Clavers, writing offers her the ability to relinquish some of her desire to force Michigan space to mold to her expectations. Her willingness to explore alternative sites of home and the accompanying fluid gender roles is not based on an ideological acceptance of the merits of natural space, or untraditional gender roles for that matter. Her approach is more pragmatic. Clavers believes in the doctrine of separate spheres (as much as she complicates that very notion), but she also sees clear evidence that domestic space in Michigan is unsatisfactory and is unlikely to improve in the immediate future. Thus, women are stuck with an un-habitable space. To combat the inadequacies of domesticity, Clavers turns to the space Michigan has in abundance and makes it accessible for females and males alike. The resulting new home may not be available to Clavers, but it is for

some of her characters; and, it allows Clavers to move toward appropriating rather than dominating space. If we were to provide a snapshot of Clavers's shift, it would be most accurate to say that she moves from an ideological standpoint to a pragmatic one. Clavers's habitability is not ideal — it is not always even sufficient to keep her characters in Michigan — nor is it without other, more serious, problems. Clavers's version of habitability undeniably favors the middle-class inhabitants of Michigan who are able to appreciate natural space both because of their educational background and the presence of hired help to take care of day-to-day tasks. She relies on a domesticated version of nature, suggesting that she may be adapting to the existing spatial conditions less than it may initially appear.

Lyman's habitability is even more troubling, however. He maintains his focus on his ideology of space and, in particular, the gender regulations and power dynamics that accompany his preconceptions of the best space. Lyman's spatial tactics are not necessarily more selfish than Clavers's: they both want to create habitability for themselves. But, Lyman's transformation of space is much more domineering. In fact, what makes the space he creates habitable for him is that it allows him to realign gender roles in a way that places him (as a masculine "historian) in a role of power and authority. A substantial part of his struggle is that his lived spatial experience feminizes him, and the way he solves that problem is to subjugate the feminine through his writing, which reestablishes his masculinity. Lyman's logic is based on the assumption that the domestic is feminine, that feminine is inferior, and that therefore the domestic is also inferior. Of course, the terms can be reversed for Lyman, too: the feminine is domestic, domestic is inferior, and therefore the feminine is inferior. When Lyman constructs

himself as outside of the domestic, he is (by his own logic) powerful and therefore appropriately masculine.

Despite their differences, together, Kirkland and Stegner's texts make it clear that the control of space is integral to habitability. This trait manifests itself differently in these texts, though. Clavers is obviously concerned with domesticating (which, of course, is an expression of control) Michigan space, but through writing, she begins to play with the idea that "home" can be defined differently from what she initially assumed. Writing alternative definitions of home allows her to relinquish control over space. As she releases her domination over domestic space, spatialized gender regulations also begin to disappear. Lyman, on the other hand, uses writing to establish and solidify his control over space. When he cannot manage or handle his lived and perceived space, he turns to writing to provide him with the power necessary for his psychological well-being. He turns writing into a space that he can inhabit, and he exerts control over his grandparent's space to compensate for his lack of authority in his own life.

The need to control space in order to achieve habitability links directly to the (perceived) imbalance of the spatial triad of lived, perceived, and conceived space. Lived and perceived space dominate conceived space dominate the lives of Clavers and Lyman, and though Henri Lefebvre implies that kind of imbalance will lead to more livable space, for Clavers and Lyman, it makes space un-habitable. The real culprit, though, is still conceived space. That is, the problem for Clavers and Lyman is that their conceptions of space prevent them from being able to accept their lived conditions. Clavers believes that domestic space should be gentile and compartmentalized — when it

is not, she is discomfited. Lyman believes that women should occupy domestic space and act as subordinates to men; when he finds himself trapped at home and in a subordinate position, his space becomes unlivable. That is to say that there is nothing inherently wrong with Clavers's or Lyman's space, except that it does not meet their spatial expectations. The spatial triad needs to be tipped in the appropriate direction for habitability to emerge. For Clavers, this means that she has to learn that lived and perceived space are acceptable; for Lyman, this means that he has to further emphasize conceived space. Habitability can be achieved by altering any part of the spatial triad, and it is clear from both of the spaces produced that the spatial triad does not need to be balanced. This opposes Lefebvre's notion of the ideal subject-space relationship in which the spatial triad is balanced between lived, perceived, and conceived space. In a related vein, Clavers and Lyman show that habitability can emerge from either the domination or appropriation of space. Although the former is less palatable, it is equally effective.

Reading Kirkland and Stegner together reveals that gender's role in habitability is directly linked to the ability to control space. That is, they both argue that gender dictates spatial power, and they then re-write space in order to distribute that power in a way that is favorable to their own gender. Because of the different gender positions they occupy, their revisions look substantially different, but the principle behind them remains the same. The authorial gender can make it tempting to hypothesize that women writers create different habitabilities than do men, but this comparison cannot be made fairly using these texts, since these two authors are separated by far more than gender (such as culture and history). Moreover, Clavers's and Lyman's habitability originates from the

same premise (that of separate spheres). Looking at these two texts shows that a relationship between habitability and gender exists, but that relationship manifests in multiple and diverse ways.

Habitability, as constructed in these texts, is makeshift, pragmatic, and variable. It is highly individualized, to the point that the production of one character's habitability negatively impacts other characters as well as space. The objectives of this chapter were to show how characters can use writing to create habitability and how that production can produce variable spaces. The task of the next three chapters is to explore how writing can (or cannot) produce an ethical habitability.

CHAPTER TWO

Delinquent Housekeeping: Transforming the Regulations of Keeping House

Michel Foucault invokes the ship as a "heterotopia par excellence," in his essay "Different Spaces," explaining that the ship is "a piece of floating space, a placeless place, that lives by its own devices, that is self-enclosed and, at the same time, delivered over to the boundless expanse of the ocean." Furthermore, it is "the greatest reservoir of imagination" (Foucault 184-5). The ship, by Foucault's reckoning, is a unique space because it traverses the boundaries between fluidity and stability, interior and exterior, place and placelessness. He endows the space of the ship with subversive possibility, if only in the realm of imagination and fantasy.

Sarah Orne Jewett's *Deephaven* (1877), Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping* (1980), and Toni Morrison's *Paradise* (1998) imagine domestic space as "floating" and a "placeless place." Their imaginings offer ground-breaking visions of home and habitability. Gendered space underpins the spatial crisis in these novels, and Robinson and Morrison use ideas from Jewett to negotiate this crisis and create a progressive habitability. Jewett links flexible spatial practices with fluid gender roles, and she lays the groundwork to redefine domestic space and home as fluid and changing (as ship-like). Robinson uses Jewett's idea of fluid domestic space (embodied by the imaginative figure of the ship) to sabotage the very definition and regulations of the domestic, creating an ungrounded domesticity. Morrison's novel also explores the possibilities of a flexible approach to domesticity, but the actual figure of the ship does not play nearly as large of a role as it does in Jewett and Robinson. When it does enter the text, it is not a

subversive space of possibility but rather as a way to remind the reader of the limits of a purely imaginary habitability.

Separated by time, geography, race, and class, these novels initially seem more dissimilar than similar. They converge, however, around representing models of habitability that use spatial transformation to resist and redefine domesticity, and in the process of renovating spatial assumptions, they also question and critique the accompanying spatialized gender regulations. Above all, these novels suggest that habitability is not tied to a particular kind of space or location but rather a particular kind of relationship between the subject and space. That they each approach domesticity from distinct historical and cultural contexts makes discussing the texts together even more valuable because, collectively, they challenge the foundations of domesticity and its relation to habitability. My analysis does not privilege one of these models but rather attempts to bring all three into a dialogue that provides mutual illumination on traditional domesticity's role in creating habitability.

The potential for authors of different historical periods to be discussed together often focuses on issues of influence, whether in a literal sense or with an attention to Bloom's anxiety of influence. In the case of the three writers in this chapter, this relationship has already been explored (to various degrees). The links between Robinson and nineteenth century American literature, for example, are well documented. In interviews, Robinson speaks of her interest in Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Emily Dickinson (Schaub, Boruch), and scholars have traced these connections in her work in more detail (Ravits, Aldrich, Hedrick). Aside from Dickinson, though, Robinson has only infrequently been

discussed in relation to nineteenth century women writers.²¹ Marilyn Sanders Mobley explores the relationship between Jewett and Morrison in her book Folk Roots and Mythic Wings in Sarah Orne Jewett and Toni Morrison: The Cultural Function of Narrative, but my work departs from hers by exploring the spatial links between the two authors' work. As valuable as studies of influence are, they also often foreclose the possibility of a transhistorical conversation either by limiting the influence to a forward trajectory or by positioning the figures to be studied in a competitive model. My chapter allows these texts to be read as an exchange of ideas about the ways spatial resistance can be used to transform dominant paradigms of domesticity.

Placeless Domesticity in Sarah Orne Jewett's Deephaven

Sarah Orne Jewett's first novel is situated firmly in the genre of literary regionalism, but rather than celebrating a personal, affective connection to a particular locale, Jewett just as often critiques this sense of place. *Deephaven* details Kate Lancaster and Helen Denis's (the narrator) summer visit to the Maine village of Deephaven. There, they "keep the house" of Kate's grand-aunt Mrs. Brandon, and the bulk of the novel consists of sketches of the local sights and inhabitants of Deephaven. The primary spatial crisis in Jewett's text is the tension between a "rooted" sense of place and what I call an ungrounded place attachment (to return to Lawrence Buell's term). In more abstract terms, the novel is about permanence and transience, and rather than privileging permanence, Jewett, through the figure of the ship, suggests that a more flexible approach to occupying space produces a more sustainable habitability.

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An exception is Joan Kirkby, who notes that Robinson's work bears some similarity to Jewett's because both create "a mythic world of women without men." Kirkby quickly follows this comparison with the argument that Robinson "does not remain long in this dimension" (99).

The tale of Miss Chauncey acts as a warning against clinging too tightly to a limited and stable domesticity. Helen and Kate meet Miss Chauncey in the village of East Parish, a place even "duller than Deephaven itself" (125). Deephaven is full of tales of people who have lived better days and whose lives are at least a bit tragic, but what makes Miss Chauncey notable is her intense attachment to her house. After her father loses his fortune, her brother commits suicide, and her other brother goes insane, Miss Chauncey herself "los[es] her reason" and is institutionalized at a nearby hospital. She regains her sanity, momentarily at least, and returns to her beloved house, where she discovers that another family member has sold all of her family's belongings to pay for bills. At the sight of her empty house, Miss Chauncey again descends into a mild form of insanity, but this time she refuses to leave her house. Miss Chauncey insists on keeping her house by living there alone even if the house falls down around her: "She had been alone many years, and no one can persuade her to leave the old house, where she seems to be contented, and does not realize her troubles; though she lives mostly in the past, and has little idea of the present, except in her house affairs..." (127). Her resolve is so strong that the only act that is able to ground her in the present is performing daily tasks of housekeeping.

Miss Chauncey's loyalty to her house could be read as admirable, as the act of the most dedicated "housekeeper." Critic Catriona Sandilands, for example, interprets Miss Chauncey as an exemplary character who embodies the positive (feminine) traditions of Deephaven combined with the newer ideas of resistance to (masculine) normative conventions (69). Though it is not Sandilands's intention to reinforce the conventional equation of the feminine with the house, her argument exposes the gendering of Miss

Chauncey's story. She is attached to her house because it is linked to her personal identity. It is integral to her identity because the distinction between gender, space, and self has collided. Jewett's presentation of the story, however, suggests that she is not privileging Miss Chauncey's place-attachment. Implicitly, she cautions her reader against allowing identity to become too intertwined with a single (gendered) space. Her critique is clearest when Miss Chauncey's emotional attachment to her house leads to her death. As her house grows more and more dilapidated, a neighbor finally insists that Miss Chauncey come live with her for the winter. However:

...her [Miss Chauncey's] fondness for her home was too strong, and one day she stole away from the people who took care of her, and crept in through the cellar, where she had to wade through half-frozen water, and then went upstairs, where she seated herself at a front window and called joyfully to the people who went by, asking them to come in to see her, as she had got home again. (133)

Miss Chauncey's return home is more pathetic than triumphant. Her joyful waving is contrasted with her method of getting home — she "stole" away, "crept" up the stairs and "had to wade" through icy water. More criminal than lady-like, Miss Chauncey's reduced circumstances are even more apparent in this scene than they were when Kate and Helen visited her. The image of the waving Miss Chauncey is tinged with sadness because the reader knows that she is delusional and can only be disappointed that the reclamation of her younger and more prosperous life as a gentile lady is impossible. As a result of her misadventures, Miss Chauncey grows very ill and, in delirium, once again

returns to her house. She dies shortly afterwards. Miss Chauncey's death is a direct result of her single-minded attachment to a particular place, a particular home.

Authors and scholars who advocate the importance of a sense of place would probably respect Miss Chauncey's fierce and stubborn attachment to her home. The theory behind sense of place, or place attachment, is that a lack of a stable place to live, or a lack of connection to a particular locale, will leave one without any sense of "home." Jewett suggests however, through the tale of Miss Chauncey, that firmly grounded domesticity is a problem because individual and communal changes are inevitable. Without the ability to find habitability elsewhere, (metaphorical) insanity and death result. Finding habitability through domesticity is not untenable, but domesticity and domestic space must be flexible. Jewett provides a model of this kind of flexible domesticity in *Deephaven* by combining the ship and the house, and the habitability produced is more sustainable. Furthermore, it is the kind of domesticity and habitability that Robinson and Morrison employ to rewrite twentieth-century gendered spaces.

At first glance, the ship does not seem like a promising location for flexible habitability. To begin with, Jewett consistently associates ships with death and tragedy. For a space of supposed possibility and potential, the sea simultaneously forecloses that very potential. Hardly a mention of ships goes by without note of the ships that did not make it back to harbor. When Kate and Helen explore the local cemetery, they pay especial attention to the "many stones which were sacred to the memory of men who had been lost as sea" (36). Of the "points of interest" they visit, the ones they mention specifically are those linked to shipwrecks (105-6). Many of the women of Deephaven

²² See, for example, Wendell Berry, Wallace Stegner, and Gary Snyder.

grieve because of shipping mishaps — Kate's single aunt is single (perhaps) because her lover died at sea, the older women of Deephaven gaze at the sea and think of their drowned husbands and brothers, and Miss Chauncey's family tragedy and deaths are indirectly caused by shipping. Even when ships are not the cause of death and tragedy, they are still a space that is largely inaccessible and relegated to the past. Deephaven is no longer a bustling shipping town; what is left of that way of life is the memories of the sailors and their families.²³

Not only are ships associated with death, literal access to this world is unavailable to women, which undermines the idea that the ship is potentially a habitable space for women. Deephavenites embody the tradition Margaret Creighton and Lisa Norling call "iron men, wooden women," in which women are those who wait at home while their men are bravely at sea (vii). Women are the bystanders to men's attachment to the seafaring life. Thus, Helen and Kate wonder if the old women look out at the sea and think about their brothers and husbands who have drowned (43). As much as Kate and Helen embody ambivalent gender roles, as a pair of women, they too are excluded from the mystique surrounding ship-life. This is represented by their segregation from the company of the ancient mariners who sit at the docks trading reminisces about their past adventures. Helen wants to tell her reader about the ancient mariners, and she and Kate want to join their company. But, Helen explains, "We found that the appearance of an outsider caused a disapproving silence, and that the meeting was evidently not to be

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²³ Jefferson's Embargo of 1807-1809 affects the residents of Deephaven deeply, even though years have passed since its inception and completion. The embargo was enacted in response to Britain's repeated interception of (neutral) American ships during its war with France. In December of 1807, entering foreign ports was forbidden for U.S. ships, as was accepting foreign cargo. The objective of the embargo was to prevent further damage to American property and to punish the British economically. Britain did not change its policy regarding American ships, but the embargo negatively changed America's shipping industry (Irwin 632-3).

interfered with" (49). Helen's positioning of herself and Kate as "outsiders" can be taken at face-value, as they are clearly outsiders in terms of locale — they are from Boston, not Deephayen, and the position of regionalist narrators as outsiders is a much discussed and well-known aspect of regionalist writers.²⁴ Thus, one could assume that they are excluded simply because they are not part of Deephaven or its culture. This exclusion, however, points to multiple issues of "outsideness," especially gender, class, and sexual orientation, not just spatial difference. Kate and Helen cannot enter the conversation because they are marked by their gender difference, suggesting that the world of shipping is not particularly fluid regarding gender roles. The figure of the ship and shipping not only solidifies boundaries between "male" and "female" but does so on the basis of spatial access. Because Jewett tends to present gender roles as fairly fluid, it is sometimes (too) easy to forget the cultural context in which she is writing. Her depictions of shipping remind her reader of the power dynamics surrounding space and gender.

Imaginatively the ship functions very differently from the way it works literally, though. Jewett blends the ship with the domestic, creating a flexible home. Helen, for example, locates her own ability to "feel at home anywhere" within her past as a child of a naval officer (24). Instead of stability providing her with a sense of place, her unsettled life allows her to have a sense of connection to multiple places: fluidity takes the place of stability. But it is important to note that fluidity and stability, transience and domesticity, are not presented as mutually exclusive categories; instead they are mutually

²⁴ See in particular the work of Judith Fetterley, Marjorie Pryse, Sandra Zagarell, and June Howard.

constitutive. Jewett presents the ship and sea as a site of a potential improvement and a complement to traditional domesticity.

In *Deephaven*, the "outside world" of commerce (represented by the ship) is not opposed to the house; instead, it serves as a reinforcement of the fluidity seen in the land-based housekeeping. From the beginning of the text, the domestic scene merges with the sea. Kate describes her aunt's house as filled with furnishings brought home from sea voyages (8). In other texts, Jewett argues that the sea provides an antidote to the potentially overwhelming interiority of village life. For example, in "The Queen's Twin," she points out that "More than this one cannot give to a young State for its enlightenment; the sea captains and the captain's wives of Maine knew something of the wide world, and never mistook their native parishes for the whole instead of a part thereof..." ("Queen's Twin" 493). It is precisely the complementary relationship of stability and fluidity that make the space of *Deephaven* habitable. This habitability is rooted in the resistance and subversion of traditional spatial practices.

Not surprisingly, Kate and Helen view the matter of housekeeping as temporary as well, leading some scholars to argue that Jewett engages in "literary tourism."²⁵

During their visit, one of their "chief pleasures" is the "housekeeping" that they undertake (84). Kate explains that "We shall have such jolly housekeeping" (10), and

²⁵ See especially Richard Brodhead in *Cultures of Letters*. Jewett's work is the (perhaps unexpected) site of vigorous debate about the ethics of regionalism, the role of class and race in the nineteenth century, the politics of nationalism, and the aesthetics of sentimentality. In many ways, the dialogue about Jewett hinges on questions of whether or not her writing exploits those she is writing about and how power dynamics influence her seemingly benign novels and stories. Kilcup and Edwards provide a particularly strong synthesis of Jewett scholarship in their introduction to *Jewett*, *Her Contemporaries*, and *Her Critics*, noting the presence of four distinct movements. The first stage involved primarily biographical criticism, and the second stage, led by feminists, treated Jewett as a "utopian" female writer writing about women. The third movement sought to correct this overly positive viewpoint by pointing out how limited Jewett's texts are in terms of their representations of class and race. The fourth movement, and the one that I hope my work falls under, tries to reconcile the second and third (2-3).

later as they buying supplies for their visit, Helen exclaims, "This was being housekeepers in earnest" (10). Servants complete almost all of the mundane tasks, so that Kate and Helen only do the jobs that are more pleasurable (13). And yet, they are almost obsessively interested in the tasks of "housekeeping" that they do perform, and so the reader follows the pair as they fish for dinner and procure items from the market. ²⁶

Kate and Helen's obvious pleasure in their version of housekeeping is (arguably) endearing, but, at the same time, it is indicative of this text's tendency to overlook the class privileges that make their habitability possible. When scholars talk about class in Jewett, they usually focus on the way that the "outsider" in the text (in this case Kate and Helen) relates to the other people in the text, particularly those who are native inhabitants of the region.²⁷ What gets elided in this approach is that many of the aspects of the text that critics find productive depend on a certain amount of economic opportunity and the accompanying perspectival advantages. For example, Sandilands points to Jewett's text as ecofeminist because it allows women to "choose to maintain, especially in their lives together, the kinds of rural morality and ecological wisdom that she [Jewett] sees in the lives and stories of her Deephaven residents" (64). Her examples include Kate, Helen, Miss Chancey, and Mrs. Bonny. What she neglects to account for is the fact that the ability to "choose" reflects privilege. Many of the women's lives in the text are dictated more by pragmatism than idealism.

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²⁶ It is worth mentioning that virtually all of their "housekeeping" is associated with consumption, which Sandra Zagarell reads as indicative of "the postbellum transition to a commodity culture in which consumption was attaining importance as an activity separate from possession" (653).

²⁷ See Allison Easton's "'How Clearly the Gradations Were Defined': Negotiating Class in Sarah Orne

²⁷ See Allison Easton's "'How Clearly the Gradations Were Defined': Negotiating Class in Sarah Orne Jewett" and Sarah Way Sherman's "Party Out of Bounds: Gender and Class in Jewett's 'The Best China Saucer."

Jewett's model of habitability, as I articulate it, also rests on the opportunity afforded to those who are wealthy enough not to have to depend upon day-to-day housekeeping. Kate and Helen, for example, can choose to complete the mundane tasks of taking care of their house. But, unlike many of their female counterparts in Deephaven, if they choose not to, they do not suffer; their servants simply do their tasks. Part of the merit of Kate and Helen's habitability is that it is flexible and can move to other places, but it is clear at various points in the text that many Deephavenites do not have this luxury. Miss Chauncey is only one example — Mrs. Kew and Mrs. Patton are other cases (12; 26). None of these women have the economic or social power to leave Deephaven, even if they wanted to do so. The ability to make space habitable, then, is at least partially dependent on class.

Kate and Helen demonstrate awareness (and even guilt) that their economic status privileges them and allows them to have a home, but their response to the reduced circumstances of others is, in many ways, inadequate. When faced with truly divergent economic circumstances, Jewett invokes Christianity as the solution. The most extreme case of poverty the girls encounter is the small family they find in the woods near Deephaven. The children are skinny and clearly hungry, and the father tells them all about their economic hardships. When they return to visit the family again, Kate and Helen discover that the mother and father have both died, leaving the children orphans. Kate's awareness of class discrepancies becomes clear when she says, "I wonder how we can help being conscious, in the midst of our comforts and pleasures, of the lives which are being starved to death in more ways than one" (121). This musing is an opportunity for deeper reflection on how the ability to have a home depends on economic security,

but instead Kate turns to platitudes about how life is meaningless if it is not a "Christian life." The stakes of Christianity only become clear at the end of the chapter, though, when Helen invokes heaven as just across the boundary of death (123). The evocation of heaven assuages their guilt because (presumably) it is a place where money no longer matters and where everyone enters on equal footing. They are relieved of an obligation to concretely address class differences because heaven does the work for them.

Despite its clear limitations, though, Kate and Helen make Deephaven a home, and they create habitability for themselves. Helen tells Kate that the house "now belongs to you, and if I were ever to come back without you I should find you here" (137). This note of seriousness shows that Kate and Helen are not simply exploiting the space, but that they are instead engaging with it on a more personal and significant level. They may be merely visitors and only superficial housekeepers, but they interact with and mutate space in order to make it their own. Kate and Helen's approach to domesticity is an alternative to Miss Chauncey's, and it is one that enables them to produce a habitability that is simultaneously grounded and ungrounded. Clearly they are invested in the particular site in question — Mrs. Brandon's house and Deephaven — but it is equally clear that the habitability they have found there can be found elsewhere too. Even if their occupation of this place will not last forever, they still find it worthwhile to engage in the process of creating a home for themselves there. This process of creating a home through housekeeping can then be transferred to another domestic scene if necessary.

The spatial flexibility endgendered by the combination of the sea and domestic life offers the possibility of gender flexibility as well. Jewett's progressive work with issues of gender are well noted. Marjorie Pryse, for example, argues that for Jewett

gender is not a binary construction: "Rather, Jewett's characters inhabit the 'third' space of possibility in which gender is a category many of them resist" ("Sex, Class" 533).

Alaimo makes a similar argument, focusing more explicitly on space: "When sexual division becomes indistinguishable from spatial division, the transgression of spatial boundaries becomes a means for contesting the very nature of sexual difference" (58).

By showcasing fluid spatial practices through her description of housekeeping, Jewett implicitly argues for a more fluid view of gender and sexual difference as well.

For instance, the figure of the (sinking) ship allows women to subvert the dictate of marriage acceptably. Kate has an aunt who has always remained single, despite the fact that she "had chances enough...and had been rich and handsome and finely educated." It is speculated that *perhaps* she had a "sailor lover...and perhaps he had been lost at sea" (19). Whether Kate's aunt actually had a drowned lover is irrelevant. The ship functions as a figure of the imagination that provides a socially acceptable alternative to marriage. Ships in this situation literally and metaphorically permit a certain amount of flexibility.

The trope of spatial flexibility produced by the combination of the ship and the house generates a habitability that extends beyond the literal presence of the ship, and so similar flexibility is present even when the literal ship is not. Furthermore, Jewett links fluid spatial practices with flexible gender role appropriation, which is a trope that becomes especially important in Morrison's work. Mrs. Bonny, a Deephaven local, is known as a bad housekeeper and resists traditional gender roles not only through her lack of concern for appropriate domestic management but also through her mode of dress, which includes male and female attire — she wears "a man's coat, cut off so that it made

an odd short jacket, and a pair of men's boots much worse for wear" as well as "some short skirts" and "three aprons" (107, 108). As Alaimo points out, Miss Bonny's spatial practices incorporate the conventionally opposed spaces of the domestic and the natural with equal enthusiasm. While Alaimo contends that Mrs. Bonny is an object of ridicule who "evokes anxiety about the loss of a domestic ideal even while proclaiming women's freedom from the domestic" (45), I read her role in the text as more of a model of spatial flexibility and alternative to the doomed Miss Chauncey. The townspeople may mock Mrs. Bonny and treat her homemade goods as suspect, but Kate and Helen do not partake in this derision (*Deephaven* 107). Admittedly, they find Mrs. Bonny's quirks amusing, but they do not dismiss or judge her harshly.

Jewett uses the figure of the ship and the sea to introduce the idea of fluidity and flexibility to the domestic sphere, so that domesticity can combine elements that are traditionally disparate. The natural and the domestic merge, stability and transience become complementary rather than contradictory, and the categorization of men and women becomes less dichotomous. All of this works to make home space habitable. In a manner that anticipates Foucault's heterotopic ship as a "placeless place," the domestic becomes a process of inhabiting that is simultaneously located within the house itself but also within the subject. That is, the subject can inhabit a particular domestic space and create habitability there, but that habitability is transferable to other domestic or natural spaces as well. Jewett thus creates a placeless habitability. Habitability is transferable because it is based on the subject's ability to relate to space, not on the space itself. Unlike Foucault, however, Jewett transfers the heterotopic properties of the ship to the

domestic. The introduction of the space of the ship to the domestic makes the domestic an environment characterized by fluidity.

Jewett builds a foundation for a spatial resistance based on fluidity and flexibility. She does not explicitly oppose spatial regulations but instead subtly incorporates and rewrites these regulations for the benefits of the inhabitants of domestic space. To explore the full significance of this model of spatial resistance and the full ramifications of a placeless habitability, we must turn to Robinson's *Housekeeping* and Morrison's *Paradise*.

Marilynne Robinson's Ungrounded Domesticity

If Jewett's texts look backwards to the ship, Marilynne's Robinson's *Housekeeping* embraces a future-oriented turn to the house-ship. While Jewett's fluid spaces are generated by the historical reality of shipping, Robinson's use of spatial fluidity and the figure of the ship are connected more to the symbolic and imaginative properties of water. Robinson's novel also creates a habitable hybrid domesticity.

Housekeeping vacillates between an ambivalent series of tensions and offers no easy solutions.²⁸ This text attempts to create a habitable space within the confines of a patriarchal history of domesticity and housekeeping, and Robinson employs the figure of the ship to negotiate the tensions surrounding domesticity and to embrace a domesticity

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Scholars often interpret *Housekeeping* based on a series of binaries: stable/transient, housed/vagrant, traditional/subversive, domesticated/liberated, and these binaries are embodied in the figure of the house and the train. Some scholars interpret the novel as favoring transience, which in its dismissal of traditional patriarchal structures such as feminine domesticity, subverts patriarchy. Paula Geyh, for example, argues that *Housekeeping* creates a "transient subjectivity which is located in a place outside all patriarchal structure" (104). Similarly, Maggie Galehouse writes that this novel "portrays drifting as a kind of liberation, an unencumbering, a casting-off of unnecessary object and social responsibilities" (119). Other scholars view *Housekeeping* as more problematic. Karen Kaivola interprets the alternatives presented in the novel (whether they pertain to subjectivity or domesticity) as "equally undesirable" (688).

akin to Jewett's. The space of the ship, though ultimately unrealizable in this text, shows that women do not necessarily have to make a choice between being domesticated or being liberated, between traditional spatial roles within the home or unconventional vagrancy and instability. Instead, Robinson offers her characters an imaginative ungrounded domesticity that is habitable.²⁹ Jewett incorporates the (imagined) fluidity of ships by creating flexible relationships between the subject and home; Robinson substitutes a ship for the traditional home-space of the house.

Housekeeping is narrated by the young Ruth, who, along with her sister Lucille, has been abandoned by her mother (who drives off a cliff) in Fingerbone, Idaho. The girls are taken care of by a series of maternal figures: first, their grandmother, who dies and is replaced briefly by their great-aunts Lily and Nona, and finally by their mother's sister Sylvie. Sylvie is an unconventional caretaker, and eventually, Lucille leaves her remaining family in favor of her more domestically-capable home economics teacher. After the ladies of the town and the sheriff threaten to remove Ruth from Sylvie's custody, Sylvie and Ruth leave the house for a life of transience. Robinson's novel builds on Jewett's work with fluid domesticity, and she uses the figure of the ship to provide an alternative to the choice between having a home (represented by the house) and being transient (exemplified by the train).

Ruth says that her Aunt Sylvie in a house is "more or less like a mermaid in a ship's cabin. She preferred it [the house] sunk in the very element it was meant to exclude" (Robinson 99). Comparing Sylvie to a mermaid on a ship links living in

²⁹ The term "ungrounded domesticity" sounds similar to Stacy Alaimo's "undomesticated ground," but they mean something quite different. Alaimo's term refers to the tendency of women writers to turn to natural space as a realm free from domestic regulations — natural space becomes "undomesticated ground." The term "ungrounded domesticity," on the other hand, refers to a kind of domesticity not situated in one particular location or site.

domestic space with displacement and exploitation, since the trope of the mermaid evokes a number of cultural myths. Mermaids do not belong in ships at all, but rather in the sea, and when taken onto a ship, the mermaid becomes a figure of exotic and erotic entertainment for men. In her proper place (the sea), the mermaid possesses supernatural power and allure, but this strength dissipates the moment that she is removed from the sea. Not only is the mermaid on a ship exploited, she is also displaced. Mermaids are structurally incapable of living on a ship or on land; they are designed for an entirely different sort of life and medium (represented literally by her fin rather than legs). Likewise, one can infer, Sylvie is not designed to keep a house, at least not in the sense that one commonly understands that phrase. In fact, when Sylvie is in a house, it is as if she is being kept rather than the one doing the keeping. Brought to its logical inferences, the mermaid metaphor implies that domesticity is also based on patriarchal exploitation.

Though Robinson is careful to avoid didacticism, the novel nevertheless (albeit inadvertently) suggests that patriarchy and its power to regulate the way women interact with space is what keeps Sylvie within the house. The male sheriff and the masculinized power of the law, for example, is ultimately the figure that enforces the townswomen's desire to remove Ruth from Sylvie's custody. The problem with Sylvie's care of Ruth is explicitly spatial. She does not keep house appropriately, and even worse, she allows Ruth to occupy the unsuitable space of the train (177). Because Sylvie threatens domestic regulations and, even more importantly what those regulations are meant to enforce, she is deemed an unsuitable guardian. Of course, Ruth is not in danger simply because Sylvie is not very tidy; she is in jeopardy because Sylvie's housekeeping inadequacy suggests that domesticity and the home itself are unstable and ungrounded.

Men, the townswomen imply, would provide the proper "order." "Do you hear anything from their father?...Or Mr. Fisher?...Your husband, dear'." When Sylvie answers in the negative, the ladies from town reveal what they hope the girls father or Sylvie's husband might provide. "Some people—some of us—feel that Ruthie should have—that a young girl needs an orderly life'" (185). If Sylvie were tempered by an upstanding masculine presence, it is implied, the house would not be full of leaves and animals, and Ruth would not be exposed to the threat of vagrancy embodied by the freight train. Though men do not appear much in the novel, they haunt it as the figures who are the regulators of domesticity and the process of creating a sense of home.

Despite Sylvie's domestic shortcomings, Ruth observes that "Sylvie talked a great deal about housekeeping" (Robinson 85). Her attempts, however, are plagued by a number of fundamental misunderstandings about what it traditionally means to keep house. The element of confusion is crucial because it suggests that Sylvie resists domesticity inadvertently, not because she sees it as a source of oppression. Robinson thereby prevents Sylvie from becoming a feminist hero of resistance to patriarchy. One of the ways Sylvie subverts (intentionally or not) this exploitation is to redefine housekeeping so that it maintains permeable, rather than stable, boundaries. So she allows the house to fill with leaves and crickets and cats, and instead of settling in to the house, she refuses to unpack. Ruth says, "It seemed to me that if she could remain transient here, she would not have to leave" (Robinson 103). In other words, if Sylvie could resist and transform traditional notions of domesticity (which imply stability and settling), she could find a habitable space within the house.

The accidental nature of Sylvie's resistant housekeeping further manifests itself in her misconception of literal "keeping" as method of housekeeping. When the women of the town visit Ruth and Sylvie toward the end of the novel, they are dismayed to find stacks of old tin cans, newspapers, and magazines filling the house. Ruth explains that, "Sylvie only kept them, I think, because she considered accumulation to be the essence of housekeeping, and because she considered the hoarding of worthless things to be proof of a particularly scrupulous thrift" (180). Sylvie does not knowingly or intentionally rebuke the standards of housekeeping. In fact, as Ruth points out, it is as if Sylvie is heeding an extreme version of "scrupulous thrift." She seems to be trying to embrace Lydia Maria Child's well known advice that opens The American Frugal Housewife: "The true economy of housekeeping is simply the art of gathering up all the fragments, so that nothing be lost. I mean fragments of time, as well as materials" (5). The aspect of household economy that Sylvie does not understand is that one must have some sort of use for the fragments that are kept; the act of keeping itself is not the objective. Therefore, Sylvie's resistance cannot be interpreted as an attempt to subvert patriarchy, domesticity, or spatial regulations, per se. Rather she tries, and fails, to conform to patriarchal and spatialized gender prescriptions.

If Sylvie were intentionally resisting domestic regulations and regulators, she would react by defending herself and her lifestyle; instead, she responds to the critiques of the townspeople at first with bewilderment and then with a resolve to do a better job at meeting their spatial regulations and expectations. She cleans out the parlor, forces Ruth to return to school, and fries chicken. She washes dishes and adds artificial flowers to their décor. She vows to "explain it all to them" (189). In short, she tries to become a

more traditional female in an attempt to maintain her current living arrangements with Ruth, even if it means meeting the strictures of a domesticity that we have to imagine she finds suffocating. Her attempts are futile, as both Ruth and the reader know; Sylvie is incapable of negotiating her displacement in a socially acceptable manner.

Robinson responds to Sylvie's quest for a habitable domestic space by offering an alternative space of domesticity — the ship and the ark. At first, the ship's role is just as ambivalent as it is in Jewett's work. The current house is continually compared to a failed and faulty ship. Robinson, however, does not dismiss the ship or its potential space. Instead, the ship enters as the ark. *Housekeeping* draws heavily on Biblical narratives and tropes, and thus the ark and references to the great flood (in various guises) permeate the text from the beginning. In a (figurative) Foucauldian inspired moment near the end of the novel, Robinson offers the ark as an improved house, a space that resists and transforms traditional domestic strictures and spatialized gender roles. Shortly after the ladies from Fingerbone visit Sylvie and Ruth (described above), Ruth contemplates an alternative kind of house:

Imagine that Noah knocked his house apart and used the planks to build an ark, while his neighbors looked on, full of doubt. A house, he must have told them, should be daubed with pitch and built to float cloud high, if need be. A lettuce patch was of no use at all, and a good foundation was worse than useless. A house should have a compass and a keel. The neighbors would have put their hands in their pockets and chewed their lips and strolled home to houses they now found wanting in ways they could not understand. (184)

The invocation of Noah's building of the ark suggests the possibility of rebuilding domesticity and functions as a logical conclusion to Sylvie's unconventional, boundary-breaking housekeeping. Ruth's reverie proposes a transformation of domestic space, but significantly not an annihilation of it. Noah uses the pieces from his house to build his new living space; he does not begin completely anew. The alternative domestic space is governed by its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. It is "built to float cloud high, if need be" (emphasis added); it is moveable and mutable. The ark allows Robinson to maintain the idea of a living space that is both a refuge and a home without negating the need for freedom, movement, and flexibility. The emphasis is on the changes that a house (not an ark) should undergo — a house should be daubed with pitch, a house should have a compass and a keel. The ship is not a substitution for the house; this metaphor (in a move evocative of Jewett) transfers the properties of flexibility and adaptability of a ship to the house.³⁰

Only when we consider the ark-house's ability to negotiate shifting terrain (and thus to be a model of a habitable domesticity) are we able to reconcile this depiction of the ship with the earlier uses of the same image to emphasize the failure of domesticity. When Lucille "floods" their small kitchen with light, exposing its decay and disorder, Ruth explains that it is all "the clutter of ordinary life on the deck of a drowned ship" (102). Sylvie's substantial attempts at domesticity are equated with a failed, dying ship, illuminated by a metaphorical influx of water. Similarly, their domestic situation figuratively places Lucille in the position of a sinking boat. "I was content with Sylvie, so it was a surprise to me when I realized that Lucille had begun to regard other people

³⁰ The necessity of altering the existing domestic space and making it more ship-like is foreshadowed when Ruth notices the changes that have taken place at the house and says that "And it seemed that if the house were not to founder, it must soon begin to float" (124).

with the calm, horizontal look of settled purpose with which, from a slowly sinking boat, she might have regarded a not-too-distant shore" (92). Once again, the text likens Sylvie's domesticity to a floundering boat.³¹ The salvation, for Lucille, is not a transformation of the definition and practices of domesticity at all, but rather other people (such as her home economics teacher) who presumably practice a more traditional form of housekeeping.

The invocation of Noah's ark, however, transforms not only domesticity but the image of the ship as well, particularly if we examine the consequences of a house that can negotiate water in the context of this novel. At the risk of stating the obvious, water pervades the novel, not only in terms of the geographical landscape and mindset of Fingerbone, but also symbolically. More than anything water, intra- and extra-textually, represents flux (this is true in Foucault as well), a combination of constant displacement and indeterminacy. Domesticity, as Ruth sees it, is only deceptively stable, but through this deception is particularly unsuited for negotiating fluidity of all sorts, "...for the appearance of a relative solidity in my grandmother's house was deceptive. It was an impression created by the piano, and the scrolled couch, and the bookcases full of almanacs and Kipling and Defoe. For all the appearance those things gave of substance and solidity, they might better be considered a dangerous weight on a frail structure" (159). Rather than refusing to admit the inherent instability of the house, and more largely the instability of the possibility of home and refuge in a stable environment, Robinson offers a transformed domesticity that can negotiate instability with ease.

³¹ Terms related to ships and the sea, such as floods and "sailing" enter the text as well in more tangential, but nevertheless significant, ways. For example, when Ruth and Lucille's mother drives off of the cliff, she does not plummet or fall, she "sail[s] off the edge of the cliff" (23), reaffirming the association of ships with death and tragedy.

Robinson's ark-house combats the tragic sense of place of people like Mrs. Chauncey and allows her protagonists liberation and habitability.

Implicit within Ruth's imagining and retelling of Noah's building process is a critique of her own neighbor's inability or unwillingness to see that she and Sylvie are not dangerous, and that, in fact, they are (trying) to create a domestic space that is more habitable than the existing one. If we extend the metaphor we see that, like Noah, Sylvie and Ruth are in the position of the faithful and, more importantly, saved people. They resist conventional domesticity in a way that will rescue them from the imminent flood. Some readers may be troubled by Ruth's willingness to identify with one of the patriarchs of the Bible, especially given the patriarchal construction of domesticity. Ruth's ability to appropriate Noah, however, is a reflection of the gender fluidity enabled by a newly transformed domesticity. Furthermore, Ruth is also just as able to appropriate the role of Noah's wife. When she stands outside the house shortly before she and Sylvie try to burn it to the ground, she contemplates the experience of being Noah's wife, saying, "Like Noah's wife on the tenth or fifteenth night of rain, she would stand in the window and realize that the world was really lost" (204). Though a house with a compass and a keel may be preferable to a house with a lettuce patch and a good foundation, it is still a space replete with loss and grief.

In the most troubling ambiguity of the novel Robinson, like Jewett, leaves ships and their space as unrealized and relegated primarily to the imagination. When their house is imaged as a ship, it becomes un-habitable to point that Ruth cannot even enter the door: "The house stood out beyond the orchard with every one of its windows lighted. It looked large, and foreign, and contained, like a moored ship — a fantastic thing to find

in a garden. I could not imagine going into it" (203). The continued stability of the ship prevents it from being accessible and habitable. It is, significantly, still a "moored" ship. It is bound to the garden, to the ground, to the spatial regulations that dictate dwelling. The house cannot become an ark, and thus it cannot become habitable, no matter how untraditional or resistant Sylvie and Ruth's housekeeping methods.

In the context of this novel, Sylvie and Ruth do not, cannot, choose the ship instead of the house; instead, they must choose the train. Like a ship, a train is a vehicle of travel and movement. The train, however, is more closely bounded, literally and figuratively, with a set path — if a train leaves its tracks, as this text is well-aware, disaster and tragedy ensue. It is also an implicitly masculine space, at least partly responsible for and symbolic of the mastery and settlement of the land. The train, as a space, is just as dictated by patriarchy as the house was. (This is not to say that on a literal level ships are not also vehicles of settlement and domestication, but that within these texts, they are imagined not to be.) While Robinson may force her characters to choose between the space of the house or the train, readers are able to see a potential alternative to these spaces — the ship, a site of ungrounded domesticity.

I am not suggesting that Robinson (or Jewett for that matter) proposes that we begin living on ships instead of in houses or apartments. Rather, I argue that Jewett creates fluid spaces within her work and that Robinson uses a similar spatial logic to show the necessity of a new kind of space that will allow for an ungrounded domesticity. Neither author is invested in recommending that all aspects of domesticity should be dismissed, but they are interested in exploring the possibilities opened up by less rigidly defined spatialized gender roles, and they use the ship as a figure to explore this prospect.

As a site of habitability, the ship becomes a privileged source of knowledge.

Foucault's heterotopian ship in "Different Spaces" should not be divorced from his other, better known Ship of Fools that he introduces in *Madness and Civilization*. Like Foucault's use of the Ship of Fools, Robinson invokes Biblical myth to reconfigure dominant cultural ideals. The Ship of Fools conveyed the "mad" and the "lunatics" from town-to-town, and the tree of knowledge formed the mast (says Foucault):

Another symbol of knowledge, the tree (the forbidden tree, the tree of promised immortality and of sin), once planted in the heart of the earthly paradise, has been uprooted and now forms the mast of the Ship of Fools, as seen in the engraving that illustrates Josse Bade's *Stultifarea naviculae*; it is this tree, without a doubt, that sways over Bosch's *Ship of Fools*. (*Madness* 22)

Foucault's impulse to transplant the tree of knowledge from the Garden of Eden to the Ship of Fools suggests a parallel between the Biblical paradise and the space of this ship. Foucault says, "The Ship of Fools sails through a landscape of delights, where all is offered to desire, a sort of renewed paradise, since here man no longer knows either suffering or need; and yet he had not recovered his innocence" (*Madness* 22). Foucault reverses the process of the Fall, banishing the mad to paradise rather than from it. The mad may be separated from mainstream society, but this separation fosters their immunity from suffering and need. Furthermore, Foucault links the mad with the possibility of immortality. He conflates the two trees in the story of Genesis into a single tree that combines knowledge and immortality. Adam and Eve are banished from Eden because the god(s) fear they will eat from the tree of life (of immortality), since they have

already eaten from the tree of knowledge (Genesis 3:22). Foucault's conflation of these two distinct trees confirms the importance he placed on associating madness with both knowledge and eternal life.

Foucault links the Ship of Fools to the Garden of Eden to critique dominant concepts of madness, while Robinson associates the house with the ark of Noah's flood to revise domesticity. Also like Foucault, Robinson's metaphor suggests that Sylvie and Ruth are chosen by God, blessed with a special knowledge that will allow them to survive as the rest of the world perishes. They know, it seems, the true nature of habitability and domesticity, just as the occupants of the Ship of Fools know the true nature of sanity and madness. And both imply that there is something utopian, or at the very least paradisiacal, about their ships. These are ideas of habitable space that Morrison's *Paradise* challenges.

Re-building Habitability in Toni Morrison's Paradise

Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, like *Deephaven* and *Housekeeping*, spends a great deal of time depicting the daily tasks of housekeeping in an all-female community, but the model of habitability this text offers differs substantially. Morrison suggests that a transformation of domestic space is premature and that first bodily space must be rewritten. She uses the trope of water so prevalent in Jewett and Robinson to shift the focus to bodily, rather than domestic, space. When the ship does enter Morrison's text, it functions as a reminder that any home that is based on utopian isolation is untenable. Most importantly, reading Morrison through the lens of Jewett and Robinson (and vice versa) shifts the focus from

the construction of habitability to the necessary destruction and re-building of habitability.³²

Paradise tracks the development and ultimate destruction of two (pseudo) utopian communities during the Civil Rights era — the all-black town of Ruby, Oklahoma, and the all-female Convent just outside of Ruby. One of the key tensions in this text is between the culture and customs of Ruby (which are overwhelmingly dictated by patriarchy) and the Convent (which are dictated by matriarchy). Morrison uses a collage-like narrative structure that offers the reader the perspectives of many characters, from the ruling twins of Ruby (Steward and Deek Morgan) to the runaway girls of the Convent to the women of Ruby. The time frame of the novel is similarly fragmented, opening with some of the men of Ruby, led by the Morgan twins, entering the Convent and shooting (some of) the women living there, and moving back and forth over time to explain how this moment culminates.

In *Paradise*, the connection between domesticity and patriarchy is much more overt and aggressive than it is in either Jewett's or Robinson's texts. The task of surveying, dictating, and controlling housekeeping falls into the hands of the men of this novel, not the women. The men in Ruby are in charge of "cleaning up" anything that threatens Ruby with contamination, which the text emphasizes through the cleaning metaphors in the opening scene: "And at last they will see the cellar and expose its filth

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Other scholars read *Paradise* as a search for "home" as well. Patricia McKee notes that Morrison branches off from many race theorists by emphasizing interiors as opposed to "open space and open movement." Furthermore, Morrison investigates not just the site of home but the "psyche of home" (204). It is this exploration of the "psyche" of home that makes *Paradise* so important in my examination of habitability. My analysis of Morrison's text departs from most scholars, in that I emphasize gender and space more than race, although race is also considered. For excellent analyses of race in this text, see Richard Schur's "Locating *Paradise* in the Post-Civil Rights Era: Toni Morrison and Critical Race Theory," "Patricia McKee's "Geographies of *Paradise*," and Katrine Dalsgard's "The One All-Black Town Worth the Pain: (African) American Exceptionalism, Historical Narration, and the Critique of Nationhood in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*."

to the light that is soon to scour the Oklahoma sky" (3). The choice of the term "filth" and "scour" expresses the desire to "clean" the Convent, and the mundane, household task of cleaning collapses with the larger moral imperative to protect Ruby from the alleged immorality of the girls in the Convent. That Deek and Steward view themselves as master-housekeepers in this sense becomes even clearer when they say, "But the target, after all, is detritus: throwaway people that sometimes blow back into the room after being swept out the door" (4). These metaphors simultaneously lend an air of innocence to the clearly reprehensible actions of Deek, Steward, and their cohorts (after all, they are just tidying up, not killing innocent women) and, at the same time, give housekeeping a much darker connotation. Housekeeping becomes sinister when removed from the context of the daily maintenance of a living space; domesticity is tied to control, and in this context, the masculine control of femininity.

It is fitting, then, that Deek is also the judge of how households should be run and gains an inordinate amount of satisfaction in the knowledge that women are managing their houses appropriately: "As Deek drove north on Central, it and the side streets seemed to him as satisfactory as ever. Quiet white and yellow houses full of industry; and in them were elegant black women at useful tasks; orderly cupboards minus surfeit or miserliness; linen laundered and ironed to perfection; good meat seasoned and ready for roasting" (111). Deek's focus may seem innocuous, but his attention to mundane details is, in fact, an attention to managing the daily lives of the women in Ruby. It is no wonder, then, that the women of Ruby find their lives, which are restricted to the domestic, unlivable.

The Ruby men may put their concerns in the terms of domesticity and housekeeping, but what they are really interested in ruling is the female body. Controlling the sexual actions and desires of women is particularly important and revealed when Deek calls the women of the Convent "bodacious black Eves unredeemed by Mary" (18), emphasizing that the women in question are sexually deviant, among other things. Billie Delia recognizes that what Deek and Steward want is obedience: "But to Billie Delia the real battle was not about infant life or a bride's reputation but about disobedience, which meant, of course, the stallions were fighting about who controlled the mares and their foals" (150). By positing that the true stakes of the wedding ceremony are about obedience, Billie Delia betrays the near-obsession the men have with women's sexuality. Patricia Best puts this obsession in terms of purity, but not only sexual purity. The men of Ruby are just as concerned (if not more so) with maintaining racial purity, and the only way to ensure this is to make certain that women of "impure" racial quality are not brought into the community and that women who are racially pure are not impregnated with men who are not. Pat explains, "Unadulterated and unadulteried 8-rock blood held its magic as long as it resided in Ruby. That was their recipe. That was their deal...everything that worries them must come from women" (217).

The motif of water counters the controlling impulses of patriarchy because it is associated with the feminine control of their own bodies. Compared to Jewett and Robinson, the ship hardly appears in Morrison's novel, and water becomes a much more prominent focus.³³ The first significant body of water the text mentions is associated

³³ It is worth at least noting that there are significant geographical explanations for the lack of water references in this text. While *Deephaven* takes place in a coastal Maine town that was once dependent on

with sexuality. Gigi is looking for a rock formation in the desert that purportedly looks like "a man and woman fucking forever" (62), and when unable to find it, she settles for finding "a lake in the middle of a wheat field" that is beside "two trees [that] grew into each other's arms. And if you squeezed between them in just the right way, well, you would feel an ecstasy no human could invent or duplicate" located in Ruby, Oklahoma (66). K.D. reinforces the connection between water and sexuality when he associates his sexual excitement and desire for Gigi with an image of the "sparkly water" of a swimming pool he once saw when he was a child (57). Even when water is not linked strictly to sexuality, the text maintains the connection and focus on the body. For example, Seneca describes her experience with water as follows: "She had opened her lips a tiny bit to say two words, and no black water seeped in. The cold still shook her bones, but the dark water had receded. For now. At night, of course, it would return and she would be back in it — trying not to think about what swam below her neck" (163). Her relationship with water prompts fear and revulsion rather than desire, but it is based on the way the water constructs and dictates her body — her lips, her bones, her neck. The emphasis of the body is significant in this text because it becomes clear that the control of domestic space is a means of controlling the space of the female body.

Habitability is competitive in this text, and it enters at two different sites: the town of Ruby and the Convent. Deek and Steward conceive of Ruby as a habitable, even utopian, racial space but this habitability is defined almost solely in terms of safety,

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the sea for its livelihood and *Housekeeping* is located on a large lake in Idaho, *Paradise* is firmly placed in Oklahoma, a region more notable for its plains than lakes. This is not to say that Oklahoma is a desert region — there are 200 small artificial lakes and 100 natural lakes in Oklahoma, as well as two major rivers — but rather to point out that the natural landscapes of these three texts differ substantially.

security, and an intense sense of interiority.³⁴ The Morgan twins equate safety and security specifically with the protection of the women of Ruby. The "people" of Ruby, when in the confines of this space, are "free and protected. A sleepless woman could always rise from her bed, wrap a shawl around her shoulders and sit on the steps in moonlight...a hiss-crackle from the side of the road would never scare her because whatever it was that made the sound, it wasn't something creeping up on her. Nothing for ninety miles around thought she was prey" (8). The textual shift from the "people" of Ruby to "woman" reveals that the concern for the security of Ruby is inextricable from the apprehensions about women and also the control of women's bodies discussed earlier. Implicit within this description is the idea that women are being protected from assault, but, perhaps even more importantly, sexual assault. Though this impulse to protect women, through spatial isolation and spatial regulation, is not itself entirely problematic, the preoccupation with maintaining racial purity imparts this desire with a more sinister tinge. In other words, women are not being protected because of concern for their wellbeing as much as they are being isolated to prevent them from even inadvertently breaking the "blood rule." Women are "free and protected" but only within the confines of Ruby.

What makes this freedom and protection possible is the ability of the town to detach itself from other spaces — to become a space unto itself, an ability that is reliant

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Understanding the history of the people of Ruby is necessary to comprehend their overwhelming concern with safety and security. Ruby is an all-black town formed by a fairly small group of people who were rejected by whites and blacks alike in other places. The basis of rejection in both cases is skin color; the founding families of Ruby are described as a "blue-black people" (193). To survive and prosper, the group moves from Haven (their first town) and forms Ruby in an unsettled area in Oklahoma. Ruby's geographical separation enables the preservation of an interiority, in every sense, that would not be possible otherwise. The secure space of Ruby is thus viewed as the foundation of all their successes and future successes, and therefore maintaining and defending the boundaries of this space is paramount to (some of) the citizens of Ruby.

upon the possibility of demarcating "inside" from "outside" in absolute terms. Spatially, Ruby functions much like a literal ship. The threats to Ruby's habitability are perpetually believed to come from the "outside" (a notion which Morrison is, of course, critiquing), and more to the point, from outside women. If enclosed space is protected and secure, then there is little that is more threatening than unbounded space: "Ten generations had known what lay Out There: space, once beckoning and free, became unmonitored and seething" (16). The quintessentially American pioneer's faith in the possibility of unsettled, unknown space is juxtaposed with an equally quintessential (White) American fear of space that is uncontrolled (because monitoring is a means of control) and wild (seething with the unknown and dangerous). The fear of unbounded space is entangled with the fear of unbounded female bodies, and both of those fears collide in the Convent. Lone DuPres expresses these entangled fears succinctly: "So...the fangs and the tail are somewhere else. Out yonder all slithery in a house full of women. Not women locked safely away from men; but worse, women who chose themselves for company, which is to say not a convent but a coven" (276).

The Convent, as an amalgam of the fears discussed above is threatening enough, but the women of the Convent even more explicitly resist the spatial regulations of the 8-rock males. To begin with, the women residing at the Convent are outsiders who wander into Ruby from various parts of the country, but even more importantly, they defy the strictures of appropriate female bodily behavior. They dance wildly at parties, gyrating and jiggling (157); they get into fights on the side of the road, intertwining with and marring each other's bodies (169); some of them even try to tempt Ruby men into forbidden sexual interludes in the depths of the Convent (237). Perhaps the most

condemning thing of all is that the Convent women refuse to respect the unseeable, but ever-present, boundaries of Ruby and seduce both female and male citizens into engaging in "unlawful" behaviors. Ruby women go to the Convent when they need a place to have an illegitimate baby, an abortion, or a temporary sanctuary from their families. Men go there (albeit infrequently) to have illicit affairs with the Convent women. This breach of boundaries allows Deek and Steward to justify their invasion of the Convent not as an offensive gesture but rather as a defensive attempt simply to protect their town (5).

The willingness and ability of the Convent-women to flout bodily conventions is less dangerous, though, than their creation of a feminine space of habitability, which the text positions as opposed and resistant to the habitability of Ruby. At first, the text suggests that part of what creates habitability is a result of the "blessed malelessness" of the Convent. But, the relationship between habitability and gender is not quite that simple. Habitability is competitive spatially (Ruby versus the Convent), and habitability in these spaces is linked to gender. For the men of Ruby, as I have shown, habitability is inextricable from the control of the female body. That is not the only factor at work, though; racial boundaries and ideological unity must be maintained. In the Convent, the absence of literal masculinity is not enough, since the women are still overwhelmed by their own traumas and conflicts. As the Convent is described in the beginning of the novel, women may find a sort of refuge there, but only temporarily and only because there is no better place for them to be at that time. Their lives are punctuated more with conflict (with each other and themselves) than with any sense of habitability. Yet, when habitability does emerge at the Convent, Morrison depicts it as uniquely and exclusively feminine.

Habitability does not emerge until the women begin rewriting their bodies, and this body-revision is the Convent-women's most effective and subversive means of resistance.³⁵ Morrison's equation of habitability with the transformation bodily space rethinks Jewett and Robinson, who propose that domestic space can be significantly altered without changing the body first.³⁶ The reconfiguration of bodily space emerges as a literal (re)writing of the body when the Convent women lay naked on the cellar floor, trace the outline of their figures, and then begin to "fill in" their "template" bodies with images drawn in chalk and paint. Seneca traces her scars in "robin's egg blue," Gigi loops a heart around her neck, Pallas adds a baby to her stomach (265). Clearly, this is a healing ritual, but it is also spatial. Drawing their own bodies and their bodily experiences allows the women to re-envision their lives and their bodies, and moreover, it offers them the opportunity to transform their own space through spatial ritual. They can resist the way their bodies have been constructed by others, and thus they can resist the spatial regulations of others. They regain control of their bodies and, in the process, recover their ability to control their space too.

Morrison's formulation of the link between the body and space exemplifies Henri Lefebvre's theories while simultaneously revising them. Lefebvre contends changing social relations and changing space are enmeshed, so that one cannot be changed without changing the other (59). Changing space, though, necessitates changing the body, since (according to Lefebvre's theory of space) the body produces space (405). The process of

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³⁵ This re-writing has been interpreted as a "mourning" ritual (Clewell 138), as well as an attempt to "decolonize" their minds (Schur 290). However the ritual is described, critics agree that this textual moment is crucial for the women's understanding of their own identity.

³⁶ Morrison's consideration of the body's impact on habitability is distinct from Jewett and Robinson, who pay little attention to the literal body. This is probably due to the traumatic nature of the women's lives who find (temporary) refuge at the Convent.

bodily restoration that Lefebvre recommends emphasizes sensuality — the voice, hearing, and touch (363). As Morrison's characters rewrite their bodies, they draw attention to the way talking, listening, and feeling create communal habitability. Lefebvre, however, posits the reestablishment of the body and its space as an endpoint, while Morrison positions as just one part of a longer process of rebuilding space.

The women's generation of a communal sense of habitability challenges Jewett's and Robinson's individualistic models. While they rewrite their bodies, the women verbally share their experiences in what they call "loud dreaming." Loud dreaming allows the women to merge their experiences: "And it was never important to know who said the dream or whether it had meaning. In spite of or because their bodies ache, they step easily into each other's tale" (264). The ability to empathize with each other engenders a relationship with space that is also more communal, exemplified by their newly acquired ability to share the tasks of domesticity (285).³⁷ The sense of communal habitability even transcends racial boundaries (which is also clearly a threat to Ruby's "racial purity"). The reader knows that at least one of the Convent women is white, but it is never clear and never that important to know the racial history of the inhabitants of the Convent. The results of their loud dreaming are subtle, but perceptible. The women of the Convent "unlike some people in Ruby...were no longer haunted" (266). It is no coincidence that it is only when the Convent women transform their space through rewriting their bodies that they are conceived of as enough of a threat to warrant destruction.

³⁷ For more on the communal nature of Morrison's loud-dreaming, see McKee.

The annihilation of this habitability (via the invasion of the Convent and massacre of the women living there) is certainly a denunciation of patriarchy, but more importantly, Morrison uses this destruction to prevent the Convent's model of habitability from suffering the same fate as Ruby. Unlike Lefebvre, Morrison suggests that creating a particular space is not the ultimate goal. It is all too easy to see the Convent's model of habitability as preferable to Ruby's model, but Morrison does not allow her reader this comfort. The habitability of the Convent, while radical in that it rewrites the body in order to rewrite space, also resembles the habitability of Ruby in many ways. Like Ruby, the space of the Convent is literally interior space and constructed with defense and protection in mind. The very structure of the Convent is imbued with a history and space of violence — it is "shaped like a live cartridge...curved to a deadly point at the north end...a veranda curved from the north around the bullet's tip, continued along its wall past the main entrance, and ended at the flat end of the ammunition" (71). Its conversion from an embezzler's mansion to a Convent could have removed this sense of violence. but instead the nuns of the Convent reenact the aggression by making it their mission to "educate" all the "wicked, wayward Indian girls" they could find (227).

Rather than trying to overcome difference (gender or otherwise), the Convent's habitability simply reverses the existing binary so that women dominate men. Like Ruby, the Convent is exclusive, allowing only women to partake in the loud dreaming that leads to habitability. When Billie Delia contemplates the prospect of the Convent women still existing "out there" she imagines them as avengers: "When will they return? When will they reappear, with blazing eyes, war paint, and huge hands to rip up and stomp down this prison calling itself a town?...She hoped with all her heart that the

women were out there, darkly burnished, biding their time, brass-metaling their nails, filing their incisors — but out there" (318). As rousing as these images and sentiments may be, particularly for the women of Ruby who feel constricted and oppressed, it is questionable whether this proposed violence is any more productive than the violence of patriarchal power. Furthermore, spatially speaking, the Convent is even more isolated and potentially static (and stagnant) than Ruby, leaving this habitability vulnerable to the overly grounded domesticity seen in Jewett's Miss Chauncey and Robinson's townspeople.

Morrison does not end her novel with the attainment of feminine habitability, though, and neither does she end it with the supposed deaths of the Convent women.³⁸ In fact, she ends her novel with an alluring indeterminacy emblemized by the figure of the ship:

When the ocean heaves sending rhythms of water ashore, Piedade looks to see what has come. Another ship, perhaps, but different, heading to port, crew and passengers, lost and saved, atremble, for they have been disconsolate for some time. Now they will rest before shouldering the endless work they were created to do down here in Paradise. (318)

This final image brings the ship's potential to fruition in a way that Jewett and Robinson's novels were unable to accomplish. Morrison acknowledges the limitations and negative connotations of the ship (gesturing toward the slave ship), while at the same

The reception of *Paradise* is often based on the interpretation of the ending. Some critics find it too didactic and ultimately unsatisfying, since it refuses to actually show the "real-world possibilities for women's survival and resistance" (Bent 147; Sweeney 57). I tend to agree more with Fraile-Marcos's interpretation that, "This paradise is not a static condition already achieved, but something that must be endlessly worked on...through the continuous free interplay of race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and whatever other categories are used in the construction of our hybrid individual and social identities" (29).

time recognizing its potential to bring about change. Significantly, the ship is "different," and is heading for shore rather than leaving it. The ship, and habitability, is not a means of escaping discrimination, whether based on class, gender, or race. It functions as a means of encouraging the constant work of building and rebuilding habitability.

Instead of luring the reader into an all-too comfortable fantasy of victimless, unproblematic resistance, Morrison's text reminds readers that resistance, spatial and otherwise, is sometimes necessarily aggressive. Admittedly, it is still uncertain what "Paradise" will look like or even whether its creation is truly possible. Morrison's text mirrors the optimism of Foucault, Jewett, and Robinson, though, maintaining that habitability is indeed possible, even if utopic habitability is not.

Uninhabitable Habitability?

These novels use the figure of the ship to transform domestic space into modified Foucauldian heterotopias. As heterotopias, they challenge conventional idea(l)s of domesticity and compel a complete redefinition of the concept. Examining some of the key characteristics of heterotopias in terms of these novels proves this point, and in addition, serves as a synthesis of the redefined domestic space. Foucault explains that heterotopias "juxtapose in a single real place several emplacements that are incompatible in themselves" (Different 181). Heterotopias, in other words, integrate contradictory spaces. Each of the houses in these texts combines spaces that are generally conceived of as contradictory — especially natural and domestic (or outside and inside) space. Mrs. Bonny's house is a notable example, as is Sylvie and Ruthie's house that is filled with leaves, crickets, and other small animals. The Convent literalizes this boundary crossing

by painting what is inside the individual body onto the outside space of the basement floor. Even within interior space, private and public space collides. For example, the parlor in Robinson becomes a place for the storage of cans and papers not because this is what parlors are for but rather because that is what worked for Ruth and Sylvie. "The visitors glanced at the cans and papers as if they thought Sylvie must consider such things appropriate to a parlor. That was ridiculous. We had simply ceased to consider that room a parlor, since, until we had attracted the attention of these ladies, no one ever came to call" (Robinson 180). Domesticity, as redefined, is not one kind of space that can be inhabited in only one way. Function supercedes regulation, which is part of the reason that these spaces become habitable. The needs of the inhabitants come before the desires of those living outside of the space.

Temporal boundaries are also flexible within heterotopias, and so it should be no surprise that Deephaven is a community where the past is just as present as the present. Similarly, multiple generations have inhabited the house in *Housekeeping*. The second sentence of the novel emphasizes the notion of temporal and spatial continuation: "through all these generations of elders we lived in one house" (Robinson 3). The Convent's rich history (ranging from criminals to nuns) constantly affects the everyday lives of the women living there because physical remnants of each time period remain. In fact, each of the houses could serve as a sort of museum, a space that Foucault invokes to explain the fourth principle of heterotopias. Part of the task for the characters that try to make these spaces habitable in the present is to exorcise the past that haunts their present and to create a less permeable boundary between the different time periods. Furthermore, they must break down the stability and stasis implied by multiple generations residing in

one place. Kate and Helen do this in *Deephaven* by virtue of being visitors, while the characters in *Housekeeping* and *Paradise* have to destroy or remodel the space in question in order to resist this aspect of a heterotopia.

Finally, Foucault explains that heterotopias have a purpose within other spaces: "Either the heterotopias have the role of creating a space of illusion that denounces all real spaces, all real emplacements within which human life is partitioned off, as being even more illusory... Or, on the contrary, creating a different space, a different real space as perfect, as meticulous, as well-arranged as ours is disorganized, badly arranged, and muddled" (*Different* 184). Brothels are an example the former and colonies the latter. The way these novels reconfigure domestic space suggests that they are meant to be the latter — that is, as a sort of perfectly habitable space. Within the domestic space of Jewett, Robinson, and Morrison, things are admittedly not well-arranged in the traditional sense, but they are peculiarly well-arranged for living. To put it another way, their houses are not tidy but this very disorderliness is what allows these spaces to be habitable. Traditional domestic space is oppressive and limited, while heterotopian domestic space challenges and resists compartmentalization and spatial regulation.

As perfect as heterotopian domesticity may seem, the novels depart from Foucault's heterotopia because, ultimately, these spaces fail. All of these novels end with what seems like a failure of habitability. Shipping is no longer a viable industry at the end of *Deephaven*, and the space and possibility opened up by ships seems untenable. Furthermore, for all that Kate and Helen form a connection to Deephaven, in the end, they pack up their belongings and admit that they probably will not ever return. Sylvie and Ruth cannot change their house into a ship-like structure with a compass and a keel,

and so they burn down the house and take to the train. As much as the train seems to offer them a respite from the spatial regulators, the two are still haunted by images of their former housekeeping and the possibilities it seemed to offer. *Paradise's* destruction of habitable space is even more dramatic; the Convent is destroyed and the inhabitants scattered if not dead. Temporarily, domesticity and domestic space are successfully transformed, spatialized gender is resisted, and habitability is achieved. But these successes are remarkably short-lived. To sum it up, seemingly habitable spaces are created only to be quickly destroyed.

Turning back to Foucault suggests that we interpret this seeming failure differently. His full description of the ship as heterotopia is helpful:

Brothels and colonies were two extreme types of heterotopia, and if you consider, for example, that the ship is a piece of floating space, a placeless place, that lives by its own devices, that is self-enclosed and, at the same time, delivered over to the boundless expanse of the ocean, and that goes from port to port, from watch to watch, from brothel to brothel, all the way to the colonies in search of the most precious treasures that lie waiting in their gardens, you see why for our civilization, from the sixteenth century up to our time, the ship has been at the same time not only the greatest instrument of economic development, of course (I'm not talking about that subject today), but the greatest reservoir of imagination. The sailing vessel is the heterotopia par excellence. (185)

Foucault repeatedly emphasizes the ship's movement — it "goes" and moves from place to place. In fact, its ability to move is the primary reason that it is a heterotopia. It is the

ship's power of locomotion that allows it to be a "placeless place," and a "floating space" that is able to access the "boundless expanse of the ocean" and reach both colonies and brothels (which are themselves heterotopias). The ship can take people to "extreme types of heterotopias" and with that power of conveyance, the ship itself becomes a "heterotopia par excellence." It is not so much the ship itself, then, as the ship's ability to move that makes it so special. On the other hand, the ship is a unique vehicle that is not interchangeable with an airplane or a train. Within an imaginative framework, this is because the ship is linked to the literal and metaphoric fluidity of water.

Bringing the spaces of Jewett, Robinson, and Morrison together makes it clear that the objective of habitability is not the creation of cozy, interior, female-centered places. In fact, together these novels emphasize that the production of a habitable space is not the goal at all. Instead, they show how transforming domesticity creates transitional, even transportational, spaces. That is, we might view them as spaces that are not so much themselves habitable as spaces that lead to habitability. The difference between these two things is subtle. If we view the new heterotopian domestic space as habitable, sustained habitability seems impossible within the scope of these novels, since the spaces in question are quickly left or destroyed. They are necessary for refuge, or reflection, but they are meant to be temporary. In other words, *Deephaven*, *Housekeeping*, and *Paradise*'s transformation of space brings us to habitability; the transformed space itself is not habitable. If, we think of these revised domestic spaces as ships that bring its passengers to habitability, habitability is not destroyed at all at the end of the novel but rather invigorated.

The true spatial potential of these texts does not lie within the spaces they create, however attractive, but rather in the way that they use the heterotopia to reconstruct the relationship between the subject and space within the confines of domesticity. Habitability depends upon revising the relationship between the subject and space. The novels suggest that a more sustainable, appropriate, and habitable relationship to space is achieved when the subject is flexible about her attachment to space. Counter to Miss Chauncey, Helen and Kate show that the ideal spatial dweller can connect with space and create a home, but this connection and home-feeling (to use a term from Kirkland) does not depend on a particular kind of space or locale. Sylvie and Ruth pick up on this transitoriness and embrace a housekeeping that embraces the inherently unstable territory of domesticity. The Convent women are forced to leave their home, but they reconvene with the intention of learning to dwell again, somewhere else. The relationship to space seen in these novels is ungrounded in the sense that it can be transferred to other spaces and places as necessary. A constant movement between fluidity and stability characterizes it, so that the two become complementary rather than competitive.

When these novels revise and redefine habitability, we need not mourn the loss of habitable space, nor do we need to seek a new, better space. Together, *Deephaven*, *Housekeeping*, and *Paradise* establish a habitability that is ungrounded and available in multiple places and spaces.

CHAPTER THREE

The Body of Space

If the first two chapters were concerned about making space safe for the subject, this chapter asks how to make the subject safe for space. When Martin Heidegger articulates his theory of dwelling, he emphasizes two things: that building engenders dwelling and that dwelling implies an obligation on the part of the subject to treat "the earth" with respect and consideration: "Mortals dwell in that they save the earth — taking the word in the old sense still known to Lessing. Saving does not only snatch something from danger. To save properly means to set something free in its own essence... Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it, which is merely one step from boundless spoliation" (352). Heidegger's saving of the earth is not only a matter of concrete actions but also a question of conceiving of the earth in a way that respects its essence as space. Cooperation and interdependence replace competition; the subject is not supposed to "master" or "subjugate" space. Instead, the subject is to see herself as part of the "fourfold," which is what Heidegger calls the integration of the earth, sky, divinities, and mortals (351-2). Recognizing the "essential" connection between the subject and natural space is an integral part of dwelling. Heidegger's concept of saving incorporates natural space into a theory otherwise dominated by the domestic.

Ecocritical and ecofeminist scholarship echoes Heidegger's idea that humans are ethically obligated to consider the environmental and spatial impact of living in space.³⁹

³⁹ There are, of course, important divergences between ecofeminism and ecocriticism. They originate from almost entirely distinct sources, for one, and ecofeminism emphasizes gender differences far more than does ecocriticsm. For a more detailed explanation of their differences, see Simon Estok's "Bridging the Great Divide: Ecocritical Theory and the Great Unwashed."

The need to heal human relations with the environment that is betrayed in Heidegger's repetition of the words "preserving," "sparing," and "saving" appears in ecocritic William Rueckert's assertion that "The problem now, as most ecologists agree, is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community" (107). Heidegger's ideas reverberate again in SueEllen Campbell's work: "...If we can't know everything, if we can't control the effects of our actions, if even the smallest human interference can cause massive natural destruction, then the only way to keep something important is to *preserve* it" (131, emphasis original). Like Heidegger, both Rueckert and Campbell believe that "dwelling" is a problem insofar as humans are apt to destroy the earth, or the fourfold, rather than spare it, and that this is a fate that should be avoided if possible.

Like Heidegger, ecofeminists are concerned with the inherent power dynamics of the subject-space relationship. Although ecofeminism is known most widely for its synthesis of feminism and environmentalism, it also investigates the role of power and domination broadly speaking. Judith Plant explains, "And ecofeminism, by speaking for both the original others, seeks to understand the interconnected roots of all domination, as well as ways to resist and change" (156). Also, as Heidegger's fourfold underscores the unification of the subject and space, ecofeminists also highlight and explore the "interconnections" between humans and nonhuman nature (Warren xiv). Ecofeminist thought (as this chapter demonstrates) has the potential to enrich Heidegger's idea of dwelling through its attention to the more subjective and concrete aspects of dwelling. Despite their substantial differences, Heidegger, ecocriticism, and ecofeminism unite around their desire for the subject to consider her impact on space and act accordingly.

Nature writers often share the ecocritical and ecofeminist preoccupation with a non-violent and sustainable subject-space relationship. Nature writing texts, generally speaking, try to transform the subject-space relationship so that it is "healthy." Ideally, this "health" transcends textual boundaries. For the nature writers I study, space does not need to be changed in order for habitability for emerge; rather, the problem(s) lies with the subject and the subject's treatment of space. Therefore, they often focus on producing habitability by rewriting the way the subject relates and forms a connection to space, which may require a simultaneous transformation of space. Mary Austin, Terry Tempest Williams, and Gretel Ehrlich save space by revising the subject-space connection. More specifically, these three authors link the body to space, sometimes by giving space a body, sometimes by allowing space to incorporate the human body, and sometimes by incorporating space into the subject's body. Austin gives space a body in an attempt to transform it into a subject (thereby granting it value and ethical consideration). Williams uses this metaphor to expose the integrated nature of the subject and space and to protect both from harm. Ehrlich's body-space connection bolsters the struggling subject. All three share the concern of a healthy habitability.

The Desert-Woman

Ecocritics and ecofeminists view Mary Austin as a significant figure who marks the transition between nineteenth and twentieth century writing about the natural world.

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⁴⁰ Often scholars interpret the tendency of nature writers to tie space to the body as a specifically feminine trait. Lorraine Anderson, for example, characterizes women's nature writing as "a movement from seeing nature as kin to seeing nature as self, from seeing earth as our mother to seeing earth as our body" (9). Whether or not Anderson's characterization of this trend as specifically feminine is helpful, or even accurate, is highly contested. Furthermore, many critics question the ethics of identifying the female body with natural space, given the historical use of this metaphor.

Arguably, she joins natural space with the self, rather than seeing nature as something outside the self (Anderson 8). Ecocritics discuss Austin because her work has clear environmental undertones (Graulich xvi). Her collection of essays The Land of Little Rain (1903) has garnered the most critical attention (both during her lifetime and in contemporary scholarship), and some even call her a "key figure of American wilderness writing" (Garrard 72). The stories in her collection Lost Borders were written years before they were published in book form, and Austin placed many of the desert-stories individually in periodicals to meet increasingly dire financial needs (Fink 135). In 1909, with a new publisher (Harper), Lost Borders finally appeared in book form. An unnamed narrator (who strongly resembles Austin) gathers and tells the stories of the miners, explorers, wives, and Native Americans who try to make the desert their home. Her environmental ethic from The Land of Little Rain persists in Lost Borders, but it is not until the latter text that Austin introduces the idea of linking the body and space in order to save space. Feminist and ecofeminist scholars often find this linkage particularly appealing.⁴¹ Read from the perspective of gender alone, however, Austin is equal part feminist and misogynist.

Austin links space and the body in *Lost Borders* by gynopomorphizing space.

Her purpose is dual: she wants to provide space with the status of an entity with agency that deserves respect, and she wants to make femininity habitable. The desert-woman

⁴¹ See Stacy Alaimo, Marjorie Pryse's introduction to *Lost Borders*, and Beverly Hume.

first appears at the end of the introduction to *Lost Borders* and then pervades the rest of the narratives in the book: 42

If the desert were a woman, I know well what she would be: deepbreasted, broad in the hips, tawny, with tawny hair, great masses of it lying smooth along her perfect curves, full lipped like a sphinx, but not heavy-lidded like one, eyes sane and steady as the polished jewel of her skies, such a countenance as should make men serve without desiring her, such a largeness to her mind as should make their sins of no account, passionate, but not necessitous, patient — and you could not move her, no, not if you had all the earth to give, so much as one tawny hair's breath beyond her own desires. If you cut very deeply into any soul that has the mark of the land upon it, you find such qualities as these — as I shall presently prove to you. (LB 160)

The desert-woman is a compelling image of strength and independence. As a woman, she is not weak-willed or subservient; instead, she is immoveable, even in the face of man's (and I use that term to indicate gender, not humankind) considerable sins. The desert-woman is large, in all senses of the word — passionate, self-sufficient, patient, determined, strong. She may have the sexual allure of an emblem of fertility, but she incites service not desire. Austin constructs the desert-woman to invoke sympathy and admiration from the reader, and based on the dominant interpretations of this text, this narrative strategy is wildly successful.

⁴² The desert-woman passage receives a great deal of attention in the scholarship on Austin's work, and whether scholars admire or decry Austin's creation of the desert-woman, it is always a topic of conversation. Thus, I begin my analysis on a well-trodden critical path.

This metaphor inverts both gender and spatial power dynamics. Men are conventionally constructed as holding power over women, but when it comes to the desert-woman, men are powerless: "Mind you, it is men who go mostly into the desert, who love it past all reasonableness, slack their ambitions, cast off old usages, neglect their families because of the pulse and beat of a life laid bare to its thews and sinews" (LB 159). The desert-woman seduces men who become so obsessed that they lose everything — their family, their fortune, their reason, and sometimes even their lives. Virtually every story in the collection shows a character who has been "gotten" by the desert-woman. More a femme fatale than a virgin, the desert turns men into devoted servants instead of incipient destroyers. This, in turn, realigns the power dynamic between the subject and space. Generally, the subject has free reign over space. In the realm of this narrative, however, imagining the desert as an animate space enables it to protect itself from encroachment. The animated space of the desert resists the colonizing efforts of the characters (particularly the men) of the text by inspiring obsession and devotion in those who would normally destroy space.⁴³

Austin rewrites the cultural metaphor of land-as-woman, which had until this point been destructive, ⁴⁴ so that it seemingly works in service of both women and space.

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⁴³ Kathryn Dezur notes that, while biographically Austin engaged in colonizing activity, she used writing to attempt to resist imperialist structures and thinking (21). Austin's degree of involvement in colonizing activity is relatively minimal. Her husband, Wallace Austin, was involved in a variety of settling activities throughout the course of his life. However, Austin was often separated from her husband, and much more involved in her own writing career than in his efforts to get rich off the resources of the desert.

Annette Kolodny describes the dangers of the American fantasy of "a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine – that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification – enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction" (Lay of the Land 4). The problem with the land as mother/woman trope is that it enmeshes men in an anxiety-ridden incestuous relationship with natural space. Incest occurs when the male relates to the earth as both mother and lover (Lay of the Land 73). As if that were not enough to inspire anxiety, men must then face the realization that their own

In some ways, this could be read as the epitome of using writing to create habitability, especially if we consider Michel de Certeau's original discussion of how the reader makes a text "habitable." When readers mutate a text, they make "the text habitable, like a rented apartment" (xxi). What de Certeau means by this is that readers change the text they are reading — he calls it the dominant text — by adding to it their own needs, desires, and preferences, much like a renter fills an apartment with furniture, pictures, and other keepsakes. The subject alters an existing text, or space, to fit their unique needs. This mutation inherently speaks to existing systems of power dynamics, evidenced most clearly through de Certeau's example of Spanish colonizers and the indigenous Indians. Indians took the colonizer's rituals, representations, and laws and "subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept" (xiii). Austin's metaphor of the desertwoman works in a similar fashion. She takes a common link that is usually used to justify the dominance of both women and the land (Merchant 8), and instead of rejecting the connection, she uses the conflation to empower the desert and, by association, women. Neither women nor natural space is powerless or victimized. Natural space, after it undergoes this mutation, meets Austin's social, psychological, and emotional needs.

Part of the reason this space meets her needs is because it appeals to her concern that mindless destruction is overtaking the desert. Equally important, though, is that her transformation of natural space revises femininity and feminine space. Austin expresses

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success in natural space depends upon the harvesting of that space's resources — a metaphorical rape — that not only destroys the space but also signifies the betrayal of the pastoral fantasy (Lay of the Land 7). See also Carolyn Merchant's The Death of Nature. For more recent critiques, see Stacy Alaimo's Undomesticated Ground and Karen Warren's Ecofeminist Philosophy.

her personal ambivalence about domesticity and its link to patriarchy in her autobiography, Earth Horizon. She explains that home "shouldn't be the place of the apotheosis of its male members," and then bitterly documents how her brother dominated the domestic scene (EH 129). She situates domestic duties as a force that inhibits feminine self-realization, explaining that her mother "never liked, had genuinely revolted against the routine of housework" but nevertheless had to complete her housekeeping tasks before turning to her own work for her church and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (EH 144). Austin's awareness of the limitations of the cultural association between women and domesticity plagues her biographically, and negotiating this linkage acts as a dominant theme in much of her creative work. Stacy Alaimo notes that constructing space as a strong woman allows Austin to subvert a constrictive domesticity (66). Natural space becomes feminist space because, unlike domestic space, it is not dominated by patriarchy and allows femininity to be redefined (Alaimo 83). Unlike Mary Clavers of Chapter One, Austin's turn to natural space hinges on her need to change gender roles; it is more ideological than practical. If, as Gillian Brown argues, one objective of the cult of domesticity is to dissociate domesticity from women's bodies (80), Austin is doubly subversive because she not only rejects home-space but she does so in a way that emphasizes the female body. But, Austin's dismissal of domesticity leads to other complications.

It is difficult to reconcile Austin's construction of habitability with her tendency to let the desert-woman destroy men and women alike, especially if her work is interpreted as feminist. Unless we read feminism as the province of only a particular kind of woman (in this case, the nature-oriented woman), it is hard to see how Austin's

disdain for many women in her text can be interpreted as feminist.⁴⁵ And Austin is disdainful. "Did I say somewhere that women mostly hate the desert? Women, unless they have very large and simple souls, need cover; clothes, you know, and furniture, social observances to screen them, conventions to get behind; life when it leaps upon them, large and naked, shocks them into disorder" (LB 165). Austin's focus on domesticity as a form of much-needed protection for women replicates the dominant culture's assumption that women are weak and vulnerable and should be protected. Most women, in other words, should stay inside, literally and metaphorically. Austin positions domesticity — evoked via the various references to the need for shelter ("cover"; "screen them"; "get behind") and solidified by the necessity of clothes and furniture — as essentially opposed to the strength of the desert-woman's natural space. For most women, the desert-woman is a rival, not a habitable space. This rivalry crosses racial boundaries, too. The Indian women of her stories cannot understand "the effect of their familiar clear space and desertness upon the white man adventuring in it" but the "vast impersonal rivalry of desertness" affects them just as much as it does white women (LB 175). While Indian women may not need the "shelter" of conventional domesticity, Austin illustrates through her stories of Tiawa and Turwhasé that the desert still beats them in any competition for masculine affection. According to Austin, most women, regardless of race, cannot handle the desert-woman any better than men can. Her construction of habitability relies not on spatial, not sexual or racial, difference.

⁴⁵ The idea that feminism is the province of only a limited group of women (namely white, middle to upper class women) is one that troubles the feminist movement as a whole, and the "second wave" of feminism tried to address this issue by grappling with the significant differences between women instead of focusing on a "universal woman." Austin's idea of difference between women is overtly spatial (as opposed to being based on race, class, or sexual differences): women are different based on their identification, or lack thereof, with domesticity and domestic space.

When Austin transforms space by giving it a body she uses this figure to introduce the idea of competitive habitability. More specifically, the desert-woman enables habitability within natural space and, in the process, forecloses the possibility of habitability within domestic space. Austin exhibits a strong distrust of home throughout her text. For example, the story "The Last Antelope," suggests that the tragic death of the last antelope is caused by a misplaced trust in home. The story begins with a description of the reciprocal relationship between the shepherd, Little Pete, and the antelope; the two share "companionship without speech" and "understand one another" (LB 191). They bond over the course of years of living in the same territory, until their idyll is interrupted by a homesteader who approaches the land and its inhabitants with "a love of mastery, which for the most part moves men into new lands, whose creatures they conceive given over into their hands" (LB 192). Predictably, the homesteader shoots the little antelope without even the briefest moment of consideration or guilt. What is significant about this story is Austin's description of the antelope's demise: "In the mean time the last antelope came lightly and securely by the gully, by the black rock and the lone juniper, into the Ceriso. The friendliness of the antelope for Little Pete betrayed him. He came with some sense of home, expecting the flock and protection of man-presence" (LB 193).

"Sense of home" here leads to betrayal of trust, a false sense of security, violence, and death. Grammatically, it is the "friendliness...for Little Pete" that betrays the antelope, but the real problem is that the antelope fails to differentiate between friendly humans and unfriendly ones. Austin combines her explicit critique of the homesteader with an implicit critique of a trust in both "home" and the "protection of man-presence."

Neither of these things offers adequate protection, despite Little Pete's good and noble intentions.

Austin's mistrust in home manifests in other stories as well. For example, "The Readjustment" is about a woman's ghost that haunts her old home, and "The House of Offence" tells the (unfortunate) story of a brothel. The story ends with the relief that this home burns to the ground. But it is in the story "The Return of Mr. Wills" that it becomes clear that habitability in this narrative is competitive. As in "The House of Offence," "The Return of Mr. Wills" tells about the destruction of home space. This story follows the narrative structure of many of the others in this collection: a man comes to the desert, "loses" himself, and along the way destroys his family. Mr. Wills, the narrator assures the reader, is not a bad person, or even a bad husband; the only "real trouble" with him is that "he should never have moved West" (LB 181). But he does. And he drags Mrs. Wills and the little Wills children after him. Once he gets out West, he falls prey to the siren song of the desert/woman.

Austin's presentation of the desert's reaction to the Wills betrays her own misogyny, and gynophoby, though, because the desert does not harm Mr. Wills but instead targets Mrs. Wills and her children:

The only visible mark left by all this was on Mrs. Wills...It seemed as if the desert had overshot him and struck at Mrs. Wills, and Richard Wills, Esther Wills, Benjy Wills, and the youngest Wills, who was called Mugsey. Desertness attacked the door-yard and the house; even the cabinet organ had a weathered look...Mrs. Wills' eyes were like the eyes of trail-weary cattle; her hands grew to have that pitiful way of catching

the front of her dress of the woman not so much slattern as hopeless. (LB 183)

The language of violence suggests a willful victimization that has only been alluded to before. Desertness "attacks" the innocent Mrs. Wills and all of the individual Wills children. Significantly, the desert invades the space of the home — it creeps up the walk into the "door-yard and the house." It does not stop there, but rather continues into the house, eroding everything including "even the cabinet organ." Before this narrative, the desert attacked women through their love of men who desired the desert. In this story, the desert attacks women by destroying their space and introduces the idea that home, if conceived of as related to domestic space, is opposed to the privileged natural space of the desert. Furthermore, women who do not ally themselves with the desert will be punished accordingly.

Austin's presentation of Mrs. Wills's actions after her husband leaves the house challenges my interpretation, though, because once Mr. Wills departs, Mrs. Wills renovates her ailing domestic space. Mrs. Wills's ability to accomplish this through the absence of her husband suggests that the lack of domestic satisfaction is not due to the desert's mischief at all, but rather the fault of the masculine presence:

This was about the time that she was able to have the sitting-room repapered and put up the lace curtains. And the next spring the children planted roses in the front yard... She was not pining for Mr. Wills; the desert had him — for whatever conceivable use, it was more than Mrs. Wills could put him to — let the desert keep what it had got. (LB 185)

The new wallpaper and lace curtains, along with the roses in the front yard are literal manifestations of a restored habitability for the Willses. They can live comfortably and safely in their home, free from the oppression of Mr. Wills's foolishness or the desert-woman's disdain for household niceties. Remodeling represents a sort of rebirth; the transformation of space is both cause and effect of a newfound contentment. Mrs. Wills's redecoration should not be considered merely superficial or as an attempt to meet domestic regulations. Instead, it bolsters Mrs. Wills and indicates her strength, literally and spiritually. She loses her "trail-weary cattle" eyes and, "She filled out, grew stronger, had a spring in her walk" (LB 184).

Unfortunately, the desert rematerializes in the form of Mr. Wills, and habitability within the domestic sphere is once more eradicated. One might think that Mr. Wills's return is the problem, but Austin's description suggests otherwise: "I saw Mrs. Wills quiver, and her hand went up to her bosom as if some one had struck her. I have seen horses start and check like that as they came over the Pass and the hot blast of the desert took them fairly. It was the stroke of desolation" (LB 185). The simile of the horses in the face of the "hot blast of the desert" locates the cause of Mrs. Wills's horror firmly in the desert. Later in the story, the narrator explains that Mrs. Wills simply did not have the energy to fight the desert that Mr. Wills had brought in "on his back." Though Mrs. Wills knows that the desert should be "dealt with as a woman and a wanton" (not a "place on the map"), since the desert is not literally a woman, she cannot divorce her husband (LB 186). The desert-woman reduces Mrs. Wills to an animal-like state, for the second time. Again, we are reminded that the desert skips over Mr. Wills and takes "Mrs. Wills in his room." And to no good effect: "As the weeks went on you could see a

sort of dinginess creeping up from her dress to her hair and her face, and it spread to the house and the doorway" (LB 186). The desert-woman's dirt and sand literally takes over not only Mrs. Wills but Mrs. Wills's hard-earned domestic space, tingeing all of it with "dinginess." In the final irony of the story, Mr. Wills remains oblivious to his wife's affliction. He, in fact, "enjoyed the improved condition of his home, though he missed the point of it... He didn't want any more of the desert. Not he. 'There's no place like home,' said Mr. Wills, or something to that effect" (LB 186). Once again, the invocation of "home" is a betrayal of sorts because the reader knows that "home" is exactly what this house is not for Mrs. Wills and her children. Mrs. Wills's narrative shows that although the desert may be a site of "feminist possibility" for some women, for others clearly it is not.

Beverly Hume's contention that "The Return of Mr. Wills" is a feminist story actually supports my position instead of refuting it. She writes, "Mrs. Wills could do this [become an independent woman], Austin implies, by aligning herself with the inhuman but feminine 'Powers' of 'desertness' and against those cultural or gender 'obligations' that have previously constrained her" (407). The fact that Mrs. Wills can only become "independent" by identifying herself with the desert is precisely the problem. Women are doubly punished by Austin's privileging of natural space in this instance: Mrs. Wills is first restricted by the patriarchal structuring of domesticity and then punished for this restriction by the desert-woman. In many ways, Austin internalizes the masculine derision for domesticity and femininity, rather than challenging the very grounds of the natural/domestic, masculine/feminine dichotomies.

If, however, we read Austin's narratives from a spatial perspective, the creation of the desert-woman becomes less about gender and more about the creation of a healthier, more sustainable subject-space relationship. Read spatially, the creation of the desert woman is a method of writing to "save" space. Austin's work in The Land of Little Rain establishes a precedent for linking writing with protecting space. For the narrator of The Land of Little Rain, ethical implications are inextricable from the process of writing about space. She explains, "And I am in no mind to direct you to delectable places toward which you will hold yourself less tenderly than I. So by this fashion of naming I keep faith with the land and annex to my own estate a very great territory to which none has a surer title" (LR 4). A twofold argument emerges from this statement: Writing about space the wrong way could endanger that space, and writing about space the right way "keep[s] faith with the land." Her description of the desert could be dangerous if it tempts the reader to visit the place she depicts, particularly if that visitor has less than noble intentions, since visiting could easily lead to destroying. By refusing to disclose the exact location, then, Austin prevents potential destruction. At the same time, she feels compelled to describe the land as accurately as possible, suggesting that part of saving space is recognizing and depicting it as it is, so to speak.

Writing, then, can protect and save space in two ways. First, it saves space by protecting it from danger. The second way is more akin to Heidegger's idea of saving space because it appeals to the need to protect the "essence" of space. What seems like a straightforward case of gynopomorphization is actually more complex. Austin does gynopomorphize space, in the literal sense of the word: she gives a nonhuman entity a (feminine) human form. But she does not do so in the pejorative sense. Often when the

term appears in (ecocritical) criticism, it indicates a human arrogance toward nonhuman nature and an inability (or unwillingness) to acknowledge that there is anything significant that is separate from the human. In Austin's case, though, she gives space a human form because she believes that (natural) space is an active, important entity. To convey that conviction, she turns space into a form that her readers will recognize as a subject. Austin anticipates a dilemma that contemporary ecofeminists still face — how can nature be represented as something "morally considerable," as Karen Warren puts it, without resorting to thinking of nature solely in terms of human benefit? Warren proposes that it requires "a willingness on our part to see nonhuman animals and nature as subjects, as active participants in our worlds, as not mere things (mere resources, properties, or commodities), as deserving of our care and attention" (76). Donna Harraway's observations seems particularly apt to Austin's desert-woman, "Ecofeminists have perhaps been most insistent on some version of the world as active subject... Acknowledging the agency of the world in knowledge makes room for some unsettling possibilities, including a sense of the world's independent sense of humor" (593). The difficulty comes in when these ideas are represented concretely. That is, what does space look like when it takes the form of an "active participant in our worlds"? What does it look like when it has "agency"? In Austin's case, space as a subject with agency looks a lot like a woman (who also happens to look a lot like Austin) (Pryse xxix).

Creating the desert-woman allows Austin to dictate the kind of subject-space relationship that leads to habitability. Habitability emerges for characters who are able to ally themselves with the powerful desert-woman and respect the strength of the desert rather than resisting it. The Walking Woman, in "Walking Woman," for example, walks

all around the desert, in and out of herder's camps, past potentially unsavory prospectors, and "through all this she passed unarmed and unoffended" (LB 256). "Mrs. Walker" as she is known, is exactly the kind of woman who does *not* hate the desert and who is not looking for domestic habitability. She is not governed by the claustrophobic strictures of domesticity, much like the desert-woman is not dominated by patriarchal structures. "She was the Walking Woman. That was it. She walked off all sense of society-made values, and, knowing the best when the best came to her, was able to take it" (LB 261). She does not have to live according to the domestic spatial regulations that control many of her unfortunate female counterparts. She does have to "keep" a house or tend to a husband. She accepts the truth of the desert-woman — that there is no such thing as stability or permanence (LB 261), and that the process of inhabiting space necessitates living with discomfort, insecurity, and even death. She does not try to fight the desert-woman. Instead she walks into habitability.

Little Pete (of "The Last Antelope") also finds habitability through allying himself with the natural space around him. "He communed with the huddled hills, and held intercourse with the stars...he looked a faun or some wood creature come out of pagan times" (LB 188-9). Little Pete, like the Walking Woman, understands space properly. The emphasis on conversation suggests that Little Pete views his relationship with the space around him as reciprocal. He does not try to dominate space, but relates to it instead as a humble dweller, to the point that he begins to become indistinguishable from the space around him (LB 192). His respect and goodwill toward natural space does not save him from grief; he is still bereft when the homesteader kills his friend the antelope. But Little Pete understands this and accepts that, "In any conflict with the immutable

forces the human is always the underdog, and when the struggle is sharp enough to be dramatic, he wins death mostly; happiest if he gets out of it some dignity for himself and some sweetness for his friends to remember" (LB 195). Thus he is able to live in harmony and happiness without being victimized by the desert-woman.

Walking Woman and Little Pete are more mobile than stationary, and they have a homeless habitability. Part of Austin's goal is to separate the idea of home (which is always associated with domesticity for her) from the idea of habitability (though she does not use that term). She uses the desert-woman to show that habitability can emerge through the dismissal of home. Reading Lost Borders spatially reveals that, in the creation of habitability, gender matters less than the appropriate (as deemed by the narrator/author) subject-space relationship. Subjects, regardless of gender, who are willing to forgo dominating space or desiring domesticity are granted habitability. Subjects who are not able to relinquish these things must suffer the consequences. Like Jewett, Robinson, and Morrison, Austin privileges movement, flexibility, and transience over permanence and stability. But, unlike the authors discussed in the previous chapter, Austin is incapable of divorcing home from domesticity, and domesticity remains inextricable from and complicit with patriarchy and conventional gender roles. She therefore cannot recuperate either term. Seeking home within domesticity collides with the act of domestication, and the desert-woman punishes both with equal verve.

Austin shares ecocriticism's, ecofeminism's, and Heidegger's fundamental principle that habitability should be premised on saving space. Moreover, all three tend to agree with Austin's implicit argument that space is best saved by altering conceived space. Yet, Austin's habitability does not fit easily into ecocritical, ecofeminist, or

Heideggerian paradigms. Reading her from an ecocritical perspective obscures the important work she is doing with gendered space; but she is not wholly ecofeminist either, since she inverts binary oppositions instead of dismantling them. She diverges from Heidegger because she dissociates building from saving. She also questions the connection between building and dwelling, which is integral to Heidegger's idea of dwelling. She implies that building is entangled with domestication and domesticity (which is at the root of the spatial crisis for Austin) and intentionally roots her habitability in *not* building. Austin's homeless habitability identifies, and then revises, Heidegger's assumption that building is innocuous.

Austin affirms the importance of saving space while simultaneously altering the dominant assumptions about how saving could and should occur. Terry Tempest Williams takes the same metaphor — space as woman — and uses it to save space, but in a way that is quite distinct from Austin.

Save Yourself — Save Space

In terms of genre, Terry Tempest Williams also falls into the category of nature writing and, like Austin's Lost Borders, Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place is told from the perspective of a first person narrator who is synonymous with the author. In this mix of memoir and essay, Williams traces the loss of her mother to cancer and the simultaneous loss of the Bird Refuge in Utah to the ever-rising Great Salt Lake. The subject-space relationship that leads to ecological habitability in this text is not remarkable — it is similar, more or less, to the subject-space relationship that leads to ecological habitability in almost any nature writing text one picks up. But this very lack

of remarkability is one of the reasons that I think it is important to discuss this text's construction of habitability; it provides a paradigmatic model of ecological habitability that is created through linking the subject and space and a model of the ideal, "safe" subject. As in Austin's Lost Borders, subjects who are granted habitability are those who respect and feel affection for space and are willing to embrace his or her innate connection and bond with space.

Yet, Williams's notion of the subject-space relationship conflicts with Austin's in many ways. The most significant difference is how they use the (female) body-space connection to produce habitability: Williams's impulse to figure the desert as a woman is pragmatic and designed to change the way the subject lives and acts toward space. She attempts, in other words, to change the subject's lived and perceived space. Austin, on the other hand, creates the desert-woman to realign power dynamics; she tries to modify conceived space. Williams wants the subject to feel space differently, and Austin wants them to think about space differently. There are other important distinctions, too. Williams transforms space so that it is inseparable from the subject, whereas Austin makes it clear that often the subject is opposed to space and vice versa. While Austin's text hinges on competition and conflict, Williams's essay collection emphasizes balance and harmony. Austin critiques domesticity and home, while Williams presents natural space as largely indistinct from home space.

Williams description of the desert as a site of "refuge," "peace," "serenity," and "grace" suggests that she views natural space as intertwined with domestic space. 46 Historically (and rhetorically), these terms have been associated with the ideal home.

⁴⁶ While Williams integrates natural and domestic space, Sarah McFarland aptly points out that Williams privileges the former (45).

Writing natural space as home allows Williams to erase the boundaries between the domestic and the natural and to emphasize the interconnections between the subject, space, and the nonhuman inhabitants of space. She explains, "There are other languages being spoken by wind, water, and wings. There are other lives to consider: avocets, stilts, and stones. Peace is the perspective found in patterns... We are no more and no less than the life that surrounds us... My serenity surfaces in my solitude" (29). Giving "wind, water, and wings" language removes the privilege humans are traditionally given as conscious, verbal beings. In place of hierarchical relationships, "patterns" surface in which "others" are intertwined with self. Through the promise of "peace" and "serenity," Williams privileges the subject who recognizes the mutuality of the subject-space relationship.

Unlike Austin's model of the subject-space relationship in which often the two are opposed and competing, Williams presents the subject and space as intertwined. When Williams invokes the desert-woman, the desert does not "get" its inhabitants; it saves them. She gives space a body so that it can protect her own body:

And they [dunes] are female. Sensuous curves — the small of a woman's back. Breasts. Buttocks. Hips and pelvis. They are the natural shapes of Earth. Let me lie naked and disappear. Crypsis.

The wind rolls over me. Particles of sand skitter across my skin, fill my ears and nose. I am aware only of breathing. The workings of my lungs are amplified. The wind picks up. I hold my breath. It massages me. A raven lands inches away. I exhale. The raven flies. (109)

Visually, Willaims's desert-woman is very similar to Austin's image: the figures are curvy and sensuous. Both authors highlight the femininity of the desert through the emphasis of signs of fertility. The key difference in their use of a female desert lies within the term "crypsis." Crypsis, the method by which an animal blends into its habitat either to avoid predators or to sneak up on prey, suggests a process that is meant to facilitate survival. Imagining the desert as a female body functions in a similar practical way. It creates a space in which the narrator can hide, a space where she can find (temporary) refuge and safety. When the rolling hills become breasts, hips, and buttocks, they resemble her own curves, and are thus better able to camouflage her. This transformation of space becomes a simultaneous transformation of self, literalized by the shift from the subject viewing space to the subject becoming and being space. This brief moment of union is also a type of habitability, if only a momentary one, because the narrator imaginatively mutates the space so that it better meets her own psychological, and especially emotional, needs.

Whereas Austin's desert-woman animates space and demands that her characters (and readers) think about space differently — as an active entity rather than an empty container — Williams's desert woman is designed to make characters and readers feel differently about space. The shift between paragraphs embodies the transition from thinking to feeling. In the first, the narrator imagines and thinks the space into a woman, and once this is accomplished, the second paragraph moves to the body. The mind is left behind and the body becomes dominant — the ears, nose, the lungs, the subtle inhalation and exhalation. Sensation replaces thought; the imaginative counters the concrete. Lived and perceived space replaces conceived space.

For Williams, emphasizing the way the subject feels space saves space because affective connections to space lead to more appropriate, sustainable relations with space. The narrator embodies this logic because her dedication to saving space originates from her affective connection to the desert. As illustrated above, part of her connection to the desert is a felt-connection. In a Stegnerian vein, another part of her attachment to the desert is rooted in her familial history: "Genealogy is in our blood. As a people and as a family, we have a sense of history. And our history is tied to land... Our attachment to the land was our attachment to each other" (14-15). Here the link between the subject and space emerges as both felt and thought, as part of the "blood" and as part of history. Because the narrator feels this attachment, because she is so intimately related to the land, she is also compelled to think about it in terms of mutual relationships rather than hierarchical ones (which is where she diverges from Stegner).

The narrator presents "thinking" and "feeling and thinking" space as the difference between environmental destruction and environmental protection. This distinction emerges through two parallel passages about "blank spots" on the map. When space is thought, "A blank spot on the map translates into empty space, space devoid of people, a wasteland perfect for nerve gas, weteye bombs, and toxic waste. The army believes that the Great Salt Lake Desert is an ideal place to experiment with biological warfare" (241). Within conceived space, blankness equals opportunity, the potential to "fill" space. As geographer J. B. Harley points out, blank spots on "maps g[i]ve much unwitting psychological support to the idea of boundless available land awaiting occupation. The maps also foster[ed] the image of a dehumanized geometrical space...whose places could be controlled by the coordinates of latitude and longitude"

(187). The logic of this argument is that when space is experienced only through thought, only through conceived space that is embodied in the form of the map, the ethical ramifications of one's actions in space are negligible, if not irrelevant. At the very least, space is not saved in the sense that it is thought of as only an empty container that can be (ab)used at will. Thinking space, without feeling it, distances the subject from space. This (conceived) separation leads to policies like the United States government's decision to test nuclear weapons in the deserts of Nevada and Utah: "When the Atomic Energy Commission described the country north of the Nevada Test Site as 'virtually uninhabited desert terrain,' my family and the birds at Great Salt Lake were some of the 'virtual uninhabitants'" (287). Williams's embittered recollection of the sight of a mushroom cloud on the horizon becomes all the more poignant when she, and the reader, realizes the practical ramifications of an overemphasis on conceived space.

Williams, as a subject who feels and thinks space, approaches the exact same phenomenon — blank spots on the map — differently. She too views blank spots as opportunities. But it is an opportunity for the subject to interact with space, not simply to act upon it: "A blank spot on the map is an invitation to encounter the natural world, where one's character will be shaped by the landscape. To enter wilderness is to court risk, and risk favors the senses, enabling one to live well" (244). By emphasizing that this sort of experience "favors the senses," Williams reminds her reader that blank spots are best experienced through the body, not just through the mind. Feeling appropriately about space, in other words, initiates thinking appropriately, which in turn, prompts acting appropriately. Of course, what is appropriate is subjective. Within this narrative,

however, what is appropriate is saving space through thinking and feeling that the subject-space relationship is mutual.

Williams constructs the subject-space relationship in a way that fuses saving space and saving the subject. That is, to save the subject, one first has to save space. The necessity of viewing the subject and space as entwined emerges through the narrative thread of cancer. Williams's text is about place attachment but it is also about her mother's bout with cancer. The way these two narrative strands intersect is through Williams's conviction that her mother's (and her other female relatives') cancer is caused by environmental contamination (283). The "greed and hate and lust" of Austin's "hoodoo" embodies itself in the form of nuclear bombs in Williams's narrative that leave behind a residue of deadly contamination that infiltrates human and nonhuman inhabitants of the desert. Far more dangerous than Austin's hoodoo, nuclear radiation presents a similarly intangible threat that is difficult to trace.

The immediacy and severity of the threat of nuclear radiation dictates Williams's approach to gender in this text, especially in terms of her use of the female body-space connection. The relationship between the female body and space transcends metaphor in Williams, and in this way, her work intersects with the more activist branch of ecofeminism. Mary Mellor's argument that the biological female body bears a disproportionate burden for environmental degradation (viii) sheds light on the character of Williams's claims. Mellor's contention is important because it draws attention to sexual, rather than gender, differences. Mellor argues that women are more susceptible

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⁴⁷ Noël Sturgeon's introduction to *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action* provides an excellent analysis of the interrelated character of theoretical and activist ecofeminism. She argues that despite the inherent connections between the two aspects of ecofeminism, American ecofeminism is largely theoretical (7).

— because of biological differences — to environmental pollution and contamination. This vulnerability manifests itself in everything from miscarriages to contaminated breast milk to breast cancer (Mellor 2). Williams's approach to her family's disproportionate rate of breast cancer diagnosis follows similar logic: "Children growing up in the American Southwest, drinking contaminated milk from contaminated cows, even from the contaminated breasts of their mothers, my mother, members, years later, of the Clan of the One-Breasted Women" (Williams 283). At a practical level, then, at least for Williams, the safety of natural space affects women's bodies more than it does men's bodies; hence, it becomes a women's issue.

Williams takes the relationship between biological womanhood and (contaminated) space and puts it in terms of gender in hopes of inspiring women to take action. She explains, "The women couldn't bear it any longer... A contract had been made and broken between human beings and the land. A new contract was being drawn by the women, who understood the fate of the earth as their own" (288). She closes her text with the narrative of how these women enter the Nevada Test Site in protest of nuclear testing; soldiers arrest them for trespassing and, as punishment, drop the women off in the middle of the desert. Williams ends the text by invoking the desert as "home." "The officials thought it was a cruel joke to leave us stranded in the desert with no way to get home. What they didn't realize was that we were home, soul-centered and strong, women who recognized the sweet smell of sage as fuel for our spirits" (290). The final image of women "at home" in the desert reinforces the bodily connection Williams establishes between the subject and space. It reminds the reader that saving the self entails saving space and vice versa. The image serves a practical purpose as well: it

inspires women to take concrete environmentalist action. The desert is habitable for Williams, and her fellow protestors, because she wants to save it in both literal and figurative ways. In addition, it links Williams to de Certeau's idea of habitability because the women mutate their oppressor's punishment so that it works to their benefit.

Williams's literary representation of the subject-space relationships leaves her vulnerable to a certain amount of critique. First, Williams's can be interpreted as arguing that women are somehow inherently closer to nature, or that they are more environmentally conscious than are men. In other words, Williams can be tied to affinity ecofeminism, which is the most disparaged strain of ecofeminist thought (Slicer 49). Part of the reason feminists and other scholars are so quick to dismiss affinity ecofeminism is based on the argument that it is essentialist. In the case of *Refuge*, though, Noël Sturgeon's argument about the role of essentialism in ecofeminism seems especially pertinent. She contends that "strategic essentialism" can have "positive oppositional ends," and that, furthermore, is sometimes necessary to meet concrete political goals (10; 9). Williams uses the connection between femininity and space to inspire her readers to feel space differently and to act on those feelings; she does not suggest that women have an exclusive and privileged relationship with nature.

Williams's work can also be criticized because it is "too personal." Dana Phillips, for example, characterizes contemporary nature writing's interest in this kind of personal relationship with space as "too selfish" (195, emphasis his), and in the sense that the subject is given just as much, if not more, weight as space in this text, I would agree with

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⁴⁸ She premises her argument on the observation that the feminist critique of essentialism stems from a concern about the "unequal power relations" that undergird some essentialist claims. Essentialism does not always work this way, however, and therefore itself is not the problem. It should not be treated as "a sin nor a permanent mark of unexamined prejudice nor an enduring implication in domination" (9).

Phillips. But his accusation seems somewhat irrelevant in this case, since Williams attempts to erase the distinction between the subject and space in the first place. That is, Williams argues that habitability is borne out of recognizing the reciprocal nature of the subject-space relationship. Self is not necessarily distinct from space, so it is misleading to think about an emphasis of self as being different from an emphasis of space, at least within the framework of this text.

Williams's text interprets saving space concretely; writing habitability means inspiring subjects to take political action to change their living space. Williams does not challenge the concept of dwelling; she uses an affective register to draw attention to some of the subtle implications already present in Heidegger's work. Heidegger, despite the seemingly abstract nature of his writing, highlights the importance of concrete, everyday life in space. Williams's attempt to address the contamination of the Southwest through the venue of writing is very much aligned with Heideggerian principles. She emphasizes the body and affect in a way that Heidegger does not, but again, she does not significantly trouble his formulation of dwelling in the way that Austin does. Rather, she reminds her reader — and Heidegger's — that the question of the subject's relation to space needs to be firmly grounded in the realities of everyday life.

For both Austin and Williams, a habitable relationship with space relies on the subject being incorporated into space in some capacity. If we think about it in terms of spatial transformation, Austin mutates space by making it into a strong woman, impervious to environmental damage, and Williams transforms the desert into a maternal refuge that commands caretaking. In both cases, the authors write a body for space. The

final text I examine, Ehrlich's *Islands, the Universe, Home*, takes a different approach—space transforms into food, so that it can be taken into the body.

Eating Space

"Don't go! I'll eat you up I love you so!" — Monster to Max, Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are

Gretel Ehrlich's collection of essays, *Islands, the Universe, Home*, differs from Austin and Williams's nature writing texts because she interrogates "space" — what is is, how it functions, and how it shapes the psyche and identity — instead of focusing on "nature." Geographically, Ehrlich moves from Wyoming to California to Japan, and this diversity allows her to reflect on the influences and effects of space on her own life. Like Austin and Williams, Ehrlich's habitability hinges on the connection between the body and space. But, Ehrlich neither thinks nor feels space. Instead, she combines the two when she foregrounds how the imagination negotiates the relationship between the body and space. Ehrlich's habitability operates in the realm of lived space, which integrates

Austin's emphasis of conceived space and Williams's accentuation of perceived space.

In a manner reminiscent of Austin and Williams, Ehrlich locates the cause of environmental destruction in an inappropriate relationship between the subject and space. She focuses more on the violent character of the interaction though:

What shocks me so is the detachment with which we dispense destruction

— not just bombs, but blows to the head of the earth, to populations of
insects, plants, and animals, and to one another with senseless betrayal —

fabricate the health of the planet the way we make a new car. (45) Like most ecocritics (though Ehrlich herself is not an ecocritic per se). Ehrlich clearly believes that if the subject has place attachment, she would not drop bombs so easily; the lack of feeling for the earth is at the root of destruction. Instead of "feeling" space, the detached subject tries to repair space without ever considering the true origin of the problem. In Lefebvrian terms, conceived space dominates perceived space. Because of the narrator's clear investment in not destroying the earth, space cannot be habitable under these conditions. As Williams finds the nuclear pollution of the desert unacceptable. Ehrlich believes the mechanistic view of the subject-space relationship is intolerable. So far, then, Ehrlich's articulation of spatial crisis closely resembles Williams's — the subject does not perceive space, she conceives of it. But whereas Williams textually transforms space so that it provokes an affective connection, Ehrlich counters a mechanistic view of space by emphasizing an aesthetic, imagined experience of space. By privileging taste as the medium of this experience, Ehrlich literalizes a personal, biological, and organic version of the subject-space relationship.

and how the proposed solutions are always mechanistic, as if we could

Her aesthetic and biological experience of space emerges in a triad of "eating" moments. In the first, Ehrlich imagines eating the earth:

I stop to eat lunch. Emerson wrote: "The Gautama said that the first men ate the earth and found it sweet." I eat bologna and cheese and think about eating dirt. At this moment the mouth frames wonder, its width stands for the generous palate of consciousness. I cleanse my taste buds with miner's lettuce and stream water and try to imagine what kinds of

sweetness the earth provides: the taste of glacial flour or the mineral taste of basalt, the fresh and foul bouquets of rivers, the desiccated, stinging flavor of a snowflake. (29)

By internalizing the earth around her, Ehrlich creates an unusual intimacy with nature, a literal and metaphorical convergence of subject and space. The passage begins with hunger and the need to stop and eat a sandwich. The narrator's body and its corporeal needs frame this moment, even as the physiological effects of food are minimized in favor of the bodily act of eating. This initially goes unnoticed, as readers are swept into the literary language of the passage. She begins with the consumption of a sandwich, draws our attention to her mouth, points out the palate, the taste buds, and the various flavors involved in literarily consuming the earth and its constituents. The sensual and aesthetic aspects of eating concern her most.

Ehrlich mediates the unification of the individual human body and the body of the earth through imagination. Her emphasis of the literary underscores the role of the imagination. A literary quote reminds the reader that this eating is a matter of the intellect as well as of the body, and the imaginative nature of the experience is emphasized by the use of both "think" in the third sentence, and "imagine" in the last one. "Palate," an apparatus of literal taste, is a "palate of consciousness" a far more nebulous entity. Furthermore, despite her revelry in the tangible earth, she never actually eats the dirt, or the even the miner's lettuce for that matter. Her seemingly intimate connection with the nature around her is largely imagined. She contemplates this eating and almost unwittingly pairs images of sweetness (bouquets and snowflakes) with descriptions of death and decay ("foul" and "desiccated"). And lest we forget the

spiritual implications of eating the earth, she invokes Buddhism, via Emerson, and tells us "at this moment the mouth frames wonder." Ehrlich's initial moment of consumption sets the stage for understanding the subject-space relationship in terms of biological needs, aesthetic experience, and spiritual merging.

The potentially mystical and religious implications of eating space are heightened in the next eating passage, in which she inadvertently swallows a piece of ash from a massive forest fire:

Sitting cross-legged on my bed of rocks, I open my mouth: an ash alights on my tongue. I swallow.... This is the body ofWhat have I eaten? A piece of tree, of fire; a piece of this island universe, or just ash, that solid residue of combustion? I no longer contemplate the sky; it kneels down on me: smoke works the landscape into invisibility. (55)

What began as an imagined event (eating dirt) becomes literal when "an ash alights on my tongue." Once again, the reader is taken through the process of literal eating —the opening mouth, the tongue's action, and the process of swallowing. Her evocation of the ritual of communion underscores the sacred and ceremonial components of eating, countering the biological and organic necessity of food. Carolyn Korsmeyer explains communion as a special kind of eating that is simultaneously about food and not about food at all: "They [bread and wine] are tasted and swallowed, but not for nourishment...The fact that the sacrament is actually taken into the body indicates the most direct participation in the mystical reenactment of God's sacrifice, one that the exercise of any sense other than taste might not render so intimate" (139). Along the

same lines, Ehrlich's suggestion of communion strengthens her formulation of the most habitable subject-space relationship as exceptionally intimate.

If nature is sacred (in the same way that bread and wine are sacred) however, it is also unknown, something that cannot be understood through the intellect or through literal interpretation. When she asks the rather shocked question "What have I eaten?" the answer does not lie in any of the things she lists, or at least, that is not the whole of the answer. In some ways, each of her answers is correct, or at any rate could be correct. Rather than being a list of choices, as the "or" suggests, this sentence lets the readers know that this singular piece of ash is all of the above, that the macrocosm is present in this microcosm. This ash, then, serves as a synecdoche for "the world." It is telling that this ash is also part of the smoke that "works the landscape into invisibility." Instead of leading to an enlightenment, her consumption of the natural world precedes a blindness. Blindness operates on two levels, both reinforcing Ehrlich's preference for lived, over conceived and perceived, space. First, blindness prevents Ehrlich from experiencing space primarily through perceived space: she cannot rely solely on her senses to guide her through space. Seeing, of course, also represents a way of knowing, and blindness shifts Ehrlich's epistemology from intellectual, rational knowing to intuitive knowing.

The final moment of eating marks significant shifts: she explicitly eats space, she moves from the natural to the domestic, and eating becomes a psychological, rather than spiritual, endeavor.

A blueprint should be a spiritual proposition: walls and windows become a form of discipline, an obstruction that liberates space and spirit by giving it form. Space is viscous and visceral. It can be held in the hand or in the mind; a body can curve around it, or a room. It starts right here at my lips. I gulp it in, and it oxygenates my blood. I swallow space; I wedge it into my psyche as a way of lifting the roof of the mind off the noise of thought, so that in the intervening silence, any kind of willful spirit can express itself. (158)

In the final eating moment, she does not eat nature, or any part of it, but rather space. This passage is unimpeded with negative connotations or doubt; she does not just imagine eating, or accidentally eat, she "gulp[s]" in space, as if it were a much-needed drink of water. Or more aptly, a much needed gasp of fresh air. Space, at this particular moment, begins with ingestion — it "starts right here at my lips." But this passage does not make sense in the way that the other moments of eating make sense. In the first, she was eating lunch and contemplating eating more of the earth; this is not unnatural given that food literally does come from the earth, from the soil. In the second passage, the eating was unintentional. Only in the third passage does she knowingly, literally, and willfully gobble up space. Space does not serve the same purpose as food though; it does not provide nutrition for the body, in the biological sense in any case. Nor is it religious as it was in the second passage.

The juxtaposition of "blueprint" and "spiritual proposition" highlights the tension that undergirded the other two passages, as well as the subject-space relationship in Austin and Williams. The distinction between an experience of space grounded in conceived space versus one rooted in perceived space becomes explicit. Blueprints embody conceived space, but Ehrlich hopes to dislodge this kind of thinking about space. The consumption of space — the gulping, the swallowing, the wedging it in the psyche

— is meant to be an antidote to the tension between lived and conceived space, a way to facilitate the unification of thinking about space and living in space. It is important to note that Ehrlich does not propose an inversion of the traditional hierarchy that favors conceived over perceived space. Habitability depends upon an understanding of space that can be "held in the hand or the mind."

Ehrlich's virtually seamless transition between eating nature and natural space to eating domestic space expresses the larger tendency in her text to present domestic space as an integration of "home" space and natural space. When she discusses the house, she explains that it is "a platform on which the transaction between nature and culture, internal and external, form and formlessness occurs" (157). She does not conflate domestic space with natural space — they are still different entities — but unlike Austin, Ehrlich believes they are compatible, not opposed. A house, for Ehrlich, is "not a defense *against* nature but a way of letting it in" (158). Ehrlich counters Austin's conviction that domesticity necessarily implies a domination of space that is incompatible with habitability by favoring the body as the most important factor in the subject-space relationship. Ehrlich's version of habitability emerges when the subject experiences space through the body and the imagination, regardless of actual location.

Read in conjunction, Ehrlich's eating moments produce a place-attachment that is dramatically different from the one posited by ecocritical scholars like Lawrence Buell and Wallace Stegner (discussed in the introduction). It does not center on the home or the house, instead favoring the body. It is intensely individualistic. Rather than depending on history, familial or otherwise, Ehrlich's sense of place-attachment is

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Changing historical and cultural conditions allow both Williams and Ehrlich to respond differently from Austin to domesticity. Though the peak of the cult of domesticity had passed by the time Austin was writing, she (likely) still felt its negative effects far more than either Williams or Ehrlich.

focused exclusively on the present moment of experiencing place. Most significantly, Ehrlich's aesthetic attachment to place is not in the least site-specific. It can be experienced anywhere, in virtually any kind of setting. It might more aptly be termed space-attachment. In that way, Ehrlich's version of habitability more closely resembles the ungrounded domesticity seen in the second chapter.

It is initially a bit less clear how eating space saves it in the way that writing space into a strong desert woman or the maternal body does. Ehrlich's literalizes the inherent connection between the body and space that Austin and Williams imply. Connecting the subject and space so intimately is meant to engender an emotional and intellectual attachment as well. Ehrlich's explanation is helpful in this regard. "As I begin to walk again, it occurs to me that this notion of eating the earth is not about gluttony but about unconditional love, an acceptance of whatever taste comes across my tongue" (29). Within the frame of this narrative, then, eating is an expression of affection, a willingness to accept the essence of space and nature, no matter how distasteful. This sentiment is certainly born out through the general exuberance the eating passages exude. Having this kind of affection for space will, presumably, lead to a respect for space. In other words, Ehrlich uses the logic of the epigraph at the beginning of this section — "I'll eat you up I love you so!"

But the reason that line always gets a chuckle from children reading Sendak's book is because it is counterintuitive to eat someone, or something, you love. Even as eating space fosters an intense and intimate attachment and expresses an "unconditional love," it also kills the thing that is being eaten. Korsmeyer explains: "Violence, after all, is necessary if any organism is to ingest another...most of what we eat is treated with

fire; and chewing is designed remorselessly to finish what killing and cooking began. People naturally prefer that none of this should happen to them" (194). No one and nothing wants to be eaten, in other words, since being eaten means being destroyed. Ehrlich's emphasis of the physicality of eating supports the argument that by eating space, she is actually (inadvertently) damaging space, not saving it.

Ehrlich's model of habitability exposes the violence of subsuming space into the subject, even if the violence is only on a theoretical level. Diana Fuss, in *Identification* Papers, says that, "Identification operates for the subject as the primary means of gaining control of the objects outside itself; identification is a form of mastery modeled directly on the nutritional instinct" (35). Specifically, oral ingestion can mediate identification (according to Freud), which means that eating something can be an attempt to identify with that which is eaten. In this kind of identification, the other is literally incorporated into the subject, and in effect, mastery over the other is obtained because the other essentially becomes part of the self and ceases to exist. According to Fuss, all identification, whether positive or negative, is essentially violent (35). If we think about the environment as other than the physical body (and indeed some ecocritics have broadly considered nature an "other Other"), identification becomes a way that subjects imagine their connection to space. By Fuss's logic imagining that connection as identification (ala eating) creates a subject-space relationship based on violence. At the very least, Ehrlich's consumption of space refuses to acknowledge the space as something other than the self, a refusal that arguably violates Heidegger's second precept of saving space.

Dismissing Ehrlich's subject-space relationship as violent, however, ignores the strongly imaginative component of Ehrlich's subject-space relationship. Furthermore, if we deem Ehrlich's attempt to create a healthy habitability a failure, we risk overlooking that Ehrlich synthesizes Austin's and Williams's use of the body to save space. Austin uses the desert-woman to realign the power dynamics of the land-as-woman metaphor, while Williams uses a similar metaphor to emphasize the interconnections between the subject and space. Ehrlich recognizes the violence within the subject-space relationship but still asserts that the subject and space are intertwined and interdependent. She argues that making space habitable may sometimes involve mutating space to the point of destroying it, but that this destruction does not necessarily mean that the subject-space relationship is inadequate or unhealthy. Ehrlich (as narrator) finds habitability within this subject-space relationship, despite (or maybe even because of) the violence of eating space.

Ehrlich's concentration on the imagination's role in the subject-space relationship parallels Heidegger's rethinking of his concept of dwelling in "...Poetically Man Dwells...". Heidegger uses the line "poetically man dwells" from Hölderin to ponder how the subject might dwell through the act of writing. After reflection about how poetry seems inherently opposed to dwelling (a theme that ecocritics and Lefebvre both echo), Heidegger concludes that poetry actually constitutes dwelling: "Rather, the phrase 'poetically man dwells' says: poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling. Poetry is what really lets us dwell. But through what do we attain to a dwelling place? Through building. Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building." A few sentences later, he says that poetry may be "even the – distinctive kind of building" (213, emphasis

original). By poetry, Heidegger does not mean the genre of poetry; rather he means the process of inventing and composing writing. Albert Hofstadter, Heidegger's translator explains: "Dicten – to write or compose poetry or other literature; to invent something fictional, make it up, imagine it. So it gets translated rather as poetry, or the writing of poetry, and often, where the word 'poetry' appears, it is well to remember its sense as a verb, as naming the act of composing and writing..." (xi).

Austin, Williams, and especially Ehrlich foreground the imagination as a means of inhabiting space. Ehrlich makes space her own, in a de Certeauian sense, by imagining it as food and taking it into her body. In Williams (and Austin to a degree), thinking about space distances the subject from it and engenders destructive practices. Ehrlich employs the imagination to revise the role of thinking in habitability. Imagining is a special sort of thinking, and writing is a special sort of imagining. It is a kind of imagining that, in Heidegger's words, "...does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling" ("Poetically" 216).

Healthy Relationships with Space

It is all too easy to find fault with the habitabilities these texts imagine. Austin's habitability rests on a gynopocentric depiction of space. Williams conflates the maternal body with natural space, reinscribing a metaphor that has been shown repeatedly to be harmful and, moreover, is gynopocentric as well. Ehrlich metaphorically annihilates space rather than saving it. If we were to try to synthesize what is wrong with the subject-space relationships within these narratives, we might best say that they are all

about the subject, and very little about the space. Even when the subject is consciously transformed so that it is safe for space, the subject ends up dominating and superceding space anyway. One solution to this problem is to continue the search for better texts that provide models of subject-space relationships that are balanced and free from violence, coercion, and arrogance. The other solution is to use these texts to dislodge the current understandings of what it means to have a healthy relationship with space.

One characteristic of a "safe" subject-space relationship is that it is close, and this proximity is embodied by the body merging with space in one way or another. Usually this union serves another, secondary purpose — it endows space with an importance it is not normally given. This is most clearly illustrated by Austin's desert-woman because transforming the desert into a woman commands respect for space. The concept of home is generally naturalized (literally) in this kind of relationship, or dismissed entirely.

Austin obviously takes the latter route, but Williams and Ehrlich choose instead to blur the distinction between domestic and natural space, suggesting that the most habitable home of all is a blend of the natural and the domestic. Most important to these characters's creation of habitability is that they believe they are saving space, rather than whether they are actually doing it.

The last point helps distinguish between habitability and the similar concept of dwelling. Habitability can be created even when saving space is undesired, impossible, or unsuccessful. Heidegger's dwelling, in contrast, requires that the subject save space. As quoted earlier, Heidegger argues that humans dwell in that they save the earth (352), and his phrasing suggests that one cannot truly dwell without also saving space. The texts I examined in this chapter show that even when the production of habitability is

undertaken with the objective of saving space, habitability can be achieved even when space is not saved at all. Austin, Williams, and Ehrlich all try to protect space and respect it as space, but none of them is fully able to do so. All these texts, nonetheless, are successful at creating habitability. In fact, these narratives go so far as to suggest that the creation of habitability very well may be contradictory to saving space, since habitability inherently favors the subject and necessitates some sort of transformation of space.

If we look to these texts to show the "right" kind of habitability, we are inevitably going to be disappointed. None of the models of habitability produced by these authors is ideal or even healthy, at least by the standards of (ecocritical) idealists. As I have mentioned, none of them are fully successful at saving space by the standards of Heidegger. All of this leads to the question of whether the definitions of "healthy" and saving need to be refined. These texts suggest, combined with the texts in the first two chapters, that it is more fruitful to gauge the health and ethics of habitability along a spectrum, rather as simply healthy or unhealthy. For example, on a spectrum, Austin's production of habitability is healthier than Lyman Ward's because it at least considers the ethics of the subject-space relationship, rather than assuming that the subject has the authority to act upon space without consideration of space's needs. Similarly, these texts point out that saving space should be defined loosely, just as the "essence" of space is fluid and ever-shifting.

While some fear that accepting less than ideal standards for the subject-space relationship means that unbridled domination will ensue, these texts argue against that perspective. Rather, Austin, Williams, and Ehrlich's texts indicate that even though it is

impossible to remove power dynamics and violence completely from the subject-space relationship, even when the subject has the best of intentions, it is still important to consider the ethical implications of habitability. In the next chapter, I turn to an explicitly violent form of inhabiting — contemporary haunted house narratives — to explore the questions of power, control, and violence within the subject-space relationship that these narratives bring to light.

CHAPTER FOUR

Haunted Habitability: The Subject and Space in Haunted House Narratives

The final chapter of this project turns to an unexpected site to complete the discussion of habitability — haunted houses. If horror narratives can be read as expressions of social anxieties about everything from race to gender to class relations. 50 haunted house texts have the capacity to expose spatial anxieties. We can read haunted houses solely as symbols and manifestations of gender, race, and class, but it is a mistake to ignore the fact that houses are, above all, a space and often the most intimate human space, aside from the body. Most obviously, haunted house narratives are haunted by (im)possibility of meeting the American dream of having a home. What is more surprising is that haunted house narratives also express an anxiety about something seemingly quite different — the complications generated by creating habitability within wilderness spaces.

Haunted houses narratives figure houses as wilderness spaces that undermine their inhabitants's ability to find safety, security, and comfort. Instead of gaining the "homefeeling" Caroline Kirkland seeks in Michigan, characters living in haunted houses are liable to become feral themselves, sinking into unmitigated violence and promiscuity. As wilderness narratives, these texts articulate not only the profound ambivalence that

⁵⁰ Carol Clover, in Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film, for example, interrogates how horror films critique and expose cultural expectations and assumptions about gender. Joan Hawkins analyzes how horror (and other "trashy") films expose assumptions about taste, and hence about class. Dale Bailey argues that haunted house narratives provide a place in which gender, class, and race can be complicated and critiqued. As members (arguably) of a gothic tradition, it makes sense that haunted house narratives would be read this way, since gothic texts are also generally read as either subversive or symptomatic (Botting 7, 19). If they are treated as subversive, critics claim that the Gothic is a genre that critiques both conventional social structures and dominant literary paradigms. If they are treated as symptomatic, one reads them with an eye toward the anxieties these texts manifest, usually regarding conventional social structures and dominant literary paradigms.

characterizes the American relationship to natural space (Nash 55) but, more specific to this project, they explore the dangers of habitability that have only been alluded to in the first three chapters. In previous chapters, domesticating space has been an essential ingredient of producing habitability, but in haunted houses, domestic activities sabotage habitability. To create habitability within the haunted house, the occupant must foster a relationship very similar to the one discussed in the third chapter; they must accept and respect space as it is, become personally connected with it, and eventually align the self with space in order to gain some of space's power. The consequence of this habitability, however, is violence and the destruction of other characters. In all of the previous chapters, habitability has been a goal, and even though sometimes the space produced by habitability was problematic, habitable space seemed preferable to un-habitable space. Haunted house narratives suggest, however, that sometimes unlivable space is preferable to habitable space.

I focus on houses that are not so much haunted as they are animated. In the words of critic Dale Bailey, the haunted houses I am concentrating on are "sentient and malign" (5). Biology tells us houses are not alive; they are objects. Physics lays down clear rules of space; the measurements of the outside of a house, for example, cannot be smaller than the inside of a house. The haunted houses I discuss in this chapter thwart the laws of both biology and physics. In truth, it is more apt to call the houses under question animated rather than haunted, but since they are widely known as "haunted houses" I retain the term in my analysis. My choice of haunted house texts was based on two fundamental characteristics: first, the haunted house had to be depicted as alive and, furthermore, the strange events that occurred could not be attributed to a past crime or

wrongdoing. Secondly, since I am especially interested in how inhabitants convert (haunted) houses from wild to domestic spaces — how they are settled and made habitable — I looked for haunted houses in which the inhabitants intended to live. I narrowed my focus to Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, 51 Stuart Rosenberg's *The Amityville Horror*, Anne River Siddons's *The House Next Door*, Stephen King's miniseries *Rose Red* and its companion text *The Diary of Ellen Rimbauer*, 52 and Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*.

Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in Popular American Fiction, has largely disregarded haunted houses as a distinct genre or trope in literature. Bailey argues that haunted houses "present deeply subversive critiques of all that we hold to be true — about class, about race, about gender, about American history itself" (6). Individual articles examining haunted texts have tended to favor texts that incorporate ghosts, such as Toni Morrison's Beloved or Henry James's The Turn of the Screw. The Derridean "hauntology" is prominent in the works of many literary scholars, but these discussions are largely unrelated to my study of animated space because they tend to focus more on

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N. Katherine Hayle introduces *House of Leaves* by saying, "Camouflaged as a haunted house tale, *House of Leaves* is a metaphysical inquiry worlds away from the like of *The Amityville Horror*" (779). *House of Leaves* is "worlds away" from *The Amityville Horror* in terms of sophistication, breadth and depth (linguistically, philosophically, and thematically), but it is a mistake to dismiss the haunted house framework as mere "camouflage." To do so ignores the larger implications of the space-subject relationship posed by the novel. My analysis does not reject the interpretations of Danielewski's work that focuses on the metalinguistic aspects of the text, but I do emphasize the subject-space relationship portrayed through the figure of the haunted house.

⁵² I focus primarily on *The Diary of Ellen Rimbauer* because it represents the attempt to live in Rose Red, whereas the miniseries documents the experiences of a group of psychics led by a parapsychologist investigating the paranormal activity in Rose Red during a weekend visit. The pseudo-diary, on the other hand, charts the original construction of the house from the point of view of Ellen Rimbauer, the wife of John Rimbauer.

questions of history.⁵³ While previous work talks about haunted houses as elaborate metaphors, I depart from this work by exploring haunted houses as literal spaces that are unlivable and can be made habitable.

Because I intertwine my analysis of these texts, rather than discussing each text individually, it is helpful to begin with a brief plot summary of each text before turning to textual interpretation. Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves* is arguably the most atypical haunted house narrative I am exploring.⁵⁴ Shortly after Will Navidson, Karen Green, and their two children Chad and Daisy move into the house, it begins to exhibit strange spatial tendencies, namely that a large black closet (which later morphs into a gargantuan ever-changing labyrinth) appears and the inside of the house measures larger than the outside. Like Navidson and Green, the Lutzs, in *The Amityville Horror*, move to their new house "High Hopes" intending to solidify the bonds of their family. As in *House of Leaves*, though, the house itself quickly thwarts their desires by producing black tar and flies and, more importantly, slowly driving George Lutz into an insanely violent rage.

The House Next Door diverges from the first two narratives because the narrator does not

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History is not unrelated to my work, nor is it even possible (or desirable) to disassociate history from space. Rather, it is a question of emphasis. Derrida's concept of hauntology, and most subsequent work with this concept, have focused on hauntology as an abstract concept linked to time, the gaps between Being and non-being, and, of course, ontology. Derrida's first mention of the term "hauntology" appears in Specters of Marx where he posits that hauntology is a "logic of haunting" that is a "staging for the end of history" (10). Though the figure of the "haunted house" could certainly be productively analyzed within a Derridean framework, my analysis emphasizes the animated, rather than the "haunted," nature of the space in haunted house narratives.

I call House of Leaves atypical because, rather than following the traditional haunted house formula, this text is a frame narrative that claims to be discussing and analyzing what is called *The Navidson Record* which is supposed to be Will Navidson's documentary about his unusual house. The frame narrator Johnny Truant compiles the narrative that is *House of Leaves* out of a series of notes and existing writing from the dead, blind man, Zampanò. The novel is complete with an impressive number of footnotes from real-life scholars and critics (ranging from Jacques Derrida and Susan Sontag) along with fictional scholars, all analyzing *The Navidson Record*. As if this were not already enough, the text itself begins to fluctuate spatially midway through the novel, as form and content merge. Each of these elements is more than worthy of its own analysis, but my own work focuses primarily on the haunted house portion of the text.

live in the haunted house but rather observes family after family move into the house and get destroyed in one manner or another. The mini-series *Rose Red* details a group of psychics's exploration of the infamous house Rose Red, built by John Rimbauer at the turn of the century in Seattle. The house has a history of killing people or simply taking them into its walls. *The Diary of Ellen Rimbauer* is a companion text to the mini-series, supposedly penned by the original mistress of Rose Red, Ellen Rimbauer. In it, Ellen details her growing relationship with her house. Finally, *Burnt Offerings* depicts the Rolfe families' summer vacation in a haunted house. These diverse narratives converge around the subject's desire and attempt to make a resistant space habitable.

Some Houses are Born Bad

Haunted houses are frightening because they are unnaturally natural. They defy the boundaries between domestic and natural space, the wild and the domesticated, subject and object, animate and inanimate, and conceived and perceived space. They are, as Shirley Jackson says, "born" not made. These narratives figure haunted houses as natural spaces, not as houses at all. In some cases, such as Siddon's "house next door," the house in question seems to be an ideal spatial fusion that merges the natural with the domestic.

This house was different. It commanded you, somehow, yet soothed you.

It grew out of the penciled earth like an elemental spirit that had lain,
locked and yearning for the light, through endless depths of time, waiting
to be released. It soared into the trees and along the deep-breasted slope

The text's author is "Joyce Reardon," a character from the mini-series. Rose Red fans still question the true author's identity, since Stephen King has resolutely denied his involvement in the text.

of the ridge as though it had uncoiled, not as though it would be built, layer by layer and stone by stone. I could hardly imagine the hands and machinery that would form it. I thought of something that had started with a seed, put down deep roots, grown in the sun and rains of many years into the upper air. In the sketches, at least, the woods pressed untouched around it like companions. The creek enfolded its mass and seemed to nourish its roots. It looked — inevitable. (24)

This house does not just incorporate natural and domestic space, as a Frank Lloyd Wright house might. Wright's architecture is known for including a blend of natural features — streams, woods, stones — with more traditional domestic space. Haunted houses, on the other hand, incorporate the domestic and the natural within the very character of their being. As something that is (metaphorically) born rather than built, the house is surprisingly organic. It grows; it is released and soars. It is even maternally nurtured by the "deep-breasted slope." It may be made from layers of stone, but from an intuitive and emotional perspective, the domestic space of the house seems more akin to a tree or a plant. In other words, the house becomes a biological, alive entity. Colquitt, the narrator, claims that rather than "maintain[ing]" the house next door, it would need to be fed and watered (34).

Colquitt's metaphor is important because it is what defuses the possible horror that is created by an inanimate object being rendered animate. Ernst Jentsch (whom Freud was responding to in his well-known essay on the uncanny) claims that one of the primary sources of the uncanny is the animation of an object that we know is supposed to

be inanimate, such as a doll.⁵⁶ At this point in this haunted house narrative, though, the house may be natural in the sense of "part of nature," but it is more akin to a houseplant than a baby (or any other animated creature, for that matter). By tapping into a romanticized ethic that equates goodness and innocence with the natural, the potentially harmful effects are diminished even more, and the hybrid of natural-domestic space appears ideal. Like the pastoral myth that we see in the first chapter, the characters in this text think that the house next door's domesticated nature is the ideal setting for habitability.

The problem is, of course, that the house's naturalness exceeds metaphor and, within the world of the text, becomes literal. For Henri Lefebvre, houses are already on the brink of the natural and the cultural, but haunted houses cross over that dividing boundary and become natural to the point that they take on animation and biological functions. Haunted houses are not entirely examples of personification though; that is what makes them so frightening. They are animated but wholly other at the same time; they are not humans, plants, or animals, but something else. The something else that supplants the domestic space of the house cannot be tamed, domesticated, or controlled by humans. Though the "house next door" is described as a domesticated sort of nature, it is not settled at all — it is a wilderness space. Like the wilderness spaces in Kirkland

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Freud's concept of the uncanny is nearly a perfect match for haunted houses. Freud himself says that "As we have seen some languages in use to-day can only render the German expression 'an unheimlich house' by 'a haunted house.' We might indeed have begun our investigation with this example, perhaps the most striking of all, of something uncanny, but we refrained from doing so because the uncanny in it is too much intermixed with what is purely gruesome and is in part overlaid by it" (222). For a specific analysis of the uncanny in architecture (including haunted houses), see Anthony Vidler's *The Architectural Uncanny* and Nele Bemong's article "Exploration #6: The Uncanny in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*" in *Image & Narrative* (http://www.imageandnarrative.be/uncanny/nelebemong.htm).

and Stegner's narratives, haunted houses are positioned as dangerous to the subject (literally and figuratively) and in need of regulation.

The term wilderness is wildly problematic, as many scholars have noticed.

Roderick Nash suggests that wilderness can be considered as a "state of mind" but prefers to think about the environment as a spectrum "ranging from the purely wild on the one end to the purely civilized on the other — from the primeval to the paves." The rural, or pastoral, resides in the center of this spectrum (Nash 6). The terms of this spectrum may be fluid, but even so, houses do not fall on the wilderness end. Wilderness need not be taken so literally as a thoroughly natural landscape untouched by humans, and the definition of wilderness that I find more useful in the case of haunted houses dates to 1340. This definition incorporates the space but also the human reaction to the space: "Something figured as a region of a wild or desolate character, or in which one wanders or loses one's way; in religious use applied to the present world or life as contrasted with heaven or the future life" (OED). Wilderness is still used to refer to a particular space or region, but the important part of the definition is that it "figured" to be "wild or desolate."

House of Leaves exemplifies the wilderness aspect of haunted houses because it "figures" the space of the house as region that is a wilderness in which one does become lost within. The figuration of the house as non-domestic, wilderness space is revealed when the exploration of the mysterious hallway is organized. The people summoned to take part in the "expedition" are all literal wilderness explorers. The leader of the team, Holloway Roberts is a "professional hunter and explorer" (Danielewski 80), and his two companions Jed Leeder and Wax Hook are mountain climbers and guides (Danielewski 81). Will's choice of companions reveals that the people most suited to explaining the

inscrutable space of the house are those who are accustomed to exploring the great outdoors, guiding people up Mount McKinley and through caves. They are experts on wilderness, not domestic, spaces. Furthermore, the space of the hallway is consistently compared to vast and unknowable natural spaces. For example, when Wax looks down the staircase that appears in the hallway and says, "It's so deep, man, it's like it's almost dream like," the narrator continues, "The last comment is actually not uncommon, especially for individuals who find themselves confronting vast tenebrific spaces. Back in the mid-60s, American cavers tacked the Sotano de las Golondrinas, an incredible 1,092 ft. hole in Mexico's Sierra Madre Oriental" (Danielewski 85). The analogy of the cave is apt because while a cave is a naturally occurring phenomenon, and a house a culturally-occurring one, the space of the hallway is resolutely interior, and Holloway despairs at his inability to find any "indication of an outsideness to that place" (Danielewski 119). The importance of this space's inherent fluidity and flexibility should not be underestimated though. Will's impulse to treat the house as a wilderness space emphasizes the mediation the space of the house continuously undergoes. It is impossible for the reader (and the inhabitants for that matter) to ascertain the "true" nature of the house because it is constantly being interpreted by Will, by the explorers, and further by the frame narrator(s). This text continuously reminds the reader that space is slippery and complex, and that in haunted houses, distinguishing between natural and domestic space is nearly impossible.

Also indicative of their organic (and dangerous) state is the fact that these houses seem to be endlessly hungry, in need of biological nourishment. The "House of Leaves" eats virtually all objects within its midst. In the hallway, the explorers quickly discover

that something is devouring their markers and food caches, and even their clothing and gear start to disintegrate. Will says, "'It looks like it's impossible to leave a lasting trace here" (162). The ingestion of objects within its walls is only a literal manifestation of the more important process of "feeding." The idea that haunted houses need to somehow gain nourishment from humans is a theme that is constant within the narratives. In House of Leaves, this tendency is explained in a footnote: "In his essay "Critical Condition" published in Simple Themes (University of Washington Press, 1995) Brendan Beinhorn declared that Will's house, when the explorers were within it, was in a state of severe shock. 'However, without them, it is completely dead. Humanity serves as its life blood. Humanity's end would mark the house's end" (134). The house even literally consumes some people (Holloway and Will's brother Tom). Humanity in general provides a necessary sort of nourishment for the house to survive. Colquitt and Walter explain a similar phenomena in The House Next Door. Like the description in House of Leaves, the house next door relies on humanity providing it with "primal vitality." Burnt Offerings works on the same principle, whereby the house feeds off the anger, pain, and deaths of the inhabitants (aside from Marian). In Rose Red, too, the house feeds off its inhabitants (which will be discussed in more detail shortly).

In Rose Red, The Amityville Horror, and Burnt Offerings the tie between domestic and wild space is less explicit but, nonetheless, there is a persistent conviction that these houses are alive and capable of acting on their own free will. Rose Red, for example, continues to expand long after Ellen Rimbauer and her carpenters have disappeared, as illustrated by two slides of the house, in which the current photo shows a much larger version of the sprawling Rose Red. The proverbial image of The Amityville Horror

house is the one in which the house is seen from a distance, red "eyes" glowing maliciously, as if the house itself is an animate being. Similarly, *Burnt Offerings* constantly reminds the reader that the house is coming "back to life." If haunted houses are lively, wilderness spaces, the question becomes: What do these texts have to say about the problem of wilderness? The answer to that question is highly ambiguous because these narratives are simultaneously demonstrative of a profound distrust of wilderness and an obsessive, even perverse, interest in its survival.

On the one hand, the hostility these texts portray toward wilderness spaces rivals that felt by early American pioneers, who believed that wild spaces were liable to induce immorality and wantonness in its inhabitants (Nash 24). The fear that the wildness of haunted houses will provoke its inhabitants to act wildly is actualized in these narratives when the characters eschew their emotional attachments in favor of physical violence and promiscuity. This idea emerges most explicitly in *The Amityville Horror* and *The House Next Door*, in which the characters are driven crazy by the house and undertake actions they would not even dream of normally. For example, in *The Amityville Horror* (the film version), ⁵⁷ the largest threat to the Lutz family is not the house, but rather the house's influence on George. While Kathy puts contact paper in the cupboards and unpacks, George falls prey to the malignant house. Through a series of real-life shots and dream sequences of George chopping wood maniacally with his ax, then sharpening that very ax obsessively, and finally standing over the bloody body of Amy, Kathy's youngest daughter, ax in hand, we see that the real menace involves the dangers and horrors of

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Unless otherwise noted, from now on when I refer to *The Amityville Horror*, I will be referencing the film. The book by the same title, written by Jay Anson, is "nonfiction" and therefore falls outside of the scope of my analysis of literary (and fictional) haunted houses because they treat haunted houses as verifiable, "authentic" episodes of supernatural activity, rather than focusing on their cultural implications. The film, on the other hand, while based loosely on the written text, is widely accepted as a fictional text.

domestic violence. George, who is seemingly mild-mannered and caring before he arrives at High Hopes, degenerates rapidly once the family moves in, snapping at the children, and eventually slapping Kathy across the face when she asks him to think about leaving. Of course, this argument could be reversed, and one could assert that the house is not the source of the problem at all, but rather that the existing familial tensions are simply projected onto the house, thus animating it.

Conflict between family members is a staple of haunted house narratives, and frequently the move into the house is premised on the hope that a new place will settle the prior problems. In *House of Leaves*, for example, Karen and Will are involved in a long dispute over his dangerous job as a photojournalist, and Karen hopes that the new move will help Will live a more regular life. In *The Amityville Horror*, the tensions are more pronounced because the family in question is blended. (The children are a product of Kathy's first marriage.) The idea seems to be that if they move into a new house as a family they will soon bond and become a true family. Yet, this is clearly not what happens, and it is no coincidence that when the fissure occurs, it is between those who are part of Kathy's biological family and the one who is related only on paper. The haunting of Amityville could therefore be read as an expression, even a fairly elaborate metaphor, for the sometimes violently difficult process of divorce, remarriage, and becoming a step-parent/step-child.⁵⁸

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⁵⁸ It is tempting to read the house in *House of Leaves* as another intricate psychological projection, especially since it is argued that the "house's mutations reflect the psychology of anyone who enters it" (165). This point of view comes from the frame narrative and the response of "some critics." The reader, however, knows that while the house might very well be a reflection of the self, the house has a startling material reality that kills and maims those who live within it. If it is a reflection of psychology, it is also something else too — something outside of the human.

The film itself resists this interpretation, however. The house is animated visually, as most sequences begin with an outside look at the house, the aforementioned red eyes, or windows, glowing. Furthermore, like the characters, the viewers are convinced that simply leaving the house will provide at least a partial resolution to the problem. (The tagline for the film is "For God's Sake Get Out!") The sense that things will be different somewhere else might be false, but there is a conviction within the text that this particular place is toxic, harmful, "haunted." This narrative's insistence that the house itself is responsible for the subject's problems reminds the viewer that though the subject and space may be linked they are not reducible to one another.

The House Next Door demonstrates the risks of living in a wilderness more overtly, since those who live in the house find themselves acting out in a particularly "wild" way. A series of examples will best illustrate this curious and revealing method of haunting. The first couple living in the house, Pie and Buddy Harralson, move out after Buddy is caught in a naked embrace with his male boss at the couple's housewarming party. Pie's father first sees the two, and he collapses from a heart attack, presumably induced by the shock of his son-in-law's behavior. Before that night, there is no indication that Buddy and his boss are not heterosexual. The second couple, the Sheehans, leave after Anita Sheehan catches her husband Buck having sex with their prim and proper neighbor, Virginia, once again in the house. Like Buddy, there is no indication that Virginia is anything but happy with her husband of many years. Anita descends into a catatonic state as a result of the shock. Even the narrator, Colquitt, almost has sex with the architect, Kim Dougherty, in the house; they are stopped only by the murderous rage of her previously kind, thoughtful, and calm husband. The final

couple's interaction with the house is less explicitly sexual but the most overtly violent. The Greenes give another ill-fated party where Norman Greene is humiliated when the entire neighborhood witnesses his daughter losing control of her bowels in the middle of the kitchen floor. The final act that dooms the Greenes occurs when Norman plans another party, this time for his university colleagues, and his wife Susan forgets to send out the Tiffany-engraved invitations. As a result, no one shows up for the party, and Norman is once again humiliated. That night, Susan shoots her husband, her daughter, and herself with a shotgun. Susan, of course, has shown no signs of violence before living in the house next door. The sexual nature of the house's actions emphasizes the link between the body and space, albeit hyperbolically, and more specifically, it shows how bodily space overwhelms intellectual reasoning. In other words, it shows just how much perceived space dominates conceived space within haunted houses.

Domestic Resistance

Each of these narratives revolves around the characters trying to create habitability, even though their environments are clearly un-habitable. For the most part, these efforts focus on domesticating the house, in one form or another. Like the desert-woman in Mary Austin's Lost Borders, the space of the haunted house resists these attempts. The plight of the inhabitant trying to create home and the ability of the house to resist the domesticating impulse points to the contradiction in these narratives that I have mentioned above — that readers and viewers want to see the inhabitants of the house survive (either by subduing the house or by leaving) and, at the same time, want the house to resist being dominated.

In *House of Leaves*, Will's response to the physics-defying space of the house is to explore and then quantify it, but Karen responds by trying to change the energy of the house using Feng Shui. Books on the subject appear, and she even purchases a number of "Feng Shui objects guaranteed to change the energy of the home" (Danielewski 62). Feng Shui attempts to change the energy created by space in order to make it more livable, comfortable, and healthy for its inhabitants. Karen's invocation of Feng Shui attests to her interest in making the house habitable for her family (as opposed to engaging in exploratory mystery-solving). Karen's practice of Feng Shui is a kind of Lefebvrian appropriation — she attempts to modify space to meet human needs, while still allowing the space to retain many of its original properties.

The house, however, reads Karen's attempt at appropriation as domination, and it reacts accordingly. If the house were not haunted, the appropriate placement of Feng Shui objects would constitute a sort of domestic ritual that, at the very least, would make the domestic space seem more pleasant and, ideally, create a sort of habitability. But because the house is haunted and animated, it does not have to respond like a blank page and accept the attempts to alter its nature. Instead of submitting to Karen's expectations and exuding harmonious energy, the house literally eats the Feng Shui objects (Danielewski 316). The literalization of the house's resistance to human needs and desires demonstrates its own status as an animate space that can "talk back." This example exposes the underlying assumption of domesticating space that space is an empty container just waiting for acts of settlement.

Haunted house narratives are organized around gendered space and traditional assumptions about spatial difference based on gender, so it is no coincidence that Karen

tries to domesticate the unruly house, while Will organizes an exploratory expedition. Men may explore and explain haunted houses, but women are ultimately responsible (within the narrative framework) for making the house livable and safe for the family. Karen's Feng Shui is primarily designed to make space safe, not to express anything in particular about herself or her culture (though, of course, it inevitably expresses cultural assumptions). It appeals to the primary function of the house as a secure shelter. Her response is to a specific spatial malady — even though there has not yet been a tangible threat from the inexplicably large closet, Karen recognizes the potentially menacing space. At first, though, she does not seem to perceive the danger as an actual threat to the safety of her family. Instead, she perceives of it as a threat to the domestic rituals that she hoped would help her family bond in their new house. The house effectively denies Karen the possibilities of domesticity producing a safe haven, a true home. Karen cannot meet spatial regulations for domesticity because the house is not a malleable space and cannot be tamed. Moreover, she is unable to use domestic ritual or domesticity to settle her house. Because Karen can do neither of these things, she is, in effect, punished by domesticity. In previous chapters, domesticity emerges as a method by which the subject can create a personal connection with space, but haunted houses show that this method of connection is ineffective if the space is not blank and open to appropriation.

Like Karen Green, Kathy of *The Amityville Horror* is presented with an impossible domestic situation. She is the first one to notice the unusual characteristics of the house. She comforts her son when his hand is caught in a window that mysteriously slams shut and just as mysteriously refuses to open. She tries (unsuccessfully) to cleanse the toilet of its inexplicable black tar, and she holds the children after George's temper

frightens them. Ultimately, though, Kathy is uninfluenced by the house's powers except in the way that the house influences George, which in turn influences her. Agency and the possibility of resisting the domestic powers of this house on any level are denied for Kathy. George, on the other hand, seems to absorb the house's malignant spirit, and at its (implicit) behest, threatens to kill his entire family. Like Karen, then, Kathy is put in an impossible position with regards to domesticity. Even if she were to successfully meet all dictates of domestic spatial regulations, it would not be enough. The house simply cannot be tamed and, regardless of how clean or well decorated it is, it would still try to kill its inhabitants. Like Karen Green, Kathy is presented with a domestic space that refuses to be inert or to mold itself to human needs.

The idea of domesticating space is especially appropriate for haunted houses, and not just because of the importance of domesticity to these narratives. These seemingly mundane moving-in rituals expose the dual nature of haunted houses (as simultaneously domesetic and natural space), but more importantly, they call into question the ethics of creating habitability in wilderness spaces. When domestication refers to domestic space, it indicates the process of making a home, but when it involves natural space, domestication is rife with negative connotations. Scholars often associate it with imperialism, colonialism, and environmental degradation. That is because when natural, "wild" space is domesticated, it generally means that it undergoes drastic transformation in the name of making it "safe" for those doing the domestication. This act also involves creating a home, but it does so at the expense of the natural features of the land, not to mention the human and nonhuman inhabitants. In the case of haunted

⁵⁹ See Freida Knobloch's *The Culture of Wilderness* and Donald Worster's *Nature's Economy*.

houses, both senses of domestication apply. The characters try to change the literal space by applying contact paper to shelves and hanging up pictures (as in *The Amityville Horror*) or by using Feng Shui. But the way the houses react — as "wild," natural spaces capable of protecting themselves — also gestures toward how the domestication of space can be synonymous with the domination of space.

If Karen and Kathy misread haunted houses as domestic spaces that are simply in need of a little home making (and are accordingly unsuccessful at producing habitability), the attempt to settle the wild space of the house is no more successful at creating habitability. Holloway responds to the conflation of house and wilderness by treating the space as unknown territory that needs to be discovered and eventually conquered. He sets out on their exploration by saying, "'We're taking pictures. We're collecting samples. We're trying to reach the bottom of the stairs. Who knows, if we do that then maybe we'll even discover something before Navidson starts all the hoopla involved with raising money and organizing large scale explorations" (Danielewski 94). From this quote we can glean not only Holloway's intentions to settle the house, but also see the similarity between his mindset and that of the pioneer discussed in the first chapter. The space itself sinks from view beneath Holloway's own desires, expectations, and ambitions. It transforms into conceived space before it even has a chance to be lived and perceived space. As a fictitious critic (Gavin Young) notes in the text, "Who could have predicted that those two words 'discover something' would prove to seeds to such unfortunate destruction?" (Danielewski 95). 60 Holloway's destruction is more personal

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⁶⁰ The "unfortunate destruction" refers to the fact that once in the house, Holloway becomes so determined to find something that he loses his mind. He wanders off with a loaded gun, doggedly pursuing the "monster" that growls and eats their supplies. Instead of finding a monster, though, he ends up accidentally

and literal, but as I argued in the first chapter, the pioneer mindset is inherently violent and destructive.

In A House Next Door, the attempted domestication of the house is more metaphorical than literal. Rather than trying to literally transform the space, the inhabitants try to tame and control the house by incorporating it into the self. Pie Harralson's description of her house demonstrates this principle. She explains, "I said, when my house is built, you're going to see the real me, you're going to see a side of your baby you didn't even know existed. And this house is me, but definitely" (Siddons 25). Her eerily cheerful prediction about her new modern house concisely shows that a house can be more than just a house. Pie assumes that the house is a magical mirror that reveals one's "true" identity, showing the world what is really going on inside the subject. She takes the idea of reflection one step further with her small italicized "is" which conflates her sense of self with the house and fluidly incorporates the house into her own identity. It is not simply an expression of her taste, her newfound freedom, or even her sizable economic power — the house is depicted as being Pie. It bolsters her identity and makes it public in a way that she is unable to do on her own. The house is domesticated via a warped anthropomorphism. Within the realm of the narrative, Pie's ability to subsume the house into her own identity is not a problem, nor is the idea that an essential self can be revealed, given the right medium. The house, however, is haunted, albeit in a peculiar way, and instead of passively accepting Pie's incorporation, the house reverses that relationship by infiltrating the subjects living within its walls and forcing them to act against their wills.

shooting Wax. Holloway Roberts never emerges from the hallway again, disappearing into the bowels of the house forever.

Thus, the house begins to incorporate the humans rather than vice versa. The second woman-of-the-house, Anita Sheehan, complicates the relationship of subjecthouse identification because unlike Pie, who tries to project her self onto the house and in turn incorporate the house into her self, the house takes an identify from Anita without giving anything in return. Anita tells the narrator, Colquitt, "I feel like it...needs me, sort of, to be at its best... I give it something... Usually a house gives you something — status, security, identity, or whatever. My house needs me to give it identity. It's a flattering feeling" (Siddons 135). Anita is enthralled with a relationship that she perceives as reciprocal. She thinks that she is able to identify with her house, and her house is able to identify with her. Her language undermines this idea, though, because of her use of the word "usually" which implies that her case is unusual, that in fact, she is not getting "status, security, [or] identity." The house's animation manifests itself in its ability to take from its inhabitants, even against their will, reversing the more traditional relationship in which the inhabitant is able to take whatever she needs from space. Furthermore, what the house needs is something that no mere object should ever need: an identity. The allegedly passive space becomes an active, animated being capable of identifying, rather than simply being identified with. In other words, the house cannot be domesticated through figurative means any more than it can be literally tamed.

The link between house and self, and more particularly house and female self emerges from Siddons's description of her work in Stephen King's *Danse Macabre*:

The haunted house has always spoken specially and directly to me as the emblem of particular horror. Maybe it's because, to a woman, her house is so much more than that: it is kingdom, responsibility, comfort, total

world to her...to most of us, anyway, whether or not we are aware of it. It is an extension of ourselves; it tolls in answer to one of the most basic chords mankind will ever hear. My shelter. My earth. My second skin. Mine. So basic is it that the desecration of it, the corruption, as it were, by something alien takes on a peculiar and bone-deep horror and disgust. It is both frightening and...violating, like a sly, terrible burglar. A house askew is one of the not-rightest things in the world, and is terrible out of all proportion to its actual visitant. (305)

Siddons identifies the horror of the haunted house in two particularly pertinent ways: first, haunted houses create an especially poignant horror for women, and second, haunted houses create horror because of the collision of house with self and thwarted ownership and control. Siddons asserts that the horror of haunted houses affects women differently when she invokes the traditional construction of separate spheres, whereby a woman is more attached to her home, literally and metaphorically, and therefore, when that home is threatened, the woman of the home is more distressed than her male counterpart. These narratives reaffirm Siddons's idea that the haunted house frightens women more than men, since women are the ones who are punished most severely for the disrupted domesticity. Her staccato repetition of "my" and "mine" emphasizes what is even more horrific than the victimization of women is the prospect that one's belongings might turn against the properly dominant party. The ability to own, and therefore control, a house, a space, is essential for well-being, according to Siddons. Siddons fuses "house" with "shelter," "earth," and finally the body ("second skin"). In so doing, she repositions the house from a "shelter" to the more intimate and corporal body; the house

metaphorically becomes part of the very body and being of its inhabitant. When the house becomes a "second skin," it literally becomes an "extension of ourselves" because it is materially attached to the body. While the body is certainly a problematic and complicated phenomenon, it still serves as a site for subjectivity and selfhood. The transformation from shelter to body is necessary because while one might argue that a shelter is not really owned, and further that the earth certainly should not be considered mere property, it is more difficult to make the case that a person does not own her own body or her own skin — and that it would indeed be disturbing if the body or skin turned against her. By the same token, however, this metaphorical conflation of the house and the self enacts a change that undermines the human ability to dominate and control the house because the house shifts from an object to a subject (this shift, however, is purely content based, as the grammatical structure remains stable throughout the passage). Though Siddons reiterates her belief in the possession of this subject, by dint of being a haunted house, we know that the house-self has eluded control and has become the dominator. The horror caused by a haunted house is a dual horror of the subversion of the owner-owned relationship as well as the self-body relationship.

The fact that all these characters are so wildly unsuccessful at their attempts to conquer the house brings me to one of the pleasures of haunted house texts — space always wins. Space's victory over the subject's misguided or plain mean-spirited attempts to control it is a welcome antidote to the too real fact that in daily life, space almost never wins. Wetlands are replaced by strip mall shopping centers, and McMansions spread with alarming speed. Forests fall, and national wildlife preserves are threatened with oil drills. Even older suburbs are not safe from the "development" of

new condominiums. In Lefebvrian terms, dominated space disproportionately overwhelms appropriated space, and even within Lefebvre's terms of analysis, there is no longer a space for wilderness, no matter how we define it. Eventually, it seems inevitable that all space will become dominated space. In the realm of haunted house narratives space can defend itself, and it can prevent the subject from dominating it. Space acts, in short, in much the same way as Austin's desert-woman does.

Haunted house texts reverse Western industrialized society's hierarchy of space deplored by Lefebvre, and in some ways, the haunted house can thus be read as a potential solution to the spatial problems Lefebvre describes. He spends a great deal of time discussing how the spatial triad of lived, perceived, conceived space is imbalanced, whereby conceived space continually dominates lived and perceived space. This domination leads to increasing fragmentation as well as the fracturing of the human body. Haunted houses turn the hierarchy upside down: lived and perceived space dominate conceived space. The space of blueprints, logic, language, and abstraction has little resonance here; it is subverted by perceived space. Conceived space is outwardly thwarted as the house acts upon its own logic and impetus. Thus, a common theme that echoes throughout haunted house narratives is that the inhabitants are "crazy" or "delusional" because they simply cannot believe their house is acting against all conceptions of how a house should act. Will of House of Leaves spends weeks and uses countless resources to try to ascertain how the inside measurements of his house are slightly larger than the outside ones. Conceived space will not coincide with lived and perceived space; that is, the undeniable reality of perceived space overwhelms conceived space, which is contrary to the way the spatial triad usually operates (Lefebvre 39).

While Lefebvre implies that shifting the emphasis to lived and perceived space will lead to a more livable space, in these narratives, the dominance of perceived space forecloses the possibility of a livable lived space. Lived space is less tangible than perceived space; it is not linked to the body nor is it entirely linked to the rational mind. Like perceived space, it is a space of everyday life, but unlike perceived space it is pervaded by the imagination, images, and symbols (although not verbal images and symbols). In haunted houses, lived space is dangerous, psychologically and physically. It is overtly hostile to those living within it. Lefebvre tells us that the solution to current spatial dilemmas is not a simple reversal of the spatial triad's hierarchy, and haunted houses illustrate why this is so.

In House of Leaves, The Amityville Horror, and The House Next Door, the subject reacts to this un-habitability by trying to resist or change the space of the house. This resistance can take the form of seeking a logical explanation or trying to "exorcise" the space via religion or particular decorating practices. When these attempts to dominate the space back into subservience fail, eventually the house must be left (House of Leaves and The Amityville Horror) or destroyed (The House Next Door). Even this final moment of resistance is impotent against the houses because, at the end of the narratives, the menace of the house remains even though the families have successfully escaped, or died destroying the house in the latter case. Readers of House of Leaves are told that the house still exists, although in the frame of the narrative, it is empty and presumably undisturbed. Still, the last image of the house is one in which everything looks normal, except for the front door mysteriously opening and closing. In the case of The Amityville

Horror, the last shot of the film is of the house, intact and standing, red eyes ablaze.⁶¹ While the "house next door" is presumably destroyed (killing Kim, Colquitt, and Walter in the process), the epilogue introduces the reader to a young, hopeful couple studying the blueprints of a young dead architect. The plans can only be Kim's, and the reader knows that the menace of the house next door is set to begin again.⁶² In short, resolution is nearly impossible within the genre.⁶³

Because these narratives foreclose the possibility of recuperation, or even destruction, of the house in question, habitability does not seem possible either. Haunted houses respond to their inhabitants's settlement practices violently, but given the cultural and historical implications of domestication, it is possible to interpret this violence as reactionary and defensive. To put it another way, the violence of the haunted house could be interpreted as a manifestation (and magnification) of the violence of habitability. The distinction between domination and appropriation is blurry in the best of circumstances, and haunted houses react similarly to both. They resist and reject change. According to this logic, haunted houses can actually be read as a sort of spatial revenge. They are spaces that are finally able to strike back and defend themselves against incursions and domination. Arguably, humans have been using and abusing space of all

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⁶¹ The "real-life" Amityville house still stands. Many other families have lived in it, without a trace of the disturbances experienced by the Lutzs.

⁶² I have said little about the origins of the haunting in any of these texts, partly because it is not essential to my analysis, and partly because each text provides an unconvincing and ambiguous explanation for the haunting. While in the more common haunted house narrative solving the "mystery" of the haunting is essential, in these narratives, the origins of the haunting are less important than the consequences. In the case of *The House Next Door*, it is concluded that the "evilness" of the house originates in the blueprints of Kim Dougherty, who is apparently a victim of a nameless, source-less curse that causes him to design killer-houses. Thus, when we see the couple looking at blueprints, we know that the curse lives on.

⁶³ The lack of resolution is in keeping with a similar tendency in horror genres. If the threat is not fully vanquished, it allows the threat of further horror to be sustained, not to mention the possibility of sequels.

kinds for quite some time, and these texts provide a venue in which space can actually defend itself.

The idea of wilderness spaces needing protection is particularly salient given the cultural ideas of wilderness surrounding the appearance of these texts. The kind of haunted house narratives I examine are all produced post-World War II, and half of them appear in the late 1970s. It was about this time that wilderness preservation efforts reached their zenith: preservation movements were increasingly effective at protecting natural space in the United States, and the number of people visiting National Parks was increasing. More important to haunted house narratives is the fact that a full-fledged "philosophy of the value of wilderness" had emerged by 1970 (Nash 317). Wilderness spaces were conceived of as much-needed respites from restrictive cultural norms, and they were protected accordingly. Haunted house narratives, if interpreted as enacting a sort of spatial revenge, are manifestations of this very impulse to protect wilderness.

As such, these texts are also presciently aware of the dangers — to wilderness — of trying to inhabit wilderness spaces. Wilderness haunted houses can be made habitable, but this habitability is even more horrifying for both space and the subject than un-livable space.

At Home in the Haunted House

My desire to read haunted houses as resisting the subject seems opposed to my desire to see subjects attain habitability. Spaces in which the subject is resisted too heavily are unhabitable for the subject, and subjects that resist space too much also find themselves in an unhabitable situation. Not all haunted house narratives depict a hostile relationship

between the subject and space though. The subject-space relationship that facilitates habitability resembles the ones seen in nature writing (discussed in the third chapter). To make haunted houses habitable, the subject must become exceptionally close to her space and accept, rather than resist, space. This sentiment echoes Austin's, Williams's, and Ehrlich's tendency to present the subject-space connection as intimate and bodily. As in the texts examined in the previous chapter, an essential characteristic of achieving habitability is an unmitigated respect, if not awe, for space. Unfortunately, in haunted house narratives, habitability is available only to a few characters, and it depends on the sacrifice of all other characters. The close connection with domestic space brings a measure of comfort, security, and happiness to the protagonist, but along with that comes horror and violence.

Stephen King's Rose Red, its companion text The Diary of Ellen Rimbauer, and Robert Marasco's Burnt Offerings show how animated space can provide some characters with a sense of empowerment and strength, provided these characters do not try to resist the space of the haunted house. Ellen Rimbauer (the original mistress of Rose Red) does not exactly find Rose Red habitable, even by the end of the text, but she becomes an ally to Rose Red's misdeeds. In this way, she is largely made safe from the violence of Rose Red (an option that is not available for those living in House of Leaves, High Hopes, or the "house next door"). Burnt Offerings takes collusion with the house a step further and shows how this acceptance, if taken far enough, can lead to a perverse habitability. The main character in Burnt Offerings reacts exactly as Lefebvre or any ecocritic would want her to react — she is humble in the face of her space, she tries to

read it on its own terms, and she respects and values the space around her. In return, she gets the affective experience of space that she deserves — habitability.

Ellen Rimbauer's reaction to Rose Red's impressive string of violence (including the disappearance of eighteen women and the death of five men) is atypical and demonstrates a unique approach to trying to gain habitability within animated space. Instead of objecting to the tendency of her house to eat her party guests and family members, Ellen becomes "friends" with the house. In the process, she harnesses some of its power. Early in the text, there is the suggestion that Ellen is more than willing to become a part of the house itself. Of building and furnishing the house, she explains, "Now, finally, the project can consume us both! I have become a part of that great house that owns so much of my dear husband. I feel myself inside its walls. He enters me. He resides in me" (Reardon 34). Ellen is consumed and her body merges with the house itself. At first she is just inside its walls, but then she quickly becomes the walls themselves as her husband "enters" and "resides" in her. Initially she aligns herself with the other women in the text who are permanently inside the house, ⁶⁴ but quickly she gains a more powerful position by identifying even more closely with space. Explicit sexual connotations aside, this passage reveals an early willingness to fuse her own body with the "body" or structure of the house. As with previous narratives, Ellen's connection to Rose Red is intensely personal, so much so that the house becomes a part of Ellen's sex life with her husband. Rose Red takes over not just Ellen's mind but her body too. In numerous later passages, Ellen admits that she is beginning to "understand" Rose Red and that she listens to what Rose Red is saying (Reardon 155). While the identification

When Rose Red takes women, it is suggested that they are not dead but living out their lives permanently enclosed in the houses walls.

with Rose Red is not ever fully realized, the boundary between the house and Ellen is increasingly blurred. For example, when Ellen describes Rose Red's voice, she admits that it is "A voice I heard utter from my own mouth" (Reardon 178). In return for Ellen's friendship, Rose Red occasionally eats women who are troublesome in one way or another to Ellen. Women, for example, who are having affairs with Ellen's husband, John, are apt to disappear into Rose Red's walls.

Instead of running away from Rose Red in horror, Ellen becomes part of the house itself. This move is simultaneously empowering and disempowering. Ellen willingly embraces the conflation of her body with the house, without understanding that she is reinforcing her own exploitation and objectification. Lefebvre notices the tendency for the female body to become an "exchange value" or a "commodity" within abstract space (310), and Ellen's metaphorical conversion turns her into a literal piece of property (a house) that is legally owned by her husband. Without being explicitly conscious of this dynamic, she resists and resents Rose Red, but she too disappears into the walls in 1950, consummating the eternal bond with Rose Red. What is important about this narrative is that it subverts the hostility between house and inhabitant present in most haunted house narratives. Instead, the house's wildness, seemingly, is used by and for women, who are the victims (within the narrative) of an unjust system of oppression and wrongdoing. Unfortunately, even though Ellen's affective experience of Rose Red is distinct from the characters in the previously analyzed haunted house texts, she is still victimized by the animated haunted house.

In Burnt Offering, a less conflicted (though no less problematic) habitability emerges. Marian shows a healthier, less proprietary attitude toward the house from the

moment that she begins exploring it. When she finds it filled with extraordinary antiques, she muses, "To be able to live with something so beautiful — not own, merely live with, for a month, two months. *God*" (Marasco 35, italics original). While Dale Bailey makes a compelling argument that it is a sort of domestic greed that makes Marian so profoundly attached to the summer house (73), the above statement undermines that contention because Marian is content to simply be around the house and its beauty. She does not want to own or change the house; she just wants to appreciate and nurture it back to "life." Like the ideal spatial dweller, she values and respects the space. Quickly she is granted the reward of an intense experience of peace and security. She discovers the central room in the house, from which a mysterious hum emanates. It becomes her "sanctuary" (214), her "grace" (190), and her access to complete "peace and isolation" (150). Marian's connection to the house, which is also intensely close, is clearly spiritual, if not religious, in character.

Marian finds habitability because, for her, the house offers all that it promises — physical, emotional, and psychological safety and happiness. She is happy to merge with the house. Echoing the sentiments seen in *The House Next Door*, the house is frequently referred to as part of her, as an extension of herself, and as a "reflection of what she was or could be inside, at her best" (77). The house, in other words, acts just as it should according to Winifred Gallagher's formulation of ideal domesticity. It enriches Marian's

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⁶⁵ In the context of the novel, this central room is supposed to be where Old Mrs. Allardyce lives. Marian and her family are able to afford to rent the lavish house for the summer because Marian agrees to provide daily meals for Mrs. Allardyce who never, ever leaves her room. Though Marian brings her meals every day, she never once sees or hears Mrs. Allardyce, although occasionally a small amount of food has been eaten.

⁶⁶ It is no coincidence that the room is in the center of the house, implicitly acting as the "heart" of the structure. The fact that the house is itself an organic body is thus emphasized.

life, and she is able to find complete satisfaction in the daily domestic rituals of dusting and cleaning and arranging it. Through Marian, the house literally comes to life and in turn, through the house, Marian figuratively comes to life. Before she came to this house she was uncomfortable and unhappy, but in this house, she is at home, in every sense of the word. It even works to help coalesce Marian's shaky identity because once she is living and caring for the house, she is able to realize her full potential, access her "true" and "essential" self. Eventually, she becomes so integrated with it that she becomes the life force of the house itself. This feat is accomplished through a rather strange process of Marian entering the room with the mysterious hum and seating herself in the chair that's waiting for her: "She clutched the arms of the chair and felt the force of the hum not outside herself but in her, issuing forth and driving itself into the house and grounds, all the way down to the smallest bits of crystal, the tenderest green shoot" (259). Marian's unification with the house is not that distinct from the mystical sense that the difference between self and (natural) space has dissolved that is so prominent in a certain type of nature writing (Phillips 185).

Marian's habitability is troubling, however. Up to this point, I have conceived of habitability as an individual relationship to space, and I have assessed it at least partly based on the affective content of character's relationship to space. Thus, I have judged Florella Sibthorpe as having habitability and Mary Clavers as not having it because Florella felt more of an affective connection with her space than did Clavers. Another attribute I used to evaluate habitability was the individual character's attempts to dominate versus appropriate the space. All of Stegner's characters use writing to try to dominate space in some capacity, whereas Kirkland's characters began to appropriate

space, especially in *Forest Life*. Throughout my analysis, the subject's misreading of space hinders his ability to make space habitable. Hence, in *House of Leaves*, *The Amityville Horror*, and *The House Next Door*, habitability is unavailable because the subjects continue to misread space as inanimate, and when the space refuses to conform to those conceptions, the characters respond by further trying to dominate the space.

Burnt Offerings exposes the dangers of considering habitability solely as an individual phenomenon. Marian, as an individual, is able to attain habitability, according to my above definition. She clearly has an affective connection with the house and feels herself utterly at home in a way that transcends Clavers's home-feeling. She reads the space accurately, and she accepts the space rather than trying to dominate or appropriate it. I find this habitability disturbing though because this narrative is just as violent as all of the other ones. Marian takes responsibility for the reinvigoration of the house, continually saying, "[the house] was alive, all around her it was alive, and how else had it come but through her?" (Marasco 214), but the actual source of "life" in the house is much more sinister. It is true that the house is regenerating itself. The old shingles are shed and shiny, new ones appear in their place, that the sidewalk by the pool heals its cracks and fissures, and that even the greenhouse fills itself with elaborate flowers. The source of the regeneration, the reader knows, is the misfortune, pain, and even death of the other inhabitants of the house. For example, the sidewalks by the pool are refurbished only after Marian's husband, Ben, inexplicably almost drowns their young son David in the pool in a session of roughhousing gone awry. The greenhouse explodes into blossoms after Elizabeth, Ben's healthy (albeit elderly) aunt, dies of unknown causes. In other words, just like the other haunted houses, this one feeds off the pain and

misery of the inhabitants. Marian knows all of this, but manages to deny it and its implications nonetheless. Her final fusing with the house is facilitated by the drowning of her husband and son in the pool, which she watches impotently from inside the house. Both Ellen and Marian have habitability at the end of these texts, but their narrative shows that it is essential to consider the wider ramifications of individual habitability.

Haunted Habitability

Habitability, much to my own horror, is haunted by at least some metaphoric, if not literal, violence. Granted, haunted houses provide an exaggerated version of this violence, but they also reveal the complications involved in settling less supernatural space. Humans living in a space cannot avoid changing that space and are constantly in danger of not "saving" the space, to return to Heidegger's term. Building, decorating, remodeling, designing, even low impact camping, affect space and thus can be interpreted as dominating space. On the other hand, affecting or changing space is not necessarily violent, or at least there are degrees of the violence; it is only violent and counter to habitability if the subject changes space in a way that is based on a fundamental misreading of space. Even if the subject heeds Heidegger's injunction to save space, a reading of haunted house narratives and contemporary nature writing shows that the most well-intentioned subject often is unable to prevent damaging space on some level.

That said, responses to space cannot be entirely rid of violence and domination, but some relationships to space certainly save space more than others. For example, Holloway's efforts to settle the house through exploration saves space less than Karen's

deployment of Feng Shui or Pie's "house-as-me" theory. They all attempt to create a livable, habitable space, but Karen and Pie are less intent upon gaining control and dominance over space. Karen and Pie try to domesticate the house, and we can read that as a metaphorically violent act, in that it attempts to change and alter a space, but Holloway's pioneering ways are much more destructive.

The temptation to read Holloway's exploitation more critically than Karen's domestication reveals assumptions about how the reader recognizes and assesses violence. Literal domestic space (as opposed to the ideological domestic space), outside the world of literature and film, is inanimate, and as inanimate, is not harmed by a person hanging pictures on the wall or dusting or painting. Even the most vehement housekeeper does not actually hurt the house, though the inhabitants of the house may be a different story. The possibility of habitability may be endangered by too much attention to the conceived space of spatial regulations, but again, the space itself is not threatened. This is not the case with natural space. Though it is controversial to claim that natural space is itself animated, it is filled with live beings, animate and inanimate. The attempts to dominate natural space are harmful on a number of levels, most immediately to the natural beings occupying the space in question and more largely to the ecosystem as a whole. Judging an action as violent is premised on the idea that something or someone is harmed by the act in question; if this is not the case, the action cannot be deemed violent. Haunted house narratives show that it is essential not to think about violence solely based on the issue of harm to space, but rather to think about the violence involved in misreading space.

The violence in the subject-space relationship haunted house narratives exposes a number of assumptions about a "healthy" relationship between the subject and space, particularly for the subject and natural space. Haunted houses undermine many of these assumptions, and that is why it is so disturbing to find that the subjects in haunted house narratives who find habitability do so by using the same methods as those who are looking for habitability in nature writing texts (for example, fostering an intense personal and spiritual connection with space). Exploring place attachment in light of what we have learned through our analysis of haunted house narratives shows that place attachment cannot remain a privileged term that indicates a healthy and productive relationship between the subject and space. At the same time, it is important to remember that nature writers only imagine that they merge with space, whereas characters in haunted house narratives literalize this connection. The harm done by the former is likewise imaginary, and therefore not nearly as problematic.

Given the potential violence of producing habitability, I find myself facing the unfortunate realization that sometimes it is ethically preferable *not* to create habitability. I read haunted house narratives as commentaries on the problems of inhabiting wilderness spaces, and if we learn anything from these narratives, it is that humans should leave these spaces alone. Granted, characters leave haunted houses (and readers and viewers cheer) to save themselves, but at another level, readers and viewers also cheer because the haunted house is not fully vanquished. Though haunted house narratives may not set out to save space, often this is an unintended consequence. At the end of these texts, the characters have no choice but to accept space as it is — dangerous and unknown — and treat it accordingly. The reality of unlivable space is a bit

distressing, but the production of a habitability that literally destroys other people is even more problematic.

The tension between individual and communal habitability resonates throughout each chapter, and whether individual habitability forecloses the possibility of communal habitability at least partially dictates how I evaluate different models of habitability. For example, in Stegner's Angle of Repose, Lyman's habitability produces strictly gendered, oppressive space, and thus is un-habitable for his female counterparts. In Morrison's Paradise, the racially-oriented habitability undermines the possibility of habitability for women. Austin's Lost Borders once again foregrounds the competitive nature of habitability and shows how one kind of habitability excludes other types. Haunted house narratives take this tension to the extreme, pitting characters against space and each other in the quest for habitability. Haunted house narratives compel the conclusion that unlivable space is preferable to habitable space in some situations.

Habitability, at its best, is replete with emotional warmth. The idea that the subject can have an intimate, healthy, non-violent relationship to space is appealing. Habitability, as revised by haunted house narratives, is much less comforting but ultimately a much more productive and realistic way of relating to space. At the beginning of this project, I, like a number of other scholars working in the broad field of place in literature, assumed that an individual, affective connection between the subject and space would necessarily lead to habitability. Further, I assumed that it was both desirable and possible to form a relationship between the subject and space that was not violent or aggressive in any way; I thought that power dynamics could be removed from the subject-space relationship if space were properly interpreted. I thought that

habitability would be, ultimately, the portrait of a healthy subject-space relationship. I believed that the warm, comfortable connection between a subject and space was indicative of habitability.

Haunted house narratives have forced me to revise habitability to include a communal, as well as an individual, connection to space. Haunted houses help redefine the concept of habitability by showing that it is not possible to remove violence, power dynamics, and aggressiveness from the subject-space relationship. An individual bond with space is not enough to counter environmentally destructive habits, and it may even contribute to the destruction of space. If the strength of habitability is its affective warmth and its implication of a comforting subject-space relationship, then these characteristics may be its weakness as well. Haunted house narratives articulate what the previous chapters have suggested — that an ethical habitability sometimes requires the sacrifice of the emotional and psychological comforts of home.

CONCLUSION

This project begins with an attempt to stage a conversation between three (seemingly) related fields: ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and space theory. All three, after all, are concerned generally, with the environment, and more particularly with how the subject relates to the environment. Space theorists like Henri Lefebvre, Martin Heidegger, Michel de Certeau, and Gaston Bachelard voice the anxiety that abstractions are smothering everyday, lived space, and they attempt to find ways that the mundane can be (re)instated as valuable. Ecocritics express a similar fear when they worry that abstraction and the need to master nature is leading to the destruction of the earth and its resources. The novelists and essayists ecocritics favor (e.g. Annie Dillard, Edward Abbey, and Henry David Thoreau) lend themselves to spatial analysis, since they clearly ask the same questions as space theorists. How can the subject create sustainable relationships to space? How should the subject negotiate space in the face of the massive changes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? What is the role of the personal, the emotional, and the corporeal in the subject-space relationship? How can the subject make a home in a time and place that seemed so plagued with spatial crisis and dysfunction?

Though the final question was the most important to me at the beginning of my analysis, I was reticient to even use the term "home" in critical analysis. Home was the site of classist, gendered privilege. Home was retrograde, conservative, and nostalgic. Like the critics that Susan Fraiman speaks of, I thought that "houses — people inside houses, practices sponsored by houses — [were] somehow inherently bourgeois and

suspect" (350). More accurately, I thought that I should think like those critics, especially since I had internalized ecocritical assumptions about home and place attachment that had clear limitations. Home, for ecocritics, means stability, connectedness with a particular place, groundedness. Home does not necessarily entail a house, but it necessitates a specific location. Implicitly, this meant that a certain amount of privilege accompanied the concept, since staying in one place suggests economic stability.

Despite my misgivings, texts that contemplated the formation of home continued to be provocative. Caroline Kirkland's *A New Home—Who'll Follow?* formed the key departure point. Kirkland's narrator Mary Clavers spent most of her time trying to find what she called the "home-feeling," and in many ways, her definition of home confirmed my worst assumptions about the term. But Kirkland supplemented Clavers's idea of home with other, alternative definitions of home that subverted Clavers's own ideology. Writing home, it seemed, provided a means to re-evaluate, revise, and experiment with space and the subject's relation to space. Writing home could transform space in a way that benefited the subject psychologically, emotionally, and socially. Linking Kirkland with Michel de Certeau produced the central term of my analysis: habitability.

Habitability allowed me to interrogate home, without using the troubling term itself. Yet, in spite of my rather considerable efforts to avoid it, "home" guided my analysis: most of my chapters revolved around examining how characters used that very term. What these texts revealed, though, countered my apprehensions that home necessarily meant middle-class domesticity and all that that entails. Wallace Stegner's Lyman Ward certainly reinforced the most restrictive ideas of home, using domestic

space to force female characters into his preconceived notions of gender, but Sarah Orne Jewett, Marilynne Robinson, and Toni Morrison redefined home by unmooring it. They did not dismiss the desire for a place to call one's own. They did not reject the idea of refuge. But they did change the site and dominant paradigms for what refuge might mean. They used metaphors to transform the home spaces given to them; they offered new definitions of home than the ones I had previously considered. To a certain degree, their ideas of home (especially Jewett's) were still enmeshed in class privileges. These novels, however, offered alternatives to making a choice between home and instability. They offered me the freedom not to have to choose between being theoretically and ideologically naïve and nostalgic and ignoring my textual concerns because they redefined the terms of habitability.

As the project proceeded, the texts I read challenged my ecocritical and ecofeminist frameworks. Ecocriticism and ecofeminism assume that a healthy subject-space relationship is both desirable and possible. As mentioned in the third chapter, health means that the subject respects space, and appropriates (not dominates) space. The ideal subject-space relationship minimizes violence and power struggles; the subject does not try to control space. Inter-relatedness replaces hierarchies in the ideal subject-space relationship. I thought that since fluid gender roles were in keeping with ecofeminism, habitability would emerge as a result of flexible gender roles. In short, I confused habitability with the ideal subject-space relationship, collapsing the two to the point that I believed that habitability would only appear for subjects who related to space in the way that I viewed as ethically appropriate.

The problems with my conflation of habitability with a utopian subject-space relationship came to light in my third chapter when I started studying nature writing. If this ideal habitability appeared anywhere, it would be in texts dedicated to the production of healthy subject-space relationships. Frustration ensued shortly after beginning this chapter because I realized that none of the texts I analyzed could meet my expectations. I found myself repeating phrases like "Habitability is impossible," "She almost creates habitability but..." and "Sustainable habitability is still unachieved." Those phrases peppered my earlier chapters, too. I resisted the obvious conclusion about this dilemma for an excruciatingly long time, writing page after page on different novels and essay collections — Edward Abbey, Mary Oliver, Linda Hogan, Margaret Atwood, Sue Hubbell, Barry Lopez, Nathaniel Hawthorne. None of them achieved habitability as I saw it.

Rereading Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* I realized that habitability was practical, not ideal. My analysis of Kirkland, Stegner, Jewett, Morrison, Robinson, Austin, Williams, and Ehrlich, and the haunted house narratives makes it clear that pragmatism, rather than ideology (usually) dictates habitability. Livability, not perfection, is the objective of the characters in these texts. Even when the characters intend to engage in an idealistic relationship with space, as in chapter three, the resulting subject-space relationship is still problematic in many ways. Each character modifies space to make it habitable. The demands of everyday life often subvert ideals. The strength of reading literature to explore how characters makes space their own is that exposes the messiness of the process. The struggle to create habitability is unflinchingly personal, problematic, and individualized.

Carson's work embraces a similar philosophy. She illustrates the practical aspects of revising the subject's actions toward space by appealing to a wide variety of uses of nature. She does not try to get the subject not to be anthropocentric or to question the idea that human interests are inherently more valuable than nonhuman nature's interests. Instead, she focuses on making her appeals relevant to the widest possible audience. She frames her plea for a change in the way the United States approaches the widespread use of chemicals in terms of safety and rights, two values designed to convince the average reader that natural space should be protected:

We have subjected enormous numbers of people to contact with these poisons, without their consent and often without their knowledge. If the Bill of Rights contains no guarantee that a citizen shall be secure against lethal poisons distributed either by private individuals or public officials, it is surely only because our forefathers, despite their considerable wisdom and foresight, could conceive of no such problem. (12)

Carson neglects to mention that nonhuman nature suffers from the spread of poisons. She underscores the effects of chemicals on humans. Referring to the founding fathers allows Carson to imply that the use of chemicals is somehow unpatriotic as well as dangerous. The idea that pollution violates the integrity of the body, thus encroaching upon the self as an individual, emerges again when she argues that every citizen should know about pesticides because we are "eating and drinking them, taking them into the very marrow of our bones" (17). Carson's contention converges perversely with Gretel Ehrlich's idea of eating space. Both observe the inherent closeness of human and nonhuman nature. But Ehrlich emphasizes this connection as a way of bolstering a

(broken) subject, whereas Carson invokes this relationship to instill fear in her reader insofar as space itself has become poisonous. The relation to Williams is also apparent since saving self necessitates first saving space.

Even when Carson discusses the effects of pollution on nonhuman nature, she puts her observations in the context of how natural space serves as a site for recreation. She often appeals, for example, to duck hunters and backyard bird watchers (45), fisherman and gardeners and explorers. Carson reminds her reader that we have a "legitimate right" to the "pleasure" nature affords (86). Her argument is most convincing when she asks:

Does Indiana still raise any boys who roam through woods or fields and might even explore the margins of a river? If so, who guarded the poisoned area to keep out any who might wander in, in misguided search for unspoiled nature? Who kept vigilant watch to tell the innocent stroller that the field he was about to enter were deadly — all their vegetation covered with a lethal film? (Carson 127)

Childhood (boyhood particularly) Carson tells her reader, should be a time of innocence and freedom. The playful exploration of natural space embodies those very values, and the contamination of that natural space not only deprives children of their innocence but potentially threatens more basic rights like health and safety. Under this formulation, natural space becomes an object that is only valuable insofar as it serves humans.

Carson uses nonhuman nature and natural space in this manner because she knows that it will work. It will achieve her purpose, which is to convince the public that something must be done about the unbridled use of chemicals. Carson does not need to

change people's general conceptions about nature as much as she needs to convince them that if something does not change, their lives will be negatively impacted. She appeals to lived and perceived, not conceived, space. Judging by the reception of her book, this appeal was successful and enough people were convinced that chemicals were being used irresponsibility to take concrete action. Carson's clear emphasis on practical, rhetorical approaches to a spatial crisis echoes the models of habitability that emerge in each chapter. Carson offers more than a rhetorically savvy approach to environmental problems, though. She reminds us that even imperfect models of habitability cannot create sustainable subject-space relationships.

Carson, along with the texts that constituted each chapter, helped me redefine habitability so that it was no longer a goal or an endpoint. This conclusion displaces space theorists, especially Henri Lefebvre, because he contends that a new space is needed to solve current problems. These texts suggest that instead, a new subject-space relationship will lead to improved spatial and social conditions. The revised approach to the subject-space relationship focuses less on stability and permanence and more on flexibility and adaptation. Some of the emotional, psychological, and physical comforts of home are rejected in favor of continual revision and rebuilding.

The realization that habitability did not require social, emotional, and ecological perfection did not negate my concern about the ethical implications of the subject's relationship with space. As a critical reader, I found myself evaluating the models of habitability produced in each chapter. The comparison of Kirkland and Stegner forces us to consider the moments when the desire for habitability might override someone else's potential for habitable space. For example, Lyman's desire for power causes him to

denigrate the feminine to the point that women would find his habitable space very unhabitable. Jewett, Morrison, and Robinson trouble the ideals of home and point out that these ideas are embedded in power relations. Likewise, Austin, Williams, and Ehrlich's nature writing forces the reader to remember how space is impacted by the process of creating habitability. Finally, the fourth chapter shows how unlivability is sometimes preferable to habitability, particularly when the violence enacted by habitability is greater than the discomfort caused by un-habitable space. Though part of me wished to take on the persona of an objective describer, an impassive observer, and therefore to simply describe habitability as it appears in a series of texts, I felt disingenuous when I distanced myself too much from the text and the kinds of habitabilities that they generated.

At stake in my divided persona is the larger question of the role of the literary critic and scholar. Carson's work again proves helpful because she counters ecocritics's and Lefebvre's concern that literature opposes lived space by showing how literature interacts with and resides within lived space (and not merely in the descriptive way that Lefebvre describes). Heidegger highlights this idea when he talks about the poet's relation to dwelling in "...Poetically Man Dwells...": "Does not all dwelling remain incompatible with the poetic?" he asks. "It is the way of poets to shut their eyes to actuality. Instead of acting, they dream. What they make is merely imagined. The things of imagination are merely made" (211; 212). The unspoken part of Heidegger's argument is the common assumption that dwelling, which deals with space, is not "merely made" or "imagined" and that space has a reality, a physical and tangible existence, that imagining does not. Of course, Heidegger dismantles this dichotomy and concludes that dwelling is not opposed to poetry but poetry instantiates dwelling.

This tension reappears again and again, long after Heidegger's conclusion. It turns up in Lefebvre's work, in ecocriticism, in ecofeminism, and even in the texts that I study in this project. They all ask: How does reading and writing about space change the way the subject inhabits it? Ecocriticism, and to a certain degree ecofeminism, takes this a step further and suggests that literary scholars are ethically obligated to use their academic work to help save (natural) space and counter environmental destruction. Given the relationship between the literary and habitability that emerges in this study, however, what role should literary scholars play in saving space? At stake in this question are the ethics of scholarship, academia, and being a critical reader for a living.

Carson's work, textually and extra-textually, collapses the distinction between concrete action and reading. On the one hand, *Silent Spring* illustrates the most predictable idea of how a book might work to save space: it informs and persuades the reader, and then the reader takes concrete action. Carson acts as a "mobilizing messenger" who gives readers the necessary information allowing them to "demand greater responsibility, more information, new legislation, enforcement, or other voluntary controls, from those in government or industry, not to mention modifying their own behavior" (Murphy 32). But the idea of concrete action gets complicated by the fact that reading merges with "doing." While direct action did sometimes result from reading Carson's text, more frequently "action" meant passing the book or article to another person so that she could act (Murphy 175). Taking action meant reading, and vice versa. Reading and passing along reading material collapsed with more direct forms of action. Carson offers a model of how reading, writing, and acting are complementary, not competitive or opposed.

As academics, critics, scholars, and readers, we need to follow Carson's lead and quit thinking about our work, which is inherently reading-dependent, as distinct from spatial action and consequences. This suggestion is aimed especially at ecocriticism. (Recall the image from Glotfelty's introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader* of the ecocritical scholar straddling the presumed abyss between literature and the earth.) The way Kirkland, Jewett, Robinson, Morrison, Austin, Williams, and Ehrlich produce habitability presents a model for an interdependent, complementary relationship between the literary and space. The characters in all of these texts use writing to question space, to revise it, and to experiment with diverse spatial configurations. Stegner, Austin, Morrison, and haunted house narratives use writing to realign spatialized power dynamics; Kirkland, Jewett, and Robinson use it to redefine the site and definition of home. The characters in these works use writing to shift the balance of the spatial triad in a way that meets the needs of its inhabitants. As critics, we can use our own writing to do the same thing.

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