

TRESPASSING WOMEN: REPRESENTATIONS OF PROPERTY AND IDENTITY
IN BRITISH WOMEN'S WRITING 1925 - 2005

by

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Dedication

To Ann Cobb, Teresa Noell, and Sonja Adams, who cultivated my early love of literature,

To my grandparents, who instilled in me a sense of fairness,

And to my parents, Jackie and Jane McDaniel, whose hard work and dedication have made me who I am today.

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Trespassing Women: Representations of Property and Identity
in British Women's Writing 1925 – 2005

ABSTRACT

by

JAMIE LYNN MCDANIEL

This dissertation examines novels for spatial and temporal practices, what I call “tactics of trespassing,” used by twentieth- and twenty-first-century women writers Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, Penelope Fitzgerald, Margaret Drabble, Hilary Mantel, and Jeanette Winterson to re-imagine established constructions of national and gender identity and its relation to property. I focus on property’s ability to enable or to prevent particular identity formations and chart the responses of modern British women writers to the ways that legal, political, and economic treatises have historically rendered property ownership in terms of the masculine. As a result, these discourses have defined feminine propriety through property’s inaccessibility for women. In novels by these writers, I discern a preoccupation with “looking back,” a process through which authors revisit narratives of national and gender identity—narratives that did not account for or represent particular sections of the British public—for the goal of redefining what, as a result of this absence, was defined as properly “British” for a woman. The specific sites through which these works look back are incarnations of property. By enacting new narratives of identity that challenge the propriety of traditional accounts, contemporary women writers aim to stake

a claim for a place within the current British body politic. Through their tactics of trespassing upon grounds of property and propriety defined by masculine society, in other words, these writers show how traditional constructions of national and gender identity are essential but insufficient for marginalized groups to understand their relationship to and position within Britain. By showing how these writers establish a degree of plurality and creativity in their intellectual heritage, this dissertation disputes the claims of British property discourses that assert to represent the whole of British society. My approach investigates contemporary novels that current studies of British identity often neglect and combines the idea of looking back with examinations of property in order to draw together two strands in British Studies previously considered in isolation.

Introduction: Narratives of Identity, the Gender Propriety of Property, and Tactics of Trespassing

In 1816 British poet Lord Byron's wife Anne Isabella "Annabella" Milbanke¹ left him after six months of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. Even as early as her honeymoon, Annabella had described Byron's behavior as being "so alarming & cruel as disposed me several times to make my escape." Taking their month-old daughter with her, Annabella withdrew² from him after fifty-four weeks of marriage and wrote, "If ever I should be fool enough to be persuaded to return, I shall never leave his house alive" (qtd. in Hay 129). However, she could not seek a legal separation on her own. Instead, her father had to sue Byron for breach of marriage contract, claiming damage to property (his daughter) entrusted to Byron and accompanied by a large sum of money (the dowry). Annabella could take only this course of action because she did not exist in the eyes of the law as a separate and independent legal entity apart from her husband or her father. The suit for separation, therefore, took place between two men who had negotiated the marriage contract, a strategic exclusion that shifted the balance of power toward men.

Annabella's story, which can be read as a woman's story *sui generis*, did not end with her as a victim of an unfair legal system. Legally disadvantaged because of her sex, she nevertheless developed ways to manipulate that same legal system. For example, after leaving Byron and traveling to London, Annabella, with the assistance of Byron's spurned lover Lady Caroline Lamb, spread rumors about Byron that included accusations of incest with his half-sister Augusta Leigh, marital violence, and sodomy. Annabella

¹ Though the history of her name is complicated by inheritances her father received and by her marriage, I will refer to her as "Annabella" for the sake of clarity.

² According to Ashley Hay, Lord Byron did not even know that Annabella had left him for at least another two weeks (125).

also called Byron's mental fitness into question and had several doctors examine him. An account of the doctors' visits began to circulate throughout London. In short, Annabella used the creation of a narrative to engage tactically with the law that sought to exclude her on the basis of her sex. In order to regain equity in their divorce proceedings, she tapped into an identity narrative that cast Byron as belonging to a particular category of man: the maniacal, out-of-control husband.³ Regardless of the veracity of the facts, this narrative eventually forced Byron to sign, against his will, the Deed of Separation and to grant many requests that otherwise would not have been open to discussion.

This infamous incident calls into question the ways that traditionally marginalized groups such as women respond to their legal, economic, and political marginalization, especially given the historical determination by men of a woman's proper societal and legal role. How does a group that by definition is not part of an official system confront that exclusion and acquire agency? The most striking element of Annabella's story is the model of change she pursued to develop equality with her husband, through the act of narrative creation. Instead of traditional forms of public social activism, which involve large organized groups and seek to develop long-term official changes to social, cultural, and political institutions and ideologies, Annabella took a more tactical, localized approach. For Annabella, the exploitation of narrative became a kind of subversive act consisting of subtle tactics of resistance and private practices meant to negotiate the system without becoming consumed by it and losing her sense of self. However, the persistent view that saw women as property lay at the core of Annabella's problem and served as a catalyst for her narrative creation. Byron's categorization as a "maniacal

³ After the passage of laws during the second half of the nineteenth century, Byron's actions would have excluded him from the privileges of coverture, if hers were found to be just and accurate charges.

husband” presented an interesting counterpoint to the common practice of dismissing women’s calls for equal property and marital rights on the grounds of mental unfitness. For example, several Victorian-era medical treatises argued that women were prone to hysteria and, therefore, lacked the composure and self-possession necessary to be afforded the same rights as men.⁴ Though the legal status of women underwent major changes from 1857 to 1925, this long-held view remains part of the British intellectual heritage. This dissertation, then, focuses on the identity-bestowing characteristic of property and charts the responses of modern British women writers to the ways that legal, political, and economic treatises have historically rendered property ownership in terms of the masculine.

The year 1925 was important for laws concerning property in the United Kingdom. In the Introduction to the “Review of Legislation, 1925” from the 1927 volume of the *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, F. P. Walton writes, “Of all the multifarious enactments of the year [of 1925] the group of Acts which have placed the English law of property upon an entirely new footing may well be considered the most important” (xxviii). Seven acts in 1925 affected the conveyance, inheritance, and ownership of property: the Law of Property Act 1925, the Settled Land Act, the Trustee Act, the Land Charges Act, the Land Registration Act, the Universities and Colleges Estates Act, and the Administration of Estates Act. In particular, the Administration of Estates Act revised a British legal institution that had been the norm since the feudal system in medieval England: the common law principle of primogeniture. Prior to the 1925 acts, property was primarily seen as an extension of the

⁴ I describe the rhetoric of such writing more fully in the chapter below on Margaret Drabble’s *The Millstone*.

Royal Family's ownership of all lands in the empire and would, therefore, pass from one monarch to the next. The dissolution of primogeniture, though, revokes the primacy of a male heir's right to land. The six other acts⁵ instituted during 1925 call into question the Crown's ability to sustain this all-encompassing position. Britain's land was changing and so was the identity conveyed through its ownership. Thus, conceptions of female identity as related to property ownership were particularly tenuous. With the passage of the Administration of Estates Act, women's long legal battle for individual and equal control of property had apparently come to a conclusion. This history included the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, and the Married Women's Property Act of 1882⁶ that finally, according to Dorothy Stetson, "altered the common law doctrine of coverture to include the wife's right to own, buy, and sell her separate property" (90). With the addition of laws granting equal voting rights in 1928, this decade proved to be one of exciting changes in the legal treatment of women in the United Kingdom.

Though granted property rights equal to those of men, British women after 1925 could not simply disregard a major part of their intellectual history. This history has

⁵ The Law of Property Act 1925 made it easier to transfer property through lease and deed. The Settled Land Act affected the conveyance of property in order to keep that property within a person's family. The Trustee Act changed the way stocks, bonds, and other securities were purchased. The Land Charges Act regulated contracts, payments, or other factors that limited the title of registered property. The Land Registration Act introduced the system of land registration by title, and the Universities and Colleges Estates Act changed the structure in which colleges were funded by the state.

⁶ Each of these three Acts carried importance for women and property in the nineteenth century. The 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act widened the ability to get a divorce and made divorce a civil matter rather than a religious one handled by ecclesiastical courts. The Married Women's Property Act of 1870 provided the right for women to earn money and to inherit property. Finally, the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 gave the same rights that an unmarried woman had to married women; in other words, married women became legally recognized as individuals apart from their husbands. For more about the status of women in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Mary Lyndon Shanley's *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895*.

traditionally rendered property ownership in terms of the masculine and, thus, has defined feminine propriety by barring women from access to property. Women's relationships with property necessarily constitute a part of their relationship to the outside world. Even after women obtained the rights to vote and to receive property as inheritance, for example, ownership of property continued to be a primary way in which both women and men "properly" place women within the world. Property positions women into what seems to be a "necessary," Westernized hierarchy that continues to dictate women's subjugation to men. This dissertation examines novels for spatial and temporal tactics, what I call "tactics of trespassing," used by twentieth- and twenty-first-century women writers to re-imagine established constructions of national and gender identity. In novels overtly concerned with representations of sex and gender and written by Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, Penelope Fitzgerald, Margaret Drabble, Hilary Mantel, and Jeanette Winterson, I discern a preoccupation with "looking back," a process through which authors revisit narratives of national and gender identity—narratives that did not account for or represent particular sections of the British public—for the goal of redefining what, as a result of this absence, was defined as properly "British" for a woman. The specific sites through which these works look back are incarnations of property. By enacting new narratives of national and gender identity that challenge the propriety of traditional accounts, contemporary women writers aim to stake a claim for these marginalized groups for a place within the current British body politic. Through their tactics of trespassing upon grounds of property and propriety defined by masculine society, in other words, these writers establish a degree of plurality and creativity in their British intellectual heritage.

By combining the idea of looking back with examinations of the identity-bestowing characteristic of property, this dissertation seeks to draw together two strands in British Studies previously considered in isolation. One earlier work on “looking back” is Robert Kiely’s *Reverse Traditions: Postmodern Fictions and the Nineteenth Century Novel*, which offers a series of “consciously anachronistic readings of nineteenth century novels through a variety of postmodern fictional lenses” (5). In Kiely’s methodology, the linear narrative of literary history, whose primary concern is the influence of the past upon the present, may be confused if not reversed altogether, as the postmodern text is allowed to work a transformative effect upon the 19th-century text that is read in its wake. Consequently, the reader determines the relative position between the nineteenth-century text and the contemporary text. Additionally, John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff in *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century* relinquish the idea that their volume constructs a history of the present and say that they “hope to provide instead multiple ways to measure the ideological motives and effects of a postmodern history that inevitably ‘forgets’ the past, or remembers it by trying to imagine it as present, or fashions its past by retelling the history of its present” (xxviii). While rigorous analyses of the texts they examine, many of these works neglect to situate their arguments within the specific socio-historical circumstances out of which the texts they discuss have arisen, as this project seeks to do. Instead, they focus on questions of media and adaptation. Furthermore, this dissertation will examine this phenomenon as it occurs within the text itself, not simply as a rhetorical or methodological strategy as in Kiely’s text. Finally, many of the essays that compose Kucich and Sadoff’s volume, such as those by Mary Favret, Ronald Thomas, Shelton Waldrep, and Susan Lurie, speak only of

contemporary adaptations of Victorian texts specifically and not of looking back more generally as a tactic for identity construction.

As do the critics who explore the trope of “looking back,” recent criticism dealing with British and English identity demonstrates an ostensible emphasis placed upon maps, locations, and other forms of place and property. From *Relocating England* to *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* to *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*, the ways in which places become marks of national identity is not a new topic in studies of nineteenth and twentieth century British literature. As Ian Baucom writes in *Out of Place*, “Englishness has consistently been defined through appeals to the identity-endowing properties of place” (4). After listing places such as a Gothic cathedral and a cricket pitch as particular to English identity, Baucom continues:

By this I mean both that these and other places have served as apt metaphors for writers struggling to define what it means to be English, and that such metaphoric understandings have been literalized, sometimes subtly, sometimes crudely, so that these material places have been understood to literally shape the identities of the subjects inhabiting or passing through them. (4)

Baucom’s text is representative of many studies of British identity and reveals three needs for this study. First, these discussions of property and Englishness as well as general discussions of British identity often neglect the contribution of contemporary works by focusing on texts from the Victorian or high modernist period, with a particular interest in colonial texts. Discussions of postwar fiction often focus on *postcolonial* texts of the last fifty years. Second, the major literature on the subject always privileges

national identity over gender identity instead of examining the intersection between the two, or how one necessarily affects the other. Lastly, while my project will discuss “real world” property as does the previous critical literature on British identity and property, I also concentrate on more non-traditional forms of property. For instance, the chapters on novels by Hilary Mantel and Margaret Drabble focus particularly on the body and the text as contested sites of ownership that relate to representations of identity.

Other critics have detected a need for a re-casting of national thought similar to the re-envisioning of gender identity that this dissertation proposes. In *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Dipesh Chakrabarty writes:

[P]rovincializing Europe is not a project of rejecting or discarding European thought. Relating to a body of thought to which one largely owes one’s intellectual existence cannot be a matter of exacting what Leela Gandhi has aptly called ‘postcolonial revenge.’ European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought—which is now everybody’s heritage and which affect [sic] us all—may be renewed from and for the margins. (16)

Though Chakrabarty’s text primarily develops a postcolonial theory of modern South Asian history, his point about the possibility that “the margins” can respond to and “renew” dominant political thought is equally pertinent to the representations of national and gender identity in the texts discussed in this dissertation. While Chakrabarty does not explicitly address identity, he emphasizes the ways in which intellectual traditions

influence people's (and especially marginalized people's) experiences. He proposes that an intellectual heritage necessarily shapes the practices of current, everyday life and the way marginalized people come to live and to think of themselves. European thought, then, is not simply a theoretical concern of the academy but rather a lens through which marginalized groups see their relationship with and position within a nation. Indeed, Chakrabarty's language of provincializing thought resonates equally with identity. Provincializing identity involves localizing identity construction to discrete instances instead of creating global claims for *a* Britishness or *a* restrictive definition of gender identity. In other words, traditional constructions of British and gender identity are equally "indispensable and inadequate," essential but insufficient for women in Britain for understanding their relationship to and position within British national identity. Women cannot simply erase centuries of thought about what it means to be a British woman. That intellectual heritage that defines women as marginal necessarily affects their identities as British citizens. When women then ask, "How do we make these marginalized identities livable?" in the context of these traditional notions of gender and national identity, the answer comes through the appropriation of those traditional definitions of identity and their revision through localizing, or, rather, provincializing identity for women in Britain.

In the context of this project, Chakrabarty's work also suggests a re-examination of the distinction between Englishness and Britishness by calling into question the ways in which the people of this area are ultimately defined as distinct from other European nations. The difference between Englishness and Britishness—the focus of many works on British identity—has been discussed at length elsewhere. One of the most recent and

useful examinations is Krishan Kumar's *The Making of English National Identity*. Kumar focuses on the confusion often made in distinguishing between "English" and "British" and uses this conflation as the starting point for his larger argument about the problem in approaches to British studies: Should British studies concentrate on the history of an "island nation" or of the "four kingdoms" of England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland (12)? I acknowledge Kumar's point in his approach to the Englishness question—that a study of English national identity must essentially "work from the outside in" because of the dissemination of British culture through colonialism and its consequential impact on British identity at home (17). However, the focus of this dissertation is not the ability to present a coherent whole in terms of national identity or the proper subject of British studies but rather the way in which images of that whole exclude various "internal others," particularly in terms of gender identity. In other words, portrayals of national and gender identity are always already fragmented because of this lack, though they present themselves as a "grand narrative" representation of British women.

Encompassing the whole of British existence, this assertion of a totalizing cultural grand narrative characterizing British women falls under what postmodern theorists have classified as metanarrative. Contemporary works of literature do not make a claim towards "wholeness," a claim to represent the totality of what it means to be British through metanarrative. Indeed, Jean-François Lyotard has famously defined postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv). Consequently, my use of "British" and "English" remains geographically confined, with "British" and its forms referring to the inhabitants of England, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland and "English" and

its forms referring to the population of England only.⁷ Through this approach, instead of examining British gender identity from the inside out as George Orwell does in his famous treatise on national identity *The English People*—resulting in one instance of a metanarrative presentation of British identity—or from the outside in as Kumar does through his focus on specific colonial sites of contention, this project seeks to break down the binary of outside and inside that often serves as an approach to critical examinations of Britishness. As an alternative, this dissertation turns to the ways that twentieth- and twenty-first century British women writers can find methods to adapt and to use the gendered constraints that traditional discourses on propriety and property place upon their identity. Within the confines of legal, economic, and political discourses, these narratives of identity do not erase identity markers that contribute to their individual identities or their position as an “Other.”

The project of provincializing British gender identity resonates with Michel de Certeau’s “tactics” that individuals use to create space for themselves in environments defined by “strategies.” De Certeau distinguishes between “strategy” and “tactic.” De Certeau defines “strategy” as “the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an ‘environment.’” He writes that a “strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, ‘clientèles,’ ‘targets,’ or ‘objects’ of research” (de Certeau xix).

⁷ For more information specifically on the Englishness/Britishness question, please see Ian Baucom’s *Out of Place* and P.W. Preston’s *Relocating England*.

On the other hand, De Certeau defines “tactic” as “a calculus which cannot count on a “proper” (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance.” A tactic “must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into ‘opportunities’” that are

achieved in the propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements (thus, in the supermarket, the housewife confronts heterogeneous and mobile data—what she has in the refrigerator, the tastes, appetites, and moods of her guests, the best buys and their possible combinations with what she already has on hand at home, etc.). (de Certeau xix)

In contrast to the tactic that de Certeau describes in the parenthetical statement, designers of supermarkets place food staples in the rear of the store as a strategy to force consumers to be exposed to more of their goods and, thus, more likely to spend more money.

De Certeau goes on to extend the distinction between strategy and tactic to the creation of narrative. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau describes the distinction between place and space. “A place,” he writes, “is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence.” Thus, two things can never be located in the same position, a position that comes to be defined by a thing being in its “proper” place. Additionally, place suggests a quality of steadiness and stability. On the other hand, a space “exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus, space is

composed of intersections of mobile elements.” In other words, actions that occur within a given place define it as a space, or as de Certeau puts it, “*space is a practiced place*” (117). In short, de Certeau distinguishes between the abstract and objective “place” and the lived experience of “space.”

However, it is only through narrative that space exists; de Certeau writes that stories “carry out a labor” that “organize the play of changing relationships between places and spaces” (118). For example, by walking into classrooms, sitting in desks, writing on chalkboards, and teaching—by enacting a narrative of education that follows the strategy of the building’s construction—the students and teachers who likely inhabit the place of a school building generate a narrative of the place. On the other hand, if teachers, students, or anyone in the school building begins to pray, to write scripture on the chalkboards, to sing hymns, and to receive a monetary offering, they enact a tactical narrative of religious ritual. In either case, the narrative of the actions of those spatial elements (a “tour” in de Certeau’s terms) creates a rhetorical space of those experiences. In light of this figuration, space does not have the same stability nor depend upon the same sense of propriety as place does (117). For example, a school building contains strategic design elements that define it as a “proper” place for education (chalkboards, classrooms, desks, etc.). However, “space” does not depend upon the same propriety as “place;” a school building can become a space of worship when the narrative of religious ritual is tactically carried out within the school building’s place, an “improper” action that transgresses the school building’s distinctive, “proper” identity. De Certeau writes, “Although they remain dependent upon the possibilities offered by circumstances, these transverse *tactics* do not obey the law of the place, for they are not defined or identified

by it” (29). Given these formulations by Chakrabarty and de Certeau, I use the words “global” and “strategy” to indicate the totalizing impulses to create a metanarrative or “grand narrative” of male identity through property and the exclusion of women. I likewise use “local” and “tactic” to describe the female response that seeks to create individual, discrete narratives of identity for women through property.

* * *

Introductions are the places properly to define critical terms of usage and to outline arguments and structures. The history of the word “propriety” can be divided into three general sections. First, the entry for “propriety” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes little distinction between definitions of “property” and “propriety” in their original uses in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and in many instances, they were used synonymously. Both terms referred to “[t]he fact of being owned by some one, or of being one's own, ‘ownness’; the fact of owning something, right of possession or use; ownership, proprietorship” or “[s]omething owned, a possession.” The terms, in short, both referred to an object being owned and the right to own it. The second sense that emerges involves seemingly innate and sometimes definitional characteristics particular to an object: “[p]roper or particular character; own nature, disposition, idiosyncrasy; essence, individuality; sometimes, proper state or condition” or “[a] quality or attribute; esp. an essential or distinctive quality; a characteristic, a peculiarity = PROPERTY.” Finally, the third sense of “propriety” reverses in some ways the second sense’s connection with essential definitional characteristics. The first recorded use of “propriety” to mean “[f]itness, appropriateness, aptitude, suitability; appropriateness to the circumstances or conditions; conformity with requirement, rule, or principle;

rightness, correctness, justness, accuracy” or, similarly, “[c]onformity with good manners or polite usage” occurred in Frances Burney’s work *Cecilia* from 1782. Burney writes that a character has “[s]uch propriety of mind as can only result from the union of good sense with virtue.” While this third sense of the word still maintains the definitional connotations of the second sense, the location from which those definitional elements arise has shifted. Instead of innate or essential characteristics, the forces that define a subject or object in this third sense come from without, using culturally constructed rules of “appropriateness” or “manners” as criteria for judging the propriety or impropriety of that subject or object.

While definitions of propriety have certainly multiplied since its original usage in the fifteenth century, Carol Rose argues that “property” has continued to be a mainstay of definitions of “propriety” and vice versa. In tracing the history of contemporary thought on property and social justice, Rose suggests that current definitions of “propriety” have never totally subsumed the original lack of differentiation between “property” and “propriety.” In *Property and Persuasion*, Rose discusses the origin and continuing development in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries of the governmental ability to appropriate property for official use—otherwise known as the “takings” issue. She writes, “This version of property did *not* envision property as a set of tradeable and ultimately interchangeable goods; instead, different kinds of property were associated with different kinds of roles” (59). The purpose of property under this understanding is to accord to each person who is subject to a national government that which is “proper” or “appropriate” to his or her personal identity. “And what is ‘proper’ or appropriate,” Rose continues, “is that which is needed to keep good order in the commonwealth or

body politic” (58). According to Rose, a person’s property consequently fixes his or her identity within the nation, creating a kind of static relationship between the individual and the body politic (59). In this light, property ultimately defines a subject’s individual identity (woman, for example) within a proper national identity (Britishness) and that subject’s relationship to other national inhabitants. In this dissertation, propriety, then, is an overcoding of place or property with dominant cultural ideas concerning a particular person’s or group’s correct role and contribution to a national identity. In terms of identity, property can be used to dictate the marginalization of groups such as women from constructions of what it means to be a British woman—in other words, to dictate the impropriety of female identity.

Propriety is mapped onto all forms of property. The fields of law and economics recognize two main property types: “real property” of immovable estate such as houses and land and “personal property” of movable goods like jewelry and furniture. These primary designations, though, can be further defined according to the property’s tangibility. British economists Robert F. Reilly and Robert P. Schweihs use the term “real estate” to designate tangible real property. They write that real estate “includes the surface of the land, any permanent fixtures or structures attached to the surface of the land, the area below the surface of the land (theoretically down to the core of the earth), and the space above the surface of the land (theoretically up to the atmosphere of the earth)” (15). Likewise, their definition of tangible personal property highlights the characteristics of movability and separation or detachment from any real estate (15). They emphasize the fact that tangible personal property “does not represent the same bundle of legal rights associated with ownership of real estate” (16). For example,

statutes of limitations involving legal disagreements over real estate are often longer than with tangible personal property. Despite the differences, both tangible real property and tangible personal property share three features as defined by Reilly and Schweih: “They are corporeal; they are visible; and they are tactile” (16).

None of these characteristics applies to intangible real property and intangible personal property. The laws associated with intangible real property refers to “the rights to use, occupy, develop, exploit, cross over, cross under, encroach upon, buy, sell, and so on, the tangible real estate” and is usually represented through some kind of contract, such as a license or lease (Reilly and Schweih 18). Though a contract is the tangible manifestation of intangible real property rights, the contract itself only represents these rights and does not suggest the corporeal, visible, or tactile nature associated with both kinds of tangible property.

Similarly, Reilly and Schweih indicate three defining elements of this type of property. First, intangible personal property does “not have substantial physical form or substance (at least to the extent that the value of the subject property is not dependent upon its physical form or substance)” (18). In other words, unlike tangible property, intangible personal property is not corporeal, visible, or tactile and does not derive its value from physical characteristics. Second, intangible personal property is movable; therefore, it is not “physically attached to the land or to other real estate” (Reilly and Schweih 18). Finally, as with intangible real property, “intangible personal property typically encompasses a specific bundle of legal rights, benefits, and interests” (18). Some may argue that intellectual property forms a third property category, in addition to real and personal property. However, given the two primary designations, intellectual

property falls within the category of personal property. This distinction is an important one to make given the dissertation's focus on property as a catalyst for narrative creation and writing—a tactical means for women's identity making and the process of thinking through the history of property for women. In addition to intellectual property, stock certificates, bonds, promissory notes, and franchises are all common types of intangible personal property, and Jeffrey Cohen lists several other examples: patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, currency (coin money), and notes (paper money) (11). "All financial assets are intangible," according to Cohen, "although sometimes they, too, are securitized by physical assets. Cash and cash equivalents are not real property; cash needs no valuation, and by definition cash equivalents do not need much of one" (11). Instead, the value of intangible personal property such as currency and notes "is intrinsic to the property rights of the intangible asset" that is represented by the money (Reilly and Schweihs 19). In other words, unlike tangible real or personal property, a quarter or a dollar bill has no intrinsic value by virtue of its physical nature. The value instead lies in the property right to exchange three quarters for a candy bar or five hundred dollars for a flight to Paris, for example. Both coin and paper money, then, represent a person's ability to obtain goods and services.

Tensions surrounding property ownership for women revolve around the idea of self-possession in a Lockean sense. In *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke writes that freedom relies upon an individual's "*Liberty* to dispose, and order, as he lists, his Person, Actions, Possessions, and his whole Property...and therein not to be subject to the arbitrary Will of another, but freely follow his own" (306). In other words, full self-possession for Locke means having control over one's body *and* the property or

possessions that come from a body's labor. Control of one's body and its actions leads to property ownership, which, in turn, enables greater freedom from the will of someone else (a wife from her husband, for example) through enhanced economic independence. However, the association of women with a lack of self-possession (in the colloquial sense of composure—the stereotypical “hysterical woman”) was often used to prohibit women from achieving self-possession in the Lockean sense. In short, self-possession was rendered “improper” for women. Therefore, the term “self-possession” has two meanings apropos to this discussion of women's propriety and property ownership: composure and emotional control (a type of somatic control over the actions of one's body) as well as the freedom from management by another (for women in the nineteenth century, for example, the ability to own, sale, and profit from property). The two definitions intersect, for example, in discussions about the freedom to choose reproductive and contraceptive practices.

The range of authors discussed in the dissertation mirrors the wide range of property represented in their novels: from land, houses, clothing, money, and other personal items to the body and the text as forms of property. The dissertation examines Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Bookshop* and *Offshore*, Hilary Mantel's *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* and *Beyond Black*, Margaret Drabble's *The Millstone*, and Jeanette Winterson's *The PowerBook*. The different kinds of tactics employed by British women writers have guided my selection of authors. The chapters move from tactics associated with concrete forms of real and personal property to tactics connected with more abstract forms of property like the body and the text.

In Chapter One, I argue that though most criticism of *Orlando* (1928) sees property used as a parody of women's troubled legal status, Orlando's actions and rhetoric shift from a strategic understanding of real property (immovable property such as houses and land) to a tactical understanding of personal property (movable property such as money, securities, and goods). This modification in Orlando's behavior and language reflects the laws of the period governing women's rights to pass on and to receive the property of an individual who has died without a will. Informed by the treatises on the law of intestacy by her friend C. P. Sanger, the chapter asserts that the novel associates the passing on of a familial and globalized masculine identity with real property and the passing on of a discrete and localized feminine identity with personal property.

Chapter Two shows how Jean Rhys in her 1939 novel *Good Morning, Midnight* problematizes the social and economic recognition afforded through women's property ownership. Both men and women in this novel "misrecognize" the value imparted through property ownership by way of a misclassification of tangible and intangible property. Sasha realizes the relative instability of her identity after the birth and death of her child but is unable to produce a recognizable identity narrative through property ownership. Rather than using property to define her identity, she becomes defined by property, particularly through clothing and houses or rooms. To this end, this chapter asserts that Sasha's tactical deployment of property cannot overcome the strategic view held by the men in her life. *Good Morning, Midnight*, then, shows how economic or property transactions involving a woman from a lower-middle socioeconomic class will cause a loss of identity for that particular woman.

In Chapter Three, I argue that in *The Bookshop* (1978) and *Offshore* (1979), Penelope Fitzgerald's female characters consistently fail to establish full self-ownership because they are unable to negotiate the tension between the identity they seek to tactically create for themselves (an individual, discrete narrative of identity) and the identity that society strategically creates for them (a generic narrative of female identity). Using C. B. Macpherson's critiques of the primarily masculinist theory of possessive individualism (a form of self-possession), in which an individual is the sole proprietor of his or her skills and owes nothing to society for them, and Scottish property law's adaptation of the practice as contexts, the chapter argues that the egalitarian nature of property in her novels tends to have a flattening effect by erasing identity markers for the female characters, which often leads to a misinterpretation or misclassification of the women by those around them.

Chapter Four argues that Hilary Mantel's novels *Eight Months on Ghazal Street* (1988) and *Beyond Black* (2005) concern her female characters' negotiation of the experience of "dispossession"—the loss of identity that accompanies a loss or substitution of the characters' property that puts her female characters into a liminal state between identities. Because this dispossession results in the women's categorization as typical "hysterical women," the male characters disregard the women's attempts at rhetorical work. The chapter claims that by depicting the process the women undergo in an attempt to regain their rhetorical power, Mantel's novels show two equal possibilities as they emerge from their liminal state: a more "complete" and integrated identity and an identity fragmented by the experience of dispossession.

Chapter Five contends that Margaret Drabble's allusions to the nineteenth century New Woman in her 1965 novel *The Millstone* reveals a set of challenges facing Post-War British "New Women." Drabble's novel recontextualizes popular nineteenth-century rhetorical strategies that were used to prevent women from having full property rights and control over their own bodies. Instead, Drabble locates identity-making in the relationship between text and body as kinds of "interior" property that avoid outside manipulation and restriction. Consequently, this chapter suggests that Drabble problematizes the assumption that totalizing knowledge about a woman can be gained through an examination of her property.

Finally, in a kind of coda or epilogue, I argue that Jeanette Winterson's *The PowerBook* (2001) deploys the metaphor of "screen real estate" and raises questions about the relation of gender to property and propriety as property rights disputes increasingly shift in the direction of the desubstantiated. Winterson's work demonstrates that the representational tactics for confronting traditional notions of British property and propriety explored by Woolf, Rhys, Fitzgerald, Mantel, and Drabble continue to evolve in virtual Britain, and gestures toward the need to evaluate the usefulness of these tactics for the composition of hypertexts, films, graphic novels, and other works where the visual and the textual interact.

Chapter One: “Her house was no longer hers entirely”: Legal Classification, Biographical Narratives, and the Law of Intestacy in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*

Virginia Woolf’s 1928 novel *Orlando: A Biography* famously concerns a sex-changing protagonist and the social dilemmas this change creates for the character in different periods of British history. For the female Orlando, one of these major dilemmas involves the administration of property that she had owned as a man. The biographer mentions the status of the Chancery Court case throughout the novel, which suggests that the lawsuit’s resolution will contain some important consequence for Orlando. However, Orlando reacts rather indifferently to the message that much of her property has been sold to pay for legal expenses. Any surplus property can only be “tailed and entailed upon the heirs male” of Orlando (187). The verb “entail” has legal ramifications related to property—namely, it is the restricting of property in an inheritance to lineal heirs of a particular class. In this instance, sex defines that class. The verb “tail” emphasizes the impossibility of another descendant path for the property by suggesting a continuous chain from one male heir to another without end, a strategy that carries on the male family name. With barely a second thought, Orlando neglects to read the remaining “legal verbiage,” swiftly signs the document, and sends it back for processing (187).

Orlando’s indifference toward the fate of her property presents the reader with a number of difficulties. Though the biographer narrates a number of other significant events, such as the death of Queen Elizabeth I, in an equally unconcerned way, the lawsuit remains the one topic of discussion in the novel that arises on a number of occasions only to be downplayed at its conclusion. Why, then, does property ownership seemingly become “a parenthesis” to the outcome of Orlando’s narrative when it has

previously played such an important part in the plot of the novel and in constructing Orlando's identity (188)? Why should readers care about Orlando's property if she does not? In short, Woolf's lack of explicit problematization of the laws that revoke Orlando's right to her house creates a narrative lacuna.

Orlando's absent concern near the end of the novel, however, should not indicate her apathy towards property. Rather, informed by the treatises on the law of intestacy by her friend C. P. Sanger, I argue that Orlando's actions and rhetoric shift focus from a strategic understanding of real property (immovable property such as houses and land) to a tactical understanding of personal property (movable property such as money, securities, and goods). This modification in Orlando's behavior and language reflects the laws of the period governing women's rights to pass on and to receive the property of an individual who has died without a will. Within this context, I assert that the novel associates the passing on of a familial and globalized masculine identity with real property and the passing on of a discrete and localized feminine identity with personal property. Orlando's changing attitude, then, indicates her tactical understanding of what and how particular kinds of possessions can effectively represent, affect, or construct female identity. In essence, *Orlando* presents a model of feminist tactical engagement with property and property law.

Despite his mention in the Preface to *Orlando*, critics have paid little attention to C. P. Sanger's possible contributions to *Orlando*'s composition because the novel and its Preface are usually taken as ironic, parodic, comic, or, most often, some combination of the three. Much of *Orlando*'s previous criticism focuses on Virginia Woolf's romantic friendship with author Vita Sackville-West, and Sackville-West's loss of her family

estate Knole.⁸ James Naremore and Frank Baldanza have argued that by dedicating *Orlando* to Sackville-West, Woolf was satirizing British property law by symbolically “giving back” to Vita the house she had actually lost to a male relative.⁹ Similarly, Caroline Webb’s article on listing in *Orlando* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) focuses on the Preface to Woolf’s novel as a satirical tool that critiques literary authority through its list of those authors responsible for Woolf’s literary “inheritance.” Webb mentions the acknowledgement of C. P. Sanger as a part of this satire; she writes, “If C. P. Sanger indeed helped his friend [Woolf] understand the law of real property that governed the inheritance of Knole, she does not accord it the reverence her preface suggests” (193). However, because of her focus on satire, Webb dismisses the connection between Woolf and Sanger out of hand, particularly given the context of *Orlando*’s focus on property—offering only one paragraph speaking to the topic. In her note about his acknowledgement, Webb suggests that, because *Orlando* is a fictional work, Woolf’s mention of Sanger in the Preface is meant to satirize his application of the way law is administered in reality to the fictional *Wuthering Heights*. Nonetheless, Webb relies upon non-fictional information in order to support her reading of the novel, and many critics have suggested that *Orlando* cannot be understood without an understanding of the real events surrounding its composition. Although my reading does not necessarily preclude a satirical interpretation of the novel, it does build upon and expand *Orlando*’s critical tradition by explaining the ways property works more generally in the novel and

⁸ The novel is often marketed as “the longest and most charming love letter in literature,” a well-known remark made by Vita’s son Nigel Nicolson (Nicolson, *Portrait of a Marriage* 202). Nicolson also writes that *Orlando* “turned into something much more than the joke Virginia had first intended,” which also suggests that the role of property in the novel and, particularly, C. P. Sanger’s contribution to that role deserves further inquiry (Nicolson, *Virginia Woolf* 107).

⁹ See Frank Baldanza’s “Orlando and the Sackvilles” and James Naremore’s *The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel* for further information on the connections among the Sackvilles, Knole, Virginia Woolf, and *Orlando*.

the specific ways Sanger's writing may have influenced the novel's representation of property.

While property is an important aspect of Woolf's writing generally and *Orlando* specifically, critical attention to biography remains one of the primary approaches to the novel.¹⁰ One common argument related to biography suggests that *Orlando* describes what it means to be British throughout the centuries depicted in the novel—a kind of biographical sketch of Britain. For example, Suzanne Raitt argues that, in its reliance on the mode of biography, *Orlando* becomes “a piecing together of national culture” and national identity. Raitt goes on to compare the writing of *Orlando* to *The Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)*, first published in 1885. Woolf's father Sir Leslie Stephen

¹⁰ Much of *Orlando*'s criticism focuses on questions related to the biography and autobiography genres as well as on Virginia Woolf's relationship with author Vita Sackville-West. Victoria L. Smith notes that the novel “has been variously described as a *roman à clef*, a *kunstlerroman*, an anti-novel, metafiction, magical realism, an autobiography (and a specifically female one at that), and a biography” (60). The rationale for these latter two designations is obvious. Many times throughout the novel, the biographer-narrator interrupts the tale to contemplate his or her role as a biographer. The biographer reveals much of the reasoning behind the inclusion or exclusion of events from the narrative and questions the objectivity that he or she holds in relating these events to the reader. In fact, Smith argues that any reading of *Orlando* must take biographical and autobiographical concerns into consideration (60). She sees the interplay between the fictional plot of the novel and its factual counterpart, between a series of deeply personal real events in Woolf's life and the novelization of those events in a publicly circulated text, as Woolf's way of considering the poststructuralist difficulty of representation in language, especially for women. She writes that

what happens in the novel—the impossible story of the protagonist rather unremarkably changing from a man to woman and living 400 years—and what it thematizes—language's inability to adequately represent the ‘thing itself’—mirrors the undecidability of the text—is it a biography, an autobiography, fantasy, etc.—and the impossibility of the form of ‘woman.’ (58)

Likewise, Jean O. Love argues that *Orlando* is “peculiarly bound” to Woolf's friendship with Sackville-West (193). Like Smith, Love makes extensive use of Woolf's letters to Sackville-West and her diary entries about the novel's composition, particularly the diary entries beginning in 1922 when Woolf first met Sackville-West. After tracing Woolf and Sackville-West's relationship through close reading of these biographical materials, Love focuses on the novel's implicit critiques of Sackville-West in addition to Woolf's admiration. Love concludes that *Orlando*'s difficulties in gaining a unified view of herself parallels Woolf's own issues with her sexual identity, and she suggests that Woolf viewed Sackville-West as most likely experiencing these same concerns.

served as the first principal editor of the *DNB* from 1885 until 1891 and had hoped she would follow in his footsteps (19). The *DNB*, as does *Orlando*, “condenses and defines tradition by telling over again the stories of distinguished men and women, and makes national achievement visible by placing it between the covers of many large and impressive volumes” (20). Raitt’s discussion emphasizes Woolf’s satire of Victorian biography and its use of the Victorian biographical methodology that demonstrates the techniques of condensation (noting a few stories of a few significant men and women) and repetition (telling those few significant stories over and over). This approach to writing biography consequently creates a Victorian “grand narrative” of British national achievement and, thus, British national identity. Raitt’s analysis likewise suggests that Woolf’s novel, in its use of timelessness and placelessness, represents a grand narrative of the history of the British people, of what it means to be British in many times and places. While I would agree with Raitt’s assertion, Woolf’s “grand narrative” remains skeptical of biography’s ability to represent the whole of British society and consistently points out those persons neglected by predominant accounts of national identity such as the *DNB*—persons marginalized because of their race, ethnicity, or, most importantly for Woolf, gender.¹¹

Jane de Gay uses a similar method in her reading of *Orlando*. De Gay compares Leslie Stephen’s “zeitgeist” approach to literary history with Woolf’s critique of that approach. In the *DNB* and *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1904), Stephen focuses on the ideological and cultural contributions of “mainstream and

¹¹ For other discussions of genre, biography, and *Orlando*, see Beth A. Boehm, Elizabeth Cooley, Rachel Blau Du Plessis, Mary Jacobus, Karen R. Lawrence, David Roessel, and J. J. Wilson.

influential writers” and divides “the century into a series of ‘schools’ gathered under key, male figures” (64). Woolf offers an alternative vision of literary history in *Orlando* and *A Room of One’s Own* through her selection of mostly female individuals, like Orlando and Shakespeare’s fictional sister Judith, who try to “retain artistic integrity in opposition to contemporary trends” (64). Though representations of property lie outside of de Gay’s area of inquiry, I argue they serve much the same purpose as the particular rhetorical strategies that de Gay asserts Woolf employs in her alternative literary history. Property provides a central site of Woolf’s intervention in feminist historiography through *Orlando*’s tactical linking of property and the creation of a viable biographical narrative.

If certain property is meant only for certain subjects, and that property defines identity to a large extent, then the sense of propriety associated with property creates an expectation that only certain “proper” life events should occur because of the ownership of various kinds of property. In short, only a particular life narrative can result from owning a particular kind of property. For the male Orlando, biography becomes inextricably linked to real property because of his ancestry’s association with real property. This connection begins to show how the novel relates real property with the passing on of a familial and globalized male identity, which excludes identities it deems “improper.” In *Orlando*, this “improper” identity is female.

The opening scene of the novel begins a trend that continues throughout Orlando’s tenure as a male: the association of a familial and static male identity with real property, specifically Orlando’s house. The sixteen-year-old Orlando “would steal away from his mother and the peacocks in the garden and go to his attic room and there lunge and plunge and slice the air with his blade,” reliving his ancestors’ actions prompted by

the green arras in the attic (11). After seeing the arras, Orlando reflects that his “fathers had been noble since they had been at all. They all came out of the northern mists wearing coronets on their heads” (12). The house’s rooms and attached decorations¹² become an impetus and a setting for the reenactment and remembrance of his ancestors’ exploits. Noticeably absent from these descriptions is any mention of female ancestors, suggesting the practice of primogeniture. Orlando mentions a female relative once, as he looks over the valley containing his family’s lands and houses. After describing a “vast mansion like that of Orlando’s father,” Orlando points out his father’s house, his uncle’s house, and his aunt’s “three great turrets among the trees there” (15). In contrast to the two complete, global views of the father’s house and the uncle’s house, Orlando mentions only the three turrets of his aunt’s house, lessening any esteem associated with the domicile.

In a later example where Orlando discusses his lineage, he defers to the power of the pen rather than the power of real property, an apparent reversal of his initial emphasis on the house as a source of historical and biographical significance. The biographer writes, “He said (reciting the names and exploits of his ancestors) that Sir Boris had fought and killed the Paynim; Sir Gawain, the Turk; Sir Miles, the Pole; Sir Andrew, the Frank; Sir Richard, the Austrian; Sir Jordan, the Frenchman; and Sir Herbert, the Spaniard” (60). Orlando’s contemplation of his family history gives him a burst of imaginative output with his writing. He even goes so far as to compare the difficulty of writing with those tasks of war performed by his ancestors: Orlando “soon perceived, however, that the battles which Sir Miles and the rest had waged against armed knights to

¹² According to C. P. Sanger, any decoration or accessory affixed to a building becomes part of that real property (165).

win a kingdom, were not half so arduous as this which he now undertook to win immortality against the English language” (60 – 61). Writing is the key to immortality for Orlando, unlike his ancestors’ military deeds now represented through “dust and ashes.” However, a closer look at this passage reveals the true source of Orlando’s “divine melody” of words: “an incantation rising from all parts of the room” (60). The house and its invocation of historical reflection lie at the center of Orlando’s inspiration and are responsible for his imaginative output of writing—not the rigors of the compositional process that Orlando has alluded to many times.

Similarly, this lack of self-sufficiency through Orlando’s words arises during one of his conversations with Sasha. Orlando describes Sasha in poetic similes, comparing her to a fox, an olive tree, a green hilltop, snow, cream, and marble, among others (34). Orlando is met with Sasha’s silence after this burst of poetic language. The history of Orlando’s family as it relates to his real property, however, acts as a catalyst for conversation between the two lovers, a goal not achieved through poetic language alone. Orlando gives Sasha “the whole history of his family; how their house was one of the most ancient in Britain; how they had come from Rome with the Caesars and had the right to walk down the Corso (which is the chief street in Rome) under a tasseled palanquin” (35). For the male Orlando, words, whether poetic or otherwise, have no power without some kind of real property to support them. After relating his family’s history, Orlando questions Sasha about her family’s real property and the identities it confers upon her relatives: “Where was her own house? What was her father? Had she brothers? Why was she here alone with her uncle?” (35). Like Orlando’s earlier listing of his own relatives, he makes no mention of female relatives, furthering the sense of

propriety that the novel has established between male ancestry and real property. In Orlando's eyes, Sasha's identity is defined by the real property that surrounds her, not her "own house" but the house belonging to the paternal line of her family. In the ensuing weeks after this conversation, Orlando "thought only...of means for making her irrevocably and indissolubly his own" (36). While Orlando intends this comment in a romantic sense, the possessive undertones of the words are undeniable. When taken in conjunction with Orlando's questions about Sasha's real property and paternal lineage, the remark gives the sense that Orlando, like many males of the same time period, sees Sasha specifically and women more generally as properly his property.

At first, by providing an ostensible focus on real property, Woolf's treatises on property and women *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own* seem to run counterintuitive to the importance *Orlando* suggests that personal property holds for women. Upon closer investigation, though, the texts hold a certain amount of skepticism toward the value of real property for women. This skepticism toward real property begins in *A Room of One's Own* in which Woolf makes her famous statement that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (4). On the surface, it would appear that Woolf's declaration endorses the importance of real property to women's writing; without the real property of the room, true literary genius will never actualize. However, Woolf's argument about the connection between literary genius, real property, and money (one kind of personal property) relies less on the ownership of the room and more on the privacy accorded to the woman writer. For example, in her discussion of Jane Austen's novels, Woolf makes the observation that people often interrupted Austen while she wrote; Austen "hid her manuscripts or covered

them with a piece of blotting-paper” when she was interrupted (67). Woolf also contemplates whether or not *Pride and Prejudice* would “have been a better novel if Jane Austen had not thought it necessary to hide her manuscript from visitors” (67 – 68). Later in the text, Woolf emphasizes that “it is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry” (105). Woolf, then, does not use “own” in a legal sense. Instead, she focuses on the space of the room—not necessarily the material ownership of the house or building where the room is located—and the accommodations it allows women writers to have. In addition to the personal property of £500 a year, a woman writer must have a private space, whether she owns it or not, that is peculiar to herself in order to produce the personal property of writing.

In *Three Guineas*, Woolf’s skepticism towards real property continues as Woolf describes the roles that houses have played in preventing women from entering the public sphere. Woolf still maintains the importance of property, suggesting that property ownership affects a person’s biology and psychology. In describing men and women as different classes, Woolf writes:

Your class possesses in its own right and not through marriage practically all the capital, all the land, all the valuables, and all the patronage in England. Our class possesses in its own right and not through marriage practically none of the capital, none of the land, none of the valuables, and none of the patronage in England. That such differences make for very considerable differences in mind and body, no psychologist or biologist would deny. (18)

For Woolf, property ownership is one aspect that lies at the heart of biological and psychological identity: a basic identifying marker. However, real property in *Three Guineas* almost always takes the form of what Woolf calls the “private house.” She mentions the “private house” several times in the text. For example, after quoting the *Daily Telegraph* from January 22, 1936,¹³ Woolf writes that “there is good reason to think that the word ‘Miss,’ however delicious its scent in the private house, has a certain odour attached to it in Whitehall which is disagreeable to the noses on the other side of the partition” (52). A road in London, Whitehall is often used as a metonym for governmental administration because of the number of government departments located on the street. Woolf sees a woman’s traditional association with domesticity and the home as a major constraint to a woman getting work, which is one of the primary points of *Three Guineas*. The association between the private house and the government suggests that women’s inequality still exists in the professional and governmental worlds—in short, the public world—despite the fact that the legal stance of women has changed. She writes “that there is something in the atmosphere of the private house which deflects the wife’s spiritual share of the common income impalpably but irresistibly towards those causes which her husband approves and those pleasures which he enjoys” (57). Woolf lays much of the blame for women’s position in society at the door of the “private house.” It becomes a kind of inescapable domestic prison for

¹³ The author of the article argues, “Homes are the real places of the women who are now compelling men to be idle. It is time the Government insisted upon employers giving work to more men, thus enabling them to marry the women they cannot now approach” (51). Woolf later restates this quotation and compares it with a quotation she has translated from German: “There are two worlds in the life of the nation, the world of men and the world of women. Nature has done well to entrust the man with the care of his family and the nation. The woman’s world is her family, her husband, her children, and her home” (53). While neither of these quotations use “private house,” Woolf’s use of the quotations indicates the universality of the idea that a woman’s place should be in the home and provides fodder for Woolf’s critique of this traditional domestic role by comparing an English quotation with a German quotation—a move that would have been stinging to her readers after World War I.

women. While I am not suggesting that Woolf actively argues against real property ownership by women, she does seem to see the house as a metaphor of women's oppression and as another possible method for women to be prevented from writing.

Finally, similar to the male Orlando, Woolf also twice connects the "private house" to ancestral memory and biographical narrative. She writes that "the traditions of the private house, that ancestral memory which lies behind the present moment, are there to help you" (82). Woolf also argues that "the traditions and the education of the private house which have been in existence these 2,000 years" must be changed if a woman is "to have a mind of your own and a will of your own" (83). The "private house" in these instances creates male familial identity only; this tradition does not account for a discrete female identity. *Three Guineas* argues that only through a woman's ability to earn her own living and to use this personal property tactically will she be able to escape the traditional male narrative associated with the "private house" and create a place of her own in a society stacked against her.

The male Orlando sees real property as the major way of producing a biographical narrative that will be remembered and respected by his descendants, a continuance of his identity in history, and Woolf's non-fiction works on property support this point of view. But does this paradigm shift as Orlando's sex changes? The answer, I argue, lies in a reading of *Orlando* within the context of writings by C. P. Sanger.

Indeed, Virginia Woolf acknowledges the importance of property law in the Preface to *Orlando*. Woolf writes, "I am specially indebted to Mr. C. P. Sanger, without whose knowledge of the law of real property this book could never have been written" (6). Modern readers best know Charles Percy Sanger through his article anthologized in

student editions of *Wuthering Heights* (1847) that details the chronology of the events in Emily Brontë's novel and its use of the law of real property; Virginia and Leonard Woolf first published the essay in 1926. A barrister by profession, Sanger's legal work primarily concerned wills and the law of intestate succession; he edited the third edition of Francis Hawkins's influential work *A Concise Treatise on the Construction of Wills* (1885) and published his best known legal work *The Rules of Law and Administration Relating to Wills and Intestacies* in 1914. In his book, Sanger offers a detailed examination of the differences between men's and women's rights to pass down property after death. He expresses that the purpose of the book "is to state, concisely, the rules which should be known by all who administer the estates of deceased persons" (iii). Consequently, Sanger admits to the often formidable nature of inheritance law. He writes, "The difficulty of the subject is largely due to the fact that the English law of Real Property is technical, obscure, and unsuited to the needs of a civilised nation" (iii). Some of these difficulties in clearly relating these laws remain in Sanger's text and point to some basic contentious issues in the laws themselves.

While C. P. Sanger discusses both wills and the law of intestate succession, he never offers a clear definition of "will." The closest he comes to a definition is when he states, "Wills are written documents; the testator's intention is determined by ascertaining what the written words, judicially interpreted, mean" (2). Sanger's definition offers a specific medium for wills but little in terms of genre or form. He notes a will's primary legal role when he notices that English law "differs from that of most other countries in the fact that it gives a practically unlimited power of disposition of property by will" (1). In describing the supposed wide powers that wills offer British citizens, Sanger writes

that “a man may by will be able to dispose of property which is not his” (1). This is one of many examples in which Sanger suggests that only the male segment of the British population is privy to these powers. One might argue that Sanger was merely following the grammatical convention to use “man” as a universal indicator of both sexes.

However, in his definition of “intestacy,” Sanger states, “A person dies wholly intestate if he or she has left no will, or if all the dispositions of the will have failed by lapse or otherwise. Partial intestacy occurs where the will does not effectively dispose of all the testator’s real and personal estate” (123). The inclusion of “he or she” in the section on intestacy stands in noticeable contrast to Sanger’s discussion of wills. For Sanger, wills seem to be more associated with the male sex, indirectly connecting primogeniture with the intentional passing of tradition or familial identity embodied in property handed down in wills. Additionally, wills provide direct language for executors, lawyers, judges, and other legal professionals to interpret. *Intention*, then, is the focus for the interpretation of wills: How did the deceased intend the property to be distributed? However, property held in accordance to the law of intestate succession has no clear line of descent indicated by the deceased. Therefore, much of the law of intestacy revolves around *classification*: Who is the heir-at-law, and who is the next of kin? This classification of individuals indicates their rights to the specific property of the deceased, though it does not necessarily take the intention of the deceased into account.

Another definitional issue arises in Sanger’s differentiation between real property and personal property in his section on the law of intestacy. Different laws applied to each kind of property; Sanger writes, “In English law the rules as to real property are entirely different from those as to personal property, including leaseholds” (123).

Therefore, the method of distribution among heirs-at-law and next of kin depended upon a piece of property's classification as real or personal. Sanger apparently gives a clear definition of each kind of property when he states, "Broadly, real estate is immoveable, personal estate is moveable property, subject to the important exception that terms of years in real estate (or chattels real, as they are called) are personal property" (164). However, even Sanger's ostensibly clear definition of the two types of property in his section on the law of intestacy contains an exception. This exception is only the first of many that follow. On the one hand, Sanger classifies corn and other "annual crops" as personal property because an intervention by the owner of the land must be employed in order to grow these kinds of crops. On the other hand, this personal property classification "does not extend to apples and other fruit grown on trees; it applies to a 'crop of that species only which ordinarily repays the labour by which it is produced, within the year in which that labour is bestowed, though the crop may, in extraordinary seasons, be delayed beyond that period'" (164 – 65). According to Sanger, because little work or intervention is necessary to grow fruit trees, the fruit from those trees constitute real property, not personal property. Sanger relates a further clarification involving trees later in the same section. He writes, "Trees form part of the soil unless they are completely severed" (167). Thus, whether dead or alive, trees in the soil are real property, and trees removed from the soil are personal property. Despite the specific exceptions or clarifications that Sanger proposes, of which there are many, the importance of his final discussion in the book lies in the inability to clearly differentiate between real and personal property.

In cases of intestacy, a widowed woman had fewer rights than a widowed man. A widowed woman also had many more restrictions placed on her appropriation of property, with some districts in England requiring chastity on the woman's part as a condition of inheritance (135). In general, though, widows of husbands that did not leave wills were entitled to £500 only, even if the deceased's real and personal estate was more valuable. Additionally, the widow was "entitled to live in the chief mansion house of her husband for 40 days after his death." Barristers referred to this period of time as a "widow's quarantine" (129 – 131). In contrast, widowed husbands were entitled to the full value of both real and personal properties of a deceased wife. Thus, the real and personal property became part of the husband's estate, with one notable exception in terms of personal property. Sanger notes that if personal property is "held to her separate use," then a husband does not automatically collect that personal property (125). Sanger states that the cases in which a woman "has [personal] property not to her separate use are becoming uncommon," with the only exceptions involving a creditor's right to a woman's personal property (125). No such exemption exists for real property, making personal property a more fluid commodity for inheritance. Sanger also writes that the "lineal descendants *in infinitum* of any person deceased represent their ancestor, and stand in the same place as their ancestor would have done if living" (138). The importance of personal property for women, then, is its ability to transfer a representation of their individual identity to future generations without becoming part and parcel of their husband's estate and family identity.

As a type of personal property, writing can exist independent of real property. Woolf's implied emphasis on writing as a kind of personal property relates to C. P.

Sanger's description of personal property and intestacy. As long as writing is held in separate use by women, that personal property does not automatically become the husband's, according to Sanger. For women, the personal property of writing cannot be subsumed under their husbands' potential estates in the event of their death without a will, unlike houses and land. Writing consequently becomes an important part of a woman's legacy.

The law of intestacy may seem an unusual source of Virginia Woolf's view of property law in *Orlando*. Why would Woolf use legal sources that do not necessarily accurately reflect the situation in which the female Orlando finds herself? Though neither Orlando nor the biographer mentions a will, Orlando does not die in the novel. However, *Orlando* suggests that a woman's position in society affords her no more powers or rights than if she were dead. For example, in the conclusion to the passage describing the three charges against Orlando in Chancery Court, the biographer writes, "Thus it was in a highly ambiguous condition, uncertain whether she was alive or dead, man or woman, Duke or nonentity, that she posted down to her country seat, where, pending the legal judgment, she had the Law's permission to reside in a state of incognito or incognita as the case might turn out to be" (125). Though concerned with Orlando's legal situation, the passage reflects more generally upon an Englishwoman's rights to property as well. The parallel format of the sentence equates life with being a titled male citizen and death with being a female "nonentity," a person without form or definition and a "nobody." The noun "nonentity" adds to this sense of formlessness or immateriality with its ghostly undertones. Orlando is not only a "nobody" in title and property, but she also has "no body," no definable or stable biology in the eyes of the

law. As a result, in legal situations, male citizens become defined in terms of what they possess, while female citizens are defined in terms of what they lack. The use of “incognito” and “incognita” to describe Orlando’s situation equally links identity to the possession of property. A lack of property, then, results in an indiscernible identity for both men and women.

Similarly, many characters and the biographer intimately associate death with Orlando’s characterization. For example, at the first mention of Orlando’s legal suit, the biographer writes

The chief charges against her were (1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing; (3) that she was an English Duke who had married one Rosina Pepita, a dancer; and had had by her three sons, which sons now declaring that their father was deceased, claimed that all his property descended to them. (124)

This passage demonstrates the concern that the law of intestate succession has with classification. Just as the litigants attempt to classify Orlando as deceased, dame, or dad, the biographer also formally classifies the three different accusations. Yet, like the biographer’s parallel sentence structure that I previously discussed, these descriptions by the biographer indicate the difficulty in classifying any elements of a system distinctively. Even as the biographer attempts to differentiate among the three charges, death necessarily becomes the common bond: through explicitly mentioning Orlando’s possible death in the first charge, through equating the state of womanhood with the state of death in the second charge, and through the sons’ rights to the property because of

primogeniture and death in the third charge. The lack of any female offspring highlights the differences between male and female inheritors. In fact, Sanger describes the results of this kind of situation for men and for women. Although all of the property would go to the oldest son of the three, three daughters would have had to share the inheritance equally (Sanger 138). Each of the three positions is predicated on the same basis and the same outcome; death undeniably results in the loss of real property for women. In other words, real property becomes part of their husbands' estates and identities, leaving women in a state of incognita.

Demonstrating the novel's focus on the law of intestacy rather than wills, the biographer makes no mention of the possible intentions of the "deceased," the primary focus of estate cases involving wills. The book also gives no evidence of concern for Orlando's intentions—whether or not she is actually dead or alive—by the various parties involved in the suit. In fact, the passage detailing the three charges relies on the notion that no one necessarily disputes Orlando's self-identification as Orlando. None of her servants ever "showed an instant's suspicion that Orlando was not the Orlando they had known" (126). Similarly, according to the biographer, "the action of the deer and the dogs would have been enough to dispell" [*sic*] any doubt of Orlando's identity because "the dumb creatures, as is well known, are far better judges both of identity and character than we are" (126). The parties in the Chancery Court case follow this lead and do not cast doubt that Orlando is who she says she is. Instead, their disagreement focuses on her classification within the law. The characters' acceptance of Orlando's identity as a living being, when taken in turn with the three charges based on death, exposes the inherent contradictions in and the absurdity of classification in estate law.

Orlando also often contemplates death. After being almost trampled by Shelmerdine's horse in their first meeting, Orlando exclaims, "I'm dead, Sir!" when Shelmerdine asks if she is hurt (183). Likewise, after supposedly finishing "The Oak Tree"—the poem that she revises for most of the novel—Orlando compares finishing the manuscript with dying: "And if I were dead, it would be just the same!" (200). In contrast to Orlando's simple intimations on death while a man, Orlando declares herself dead in these two instances, ostensibly a benign use of metaphorical hyperbole. The female Orlando's metaphorical uses of death imply less a metaphysical analysis of mortality and more a reflection of actual social conditions of women at this time. A noticeable disparity with her exclamations of death in these examples, Orlando's hyperbolic statements indicate a dynamism and energy not demonstrated earlier in the text, when Orlando's thoughts on death recall quotations from texts such as *Othello*, not her own meditations on mortality.

This dynamism, I argue, comes as a result of the female Orlando's tactical engagement with moveable personal property as a source of biographical narrative creation rather than static real property. The law of intestacy in the novel along with Orlando's associations with death critiques what was seen as the proper legal position of women in English society. Orlando, and thus all Englishwomen, might as well be dead in the eyes of English law because of the weaknesses in the property rights for women. The emphasis on death and the law of intestacy may also be a nod toward the 1925 formal legal revocation of primogeniture, a practice that depended upon death for its survival. However, it should not be thought that Woolf's view on property rights insinuates a lack of belief in the ability to improve the legal system or a woman's inability to use the

current laws to her advantage. Orlando's own transition from associating identity with real property to associating identity with personal property indicates an Englishwoman's ability to use that legal system to her advantage. As the novel unfolds, it presents a counterpoint to the historical continuation of a familial identity that forms the basis of the male Orlando's identification with real property. Instead, the use of personal property by the female Orlando localizes her identity, focusing instead upon the passing on of a narrative of discrete female identity, not the biography, name, and tradition of a family.

The female Orlando's interactions with the band of gypsies that she travels with soon after her transformation begin to help Orlando see the possible liabilities of real property. Immediately after Orlando joins the troop of gypsies, she notices the freedom afforded to the gypsies. The biographer writes, "The gypsies followed the grass; when it was grazed down, on they moved again" (104). This freedom comes from a lack of real property; in the novel, the gypsies depend only upon personal, moveable property for their existence. The gypsies see the land of the world as a communally-owned property, and any "Duke" who accumulated land "was nothing but a profiteer or robber who snatched land and money from people who rated these things of little worth" (109). As she did with Sasha, Orlando "could not help with some pride describing the house where she was born, how it had 365 rooms and had been in the possession of her family for four or five hundred years. Her ancestors were earls, or even dukes, she added" (109). However, discussing the mansion and the biography it represents does not have the same effect on the gypsies as it has on Sasha. The gypsies are not impressed; in fact, they "were uneasy" (109). Neither Rustum, the head gypsy, nor any of the other gypsies sees the point of building 365 bedrooms when one is enough. Orlando finally realizes that

“[f]our hundred and seventy-six bedrooms mean nothing to them” (110). They see no value in real property, and owning real property does not differentiate the gypsy families from Orlando’s family as Orlando initially thought; the gypsies’ “own families went back at least two or three thousand years” (109). Because gypsies find themselves in a marginalized position similar to the position of women,¹⁴ the fact that the gypsies’ ancestry is based in personal, moveable property shows the female Orlando that biography through property is not restricted to the male sex or to real property.

One of Orlando’s ending thoughts at the conclusion of the text, as she looks out upon the land that was once hers, is a recollection of questions that Rustum asked her: “What is your antiquity and your race, and your possessions compared with this [natural scene]? What do you need with four hundred bedrooms and silver lids on all your dishes, and housemaids dusting?” (239). Orlando’s remembrance of these questions implies that she has come to the same conclusion as Rustum, that real property provides restriction instead of freedom. As Orlando ponders these thoughts, “the landscape (it must have been some trick of the fading light) shook itself, heaped itself, let all this encumbrance of houses, castles, and woods slide off its tent-shaped sides” (239). From Orlando’s perspective, real property is an “encumbrance” that prevents the creation of imagery. Through her experience with the gypsies and their interaction with personal property, the female Orlando learns that biographical narrative and identity are not restricted to real property, as the male Orlando had thought. Orlando acknowledges through this remembrance the importance that the gypsies and their attitude towards real property

¹⁴ Abby Bardi associates the trope of the gypsy with gender indeterminacy in Virginia Woolf and Charlotte Brontë’s works. She writes that “Woolf finds resonance with the protean quality with which she represents gender; like gender in *Orlando*, Gypsies constitute a floating signifier whose signified...managed to elude” non-Romani observers (41).

have played in her development. The action associated with moveable property serves as a reminder of an individualized identity rather than a familial identity.

Orlando has a vision of her house almost immediately after coming to this conclusion about real property. In earlier discussions of Orlando's house, the dialogue has focused on actual depictions of or interactions with the mansion and the surrounding land and trees. These earlier references to the house and Orlando's family history create a more static picture of the house, thus suggesting that the identity conferred by its existence and inheritance will continue throughout the ages. During this vision, though, the vast park surrounding Orlando's house "appeared on the bald mountain-side" (111). After the park appears, with its trees, deer, and moving carts, "there appeared the roofs and belfries and towers and courtyards of her own home" (111). The park, the activities occurring in the park, and Orlando's house all appear from and disappear into the mountain; this vision of property is more organic because it comes from an individual's perception—a figment of Orlando's imagination. The house becomes a constructed image rather than a "real" piece of property, suggesting that the female Orlando derives identity through the creative power of the imagination rather than from ownership of real property.

As implied in the previous vision of Orlando's house and land, the female Orlando begins to focus on passing on an individual identity in personal property rather than the continuation of a transcendent familial identity in real property. The most prominent example of Orlando's turn to personal property is her emphasis on ink and paper, materials that she sees as indispensable for writing. The first occurrences of Orlando's wish for ink and paper take place during her time with the gypsies. At this

point, Orlando does not credit writer's block with her inability to write—as the male Orlando had earlier—but rather the lack of the required materials for writing. In deciding whether or not to remain with the gypsies, Orlando thinks that it is “impossible to remain forever where there was neither ink nor writing paper” (110). At one point, the ink seems to take on the role of educator, blotting out ideas that Orlando had written which run counter to those concerning property that she learned from the gypsies: “Orlando, who had just dipped her pen in the ink, and was about to indict some reflection upon the eternity of all things, was much annoyed to be impeded by a blot, which spread and meandered round her pen” (173). At the beginning of Chapter Six, the biographer describes Orlando's preparations for writing. Orlando does not focus on the property itself but rather the action of writing that occurs in the space. The lists in each of these passages where Orlando or the biographer mentions pen and paper parallel the listings of Orlando's paternal family history that she discusses with Sasha earlier in the novel. The emphasis has moved beyond representations of male identity in real property and instead focuses on putting “the contents of her mind carefully” onto paper (196). By replacing the repetition of Orlando's ancestors with the repetition of personal property, the references to ink and paper break with the biographical technique of condensation and repetition discussed by Suzanne Raitt in her examination of *The Dictionary of National Biography* and reject the prolix and euphemistic kind of biographies that the Victorians wrote by showing that discrete marginalized identities, and particularly those identities of women, cannot be remembered by repeating the narrative of ancestors instituted within real property.

Like the male Orlando earlier in the text, the female Orlando visits the tombs of her ancestors. This passage lies in stark contrast to the male Orlando's earlier visit to the catacombs, where his respect for their deeds is evident. She thinks that "the bones of her ancestors" have "lost something of their sanctity" since her time with the gypsies (128). The biographer continues describing Orlando's thoughts, which hold the basis of her shift in perspective:

Somehow the fact that only three or four hundred years ago these skeletons had been men with their way to make in the world like any modern upstart, and that they had made it by acquiring houses and offices, garters and ribbands, as any other upstart does, while poets, perhaps, and men of great mind and breeding had preferred the quietude of the country, for which choice they paid the penalty by extreme poverty, and now hawked broadsheets in the Strand, or herded sheep in the fields, filled her with remorse. (129)

Her thoughts on the despicable nature of her ancestors' actions reflect the gypsies' idea about the communality of property. Orlando's motivation for respect shifts from accumulation to composition, with the implicit comparison between the ancestor's house and the poet's writing. Orlando sees moving past her male ancestors' emphasis on real property as "growing up," which she twice repeats (128 – 29), a progression past traditional uses of property to indicate familial identity. She uses personal property as a catalyst for self-development.

Unlike Sasha, who is the male Orlando's primary love interest, Shelmerdine, who is the female Orlando's primary love interest, does not show much concern for real

property. The female Orlando does not subject Shel to the same interrogation about family property, instead focusing on Shel's ability to create narrative. Orlando consistently asks Shelmerdine to tell a story; soon after meeting Shel, Orlando implores him, "'Shel, my darling' she began again, 'tell me . . .'" (185). The ellipsis indicates a type of indifference towards the content of the narrative and a focus instead on the act of narrative creation to fill that ellipsis; the biographer writes that "they talked for two hours or more, perhaps about Cape Horn, perhaps not . . .'" (185). Orlando also asks Shel to describe Cape Horn after learning the results of the Chancery Court case. The use of ellipsis and Shel's repetition of the same Cape Horn narrative indicate that the content of the narrative does not matter; narrative creation attracts Orlando to Shel.

The importance of writing and narrative creation comes full circle in Orlando's final statement about her house, in which the house becomes a constructed image rather than a "real" piece of property:

The house was no longer hers entirely, she sighed. It belonged to time now; to history; was past the touch and control of the living. Never would beer be spilt here any more, she thought...or holes burnt in the carpet. Never two hundred servants come running and brawling down the corridors with warming pans and great branches for the great fireplaces. Never would ale be brewed and candles made and saddles fashioned and stone shaped in the workshops outside the house. (233)

Unlike the passage where the male Orlando presents an encapsulation of British military history in a list of his supposed ancestors and where the house serves as the inspiration through an "incantation" for his "divine melody" of words (60 – 61), the house in this

final mention instead becomes a discursive creation of the female Orlando's narrative. The key to this passage is, indeed, time as related in the verb tenses used to depict the events. Unlike the original image of her house, where readers get only a short, imagistic description of the building proper, the events of the described narrative that could take place in her house in essence "build" the house for the reader, giving the excerpt a sense of the present and an urgency not shown in previous portrayals of the house. On the other hand, the events that Orlando is thinking about have, in fact, occurred in the house during the course of Orlando's narrative, giving readers a sense of the past tense that conflicts with the urgency of the present. This sense of indeterminacy traps the house between a narrative of definite past events and a narrative of a possible, conditional future.

Orlando creates a similar conditional narrative in her final experience with her work "The Oak Tree." Throughout the novel, an actual oak tree on her property has provided a place of refuge and inspiration. In this final scene, Orlando recounts a narrative about burying a first edition of her now published work under the tree's roots. Though this narrative would seem to symbolize an acknowledgement of the tree's role—and, consequently, real property's role—in writing the work, the narrative, like the final story about her house, is written in a conditional form: "I bury this as a tribute, she was going to have said, 'a return to the land of what the land has given me'" (238). In playing the role of the author by, in essence, "taking back" the narrative she has just created—in other words, by refusing to act out the conditional narrative with the burial—Orlando reasserts the power that personal property holds for women. As C. P. Sanger writes in his treatise, "Trees form part of the soil unless they are completely severed" (167). Thus,

whether dead or alive, trees in the soil are real property, and trees removed from the soil are personal property. While the oak tree on Orlando's land is clearly real property, Orlando's "The Oak Tree" acts as a kind of metaphorical tree taken from the ground—a word released from the patriarchal power of real property. Like the references to death and Orlando, this reference is a final comment upon the state of women's property rights in England. She questions the power of the oak tree, but not "The Oak Tree": Orlando's ultimate disavowal of her house and lands for the narrative offered through her paper and pen.

The narrative of Orlando's development in her use of personal property depicts an alternative to the kinds of static and familial biographical associations held in real property—a tactical engagement with property that offers the female Orlando a narrative of identity dynamic in its creation. The difficulty in distinguishing between different kinds of property reinforces the inability to definitively classify Orlando's sex or the genre of the novel. Instead, the novel is a series of "exceptions" and "buts," like the law of intestacy it borrows from. Following the news that she has lost most of her real property in the legal case, Orlando has realized the fleeting nature of real property, now favoring instead the power of renewable resources: ink, paper, and especially writing.

Chapter Two: “What You Really Get When You Try to Sell Things”:

(Mis)Recognition and (In)Tangibility in Jean Rhys’s *Good Morning, Midnight*

Orlando shows that a key to the relationship between identity and property for women of a particular socioeconomic class involves using narrative to tactically negotiate the social and economic recognition afforded to property, and it is this process of recognition that Jean Rhys problematizes in a pivotal scene from her novel *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939). Using borrowed money, the main female character Sasha Jensen has traveled to Paris to escape from her life in Britain. However, her prospects are not much better in France. During her time in Paris, she takes on a series of odd jobs, one of which involves ghostwriting stories for a woman. Near the end of the novel, Sasha is writing stories, like Orlando at the end of Woolf’s novel. However, unlike Orlando, Sasha’s stories are not her own but rather the stories of others for others. This position reflects the way that she has come to base her identity in other people’s property and defining herself by that property. She writes fairy tales for her employer using ideas that her employer develops from old myths and legends. Sasha, then, is not the creator of narrative but rather the machine through which these stories are recycled and manufactured for personal consumption. In contrast to herself, Sasha says that the woman who has hired her to write has such “a sense of property! She’d raise hell if a spot of wine fell on one of her Louis Quinze chairs. Authentic Louis Quinze, of course they were” (168). In summation, Sasha thinks of the experience, “Fairies, red roses, the sense of property” (168). In these instances, Sasha links the ability to create one’s own narrative or, in this case, to hire someone to create a narrative to your specifications, with a higher socioeconomic class than the one to which she currently belongs. Sasha’s

employer has the luxury to have someone write frivolous tales for her pleasure, but Sasha does not have access to this power. Sasha recounts this story to René, a man that she meets at a restaurant and that she develops feelings for, which would seem to indicate some kind of power to produce a narrative of her identity as a writer. However, René interrupts Sasha because he is familiar with Sasha's former employer and finishes her story with ornate drawings and details. Stealing away Sasha's role as narrator, he takes control of her identity narrative, and Sasha can seemingly do nothing about it. Why does Sasha so easily recognize and then adopt René's narrative, which she knows incorrectly constructs her identity?

By focusing on processes of misrecognition, this chapter argues that Sasha's attitude indicates a pessimistic and even misanthropic view of property's ability to ground women's identity formation. Both the men and the women in this novel "misrecognize" their relationships to real and personal property and to the identity imparted through property ownership to show how economic or property transactions involving a woman from a lower-middle socioeconomic class will cause a loss of identity for that particular woman. Sasha realizes the relative instability of her identity, for example, after her husband leaves her with no money after the death of her child. However, rather than tactically using property as a medium for defining herself, she becomes defined by property, particularly clothing and houses or rooms. Likewise, the main male characters incorrectly place Sasha within a particular genre of woman by misrecognizing her relationship to property. For Sasha, this genre relates to socioeconomic class—the "rich bitch." Sasha's experiences with property before encountering the men do not allow her to correct these mistakes. Instead of empowering

Sasha to produce her own identity narrative, property literally “boxes” her in, as she becomes a captive of her room at the end of her story. To this end, the novel highlights the fact that Sasha’s tactical deployment of property cannot overcome the strategic view held by the men in her life.

I have chosen to focus exclusively on *Good Morning, Midnight* because it offers both a way to show how Rhys’s earlier fiction influenced her most widely read novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* and an opportunity to contribute to current scholarship that seeks to revalorize Rhys’s earlier work. Until recently, the majority of criticism written about Jean Rhys’s work has centered on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a “prequel” of sorts that reveals the history of Bertha Mason—the infamous “madwoman in the attic” from Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*.¹⁵ However, scholars have begun to criticize scholarship that tends to discuss *Wide Sargasso Sea* only. For example, Urmila Seshagiri argues that “*Voyage in the Dark* [1934] has been overshadowed by Rhys’s 1966 masterpiece, *Wide Sargasso Sea*,” although “it is the earlier novel that shows us a crucial transformation in the aesthetic priorities and political thrust of twentieth-century English fiction” (487).¹⁶ This chapter follows Seshagiri’s lead by suggesting how *Wide Sargasso Sea* owes much of its critical (if not commercial) success to Rhys’s earlier novels and, especially, *Good Morning, Midnight*. Though Rhys published *Good Morning, Midnight* twenty-nine years prior to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the plot and themes of the former resonate with the latter, particularly through the novels’ depictions of property. Both novels offer a negative assessment of women’s relationships to property, whether through the critique of

¹⁵ For recent scholarship on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, see Emery, Mezei, Wickramagamage, Su, Carr, and Nesbitt.

¹⁶ For recent scholarship on Rhys’s earlier novels, see Czarnecki, Nardin, Zeikowitz, Britzolakis, Seshagiri, Port, and Linett.

primogeniture and property law in *Wide Sargasso Sea* or, as I will argue, through the indictment of how socioeconomic differences adversely affect women's abilities to tactically engage property in *Good Morning, Midnight*. The novels mirror the fates of Antoinette Cosway / Bertha Mason and Sasha Jensen; both find themselves as prisoners of property at the end, Bertha in Rochester's attic and Sasha in her hotel room. Their final attempts to escape from their situations are equally as dire. Bertha burns down Thornfield Hall, killing herself in the process. Sasha offers her body to a neighborhood worker who has propositioned her intermittently throughout the novel. Though Sasha does not kill herself, this final act operates as a kind of sexual self-sacrifice; she says that she lies "very still, with my arm over my eyes. As still as if I were dead..." (190). She has become that which she has dreaded throughout the novel: a passive object of pity without independence, economic or otherwise.

I would argue that Rhys's scholars have not adequately expressed the depth of disillusionment in her novels, particularly in terms of her characters' passivity and the relationship between that trait and property. Most scholars choose to read passivity as a result of Rhys's fragmented narrative technique or as a symptom of depression or trauma, all which, according to Thomas Staley, challenge "the entire fabric of social and moral order which governs so much of society" (1). Similarly, Kristin Czarnecki examines Sasha's behavior through the lens of Kristevan depression; Sasha's passivity, then, becomes a critique of learned helplessness from a society refusing full access to language and culture for women (63 – 64). Christina Britzolakis locates the author's fragmented narrative style within the history of Modernist urban spectacles and connects passivity to ethnicity because late "nineteenth-century European ethnographic discourses of the white

Creole were built around the motifs of passivity, drifting and paralysis, as well as the degenerative perils of miscegenation” (462). For Britzolakis, Rhys’s fragmented writing “actively dislocates the European genealogy of metropolitan modernity” while at the same time describing “the impossibility of inserting white Creole subjectivity into any narrative of national identity” (462). Maren Linett combines the two approaches to passivity by connecting powerlessness, trauma, and fragmentation. According to Linett, Rhys “worked with fragmented text in part because she desired to make trauma legible in the precarious, partial ways that can be done. Her fragmentary style is...strategic and mimetic rather than symptomatic” (439). All of these approaches share the idea that Rhys’s novels remain essentially positive about society’s ability to better itself and show how passivity serves as a tactical part of Rhys’s critique by working within dominant British traditions that defined women’s roles as passive. These scholars contextualize passivity as a result of ongoing social oppression, and they argue that Rhys’s novels attempt to engage and work against that oppression. However, this chapter argues that this scholarship does not go far enough in its evaluation of passivity in Rhys’s works. By examining the relationship between property and Sasha’s passivity in *Good Morning, Midnight*, I show how this novel displays a fatalistic approach to representations of property. Through Sasha’s lower-middle class perspective, property and its exchange always already put women in this socioeconomic class in a disadvantaged position.¹⁷ Instead of social criticism, Sasha’s inability to work against that disadvantage indicates the novel’s pessimistic approach to property’s value for the construction of women’s identity.

¹⁷ I would argue that scholars have focused almost exclusively on ethnic identity in Rhys’s work due to her Caribbean heritage to the detriment of exploring the impact that her economic class has on her identity.

As many critics note, *Good Morning, Midnight*'s narrative structure is unconventional; the novel contains nightmares, ellipses, flashbacks, and other narrative elements that are not always clearly indicated by the narrator Sasha. Though readers encounter Sasha's dream that contains the scene of her baby's birth and death in Part One, they do not learn the bulk of her back-story—how she came to the attempt to drink herself to death in the London room at the opening of the novel—until Part Three, late in the novel. This section is the only point in the novel where Sasha represents her relationship to property previous to her baby's death, a relationship that comes to rely upon Sasha's understanding—or, rather, misunderstanding—of tangible and intangible property and the rights associated with each type. It is this misrecognition that plagues Sasha in *Good Morning, Midnight*. As her story unfolds, the novel's framework develops around Sasha's changing attitudes towards property. Before the exit of her husband and the death of her child, Sasha demonstrates an understanding of the value of different kinds of property through her interactions with property and through her use of metaphor. However, because of her experiences with her husband Enno and the connection that Sasha draws between her lack of money and the death of her child, she comes to see all kinds of property, real and personal alike, as tangible. Sasha begins to believe that any transaction involving a woman of a lower socioeconomic class will cause loss for that woman—of property rights and of self-worth, for example. Even her sexual reputation becomes a kind of intangible personal property. Sasha sees this feature of loss as a natural and proper aspect in any exchange of property.

At the beginning of Part Three of Rhys's novel, which portrays the chronological first events of Sasha's story through the use of flashback, Sasha demonstrates an

approximate understanding of the relationship between tangible and intangible properties and the rights and values they inherently possess or represent. This understanding comes through her initial focus on money and its connection, at least for Sasha, to living in London. Near the beginning of Part Three, we learn that Sasha has left London to go with her eventual husband Enno. Reflecting on the situation in which she now finds herself, Sasha describes London and her life in London in terms of tangible real and personal property, specifically using the metaphor of a room and the items it contains:

Well, London. . . . It has a fine sound, but what was London to me? It was a little room, smelling stuffy, with my stockings hanging to dry in front of a gas-fire. Nothing in that room was ever clean; nothing was ever dirty, either. Things were always half-and-half. They changed one sheet at a time, so that the bed was never quite clean and never quite dirty. (113)

By condensing her experience in London into the “little room” she rented there, Sasha uses the inherent characteristics of tangible real property in order to depict her view of the city and her relationship to its inhabitants. London becomes an immovable and unchangeable piece of real estate that does not allow Sasha emotional or mental mobility or development. Sasha describes the room as “endless, inevitable and restful,” highlighting the room’s unchanging features. Due to her recognition of this lack of mobility, Sasha concludes, “In that room you couldn’t think, you couldn’t make plans” (113). At this point in the narrative, prior to her marriage and pregnancy, Sasha recognizes the effect of the London room. She sees herself as unable to improve herself, like the room that is never quite clean or dirty. She connects this lack of advancement to

the London room, which for Sasha represents her past in England in a way similar to the way that Orlando's English country mansion represents a male family history. Her desire to escape this sense of historical determinacy leads her to run away with Enno in the first place.

In addition, Sasha's use of metaphor through her comparison of London to a room further suggests her understanding of the value of property and foreshadows her inability after the death of her child to comprehend the metaphorical characteristics of different kinds of property, a point I will return to later in the chapter. The use of metaphor in her description of the London room closely follows the relationship between money and intangible property rights. The value of the metaphor lies within its interpretation by Sasha and is not inherent to the physical form or expression that the metaphor takes on. Sasha demonstrates the specific importance of this relationship as this section unfolds. Sasha understands that London has not provided her a great life; immediately after the paragraph cited above, she thinks, "I've got away from all that, anyhow. Not to go back, not to go back...." (114). Later, Sasha connects her departure from London specifically with the possession of money, not out of love or a desire to marry Enno. She writes, "I haven't any money. He hasn't any either. We both thought the other had money. But people are doing crazy things all over the place. The war is over. No more war—never, never, never. *Après la guerre*, there'll be a good time everywhere.... And not to go back to London" (114). Sasha connects the possession of money with the right to travel and leave London, benefits of intangible personal property rights represented by the pound and not innate to its physical characteristics. Although she insists that "there'll be a good time everywhere," she equally insists on the importance of her trip from London to Paris.

She equates London with poverty, which stands in contrast to her statement about economic success after the war. In contrast, she equates Paris with prosperity, suggesting that the value of personal property for her lies in its inherent characteristic of movability, represented through her right to travel and through its ability to be transferred from one person to another and from one country to another. She writes, “But when we get to Paris the good life will start again. Besides, we have money. Between us we have fifteen pounds” (115). Sasha has escaped the permanence associated with tangible real property through her move to Paris, which she sees as a new beginning to her story—the third one in a linear reading of the novel.

The novel also highlights Sasha’s understanding of property rights through the juxtaposition of her views on money with Enno’s views on money. As she prepares to describe her wedding day, Sasha says, “All the same, I never thought we should really get married” (115). Along with Sasha’s emphasis on Enno’s lack of money in the previous passage, the novel suggests that Sasha is being disingenuous in her expression of feelings for Enno, instead using him as a way out of London,¹⁸ though the same could be said of Enno’s thoughts on Sasha. Sasha does not seem concerned about Enno’s verbal aggression or his lack of emotion towards her, but rather she focuses on the condition of her tangible personal property after they elope: “I hadn’t bargained for this. I didn’t think it would be like this—shabby clothes, worn-out shoes, circles under your eyes, your hair getting straight and lanky, the way people look at you...I didn’t think it would be like this” (121). They have little money, and at an earlier point, they have had to sell their clothing to continue their trip to Paris (118). Because they have exchanged their

¹⁸ Sasha later says that she “fastened” herself to him “because [she] wanted to escape London” (130).

better clothing for money, Sasha's protestations condemning the state of her remaining clothing parallels her connection between the physical state of tangible personal property and its value. As the physical condition of her clothing deteriorates, Sasha realizes that the value consequently decreases. In other words, she is not being what Enno might call a hyperemotional "typical woman" in her complaints but rather recognizing that the condition—and, therefore, the value—of her clothing might hold the key to her further travels. Cynthia Port has commented that Sasha, unlike Rhys's other heroines in her earlier novels, finds herself in the "position as consumer rather than commodity" and that this position "seems potentially empowering" (207). Sasha's reference to "bargaining" in discussing the outcomes of her marriage suggests her expectation of a give-and-take relationship, a kind of *quid quo pro*, with Enno in the marriage partnership.

However, Enno does not have the same ability to recognize the value of property and the rights afforded through ownership. For example, in response to the two times that Sasha makes mention of the condition of her clothing, Enno does not understand her emotional reaction to it; he says, "Don't cry. If you cry I shall go mad" (120). For Enno, one dress is just like another, easily discarded or exchanged for "another dress as soon as [they] get to Paris" (120). Enno misrecognizes clothing as representative of intangible personal property rights—in short, as providing the ability to travel and get to Paris. He does not, however, connect the physical condition of the clothing with the value of the money they receive. This view results in a kind of deferment of the cost of monetary "credibility" for Enno. By removing the importance of physical condition to the value of tangible personal property and transferring the value of intangible personal property rights into clothing, Enno reduces the importance of money as the physical representation

of those rights. He makes any other physical object just like money—a representative of intangible property rights—and confers intangible property rights onto tangible property, at least in his mind. Consequently, every type of property becomes, in a sense, a container of intangible property rights to Enno. Unlike Sasha’s understanding of the use and exchange of property and its rights as a type of bargaining in which rights are simultaneously gained and lost, he sees the rights themselves as property, available to him without restriction or consequence through exchange.

Enno’s deferment of the cost of property rights contrasts with Sasha’s vision on property; this difference is highlighted in the two scenes where Sasha and Enno each borrow money. After arriving in Brussels on their way to France, Sasha remembers that an acquaintance named Mr. Lawson lives in the city and had told her to call on him if she ever came to Brussels. After a long talk in which Mr. Lawson does not recognize Sasha and treats her situation as if it was a “joke,” he offers her a hundred francs. After receiving the money, she thinks, “I am standing there with the note in my hand, when he comes up to me and kisses me. I am hating him more than I have ever hated anyone in my life, yet I feel my mouth go soft under his, and my arms go limp. ‘Good-bye,’ he says in imitation American, and grins” (119). In this exchange, Sasha understands that she gives over a kind of control to Mr. Lawson in taking the money; after telling Enno about the money, she reflects, “(With a hundred francs they buy the unlimited right to scorn you. It’s cheap.)” (120). In retrospect, Sasha comes to relate this loan from Mr. Lawson to her sex. Her seeming loss of bodily control after having received the money foreshadows her descriptions of her bodiless, faceless clients and the nameless and

formless hotel rooms she enters after she turns to prostitution when Enno leaves her for good at the end of this section (145).

In this conversation, the novel represents the exchange between men of property, both tangible and intangible, and rights related to that property, as a kind of automatic equivalency, with no sense of gain or loss. The sexual undertones and connection to her future street life in Sasha's description of her embrace with Mr. Lawson and the power she believes she has lost to him contrasts with the more casual exchange between Enno and the waiter he has befriended who has agreed to loan him money. Both Sasha and the waiter's wife accompany Enno and the waiter on their walk through town, and we learn that the money the waiter is lending Enno initially belonged to the wife: "All the time she was complaining in a thin voice that he never let her have any money for clothes, and that it was her money after all; he hadn't a sou when she married him" (122). Instead of a type of bargaining or a give-and-take partnership as Sasha has previously envisioned marriage, the waiter's wife is placed in a position of powerlessness and loss like Sasha when she borrows money from Mr. Lawson. After leaving the couple, Enno gives his opinion of the wife:

Enno had taken a dislike to Gustave's wife. 'That to call itself a woman!' he said.

'But it was her money,' I said.

'Oh well,' Enno said, 'he makes very good use of it, doesn't he?

He makes much better use of it than she would.' (122 - 23)

Neither the waiter nor Enno give or receive the kind of power loss that Sasha believes she has conceded to Mr. Lawson. There is never any mention of Enno's intention to repay

this loan nor either of the other two loans that he later receives. The incongruence of this situation relates to the fact that Enno—an assuredly high credit risk—sees himself as a “better use” of money than the purchase of adequate clothing for the waiter’s wife. Because there is no explicit discussion of repayment, he does not comprehend the intangible property rights that the waiter now holds over him through the loan. On the one hand, Enno sees the money only in terms of the intangible property rights that the cash immediately gives to him and not what taking the cash now might cost him in the long term. On the other hand, the novel portrays the state of women as always at a loss in exchanges of property. Like Sasha’s sense of loss with Mr. Lawson, the wife’s property is lost to her husband’s whims. Even when the wife tries to assert control of that money, Enno questions the wife’s identity as a woman; she only “calls herself” a woman but does not act like a proper one from his perspective when it comes to her property.

The novel, then, criticizes what it sees as the formation of a type of propriety—among women, property rights, and loss—to which Sasha eventually succumbs despite her initial views on property. This formulation of propriety comes to a head when Enno walks out on Sasha after a sexual encounter. Sasha recalls Enno’s words at this point, previous to his three-day disappearance: “‘You don’t know how to make love,’ he said. That was about a month after we got to Paris. ‘You’re too passive, you’re lazy, you bore me. I’ve had enough of this. Good-bye’” (128). Enno describes Sasha in terms of what she lacks: knowledge of physical intimacy, a sense of intentional activity, and any interest for men. This characterization prompts Sasha’s first mention of the twenty francs that Enno has left her and the certainty of her pregnancy, which begins to put in place a parallel between the lack of her “proper” female traits (at least from Enno’s perspective)

and a “proper” method of obtaining and using money that is depicted in the scene between the waiter and his wife. Sasha more overtly begins to relate these “absences” in her femininity to her lack of sustainable property ownership when Enno returns three days later. Upon Enno’s return, he tells Sasha to peel an orange for him. She is unable to respond to his request in the way she wants: “Peel it yourself,” or “Go to hell” (128). Although Sasha has spoken out against Enno previously in the novel, she does not say these confrontational phrases because “the room, the street, the thing in myself” is “much too strong” (129). She relates her passivity—a characteristic that Enno has earlier charged her with—to the property around her. The structure of the sentence in this example, with the three sets of nouns connected by commas, creates a parallelism that depicts her child, the “thing” in the third set, as another piece of property. This connection between her baby and tangible real property serves as the basis of her relationship with the newborn that I will discuss later in the chapter.

Instead of seeing tangible or intangible property as imbuing people with rights as she once did after her departure from London, Sasha sees all property as stripping away not just her rights but also her ability to speak. Enno then reveals what he has acquired during his three-day absence: “He brings out a mille note, a second mille note. I don’t ask where he has got them. Why ask? Money circulates; it circulates—and how! Why, you wouldn’t believe it sometimes” (129). This attitude constitutes a different point of view for Sasha than the one she has previously held in Part Three. For Sasha now, it is the possession and movement of the physical object of money that matters, not necessarily the rights the intangible property of money bestows or any “interest” he might owe to the person from whom he has borrowed the money. In other words, she begins

misrecognizing property rights and the categorization of property in a way that reflects Enno's own misconception of property.

After Enno leaves Sasha for the last time, the novel depicts Sasha's quick emotional descent in which she begins to base her self-worth on the property she has or desires. She worries constantly about money after her family decides not to support her; she thinks, "Money for my hair, money for my teeth, money for shoes that won't deform my feet (it's not so easy now to walk around in cheap shoes with very high heels), money for good clothes, money, money" (144). The word "money" is repeated six times in this passage, and in the first four instances, Sasha connects the possession of money with some part of her body. Similar to Enno's list that describes what he thinks she lacks, Sasha's list of improvements implies that she views her body as lacking in appropriate characteristics, a problem that she thinks can be improved with money. The word "money" becomes a kind of mantra for Sasha, an attempt to convince herself of her ability to obtain self-worth through spending. Because she has begun selling her body on the street, she sees herself as a form of tangible personal property whose value is dependent upon the upkeep of her clothes and her looks.

However, the repetition of the word "money" divorces the word itself from any real-life referent or resulting value of its exchange. As the sentence draws to a close, the references to her body disappear. These references are replaced by the simple utterance "money, money." Instead of money providing the right to obtain goods and services—in this case, to "improve" herself physically in her mind—money becomes the object of attention and desire itself, not necessarily the rights that it affords the person who possesses it. Consequently, she thinks, "That's always when there isn't any. Just when

you need it there's no money. *No money*. It gets you down" (144). Sasha, then, places emphasis on obtaining the physical representation of intangible property rights without a focus on the property rights themselves. Instances of the physical body continue to disappear as the scene unfolds. Sasha describes a typical night with a client: "Eat. Drink. Walk. March. Back to the hotel" (144). The direct and simplistic imperative statements indicate a kind of unthinking and mindless process, one that occurs automatically, outside the awareness of the body. She continues her description later in the same paragraph, thinking, "Back to the hotel without a name in the street without a name. You press the button and the door opens. This is the Hotel Without-a-Name in the Street Without-a-Name, and the clients have no names, no faces. You go up the stairs. Always the same stairs, always the same room" (144 – 45). Every item in this passage is defined by absence, with a particular emphasis on property (the hotels and streets) and bodies (her clients). Within this context, most notably absent for Sasha is any mention of money, which has disappeared from her mind altogether, and her body, which she was originally overtly concerned with.

Rather than focusing on the physical condition of her body as a form of tangible personal property, she begins to see it as an equivalent to cash, much as Enno in his response to her worries about clothing earlier in the story. The room takes her ability to speak and think: "The room says: 'Quite like old times. Yes?...No?...Yes'" (145), a repetition of the first line of the novel. Even the mental will she had in the scene with Enno—where she wants to tell him to peel the orange himself—has been subsided by the power of the personified property. By the end of the section, she wants money only to experience the physical process of giving it away; she writes, "Just the sensation of

spending, that's the point," not what she gets in return (145). In other words, she begins to treat cash, a form of intangible personal property, as if it were tangible personal property dependent upon transfer and physical condition for its value. At this point, then, Sasha no longer sees property rights or her now absent marriage as a form of bargaining but rather as permanently affixed to a process of loss, and we see her beginning to attach her sense of self to any property that she comes into contact with.

This sense of connection among loss, self, and property becomes compounded by her pregnancy. After giving birth to her son, she relates her thoughts and feelings in the hospital: "Afterwards I couldn't sleep. I would sleep for an hour or two, and then wake up and think about money, money, money for my son; money, money..." (59). Again, Sasha begins to use the word "money" as a kind of mantra, focusing on the possession of the physical entity rather than any help that it might give to her or her son. Just the thought of money seems to make her at a loss for words; this sentence as well as many of the other sentences in this section that mentions money ends in ellipses. For example, she also says, "Money, money for my son, my beautiful son..." (59). Sasha twice connects a loss with her not having money. First, she questions the motivation of the staff at the hospital; she thinks, "But the thought that they will crush him because we have no money—that is torture" (59). She repeats her complaint about lack of sleep and connects the lack of money to her inability to produce breast milk for her son. She writes, "I can't sleep. My breasts dry up, my mouth is dry. I can't sleep. Money, money..." (59). In each of these instances, Sasha relates the absence of money with the loss of bodily function by connecting the possession of intangible personal property with the very tangible effects on her and her child's physical condition. In effect, she begins

identifying herself—her physical and mental state—with the absence of money and equating an absence or loss of property with an absent or lost body and, consequently, identity.

After the birth and death of her son, Sasha continues this pattern of relating her physical or mental state to tangible and intangible property and defining her identity through this property, especially property that does not belong to her. For example, Sasha begins planning her life around the effect that property has on her; she writes, “The thing is to have a programme, not to leave anything to chance—no gaps” (15). Consequently, she writes, “At four o’clock next afternoon I am in a cinema on the Champs Elysées, according to programme. Laughing heartily in the right places” (16). In other words, Sasha creates the narrative of her life events in accordance to the strategy of the city plan rather than according to a kind of tactical “wandering” or an intentional path that she purposely makes.

In opposition to her escape from the effects of her London room and an oppressive family environment, tangible real property now serves to define her days and nights, her actions and inactions. Sasha realizes this effect that property has on her life:

My life, which seems so simple and monotonous, is really a complicated affair of cafés where they like me and cafés where they don’t, streets that are friendly, streets that aren’t, rooms where I might be happy, rooms where I never shall be, looking-glasses I look nice in, looking-glasses I don’t, dresses that will be lucky, dresses that won’t, and so on.

(46)

At first, the passage seems to describe the relationship between Sasha and property forged at the beginning of the novel; the property in the passage dictates her actions and makes her life a “complicated affair.” Using the possessive pronoun “my” suggests Sasha’s belief that property’s influence is specific to her. However, this passage also seems to indicate a kind of slippage from an externalized construction of Sasha’s identity to an internalized one, moving from references to large-scale, more general property (cafés and streets) to more specific kinds of property related to her body (glasses and dresses). In the references to cafes and streets, both structures are personified in terms of their friendliness towards and likeability of Sasha. Initially, she relates her inherent “goodness” or “badness” in terms that are outside her control; she cannot make the streets or the cafés welcome her. The latter two references to looking-glasses and dresses do not use personification. The qualities of “being lucky” or “looking nice”—or the lack thereof—comes from within Sasha herself, though she bases these qualities on the property she encounters. Instead of the property representing her identity, the property defines the attitudes she holds about herself. The room, located in the middle of this passage, serves as a transitional space between the public attitudes about Sasha and the private attitudes she holds about herself. She never owns a room or house in the novel but instead relies upon rented rooms. Because of that reliance, the sense of public ownership of the room exists—she often mentions the history of the people who have inhabited the room before her, once calling them the “ghosts in my room”—though the rented room is her private space containing her personal property (56). Though there are rooms that she will never be happy in, she can only speculate about the possibility of rooms that can provide happiness to her. This note of despair ties together the public

view of herself from the beginning of the passage and the private view of herself at the end, moving from outside on the street to inside a building. Additionally, her attempts to offer this relationship as specific to her identity break down. Although she protests that her life is not “simple and monotonous,” the parallel structure of the sentences that comprise this passage indicates otherwise; the repetitive sentence structure connotes a kind of monotony to her life. In the end, then, this passage demonstrates how Sasha internalizes the property around her, whether or not she owns it, in an attempt to establish a discrete identity.

However, the novel problematizes this attempt to form a discrete identity through the construction of a life narrative that uses property as its basis in a key scene that reintroduces the idea of misrecognition. About midway through the novel, Sasha meets the young man René while having drinks at the Dôme in Paris. He begs Sasha to listen to his story. René says that he has approached Sasha because she speaks English and because she “won’t betray” him (73). Though Sasha initially hesitates and questions his motives, she listens to his story. After hearing a tale of running away from home to join the French Foreign Legion from which René has recently escaped, Sasha presents the reader with two very different reactions, one external and one internal. To René, Sasha says, “But, my dear friend, I don’t know what you think I can do. People who are in trouble want someone with money to help them. Isn’t it so? Well, I haven’t got any money” (75). Sasha’s amiable, matter-of-fact response to René’s situation and her recognition of his “true” motives—we learn later that he does indeed want money for a counterfeit passport to London—suggests her ability to control her property as well as to manipulate outside views of her identity as it relates to property. However, Sasha’s

internal monologue immediately following her statement stands in stark contrast to her overt friendliness and demonstrates that this control is tenuous at best; she thinks

I want to shout at him ‘I haven’t got any money, I tell you. I know what you’re judging by. You’re judging by my coat. You oughtn’t to judge by my coat. You ought to judge by what I have on under my coat, by my handbag, by my expression, by anything you like. Not by this damned coat, which was a present—and the only reason I haven’t sold it long ago is because I don’t want to offend the person who gave it to me, and because if you knew what you really get when you try to sell things it would give you a shock, and because—’ (75)

Sasha’s internal thoughts indicate both a lack of forcefulness and an absence of control. Though René does need money for the passport, his level of interest in Sasha goes beyond the monetary as we come to find out near the end of the novel, which I will discuss later in the chapter. The short simple sentences at the beginning of the passage transform into one long rant as the intensity of the passage, and Sasha’s anger, increases to the point where she cannot continue thinking, breaking off in mid-sentence. This incident ends with a kind of resolution by Sasha. She thinks, “Well, there you are—no use arguing. I can see he has it firmly fixed in his head that I’m a rich bitch and that if he goes on long enough I can be persuaded to part” (75). After all, Sasha believes, “Well, what harm can he do to me? He is out for money and I haven’t got any. I am invulnerable” (76).

This passage serves to link property with narrative formation, and particularly the formation of a narrative concerning Sasha’s identity. René begins the conversation by

begging Sasha to listen to his story. Sasha believes that René's story of his time in the Foreign Legion is only a pretext for his motivation to try to swindle her out of money; she questions the veracity of his narrative. After hearing his story and his protests about its legitimacy, she thinks, "You imagine the carefully-pruned, shaped thing that is presented to you is truth. That is just what it isn't" (74). Because she is wary of his story and the possibility that he has used the story on other women to dupe them out of money, Sasha seems to believe that the creation of narrative can lead to the acquisition of property, a position that appears to counter her original focus on bargaining and exchange or give and take. Sasha has previously commented on the physical condition of the coat at the beginning of the novel: "And then this damned old fur coat slung on top of everything else..." (15). She has no delusions about the value of the jacket as a piece of tangible personal property. However, the fur coat is a gift from a friend; much of its value for Sasha lies in its symbolic value as a gift and not as an item of exchange or through its physical condition. Sasha, then, sees this tangible piece of property as having more sentimental than actual value. René does not recognize either of these aspects of the tangible personal property. He does not take notice of the physical condition of the jacket nor does he know about the sentimental value the coat holds for Sasha. Thus, the identity narrative that Sasha thinks René provides from his recognition of the jacket—that of a "rich bitch" in Sasha's language—is based on a false valuation of the property. Although Sasha recognizes this narrative as incorrect, she passively accepts its designation of her identity, which becomes ironic because we learn that René does actually care for Sasha at the end of the novel. As with Enno, where she begins viewing property in the way he views property, she also starts connecting property with the

formation of an identity narrative. Though she suggests René's erroneous reading of her property, this statement does not reflect the forcefulness of her thoughts about his misrecognition. This type of inaction is just another in a long line that comes about when she begins thinking of property now, a problem based in her relationship with Enno and the death of her child. Because of her inaction, she cannot produce her own narrative through her association with property but rather must rely on others to produce them for her. She assumes the role that has been constructed for her, much like she began viewing her body as a kind of property earlier in the novel. The men create Sasha's identity for her as they create a perceived life narrative for her physical property. By accepting these identity narratives, Sasha is provided with a false sense of security; as a "rich bitch," she becomes "invulnerable" to any threats.

The final moments of the book show how misrecognition of property value has completely defined Sasha. At the conclusion of her time with René, Sasha rejects his sexual advances even though she has developed feelings for him. Though she tells him to leave her hotel room and take the money he needs, she discovers after his departure that he has left the money, an indication that he has also developed an emotional attachment to Sasha. In short, Sasha misreads René and his intentions. In the context of the sexual situation in which they find themselves, she expects him to leave her penniless; from her perspective, it is the proper role of men to take money away from women. After he leaves, Sasha thinks, "The last performance of What's-her-name And Her Boys or It Was All Due To An Old Fur Coat" (184). This final moment with René mirrors the one sexual experience the novel describes with Enno earlier in the novel and leaves Sasha, in her mind, without the most basic identifying marker: a name. Consequently, she is left

with no one or nothing to create for her a narrative of identity except for her neighbor, whom she ironically despises yet invites into her room. After inviting her neighbor to share her bed, Sasha says, “Yes—yes—yes...” (190). These final words of the novel, along with the ellipses, imply a nightly ritual of economic exchange where her body—personal property of the most personal sort—is the currency of choice.

Good Morning, Midnight demonstrates that women cannot passively assume a “proper” recognition of their identity grounded in tangible and intangible property and must actively work, through narrative, to correct any misrecognition. Given Sasha’s unfortunate end, the novel suggests that even this tactic is tenuous at best. However, *Good Morning, Midnight* shows the groundwork that Rhys laid for her approach to writing *Wide Sargasso Sea*, her next novel. *Wide Sargasso Sea* exposes how readers assume a sense of propriety about Bertha through her depiction in *Jane Eyre*, namely that her proper place is in the attic and that her proper role is that of a madwoman, a representation of deterministic fate. Similarly, it is this sense of determinism that leads Sasha to think, “Well, there you are—no use arguing,” when René misrecognizes her fur coat as a sign of her “rich bitch” identity (75). Unlike her representation of Sasha, though, Rhys creates an identity narrative for Bertha, the history of Antoinette Cosway described in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and recovers a sense of historical contingency. The deliberate refusal to provide an unambiguous conclusion to the novel shapes the narrative of alternative history that Rhys offers through Antoinette. By linking Sasha’s inability to create an identity narrative with the recovery of a sense of chronological indeterminacy through the creation of Bertha’s identity narrative, readers can more fully understand Rhys’s larger project that shows how literary fictions have a unique capacity to prompt

critical reassessments of social mores and normative codes of propriety and gender identity construction that are often taken for granted.

In the years of *Good Morning, Midnight*'s composition prior to 1939, Rhys's experiences with property were negative and paralleled many of Sasha's experiences. According to biographer Carole Angier, Rhys's then husband John Lenglet stole large sums of money from her and was sent to prison for selling foreign currency on the black market (117). Angier describes several instances of possible plagiarism on the part of Lenglet. About the issue, she writes that Lenglet "was certainly prepared to hijack Jean's works in order to swell his reputation" as well as his pocketbook, though the issue remains one of debate among Rhys scholars (288). Not only did Lenglet steal Rhys's money, making her livelihood more difficult, but he also possibly appropriated her narrative, the creation of which contributed to her identity as a writer. I end with commentary on Rhy's life because I want to avoid what Mary Jacobus describes as "an unstated complicity with the autobiographical 'phallacy,' whereby male critics hold that women's writing is somehow closer to [women's] experience than men's, that the female text *is* the author, or at any rate a dramatic extension of her unconsciousness" (520). These moments from Rhys's life should tell us less about specific correspondences between Rhys and Sasha and more on the way Lenglet's apparent view of Rhys indicates the general attitude toward women and property during the first half of the twentieth century in Britain. As laws sought to correct the disadvantaged positions in which women found themselves, women novelists began to expand their definitions of property to include alternatives, especially the somatic and the textual. As you will see in the next

chapter, self-ownership becomes a key concept in how British women writers since the middle of the century have understood these more inclusive definitions of property.

Chapter Three: A Boat of Our Own: Revisions of Possessive Individualism and the Dangers of the Egalitarian Instinct in the Novels of Penelope Fitzgerald

In contrast to the novels by Woolf and Rhys, Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Bookshop* (1978) and *Offshore* (1979) explore what is at stake in relying upon property as a source of self-ownership, the consequences of having that property taken away or altered, and the gendered reactions to this alteration. Though critics have focused on issues of class and satire in Fitzgerald's novels, I contend that gender, especially as it relates to property, is crucial to an understanding of her social critiques. Fitzgerald's female protagonists work toward "owning the self," toward having the freedom and self-management of one's body *and* the control over property and possessions that contribute to an important part of their identity. Their work to develop self-ownership and identity formation contrasts with the legal principle of coverture, in which women are said to be "covered" by men's legal rights. Men's property, in other words, determines women's relation to society as a whole by shaping their relation to ownership. Fitzgerald's novels acknowledge that property offers necessary identity-bestowing characteristics for women. However, as Barbara Fisher Williamson's review of Fitzgerald's *Offshore* states, "[A]ll end up literally suspended, between dry land and the drink. No one is settled in the end, including the reader, who hangs on perilously to a slender spar of the storytelling craft." Fitzgerald's female characters consistently fail to establish full self-ownership because they are unable to negotiate the tension between the identity they seek to tactically create for themselves (an individual, discrete narrative of identity) and the identity that society strategically creates for them (a generic narrative of female identity). The female

characters end up “suspended” between the property rights and interests of the individual and those of the community in which they live and must participate.

Although *The Bookshop* and *Offshore* are two of Fitzgerald’s earliest novels (her first books include a biographical piece concerning the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones and a history of her father, who was a *Punch* editor, and his three brothers), they remain two of her most read and highly acclaimed works. *The Bookshop* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1978, and *Offshore* won the award the following year. Published near the end of the 1970s, the novels arrived at a time when feminism began to enter a state of transition. One reason that I have chosen to examine Fitzgerald’s novels is that they mark this transition; they reflect the concerns of second wave feminism and also anticipate the more deconstructive methods of third wave feminism and gender studies. However, readers of Fitzgerald have often bypassed feminism or the concerns of women as a way to approach her novels likely because of her understated style, a style that creates “no distinctly calibrated moral scales in Fitzgerald’s fiction, but rather carefully modulated shades of gray” as Tess Lewis suggests. Her novels are not as radical in narrative structure, style, or content as some of her feminist contemporaries, such as Angela Carter and Hélène Cixous. The novels also do not seek to invert the gender binary opposition of men over women—a primary project of second wave feminism. Feminist scholars may have ignored her writing because they do not see her work as greatly critical of women’s marginalization in society and literature. This chapter describes the ways that Fitzgerald’s female characters perform this criticism by relating property and women’s access to (or lack of access to) the identity-bestowing characteristic of property under masculinist regimes of self-ownership and identity

formation in Britain. Part of the work of this chapter, then, is to claim Fitzgerald's place in the canon of feminist literature, or, in short, to establish the propriety of her identity as a feminist writer.

I concentrate specifically on *The Bookshop* and *Offshore* because these novels locate her feminist critiques within discourses of self-ownership in Britain. Unlike many of her other works (such as *The Blue Flower* that concerns the life of Germany's most famous romantic poet or *Innocence*, which is set in Florence during the middle of the twentieth century), *The Bookshop* and *Offshore* present an example of how a British woman writer understands a woman's role in society and how that role is perceived by the British public. My focus on self-ownership in my approach can also be applicable to her other novels by considering the histories of property, propriety, and women in Germany and Italy, for example. However, that critical work lies outside the scope of this chapter.

Though criticism on Fitzgerald's writing is slight, most scholars and reviewers comment on her use of social satire yet do not concentrate on gender as a part of that satire. For example, Peter Wolfe writes, "Fitzgerald understands the ripple effects, not only of marriage but also of other bonds. At issue are social arrangements and assumptions in place so long that they are taken for granted." Fitzgerald realizes that unless "they are challenged, they will stay put" (24). As Tess Lewis, Sybil Steinberg, and Jeff Zaleski point out, one of Fitzgerald's primary means of social critique is her humor. About *The Bookshop*, Steinberg and Zaleski write, "Fitzgerald is mordantly funny, especially when exposing the foibles of the town's extremely petty population..." (183). Similarly, Lewis discusses Fitzgerald's criticism of academia in her first novel

The Golden Child. Inspired by Tutankhamen mania, the novel includes a German scholar, Professor Untermensch, author of *Garamantischengeheimschriftendechiffrierkunst*—a monograph on the art of deciphering Garamantian pictographs. Lewis writes, “Decades before today's excesses, she skewers the museum as cultural temple in the age of the mega-show and the temples’ high priests, those keepers of various departments interested only in expanding their power and their collections regardless of cost or quality.” This chapter contributes to previous Fitzgerald scholarship by presenting tactics other than humor through which her novels criticize social standards and traditions, especially in terms of the establishment of self-ownership for women.

The purchase of the Old House by Florence Green, Penelope Fitzgerald’s protagonist in *The Bookshop*, begins as a pursuit to demonstrate self-ownership and to put her “property in person”¹⁹ into the marketplace of Hardborough through her labor. However, Florence’s response to the purchase of the Old House demonstrates that self-ownership is not created through property acquisition alone. Florence “had recently come to wonder whether she hadn’t a duty to make it clear to herself, and possibly to others, that she existed in her own right” (7). Florence wants her business to offer tangible evidence of her existence and her identity within the community. At first, Florence does not feel that she owes society anything through her labor. Instead, she wants to stake a claim for herself and her identity through recognition in the Hardborough economy. However, the irony in this decision lies in the fact that as she gains more possessions, she loses the sense of herself that she has held since she became self-

¹⁹ By “property in person,” I mean that individuals are beings who have property in their own abilities. This proprietorship authorizes their free activities in the marketplace.

supporting at sixteen (9). This point demonstrates the reductive nature of property ownership. The property defines Florence, and she begins to lose those important human capacities that she had developed at a young age. This experience of the reductive nature of property ownership manifests after the purchase of the Old House through her generic identification with the property itself.

Florence's purchase of the Old House does not offer the creation of an individual identity for herself as she had hoped; instead, her identity is reduced to part of a generic classification. At the Gamarts' party at The Stead, a private club, the crowd affords her recognition but not the kind she has wanted to create through buying the Old House.

Upon seeing Florence, General Gamart is

relieved to see a smallish woman who did not appear to be intimidating or a relation of his wife's.... If she was not a relation of his wife's there were no elementary blunders to be made, but although he felt certain he had seen her somewhere before, God knew who she was exactly. She followed his thoughts, which, indeed, were transparent in their dogged progress from one difficulty to another, and told him that she was the person who was going to open a bookshop. (20)

The General initially identifies Florence by who she is not or by the characteristics, both physical and psychological, that she lacks, and he finds comfort in that fact. While it might seem as if the General tries to identify her through her relationships with others, the relationships he mentions are arbitrary familial ones rather than relationships cultivated through community interaction. In this way, the General strips her of any "property in person" that she might "own" because he does not want to know her identity so that he

can avoid any social missteps. For the General, identity is associated with propriety, with affording the correct social manners to those of the correct category, whether through economic class or family relationship. Instead of telling the General her name, she responds to the conversation by identifying herself through the property she owns or the activity that she undertakes. Nevertheless, Florence needs to provide herself a place within the General's identity schema. Thus, by reducing herself to property owner, she relies on her property that she thinks will offer her a recognized identity in the community. However, this identification with property has the opposite effect, reflecting a type of false assurance that self-ownership through property offers. Propriety in this instance means the absence of "property in person." Instead of offering Florence some kind of standing in the eyes of the general or an identity that differentiates her from other business owners, she instead becomes simply the lady who owns the bookshop, what I call the "egalitarian instinct" in the novel. The General replies, "That's it, of course. Got it in one. You're thinking of opening a bookshop" (21). Their conversation from that point on focuses on the bookshop, its supply and need in the community. Florence becomes just another generic business owner discussing generic business owner issues.

Milo North makes a similar comment after the General leaves that alludes to coverture and the idea of women as property instead of women as owners of property. Milo says, "You live by yourself, don't you? You've just moved into the Old House all by yourself? Haven't you ever thought of marrying again?" (23). In this and the ensuing conversation, Milo associates each aspect of Florence's identity with the purchase of the property, a practice that would seemingly support her decision to try to "exist" through the acquisition of property. However, Milo implies two ideas with his remark about her

marriage and the ways it relates to property. First, Milo shows that he has his own idea of propriety that parallels the sense of propriety established by the General. Milo's propriety focuses on gender instead of class though; through his constant repetition of Florence's widowhood and his focus on a possible new marriage, Milo's statements suggest that Florence should not properly own the Old House without a male companion to help her. Women are not owners of property but rather property to be owned and managed by a husband. Second, Milo goes on to pose the question, "Are you sure you're well advised to undertake the running of a business?" (23). With this question, Milo suggests that Florence does not exhibit the proper characteristics for running the business, a primarily essentialist notion that reflects the attitudes that coverture formalized as law. In other words, Milo's position implies that women do not have access to property in person that will allow them to enter the market and sell their labor.

In contrast to Florence, for *Offshore*'s female protagonist Nenna, purchasing and living on a houseboat in the Thames River helps her escape the definition of her identity based purely on her roles as a wife. The novel uses summary to describe any depiction of Nenna's life prior to and during her marriage; therefore, before her purchase of the houseboat, the novel does not allow Nenna to have an articulate voice to propose her own opinions and thoughts or counter the charges made against her by her husband Edward. The purchase of the houseboat, though, triggers what she calls "a kind of perpetual magistrate's hearing, in which her own version of her marriage was shown as ridiculously simple and demonstrably right, and then, almost exactly at the same time, as incontrovertibly wrong" (34). The fact that she formulates this imaginary rebuttal in the form of legal proceedings lends some credence to the conclusions that she comes to, at

least for herself. In the proceedings, Nenna is granted a voice with which to answer the magistrate's, and thus her husband's, attempts to define her through what is seen as her "proper" wifely duties. The magistrate asks Nenna, "Mrs. James. Did your husband, or did he not, complain that the houseboat *Grace*, apart from being damp, needed extensive repairs, and that it was difficult if not impossible for you to resume any meaningful sexual relationship when your cabin acted as a kind of passageway with your daughters constantly going to and fro to gain access to the hatch...?" (36). While the magistrate first points to the condition of the boat as a problem for Edward, the majority of the sentence concerns the boat's role in preventing the sex act. The initial complaints become a pretense for mentioning the lack of physical intimacy between Nenna and Edward, a focus on his physical needs as a man and not their physical and emotional needs as a married couple. The magistrate's phrasing denaturalizes the children in their marriage, making them mere obstacles to obtaining sex from Nenna. All of these issues arrive out of the property's particular form and function.

Unable to address the issues outside her imagination, her livelihood on the boat has helped her develop a voice independent of her husband so that she can answer the charges in her imaginary interrogation. In response to the magistrate's questions, Nenna yells, "I love him, I want him. While he was away was the longest fifteen months and eight days I ever spent. I can't believe even now that it's over. Why don't I go to him? Well, why doesn't he come to us? He hasn't found anywhere at all that we could all of us live together" (36). In her response, Nenna describes the pain that she has felt as a result of Edward working in South America; in other words, Edward is not the only one in the relationship missing emotional fulfillment. The two questions that she poses put equal

blame on his shoulders for their current separation. Rather than the problem simply belonging to Nenna because she does not mindlessly follow her husband wherever he goes, she points out that they both have a responsibility to themselves and to their children to try to communicate and work out their marriage. Her tactic of response that focuses on equal responsibility between her and Edward in these imaginary exchanges mirrors the emphasis on equality among the owners and the ships in the initial scene, associating her voice with her experience as the boat's owner and its geographical setting. Living on *Grace* has provided an atmosphere where Nenna has developed her own voice, the ability to think for herself, to construct an identity outside of her role as a wife.

I now turn to contrasting theories of "owning the self" to explain and understand this tension between self and society represented through the experiences of Florence, Nenna, and the other women in *The Bookshop* and *Offshore*. To this end, I use the theory of possessive individualism, in which an individual is the sole proprietor of his or her skills and owes nothing to society for them, a primarily masculinist position, and C. B. Macpherson's idea of "cooperative and creative individualism" and Scottish property law's similar community-based adaptation of possessive individualism to argue that the works expose how women remain suspended between the legal, political, and economic property interests of the individual and the interests of the community in twentieth-century Britain. While most criticism of possessive individualism emphasizes the injustice it does to non-owners, Fitzgerald's novels take gender into consideration and concentrate on the possible damage to the development of a female owner's identity and relationships when she defines herself solely by her proprietorship. In contrast to possessive individualism, "cooperative and creative individualism" relies upon property

not for the good of the self but for the good of the community. Property holding no longer implies an ability to dispose of goods and talents at will but a commitment to use them for collective benefit, which results in the cultivation of an identity for the community participant. However, Fitzgerald's novels show how the egalitarian nature of property in this perspective tends to have a flattening effect by erasing markers of identity for the female characters. Fitzgerald's novels do not construct alternative ontological or epistemological models for women nor do they wholly disprove possessive individualism or cooperative and creative individualism, theories of self-ownership constructed primarily by men for men. Rather, by describing the female experience of establishing self-ownership, the novels critique the weaknesses and inadequacies of traditional ways of thinking about the formation of self-ownership, identity, and property. In short, these approaches are insufficient to describe and account fully for the experience and development of women's identities.

In defining "possessive individualism," C. B. Macpherson seeks to marry politics and economics in arguing how this conception of self-ownership has shaped liberal thinking about the development of the individual. Possessive individualism is, as Etienne Balibar explains, a blend of ideas arising from seventeenth-century Britain in the writings of Thomas Hobbes, the Levellers, James Harrington, and John Locke that had wide-ranging but not necessarily consistent effects on English law (299-303). Macpherson popularized the term, though clearly not the idea, in his influential 1962 book *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*. In this text, Macpherson provides seven assumptions that serve as the basis of possessive individualism in the West.²⁰

²⁰ Macpherson uses "man" throughout his descriptions of these assumptions. Because the text was first published in 1962, I assume that Macpherson was simply using what was, at the time, the stylistic standard

- (i) What makes a man human is freedom from dependence on the will of others.
- (ii) Freedom from dependence on others means freedom from any relations with others except those relations which the individual enters voluntarily with a view to his own interest.
- (iii) The individual is essentially the proprietor of his own person and capacities, for which he owes nothing to society....
- (iv) Although the individual cannot alienate the whole of his property in his own person, he may alienate his capacity to labor.
- (v) Human society consists of a series of market relations....
- (vi) Since freedom from the wills of others is what makes a man human, each individual's freedom can rightfully be limited only by such obligations and rules as are necessary to secure the same freedom for others.
- (vii) Political society is a human contrivance for the protection of the individual's property in his person and goods, and (therefore) for the maintenance of orderly relations of exchange between individuals regarded as proprietors of themselves. (263-64)

The key idea in possessive individualism, then, is the use of "property in person" to define both persons and things. Individuals are beings who have property in their own abilities. This proprietorship authorizes their free activities in the marketplace and in the state. They can exchange goods and labor because they "own" those things and talents

to represent both sexes through the noun "man." Consequently, I do not believe that Macpherson is consciously making a statement about the inaccessibility of possessive individualism for women.

and, as a result, become defined as property and “individualized” through this conception of “self-ownership.” The legal system exists to protect the concept of property, and laws do so best when they impose only as much restraint on individual freedom as is necessary to allow other owners equivalent freedom. Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, which often alludes to Locke, celebrates the power of ownership. For example, Blackstone states that the law “will not authorize the least violation” of an owner’s “free use, enjoyment, and disposal of all his acquisitions”—“not even for the general good of the whole community” (1: 134-35). Blackstone places the right to property alongside a person’s right to security and liberty as one of the three absolute rights of every person.

In practice, though, only men who possessed land that represented their status as proprietors enjoyed the freedom of self-ownership. Most women could not be self-owners because of the law of “coverture,” which placed their possessions and their person in the custody of their husbands when they married (Blackstone 1: 430). Men who did not own land also could not fully enjoy self-ownership because their activities were limited by their economic dependence. By the early nineteenth century, awareness of the injustice of these exclusions and protests against them appeared in the philosophical treatises and radical novels. Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Charlotte Smith, and other writers depicted the hardships that this legal system imposed upon women and non-elite men, and they sought alternative definitions of personhood through natural rights theories that valued human existence apart from ownership.

In his work, Macpherson criticizes possessive individualism on two fronts. First, he claims that it is a reductive approach to thinking about members of a society in terms of development and identity. Joseph Carens writes that Macpherson believed possessive

individualism produces “an impoverished view of life, making acquisition and consumption central and obscuring deeper human purposes and capacities” (3). By focusing on the acquisition of property, people never develop past their identities as consumers and as makers of consumable products. The ultimate goal for all members of society under the regime of possessive individualism, then, is maximizing the production of utilitarian objects for purchase and consumption by others, not self-ownership through the freedom and self-management of one’s body, the control over property or possessions that contribute to an important part of their identity, and the development of essential human capacities. This ambition stands in contrast to Macpherson’s goal of the democratic ideal to “provide the conditions for the full and free development of the essential human capacities of all the members of the society” (*Real World* 37). Later in the chapter I will describe these “essential human capacities” that become a part of Macpherson’s idea of cooperative and creative individualism and how feminist responses to Macpherson agree and disagree with his alternative.

Macpherson’s second critique of possessive individualism involves the false assurance of freedom and equality it offers. Carens explains:

Most people cannot really enjoy even the impoverished individuality, freedom, and equality that possessive individualism ostensibly offers to all, because a system based on private property and so-called free exchange inevitably generates a concentration of ownership of all the means of production except labor. Most people are compelled to sell their labor to gain access to the means of life. (3)

Therefore, because people must sell their labor in order to maintain a basic standard of living, they are free and equal individuals in name only. Owners of capital use the power that ownership brings to control those without capital and to extract benefits from them. Macpherson argued that the original meaning of democracy was rule on behalf of the common people or the formerly oppressed. However, the possessive individualist version rejects and obscures the subjugation and class domination intrinsic to a society based upon private—and unequal—property. In this configuration, women’s lack of property rights under the principle of coverture would doubly remove them from the benefits of proprietorship and, as a result, self-ownership.

Macpherson’s critiques also suggest several other difficulties that expose possessive individualism as anti-social and self-destructive. Because people’s identities are never cultivated past their roles as producers and consumers, members of a society can become indifferent to the effects of property acquisition on others. Taking advantage of ethically dubious, though perfectly legal, situations in order to sell or purchase property becomes the norm. For example, the transfer of family property in payment of personal debts was permissible, though many legal commentators such as Baron David Hume in his *Commentaries on the Law of Scotland* (1797) found the practice to be ethically questionable. Accompanying property acquisition and ownership is the idea of property improvement. Possession through improvement is shown, for example, by the landowner’s domination of the land and its inhabitants through such procedures as cutting down trees, altering the course of a stream, or moving cottages, or even whole villages, to suit the owner’s view. Improvement equates with privilege. Its emotional appeal lies in possessing what others do not and generally cannot enjoy, regardless of who or what is

damaged in the process of improvement—an often destructive demonstration of ownership. Competitive improvement, then, leads to extremism and jealousy as a result of possessive individualism. Owners of property are willing to take extreme measures to make sure that their possessions best the possessions of other owners and become jealous if they do not. Far from developing the best of Macpherson’s “essential human capacities,” this aspect of possessive individualism results in mistrust rather than cooperation.

In *The Bookshop*, both Violet Gamart and Milo North represent a possessive individualist mindset by making “improvements” to property in order to display ownership, using their “property in person” to gain an upper hand over Florence, or by using their “property in person” to question Florence’s “property”: her ability to own and run the bookshop. Each of these tactics focuses on the formulation of the individual’s identity through property ownership as well as the individual’s profit from ownership, a reductive approach to self-ownership that does not concern itself with the welfare of the community.

Mrs. Gamart’s first tactic involves trying to persuade Florence that the only business that will improve the Old House—and thus help the community—is an arts center. This tactic exhibits traditional possessive individualism. Mrs. Gamart sees property as exhibiting “essential characteristics” that parallel those that Macpherson discusses. In trying to convince Florence to locate the bookshop in a different building in the village, Mrs. Gamart says, “There are so many more suitable premises in Hardborough, so much more convenient in every way for a bookshop. Did you know, for example, that Deben is closing down?” (26). In this final statement, Mrs. Gamart

displays an indifference to the effects that her viewpoint has on others, ignoring the financial implications for Deben as he must close his fish market. Her suggestion for Florence to improve Deben's property goes along with possessive individualism's idea of improvement as a destructive display of ownership.

Mrs. Gamart's focus on her "property in person" and those capacities that she can use to supposedly help Florence and the village also reflects possessive individualist assumptions. Mrs. Gamart says to Florence, "You musn't laugh at me, but I'm fortunate enough to have a kind of gift, or perhaps it's an instinct, of fitting people and places together" (25). By likening her ability to pair property and proprietor to a "gift" or "instinct," Mrs. Gamart naturalizes the suggestions that she makes to Florence, removing any possible advantages that she might receive from the picture. Rather than offering the suggestions to relocate the bookshop as a personal choice formulated by Mrs. Gamart, she presents it as an innate part of her property as a person. In short, she tries to present herself as a cooperative and creative "doer" in the community rather than as simply a consumer. Mrs. Gamart applies a similar strategy to Florence as a person:

'And of course,' Mrs. Gamart went on, with even more marked emphasis, 'one great advantage, which it seems almost wrong to throw away, is that now we have exactly the right person to take charge. I mean to take charge of the centre, and put us all right about books and pictures and music, and encourage things, and get things off the ground, and keep things going, and see they're on the right lines.'

She gave Mrs. Green a smile of unmistakable meaning and radiance. (27)

Mrs. Gamart associates property with advantage and implies that Florence's capacities for aesthetic creation and as a businesswoman and "patron" of the arts will make her an appropriate choice as the proprietor of the arts centre. Mrs. Gamart also invokes a rhetoric of waste that implies both an economic and cultural loss if Florence does not agree to head the centre and locate her bookshop elsewhere. She implies that no one else contains the proper characteristics to operate the centre; from Florence's perspective and, supposedly, from Mrs. Gamart's, she is "exactly the right person" to run the centre. In other words, no one else has the proper characteristics of possessive individualism to do it. However, the final sentence of the quoted passage indicates that Florence is interpreting Mrs. Gamart's intentions, particularly through body language. Mrs. Gamart never specifies whose "property in person" exhibits these capacities. Later, Florence surmises that Mrs. Gamart had meant Milo North; Florence says to Milo, "When Mrs. Gamart was talking at her party about the ideal person to run an arts centre, it was you, wasn't it, that she had in mind?" (33). Inherent in Florence's realization is a revelation that Mrs. Gamart's true capacity is not necessarily matching property with proprietor as she suggests. Instead, her knowledge of social propriety as demonstrated through her body language and verbal cues to Florence shows how she can manipulate linguistic and somatic signals to obtain economic benefits, reflecting the false assurance for self-ownership and development of essential human capacities that possessive individualism offers.

Mrs. Gamart's actions when she visits the bookshop reveal a further characteristic of her possessive individualism. In the bookshop, Florence's eleven-year-old assistant Christine Gipping raps Mrs. Gamart's knuckles with a ruler for breaking line and

disordering reserved books that have been arranged according to Christine's own organizational system. When Florence asks what has happened after Mrs. Gamart storms from the bookshop, Christine says, "Mrs. Gamart from The Stead, she wouldn't wait her turn, she picked up other people's books and looked at them. Do they were hers she wasn't allowed to do that, and she's muddled my pink tickets!" (74 – 75). In this instance, two senses of social propriety come into conflict with one another: Christine's organizational system that relies upon order and fairness that equalizes all people despite class or societal ranking and Mrs. Gamart's propriety that relies upon economic and social standing that gives her superiority to other customers. She is indifferent to the effects her actions might have on others. However, Christine's sense of propriety is connected with what she sees as her duty to her customers and the community, while Mrs. Gamart's only duty is to herself. She does not accept any sense of Christine's challenge to possessive individualism that does not fit within her definition of propriety. In short, for Mrs. Gamart, there is only one model of possessive individualism, and that is her own. This mindset contrasts with the idea of shared enjoyment that is an integral part to Macpherson's philosophy of cooperative and creative individualism.

Mrs. Gamart's second tactic invokes the indifference to the plight of others, the idea of destructive improvement, and extremism and jealousy through her focus on the legal system as a means to force Florence to relocate the bookshop: all problems that Macpherson associates with the philosophy of possessive individualism. She uses her knowledge of the law—she serves as a Justice of the Peace—in three instances. First, Mrs. Gamart threatens to bring legal action against Florence for causing a disturbance through her window display promoting *Lolita*. However, Mrs. Gamart does not cite

safety for the community or even indecency as the reason for the possible suit.

Florence's attorney writes that Mrs. Gamart's attorney has said that the crowds gathering in front of Florence's store provide "a temporary obstruction unreasonable in quantum and duration to the use of the highway, and that his client...has to carry out her shopping expeditiously" because she is a member of several committees and clubs (85). Her sense of possessive individualism that focuses on the propriety of her social standing as the core of her identity elevates the needs and wants of the self over those of the whole or community. Taking away the crowds in front of Florence's store will help only Mrs. Gamart, certainly not Florence's bottom line or the people in Hardborough.

When Mrs. Gamart's first attempt to attain Florence's property through legal means fails, she shifts her focus to Christine Gipping. Mrs. Gamart has tipped off the local school authority that Christine has worked more hours than she is allowed to work under child labor laws. "Furthermore," the memo from the Education Authority to Florence states, "her health safety and welfare are at risk in your premises which are haunted in an objectionable manner" (96). In this instance, Mrs. Gamart uses the Old House—namely, its "rapper" or poltergeist—in order to prevent Christine from helping Florence with the business. Although Mrs. Gamart has earlier argued that her plans will benefit the community, her actions in this instance eventually prevent Christine from obtaining money to help her family. Thus, not only does Mrs. Gamart prevent Florence from running a successful business, but she also harms a specific family in the community by cutting off a source of monetary support for the Gippings—all in the name of improving Christine's life and the life of Hardborough. Mrs. Gamart cuts off an adequate means to life for the Gipping family.

Finally, Mrs. Gamart uses her nephew's power as a Member of Parliament from the Longwash division to have a law passed that allows the state to take property from landowners, a form of eminent domain. The "Access to Places of Educational Value and Interest Bill" in its original form gives local councils the power to "purchase compulsorily, and subject to agreed compensation, any buildings wholly or partly erected before 1549 and not used for residential purposes, provided there was no building of similar date on public show in the area" (99). In its final form, though, the Bill removes the qualifying phrase about residences; although Florence lives in the Old House, the government can compel her to sell the property. One of the major problems at the heart of possessive individualism is that it sacrifices the property that relates Florence's identity in the name of improvement. All of these problems occur due to Mrs. Gamart's jealousy of another woman's success. Rather than developing the best capacities that humans have to offer, possessive individualism promotes the worst. Through the character of Mrs. Gamart and her relationship with Florence, the novel shows the damage to the development of a female owner's identity and relationships when she defines herself solely by her proprietorship.

As *The Bookshop* has suggested, possessive individualism as a way to describe the development of self-ownership is inadequate for women. C. B. Macpherson's alternative to possessive individualism, what Alasdair MacIntyre calls "cooperative and creative individualism,"²¹ suggests that essential human capacities are developed and cultivated through participation within a community (178). This perspective relies upon property not for the good of the self but for the good of the community. However, this

²¹ Though in Macpherson's response he disagreed with MacIntyre's assessment in a number of different ways, Macpherson ultimately accepts the moniker "cooperative and creative individualism" to describe his position and writes that he is "indebted" to MacIntyre for coining the term ("Individualist Socialism" 198).

conception of the development of self-ownership is equally untenable for women because, as Fitzgerald's novels will show, the egalitarian nature of property in this perspective erases basic markers of gender identity for the female protagonists.

Macpherson's image of the individual in creative and cooperative individualism is of the person as a doer rather than a consumer. MacIntyre writes, "The twin concepts which are central to the definition of Macpherson's position are that of essential human capacities and that of the impediments to the use and development of those capacities" (178). In *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval*, Macpherson offers several examples of what he believed to be those essential human capacities: "the capacity for rational understanding, for moral judgment and action, for aesthetic creation or contemplation, for the emotional activities of friendship and love, and, sometimes for religious experience"; "the capacity for transforming what is given by Nature"; "the capacity for wonder or curiosity", "the capacity for laughter," and "the capacity for controlled physical / mental / aesthetic activity as expressed, for instance in making music and playing games of skill" (4 – 5 and 53 – 54). Such capacities are rewarding ends in themselves rather than means to consumer satisfaction, and their exercise need not pit people in competition against one another, but typically thrives on cooperation. In defending Macpherson against claims about the arbitrary nature of his list of essential capacities, Jules Townshend writes that "it was in a sense deliberately" arbitrary because "individuals can exercise and develop their capacities as they think fit" for their particular community, "once they were no longer possessed by consumerism and endless appropriation" under possessive individualism (142). This conception allows for flexibility in the development of self-ownership from community to community. Of course, Macpherson assumes that the

development of these capacities will not prevent other members of the community from likewise developing their capacities. Focusing on primarily external obstructions, Macpherson includes in the impediments to this form of self-ownership a lack of adequate means of life, a lack of access to the means of labor, and a lack of protection against invasion by others. For Macpherson, community should not rely on coming together in the quest for greater individual benefits, taking advantage of the absence of equal opportunity for individuals to realize their human potentials, or developing some individuals' capacities at the expense of others. Rather, the individual is secondary to the cultivation of the communal good.

Other contemporary commentaries on the law also argued against a focus on possessive individualism. Specifically, Scottish commentaries on property laws assert the priority of the common good over individual enjoyment, which gives them a different emphasis from Blackstone, even when the point of law is the same. For example, eminent domain seizures (taking private property for the good of the public through arguments related to "improving" the property) were legal in both countries, but Blackstone interprets the process in terms of a contract between individuals while John Erskine, his near contemporary whose *Institute of the Law of Scotland* was first published a decade before Blackstone's *Commentaries*, places the public good first. Despite having said that private property may not be taken even for public good, Blackstone concedes that the legislature may "compel" an owner to give up his property for public use, provided that it compensates him fully for the "injury." Blackstone rationalizes, "The public is now considered as an individual, treating with an individual for an exchange. All that the legislature does is to oblige the owner to alienate his possessions for a

reasonable price” (1: 135). In contrast, Erskine writes, “It is another legal limitation or restraint on property, That it must give way to the public necessity or utility.” Two conditions must be met: first, necessity or utility must be demonstrated: “*2dly* The persons deprived of their property ought to have a full equivalent given to them” (1: 162). In other passages, Erskine inserts positive comments about the importance of law in “inhibiting our licentiousness in the exercise” of our rights. He argues that “the law interposes so far for the public interest, that it suffers no person to use his property wantonly to his neighbour’s prejudice” (1: 162). Blackstone, however, avoids positive comments about restraints on individual freedom.

Facilitating a form of creative and cooperative individualism, the Thames River, where *Offshore* takes place, has always been associated with equality in British history. It is what Peter Ackroyd in his recent biography of the river calls a “leveller” because many levelling movements through British history associated themselves with the rivers. “Water,” he writes, “is the greatest of equalisers. It is well enough known that water seeks an even level, but this is more than a metaphor. Throughout its history it has been understood that the river is free to all people” (115). In the Magna Carta as well as in several parliamentary proceedings, the Thames has consistently been claimed as a place where all are welcome and where all can partake of the river’s gifts of food and transportation. Within this context, no one owns the river, not even the monarch. Consequently, Ackroyd writes, “The water of the Thames was available both to rich and poor, whether for bathing or for cleansing, for cooking or for drinking; the need for it was so universal that it was deemed to be common to all” (115). The Thames is community property. Despite gender or socioeconomic class, everyone can lay claim to part of the

river and can use its inherent qualities that provide for the people of London. People of different classes, genders, and ranks lived literally side-by-side on the river. Sir William D'Avenant detailed this egalitarian geography in his description of the Thames; he writes in 1656, "Here a lord, there a dyer, and places of the worst kind between both" (qtd. in Ackroyd 116). The Thames acts as a place of unity where divisions among class and gender are not recognized due to the nature of its water, Ackroyd claims. He states,

The river actively worked against hierarchy and division of all kinds, particularly because water is a dissolving and unifying element.... Class distinctions seem to disappear in the process of going upon the river, even in its frozen state, and through the centuries the Thames was an emblem of liberty. All the divisions and distinctions of dry land are washed away and erased. (116-17)

People living on the Thames, like the main characters in Fitzgerald's *Offshore*, have those markers that divide people on dry land, especially in terms of gender, stripped away for a more egalitarian way of living. However, as *Offshore* demonstrates through the loss of individual identity, this sense of equality comes at a cost for Nenna, the main female character living on the Battersea Reach.

In *Offshore*, the identities of those living on houseboats in Battersea Reach on the Thames become inextricably linked to their boats, seemingly demonstrating the possessive individualism. In the opening scene of the novel, representatives from each of the boats have gathered to discuss a request by Willis, the sixty-five-year-old marine artist who owns the *Dreadnought*. Willis is trying to sell the *Dreadnought*, which is in a state of disrepair, and he wants the other owners to not mention the much needed repairs

to his boat unless directly asked by a potential buyer. Richard, the owner of the *Lord Jim* and the presider of the meeting, asks, “Are we to gather that *Dreadnought* is asking us all to do something dishonest?” (9). By eliciting opinions from the other boaters, Richard refers to the owners through their boat names: “*Rochester? Grace? Bluebird? Maurice? Hours of Ease? Dunkirk? Relentless?*” (10). In each of these instances, the boats’ names stand for the owners’ names, a metonymic replacement of this basic identifying marker of a person. Unlike in possessive individualism where obtaining property in order to improve one’s self in the eyes of the public is key, this metonymy serves to develop a sense of equality among the boaters. This mindset reflects cooperative and creative individualism by working to help Willis maintain an adequate means to life and labor. Each boat gets to have its say about all of the issues that the community faces, regardless of the socioeconomic status attached to their name on dry land. It is in this focus on community opinion rather than individual opinions where the boaters diverge from traditional definitions of possessive individualism. Rather than seeing a focus on individual preservation by centering on the idea of improvement for an individual’s economic prosperity, an idea posed in *The Bookshop*, we see a democratic attitude that has developed among the boaters. They want to do what is best for the members of the community.

Similarly, Florence’s attempt at possessive individualism in *The Bookshop* does not work primarily because the community in which she lives does not seem to accept that philosophy as a framework for identity for women in particular. Instead, the inhabitants of Hardborough focus on the communal good. As I argued earlier, both Milo North and Mrs. Gamart use forms of possessive individualism to thwart Florence’s

business enterprise. However, they in many ways lie outside the mainstream of Hardborough. Milo is only a part-time resident of the village because he lives in London much of the time to work for the BBC, and “Hardborough was used to not being quite certain what people did in London” (22). Additionally, the narrator describes Hardborough as a place of economic strife: “Although [the Hardborough citizens] were constantly told, by press and radio, that these were prosperous years for Britain, most of Hardborough still felt the pinch, and avoided the bank manager on principle. The herring catch had dwindled, naval recruitment was down, and there were many retired persons living on a fixed income” (11). Mrs. Gamart often situates herself above this world of economic downturns; she is obviously of a higher socioeconomic class than most of the inhabitants of the village, and she focuses on her property and her ability to obtain property as a symbol of that status. However, the people of Hardborough ignore property as a symbol of status within the community. After Mrs. Gamart asks Florence whether she knows that the local fish house is closing, the narrator writes, “Certainly she knew that Deben’s wet fish shop was about to close. Everybody in the town knew when there were likely to be vacant premises, who was in financial straits, who would need larger family accommodation in nine months, and who was about to die” (26). Even the land itself is constantly changing because of the weather and floods: “The town itself was an island between sea and river, muttering and drawing into itself as soon as it felt the cold” (12). Because they understand property’s constantly changing nature, the inhabitants of Hardborough do not use property as a basis for identity making. Instead, they see each other as doers within the community rather than as individual consumers who owe nothing to the society in which they live.

Feminist scholars find many aspects of Macpherson's creative and cooperative individualism compatible with the feminist project. For example, Virginia Held agrees with Macpherson's view concerning the ultimate compatibility of human developmental powers—a "kind of power such that more for one person is compatible with more for any other." She observes that many feminists share this optimism. Likewise, Held writes, "Macpherson's understanding of what it means to live as a free person has enabled him to argue eloquently that a person cannot be free without the means to live and work and act. Feminist views of liberation appreciate these understandings" (139). For Held and, by implication, Macpherson through his discussion of impediments to creative and cooperative individualism, possessive individualism interferes with women's possession of property and their development of self-ownership. "Our exercise of our rights," Held argues, "cannot provide the liberation women seek if we have no property and are unable to acquire the means to live and to act and to feed our children" (139).

However, at this point Held's agreement with Macpherson ends. She criticizes Macpherson in two respects. First, because he focuses on external impediments to self-development, Macpherson ignores internal ones, which Held argues are often peculiar to women. She uses shame as one of the most prominent examples; citing psychological research that claims women experience shame more than men, Held suggests that this major internal impediment to the development of self-ownership through essential human capacities has led to a sense of disempowerment and inadequacy for women (140). Second, she disapproves of the way that, through her understanding of Macpherson's writing, "Self-development was not intimately tied to the development of other persons, that is the development of that relation with another person" (Townshend 154). For

example, Held argues that Macpherson's creative and cooperative individualism does not account for the development of social "relations of care and concern, of mutually appreciated expression, of shared enjoyment," and of trust (148). Against this latter attack, Jules Townshend rebuts Held's position. In Townshend's view, Macpherson "willingly embraced the communitarians' relational sensibilities and saw people developing through others and with others. In other words, there was a concern for sustaining relationships that would promote this process" of the development of essential human capacities. Despite Townshend's rejoinder to Held's objection, Fitzgerald's novels demonstrate the possible dangers of this relational sensibility through their depiction of property. By using Held's theoretical issues with Macpherson, I show how Fitzgerald's novels are distinctly feminist.

Instead of presenting Florence with a method for her to exist and develop self-ownership through possessive individualism, the Old House leads to questions about her identity from those in the community, a result that undermines rather than stabilizes. Florence's response enacts one of the primary criticisms about gender that Virginia Held has of Macpherson's cooperative and creative individualism: Macpherson's focus on external rather than internal impediments to self-ownership. The descriptions of her feelings during the party demonstrate a loss of self-control after her conversations and the development of an internal sense of shame and doubt. After Milo's dizzying array of questions in their initial conversation, "Florence felt confused. It seemed to her that she was becalmed with this young man in some backwater, while louder voices grew more incoherent beyond. Time seemed to move faster there" (23). The description of Florence at this moment reflects that of an out-of-body experience. As Milo interrogates her under

the guise of care and concern for the woman's ability to run the shop, she loses self-awareness and the ability to articulate a response. Even more important is Florence's response to her initial meeting with Mrs. Gamart at the party. After Mrs. Gamart's initial words with Florence, "Florence felt a muddled sense of vocation, as though she would willingly devote her life to the service of Mrs. Gamart" (25). While "vocation" is typically understood as a synonym for "calling," the word can also refer to an inclination for performing a particular course of action. Upon meeting Mrs. Gamart, Florence's "vocation"—both in the sense of calling and the characteristics that make her appropriate for operating a bookshop—becomes unstable to the extent of unquestioning devotion to Mrs. Gamart, although Mrs. Gamart does not even know her name. In short, Florence begins to internalize the doubts that the community of the party has demonstrated about her capacity for running the business. Consequently, she loses the ability to articulate her self-ownership, an action she did many times with the banker earlier in the novel.

This feeling of doubt and shame during the party scene parallels Florence's state at the opening of the novel as she contemplates her purchase of the Old House. The narrator says, "In 1959 Florence Green occasionally passed a night when she was not absolutely sure whether she had slept or not" (7). The narrator adds, "The uncertainty [about buying the Old House] probably kept her awake" (7). Florence becomes haunted by the house. Later, she relates her feelings to a scene from nature: "She had once seen a heron flying across the estuary and trying, while it was on the wing, to swallow an eel which it had caught. The eel, in turn, was struggling to escape from the gullet of the heron and appeared a quarter, a half, or occasionally three-quarters of the way out. The indecision expressed by both creatures was pitiable" (7). In this instance, the narrator

relates bodily knowledge and self-control to ownership; however, that ownership does not serve to solidify Florence's identity or self-development. Indeed, she is not able to determine the state of her body and consciousness; she is not able to tell whether or not she has slept. The embodiment of this moment in an image of nature serves to connect self-knowledge with the idea of self-preservation and survival. The image tends to naturalize the feeling of doubt that Florence experiences, suggesting a relationship among doubt, shame, and gender that Virginia Held has discussed. However, Mrs. Gamart and Milo North's manipulation of Florence during this experience offers an argument against cooperative and creative individualism by showing both external and internal impediments to self-ownership for women.

In contrast to Mrs. Gamart's uses of possessive individualism, two incidents in the novel reflect Florence's attempt at cooperative and creative individualism: the letter exchanges between Florence and members of the community as well as Florence's interactions with Mr. Brundish and her decision to sell *Lolita*. These examples show that Florence is a doer rather than only a consumer, that she depends upon the community, and that she looks to develop self-ownership through contributing to the growth of relationships in the community (and the resulting essential human capacities).

Florence exchanges multiple letters on two occasions in the novel. The first set of letters responds to her solicitor's letters in response to Mrs. Gamart's complaints about the crowds in front of her store looking at the *Lolita* display. In the letters, the solicitor Mr. Thornton suggests that she take down the display and that she should stop selling "the complained-of and unduly sensational novel by V. Nabokov. We cannot cite *Herring v. Metropolitan Board of Works 1863* in this instance as the crowd has not

assembled as the result of famine or of a shortage of necessary commodities” (87). In her response, Florence writes, “A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life, and as such it must surely be a necessary commodity” (87). Florence focuses on the effects that the book has for the members of the community, not on its inherent value as a piece of property. The effects of reading a book make the novel a “necessary commodity” for the community because they will help develop the essential human capacities that she thinks is vital for community members’ self-development. The businesswoman Florence, while no doubt recognizing its economic value to her shop, highlights the psychological and communal value of the book: a value that can be shared among many people of the community and that can develop the human capacities essential to Hardborough.

Florence offers a similar response in her memo to the Education Authority’s suggestion that, due to Christine’s age, she can work only at a stand or stall on the side of the street. Florence writes:

There is no room on the pavement of Hardborough High Street for boards supported by trestles to be dismantled at the end of the day.

Christine, like a large proportion of the Primary School population of Suffolk, is, as you very well know, ‘helping out’. She will be taking her 11+ in July and I expect her to proceed to Flintmarket Grammar School, when she will have no time for odd jobs after school. (97)

Florence highlights the fact that Christine is working at the bookshop out of need rather than want; she does not define Christine’s identity through property but instead through how she helps her family and Florence in the business. Thus, she emphasizes the effects

that Christine's acquisition of property has for herself and for her family, not the identity that it might provide for Christine. Indicative of Virginia Held's theoretical position, the development of self-ownership relies on relationships among members of the community. By demonstrating care and concern for Christine and her family, Florence shows that the development of what Held argues are particularly female essential capacities is possible through cooperative and creative individualism. Also, by implying that the recipients of the letter do not actually have the knowledge of the community that they must possess to adequately run the village and its education system, Florence makes a larger indictment of government officials for not supporting the villagers.

Florence's interactions with Mr. Brundish also demonstrate her understanding of property as an identity formed through the community rather than through the individual. After receiving a letter from Mr. Brundish when she first opens the bookshop, Florence decides to ask for his input about *Lolita*, which Milo North recommended for her inventory. Florence writes, "Would you be good enough to read it and to let me know whether you think I should be doing right in ordering it and recommending it to my customers?" (76). Florence asks Mr. Brundish because of his long history in Hardborough. This act demonstrates that Florence does not necessarily anticipate the "alarming sensation of prosperity" that comes with selling the novel (88). In other words, she does not want to order the book simply because it might bring increased wealth and better business. Florence is more worried about the effects of property on her community rather than any identity that it might confer upon herself. Florence also writes in the letter, "Some critics say that it is pretentious, dull, florid and repulsive; others call it a masterpiece" (76). Instead of asking Mr. Brundish for business advice about what to sell

based upon what will make the most money, she wants what is best for the community through focusing on the novel's aesthetic value and worth.

Offshore's society of houseboats on the Thames shows us the cultivation of essential human capacities relevant to this kind of community. In cooperative and creative individualism as in the novel, this development of self-ownership occurs through a focus on relationships. These capacities include care and concern, mutually appreciated expression, shared enjoyment, trust—all capacities that Virginia Held describes as particularly feminine traits of self-ownership. Primarily, though, the novel is about mutually appreciated expression, or the idea that no one course of action or way of behavior is proper or correct for all people. The men on the Reach grow from their relationships, and even Nenna, the primary female protagonist, does for part of her time on the Reach. Eventually Nenna realizes the harmful effects it has on the development of her self-ownership, and she leaves the Reach.

Maurice, the gay prostitute and unwitting criminal accomplice as a receiver of stolen goods, most clearly describes mutually appreciated expression when Nenna asks him for advice about staying on the Reach or returning to Canada with her sister. After telling Nenna that she should not go see her soon-to-be ex-husband, Maurice says:

‘Why should you think it’s a good thing to do? Why should it make you any happier? There isn’t one kind of happiness, there’s all kinds. Decision is torment for anyone with imagination. When you decide, you multiply the things you might have done and now never can. If there’s even one person who might be hurt by a decision, you should never make it. They tell you, make up your mind or it will be too late, but

if it's really too late, we should be grateful. You know very well that we're two of the same kind, Nenna. It's right for us to live where we do, between land and water. You, my dear, you're half in love with your husband, then there's Martha who's half a girl, Richard who can't give up being half in the navy, Willis who's half an artist and half a longshoreman, a cat who's half alive and half dead...'

He stopped before describing himself, if, indeed, he had been going to do so. (47)

In his speech to Nenna, Maurice identifies their position of being “between land and water,” as one that is based in property and geography, though not in a “fixed” or reductive way that traditional definitions of possessive individualism would offer. Rather than offering advice on the specific decisions that Nenna should make, Maurice refuses to offer a conclusive interpretation of Nenna’s situation or the “right” choice that she should make. Even the idea that a “proper” or “correct” decision exists seems foreign to Maurice, a way of reasoning that he connects to those living on the land—a “fixed” way of thinking relying upon notions of a binary choice between a proper, correct choice and an improper, incorrect choice, a choice that is “too late.”

In a similar way, Richard’s interactions with Maurice, Nenna, and the other boat owners help him to understand that there is not one “correct” way of thinking or coming to a conclusion as his time in the Navy has taught him. Richard thinks that “the weakest element in the situation—the one most in need of protection, towards which Richard would always return—the weakest element was certainly Willis” (54). Richard understands that the state of the *Dreadnought* makes Willis the most vulnerable member

of their community, so he must help him by discussing the terms of the sale with Pinkie, the person selling the boat. Saying that “everyone knows” that “these old boats leak like sieves” just like “period houses are as rotten as old cheese,” Pinkie responds positively to Richard’s revelation that the boat leaks (57). Consequently, Richard does not have to convince Pinkie to lie to any potential buyers. However, Richard’s process arriving to the decision that he would ask Pinkie to lie about the leaks contrasts with his idea of “duty” at the beginning of the novel, where he describes “duty” as “what no-one else will do at the moment”—a position informed by his time in the Royal Navy (9). In coming to his decision, “Richard was not aware that he was no longer reasoning, but allowing a series of overlapping images—the drawing of *Lord Jim*, Tilda cooking—to act as a substitute for argument, so that his mind was working in a way not far different from Maurice’s, or Nenna’s. But the end product would be very different—not indecisive and multiple, but single and decisive” (54). Living on the Reach has helped Richard realize that life is not about the conclusions that are reached, whether singular or multiple. The process and journey that a person goes through in order to reach that conclusion is just as important. Instead of subscribing somewhat blindly to the masculinist logic that he has developed from his time in the Navy, Richard has developed an alternative approach to problem solving that changes a core part of his identity, an approach that emphasizes multiple pathways and palimpsests—the approach of mutually appreciated expression—rather than the traditional logic of argument.

In these instances, Nenna’s identity is based upon the fluidity and mobility associated with her property, the development of human capacities needed for their community, and the lack of impediments to an adequate means of life and labor.

Through the cultivation of essential human capacities, she has apparently developed self-ownership, though it is tentative at best. As the novel unfolds, Nenna begins to understand the cost of having a fluid identity through cooperative and creative individualism and the focus on egalitarianism and multiplicity. This cost is the loss of individual identity. For Nenna, this loss of identity focuses on her gender identity, a connection reminiscent of the relationship between Mrs. Gamart and Florence in *The Bookshop*. During her visit to see Edward, Nenna asks him “whether he didn’t think he’d be happier living with a woman, whether she was on a boat or not,” and Edward replies, “You’re not a woman!” (95). For Edward, living on the boat has erased what made Nenna a woman because of the way she treats the mother and son that Edward lives with. Nenna forgets that she is on dry land now. Instead of treating Gordon and his mother with the respect accorded to them through their property ownership (Edward has been living with them rent free during his months away from Nenna and their children), Nenna treats them as equals, using her newfound voice discovered upon the Thames to give her opinions to Gordon and his mother. For example, in response to the mother stating that Gordon is “something of a pianist,” Nenna says, “No, he isn’t” (93). Instead of seeing Nenna’s new personality as a positive change, Edward says she is crazy and “raving” (94). Thus, because it does not fit his view (the the dry land’s view) of how a woman should act, Nenna is marginalized through Edward’s accusations of insanity. Without the support and in a different set of circumstances that do not value the capacities that she has developed, Nenna loses self-ownership. Edward sees Nenna’s self-control, her forceful statements of what she wants and desires, as a loss of control. Devoid of self-ownership, Nenna becomes a silly melodramatic woman only. When Nenna restates the phrase to

Richard later that night, Richard replies that she is “demonstrably” a woman, in “any ordinary sense of the word” (105). In trying to be supportive of Nenna, Richard reduces her to a simple definition; his use of “demonstrably” takes the focus from her personality or other attributes of her femininity and relocates her identity within her body—those parts that everyone can see and that define her as a woman.

After these incidents with Edward and Richard, Nenna loses her voice and sense of self-ownership that she has previously developed through the ownership of *Grace*. After Richard is shot by Harry, the smuggler who keeps his stolen goods on *Maurice*, Nenna feels sorry for not having told Richard about the arrangement between Maurice and Harry. The narrator writes, “But curiously enough the regret she felt, not for anything that she had done but for what she hadn’t, quite put an end to the old wearisome illusion of prosecution and trial. She no longer felt that she needed to defend herself, or even to account for herself.... The case was suspended indefinitely” (129). In one sense, this passage could indicate further personal growth on Nenna’s part; she no longer has to provide proof or justification for what she does in her life. However, in the incident immediately following this passage, Nenna’s sister from Canada shows up again and asks her one last time to come back to Canada with her. Unlike the earlier scene in which she confronts and argues with her sister about the possibility that she might return to Canada or her arguments exemplified in the imagined court proceedings, Nenna does not offer any defense of her stay on the Thames. She never says that she is returning to Canada; readers only know this information through the narrator and her children, both second-hand sources. After this incident, Nenna no longer seems to have a say in the direction

that her life will take, the final upheaval of Nenna's life in the novel represented symbolically by a final storm upon the Battersea Reach.

Cooperative and creative individualism provides no better ending for Florence in *The Bookshop*. Her problem is connected to the fact that the members of the community must be receptive to the cultivation of their capacities as well as the conscious contribution to the development of self-ownership in others. The narrator relates that the proprietors of the other community businesses, jealous that none of Florence's many customers enter their own stores, "were now either slightly or emphatically hostile to the Old House Bookshop. It was decided not to ask her to join the Inner Wheel of the Hardborough and District Rotary Club" (89). This lack of support from the business community and the revelation of the reasons behind that lack of support demonstrate the proprietors' worries not for the welfare of the community but rather for the economic welfare of themselves. These motivations closely parallel Mrs. Gamart's motivations in trying to shut down the bookshop. She does not necessarily want an arts centre for the good of the community, for the effects the art in the building would have on the community. The last sentence of the novel encapsulates this viewpoint that embodies possessive individualism: "As the train drew out of the station she sat with her head bowed in shame, because the town in which she had lived for nearly ten years had not wanted a bookshop" (123). To Mrs. Gamart and the rest of the business owners in Hardborough, the property itself is more important than the effects the art might have on the community. In her attempt to improve the community, Florence learns that a community must want change in order to effect change.

Both *The Bookshop* and *Offshore* demonstrate the problems for women associated with traditional approaches to developing self-ownership. In leaving all of the female characters unsettled in the end, Fitzgerald's novels suspend them between individual and community-based self-ownership. Because both narratives are left open, without any sense of closure to the stories of Florence, Christine, and Nenna, the reader is likewise held in suspension—unable to take full ownership of the events in the story. Perhaps Fitzgerald's novels work this way to make the reader identify with their female characters, which might provide a tactic to improve society for the development of women. This kind of reader-response approach might prove useful as another way to examine the novels' treatment of gender and to show that Fitzgerald's social critiques are not relegated to the class arena.

Chapter Four: Trespassing through Bodies: Hysterical Women and Dispossession in the Novels of Hilary Mantel

Hilary Mantel has done something extraordinary. She has taken that ethereal halfway house between heaven and hell, between the living and the dead, and nailed it on the page. She has taken those moments between sleep and waking, when we hardly know who we are, or why, and turned them into a novel that makes the unbelievable believable.

--Faye Weldon's Review of Hilary Mantel's *Beyond Black*

By describing the primarily negative female experiences of being trapped between individual and communal property interests, Penelope Fitzgerald's novels critique the weaknesses and inadequacies of traditional ways of thinking about the formation of women's self-ownership through the integration of gender. Weldon's review suggests that Hilary Mantel's characters in *Beyond Black* (2005) and, as I will argue, in *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* (1988) encounter a similarly difficult situation in "that ethereal halfway house." The female protagonists in Mantel's novels find themselves in liminal states without self-possession,²² in that they can no longer profit from labor unless they relinquish bodily control and composure. They must inevitably confront the fact that they "hardly know who [they] are" in these threshold positions. For example, at the opening of *Beyond Black*, Alison Hart, the main protagonist of the novel, is driving on the M25 motorway that encircles greater London. The location of the scene evokes a

²² Keep in mind that the term "self-possession" has two meanings apropos to this discussion of women's propriety and property ownership: composure and emotional control (a type of somatic control over the actions of one's body—bodily self-possession) as well as the freedom from management by another (for example, the ability to own, sale, and profit from property—economic self-possession). Thus, having control over one's body *and* the property or possessions that come from a body's labor is necessary for full self-possession.

threshold between the urban metropolis of London and the British countryside. The novel describes each element of the scene as being “in between”: Alison is traveling between destinations at dusk (a time between day and night), the scene occurs between winter and spring, and the M25 is described as a “marginal land” of discarded property and marginalized identities—“outcasts and escapees, with Afghans, Turks and Kurds...”

(1). Among the rubbish and rabble emerges Alison, who is a fixture on the M25 and who says, “It’s no good asking me whether I’d choose to be like this, because I’ve never had a choice. I don’t know about anything else. I’ve never been any other way” (2). Alison’s inability to see options for her life while in this liminal state indicates a lack of self-possession and control, an ironic allusion to her profession as a psychic who is constantly “possessed” by spirits. Alison’s profession, which necessitates these experiences of liminality, reveals the cost of using the body as a source or catalyst for self-possession and identity making. Alison obtains the value of her body’s labor, the definition of Lockean self-possession, and purchases a new house and shed. The newly acquired property and the house in which she grew up, though, act as thresholds that allow access to Alison for her spirit tormentors, and her body suffers sexual fragmentation as a result.

This chapter concerns the negotiation by Mantel’s female characters through this experience of “dispossession”—the loss of identity and bodily control that accompanies a loss or substitution of the characters’ property and initiates a liminal state. Because this dispossession results in the women’s categorization as typical “hysterical women” through the loss of economic and bodily self-possession, the male characters disregard the women’s attempts at rhetorical work. Most criticism that describes liminal states note the essentially positive effects they have on those people and characters that experience

liminality. I claim that by depicting the process the women undergo in an attempt to regain their rhetorical power, Mantel's novels show two equal possibilities as they attempt to emerge from their liminal states: a more integrated identity and an identity fragmented by the experience of dispossession. One of the major ways that liminality produces this state of ambiguity and possibility relies upon the stripping away of the kinds of cultural distinctions afforded through property. Mantel's novels expose the underlying economic element of liminality and show how that aspect negatively affects women in particular. In short, Mantel's writing complicates liminality as a version of or explanation for female self-development, particularly because of its economic underpinnings.

Critical examinations of Hilary Mantel remain unexpectedly difficult to find, especially in light of the praise her novels have received. Mantel won the Hawthornden Prize for *An Experiment in Love* (1996), one of only eight women to have received Britain's oldest literary award, and the 2009 Man Booker Prize for *Wolf Hall* (2009). She is also admired by other contemporary writers. In a 1995 letter to Mantel, Penelope Fitzgerald writes that she "enjoyed *An Experiment in Love*—and so did my daughter—and so I'm sure will *her* daughter in a few years time" (*Letters* 454). Other reviewers have similarly praised Mantel. Barbara Love likens Mantel to Fitzgerald: "Like her fellow Brits Rose Tremain and Penelope Fitzgerald, Mantel continually produces novels that chart fresh terrain and derive from a wellspring of creative imagination" (198). Laurie Muchnick also finds material for comparison with acknowledged masters of the contemporary British novel, particularly through humor. She writes, "Part of the appeal [of *Beyond Black*] is in Mantel's astringent sense of humor, a particularly British form

that she has in common with some of my favorite writers: Muriel Spark, Penelope Fitzgerald and Barbara Trapido.” Despite the high praise, few have sought to venture beyond these evaluative comments for Mantel’s works. Though selecting representative texts from Mantel’s body of work is difficult due to the diversity of the female experience she depicts, I have chosen *Beyond Black* and *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* because they demonstrate the universal element of the liminal experience and the ways in which economics support that experience. Though one takes place in Britain and the other in Saudia Arabia, both texts stress the importance of bodily and economic self-possession for women.

The concept of liminality as it relates to identity formation initially arose in the research of anthropologist and folklorist Arnold van Gennep through his focus on cultural rites of passage ceremonies. In *The Rites of Passage* (1908; trans. 1960), Van Gennep defines this concept as “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age” and describes the three-part organization of these regeneration rituals (qtd. in *Forest* 94). He designates these three phases as preliminal, liminal, and postliminal (van Gennep 21). The preliminal phase consists of an individual²³ symbolically breaking away from an established location within the social structure or from a state of being defined by a set of cultural conventions and norms. The society at hand recognizes this location or state and acknowledges the separation experienced by the individual. In opposition to the preliminal phase’s disconnection, the postliminal

²³ Of course, an individual within a group may also experience rites of passage as a member of that group. Many authors, for example, offer graduation ceremonies as an example of van Gennep’s structure, where the participants in the ceremonies (liminal phase) are no longer students (preliminal phase) but are not official graduates either (postliminal phase). However, I will use the term “individual” because my discussion of the novels focuses on the liminal experiences of individual characters. I have not found any scholarship that deals with differences between rites of passage experienced as an individual alone versus an individual within a group.

phase focuses on the individual's reincorporation into his or her new location or state within the society. Finally, the liminal phase acts as a transitional period between the preliminal and postliminal; for example, van Gennep uses the idea of a door or a porch on a house as symbolic of the threshold between the public and the domestic worlds (20).

One of the major ways that liminal rites facilitate the elimination of a strict social structure and hierarchy relies upon the stripping away of the kinds of cultural distinctions afforded through property. Typically, this property equality comes about in two main ways: either through the taking away of property or, when dealing with a group of individuals experiencing the liminal phase of the rites of passage, through the equal redistribution of property so that no material distinction exists among the members of the liminal group. "They have no status, property, insignia...to demarcate them structurally from their fellows," writes Turner (*Forest* 99). However, he notes that the "'liminal *personae*' is defined by a name and by a set of symbols" even though possessions may be forbidden (*Forest* 95). Turner, then, makes a distinction between "property" in the legal sense of ownership and "property" in the general sense of material articles. Though possessions may be taken away, they may be replaced by items with symbolic meaning within the culture of the liminal individual, as long as the individual stakes no claim to ownership. Susan Broadhurst expands upon this idea; she writes, "An important trait of the liminal is the centrality of non-linguistic modes of signification. In much of the liminal, signification modes are visual, kinetic, gravitational, proxemic, aural and so on" (13). Despite the various forms, these symbols or signification practices have three commonalities in the liminal phase. First, the symbols work according to condensation; in other words, "Many things and actions are represented in a single formation,"

according to Turner (*Forest* 28). Second, the meanings of those “things and actions” brought together in a dominant ritual symbol are disparate and may even be oppositional. Finally, although the symbolic meanings are typically incongruent, the liminal rites of passage tend to polarize those meanings around two different categories (*Forest* 28). Of course, the exact poles around which symbolic meaning gathers change according to cultural values and practices, but Turner argues that the general framework is universal.

Beyond Black depicts Alison as a liminal figure from the beginning of the novel. Much of the plot involves her search for answers about her past, answers that will show what prompts her dispossession early in her life. In contrast, Frances in *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* demonstrates both economic and bodily self-possession while living outside Saudi Arabia. Thus, the novel more fully depicts her preliminal state and the removal of her property. As a consequence, though, this process leaves her without self-possession and the ability to do rhetorical work—namely, to convince those around her that illegal actions are taking place in her apartment building.

In *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street*, Mantel illustrates the inverse relationship between Saudi Arabian society’s emphasis on self-possession in terms of self-control and Frances’s gradual loss of self-possession by the end of the novel. Frances demonstrates self-possession at the beginning of the novel. In a passage of free indirect discourse from her husband Andrew’s perspective, he describes how they met in Botswana:

She had come to Africa at her own behest, a single woman, one of the few recruited for her line of work. She had lived alone before they met; for three nights in succession, he had sat by himself, seemingly disconsolate, on a corner stool in the bar of an expatriate club, not even looking her

way, but concentrating hard; until she had asked him to go home with her. She had fed her dog, and then cooked eggs for them, and asked him what he wanted out of life. (15)

Andrew tries to suggest that Frances's actions are the result of wish fulfillment on his part. His rhetoric attempts to shift the impetus for her resulting activity to his unspoken motivations. However, every specific action that the narrator describes directly results from Frances's initiative and drive. Frances is the active figure while Andrew remains passive, waiting for opportunities to come to him. He receives the Jeddah job offer through a series of coincidental meetings with Jeff Pollard, not because of self-conscious decision made on his part to seek out a new post. In contrast, Frances is geographically independent. Her occupation as a cartographer—and, thus, the ability to read and to adapt to new geographic locations—allows her to move among continents whenever she pleases; full self-possession means having control over one's body *and* the property or possessions that come from a body's labor. Neither is Frances restrained by the traditional notions of femininity, particularly those beliefs held in Jeddah. At their first meeting, Frances chooses to make the first move on Andrew when she notices him in the bar. While she does cook Andrew eggs, an ostensibly feminine household chore, she first feeds her dog before she feeds Andrew. Demonstrating another instance of Frances's self-possession, this small action shows that she has her own agenda even when she performs domestic duties. The only reservation that Jeff Pollard has about the move from Botswana to Jeddah involves Frances's ability to adjust because she's always "been a working woman" (15). In using the "working woman" category to describe Frances, Pollard tries to establish a sense of gender propriety for women who have chosen

something other than a life of domesticity. However, Frances has chosen an occupation primarily held by men,²⁴ which contributes to the sense that she lies outside traditional determinations of gender propriety and that she cannot change that position because of her self-possession.

When Andrew first mentions the possibility of a move to Saudi Arabia—a move predicated on his ability to earn a better living and save money for the couple so that they can buy a house in Britain—Frances is squarely against the move, another example of her self-possession through her composure and will. Though the move will further Andrew’s career only and effectively end Frances’s career, this issue is couched in rhetoric that focuses on the additional property they will purchase as a couple. Nonetheless, Frances realizes she must abdicate a portion of her self-control in order to achieve that goal. She tells Andrew, “Oh no...I’d have to go around with a headscarf on all day. I couldn’t put up with that” (11). Frances implies a loss of self-control on her part if they were to move to Jeddah because of the cultural customs that she would have to follow. As in the earlier passage, here Frances does not want to subscribe to dominant societal norms of what makes a proper woman in Britain, in Botswana, or in Jeddah. In response, Andrew says, “Frances...we have to make some money. We haven’t made any here. I thought we would, but it’s not worked out. We have to get something behind us” (11). Andrew presents the case to move to Jeddah as an opportunity to grant them more control over their lives, a rhetoric of security through ownership that sounds convincing to Frances. He continues this argument later in the novel when Frances questions her ability to work

²⁴ Though recent scholarship has revalorized women’s contributions to cartography, especially since World War I and World War II during which the figure of “Millie the Mapper” was made popular, Judith Tyner has written that only 16% of the members of the American Cartographic Association were female by 1987 (27). Mantel’s novel was published in 1988, so readers do not have to stretch to imagine Frances’s marginalized position in her profession.

in Jeddah. Frances says, “Well, if you’re going to earn all that money, I’m sure I can occupy myself. After all, it’s not forever, is it?” In response, Andrew says, “No, it’s not forever. We should think of it as a chance for us, to build up some security—” (15). The rhetoric of security through the acquisition of money causes Frances to question her decision. Instead of using her profession as a form of self-possession, Frances figures that she can find new ways of “occupying” herself, of developing a sense of self-control and professional identity once in Jeddah.

However, Frances’s attempts at developing self-possession fail after arriving in Jeddah. This failure is depicted in two different ways in the novel, each associated with one aspect of Frances’s self-possession—her ability to adapt geographically because of her cartographical background and her refusal to accept traditional female roles. First, the novel describes the landscape of Saudi Arabia and Jeddah as constantly in flux, which presents a particular problem for the cartographer Frances. Second, the “ghost story” that Frances develops from her experiences in their flat ties her to the tradition of the “hysterical woman,” an established stereotype of women that definitionally relies upon the loss of self-possession. Both of these experiences gradually lead to a loss of self-possession in which Frances herself becomes a ghost of what she used to be.

The first step in Frances’s transition from self-possessed woman to dispossessed “spirit” occurs immediately before landing in Jeddah. This instance sets the tone for the rest of the novel because both her abilities to undermine traditional female roles and to adapt to new geographies are called into question. The steward on the plane offers to take her to the hotel on the airline’s bus in case Andrew is not at the airport for some reason. Frances thanks him but suggests that she will simply take a taxi if no one meets

her at the airport. The steward says that no taxi driver will pick her up because she is a “strange woman” and that a man can be jailed for that. Frances attempts to apply Western logic to the economics of the taxi driver. As it is her job to construct maps, an aspect of her self-possession, it is the taxi driver’s job to pick up strangers. However, as she learns during this conversation, the philosophy of self-possession no longer necessarily resonates within this new culture. When Florence asks the steward to explain the steward’s remark because she believes that the taxi driver’s job is “picking up strange people,” the steward replies, “But you’re a woman.... You’re a woman, aren’t you? You’re not a person anymore.” Then, “Doggedly, courteously, as if their conversation had never occurred, he reached for a glass from his trolley: ‘Would you like champagne?’” (21). The steward’s remarks display the cultural logic of female identity in Jeddah. The statement naturalizes the connection between “strangeness” and the category “woman,” which strips away any signs of humanity within the context of Jeddah’s culture. If she is, indeed, no longer considered even human, how can she “fight” against traditional female roles when the category “person” itself is not available to her? The “loss” of her humanity also foreshadows the development of her connection with the ghostly.

In the initial descriptions of Ghazzah Street and Jeddah, the novel depicts the land and the property that sits on it as a constant liminal space, an area like *Beyond Black’s* description of the M25 that is always in a state of transition. In one of the early descriptions of Ghazzah Street, the narrator writes, “At the moment Ghazzah Street is about a mile and a half from the Red Sea, but in this place land and sea are in flux, they are negotiable” (23). Part of the irony of this passage is the contrast between the fluid

nature of the location and the dryness of the land itself. Similarly, the movement between the land and the sea is described in economic terms. However, while the most basic identity marker of the town—its boundaries and physical features—are unfixed, so many cultural elements of the town define specific boundaries that hold dire consequences if they are crossed, another use of Mantel’s satire in providing a context for Frances’s future dispossession. This description of the land in economic terms may also nod toward the lack of women’s property rights in the city. The narrator continues the description of Ghazzah Street: “It is a small street, which got its name quite recently when street names came into vogue, and a narrow street, made narrower by the big American cars, some of them falling to pieces, which its residents leave parked outside their flat blocks” (22). None of the residents living on the street “can remember whether there was ever a building on the waste ground; no one has been in the area for more than a couple of years” (22). Like the city which is on the threshold between land and sea, Ghazzah Street is on the threshold between the new and the old, representing the Saudi culture’s appropriation of Western wealth while maintaining its cultural traditions that restrict women’s freedoms. The residents of the street seem to lack a kind of cultural memory, favoring whatever is “in vogue” over any notion of ethical duty.

Before arriving in Saudi Arabia, Frances is introduced to the difficulties that she will encounter in Jeddah. During her plane ride to Jeddah, she speaks with a passenger visiting for a business trip. After finding out that Frances is a cartographer, the passenger says, “Oh well, you’re redundant”; he explains that “[t]hey don’t have maps” because they are “[t]oo bloody secretive to have maps. Besides the streets are never in the same place for more than a few weeks together” (18). However, because Frances is a woman,

hers is not a temporary redundancy but one inherent to her sex, at least from the perspective of the Saudi culture.

Not only does the culture in the country refuse women the right to work most jobs, the nature of the geography of the country itself takes away one aspect of Frances's self-possession, her skills and aptitude for mapmaking and organizing physical space. One example of this point comes in Frances's first diary entry where, after she has moved a packing case into an empty bedroom "so that it looked more occupied"; she does "not feel at all in possession of the ground" (37). "Possession" here seems to work on a number of different levels. First, because they rent the flat in Jeddah, neither Andrew nor Frances owns the property where they live. Second, the term can refer to Frances's sense of not having made the place her own yet because of the generic décor that does not reflect her personality. Third, and perhaps most importantly, is that idea that to be in possession of the ground is to know the ground; the fact that she does not have sufficient knowledge of the place suggests a loss of her economic self-possession as well as a connection to the land's fluid identity through the use of "ground" instead of "house." This lack of possession becomes fully embodied when Andrew brings home a map in which their flat building is depicted as a vacant lot; she writes "CARTOGRAPHY BY KAFKA" on the map and says, "We don't exist" (68). The map minus their flat building becomes a physical representation of Frances's frustrating inability to "fix" the place in space—to find something definite and knowable in terms of spatial relationships.

Later in the novel, Frances undergoes a decided change in her demeanor toward other ethnicities and geographies, an attitude shift that stands in contrast to her personality earlier in the novel when she visits Botswana of her own accord and speaks

fondly of her time there. When Andrew accuses her of racism, Frances says, “I’m not a racist, Andrew, I’m a xenophobe. See—I’ve been going through the dictionary to find out what’s wrong with me. There’s England and France, and after that it’s madness” (173). Frances’s remark indicates both a presence and lack of self-awareness. On the one hand, Frances is able to articulate a difference between xenophobia and racism, and she recognizes the fact that she displays these tendencies. On the other hand, Frances does not realize the shift in her personality from welcoming foreign cultures to fearing them, and she depends upon an outside source to “diagnose” her. Though perhaps a simple use of hyperbole, Frances’s connection of all geographies outside England and France with the state of madness highlights the connection between her mental state and the property and geography she inhabits. This connection between madness and property continues in the diary entry that follows this conversation. In the entry, Frances writes, “If we did leave here, where would we go? We don’t belong anywhere physically. If we didn’t have each other we wouldn’t belong anywhere emotionally” (179). Frances connects the physical with the emotional, geography with psychology. If not for Andrew, the passage implies that Frances would lose the feeling of “belonging,” of the sense of self-possession that holds emotions in check. Later, Frances realizes this sense of loss in a conversation with the visitor Fairfax, for whom she drew a map that got him lost: “‘I used to be good at maps,’ Frances said. ‘They were my living. I must be losing my touch’” (235). Finally, Frances realizes her loss of economic self-possession—her ability to represent property through cartography. This moment initiates her liminal state.

Though much of *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* depicts Frances’s preliminal state, both of Mantel’s novels focus on the female liminal subject. Building upon Arnold

van Gennep's writings, Scottish ethnographer Victor Turner describes the condition of the liminal subject. The state of the liminal subject is often a difficult one to define or describe because of one of the most recognizable characteristics of the liminal subject: ambiguity. In much of his work, Turner describes the limen as "betwixt and between" the different classifications that societies use to structure and understand individuals within their communities, such as distinctions of class, occupation, rank, or religion.

Turner writes,

The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial (*Ritual Process* 95).

Liminal rites, then, make a society's hierarchical principles that help individuals to realize and categorize differences among themselves undetectable. As Turner notes, this idea particularly holds merit in terms of law and, as I will argue momentarily, of classifications of property ownership. Consequently, during the liminal state, the individual undergoes a sense of self-defamiliarization in addition to the inability of the individual's society to definitively classify his or her place within the societal hierarchy. To use Turner's words, the subject in the liminal period is "structurally, if not physically, 'invisible'" (*Forest* 95). The society has been stripped of its "interpretive framework" used to understand the liminal subject's position within cultural space.

However, with this “structural invisibility” comes a sense of almost unlimited possibility or potentiality for the liminal individual. Turner describes the liminal phase as a “storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structure” (“Universals of Performance” 12). This point alludes to van Gennep’s initial statement of purpose behind rites of passage: to revitalize and rejuvenate members of a society. A result of this revitalization, Turner argues, are new symbols with which to understand the relationships among individuals within a society. He suggests that these new symbols then “feed back into the ‘central’ economic and politico-legal domains and arenas” of the society (qtd. in Spariosu 33). The creation of these new frameworks that develop from liminal rites are how societies change.

Because the liminal phase takes away or blurs those socially established distinctions that can cause division within a culture, those sharing the liminal experience develop a special kind of camaraderie. Turner writes, “Among themselves, neophytes tend to develop an intense comradeship and egalitarianism”; he calls this state of equality *communitas* (*Ritual Process* 95). The attachments and strong egalitarian ties developed among the liminal individuals hopefully continue after the completion of the rites of passage. Because those who experience liminality realize “that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low,” the differences in status that a culture develops are leveled out (*Ritual Process* 97). This sense of equality manifested in the liminal rites, then, helps to lessen the divisions and differences between individuals reintegrated within society at the completion of the rites of passage and offers those individuals a sense of renewed vitality.

Eight Months on Ghazzah Street, however, shows little hope that Frances will renew and recapture her economic self-possession (the ability to receive the value of her body's labor), despite the creation of *communitas* among the women in Jeddah. This lack of hope comes through the depiction of her gradual loss of somatic self-possession that accompanies her liminal state: the development of her paranoia and hysteria as she attempts to interpret the events occurring in the flat building. Frances initially notices something strange about the fourth empty flat on her first day living in the building. After commenting about the flat supposedly being empty, the narrator says, "Curious, that, because on her very first morning she had heard footsteps above her head. She remembers it—she remembers every detail of her first day—as the incident which jerked her out of her maudlin state, and made her know that there were other people around her, and a new life to be lived. But Andrew says she must be mistaken" (54). In this instance, the strange incident causes her to become more self-possessed because it brings her out of a sentimental and emotional state of mind. The description even contains positive overtones because the footsteps act as a sign to Frances that her loneliness is temporary and that she exists at the threshold of a new era in her life.

Although Frances claims to remember every detail of her first day, Andrew dismisses what she has heard out-of-hand. He immediately jumps to the conclusion that she has misheard rather than offering any other kind of possible explanation. At this moment in the novel, Frances seems willing to accept Andrew's explanation, and they have no other explicit discussion of the incident. Andrew's questioning of her senses prompts the following description of Frances:

Introspection has become her habit. There are things she was sure of, that she is not sure of now, and when her reverie is broken, and first unease and then fear become her habitual state of mind, she will have learned to distrust herself, to question her own perceptions, to be unsure—as she is unsure already—about the evidence of her own ears and the evidence of her own eyes. (55)

Frances has to concentrate on self-possession through introspection, or she loses her composure, falling immediately into an uneasy and fearful state of uncertainty about everything she perceives and feels. Instead of self-possession remaining a habit as it had been previously for Frances in the novel, fear becomes a habit, a natural and reflexive movement to a state of discomfort. By repeating “evidence” and “own,” the passage uses legal terminology to emphasize the certainty and legitimacy of Frances’s experiences (particularly in the context of Jeddah, where so many stories are based upon rumor). However, the repetition can also be read as a sign of self-doubt, where Frances tries to convince herself of what she has heard. Consequently, this passage begins a trend that develops in the novel in which Frances’s self-possession is questioned at every turn, making her into the stereotypical “hysterical woman” in the eyes of her husband and their friends.

The sound of a woman sobbing in the fourth floor flat is Frances’s next strange experience that leads to her loss of bodily self-possession. Immediately after this experience, Frances begins thinking “how incompetent” she is becoming “about even quite ordinary things” (75). Frances “felt an irrational urge to hammer on the door, shout to whomever was listening, in the outside world, to come and spring her, get her out”

(75). Frances even develops paranoia about some unknown assailant reading her diary when she is not at home (91). Unlike the prior passage in which Frances hears the footsteps and her negative feelings are primarily inwardly focused, this passage demonstrates a new development in her loss of self-possession: the inability to deal with the outside world, even “ordinary” duties of the household. At the same time, though, rather than deriving self-possession from an internal sense of her identity, Frances comes to rely upon the outside world to come to her rescue, to provide some control for her life. When Frances tells Andrew about the sobbing woman in the empty flat, however, Andrew reveals that he has told their friends about the sounds in the flat, and they believe “that it’s a bit of a joke. And none of our concern” (96). Not only does Andrew believe that the sounds are figments of Frances’s imagination, but the community-at-large also seems to think that she is overreacting, playing off the incidents as simple jokes on unsuspecting foreigners.

Andrew later offers an explanation of the sounds that Frances has heard in the flat, though he does not offer an apology for questioning her emotional composure. In fact, Andrew automatically believes the rumor that he “was told by someone at Turadup that the flat is kept empty for the use of the Deputy Minister’s brother. He is a married man, and meets a married woman here. It seems it’s a long-running affair” (105). Although he knows and has earlier explained that rumor is a *modus operandi* of Jeddah, Andrew’s automatic belief contrasts with his automatic disbelief at Frances’s descriptions of what she has seen and heard. Consequently, Frances begins questioning her own questions, believing them to be “naïve” and having that belief confirmed by Andrew (106). She writes in her diary, “The more you think of it the more ludicrous it becomes”

(106). The use of second person instead of first person, particularly in terms of the diary format that focuses on the subject (the “I”), suggests a separation between what she thinks and what others may think. Although the situation might seem mad to an outsider (the “you” of the sentence), it still seems logical to Frances.

After this turn to outside rumors and public disbelief in order to explain what Frances experiences, she begins to develop an outward paranoia involving the flat itself. She describes the pattern of the unfinished tiles in the hallway outside her door: “Small faces: each tile with its splash of scarlet, its swirl of black. She felt as if she were being watched, by bloodied eyes; by the victims of some Koranic punishment. And soon the men would start work again and the watchers would multiply” (184). She later believes, “The walls watched her, each separate tile with its own maleficent stare” (195). Both passages occur as Frances is about to investigate an element of the empty flat, triggering her paranoia. Where once she demonstrated her economic self-possession through the control of property and place, the property of the flat acts as a policing unit, out to record and report any transgressions that Frances might undertake to whomever is behind the mystery in the fourth flat. Instead of Frances manipulating the property to support an identity that she chooses to develop, the property manipulates Frances—her mental state and her actions—in order to develop her persona as a hysterical woman.

The connection between Frances’s lack of self-possession and the real property of the flat also relates to the couple’s money problems. Immediately after Andrew reveals to Frances the money problems that Turadup (Andrew’s employer) is experiencing, she begins focusing on a crate that has appeared on the balcony of the empty flat. Not only is the firm running out of money, but it is also “running out of building materials” and

“photocopying paper” (199). Instead of focusing on the lack of money—the acquisition of which is their stated reason for living in Jeddah—and the low level of supplies, Frances asks Andrew, “What do you think this crate is?” (199). Demonstrating what she earlier calls her “sense of unreality,” Frances avoids the possible money problems that they will have to deal with, focusing instead on rumor and theories that might explain the crate’s presence and contents. While this question might sound like a logical one that can be attributed to simple curiosity at the recently appeared item, Frances’s response to Andrew’s notion that it is just a chicken coop belies her loss of self-possession and emotional instability. A diary entry occurs immediately after Andrew’s suggestion at the crate’s purpose, and Frances writes, “...well, I don’t know, but I don’t think it is a chicken coop” (199). The use of ellipsis here draws the previous argument between Frances and Andrew into the diary, a textual representation of how the mystery of the flat has taken over her life.

Eventually, the novel’s language describes Frances in a spectral way. Frances comes to believe that someone is being kept in the crate. After she tells this idea to Andrew, even she begins to question the legitimacy of her own thoughts: “What am I saying? Again that inner protest, incredulity” (202). However, this questioning of her interpretation of the situation does not lead to a clearer sense of self-possession. Instead, she begins to lose control of her body, feeling sick, not eating, and lying in an “oblivious state” (213). To this end, the narrator says, “Anything might have happened, in other apartments, other rooms; but she has abdicated control. She feels that she once had a grip on the situation, but that now she has lost it” (214). This loss of bodily control indicates a kind of combination of the interior and exterior sources that question her self-possession

because the symptoms become an exterior manifestation of an inner struggle. After questioning her own account of the situation, she sees a doctor but learns nothing new. Instead, she feels like she should say, “Doctor, I have a neurotic imagination” (215). Like the person she believes to be held prisoner in the crate, Frances is being held captive by her imagination. Soon after visiting the doctor, Frances is described in a way that makes it appear as if she has lost all self-possession. During Fairfax’s visit, Frances “did as [Andrew] told her; and yet making for the kitchen she didn’t stagger, but seemed to float” (238). Like the ghostly veiled woman who turns out to be a gun-toting man, Frances becomes ghostly herself, a disembodied soul lacking control or initiative unless activated by other individuals.

Near the end of the novel, Frances does not find validation in the revelation that something possibly criminal has been occurring in the empty flat. This lack of satisfaction occurs because she has framed this narrative in terms of a mystery narrative through the focus on her imagination and writing. However, though we know some details of the events, such as the facts that Yasmin has some form of relationship with Abdul Nasr and that she has tried to leave the country, the mystery is never quite resolved. Knowledge of the mystery does not offer Frances a solution, and she has earlier said that she was “sick with knowledge,” indicating that her new knowledge of some of the facts of the case may make her dispossession worse (217). Andrew does not acknowledge the fact that she was right to some extent; he says, “I just thought that you were rather—pressed upon by your environment, if I can put it like that. I thought from the beginning that you were one of those people who should never have come here” (267). As he did in his earlier explanations of the sounds that Frances hears in the flat,

Andrew continues to seek explanations that fault Frances. In this dialogue, Andrew reveals explicitly for the first time that he has believed that Frances has never contained the ability to maintain self-possession in this kind of environment. This position relies upon the perception that Frances is simply a hysterical woman. This position is supported in the final chapter, where Frances becomes a first-person narrator, shifting from the predominantly third-person omniscient point of view of the rest of the story. In this section, Frances becomes a disembodied narrator. Readers no longer see material representations of her words, her property, through the inclusion of the diary entries. Instead, we see her language through the narrative. While this shift might suggest that she has finally regained the self-possession that she exhibited at the beginning of the novel, it comes at a cost. After describing her poor physical shape, Frances says, “I have become the negative of myself” (278). Instead of a character in a larger narrative, she becomes and embodies the mystery story that has held her imagination captive throughout the novel.

The conclusion of Frances’s narrative suggests that her loss of self-possession may be permanent. However, Alison’s narrative in *Beyond Black* offers its readers a woman who ultimately reclaims her self-possession that was stolen from her at an early age. This moment is one which Alison must confront if she wants to rid herself of Morris—her “Spirit Guide” and tormentor. In contrast to Frances’s story, Alison’s story presents the positive effects of liminality and the loss of self-possession, though the process may be psychologically painful.

In *Beyond Black*, Alison seeks to reconcile what she sees as her public self and her private self, a source of her loss of economic and somatic self-possession. After a

conversation with an attendee at one of her public readings, the narrator writes, “This is Al’s public self: a little bit jaunty and a little bit crude, a bit of a school mistress and a bit of a flirt” (23). This description of Alison’s public self seems to indicate a fully developed sense of who she is and what her motivations are. The comparison to a “school mistress” evokes control and steadiness in the “classroom” that is her audience. She knows how to make the audience members say and do what she wants them to by offering prompts suggested to her by the “Spirit World.” Alison also “often speaks to the public about ‘my wicked sense of humour,’ warning them not to take offence; but what happens to her sense of humour in the depth of the night, when she wakes up trembling and crying, with Morris crowing at her in the corner of the room?” (23). Alison’s humor serves as the lynchpin between a tactic that she uses to control her audiences and herself and the lack of self-possession she demonstrates in private. While in public, her sense of humor puts the audience members at ease and opens them up to Alison’s supposed powers. However, humor can have the opposite effect on Alison because, she says, “It’s from Morris that I get my wicked sense of humour” (33). While Alison can seemingly control others through her sense of humor, which appears to be part of her economic and somatic self-possession, she cannot use humor to control herself because this sense of humor has been fostered in her through Morris. The characteristic is not necessarily a basic and natural part of who she is. Even Alison admits that Morris is a “control freak” (44). Consequently, Alison does not display self-possession in terms of self-control, but rather she is being controlled by an outside force (through Morris) or controls an outside entity (her audiences).

Similarly, Alison demonstrates how her public displays of her psychic powers cause her to lose self-possession after retiring from the stage. Although she remains totally in control while in public, she develops this control only through rendering herself as chiefly a conduit—a “medium”—for others. The novel describes one such reaction near the opening of the book: “But sometimes, hours after she had put out the light, she would wake up and find herself famished and nauseous. She needed cake and chocolate bars then, to pad her flesh and keep her from the pinching of the dead, their peevish nipping and needle teeth” (10). Only by making herself gain more weight by eating bad foods does she calm her panic attacks. However, her eating is motivated by an external source, another example of how Alison is controlled from an external, rather than an internal, sense of bodily possession. After a later psychic demonstration, Colette thinks, “[S]he’ll have to regurgitate or else digest all the distress she’s sucked in from the carpet and the walls. By the end of the evening she’ll be sick to her stomach from other people’s chemotherapy, feverish and short of breath; or twitching and cold, full of their torsions and strains” (27). Showing how a liminal state occurs due to an outside source, this passage displays how the problems of the spirits become materialized through Colette’s suggestion that the “distress” becomes something physical that can be regurgitated or disgested. This physicality translates into a loss of self-possession for Alison; in a way, she becomes physically possessed by the problems that plagued the spirits around her. Colette’s description also presents a model of the way Alison currently deals with memories about the rape. Alison has not expelled them nor dealt with them, so they remain inside her, contributing to her loss of self-possession.

Although the process causes Alison to lose self-possession, she sees the purpose of her psychic gift as providing a kind of self-possession for her clients. Alison says, “It’s about impressing them without scaring them, softening the edges of their fright and disbelief” (20). The passage emphasizes self-possession for the audience member rather than for Alison. Alison’s purpose is to provide them some kind of emotional comfort from the fear of their own death or the fate of their loved ones. After choosing a voice from the many that come through to her from the Spirit World, Alison takes “that voice, the dead voice you’ve chosen, and fit[s] it to the living body, to the ears that are ready to hear” (18). Alison sees herself as a kind of portal through which messages of the dead can transport, a kind of liminal intermediary between the living and the dead. While she can “fit” the message for the recipient, she only holds the message temporarily, indicating that these messages do not present self-possession for Alison. The idea that Alison is only the temporary holder of the message is shown through the metaphor used to describe her actions. She tells one woman in her audience, “Think of me as your answering machine” (24). The metaphor of the answering machine shows how Alison sees herself as the threshold between messenger and receiver. Alison sees herself as an object to be used by the living or the dead, and the choice of “your” indicates that she feels owned by the members in her audience. She does not feel self-possessed or in control of her actions and feelings; instead, her actions are dictated by her audiences.

One of her primary tactics in helping her clients find self-possession is through the assurance that their loved ones have also found self-possession in the Spirit World. “In Spirit World, she said, people are healthy and in their prime. ‘They’ve got all their bits and whatsits. Whenever they were at their happiest, whenever they were at their

healthiest, that's how you'll find them in Spirit World" (32). Here, self-possession works in a slightly different register. With death comes a return to wholeness and to an experience of being fully content. Alison says, "The dead have no sense of time, no clear sense of place; they are beyond geography and history, she tells her clients, till someone like herself tunes in. Not one of them is old or decrepit or uselessly young. They all have their own teeth: or an expensive set of implants, if their own were unsightly" (40 – 41). Through the use of the teeth example, the novel suggests that death provides a kind of overabundance of self-possession even as the physical body disintegrates. Implicit within Alison's description is the idea of a kind of equality that does not exist in the living world. Everyone experiences this sense of wholeness despite what he or she has done during their life. For Alison, death is the great equalizer in a very real sense.

Alison eventually reveals the source of the loss of her self-possession: her sexual molestation as a child at the hands of several of her mother's friends. In her initial revelation to Colette, Alison says:

You see, you don't tell anybody because there's nobody to tell. You try and write it down, you write My Diary, but you get your legs slapped. Honestly.... It doesn't matter now, I don't think about it, it's only once in a while I think about it. I might have dreamed it, I used to dream I was flying. You see, you wipe out in the day what happens in the night. You have to. It's not as if it changed my life. I mean I've never gone in for sex much. Look at me, who'd want me, it'd need an army. So it's not as if I feel...it's not as if I remember.... (108)

Through this defense mechanism, Alison relinquishes ownership of her memories, though she has ownership of other people's memories due to her psychic powers. Alison cannot confront her experience and memory, so she cannot own it. Alison's initial explanation in this passage reflects her earlier emphasis on the reception of her messages. In essence, there is no safety valve for Alison in confronting her memories, "because there's nobody to tell"—unlike during her psychic demonstrations. While she uses the second person "you" throughout the passage, it serves simply as a rhetorical replacement of the first-person "I." This shift between persons acts as an additional defense mechanism that further separates her from her memories of the gang rape. While all of the "you" subjects link to verbs depicting action toward controlling these memories through writing or speaking, Alison uses "I" only in order to connect herself to rather passive actions such as dreaming. The use of ellipsis also indicates a lack of active pursuing of the memories on Alison's part by indicating a hesitance to attempt to remember the horrible things that have occurred. The disconnection between the passive "I" and the active "you" connects with her later description about the struggle to be whole, which she connects to her womanhood: "She knew there was this struggle in a woman's life—at least, there had been in her mum's—just to be whole, to be clean, to be tidy, to keep your own teeth in your head; just to have a clean tidy house and not fag ash dropped everywhere and bottle tops under foot..." (114). Naturalizing the association between women and a divided sense of self, Alison thinks that this struggle is just a part of being a woman. She later says of the rape, "There on the ground they operated on me, took out my will and put in their own" (194). This serves as another example of the passivity she has come to accept.

Here we see not a divided self but the total loss of self—a change she is powerless to prevent.

In her interactions with Mart, Alison develops a model of self-possession based on self-respect instead of self-loathing. In one of her first conversations with Mart, Alison discusses with him why the other workers laugh at him, a notable loss of self-possession on their part. Alison says, “But that’s because you don’t get on with the job. You should have self-respect! That’s what’s important to all of us” (319). After this important self-realization prompted by Mart’s situation, Alison suddenly seems to develop control over her body, something that she has not previously demonstrated and that becomes her first step on the road to self-possession. The narrator describes Alison’s exploration of her body, something that until now she has tried to ignore. However, in this passage, she attempts to gain knowledge of her body so that she can control it: “She took handfuls of flesh from here and there, repositioned and resettled them. She viewed herself from all angles but she couldn’t produce a better effect.... My flesh is so capacious; I am a settlement, a place of safety, a bombproof shelter” (321). The metaphor Alison uses to describe herself stands in noticeable contrast to the answering machine metaphor earlier. Alison is no longer a conduit for other people’s messages or thoughts; instead, Alison becomes a shelter for her own identity and emotional control.

As a result, Alison discovers the danger of having your self-possession controlled by outside forces. Alison says to Colette, “—if you ask why I have an evil guide, it’s to do with the fact that I’m a bad person, because the people who were around me in my childhood were bad. They took out my will and put in their own. I wanted to do a good action by looking after Mart, but you wouldn’t let me—” (343 – 44). Alison equates self-

respect and self-possession with doing a good deed. She no longer sits idly by being controlled by the actions of others. Alison connects Colette's refusal to help Mart with her rapists' removal of her will; she is able to attribute blame and confront Colette with what Alison feels is a wrong she has committed. The dashes at the beginning and ending of this passage emphasize Alison's voice that she has developed by physically highlighting the quotation. Later, Alison has a discussion with Colette about Mart's suicide. "I tried to do a good action. Look how it ended up" (378). Colette sarcastically remarks, "It's the thought that counts" (378). However, Alison learns that it really is the thought that counts when she sees Mart's ghost almost immediately after this conversation: "Mart had looked quite chipper, Al thought, when she saw him perched on the fence" (378). Her concern over his well being continues even after his death; she contemplates leaving a plate of sandwiches out for him. She can control her own actions and her own feelings. Self-respect for Alison is attempting to do good deeds. Results do not matter because that would return Alison to the same liminal state through relying on outside forces to control her actions; instead, Alison's intentions and her ability to make a conscious decision to act matter.

Through this newfound self-possession, Alison is able to confront her mother about their past. Before going to see her mother, Alison decides, "At some point on your road you have to turn and start walking back towards yourself. Or the past will pursue you, and bite the nape of your neck, leave you bleeding in the ditch. Better to turn and face it with such weapons as you possess" (385). Alison makes the decision to actively pursue her past in order to control the memories she has run away from during the novel. Although she does not feel totally prepared, Alison implies that no one ever feels

completely ready to confront their past. However, as she has learned through her “good deed” with Mart, Alison must try “with such weapons as you possess.” In other words, Alison decides that she may never feel that she has the appropriate knowledge to fully face her past but that it is her active decision to attempt to confront her mother that is the important choice she makes.

Unlike earlier in the novel, Alison becomes aware of her body and the control that she has over it after making this decision: “With each step backwards she is pushing at something light, tensile, clinging. It is a curtain of skin. With each step the body speaks its mind” (386). Alison is no longer controlled by outside forces but instead her body demonstrates a dynamic voice in her new active mindset. The body is also depicted as a whole, not as the fragmented, sickly body parts that Alison has earlier described. This holistic view of herself stands in contrast to the fragmented self that Alison’s mother describes when she recalls life in their house. Alison’s mother says, “Many’s the time I seen your top half in the scullery and your bottom half in the front room. I seen your left half out the back in the shed and your right half God knows where” (389). This fragmentation occurs at the hands of her mother’s “friends,” an outside force that will no longer control Alison. Instead at the end of the novel, having found a new Spirit Guide Maureen Harrison, the narrator writes, “Unmolested, unobserved, they flee before the storm. If the universe is a great mind, it may sometime have its absences” (416). The sentence emphasizes the importance of the liminal state to Alison’s development. Her realizations about intent allow her to leave without trouble or difficulty from Morris or the other spirits. She becomes a fully self-possessed and active individual through this “universal absence,” a result of working through her liminal state.

For Mantel, the death and ghost tropes haunt her novels and become apt metaphors for women's experience of dispossession. In a 1997 letter to Mantel, Penelope Fitzgerald writes, "I wish I could agree with you that death is the least of the things that divide people..." (454). Fitzgerald goes on to compliment Mantel's non-fiction story "Terminus," in which Mantel describes the experience of possibly seeing her father's ghost on a train. In her memoir *Giving Up the Ghost* (2003), Mantel also uses the language of death and the spiritual to portray her feelings about her misdiagnosed endometriosis. Due to this misdiagnosis, doctors put Mantel on antipsychotic drugs because they thought her medical issues were psychologically, instead of physically, based. Doctors classified Mantel as the stereotypically hysterical woman, like Frances and Alison, and neglected to listen to her descriptions of pain and discomfort. In this way, Mantel's body was treated by her doctors as a kind of property that, as a side effect, constructed her identity as a mentally unfit woman and initiated the loss of her ability to perform rhetorical work. Mantel eventually reclaimed her identity from these doctors and sought help for her physical condition. This process of reclamation, particularly in terms of medical discourse, forms part of the focus in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: A Voyage into the Interior: Self-Possession, “New Women,” and the Reclamation of Somatic and Textual Property in Margaret Drabble’s *The Millstone*

This chapter does not concern representations of property in the sense of land, houses, clothes, books, and other personal items. The previous chapters have shown how representations of different forms of property affect women’s identity formation and result in various, and not always wholly positive, consequences. In the novels of Woolf, Rhys, Fitzgerald, and Mantel, property can become a gateway to disrupt a woman’s economic and bodily integrity. In contrast, this chapter examines a novel in which the female protagonist bypasses conventional kinds of property altogether for more intimate sources of narrative creation: the body and the text.

In an October 1985 lecture entitled “Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in the Post-War British Novel,” Margaret Drabble suggests that the “New Woman has had to forge a new novel to describe these new experiences” of Post-War Britain (7).

Drabble’s reference to the nineteenth-century New Woman²⁵ in her 1965 novel *The*

²⁵ The complexity and difficulty of defining the New Woman has one basis in the debate surrounding the existence of the New Woman as a real figure or as simply a literary figure. While not directly addressing the issue, Ann Ardis’s discussion of the naming of the New Woman holds implications for this debate. Ardis suggests that the nineteenth century discussions of the “Woman Question” shifted from references to real-world effects of greater powers given to women earlier in the century to the identification of the New Woman as a primarily literary phenomenon later in the century. Ardis writes, “Labeling the New Woman a literary rather than a ‘real’ phenomenon, these critics locate all ‘genuine’ change, all ‘real’ reform, in the nonliterary realm” (13). This practice of relegating the New Woman to the literary realm negates any power she might have in criticizing dominant Victorian values and practices. Consequently, Ardis’s view on the debate is primarily a negative one.

Ardis’s work suggests four characteristics of the New Woman. First, Ardis proposes that the New Woman demonstrated a proclivity for sex for pleasure. Unlike the “Old Woman,” the New Woman did not see sex as just a way to produce children but rather exhibits a passion for sexual activity. Thus, this passion lent itself to challenges to the relegation of female power and autonomy to the middle-class household. In short, female self-possession is allowable as long as it is defined, controlled, and restrained by the traditionally masculine tangible real property of the house. Second, the New Woman focused on cultivating a community of women from all economic backgrounds to develop challenges to the wide-ranging inequalities of Victorian society. Unlike single-issue reformers who sought out primarily middle-class women for protest against a small selection of important issues and who relied on differentiating themselves from working-class women through a focus on traditional definitions of “lady,” the New Woman worked to change the core issues at stake for women in Victorian society without necessarily

Millstone reveals a set of challenges facing Post-War British “New Women” like Rosamund Stacey in *The Millstone* (1965). Like her nineteenth century counterparts, Rosamund works for academic, economic, and domestic freedom, success, and equality in 1960s Britain. More specifically, the struggles emphasized in New Woman novels about women’s self-possession—in the sense of composure as well as the ability and right to be free from control by men through choosing reproductive and contraceptive practices, for example—serve as a point of contact between those novels (by authors such as Mona Caird and Sarah Grand) and Drabble’s treatment of the body and the text as kinds of property. Drabble’s depiction of Rosamund’s experiences with her friends, her family, and the medical establishment problematize the idea of an exterior source of self-possession through property ownership by confronting popular nineteenth-century rhetorical strategies that were used to prevent women from having property rights and, thus, control over their own bodies. These rhetorical strategies include the naturalization of sex differences in medical and scientific discourses, the claim by male writers to possess the one true knowledge about women and their motivations (called the “monopolist instinct”), and the conflation of the language of love and ownership. In response, Rosamund develops tactics of reclamation that link the body and the text as interior sites of property. She recreates identity narratives based in the body that are

discriminating on the basis of socioeconomic status. Third, while the New Woman challenged the legitimacy of the propriety of public, male spaces and domestic, female spaces, the “Independent Women” used this rhetoric of natural socioeconomic and gender distinctions between men and women and between middle-class and working-class women to lend credence to the professionalization of activities seen as typically female in the domestic sphere such as nursing and charity work. Consequently, “Independent Women” reinforced the legitimacy of separate male and female spheres. Finally, while the New Woman appeared at the intersection of the rights of the community and the rights of an individual, the New Woman did not necessarily see a Socialist re-appropriation of private property as the answer. The New Woman questioned the ability of a class-based approach for explaining the history of gender inequality and did not believe that a Socialist “revolution” would result in better practical conditions for the women of Britain.

themselves embodied through their circulation to and recognition by the textual public. For Rosamund, these sites provide more effective catalysts for self-possession because they avoid outside manipulation and restriction, unlike conventional goods.

Tensions surrounding property in the New Woman novel revolve around the idea of self-possession. In her study of the relationship between New Woman and colonial adventure fiction, LeeAnne Richardson speaks to the purpose of nineteenth-century feminists:

Nineteenth-century feminists want 'self-possession' both politically and metaphorically: they want the ownership of self that signifies both freedom and self-management. Typically characterized as sentimental beings, prone to hysteria, not fully in command of their faculties, women increasingly sought to wrest their public as well as their psychic identities from male control. The struggle for individual and political rights in the nineteenth century became a struggle for self-possession informed by and informing the discourses of property, ownership, enslavement, and abolition. (106)

Unfair property practices were no longer at the forefront of feminist worries in Britain in the sixties.²⁶ Instead, women found themselves faced with similar problems and arguments involving self-possession and control of one's body through, for example, debates on abortion rights. Consequently, discourses of the body and the text supplant these more overt discussions of property and ownership of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

²⁶ This is not to say that all problems related to women's property rights had been alleviated by the sixties. Equal pay, for example, continues to be a problem in the corporate world, and men in many countries continue to treat women as a form of property subjugate to her husband.

The last thirty years of criticism on Margaret Drabble's novels demonstrate little deviation from two common touchstones: the novels' exploration of the role of women in society—with a particular focus on the role of the woman writer—and the narrative strategies Drabble's novels employ. In the latter case, Drabble is an acknowledged conservative in terms of her narrative form, favoring the nineteenth-century realist tradition. When asked in an interview about the postmodern tendency towards formal and narrative experimentation,²⁷ Drabble said that she would “rather be at the end of a dying tradition which she admires than at the beginning of a tradition which she deplors” (qtd. in Pickering 475). Some early critics of her work such as Francois Bonford and Maureen Howard have commented on Drabble's devotedness to Victorian and Edwardian realism, and Drabble's celebrated biography of Arnold Bennett makes these devotions fairly explicit. Recently, Pamela Bromberg has concluded that “Drabble remains a realist; she builds upon the Great Tradition [the European novelistic tradition] and insists . . . that ‘writing isn't about writing; it's about the other thing, which is called life’” (7). Bromberg's project is in part to catalogue the many sources from nineteenth century realist fiction, such as the prominent “web” metaphor from George Eliot's

²⁷ Much of the current work on her novels, though, classify her narrative strategies as particularly postmodern or attempt to reconcile her penchant for realism with postmodernism. This tendency in the criticism of Drabble's writing to discuss her works within a postmodern framework to the detriment of other possible readings misses an important layer of complexity and density in Drabble's work, especially given the author's admiration of realism. For example, Roberta Rubenstein argues that Drabble's characters increasingly “suffer bodily injury and fragmentation as terrorism, crime, random accidents, and disasters seep into and disrupt their lives” (136). Rubenstein parallels the use of bodily imagery with the fragmented narrative of Drabble's later novels. Similarly, Pamela Bromberg argues that D uses metafictional techniques that attempt to address the idea of mimesis—representing reality within narrative—an idea that many postmodern authors critique. Bromberg suggests Drabble realizes that a “fragmented, self-aware society may require disrupted, self-reflexive narrative forms to represent it” (6). Thus, Bromberg sees many postwar women writers such as Drabble and Doris Lessing as “engaged in a revision of literary realism” that uses “a variety of innovative narrative techniques and complicated intertextual dialogue with the literary past” (5).

Middlemarch, that Drabble revises in her fiction to question the ability of narrative to represent life and, particularly, a woman's life.

However, one source from which I will argue Drabble draws is left absent: the New Woman novel. Though no critic has previously sought to read Drabble's female characters as "updated" New Women, this absence is particularly noticeable in Bromberg's essay because Bromberg locates the cause of reflexivity in post-war women's writing within the development of a feminist consciousness, beginning with Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. Although she pulls from popular examples of nineteenth-century psychological realism like Eliot's *Middlemarch* and *The Mill on the Floss* and twentieth century texts like Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* to put forth her argument about metafiction, Bromberg never mentions the contributions of the New Woman novel to the development of that feminist consciousness, particularly in terms of property ownership and self-possession.

The struggles emphasized in New Woman novels about women's self-possession through a focus on property and bodily ownership serve as points of contact between those novels and Margaret Drabble's treatment of the body and the text as related kinds of property. Drabble's book, in Richardson's words, "wrest [women's] public as well as their psychic identities" from public control in order to tactically engage with contemporary women's issues. Like the New Woman writers, Rosamund redeems her narratives of identity from the novel's public to revalorize and reempower them through an emphasis on the body as a site of self-possession and identity making. In *The Millstone*, this process of redeeming and adapting results in a paradigm shift for

Rosamund—from having an identity defined by her friends and family to an identity defined by herself, a movement from exterior to interior.

Talia Schaffer describes the process through which New Woman writers would regain their public identities. For example, in a series of popular articles from the *North American Review* of 1894, Sarah Grand and Ouida's depictions of the New Woman fall within the dominant Victorian binary of the angel and the demon. These fictional accounts of the New Woman played upon the fears of "the unsexed, terrifying, violent Amazon ready to overturn the world," which stands in contrast to the "everyday" representatives of "New Womanism" who biked and did not need chaperones, for instance. Schaffer writes that by making "the New Woman into a fiction, Grand enables herself to construct a meta-history which conveys her own psychological sense of the real enormity of the change, rather than the facts which produce a misleadingly minor sense of the movement. In that way, Grand *wants* the New Woman to be a fiction; she's much more impressive that way" (42). Grand creates a kind of mythical and larger-than-life New Woman by avoiding specific instructions for charitable social activism and by creating sweeping historical narratives for the New Woman that cannot realistically be supported. In other words, she shifts genres from reportage to myth, and it is this tactical narrative revision that makes the New Woman appear more powerful.

Ouida's physical description of the New Woman mirrors Grand's hyperbolic turn. In her article, Ouida's initially refers to a caricature that had appeared in *Punch* some years earlier. By using a caricature as the basis of her defining portrait, Ouida fictionalizes the New Woman in order to strike a comparison between herself and the New Woman. Schaffer writes that "the more powerful, enormous, and significant this

fictional caricature becomes, the more benign, sedate, and reassuring Ouida herself seems by comparison” (44). In contrast to Grand’s mythical “idealized nurturer,” Ouida creates a demonic and grotesque version of the New Woman (Schaffer 45). When Ouida argues for animal rights, for example, her passionate arguments would seem adequate and agreeable when contrasted with Ouida’s shrewish harpy version of the New Woman. Thus, the rhetorical strategies employed by Sarah Grand and Ouida, though different in kind, work to develop fictional accounts of the New Woman’s history in order to produce “real” cultural change. Both Grand and Ouida appropriate the various depictions of the New Woman from public discourse, recreate them, and re-publicize them through textual circulation with different—and, in their opinions, more effectual—identities.

Initially, as with the depictions of the New Woman that Ouida and Sarah Grand address, Rosamund’s identity is primarily constructed in the novel through the opinions of the public surrounding her. Instead of trying to formulate her own identity, which would demonstrate control and self-possession, Rosamund accepts the identity that they construct for her throughout the novel. Consequently, Rosamund spends much of the novel trying to adapt this constructed persona by her friends, family, and doctors—a movement from an exterior conception of identity to an interior conception of identity.

At the beginning of the novel, Rosamund’s identity does not derive from an experience of self-possession based in ownership but rather through the public recognition of others’ possessions and her association with them. Instead of working on Elizabethan sonnet sequences, Rosamund’s parents wanted her “to read economics at Cambridge,” a subject they see as having a more distinct opportunity for success (32). Rosamund also discusses the possibility of people misinterpreting her socioeconomic

position from the fact that she lives in an expensive flat owned by her parents. Her parents, we learn, purport to be staunch socialists, and they have travelled to Africa so that Rosamund's father can take a position as a professor of economics at a university. Though they could have rented out their flat for a large fee, Rosamund's parents "disapproved very strongly...of the property situation, and were unwilling to become involved in it except on a suffering and sacrificial basis: so their attitude was not pure kindness, but partly at least a selfish abstinence from guilt" (11 - 12). Rosamund's parents ironically base much of their identity upon the property that they own by refusing to recognize the rights conferred through property ownership, and Rosamund's sense of self-possession arises from this logic. Rosamund's view of herself follows this sense of self-deprivation; her parents have defined for Rosamund what self-possession means.

Rosamund sees the "only disadvantage" to living in her parents' flat as being the fact that

people would insist on assuming that because I lived there I was rather rich: which by any human standards I was, having about five hundred a year in various research grants and endowments: but this, of course, was not at all rich in the eyes of the people who habitually made such assumptions. In fact, had they known the truth they would have classed me on the starvation line, and would have ceased to make remarks about the extreme oldness of my shoes. (12)

Like her parents, Rosamund does not see property as a proper basis of independence. Instead, her rhetoric bespeaks a negative appraisal of property's power to provide freedom. Unlike the short simple sentences at the beginning of this passage, Rosamund adds clause upon clause with the colon when explaining her property that, in a sense,

overly apologizes for what she appears to possess—even down to her shoes. Her parents have “drummed the idea of self-reliance” into Rosamund so much so that she “believed dependence to be a fatal sin” (12). Just as Rosamund fears that the flat defines her identity to the public, so have her parents defined what “independence” means for Rosamund. Later, in describing her parents’ “extraordinary blend of socialist principle and middle-class scruple,” Rosamund says that they “have to punish themselves” because they “can’t just let things get comfortable” (31). Rosamund lacks the self-possession needed to disrupt the public construction of her identity as well as her parents’ definition of what freedom should mean to her.

This pattern of reliance on outside perceptions of Rosamund’s identity continues in her relationship to the literature that she studies. After finding out about her pregnancy, Rosamund “went through slightly more than the usual degree of incredulity and shock, for reasons which I doubtless shall be unable to restrain myself from recounting: there was nobody to tell, nobody to ask, so I was obliged once more to fall back on the dimly reported experiences of friends and information I had gleaned through the years from cheap fiction” (10). Rosamund demonstrates a lack of control over the creation of her narrative; because she cannot “restrain” herself “from recounting,” her story comes as a result of an automatic response to a stimulus rather than a demonstration of self-possession. Rather than a narrative written for herself, Rosamund’s story depends upon an audience to receive and comment on it. Indeed, the commentary becomes more important than its creation.

This idea of reception that validates an identity constructed by a narrative works much like the public’s interpretation of her identity in terms of her parents’ flat.

Rosamund does not “own” her story but rather relies upon an outside perception of her story, a perception that she has little control over. Her emphasis on “cheap fiction” and the similarity of her situation to many Victorian heroines suggest sensation fiction and the New Woman fiction of the nineteenth century as well as the contemporary romance novels from British writers like Barbara Cartland. Rosamund constantly makes references to the fates of fictional heroines of the past. She later explains her pregnancy after a less-than-stellar first sexual experience with George Matthews, a supposed homosexual newsreader for BBC radio, through the language of the Victorian angel/demon binary: “Had I rushed in regardless, at eighteen, full of generous passion, as other girls do, I would have got away with it too. But being at heart a Victorian, I paid the Victorian penalty” (22). In other words, she sees her story not as one of an individual but rather as a retelling of the Victorian heroines of the past—something she thinks that she has no control over and that is simply deterministic. In short, she lacks the self-possession necessary to break free from this tradition and to create her own story.

What, then, are the ways the public prevents the development of self-possession for the New Woman, and how are these rhetorical strategies presented in *The Millstone*? LeeAnne Richardson notes that nineteenth-century medical and scientific discourses naturalized racial and sexual differences, always to the detriment of those who are not male or white. The naturalization of these divisions resulted in the creation of generic approaches to women that do not account for individual difference and the development of the idea that certain characteristics are proper or improper aspects of a woman’s personality and bodily function. For example, Charles Darwin suggests in *The Descent of Man* (1871) that the presumably feminine traits of intuition and perception are

“characteristics of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization” (2: 326 - 27). As medical science learned more about the workings of the human body and mind during the latter half of the nineteenth century, these assumptions adapted, too, so that women were always seen as the lesser of the sexes. For example, Ann Oakley writes, “At the turn of the century, when the parietal lobes replaced the frontal lobes as the seat of intellect, it was discovered that women’s frontal lobes were actually more developed than men’s—but were not a sign of intelligence after all” (122).

Consequently, women were seen not to have the intellectual capacity to either deal with property ownership or with ownership of their own bodies. Likewise, philosophers such as Frances Power Cobbe, John Stuart Mill, and John Locke composed treatises against writers such as Thomas Jefferson who, like many nineteenth-century scientists, created arguments that proposed “natural” explanations for unequal property rights between men and women.

Like the New Woman, Rosamund’s lack of self-possession in terms of identity narrative creation arises partially from the fact that medical discourses in the novel deem self-possession as inappropriate for Rosamund, reflecting the same scientific and philosophical arguments levied against women’s self-possession in late nineteenth-century New Woman fiction. In *The Millstone*, these discourses revolve around the way that Rosamund’s doctors treat her at the National Health Clinic and the way that Rosamund interacts with the medical buildings.

Rosamund demonstrates a lack of knowledge about giving birth that the doctors and nurses expect her to demonstrate because she is a woman. Dr. Moffat’s “undisguised relief” at passing her off to St. Andrew’s hospital causes Rosamund to demonstrate a

hesitancy in asking questions about her pregnancy. Instead of demonstrating her lack of knowledge, Rosamund simply says, “Yes, of course,” as though she “understood the whole procedure” though she “wanted to ask him a dozen things” (62). She even goes so far as to say that her “innocence” prevented her from “even know[ing] what a clinic was” (63). Dr. Moffat implies and Rosamund concludes in this interaction that there is a kind of correct “pregnancy narrative” to which she is not privy and should be. At her first visit to Dr. Moffat, Rosamund says that she “felt [her] independence threatened” (45); Rosamund is unable to challenge the legitimacy of this pregnancy narrative because she believes that she has no right to challenge it. In other words, she lacks the self-possession to question the propriety of the medical establishment’s method of approaching pregnant women.

These medical expectations about Rosamund’s knowledge about how a “proper” pregnancy narrative should unfold continue when she arrives at St. Andrew’s Hospital. Rosamund feels that even the architecture of the medical buildings conspire against her and her lack of knowledge about having the baby. She says that she “was alarmed, not so much because the building was an eyesore...but because [she] did not know how to get into it, nor which part to attack. There were innumerable doors and entrances, and [she] had a sense that the main door was certainly not the appropriate one” (63). In this passage, Rosamund continues to connect the idea of an “appropriate” narrative—in this instance, a kind of spatial narrative—to the way that she goes about her pregnancy. Rosamund feels pressured to conform the tactical, individualized way that she interacts with the medical building, a demonstration of self-possession, to the strategic way that the medical building has been built. The response from the receptionist—being directed

back outside to the “Out Patients” entrance down a side street—reinforces Rosamund’s feelings of inadequacy about her pregnancy by implying that there is a right path that she should naturally know and that Rosamund has chosen the wrong one. After arriving at the “Out Patients” entrance and seeing that “there was no reception desk and no indication of any direction,” Rosamund remarks that she “stood there irresolute, feeling acutely ashamed at [her] own ignorance” (63). While her “ignorance” is explicitly related to her lack of knowledge about directions, the remark implies that, like her remarks during her earlier visit to Dr. Moffat, she begins to let this perceived ignorance overtake her independence in the matter of her pregnancy.

Finally, the treatment which Rosamund undergoes at St. Andrew’s hospital decentralizes the individuality of her pregnancy narrative and her body. In other words, from the perspective of the doctors and nurses, she becomes a generic pregnant woman rather than one with individual needs—an approach that parallels the nineteenth-century medical rhetoric I describe earlier. Because she goes to a teaching hospital, Rosamund is examined by her primary physician Dr. Esmond as well as a group of five medical students. Rosamund describes the medical procedure during this first time that she had ever been examined:

I lay there, my eyes shut, and quietly smiling to conceal my outrage, because I knew that these things must happen, and that doctors must be trained, and that medical students must pass examinations; and he asked them questions about the height of the fundus, and could they estimate the length of pregnancy, and what about the pelvis. They all said I had a narrow pelvis, and I lay there and listened to them and felt them,

with no more protest than if I had been a corpse examined by budding pathologists for the cause of death. But I was not dead, I was alive twice over. (67)

The doctor and medical students treat Rosamund's body as a kind of text meant for interpretation, a site of knowledge that they must learn. Likewise, Rosamund's focus on the examinations that must be passed suggests she believes that there is one "correct answer" to her body. However, Rosamund's bodily reaction to the medical examination betrays her actual feelings about the examination. Even as the doctor and students look at Rosamund as a site of knowledge about the female form, Rosamund closes her eyes, indicating an unwillingness that also goes against her willing smile. While this control over her outward reaction through smiling might be interpreted as a form of self-possession, she only demonstrates self-possession inasmuch as it determines the medical students' outcomes on their exams, not her own clear bill of health. She does not feel as if she needs to pass her "examination" but can only help the medical students pass their "examination."

Additionally, her body is described as a series of generic parts, the fundus and pelvis. The term "fundus" does not refer to a specific anatomical part but is a generic anatomical term referring to the portion of an organ opposite from its opening. Likewise, all of the medical students make the same observation about Rosamund's pelvis without offering any kind of specifics that would differentiate her from other women. The divisions of each sentence into individual clauses linked by commas or semi-colons parallels the division of Rosamund's body, furthering the idea that Rosamund's body becomes much like a text to be "read" and interpreted by the medical students. A

representation of the female body within the blazon tradition of Elizabethan sonnets—her subject of study for her graduate degree—this passage depicts Rosamund’s body as a series of generic female parts within a generic pregnancy narrative; the “correct” examination procedure or answer for Rosamund’s body is the correct one for all women. Although Rosamund ultimately rejects the comparison, the fact that she feels like a dead body demonstrates another flattening of her identity. Even in her rejection, though, she does not speak of herself as an individual but rather from within the context of her pregnancy, again demonstrating her lack of self-possession.

In addition to medical discourse, another strategy used to prevent the New Woman’s (and Rosamond’s) self-possession involves what Grant Allen terms the “Monopolist Instinct” of the British Empire’s attitude towards patriotism, capitalism, property rights, slavery, and women’s rights. Allen’s description of the monopolist instinct ostensibly relies on exclusive possession or control so that a dichotomy involving the powerful and the powerless is constructed, creating a kind of “us versus them” mentality. For example, Allen writes in *Post-Prandial Philosophy* that the English attitude towards property “is a viler and more sordid” monopolist instinct than patriotism because patriotism

at least can lay claim to some expansiveness beyond mere individual interest; whereas property stops dead short at the narrowest limits. It is not ‘Us against the world!’ but ‘Me against my fellow-citizens!’ It is the final result of the industrial war in its most hideous avatar. Look how it scars the fair face of our England with its anti-social notice-boards, ‘Trespassers will be prosecuted!’ It says, in effect, ‘This is my land. God

made it; but I have acquired it and tabooed it. The grass on it grows green; but only for me. The mountains rise beautiful; no foot of man, save mine and my gamekeepers', shall tread them. The waterfalls gleam fresh and cool in the glen: avaunt there, you non-possessors; you shall never see them! All this is my own. And I choose to monopolise it.' (82)

Allen uses the basic idea of this passage—that property ownership in England can lead to a kind of protectionist mentality—to critique the mindset that sees women as property.

Allen continues, arguing that slavery has been outlawed except

as regards women! There, it lingers still. The Man says even now to himself: —'This woman is mine. If she ventures to have a heart or a will of her own, woe betide her! I have tabooed her for life; let any other man touch her, let her look at any other man—and—knife, revolver, or law court, they shall both of them answer for it!' There you have in all its natural ugliness another Monopolist Instinct—the deepest-seated of all, the vilest, the most barbaric. She is not yours: she is her own: unhand her! (84)

In his argument against monopolizing property and for women's self-possession, Allen sets up a position that goes against the rhetoric of naturalized differences that scientists and philosophers offered. Instead, he argues that self-possession is the natural state of men and women and any deviation from self-possession is a kind of degradation. Allen satirically uses the naturalistic word "instinct" to describe this process of polarization. Both women and property are naturally free until the interferences of man have "tabooed" them both, making their current state in England unnatural. Both passages use

metaphors of the body. The “scars” on the “fair face of England” imply degradation from an original ideal form. Likewise, the passage emphasizes the senses of a woman and the danger of death posed to the body for crossing her “owner.” For the “owner” of a woman, she becomes a series of feelings written on the body: a look from the eyes, a “will” in the heart, or a touch of the hand. Like the landscape of England, this “dissection” of the female form makes her more easily controlled and more easily made to “answer for” demonstrations of self-possession or control. Allen rejects the idea that this process of dissection is natural; instead, he shifts the idea of nature to the “natural ugliness” of the monopolist instinct towards women, which echoes the “scars” of the English landscape in that both result from the practice of man and not nature.

However, in describing the monopolist instinct of English society towards property and women, Allen himself demonstrates a monopolist instinct. As LeeAnne Richardson points out, Allen “wants to own all knowledge about women” and “sees himself as possessor of the one true knowledge” about women because he is “the one rational being in a society filled with illogical ideas and practices” (117). For example, in “Plain Words on the Woman Question,” Allen “feel[s] sure” that “while women are crying for emancipation they really want to be left in slavery; and that it is only a few exceptional men, here and there in the world, who wish to see them fully and wholly franchised” (452). The basis for this conclusion about women’s self-possession develops from essentialist notions of women’s work and interests derived from primarily biological principles. Allen asserts that any woman who “has no desire to become a wife and mother” is “really a functional abberation” (452). Thus, while Allen critiques British men for monopolizing the female body, he likewise uses it as the primary basis of his

knowledge about women: Destiny derives from biology, and any deviation from that destiny results in an abnormal identity.

Rosamund's friends and family also demonstrate Grant Allen's "monopolist instinct" when it comes to describing what is best for Rosamund in terms of sexual fulfillment, independence, and abortion. In other words, they think that they know what is better for her than she does: a demonstration of her lack of self-possession.

Rosamund demonstrates a reluctance to put forth her story of pregnancy because she does not think that anyone will believe her, a hesitancy to make her identity narrative public that reinforces misperceptions about herself. She never told anybody that George was the father because, she writes, "[p]eople would have been highly astonished had I told them, as he was so incidental to my life that nobody even knew that I knew him. They would have asked me if I was sure of my facts" (20). Rosamund's view of her friends' possible incredulity comes as a result of her belief that her story does not fit into a twentieth century conception of sex. In short, she does not possess her story but is rather possessed by her friends' possible interpretations of her story and in the way they would respond to it within the cultural context of Britain in the sixties. This context naturalizes sexual abandon for women in the same way that the late nineteenth century naturalized sexual frigidity. Both contexts offer a monopolistic knowledge about what women want. After making reference to the disbelief that she would encounter from those around her, she twice compares her story to that of Hester Prynne, the heroine of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Rosamund "always wished to discount" these kind of moral revenge stories "because of their overhanging grim tones of retribution, their association with scarlet letters, their eye-for-an-eye and Bunyanesque attention to

the detail of offense” (20). She does not see her story as proper for the twentieth century; she writes, “I was guilty of a crime, all right, but it was a brand-new, twentieth century crime, not the good old traditional one of lust and greed. My crime was my suspicion, my fear, my apprehensive terror of the very idea of sex” (21). Thus, the “scarlet letter embroidered upon [her] bosom...stood for Abstinence, not for Adultery” (21). The same kind of monopolistic thinking that does not allow for individual differences among women of nineteenth century America also constrains Rosamund’s self-possession to the point of criminality in her mind. There is a punishment to be paid for going against this prevailing philosophy, and Rosamund initially thinks that her pregnancy is the punishment. However, as the novel unfolds, Rosamund begins learning to create her own individual narrative of identity rather than relying upon categorizations.

In terms of Rosamund’s sexual practices, her friends believe that she has the same kind of sexual prowess as is expected of other women in their social context, and Rosamund allows them to think this way. Specifically, her friends think that she is sleeping with Joe Hurt, a liberal novelist, and Roger Henderson, a conservative barrister. Though she is not sleeping with either man, Joe and Roger believe that Rosamund has slept with them both. Joe and Roger enjoy the thought that Rosamund is sleeping with the other; this possible sexual activity makes her have “a seedy status” in their eyes (23). While the arrangement allows Rosamund to avoid sexual contact until she becomes involved with George—the father of her baby—Joe and Roger both demonstrate a monopolistic determination of Rosamund’s wants and needs that fits her into the same interpretive category: a sexually overactive woman that performs for the pleasure of men. In other words, like Grant Allen when discussing his knowledge of women, both

Joe and Roger claim to know what is best for Rosamund as a woman and do not conceive of other possible ways for Rosamund to act. It is only through Rosamund's deception that she somewhat avoids this instinct. Rosamund states that had Joe and Roger "known the true state of affairs, [they] would have felt [themselves] obliged for honour's sake to try to seduce [her] and to reveal to [her] the true pleasures of life" (22). Rosamund does not necessarily create an authentic identity that breaks free of the monopolistic instance to categorize her as a sexually overactive woman because she relies upon lies to create this identity. Thus, she becomes entrapped within this monopolistic instinct directed towards her sexual activity.

Another result of this monopolistic categorization by Rosamund's friends is the naturalized assumption that she will have an abortion. After becoming pregnant and revealing her pregnancy to her friends, they automatically think that Rosamund will have an abortion, the "problem of publicity" as Rosamund calls it (45). Again, her friends incorrectly see Rosamund as representative of a specific category of women about which they own all knowledge: a single, sexually active woman who should not want a child or, as Joe calls her, "a very unwomanly woman" after he brings up a Bergman film that focused on miscarriages in a maternity ward (46). Joe's first words after finding out about the pregnancy are, "You're not going to have it, are you?" (46). Roger makes a similar remark when he learns of her pregnancy; he asks, "Well, what are you going to do about it, if that's not too tiresome a question?" (53). He is confounded that Rosamund is "going to let nature take its course" (53). Neither Joe nor Roger believes that she would even consider having the child because they believe that they share the "correct" knowledge of Rosamund's identity, which is based in her supposed sexual activity.

A final rhetorical strategy used to deny self-possession involves the co-mingling of the language of ownership and the language of passion. This impetus to surrender one's self-possession to another in the name of love arises from an inversion of the chivalric code, which placed the power primarily in the hands of the female beloved. Instead, the version of love in New Woman fiction minimizes women's power in a relationship, making the loss of self-possession in a relationship natural to and dutiful on the part of women. This loss of power occurs at the behest of both sexes. Both the men and women of New Woman texts such as Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* and Charlotte Mew's writings operate according to the idea of "to care for and to keep," the words uttered by Mew's protagonist Laurie in describing her devotion to her fiancée Tony (131). Laurie decides to become a missionary instead of marrying Tony, saying that love for Tony "means simply possession, satisfaction." However, Tony repeats her phrase—"to care for and to keep"—in his attempt to convince her to stay. He continues, "Don't *you* remember? And now you speak as if it were some paltry version of my own. It once was yours" (131). Tony's assertions rely upon a kind of cultural hegemony that appeals to the "common sense" of love; love is primarily about sacrifice for the protection of each other. Richardson writes that "[l]ove...becomes a metaphor for tyrannical control: a woman is surrounded by monsters of affection, caring guides who in reality domineer" (118). In defining the propriety of women's roles in British society, Richardson continues, "Domestic ideology *owns* women by defining what is possible and what is acceptable in wife, mother, and daughter" (119). The ideal of romantic love naturalizes women's sacrifices for the loved ones. These sacrifices are the sole responsibility of women, "when women alone are taught that to be loving is to be

submissive, obedient, and self-sacrificing” (Richardson 118). The mixing of the language of love and possession, then, becomes another way to ensure a woman’s acceptance of gender norms.

Roger and Joe’s monopolist instinct about what Rosamund desires creates a related problem around this third rhetorical strategy against self-possession in *New Woman* fiction. In each encounter with Joe and Roger when she tells them about the pregnancy, money is offered to Rosamund. However, each offer of money comes with the same set of conditions—a promise of abortion and repudiation of the competing man’s affection. Because he originally thinks that the baby belongs to Roger, Joe says, “It’s his fault, it’s his job to get you out of it. He’s rich enough, isn’t he? Why don’t you make him pay and go off and have it done in comfort?” (46). After getting visibly rattled by Rosamund’s refusal to have an abortion, Joe argues, “You just can’t. I forbid you. It’ll ruin your life. If you want some money, I’ll lend you some. How much do you want? A hundred? Two hundred? How much do you need?” (47). In each of these instances, an acceptance of Joe’s offer would necessarily result in a decrease in Rosamund’s independence; while Joe would lose some money, Rosamund would, in her mind, give up a lot more. This problem is compounded by the fact that Joe expects their relationship to maintain its present course, implying that Joe actually has his own interests at heart rather than Rosamund’s. Though Roger does offer money, more importantly he offers to marry Rosamund; however, Roger’s proposal seems less than genuine because in the next breath he says, “We could always get divorced more or less instantly” (54). Though Rosamund cannot think of any good things that would come out of a marriage, Roger says that “it would have its compensations” (54). In the context of

Roger's earlier remarks about Rosamund's supposed identity as a sexual adventurer, Roger's remark about "compensations" implies a total control over her body that would preclude Joe's participation, although Roger is supposedly already married to a woman in America.

As the novel unfolds, Rosamund develops tactics of self-possession to fight against the rhetorical strategies that question her ability to create her own identity narrative. Drabble's character redeems her narratives of identity from the rhetoric put forth by the novel's public to revalorize and reempower them through an emphasis on the body as a site of self-possession rather than as a site to be controlled from an outside source or from biological determinism. She takes her identity from the public in three ways related to the three rhetorical strategies: the ways that she manipulates the medical system, reclaims her story that her friend Lydia turned into a novel, and treats George in the final scene of the story.

Rosamund's rebuttal to the medical discourse in the novel comes in the form of two scenes: the birth and sickness of her daughter Octavia. Even before these events, Rosamund becomes accustomed to the medical system and the ways in which she can manipulate it. For example, she "learned what time to arrive and where to slip [her] attendance card in the pile so that [she] would get called early in the queue" and "learned to read the notes upside down in the file that said Not to be Shown to the Patient" (67). She develops individual tactical methods in order to undermine the conventional wisdom of the medical professions about knowledge that the patient should and should not know and instead makes those decisions herself. Later, after going to the hospital because she has experienced labor pains, the nurses tending to Rosamund begin recounting tales of

their last shift in the maternity ward. The nurses inquire “how many had been born the night before, and what had happened to the little premature one that was failing earlier in the evening” before moving on to stories of long labors, racist mothers, and the death of a mother and a baby (112). Like the previous hospital scenes, the nurses interpret Rosamund’s pregnancy and labor from the perspective of a generic medical narrative; “One of them said, *en passant*,” Rosamund recalls, “I’ll be really glad to get out of this ward. I don’t really mind the babies, but the mothers are enough to give anyone the creeps” (112). The nurses ignore Rosamund’s suggestion that she is about to have a baby because they believe that she has “a long time to go yet” (113). Rosamund goes on to have the baby five minutes later. The nurses, in other words, do not offer the possibility for individual differences among different mothers but suggest that all birth narratives belong to the same kind of terrible experiences that they have described. From the nurses’ perspectives, she cannot possibly be ready to deliver because of the way they read her bodily signals, a reading that turns out to be a misreading.

Rosamund also disrupts their dire interpretation of her pregnancy by producing, for the first time, a voice of her own. After describing the death of the mother and baby the previous night, Rosamund says “At this I could take it no longer, and I heard my voice yell, from a long way away, ‘Oh, for God’s sake, pack it in, can’t you?’” (112). Rosamund describes the yell as having an “unnatural loudness of tone” (112). While this yell brings the first real bit of attention that Rosamund receives from the nurses, Rosamund’s description of the comment suggests that she still has not fully gained control over her own narrative of identity. Rosamund describes the voice in a disembodied way; she does not see the yell as originating within her body but rather

“from a long way away.” She still does not seem to realize her self-possession in actions but rather relies upon the nurses’ reactions to color her interpretation.

However, Rosamund’s hesitancy changes when she has to bring Octavia to the hospital for an operation. After enduring a long wait to see Octavia, the head nurse tells Rosamund that visits are not allowed in that particular ward. In response, Rosamund says, “I have never been good at getting what I want; every impulse in me tells me to give up at the first breath of opposition” (146 – 47). However, Rosamund does not succumb to this initial reaction any longer, the reaction that the nurses expect from her. Instead, this time, she felt that she “would not be the only one to lose; somewhere Octavia was lying around” and waiting for her. Rosamund no longer believes that it is “a question of what [she] wanted: this time there was someone else involved. Life would never be a simple question of self-denial again” (147). With this denial of self-denial, Rosamund comes to the realization that motherhood and independence are not mutually exclusive and willingly and purposefully accepts her position as Octavia’s mother; she exhibits self-worth rather than a value or category that is assigned to her by others. While one might argue that Octavia is an exterior source of self-possession, Octavia is, in a sense, the ultimate representation of Lockean self-possession because she is a product of Rosamund’s body. After the head nurse begins to physically remove Rosamund from the office, Rosamund again screams as in the earlier scene, though Rosamund presents this scream differently than the first:

I screamed very loudly, shutting my eyes to do it, and listening in amazement to the deafening shindy that filled my head. Once I had started, I could not stop; I stood there, motionless, screaming, whilst they

shook me and yelled at me and told me that I was upsetting everybody in earshot. ‘I don’t care,’ I yelled, finding words for my inarticulate passion, ‘I don’t care, I don’t care, I don’t care about anyone, I don’t care, I don’t care, I don’t care.’ (149)

Unlike the first yell, Rosamund’s scream this time is deliberate with her newfound self-possession and elicits action from the nursing staff. When read within the context of the rest of novel, where Rosamund’s identity is based primarily in the opinions of and categorizations by the public—her friends, family, and physicians—her cries of not caring allude not to her feelings about Octavia but rather to these outside opinions. She does not care how people interpret her actions in the hospital. Rosamund also remembers “the clearness of [her] conscience and the ferocity of [her] emotion” (149). She is “neither one nor the other, but enduring them, and not breaking in two” (149). Unlike the first yell, which Rosamund describes as having come from outside of her body, this scream comes at a moment when Rosamund feels most in control of her actions, her intentions, and their possible consequences, a kind of unified experience of emotion and conscience that she has never felt previously. After Rosamund’s doctor agrees to allow her a visit to Octavia, Rosamund immediately stops screaming. Though the medical staff believed that Rosamund was hysterical, she again demonstrates full control over her actions, disallowing their interpretation of her actions. Because she immediately quits screaming when the nurses allow her to see Octavia, Rosamund’s loss of composure in this instance works as an assertion of her voice and her identity as a mother.

Another important way that Rosamund demonstrates self-possession is her treatment, or, more specifically, Octavia’s treatment of Lydia’s novel. Lydia initially

complains to Rosamund about the difficulty she is having with developing a new subject for her new novel. After telling Rosamund about how she lost her baby by getting hit by a bus, Rosamund asks why she does not write about that experience. Lydia replies that she “couldn’t possibly” because it is “so unconvincing. Far too unrealistic for [her] kind of novel” (73). Lydia further compares her story to stories found in Thomas Hardy’s *Life’s Little Ironies*, which constructs a parallel between what has happened to Lydia’s body and a “proper,” believable narrative. In other words, Lydia’s “theory” of narrative formation relies primarily upon public reception, upon the public’s ability to believe and accept the narrative. Because the narrative that Lydia would write is based in her specific female bodily actions related to pregnancy, Lydia implies that only particular narratives of the female body are proper for public reception—a kind of monopolist viewpoint of assumptions that Lydia makes about women. This instance expands upon Grant Allen’s suggestion that men are the only ones who demonstrate this “monopolist instinct” about women by demonstrating the assumptions that Lydia makes about another woman’s narrative.

Rosamund later discovers that Lydia has chosen to use Rosamund’s situation as the basis for her new novel. After reading some papers that Lydia leaves next to Rosamund’s typewriter and realizing that it is Lydia’s new novel, Rosamund says, “I read the whole lot straight off, or what there was of it; it was not finished. It was nothing more nor less than my life story, with a few minor alterations here and there, and a few interesting false assumptions amongst the alterations” (103). Among the assumptions and alterations that Lydia adds to her version of Rosamund’s life story are Lydia’s false assumption that Joe is Octavia’s father and her incorrect representation of Rosamund’s

academic discipline. In making these changes to Rosamund's story, Lydia assumes a monopolistic knowledge about Rosamund, down to the origin of her pregnancy.

Rosamund's reaction, though, bespeaks a problem in Lydia's adaptation of Rosamund's story. Rosamund says that "it amused me to think of Lydia sitting there racking her brains trying to work out why I was having the child, and why I hadn't got rid of it" (104). In other words, Rosamund has recognized that Lydia has misread her narrative because Lydia must fit Rosamund's story into her own conception of narrative creation so that it will be properly received by the public. Within the context of Rosamund and Lydia's earlier discussion about the proper subject of novels, Lydia believes that the story should both lack irony and conform to her view of Rosamund as sexually amorous—just like Joe and Roger have both concluded.

Yet Rosamund recognizes the irony of her story and how it relates to her lack of sexual activity. She says, "My present predicament would certainly qualify, I thought, as one of life's little ironies" because she is not the stereotypical 1960s woman that her friends' think she is and got pregnant after her first sexual experience (74). Later, Rosamund also takes offense at Lydia's description of her "jigsaw mind" in her novel (105). However, Rosamund takes this chance to "rewrite" the narrative of her relationship with Lydia. Rosamund believes that "in those pages of typescript had been the proof that I was still the donor, she still the recipient" (106). In this sense, Rosamund reclaims possession over her narrative resetting the context in which it is presented; it is only through her "donation" of her narrative that Lydia creates her novel—a kind of philanthropic action on Rosamund's part. Rosamund consequently remains in the position of power, rejecting Lydia's fictionalization of her life. After Rosamund leaves

Lydia's door open while Lydia stays in the flat, Octavia crawls into her room, rips up many pages of the only copy of the novel, and "eats" other pages: "'Octavia,' I said in horror, and she started guiltily, and looked round at me with a charming deprecating smile: her mouth, I could see, was wedged full of wads of Lydia's new novel" (163). Not only does Rosamund metaphorically reclaim her identity narrative from Lydia's monopolist instinct to capitalize upon her story, Octavia physically reclaims the story, a merging of the textual narrative of her identity and the physical body that serves as its basis.

Rosamund's treatment of George at the end of the novel gives one final example of the development of her self-possession. Rosamund meets George in the Chemist's because she has gone out to get medicine for Octavia. After inviting George back to her flat and talking with George, Rosamund says, "Words kept forming inside my head, into phrases like I love you, George, don't leave me, George" (189). Instead of a positive effect, Rosamund wonders "how much damage" uttering one of those phrases would do (189). However, one moment fully convinces her not to speak of emotions; in reference to Octavia, they say:

'She's beautiful,' said George.

'Yes, isn't she?' I said.

But it was these words of apparent agreement that measured our hopeless distance, for he had spoken for my sake and I because it was the truth. Love had isolated me more securely than fear, habit or indifference. There was one thing in the world that I knew about, and that one thing was Octavia. I had lost the taste for half-knowledge. George, I could see,

knew nothing with such certainty. I neither envied nor pitied his indifference, for he was myself, the self that but for accident, but for fate, but for chance, but for womanhood, I would still have been. (191)

Rosamund does not allow herself to be possessed by any kind of passion or possible love for George. Rosamund sees George as possessing only a “half-knowledge” of what womanhood means for her. This knowledge does not rival what she implies to be a complete and certain knowledge about her own identity. This final example of self-possession demonstrates Rosamund’s movement from being identified from a narrative produced by an outside source to producing her own narrative of identity.

With its focus on the reclamation of somatic and textual self-possession through the evocation of the New Woman, *The Millstone* suggests that a source of Drabble’s brand of neo-realism has gone without comment. This lack of criticism has occurred despite the fact that many of Drabble’s female protagonists are reminiscent of the New Woman Figure. For example, Drabble’s Frieda Haxby in her 1996 novel *The Witch of Exmoor* displays several characteristics often included in traditional New Woman novels: eccentricity, a life in exile, and, a larger-than-life personality, to name a few. Looking at Drabble’s text within the context of the New Woman offers a new perspective on how one of Britain’s finest writers engages with contemporary feminist issues by “looking back” at a prior form. Drabble herself acts like the New Woman writers Ouida and Sarah Grand by drawing from a type of writing that, in the sixties, was much maligned and thought to be of low quality. Drabble took that identity from the public’s perception, adapted and re-empowered it in writing *The Millstone*, and published a book that sought to break down prevalent gender stereotypes during the middle of the twentieth century.

Epilogue: Jeanette Winterson, Online “Real Estate,” and the Future of Women’s Property

In Jeanette Winterson’s *The PowerBook*, the character Ali in the initial story about smuggling tulips describes her various disguises, which leads her to ponder the authenticity of her body: “But what if my body is the disguise? What if skin, bone, liver, veins, are the things I use to hide myself? I have put them on and I can’t take them off. Does that trap me or free me?” (16 – 17). In many ways, the final question posed by Ali, whose hidden tulip bulbs beneath her clothes have suddenly sprung to life, encapsulates the tension that this dissertation has sought to examine. What are the consequences for women when property—whether real or personal, tangible or intangible, somatic or textual—comprises the basis of identity formation and self-possession? How do women’s relationships with property, which necessarily constitutes a part of their relationship to the outside world—a world outside “women” and their selves—support or deny the construction of an authentic self? Despite its classification, property is a primary way in which both women and others “properly” place women within the world. Property positions women into what seems to be a “necessary,” Westernized hierarchy, and the female characters this dissertation discusses either succumb to that often patriarchal hierarchy or find ways to negotiate around or through it. Using *The PowerBook*, a thoroughly twenty-first century novel, as its basis for examination, this afterword suggests how some of the tactics examined in the novels written by Woolf, Rhys, Fitzgerald, Mantel, and Drabble may evolve or adapt in response to changing experiences of property highlighted by Winterson’s novel.

Within this context, one of the most important reasons to examine Winterson's novel as a harbinger of things to come in women's writing is the way in which it depicts the changing nature and essence of what property is, especially through its focus on cyberspace. Of course, Winterson is not the first to describe the correlation between "real world" property and "virtual world" property. Even the very language that computer users employ in their electronic interactions offers an analogical understanding of the tools they use online: the electronic "page," the screen's "window" that allows users to "see" into cyberspace, and online chat "rooms," just to name a few. Perhaps one of the most intriguing for this study comes out of the realm of computer application design. Screen "real estate" refers to the amount of space available on a display for an application's visual output. For application designers, the difficulty with screen real estate is the dual tendency to want to make visible as many tools as possible without the need for hidden tools and to want to allow for white space so that the screen does not become crowded and less usable. Within this new context, "real estate" lacks the historical baggage that associates real property with men. While application developers need to design screen real estate with the greatest usability in mind—in essence, an emphasis on communal interests—the ways that the developers individually design the displays as well as the ways that users interact with the output can demonstrate great variability. Finally, the displays that application developers design are often dynamic rather than static. Working in a kind of feedback loop, the displays and their output change as the user interacts with them, and the user, consequently, reacts to those changes.

This concept of “real estate” contrasts in interesting ways with the previous discussions of real estate in this dissertation. For example, in the Woolf chapter, real estate becomes associated with a primarily male tradition that seeks to carry on the male family name and identity while strategically erasing the identity of female ancestors. Through an emphasis on the personal property of writing, the female Orlando develops tactics to negotiate through the legal strategies that prevent women from passing on their identities through property to future generations of women and women writers. The new context and medium that Winterson provides, though, lends itself to working against the idea of real property as supporting only a male tradition and identity. Real estate in *The PowerBook* remains unsexed and ungendered in its depiction. For example, the protagonist Ali writes:

This is a virtual world. This is a world inventing itself. Daily, new landmasses form and then submerge. New continents of thought break off from the mainland. Some benefit from a trade wind, some sink without trace. Others are like Atlantis—fabulous, talked about, but never found.

(73)

In this passage, online real estate has a mind of its own, becoming a living, breathing entity with an imagination that it uses to “invent itself.” This real estate is in constant motion and change, an aspect that goes against the depiction of long lasting real estate in *Orlando*. Online real estate is not around long enough for a tradition to become attached to it; therefore, it cannot be used strategically in the same way as in Woolf’s novel, as an attempt to prevent the passing on of female identity. In fact, Winterson’s description seems to suggest that property is not a proper basis of identity formation for women or

for men. By representing online property as having a will of its own, the novel cautions against associating one's identity with something that can shift so easily and that is often outside of one's control. In this respect, Winterson's treatment suggests a movement away from typical Western ways of understanding how property organizes the methods that men and women use to relate to each other in both the real and virtual worlds.

In the Rhys, Drabble, and Fitzgerald chapters, real estate is a communal resource, emphasizing equality for all. Nevertheless, the egalitarian nature of property in their novels tends to have a flattening effect by erasing certain important identity markers. This process of erasure often leads to a misclassification of the women by those around them. Similarly, Winterson acknowledges the essentially communal nature of cyberspace; Ali's profession as a "language costumier" relies upon her interaction with those that she meets online. However, Winterson shows how interactions in online real estate can be intensely personal and transformative, especially for Ali and her lover. For example, Ali writes, "I am the map that you redraw" (128), a passage that recalls the liminality of Mantel's *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street*. In equating herself with a map, Ali highlights the highly personal nature of the online environment when two people interact. The use of metaphor creates a sense of immediacy and seriousness in the exchange. This is a particular kind of map, one that leads to "buried treasure" (129). In using the idea of a treasure map, Ali highlights the possibility of individuality in an online environment; a treasure map has one purpose in that it locates a prize to be sought after. Although this particular treasure map is constantly changing, the goal is the same for each incarnation—for the lover to reach the beloved. It is at this moment when Ali declares her love for the beloved: the ultimate personal moment between two characters

in many of Winterson's novels. In this respect, Winterson's depiction of online property suggests that women writers may react against the prevailing notion of cyberspace as a primarily communal way of interacting.

Finally, real estate in Mantel serves as a portal through which the female characters are manipulated by outside forces. This manipulation results in a loss of self-possession that the women must confront and develop a way to control so that self-possession is regained. As demonstrated in the prior example from Winterson's novel, Winterson sees cyberspace as a tool that promotes a kind of dialectic rather than the one-way effect that Mantel describes. The relationship between Ali and her beloved is not a manipulation from without but rather an exchange between the two. In another instance immediately after the story about the tulips, Ali and her beloved are chatting online. Ali begins:

'Let's start. What colour hair do you want?'

'Red. I've always wanted red hair.'

'The same colour as your tulip?'

'Look what happened to that.'

'Don't panic. This is a different disguise.'

'So what shall I wear?'

'It's up to you. Combat or Prada?'

'How much can I spend on clothes?'

'How about \$1000?'

'My whole wardrobe or just one outfit?'

'Are you doing this story on a budget?'

‘You’re the writer.’

‘It’s your story.’

‘What happened to the omniscient author?’

‘Gone interactive.’ (31)

Ali’s final comment describes her process of narrative creation. Ali is not manipulating her beloved into choosing what she prefers as the author, and her beloved is not forcing aesthetic choices upon Ali. Instead, the conversation about the story’s creation is one of negotiation, give and take, suggestions and counteroffers. Instead of being based in one person or figure, the primary location of authorship becomes dispersed in the interactions of the two characters. Ali highlights this model of narrative creation several times in the book. For example, in describing a square in Capri, she twice repeats the phrase, “Imagine the square” (117). Though Ali offers her own details of the square, her insistence on the beloved and, by extension, the reader of the novel to create their own vision of the square shows Ali’s focus on interaction. Online real estate allows property to become a discursive creation that denies individual ownership in order to focus on more collaborative models. The beloved (and, in this case, the reader) “owns” the imagination and the images it produces; the author is no longer the dictator of the narrative.

This focus on collaboration in narrative creation brings to the forefront a second type of property that this dissertation has discussed: textual property. In *Orlando* for example, the title character uses the personal property of writing as a tactical way to pass on an individual female identity. In this way, the female Orlando works around the laws that would prevent her from passing on her property and, thus, her identity to future

women. Drabble likewise uses writing as personal property; however, for her heroine Rosamund Stacey, writing is personal property that must be “repossessed” in order to regain her sense of self-possession. In both of these examples, the characters see textual property as a kind of stable container to hold and represent their identities to the public in the novels.

In contrast, Winterson exposes the fluidity of identity held in textual property, which, for the author, has both positive and negative implications for women. For most of Winterson’s novel, gender identity through textual representation is multiple rather than singular; for example, in *Lighthousekeeping*, identity shifts with every story about Babel Dark that Pew tells to his young ward Silver. In other Winterson novels, gender identity is indeterminate through textual property, especially in *Written on the Body* where the reader never discovers the sex of the lover and beloved main characters. In *The PowerBook*, Winterson includes some of this sense of indeterminacy by playing off the cyberspace setting of the story. In an online conversation between the two main characters, the beloved says:

‘Male or female?’

‘Does it matter?’

‘It’s a co-ordinate.’

‘This is a virtual world.’

‘OK, OK—but just for the record—male or female?’

‘Ask the Princess.’

‘That was just a story.’

‘This is just a story.’ (30)

For Ali, her sex is just another element of a story, like symbolism or imagery. As the story constantly shifts, so does the identity that it represents. Textual property, in short, does not offer a stable method of representing one's identity. Additionally, Ali bases her profession as a "language costumier" in producing stories for consumers. She promises, "Freedom, just for one night" (3). This mantra becomes a kind of advertising jingle that entices the consumer to try Ali's product. Therefore, Ali wants to give away her textual property, her intangible personal property; it is not taken from her but collaboratively developed, so she does not have to repossess it. In return, she reaps, not monetary benefits, but rather the benefits of narrative creation and aesthetic fulfillment. In taking prior stories of famous lovers (such as Lancelot and Guinevere) and reinventing them for her current situation, Ali suggests that stories are property that should be reused. Authors should not succumb to the pressures of creating a work that is totally original but should celebrate the advantages of recyclable textual property.

The elasticity evident in the prior example alluding to Ali's sex also suggests the third kind of property discussed in this dissertation: somatic property. For example, for Jean Rhys's Sasha Jensen in *Good Morning, Midnight*, the categorization of her property as tangible or intangible by the men in her life results in a misreading of the property's value and, thus, of her identity. This misreading leaves her as a vacant being at the end of the novel, much like the room she inhabits. For the female characters in Penelope Fitzgerald's novels, on the other hand, the sense of *communitas* that they experience erases the class and gender differences "written on the body." However, Fitzgerald's novels seem to suggest that this lack of difference results in a lack of individual identity for her female characters. Finally, both Margaret Drabble and Hilary Mantel associate

the body with self-possession either by treating the body as a site of property (as in Drabble) or by depicting somatic property as a catalyst for the loss of self-possession.

Winterson's novels, however, work against categorization of the body by examining the arbitrary nature through which society reads the body. *Written on the Body* performs this critical work most explicitly; the novel refuses access to a gendered reading of the characters and their motivations by refusing to reveal the sex of the two main characters telling the story. This tactic works outside notions of sexual propriety when it comes to storytelling. In short, the reader cannot rely upon preconceived expectations about how a female narrator should or should not tell a story or what the proper content is. Ali also connects the act of writing with the body; she writes, "This is where the story starts. Here, in these long lines of laptop DNA. Here we take your chromosomes, twenty-three pairs, and alter your height, eyes, teeth, sex. This is an invented world. You can be free just for one night" (4). For Winterson, the space of cyberspace takes away the "property" of the body, a discursive creation that can be manipulated through the power of storytelling. By using DNA strands as a metaphor for the elements of narrative, Ali locates the body at the center of storytelling. This is not to say that Ali displays a type of essentialism; rather, the use of the generic twenty-three pairs suggests that anyone can create the "invented world." Ali similarly associates textual and somatic property at the end of the novel; she writes, "Your body is my Book of Hours" (289). The beloved's body directs the narrative through which Ali presents her devotion. In this sense, the beloved's body acts not simply as inspiration of narrative creation but also as the author.

The PowerBook gestures toward a reevaluation of the tactics of trespassing that dwell in the novels of modern British women writers. Specifically, the novel's representations of multimedia engagement between Ali and her beloved show that different media can offer new tactics to question gender propriety through digital property. This idea implies that those texts mixing media in their composition—hypertexts, experimental films, and graphic novels, for example—hold the most promise for women, particularly in those in-between spaces where the visual and the textual interact. However, Winterson's novel does not advocate ignoring the tactics of Woolf, Rhys, Fitzgerald, Mantel, and Drabble. Instead, as with the novels in this dissertation, it looks back to re-imagine these tactics of trespassing for the new provincialized worlds of a virtual Britain

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