GENDERING THE LANDSCAPE: WOMEN’S EMERGING ROLE INTO THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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To: Rosa and Chris
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ABSTRACT

By the late nineteenth century in Great Britain, the feminist movement began gaining traction by pushing for women’s suffrage. As women developed their political role in society, gender roles were also reevaluated. Although still subordinate they were tied to England’s landscape and were seen as the arbiters of England’s heritage. With the end of coverture in 1885, married women no longer ceded their property to their husbands giving them greater access to financial and legal independence. This work expands on the historical narrative of women’s entrance into political and public spaces, a process that began with men’s promotion of separate spheres. Using Jurgen Habermas’ framework for the public sphere, this historical work revises the role that class had in nineteenth century discourse, by analyzing the role gender played culturally and socially in Great Britain. Out of a growing concern for changes to English masculinity, men fostered a debate about women’s roles. Women used the stereotypes placed on them to enter into the public sphere. This strategy began with literary, artistic, and social reform movements seeking to modify ideas of gender, a process explored in this work through an analysis of John Ruskin, Octavia Hill, and E. M. Forster. A strong advocate of separate spheres for men and women, Ruskin wrote and gave lectures that influenced the English population about prescribed ideals for how men and women should relate to one another. As a social critic he influenced Octavia Hill. Hill was a social reformer who under the tutelage of Ruskin, expanded her own reform schemes striving to improve the lives of lower class Londoners.
through art and access to gardens. The novels of E. M. Forster satirized the growing concern over the role that women now had in society. Exacerbated by legal changes, anxiety over modernity, women’s changing expectations within society led to literary explorations of the role that women played in England. This thesis argues that women maneuvered through the limitations placed on them by constructing and changing their position in the public sphere through a reevaluation of their relationship to the English landscape.
INTRODUCTION

And so on a time it happened that Merlin showed to her in a rock whereas was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, that went under a great stone. So by her subtle working she made Merlin to go under that stone to let her wit of the marvels there; but she wrought so there for him that he came never out for all the craft he could do. And so she departed and left Merlin.

Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*

In December of 2013, Ralph Palmer, the Baron Lucas and Lord Dingwall, addressed the chamber of the House of Lords to present the Downton Abbey Law. The Equality (Titles) Bill, as it was officially known, sought to change the law of primogeniture. Spurred on by activists, the Downton Abbey law would echo the recent Succession to the Crown Act 2013, which guaranteed royal succession to the firstborn child of Prince William and Kate, Duchess of Cambridge regardless of gender. Although all these factors help to mitigate a revaluation of peerage laws that granted titles and estates to first-born sons only, it was only through the popularity of a television show that this issue gained support and the situation surrounding the continued denial of titles to women was raised. The Downton Abbey Law, named after the television show, sought to alter the four hundred year-old tradition that barred women from inheriting titles.¹

*Downton Abbey* is a formulaic British period drama that begins in 1912 when the heir apparent to the fictional title of the Earl of Grantham dies as a passenger on

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the Titanic. A work of historical fiction, much of the show’s conflict derives from the current Earl of Grantham’s lack of a male heir, having only produced three daughters. Lady Mary, the oldest of the daughters, is unable to inherit based on laws of primogeniture. These circumstances lead to a search for another male heir, who ends up being a distant middle class relative who has no previous knowledge of his noble bloodline. This further complicates the plot and forces the family patriarch to reconcile the loss of much of his estate and his power to an unknown family member.

Within the Downton Abbey estate, three social classes are thrust together, the titled nobility, the middle classes and the working class servants. All three reflected the changing nature of British society during the early decades of the twentieth century. The rest of the series follows the trials and tribulations of the Crawley family, both highborn and middle class, overseers of Downton Abbey, while their servants serve and provide an antidote to English high society. Underneath all this tension, creator Julian Fellowes poses a question in the series: why, when women were gaining access to the public sphere in the early part of the twentieth century and the Suffrage movement was entering a militant phase, were women within the peerage system denied access to their heritage? Fellowes’ question implies that Lady Mary, the oldest of the Earl of Grantham’s daughters, is the rightful inheritor of Downton Abbey and that the political and noble culture has not yet caught up with changing attitudes towards women’s rights. Yet, there is another current that runs through Downton Abbey. Fellowes presents the character of Mary as the more enlightened steward of
the land, drawing on a trope that is the focus of this thesis: women as rightful inheritors of the English landscape, the construction of which was also in transition.

The discussions of women’s role in changing England’s cultural and intellectual concept of landscape in the nineteenth century have been broached only tangentially. This work aims to explore the social, political, and cultural changes that helped to redefine the imagined ownership of the landscape, at a time when changes to the conception of public and private space melded with a hardening of gender roles. Women at the turn of the twentieth century fostered a discussion about their role within society that coincided with newly formed ideas of femininity forcing a reevaluation of the space women would inhabit within the British nation.

The role of women changed fundamentally in the nineteenth century with the passage of laws that granted women responsibility for their own property ownership through the elimination of coverture laws. Additionally, the growth of secularism, exacerbated by industrialization and increased migration into urban areas limited the reach of religious institutions. The need for charity increased and women took the reins, spurring developments in social reform that provided a fertile space for them to flourish. Women negotiated these changes in the public sphere, leading to apprehension over women’s increasing movement into spaces dominated by men. As this took place there developed a need, by both genders, to separate the spheres of men and women allowing England to carry on in a manner that retained a semblance of its customary patriarchal appearance; an adherence to illusory principles of society. In order to evaluate the history of these changes it is necessary to look at how
historians have dealt with the public sphere, the landscape, and gender and examine earlier contributions to the convergence of gender and space.

The intellectualization of space began with Jürgen Habermas’ deconstruction of the public sphere. In The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, he argues that the connection between the private and the communal realms of influence united through the press and social clubs that allowed private citizens to engage with one another and form a public. Beginning in the eighteenth century, the bourgeois found a voice in the emerging public sphere and were able to coalesce this growing power into a mass movement. Moneyed interests and state concerns discussed in coffeehouses fomented into political unrest and developed into political journalism. Although Habermas discusses the development of public opinion and the public sphere in Great Britain, he views civic engagement as a male space, never engaging in the debate over the proper role for women or questioning if gender modified entry into the public sphere. However, Habermas does provide a method for investigation into the social ramifications of culture’s ability to alter conceptions of space and the creation of space as an intellectual and political tool. In the nineteenth century, by virtue of the argument over how women and landscape should be connected, a change took place within the public sphere that implied a growing value on the role of women in society. They had broken through into the public sphere, in this case by harnessing and addressing the political nature of equality. As women engaged as

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3 Habermas, 27.
4 Habermas, 59.
actors within the public sphere, they were able to promote their own needs. Suddenly the question of where a woman’s role should be within society and the ensuing conversation around this subject shows that it is within this specific period that women were gaining traction in the fight for increased rights.

The image of the landscape as a place of public engagement and a source of identity has been a relatively new focus of research. The scholarship of imagined spaces has offered a much broader definition of the English landscape. Denis E. Cosgrove in *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* took a postmodern take on landscape. He deconstructs the idea of landscape and sees it as a construction of the mind. Looking at the changes that occurred in the move from a feudal to a capitalistic society, he seeks to revise the influence of geographical studies by refocusing on the cultural aspects of landscape that are ideologically driven. Cosgrove re-connects the severed ties between the geographical and the artistic and literary ideas of landscape to better attain the view of the land that he believes is an ideologically driven social phenomenon. The intention of this work is to develop this connection further by showing that many times the representation of the English landscape altered social interactions between classes and the sexes. Martin J. Weiner in *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* argues that the Industrial Revolution “inoculated” the growing middle class and upper classes against innovation and economic growth, associating national identity with values that were rooted in a “slow-changing

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6 Cosgrove, 11.
7 Cosgrove, 11.
‘country’ way of life.  

For Wiener, England’s Industrial Revolution was not revolutionary because the growth of industrialization in Britain was organic and came from within, very different from modernization in other countries, and thus was gradually integrated into English society and culture, perpetuating old values.\(^9\) He goes on to note that in England, the symbols of machine and garden are always in opposition and this led to hostility within the world’s first industrialized nation that led to rural myth making in the nineteenth century. His monograph moves into the late twentieth century and shows the *longue durée* of the various social and cultural influences that led to alterations in English identity. This thesis will argue that many of these divisions between modernity and a romanticization of rurality were combined with a growing division between the ideals of masculinity and femininity.

One social alteration that occurred was the relationship between gender and the English landscape, which was disrupted by modernity. Carolyn Merchant identifies two aspects of nature that have been attributed to femininity; the belief that nature is meant to be subdued by man and also that nature could be wild and untamable; both allowed for the men to retain their patriarchy.\(^{10}\) Dually influenced by a dread of British declension and a growing environmental movement, Merchant examines the role of the land in *The Death of Nature*, published in 1980. She believes that the Scientific Revolution displaced feminine representations of the landscape and

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\(^9\) Wiener, 7.

concludes through her study of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, that mechanism and mastery over the land replaced the nurturing image of the Earth.\textsuperscript{11} Merchant argues the Scientific Revolution was detrimental to femininity. She believes society suffered as the feminine was removed from discussions of the earth and this altered humanity’s relationship to the land, so she advocates for a renewed infusion of feminine sensibilities into ecology and environmentalism. Merchant overstates the spiritual role of women by focusing on idealized cultural conceptions of women, primarily by men. Further, what she fails to address is the growing role of Victorian and Edwardian women in the public sphere that led to reevaluations of an identity based on characteristics originating in the countryside. Yet, Merchant offers the idea that rationality and science, and their professionalization, created a divide between men and women that predated the \textit{fin de siècle}. The English countryside had traditionally been a space for both men and women that reinforced traditional gender roles and Merchant adheres to a golden age narrative that seeks to promote an era of gender equality that never existed. This belief supposes a devolution resulting from a male dominated modernity that is false. Inferring a female-oriented pre-modern world, she emphasizes the use of feminized language to refer to nature, although this discourse was derived from men’s paternalistic view of nature as part of their sovereignty. Further, she does not discuss how modernity ushered in a change to women’s suffrage that gave women greater access to land.

\textsuperscript{11} Merchant, 2.
There is a debate over the beginning of the feminist movement, which manifested in the push for political representation and improved property rights. This movement relied on women imagining themselves within the public sphere. Arianne Chernock in *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism* believes that the question of female equality arose during the late British Enlightenment period, approximately the last quarter of the eighteenth century.¹² In reaction to the work of Mary Wollstonecraft who in 1794 wrote *A Vindication on the Rights of Women*, Chernock seeks to reinsert men into the feminist movement of the nineteenth century. In extension of Habermas’ argument that the public sphere changed politically because of the growth of the middle classes, Chernock sees the development of the women’s movement as an expansion of the political realm with the end of the monarchical court system. For Chernock, there existed a group of men who were able to influence the perception of women within society. Eventually, these men would effectively put woman into a separate sphere; however, Chernock does not extend her analysis into the late nineteenth century. For Patricia Hollis, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that women were able to fully integrate themselves into the public sphere through women like Florence Nightingale and Octavia Hill.¹³ Although Chernock is correct that discussions about the equality of women derive from the end of the eighteenth century, Hollis accurately determines

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that the tipping point for women’s movements occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century as feminist ideas diffused into the middle classes.

Within the historical discourse of the last decades of the twentieth century there emerged an argument that sought to eradicate the belief that men and women existed within ‘separate spheres’ in order to illuminate the nuances of Victorian gender roles. Amanda Vickery, in her essay “Golden Age to Separate Spheres,” notes that the ‘separate spheres’ theory has become the “the organizing category of modern British women’s history.” She goes on to state that the theory is an outmoded overarching paradigm even though women had hyper-femininity imposed on them. She argues that many historians either fail to view the modes and methods which women used to maneuver through society in order to achieve their goals of equality or function as specific actors. Philipa Levine, in Feminist Lives in Victorian England, adds into the equation the notion that this period of history’s is inimitable to the women’s movement because there lacked any concrete philosophical ideas surrounding the role of women within the public sphere leading women to achieve their goals through doing. Through actions, women focused less on offering an intellectual argument for equality, which allowed for further division within the public sphere. Women were not actively trying to overturn the patriarchal dominance of men, but instead were trying to find new positions in society through the public

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15 Vickery, 390.
role offered to them. Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair try to move beyond this analysis, although they eventually yield to the idea that this has been the dominant discourse on the Victorian period, and try to illustrate the fluidity in gender roles that most likely occurred during this period.\textsuperscript{17} Despite acknowledging previous historiography, Gordon and Nair offer no historical intervention and support Vickery’s argument that focusing on individual historical actors leads to particularities that cloud an understanding of Victorian women. Understanding fully the way women were able to resist strong cultural influences requires that connections be made between individual perceptions of separate spheres and the way they did or did not enact these ideas. My argument is that the women of this period used social reform as a method for the gendering of the cultural English landscape. Through the idealizations of the home and social reform, which were seen as acceptable extensions of feminine qualities and thus worthy pursuits, women became supervisors of the landscape and used this role to their advantage.

If determining how men and women constructed identities in contrast to one another has led to conflicting theories, it is based on the instability and incongruent development of society in the late nineteenth century. In focusing on the landscape, Walter E. Houghton in \textit{The Victorian Frame of Mind} argues that transition was one of the hallmarks of the Victorian period.\textsuperscript{18} For the Victorians, the nineteenth century was a period when society began to look towards the future, leading to an intellectual


break from the Middle Ages, as opposed to recent periods like the Romantic period or the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{19} He goes on to claim that issues of morality were devised in a period of insecurity that led to ambivalence over many different factors of Victorian life. In his zeal to show that this was a period of fluctuation in thought and attitudes toward the role of masculinity and femininity in society, Houghton searches for certainty within the uncertain Victorian period. His conclusion is that the search to discover a method to ameliorate the increasingly significant changes to society defines the period. For the men and women of the late Victorian and Edwardian period, there was less of a need to break with the past, as Houghton claims, and more a need to use the past as an arbiter to temper the growing influx of new ideas. Tradition became a soft antithesis in the Hegelian model of progress and buffered an assault on modernity.

The cult of the countryside provided a method to negotiate this dichotomy. The bourgeoisie adopted aristocratic notions of English identity including the importance of the country in British life. F. M. L. Thompson noted that the middle classes “could be more aristocratic than the aristocrats in in their anxiety to conform to the rules of country life.”\textsuperscript{20} As modernity encroached upon the middle classes, there emerged a need to temper progress through a return to the land, as if in doing so, many of the industrial problems that were created—such as smog and health

\textsuperscript{19} Houghton, 1.
issues—would be minimized. The middle class adopted manners and traits of those socially above them while also engendering an affinity for aspects of rural society that promoted a much simpler life than the lived experience of meeker people.

If modernity and industrialization were becoming a growing concern, the admiration for the common man and his residence in the country provided an answer to the growing anxiety. Although there is debate over the role of the rural lower classes during this period, it is clear that the bourgeoisie dominated the perception of the land. Alun Howkins astutely notes in Poor Labouring Men that the true history of the English rural poor is absent from the mythology of the landscape. Howkins notes that during the period of 1870s to the early 1920s the political and social concerns of the countrymen were altered and could differ from the national interest. Urban and industrial matters drove many of the major political policies of the late nineteenth century. But the development of a capitalist society from one based on a rural economy did not progress along a national timetable within various regions. Depression in the 1880s, a consequence of changes in wheat production and importation, stopped the steady influx of renters that many of the lower gentry who owned land depended on. These changes led to a diminished significance of the

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21 For a better understanding of the effect of the world on artists John Ruskin’s The Brantwood Diaries offers perspectives on the way the weather had an effect on the mind of the English artist.

22 Alun Howkins, Poor Labouring Men: Rural Radicalism in Norfolk, 1872-1923 (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), xi-xiii. Howkins offers a look at the political and radicalism of the poor in Norfolk in his work and offers not a counter to the bourgeois ideas of landscape but rather tries to show that the rural had their own political and social systems that sometimes were in tandem with those of the larger middle classes in England.


landscape, both politically and economically, yet there remained within the artistic and literary set a continued fascination with everything that the land represented. The inhabitants of the rural countryside were seen as holding a pastoral simplicity that was in contrast to the fast-paced world around them and manifest characteristics such as courteousness, being charitable, lacking envy, and lacking in ambition. They were also viewed as honest, humble, and straightforward, retaining closeness to the natural world and the divinity that is found there, and seen as unsophisticated.\footnote{Sharon R. Yang, \textit{Goddesses, Mages, and Wise Women} (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2011), 13.} Howkins’ histories continue a tradition of looking towards the countryside in times of economic change and the unique practice of valuing the assumed simplicity of rural lower-class life. This connection between the environment and society rests in the attribution of a sense of morality based upon geography. Howkins provides evidence to suggest that the alignment between rural and urban economies and sensibilities were closer than previously thought for the reasons noted above. Additionally, the conception of the countryside as a bastion for the bourgeois was a social construction. What took place in the late nineteenth century was a promotion of an idealized version of the countryside and those who lived there.

Reminiscent of the romanticization of the countryside that took place earlier in the century by men like William Cobbett, the Romantic Movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century evolved from the growing anxiety concerning a waning masculinity and the burgeoning women’s movement. Generally seen as a reaction to
the Enlightenment’s emphasis on reason, the tenets of romanticism as an ideology are continually debated. Much of the literature defined as Romantic was an exploration of the inner emotions through the written word with an emphasis on the imagination and symbolism. Further, Romantics explored the connection between man and the world through nature. Aesthetically art, rather than being a mimesis of the world, sought to illuminate the inner thoughts of the human condition. M. H. Abrams created the analogy of the mirror and the lamp to mark the occurring shift in conceptions of the imagination. Previous to the Romantics, art was merely a reflection of the world. Authors who embraced and expressed romanticism emphasized a new way to view the self, “accentuating emotion, expression, aesthetics, and purposeful action”.26 The imagination as a source for human knowledge of the world marked the Romantic period, dating roughly from 1760 to 1860, although it will be evident that traces of romanticism withstood and were embedded within the literature and culture well into the twentieth century.27 More importantly, rather than a complete break with classicism, the infusion of sensibility better defines the period. Sensibility during the eighteenth century was defined as the cultivation of emotional responsiveness. Initially this was to combat the detachment that came with an overemphasis on reason manifesting into a fusion of feeling and reason for the betterment of all. Outside of

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27 Michael Ferber, *Romanticism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010). Ferber seeks to pin down a starting date in Britain, which proves to be an elusive task. He notes that some scholars date the beginning of Romanticism to 1789 when William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* was written, but also notes other important dates most notably 1832 with the passage of the Reform Act.
intellectual and literary thought, romanticism offered a panacea for many of the social changes wrought by industrialization and liberal democracy. By romanticizing the land, an idealized rural society provided a conservative reaction that affected gender roles.

To fully understand the range of responses to the women’s movement it is necessary to unpack the impact that it had on men of the period. John Tosh in *A Man’s Place* documents how during the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century there was a reevaluation of the role of marriage by men of the upper and middle classes as a result of women removing themselves from the “pedestal view of womanhood.” Tosh argues for the reestablishment of the domestic life of men in the historiography, and shows that the construction of masculinity in the Victorian era was predicated on a man’s domestic life. Additionally, many Victorians found medieval art and architecture admirable and began to search and find more in common with the medieval period even if their perceptions revealed anachronistic interpretations of the past. The interest in chivalry within the nineteenth century was

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29 Tosh, 3.
30 David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 97. Arthurian legend also saw resurgence and although much of this emphasized male chivalry, an infusion of female representation emerged as well. Much of this painted characters like Vivien and Guinevere negatively, reflecting Victorian ideals of masculinity and femininity. The artwork of Gustave Doré and Julia Margaret Cameron infused a feminine sensibility into the Arthurian legend. Cameron was specifically asked by Lord Alfred Tennyson to illustrate his *Idylls of the King*, giving a feminine perspective on the legends. There are some superficial similarities between Tennyson’s and Forster’s texts. Tennyson revises Malory’s Guinevere to be the architect of Arthur’s undoing. He paints Guinevere as choosing between the ‘cold realism’ of Arthur and the ‘consuming affection’ of Lancelot. For further reading on this subject Barbara Tepa Lupack. *Illustrating Camelot* with Alan Lupack, (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 22-24.
tied to an admiration for all things medieval and mythic and a growing sense of adventure that the growth of Imperial Britain offered men. Novels that romanticized masculinity and male companionship through the writings of Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling provided an antidote to the growing feminized literature that was becoming popular.\textsuperscript{31} Fictionalized stories located within the far reaches of the Empire reflected a growing trend for men to use the colonies as a site for adventure. Twenty-seven percent of all men who entered into Balliol College, Oxford worked for the Empire overseas, not including those who joined the army.\textsuperscript{32} So development of the New Woman coincided with the movement of men to the empire from the upper and middle classes.

For the men who promoted sexual equality at this time, their notions of chivalry broke with the traditional perceptions of masculinity. These men believed that by giving women expanded rights they were protecting the female sex and the men who acted in a traditionally masculine manner were acting unmanly and un-chivalrous.\textsuperscript{33} Yet, men who sought to limit women and establish patriarchal dominance justified their actions by claiming it was done for the protection of women.\textsuperscript{34} These two definitions of masculinity would come into conflict and played

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Tosh, 174.
\item Tosh, 176.
\item Chernock, 5-6.
\item A key aspect of chivalry and being a gentleman led to the protection of the female sex. The Victorian focus on purity coupled with the need to be a Christian soldier led to the Labouchère Amendment. The act itself was produced as a means to investigate the notion that English girls had been co-opted into foreign prostitution. Victorian values and social reform led the British government to protect the lives of its female youth and the fear of foreign enticement and the lure of the ‘other’ are specifically legislated within this act. For a more in-depth look at the way that sex and chivalry mixed look at Frederick Mead, Esq., and A. H. Bodkin, Esq., \textit{The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885, with}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
out culturally through the aesthete and the more popular perception of men in society during the late nineteenth century.

Also, the bourgeoisie were moving into the country and remodeling homes, a trend that was happening prior to the Victorian era but proceeded at a faster rate due to the influx of money into the middle classes, expanding the number of those who fell into this class category. The country home became a distinct site where the division between men and women physically existed; specifically through the gendering of rooms deemed male and female. Gender divisions had physical expressions and imagined spatial boundaries. Edwin Abbott Abbott’s novella *Flatland* best represents the intellectualized spatial divisions of the period. Full of illustrations, Abbott’s novella depicts gendered spaces through the use of science fiction by using shapes and lines to represent divisions within society. The story is a satire of Victorian adherence to hierarchy set in a two-dimensional world with illustrations that delineate spaces in homes for men and for women, the latter being relegated to enter through small doors and least developed rooms. The higher on the social ladder the more sides one has, for example low-class men are triangles, while

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upper class men consist of five or six-sided shapes; women are straight lines.\textsuperscript{38}

Abbott’s importance lies in his representation of spatial constructions of gender and class demonstrating the development of an astute assessment of society that used fiction as a method to illuminate social differences.

During the 1890’s and into the early twentieth century the women’s movement took on a more militant tone that frightened some men. Many of these Suffragette groups after 1890 used literacy to communicate and construct a history that took its beginning with the Reform Act of 1832 and placed women as the inheritors of the radical tradition of British politics.\textsuperscript{39} As women began to insert themselves even further into the political public sphere, a pushback ensued creating a growing fear in men of the \textit{fin de siècle}. Leaders of the Suffrage movement such as Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, associated with the Women’s Social and Political Union (WPSU), sought to turn the passive movement into a far more aggressive one through the interruption of Liberal Party meetings and engaging in street theater tactics.\textsuperscript{40} The work of the Pankhursts helped to increase divisions already beginning among women fighting for the vote that tended to fall along generational lines. Emily Davies, a well-known Victorian suffragist, disliked the methods of the younger generation and their political and social leanings.\textsuperscript{41} Davies sought to increase the relationship with the Conservative Party in Parliament and

\textsuperscript{38} Abbott, 29.
\textsuperscript{40} Mayhew, 341.
\textsuperscript{41} Barbara Caine, \textit{Victorian Feminists} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 263.
eventually joined the Conservative and Unionist Women’s Franchise Association. The divisions grew into factions that catered to different political sensibilities despite fighting for the same cause. The militant movement for suffrage saw many milestones within the first couple of decades of the twentieth century yet set a tone that created more detractors than adherents.

Women like Octavia Hill offered an alternative version of feminism through her use of the public sphere to achieve her goals of social reform but she also provided women an avenue for improving their station within society that was compatible with the prevailing views. She gave critics of feminism a model they could admire because she maintained the status quo. By relinquishing the spiritual ownership of British landscape to women and developing a domestic role for them, men could retain their dominance. So it is no coincidence that within the twentieth century preservation of the land fell to women, exemplified in the role of The National Trust and the later impression that old female pensioners ran the organization. Yet, within the historiography of European environmental history there is a lack of acknowledgement of the role of Hill and other women in creating and fostering The Natural Trust. Karl Ditt and Jane Rafferty in “Nature Conservation in England and Germany,” only briefly mentions the National Trust and spends more time discussing Nathaniel Charles Rothschild, founder of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (SPNR). The SPNR was affiliated with the National

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42 Caine, 263.
Trust, acquiring land and then transferring ownership to the National Trust. Ditt argues that although the National Trust was successful, unlike in the United States and Germany, environmental legislation in early twentieth century Britain did not occur, which only supports the argument that the organization’s female dominance allowed the work being done to be ignored.

Janice Doane and Devon Hodges in *Nostalgia and Sexual Difference* address aspects of nostalgia and nostalgic writers whose focuses on the past reinforced outmoded beliefs of gender in order to consign women to an inferior position within society. The focus of their collection is based on how past/present and male/female are associated with each other respectively and are used to promote the belief of an idealized past that existed before the feminist movement began. This work strives to give importance to the intellectualization of gender that provided a model for gendered ideas of identity and space that coincided with an idealization of the past. While primarily focused on the United States, Doane and Hodges’ work provides a theoretical framework for the use of the past as a source for social and cultural construction in England. In arguing against a gender binary, they negate an inherent duality, despite this binary finding a material and temporal component. The gender dyad became spatial manifesting into separate spheres based on sex. Additionally, the past was gendered male and idealized. Doane and Hodges note that these were not

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44 Janice Doane and Devon Hodges, *Nostalgia and Sexual Difference: The Resistance to Contemporary Feminism* (New York: Methuen, 1987). Their monograph addresses the way that critics in the recent American past have responded to second wave feminism by focusing on nostalgia in order to negate the post-structural approach and to eradicate the binary language that separates the identities of men and women.
fully accepted and felt by all of society but were rather prescribed ideals. They highlight women trying to break through this dialectic, delving into cultural and social idealism by overemphasizing the impact of their analysis. Men were instrumental in the creation of the modern feminist movement and although the number of men who took up the cause for female equality was small, they specifically placed their ideas within the popular thought of the period. Most importantly, by using Derrida’s idea of oppositional terms that reinforce the meaning of each other, the authors advance the notion that the fixation on the past and the creation of heritage leads to a disparaging of the present. For many men of the period, the focus on heritage and the past was a method for dealing with modernity and retaining their social dominance.

Peter Ackroyd in his extensive research into the origins of the English imagination shows how Anglo-Saxon ideals permeated the past and the physical landscape. He also claims that many English fiction writers have been unable to offer anything other than a look to the past. For Ackroyd, none of the writers nor other artists he analyzes are able to “insert their work into the present moment or to sketch the outlines of the “modern” condition.” This is one of the fundamental issues that this work will analyze, primarily through the work of author E.M Forster, who writing in the Edwardian era, satirized the increasing need to solidify the gender roles within society through the lens of the English landscape. Ackroyd does mention

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46 Ackroyd, 73, 262. Ackroyd surmises that the English literary tradition is a result of Anglo-Saxon social adaptability and geographical isolation.
Forster in his historical analysis—albeit only under the briefest analysis—noting the English tendency to ignore the present in their analysis despite Forster’s grounding in cultural criticism. However, Ackroyd fails to see that Forster was exploring the influence that modernity was having on society while using the landscape as a tool to explore gender.

Lionel Trilling in his literary work on E. M. Forster claims that Forster was unable to have a popular impact in England although he is somewhat highly regarded. Trilling is quick to note the comedic twists and turns that demonstrate Forster was promoting an antiquarian attitude coupled with a deep understanding of literature as a tool for revealing aspects of the present. Yet, Forster’s uniqueness lies in his allusions to tradition steeped in moral realism. One of Forster’s greatest contributions, according to Trilling’s analysis, is his distinction between flat and round characters, those who are one-dimensional, and those who are complex.

Jesse Wolfe sees the work of Forster as an attack on the role of patriarchal marriage within society and symptomatic of the need for early twentieth century writers, in particular those of the Bloomsbury Group, to establish and define new roles for men and women. However, Forster’s role in Bloomsbury was limited and his view of the frank sexual mores that many of the Bloomsbury members followed was quite different and this places his work in a unique transitory position. Wolfe notes that

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49 Wolfe, 2.
Forster was ambivalent about refuting Victorian norms and did not see marriage as damaging like many of his Bloomsbury friends, but he did use bourgeois ideas of gender to critique Victorian modes.\textsuperscript{50}

It is also important to discuss two factors that are important to this period but are not directly addressed within this work. The first is the role of sexual danger that emerged with the arrival of women into the urban public sphere. In her work on the role of women in the public sphere, Judith R. Walkowitz, in \textit{City of Dreadful Delights}, argues for a sexual landscape developing in the 1880s that opened up the discussion of danger to women in London.\textsuperscript{51} As middle-class women participated in the discourse of male sexuality, the view of men as embodiments of sexual desire only reinforced ideas of sexual differentiation.\textsuperscript{52} Walkowitz is able to articulate in her analysis that there were conflicting modes of cultural contestation that exacerbated class and social divisions within the feminist movement. By framing her work against the urban landscape of London, Walkowitz provides a model for the way that perceptions of space affected the way that English men and women constructed identity.

The second important element that underscores changing opinions on gender and landscape is the role of colonialism. Philippa Levine in \textit{Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire} emphasizes the connection

\textsuperscript{50} Wolfe, 2.  
\textsuperscript{52} Walkowitz, 7.
between the metropole and the colonies. With so many men protecting the Empire all over the world, it is no coincidence that a discussion erupted over the political power of women at home. This lacuna offered a space for women to explore their roles within society. She argues that policies abroad had an effect on British identity, specifically those that related to sexual matters and sexual differentiation, viewed through the lens of racial differences.

Literature and art, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, became tools used to influence political and social change. Gender roles shifted between the Victorian era into the Edwardian period revealing an evolution rather than a strict paradigmatic change. The goal of this work is to survey the connection between the work of three distinct individuals who had a lasting impact on perceptions of gender and constructions of identity that are tied to a relationship with the land: John Ruskin, Octavia Hill, and E. M. Forster. It will examine gender and the land in order to analyze the representation of each in literature at the fin de siècle. Moving beyond literary criticism as a practice in textual analysis, the goal here is to find influences in society that were then conversely used to disseminate already held beliefs. This analysis will focus on how identity changes in the middle class directed culture to view the landscape as a space that adhered to divisions between the sexes in order to negotiate social change. It will be argued that one of the ways that women used the small sense of agency they were given to find a place within society that they

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could use to expand their influence was through reevaluating the role of the land and
environment in British society.

The first chapter will look at the increasing need to define masculinity by the
middle classes through appeals to rural culture and the countryside. As a literate male
middle class emerged, the move away from traditional roles led to a crisis that would
manifest itself in many different ways. Primarily, through an exploration of Ruskin’s
work, this chapter argues that lower class ruggedness became a symbol of masculinity
that tied modernity to femininity and created a separate public space for women to
enter into. The second chapter will look at the growing feminist movement and show
the connection between social reform, which provided an avenue for women to enter
into the public sphere, and the proper use of English land. The need to bring art and
literature to the lower classes inspired Octavia Hill to use her work in social reform to
promote land preservation. Hill is an excellent example of the way that women could
provide for themselves and others through programs tied to land preservation. The
third chapter will culminate with a discussion of two of the novels of E.M. Forster,
published in the first decade of the twentieth century, that were influenced by the
work of Ruskin and Hill. Through fiction, Forster was able to construct a new model
of the landscape that now belonged to women.

It will be argued that as women began to feel limited by the Victorian societal
ideal that relegated them to the home, they deftly maneuvered through the patriarchal
society of fin de siècle Britain. Some women were able to skillfully transcend the
limitations society placed on them by using the cultural changes to the landscape as a
call for social reform and the creation of a new feminine space. They were effective in using the gendered landscape in *fin de siècle* Britain to stimulate new ways of applying both Enlightenment and Romantic principles into a synthesized artistic approach that was synthesized to hardened gender roles. The by-product of the response gave women a new role in society that played into stereotypes of femininity while also providing women opportunities for independence. Further legal changes gave married women access to their own property through the removal of coverture and allowed women to exert their growing self-sufficiency; albeit, in a way that did not upend customary visions of a gendered public sphere. In order to establish a place for women, and as a sort of last-ditch effort to manage the changes occurring within society, the home and the countryside were elevated to provide women a space that would allow them to exert their new-found independence but in a manner that did not disrupt the established order of society.
JOHN RUSKIN AND BOURGEOIS MASCULINITY

Chivalry to-day means the woman, right or wrong, just as patriotism to-day means “my country right or wrong.” In other words, chivalry to-day is only another name for Sentimental Feminism.

E. Belfort Bax, *The Fraud of Feminism* (1910)

In comparison to the Continent, England did not have a long history of celebrating the peasant. There were earlier displays of peasant culture in literature such as in Geoffrey Chaucer’s plowman, William Langland’s *Piers the Ploughman*, and in Shakespeare, but many of these works displayed an allegorical focus on the perceived charms of the peasant rather than sincere representations of the poor. In comparison, the nations on the Continent had a long developed literature that sought to depict the lower classes; however, in seventeenth-century Great Britain representations of the lower class were banished from society and, therefore, never found favor in the eighteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth century, a development occurred that presented the rural lower-class as having a simpler life than that of the burgeoning bourgeoisie, which reflected a misunderstood reality of rural lower-class life.

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55 E.P. Thompson, 6. For a more in depth discussion of the development of the role of the peasant in English literature, Thompson delves deeper into the slow emergence of accurate representation of the lower classes. It should be noted that Thompson adds the disclaimer that this lack of the peasant in culture should not affirm that there was a disgust or distaste for the peasant but rather because they were so linked in life – the aristocrat and the peasant – it did not foster any artistic merit.
Although changes in the economic viability of the countryside were occurring, there began to develop an artistic and literary preoccupation with the landscape as a romantic reaction to the physical and social change in the last half of the nineteenth century. The countryside and all it represented became far more attractive in the nineteenth century in response to both the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment view of the universe as mechanized. In particular artists and intellectuals idealized the countryside and worried about its loss while bringing into focus the plight of those who lived there.\(^{56}\)

Writers like William Cobbett at the beginning of the nineteenth century were concerned with the erosion of the countryside by industrialization. In his infamous rides through the English countryside in 1826, Cobbett noted as he passed through the Valley of Avon on the situation of the landed gentry who “call themselves ‘country gentleman’… while railing against the poor and the poor-rates; while affecting to believe that the poor are wicked and lazy.”\(^{57}\) Although Cobbett was partly responsible for the growing fascination with the countryside, he notes the hypocrisy of those who never speak a word against the “pensioners, placemen, soldiers, parsons, fund holders, tax-gatherers, or tax-eaters.”\(^{58}\) Cobbett was influential in the romanticization


\(^{58}\) Ibid. Cobbett was reacting to the loss of the small farmer and the ensuing changes that were being wrought by industrialization, seeing the turn from farm labor into industrial labor and the development of the railways as ‘unnatural.’\(^{58}\) However, Cobbett reacted in a decidedly interesting way by promoting a return to domestic industry but he also believed that there should be no salvation for the common man in the form of charity. As these small farmers were losing their land to larger estates and earning unfair wages, Cobbett predicted a horrible outcome. For a discussion of Cobbett’s views on industrialization and the railway see Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780 – 1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 15.
of the English countryside in the early part of the nineteenth century; however, the Victorian perception of the land took a different route. Much of the literature of the late Victorian era exploded with ‘country books’ that told of the “spiritual recuperation” that one could receive from a retreat into rural England, as if remaining in the city for too long could lead to “emotional atrophy and spiritual decline.” What differentiated the renewed romantic view of the landscape was that it offered methods that were unique to each gender. Men would be able to regain a sense of masculinity by being closer to the land and learning to embody the characteristics of the rural countryman, who exhibited qualities that every Englishman should have; women would learn to tailor their needs to the domestic sphere. As was part of English tradition the ideology of the land became a savior for the bourgeoisie who were being transformed by the perceived insidiousness of the city as modernity progressed. For the middle classes, modernity was something that one had to be protected from and only be given in small doses; too much and one could falter. So the countryside became an antidote to a quickly changing world, especially for the middle-class artists of England.

The symbol of encroaching modernity to many of these writers was the railroad. The railroads blighted the landscape but they also brought beneficial changes to the countryside. With the increase in expanding markets, by the 1880s an Englishman could obtain whatever he needed within 10 or 12 miles of his country.

59 Marsh, 33.
home. Not only were people able to move more quickly throughout England due to the expanding railroad but the improvement in the transfer of goods into smaller markets also limited the need to travel. A growth of small-scale agricultural and horticultural industries provided new luxury foods and plants for the growing suburban and even urban classes. The urban middle class was slowly infringing on the country during this period and their conceptions and relationship to land would dominate English perceptions of identity. For the middle class, the move toward modernity ignited a fire both alluring and dangerous as the connection between the rural and the urban was growing stronger.

Simultaneously there was a chivalric movement that revealed a desire to return to a period when ‘men were men.’ Cobbett was a proponent of this rise in admiration of medieval chivalry and it is no coincidence that literature was one of the avenues where this ‘medievalism’ was manifested. The Middle Ages was for Cobbett a time when feudal responsibilities between lord and peasant were at their best. Most of the focus of the chivalric movement was exemplified in literature that reinvigorated an emphasis on the role of the gentleman and mythology of the Middle

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61 Howkins, Reshaping Rural England, 210-211. Howkins shows that during the 1881 census there was a twenty-four percent growth in employment in non-domestic gardening over the last ten years and in 1891 this number slowed to 20.9 percent. This continued into the new century with a thirteen percent increase between 1901 and 1911. The area of land that was used for market gardens simultaneously grew during this period as well.
62 Williams, Culture and Society, 19. William Cobbett is partly responsible for the idealization of the Middle Ages that took hold of the nineteenth century. Much of this is attributed to his belief that the peasantry should look after their own education. Cobbett also believed that monasteries with their communal societies offered a better solution to his dissatisfaction with industrial society.
Ages. Literary depictions of the myth of Robin Hood, the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Roundtable, and Richard the Lionhearted all made a cultural resurgence. One of the most prevalent manifestations was in the development of the chivalrous gentleman as a signifier of middle-class masculinity during this period. Being a chivalrous man meant being “brave, straightforward, and honourable, loyal to his monarch, country and friends, unfailingly true to his word, ready to take issue with anyone he saw ill-treating a woman, child, or an animal.”\(^{63}\) Coincidentally there also emerged a literature that focused on the “origins of Britain.” The middle classes used this foray into nostalgia as a cultural touchstone during the late Victorian era in order to imbue their growing status with heritage and gravitas. The chivalrous gentleman was not created by accident, but was a way to train men to display their morals through outward appearance and through this display of moral superiority show why they should be regarded as part of the elite. The renewed interest in the greenwood, the setting for many of these stories, was also a manifestation of a society that wanted to recapture the idyllic splendor of an imagined English past. The nostalgia for these myths reinforced the patriarchal dominance of the land, while ironically also supporting a belief in personal liberty and freedom. Further, these myths offered a cultural model for masculinity, which only enhanced their appeal.

\(^{63}\) Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 260. Girouard argues that the Victorian and Edwardian era was a period when English history was re-mythologized. Not only were old legends reinterpreted but contemporary stories were tailored to the chivalric revival. He also shows the many ways that this chivalric movement extended into all aspects of British life.
In times of crisis, the woods played an important role in the creation of English myth and literature. Hidden powers lay concealed within the forests of England and provided Englishmen a place of “refuge and sanctuary.” The English saw the woods as a place where freedom lived—and died. The mythology surrounding the English forests was attributed to the Norman Conquest and the Norman’s use of the woods for their own personal gain. Walter Map, archdeacon of Oxford in the 1180s, wrote that, “the Conqueror took away much land from God and men and converted it for the use of wild beasts and the sport of his dogs for which he demolished thirty-six churches and exterminated the inhabitants;” yet, it was also where rebels hid from his grasp. So the belief in the freedom of the greenwood pervaded the memory of England into the late nineteenth century in literature. The onset of the market-based economy led to a constructed fiction that there existed a moral economy reliant on a mutually beneficial relationship between lord and peasant. With the rampant social change that came with industrialization, the myth of a rural England where lords did not overstep their rights to hunt and allowed peasants’ land animals to pasture was seen as admirable and desirable.

As the countryside was being imagined as a reprieve from the confines of the city at the end of the nineteenth century, a change in attitudes toward those who lived in the country took place, specifically about lowest class who relied on the land as a

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source of income. The countryman was suddenly admired for his simplicity and traditional way of life. This was far different from how English intellectuals had previously seen them. George Bourne in *The Bettesworth Book*, published in 1901, was one of the contemporary writers who expressed this feeling and promoted a change in the perception of the rural Englishmen in order to assuage the death of Old England. In conducting interviews with his gardener Bettesworth, George Sturt, under the pen name George Bourne, writes that his perception and opinion of the man gradually changed. Bourne claims that Bettesworth’s attributes were at once quaint and comical but he slowly found Bettesworth’s life “veiled so much silent suffering as to make me wonder and admire where before I might have laughed.” Throughout the book, Bourne regales readers with the stories that Bettesworth tells of his life and the drudgery that encompasses his existence. It seems that Bourne tried to help Bettesworth find work but he is taken by Bettesworth’s pride in the face of adversity. Yet for all of his admiration, Bourne is only able to see Bettesworth as a symbol of the lower class. Bourne writes about a recent trip to Oxford and observing the laborers and imagining them continuing the work of their ancestors by being keepers of the land. He goes on to stereotype these men and Bettesworth, saying,

> And so, when I hearken to Bettesworth, I feel that it is not to an exceptional man… but that in his quiet voice I am privileged to hear the natural, fluent unconscious talk, as it goes on over the face of the country, of the English Race, rugged, unresting, irresistible. The Race—not the aggregate of individuals, but the Stirp or Stock that puts forth Bettesworths by the million, and rejoices in its English soil and

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69 Bourne, 8.
loves the hard knocks of adventure and necessity everywhere. The/native orderliness, the self-reliance, the indomitable vigour of our
English breed unimpaired as yet by culture—this is what
Bettesworth’s talk means to me.**70**

Bourne’s account reveals a desire to find a historical and nostalgic source for English
masculinity. He views the lower classes as untouched by modern culture. They have
been able to retain their worth and their masculine roles and by making this claim,
Bourne reveals a feeling of wistfulness. As the middle classes were moving into
professional jobs that had nothing to do with the land, men like Bourne saw
themselves as less masculine, and the way to fix this was to regard the peasant, who
relied on the land for hearth and home, as a spiritual embodiment of manly morality.
In a span of thirty years, from the 1880s into the next century, the countryman came
to be revered for his stoicism and provided a model of Romantic morality for artists
and writers to admire.**71** He became the embodiment of a preoccupation with the land
that was becoming part of popular mythology, even if this did not manifest itself in
any real changes for the life of the countrymen.**72** The irony of the situation is that for
the men of Bourne’s social status, living the life of a peasant would have been
unbearable. The England that Bourne imagined did not fully engage with the reality
he documented, there were social and class distances that were too great to be
spanned.

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**70** Bourne, 8-9.

**71** Marsh, 71.

**72** Marsh, 64.
The admiration for the new nineteenth century countrymen and a love of the landscape led to a renewed romantic spirit, which would manifest itself in the writings of John Ruskin. The examination of Ruskin is important to this study because he offers many cultural and social observations about contemporary society, giving clues to the intellectual elite of the period. Additionally, Ruskin was a friend and benefactor to Octavia Hill, who will be discussed in the next chapter and also is mentioned frequently in the works of E. M. Forster. As an adult, Ruskin was important in establishing and reinvigorating the work of the Romantics of the previous generation.  

He describes his love for the landscape as, “the ruling passion of my life and the reason for the choice of its field of labour.” Later in life he even claimed, “The beginning of all my own right art work in life, … depended not on my love of art, but of mountains and sea.” Born in 1819 in Brunswick Square to a solidly bourgeois family, Ruskin had a close relationship with his mother. A devoutly religious Scottish Protestant woman, he spent more time with her than was usual in a 1820s household. His family’s wealth afforded him the ability to travel through Europe observing the landscapes of the various countries they visited and this was a great influence on him. In his early life, Ruskin was attracted to geology but he was inclined to do more than observe. Ruskin wanted to experience the landscape without

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any preconceived notions and gain knowledge from the ‘lived’ understanding of the physical world, rejecting scientific empiricism setting him on the path to emphasize Romantic ideals.\textsuperscript{77}

Much of the problem with any analysis of Ruskin is that his ideas are contradictory and even more progressive than usually accepted. As a founding father of British socialism, he was apt to claim that he was the reddest Communist, while also claiming that he was a “Tory of the old school.”\textsuperscript{78} Ruskin distinctly describes his own communism as being “old school” based on his conviction that property “belongs to everybody, and everybody’s property to us.”\textsuperscript{79} Ruskin’s view of property and land grew from a distinctly paternalistic view of English society combined with a communal spirit that had less to do with reforming class and gender structures than with romanticizing the past, a contradiction indicative of changes taking place to England’s idealization of the landscape.\textsuperscript{80} There was a push by the cultural elite to reconcile modernity and the long-rooted worship of the land in a manner that would not be perceived as retrograde.\textsuperscript{81} Rather than a shift in paradigm, cultural critics and artistic works of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century offered a

\textsuperscript{77} Cosgrove, “John Ruskin and the Geographical Landscape,” 45.
\textsuperscript{78} Fuller, “The Geography of Mother Nature,” 15.
\textsuperscript{80} Fuller, “The Geography of Mother Nature,” 15. Although Fuller shows that Ruskin contradicted himself, Ruskin’s self-identification as a communist can be found in the introduction to \textit{Fors Clavigera}, 4.
\textsuperscript{81} Peter Mandler, “Against “Englishness”: English Culture and the limits to Rural Nostalgia, 1850-1940” \textit{Transactions of the Royal Historical Society} Sixth Series, Vol. 7 (1997), 156. This incongruity seems to be at odds with a forward thinking approach to the emergence of intellectual and social changes, but Peter Mandler does not see this as a cognitive dissonance, which allowed for a smooth transition into modernity.
range of methods for managing any anxiety about modern society by wrapping
cultural movements in nostalgia.

Ruskin is considered by historian Peter Fuller as the ‘the true prophet of the
“post-modern” and “post industrial” era.’

Much of his output, which spanned many
different genres, was a bridge to the twentieth century primarily due to Ruskin’s
ability to view landscape holistically in response to science and commerce.

To temper the growing social and cultural changes occurring in England required a
traditionally English appeal to the land. Although Fuller argues that Ruskin was the
conduit, his reading of Ruskin is teleological. Ruskin was not looking to make a
smooth transition into the modern period but rather wanted to recoup the loss of
nature that had been hastened by industrial development. For Ruskin modernity and
all that came with it were detrimental to society. He adamantly wishes that
“I should like to destroy most of the railroads in England, and all the railroads in Wales, I
should like to destroy and rebuild the Houses of Parliament, the national Gallery and
the East end of London.”

For him, the railroads were a symbol of the loss of liberty,
a literal virus spreading its way through the English countryside. The antidote to this
was the retention of “the fields of England green, and her cheeks red; and that girls
should be taught to curtsy, and boys to take their hats off, when a Professor or
otherwise dignified person passes by.”

It is within these writings that a sense of

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82 Peter Fuller, *Images of God: The Consolations of Lost Illusion* (London: Chatto and
Windus, 1985) cited in Cosgrove and Daniels *The Iconography of the Landscape*, 5.
84 Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, 5.
85 Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, 5.
conservatism emerges in Ruskin that is not tied to the political landscape but rather the geographical landscape. This conservatism would preserve aspects of English society such as a separation of the sexes and a clear order that was based upon a conventional hierarchy. Ruskin’s writing indicates how in an era that focused on egalitarianism some yearned for traditional values that would carry into the fin de siècle and beyond.

The division between men and women was ever present within English society but it is within the nineteenth century that these divisions had fused with the intellectualization of space and were used as a reason for the denial of expanding the rights of women. Generally, most men deemed women naturally inferior but the Enlightenment and the desire to construct an ideal society led many English intellectuals to argue against the notion that women were not fit for the public sphere. Ruskin, as one of the most famous and influential writers of the period, promotes the reinforcement of the home as a sphere of the woman. In his essay “Sesame and Lilies,” he argues that the home was the true place for women.86 Ruskin begins with a description of men’s role in society. He describes men as active and progressive, having an “energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest is necessary. But the woman’s power is for rule—and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision.”87 This statement offers a sphere of influence for women but Ruskin is careful to

87 Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies, 84.
maintain a gendered status quo with men maintaining their role at the top of the patriarchy. He goes on to talk about the role of women in the home but his concept does not only inform the conception of the physical home but also the spiritual idea of home. Ruskin cleverly uses Queen Victoria’s reign as a model for how women should conduct themselves within the home: a largely ceremonial role that allowed for the sovereignty of men. In the physical home, women were still subject to their husbands, despite the home being refashioned as a women’s sphere. In the spiritual home, or Great Britain, men would remain dominant domestically while also ruling the Empire. Effectively men were ceding some space to women while maintaining a dominant role for themselves. According to Ruskin, women’s greatest function is to “praise; she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest.” He goes on to describe the horrors that await man outside of the protection of the home and states that a woman’s role is to protect this area. For Ruskin, man enters into the “hostile society of the outer world” and when these troubles make their way across the doorway of the threshold of the home, then the role of a woman has faltered. Ruskin created a specific role for women that charged them with the protection of the home and the nation. Women have a role to play within society; like the rural landscape, they offer security and tradition.

These views should not suppose that women’s agency did not exist; it merely occupied and was exerted within a separate space. Ruskin is quick to mention that women should not merely be subservient to men, claiming, “as if [men] could be
helped effectively by a shadow, or worthily by a slave!"\textsuperscript{88} Women should be standing right next to men but remain in the private sphere. Understanding that a large portion of his audience was comprised of women, Ruskin admired and revered the role they should hold in society. In the same lecture, Ruskin uses Shakespeare to depict how women are the real heroes of literature, stating, “the catastrophe of every play is caused always by the folly or fault of a man; the redemption, if there be any, is by the wisdom and virtue of a woman, and failing that, there is none."\textsuperscript{89} Ruskin sees that in order to promote the role of women within society, previous writers have diminished the role of men and the only way to fix this was to equalize their roles by relegating each sex to separate spheres. Further, to uphold a specific type of masculinity, derived from a remythologization of the countryside that nurtured those who inhabited it, required a distinction being made between spaces appropriate for men and those appropriate for women.

Feminists have excoriated Ruskin in the last forty years as an example of Victorian patriarchy. Kate Millet first developed the notion that Ruskin’s views were an antithesis to John Stuart Mill’s belief in a rational female, arguing against his belief in separate spheres and complementary relationships.\textsuperscript{90} Ruskin was promoting a feminine ideal that was more emotive and aligned with notions of Romanticism. However, Ross Elliot Eddington recently revised this belief by comparing Millett to Ruskin claiming that the two were merely reflecting modes of thinking that were

\textsuperscript{88} Ruskin, \textit{Sesame and Lilies}, 74.
\textsuperscript{89} Ruskin, \textit{Sesame and Lilies}, 75-76
reflective of their respective contemporary mentalities. Millet excoriates Ruskin for his beliefs but also for his peculiarities surrounding women. His work *Sesame and Lilies* was written for Rose La Touché in 1858 when she was nine and he was thirty-nine. Millet uses facts like these to distort Ruskin’s own assertion that he is paving the middle course of female independence. Moving away from Millet and focusing on Ruskin, we see that this belief that Ruskin was merely reflecting a mode of thinking that was popular at the time is both simplistic and obvious. Eddington is able to read the nuances of Ruskin’s views of females but where he fails is in the ability to see the lasting implications in the separation that Ruskin advocates.

One of the concrete ways that Ruskin established a connection between art and society was through the promotion of artists. The whole purpose of the landscape artists was not merely to replicate the site or scene but to determine the parts of nature that are worth painting. He continues this point by asserting that the artist works as a conduit for the spectator; acting as nothing more than a conveyance, but it is within this praxis that the artist and the spectator truly have a conversation. Through this dialogue, the artist can impart upon the spectator ideas and modes and remove “all that is base” from him through a communication with a far more advanced intellect. Ruskin is creating and imparting a scenario in which the artist drives the ethos of the public sphere. He developed the argument that the artist had a responsibility to society through the production of public knowledge, which would influence society.

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91 Ross Elliot Eddington, “Millet’s Rationalist Error” *Hypatia* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn, 2003), 196.
93 Ibid. 45.
for the better. By fostering within artists a developed love for the landscape, and arguing for the landscape as truly the most developed of artistic endeavors, Ruskin actively sought to influence the public sphere through artistic endeavors, connecting both and hastening the divisions between popular and elite culture. Ruskin embodied his ideas by establishing an art gallery that furthered his own belief in the role of landscape. Not only did he promote ideas about how to perceive art, creating a discourse on the proper role of the artist in the nineteenth century, but also his Guild of St. George sought to reinvigorate pre-industrial guilds by focusing on aspects of the arts and crafts movement.

Whether it be through an intellectualized appreciation for the natural world or through hands-on physical labor, the landscape as a concept provided Ruskin a space to negotiate his own feelings of masculine insecurity and provide a template for men within his social position who felt the same way. The same factors that led to the Romantic revival altered the construction of masculinity within the Victorian period. Thomas Carlyle is credited with creating a concern with the identity men should be adopting in Victorian England. Ruskin saw work in much of the same way that Carlyle did; work was crucial in combating the spiritual threat of materialism that had become a hallmark of the Victorian era.\textsuperscript{94} For Ruskin, the best way out of this existential dilemma was through vigorous manual labor such as digging.\textsuperscript{95} Ruskin criticizes his own position in society in \textit{Fors Clavigera}, by claiming that his own

\textsuperscript{94} Martin A. Danahay, \textit{Gender at Work in Victorian Culture: Literature, Art, and Masculinity} (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 125. For a more expansive dissection of Ruskin’s view on work see Peter D. Anthony, \textit{John Ruskin’s Labour: A Study of Ruskin’s Social Theory}.

\textsuperscript{95} Danahay, 125.
work is not as valuable as that of the working class, seeing what he does—thinking and writing—as ‘play.’ Ruskin is not living up to his own standard of masculinity and the life that he is leading is dependent on others. In a telling passage within Fors Clavigera, subtitled “Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain,” Ruskin details the work of others that have made his morning routine possible and ends with the awareness of, “having written this sentence, I go to the fire, warm my fingers, saunter about the room, and grumble because I can’t see the other side of the lake.” By focusing on the work of the working class and the benefits of such labor, Ruskin was revealing his own feelings of inadequacy. Ruskin’s personal crisis of masculinity demonstrates how modernity created social anxieties.

Ruskin promoted manual labor to combat this perceived loss in masculinity. Digging in the landscape as exemplified in Ruskin’s Hinksey Road Project sought to channel masculine energy and the love of sport into the type of labor that was valuable to society by harnessing the roughness and enduring work-ethic of the common man into a usable force for the landscape. In 1873, Ruskin engineered the Hinksey Road project to connect North and South Hinksey, a path that the lower classes primarily used. He used Oxford undergraduates to perform the work in order to channel the young men’s athleticism for a greater good and reacquaint men with an

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96 Danahay 125. For an in-depth discussion of the role of work in the Victorian period Danahay discusses the various perspectives and historiography of Ruskin’s views on work, comparing them to other contemporaries such as William Morris and Thomas Carlyle. In Danahay’s view, both Carlyle and Morris had a much more nuanced perception of working-class work that aligned with their own views on society and politics.

97 Ruskin, Fors Clavigera, Vol. I, 398
essential feature of their nature. His contemporaries did not readily follow the suggestion by Ruskin to admire and emulate the work of the working class. Although he did have followers, there was not a mass movement at Oxford of students or of other intellectuals who took up a shovel in order to prove their manliness. Rather, the middle classes continued to mimic the aristocracy.

Ruskin’s personal issues with masculinity were not merely a construction of his own feelings but were derived from the society around him. He came under fire for his romantic views, which were labeled effeminate by his critics. When writing on economic issues, Ruskin fell under the rationalist and scientific gaze that marred the division between the sexes. By advocating for a pre-modern political economy, many of Ruskin’s critics claimed that his views were simply too sentimental and called his work an example of “querulous feminine virulence.” The reaction against Ruskin shows that there was a public dialectic about the appropriate roles for men within society. This may have been a symptom of Ruskin’s dissent against the professionalization of science but also his focus on the emotive notion of learning, not from the exceptional, but through every day experiences. As modernity spread

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98 Canon Rawnsley, “Ruskin: The Experience of Canon Rawnsley and Two “Atlantic” Contributors” The New York Times March 31, 1900. The Hinksey Road project was one of Ruskin’s many divergences. Through this project a young Oscar Wilde became friends with Ruskin, who was an undergraduate at Oxford at the time. It is unclear the nature of their friendship but does show the many links between cultural critics like Ruskin and Wilde, and also the influence of thought throughout the nineteenth century. For a brief reading see Tim Hilton, John Ruskin: The Early Years (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 574.
99 Danahay 135.
through society, Ruskin offered his framework for combating the increasingly
disruptive role of industry and economic change but for many men what he was
offering was not the correct course of action. Much of this surrounds the debate about
the role of the aesthete. Although there was always the implication that men who
were interested in art and “sparkled at parties” were effeminate, by the 1890s this
became a marker of sexual deviance and homosexuality. Simultaneous to a
developing split in the role of science and art, the romantic focus on the beauty of the
land and the lessons it could teach fostered a fear of femininity.

The Victorian intelligentsia, artists, painters, poets, philosophers, social
theorists and journalists such as William Morris, Dickens, Gaskell, Carlyle, Pugin and
John Ruskin were not the first to mourn the destruction of the English landscape. In
the 1820s and 1830s, the tension between the pride of being able to alter nature and
the anxiety about what these changes wrought were manifested by what historian
Lewis Mumford called “the widespread perversion and destruction of the
environment.” This need to ameliorate all the changes wrought by the Industrial
Revolution in the nineteenth century created a unique situation for the middle class in
England. In one respect, they wholly adopted the capitalistic system of wealth and
accumulation that transformed society away from one based on feudal and rural
hierarchy; on the opposite end, they instilled within the public sphere an admiration

102 Pamela Thurschwell, Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 39. Thurschwell argues that the trials of Oscar Wilde led to the popular assumption that artistic and effeminate men were homosexuals.
103 James Winter, Secure from Rash Assault: Sustaining the Victorian Environment (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 8.
104 Winters, 8.
for the landscape and the countryside as a symbol of a pre-capitalist past. Much of this was a peculiar blending of the romantic notions of individuality and intuition and a classical feeling of order and emulation. Men and women could regain a proper morality through an admiration for the landscape, and they imbued this sentiment in the rural countryman who they saw as inhabiting a pre-modern emotionality. In a period of social change, the English turned to the countryside and the woods as a symbol for liberty. This sense of liberty was based upon customary law and ideas of Anglo-Saxon identity. Ruskin’s work on the spirituality of landscape promoted a masculinity that was uniquely found in the countryside. By promoting a definition of masculinity that was derived from nature, Ruskin opened up a discourse within the public sphere that would have ramifications for the role of women in England and their connection to nature.

And so what began as the use of nostalgia to reinforce structures of power against the misuse of the land in the late nineteenth century moved beyond and appropriated stereotypes in order to subvert them. Artists like Ruskin lamented changes to the landscape as they saw these alterations leading to the spiritual loss of England. The methods they used to negotiate this change through the veneration of the rural peasant helped to reinforce Victorian ideals such as gender and class division. This approach was not unique. By adhering to a nostalgic past that never truly existed they reinforced a false sense of tradition that only separated the spheres of men and women. This would merge with changes in the professionalization of

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105 Lowenthal, 101.
science and art, which would split the imaginative process from rationality even further, adding a gendered component to the former.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the anxiety surrounding masculinity was further exacerbated by the increasingly aggressive feminist movement and led to a search for a male identity. In 1913, E. Belfort Bax, wrote a book called *The Fraud of Feminism*, arguing that the women’s movement hampered men and that there was no theoretical basis for the belief that women were to be placed on equal footing to men.\(^\text{106}\) A Marxist, Bax was determined to show that women were given certain leniencies in law that gave women special rights, not equal rights. Other men who felt they were losing privileges previously taken for granted repeated Bax’s response to the growing Suffrage movement. Tracing the historical rise of the feminist movement, Bax claims that women before the feminist movement—a period he does not acknowledge as having a start date—were seen equally under the law. With recent changes to property laws women suddenly had an advantage over men. The Married Women’s Property Act of 1882 had forced men to provide for their wives but women were “not compelled to give a farthing towards the support of her husband.”\(^\text{107}\) For Bax, the women’s movement consisted of two facets: the belief that women are morally and intellectually equal to men resulting in their equality in public life and special privileges and immunities in the law that have not

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\(^{106}\) E. Belfort Bax, *The Fraud of Feminism* (London: Grant Richards, 1913).

\(^{107}\) Bax, *The Fraud of Feminism*, 57. Bax first put these ideas in writing in 1908 in his pamphlet “The Legal Subjection of Men.” Using the language of John Stuart Mill, Bax argues against the special privileges that women had recently attained and many of these had to do with inconsistencies in property and criminal laws. Bax is considered the father of the modern Men’s Rights Movement.
been extended to men.\textsuperscript{108} This has led to a strong coalition of women who have been able to come together but has also led to an “inconsistent slushy sentiment among men.”\textsuperscript{109} He later goes on to state the feminist movement hurt men, making them the real victims by attacking their need to exert their chivalrous nature toward women.

Bax may be arguing for true equality for all, perhaps based on his Marxist inclinations, but his discourse is one of victimhood. Women, according to Bax’s writings, are the ones who are exerting undue force upon men and masculinity as a whole is suffering for it. As women began to take their place next to men, it was clear that some men had a real fear of what this could mean for their fragile notions of balance between the sexes.

As men like Oscar Wilde adopted styles and dress that were deemed effeminate, middle class men reacted against them for two reasons: the adoption of effeminate styles was reserved for the aristocracy and these Aesthetes were moving into roles that women generally held.\textsuperscript{110} This extension of aestheticism developed as a component of what literary critic Ian Fletcher called missionary aestheticism. Ruskin was one of the main proponents of this type of aestheticism that moved beyond “art for art’s sake” and toward influencing social reformers. The focus on the landscape and the promotion of a rural sensibility facilitated the division of the classes further. If Marx claimed that the progression of capitalism would eventually force the

\textsuperscript{108} Bax, \textit{The Fraud of Feminism}, 12.
\textsuperscript{109} Bax, \textit{The Fraud of Feminism}, 6
\textsuperscript{110} Talia Schaffer, “Fashioning Aestheticism by Aestheticizing Fashion: Wilde, Beerbohm, and the Male Aesthetes Sartorial Codes” \textit{Victorian Literature and Culture} Vol. 28, No 1 (2000), 40. Schaffer argues that men like William Morris and Walter Crane who popularized the Arts and Crafts movement were writing about subjects like the home that were traditionally the venue of women.
bourgeoisie and the proletariat apart, he failed to account for the role that culture would play within this process. Artistic movements reflected and exacerbated the unease that came with the inclusion of women in the public sphere. Bourgeois men looked to the rural lower class to help find a new model for masculinity that reinforced the divisions between the various classes in England. As some men searched for an alternative to modernity that supported their masculine identity, the development of a heritage based on a relationship with the land altered the perception of the landscape. Landscape as a concept could be modified and this would have ramifications for women in the fin de siècle. Although this process began with the Romantic Movement, it was not until the late nineteenth century that men like John Ruskin would help to foster a reevaluation of the landscape and gender it. By using art and literature to enforce the concept of separate spheres, Ruskin began a process that would allow women to gain a space within the intellectual landscape of England.
OCTAVIA HILL AND NEW ROLES FOR WOMEN

Is it any reason, because a woman’s powers are inferior, that she should be prevented from using such powers as she has?

Frances Power Cobbe (1863)

The government of men and affairs should belong to woman; for since she is more balanced, more reflective, more stable, she will be able to perform her duties with continuity in her ideas and proceedings. His instability [...] his vagabondage which is directed by his very nature, make him a dangerous element in social and political life. [...] Nature herself has indicated our path. Women must rule, and man has only to submit to her laws and inspiration.

Jean Finot, Problems of the Sexes, 1913

In 1843, Sarah Stickney Ellis bluntly warned the young women of England seeking to improve their position within society to be “content to be inferior to men—inferior in mental power, in the same proportion that you are in inferior in bodily strength.”111 Writing in The Daughters of England, her goal was to reacquaint women with duties that were fit for a woman, mainly the maintenance of the domestic sphere. Ellis seeks to influence educated women who felt they needed to use their intellect to prove their equality to men and quell any admiration for personal improvement that could lead women down the wrong path. Yet behind all of Ellis’ ideas were loves for the home and England. A few years earlier in The Women of England, she excoriated

modern gender relationships and reveals that women were not to blame for their current situation but were victims of societal changes writing,

the habits of men are progressively involving them more deeply in the interests of public life, so that unless some strenuous efforts are made on the part of women, the far-famed homes of England will lose their boasted happiness, and with their happiness, their value in the scale of our country’s moral worth.  

The most damning indictment of men and their role in opening the public sphere to women is wrapped in a critique of gendered emotionality. Ellis asserts that a man must “sacrifice the poetry of his nature for the realities of material and animal existence—for women, whose whole life, from the cradle to the grave, is one of feeling, rather than of action.” Ellis, in an effort to argue that women control a specific arena of English culture, says they are to sever the ties to the masculine notions of artistic expression. However, ideas like Ellis’ reinforced the belief that women should not engage in the public sphere. Through the development of the Suffrage movement, assertions like those of Ellis would soon become antiquated as women began to maneuver through society using Enlightenment rationality and romantic sensibilities to further their own personal goals.

Women suddenly had more time on their hands with the rising prosperity of the middle class during the late Victorian era. Changes in men’s labor affected their presence at home as work increasingly became tied to time and as men traveled overseas in order to subdue the Empire, leaving women to take control of the home.

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This development occurred at the end of the eighteenth century with the separation of work from the home and the elevation of the male as a ‘breadwinner’ who would provide for the entire family outside the home.\textsuperscript{114} Middle and upper-class women no longer engaged in producing any economic benefit for the family and instead protected the sanctity of their husbands’ place within the public sphere as the sole providers.\textsuperscript{115} As a result, women’s role in the home changed at the same time as the Suffrage and women’s movement gained momentum. The uniqueness of the second half of the nineteenth century was that for the first time, women’s role within the home was being elevated to men’s role outside it. As some men of the artistic set were becoming more concerned with the proper roles for men, they began to focus on the way that they could channel women’s growing agency into an acceptable role that kept them safe and maintained within a domestic sphere. As men such as John Ruskin searched for a new masculine identity that converged with modernity, women’s social roles also changed. Ruskin’s rhetoric about women’s roles within society offered them a template for shifting their own identities. Additionally, his influence on Octavia Hill would foster her independence and alter the use and the conception of the English landscape.

Many factors expedited women’s shift from the home to the public sphere. The home became women’s calling card and they used the home, and the decoration

\textsuperscript{114} John Tosh, \textit{A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 17.

\textsuperscript{115} Tosh, 17-18.
of the home, to gain dominion of the house.\textsuperscript{116} Further, changing property laws increasingly gave women more choice in their investments including their land, altering their own lives in a manner that would alarm some men of the period. Suddenly, a legal change in who could own private property—especially land—was raising the issue of whom physically and spiritually owned England. At the same time, as women’s civic presence was increased through social reform, and land preservation and the need to connect the past with the present and the country with the city allowed women to take up the reins of heritage. During the late Victorian period, some women were becoming the vessels of tradition that reinforced the significance of nature, but more importantly made it their sphere of influence.

All this change required an intellectual shift that allowed men to retain their place in society while offering a new one to women. As women slowly emerged into the public sphere, there was a need to find an appropriate role for these women within society that did not encroach upon the man’s place in the public sphere. The obvious choice was to promote the ideal that women should encompass all the duties tied to the comforts of the home. Always a prescriptive model, the idealization of the ‘angel in the house’ has been explored in the historiography but this scholarship has led to the conclusion that the promotion of the passivity of women was a dominant trait.\textsuperscript{117} However, the separate sphere model was not a phenomenon that emerged in the

nineteenth century; the division between men and women was based upon long-standing duties that were devised before this period, waxing and waning over time depending on economic issues.\textsuperscript{118} What was unique to nineteenth-century gender relations was the movement of men out of the home, as the space of production shifted.\textsuperscript{119} The home was constructed as a reprieve from society. Women’s domestic duties existed outside of the new economy as industrialization matured and left women out of the greater economic changes occurring in Great Britain. This led to a greater emphasis on the roles that women did play within society, namely as mothers and as wives, changing the perception of women with a greater emphasis placed on women’s religiosity and their distinctive sexuality.\textsuperscript{120} The idealization of the characteristics of feeling, benevolence, and moral purity were placed on women while sexual satisfaction was relegated to the male body, leading to the construction of women as sexually passive.\textsuperscript{121} However, in reality middle-class women were helpful in reinforcing these notions of social purity by engaging in the discourse that arose within the public sphere.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{118} Amanda Vickery’s article “Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History” offers a concise overview of the issue of separate spheres in British history. For a European-wide perspective Jerrold Seigel’s, \textit{Modernity and Bourgeois Life: Society, Politics, and Culture in England, France, and Germany since 1750} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Seigel provides examples of separate spheres dating back to as early as the fourteenth century.


\textsuperscript{121} Shoemaker, 5-6.

Jurgen Habermas’ conception of the public sphere requires a revaluation in order to place women’s emergence into this space in proper context. A development of the Enlightenment the public sphere eventually degenerated in the second half of the nineteenth century, according to Habermas.\textsuperscript{123} Women were always part of Habermas’ conception of the public sphere, even if they were never explicitly mentioned. One of the components of Habermas’ definition of the public sphere was that it required an egalitarian space where social status was disdained, and this feature allowed for reasoned debate. As Craig Calhoun points out, anyone who could obtain cultural products in the form of books, plays or any other artistic endeavor could make a claim to the public sphere.\textsuperscript{124} However in reality, women were always granted access to literature and art but this never transformed into a political voice until the late nineteenth century. Habermas’ overemphasis on the need for a rational-critical debate that was founded upon an agreed use of reason was an idealized prescription for society. It is only in the last half of the nineteenth century that women truly engaged within the public discussion surrounding their position in the political sphere. The results of this discussion only prove how idealistic Habermas was about the level of equality inherent in the development of the public sphere. There required a critical mass of middle-class women engaged in the public sphere before any alterations could be made. This only occurred after discussions of the private and public realm blurred the lines between the state and society that forced a complete

reassessment of women’s role in English society. That this discourse began with men should not infer that women played no part in their own increased presence in the public sphere. Rather it demonstrates that men’s concern with their own masculinity opened up discussions about women’s civic identity and by opening up the topic to debate ceded to women an opportunity to alter the public sphere and their place within it. Women’s increased visibility in the public created various and divergent responses. As bourgeois women settled into their new roles, they subverted and transformed the public sphere by correlating their identity with social reform and the landscape of England.

During the nineteenth century changes to women’s property rights resulted in a social shift precipitated by the end of coverture. The fight for women’s rights extended well before the latter quarter of the Victorian period. As early as 1856, married women fought for the right to hold their own property. Sir Richard Bethell, Attorney General, illuminated the effects that could result from altering property laws. Placing woman on equal footing as men, would give them “a strong-minded and independent position which so few chose for themselves” a role Bethell “did not think that was a position which the best and the most amiable of the women of England were anxious to occupy.” At this time, the law still held that a woman’s property became the domain of her husband upon marriage. Husbands had complete

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control of real property—or real estate—in so much that he could do whatever he pleased with it so long as he did not dispose of it without her consent.\textsuperscript{127} Her personal property and private possessions belonged completely to her husband. Debates in Parliament revealed that the men were more concerned with the consequences that extending property rights to married women would create in the home rather than correcting any legal inequality.\textsuperscript{128} As property became a means for women to enter into the public sphere, it also allowed for the public sphere to encroach on the private. For some members of Parliament, the problems this law could create would lead to instability within the home, and women could suffer. Mr. Beresford Hope feared that it would allow husbands to completely negate their responsibilities to their wives and result in men telling their wives to “go and earn your own bread, as the Act of Parliament tells you, and I wash my hands of your support.”\textsuperscript{129} The protection of women as a symptom of Victorian morality and patriarchy kept the law from being passed even though the votes signaled the approval of the act. Yet once the defeat of the Bill of 1856 occurred many women who had been active in attempting to change the law decided to pursue other alternatives to better the lives of women. Many of these women began to focus on education and increased employment in jobs previously denied to them as a source for female betterment, leading to an explosion

\textsuperscript{127} Holcombe, 5
\textsuperscript{129} Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 14 May 1857 vol. 145, 279, \textit{Historic Hansard}, \url{http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1857/may/14/leave-first-reading#S3V0145P0_18570514_HOC_33}.
of organizations that sought to enlarge the role of women outside of the home. Having been denied a legal voice, women engaged with their new found visibility in the public sphere in different ways.

The lack of political support from men forced women to be adaptable. Women used their friendship ties as a means to communicate and effect change, creating societies for the betterment of women of all classes. Women such as Barbara Bodichon nee Leigh Smith and Emily Davies were instrumental in creating groups that overlapped and fought for an increased public role for women. They established the Langham Place Circle, a group that contributed to the petition of 1856 that eventually became the first Married Woman’s Property Act to be debated in Parliament. They also founded the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women and the English Woman’s Journal. These groups asserted themselves within the public sphere through the creation of female clubs. They gave middle-class women a safe location for their activities while simultaneously providing a space for intellectual discourse within the bustling metropolis but one which continued to keep women in a separate sphere.

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131 Shanley, 50.
132 Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 5. In *Shopping for Pleasure*, Rappaport sees a rupture in the role of women in society. Her take is that during the late nineteenth century there emerged a pleasure for shopping that was strictly feminine that opened up the city to women that then flowed into changes in gender ideals and political influence., 75.
133 Rappaport, 75.
As opportunities for women’s engagement in urban areas developed, there was also occurring a dialogue about the role of the countryside and how it pertained to a view of women. In 1856, George Eliot, the pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans, in “The Natural History of German Life” wrote that “[t]o make men moral, something more is requisite than to turn them out to grass.” Noting the trend to favor the workingman and the countrymen, Eliot found fault with the passing novelty that focused on the pastoral life of England as a panacea for urban life and modernity. Eliot was specifically reacting to the work of writers like Ruskin, who believed that the future of English morality lay within a view of the peasantry that romanticized them in a false representation of tradition and virtue. She goes on to write,

> [t]he notion that peasants are joyous, that the typical moment to represent a man in a smock-frock is when he is cracking a joke and showing a row of sound teeth, that cottage matrons are usually buxom, and village children necessarily rosey and merry, are prejudices difficult to dislodge from the artistic mind, which looks for its subjects into literature instead of life.¹³⁴

Eliot’s reaction reveals two particular aspects of the imagined nature of the English landscape: that a happy and healthy rural peasantry defined the popular representation of the landscape and an idealized version of traditional gender roles dominated it as well. By offering an alternative to the separate spheres ideal men like John Ruskin were having in literature and art, Elliot, as a woman, participated in a public discourse about the prescribed roles for men and women. Inadvertently, the discussions opened

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up these ideals to criticism and gave women an opportunity to make adjustments for their benefit.

However, there were differing views on how to achieve a new model of femininity during a time of social change. Eliot is an example of the ambivalence that some women of the era had about their interactions with one another and within themselves. She supported the work of her single friends and acquaintances, such as Octavia Hill, signing petitions to Parliament that sought to change the Married Woman’s Property Act, but she did this without enthusiasm even though she admired the work of these pioneering women.\textsuperscript{135}

The division between single woman and married woman reflected the roles that each believed the female sex should take. Conservatively, Eliot was a proponent for the slow growth of women’s rights and was more than happy to reside in the background to her male partner. Although she was the more successful of the two, she was able to have the intimate relationship that afforded emotional security but also the legal protection of being a spinster that allowed her to maneuver through society independently.\textsuperscript{136} Her engagement with the public discourse was unique because of her status in society and as an author. In her novel, \textit{Middlemarch}, she concludes the story with the arrival of railroad surveyors in the countryside, showing that England’s landscape was being transformed.\textsuperscript{137} Even Eliot was hesitant about modernity and


\textsuperscript{136} Foster, 186-189

\textsuperscript{137} James H. Winter, \textit{Secure From Rash Assault, Sustaining the Victorian Environment} (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999), 8.
women’s role within it. Although she despised the elevation of the peasant as a source for morality, Eliot saw within the development of the railroad a harbinger of change that could alter society and culture. Modernity was as anxiety producing for women as for men and would produce an equal response.

Other women, as well, were concerned with the way they were being perceived and sought to temper the move toward equality by focusing on ways to downplay their independence by bolstering their feminine qualities. In 1860, Elizabeth Garrett, the first woman to qualify as a physician in Great Britain, wrote to Emily Davies, a leading Suffragist and reformer of higher education for women, claiming that she believed she could use her femininity to her advantage. Garret wrote, “[e]xperience is modifying my notions about the most suitable style of dress for me to wear at the hospital. I feel confident now that one is helped rather than hindered by being as much like a lady as lies in one’s power.”

For Garrett, her ability to remain feminine and a lady was as important to her as her education and her occupation. Reinforcing ideas of beauty and the aesthetic stereotype placed on women, Garrett realized that she could provide an example of an educated woman while also adhering to feminine ideals that supported the perception of women during the late nineteenth century. Her friend Davies had the same perspective on this issue, believing that the dissimilarities between men and women that separated them into different spheres were false. Davies writes in her essay “Ideals” in 1866, ‘that women have a part in the world, and that men are by no means ciphers in the home circle—"}

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138 Elizabeth Garrett to Emily Davies, 5 September 1860 quoted in Patricia Hollis, 6.
know that a man who should be all head would be as monstrous an anomaly as a woman all heart.” While Garrett merely echoes the popular sentiments that men had about femininity and gender division, Davis articulates that stressing the divisions between the sexes is a detriment to society because they create manifestations of each gender that are false and constrained. These differing views validate that women were learning to maneuver through the roles that suddenly had opened up to them as a consequence of the women’s movement.

Many historians have argued that the development of the Suffrage Movement should be attributed to John Stuart Mill, who as a member of the House of Commons from 1865 to 1868 was able to bring to Parliament the question of women’s legal equality in a manner that provided the issue a degree of seriousness. In 1869, Mill wrote in his women’s rights essay “The Subjection of Women” that women should no longer accept their role beneath men but needed to be placed on equal footing alongside men. However, Mill was following a trend that had begun much earlier. Bodichon, an artist, educational reformer, and leader for women’s rights wrote of Mill and his take on female equality in “The Subjection of Women”, “[i]t is almost painful to be so dumb & to feel not able in any way even to reply what even to me personally Mr Mill has done of good (sic).”

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140 Ann Robson, No Laughing Matter: John Stuart Mill’s Establishment of Women’s Suffrage as a Parliamentary Question,” Utilitas 2 (1990), 88-101. Mill’s belief was that women were still living in a state of slavery that was slowly being abolished but not for women. These ideas were first put forward as early as 1826 in a review of work on medieval French history.
enfranchisement was not one of the leading goals for women during the 1850’s and 1860s.\textsuperscript{142} The middle-class women who created periodicals such as the \textit{English Woman’s Journal} were more concerned with education for middle-class girls, the expansion of women into occupations they were denied, and emphasizing social reform as a worthy pursuit for middle-class women. The founders of the \textit{Journal}, Bessie Parkes and Bodichon, actively supported the election of Mill, whose campaign was based upon extending suffrage to single women, although in private, many campaigners believed in the extension to married women as well.\textsuperscript{143} Jane Rendall believes that much of the reaction by women resulted from the stifling limits placed on women at the time and the work women did during this period. They were confined to the care of people through teaching, nursing, and childcare, and provides proof of the separate spheres theory. Amanda Vickery astutely notes that this argument is important but that the new rights gained by their brothers and fathers enticed many middle-class women and were committed to political equality and borrowed the liberal rhetoric of exclusion. Vickery points out that Bodichon and Parkes were descended from families with a tradition of radical political backgrounds that informed their work and their personal concerns.\textsuperscript{144} Either way, the early work of women like Bodichon and Parkes focused on improving the life of women in ways that could be attained through social reform and education. The focus of their work mimicked many of the same ideologies and language that sought to limit the role of

\textsuperscript{142} Rendall, 171-173.
\textsuperscript{143} Rendall, 175.
the monarchy in the early seventeenth century. Women such as Frances Power Cobbe endorsed the idea of feminine freedom and liberty by claiming notions of natural rights. Cobbe writes,

[w]hen the theory of the “Divine Right of Husbands “ has followed to limbo that of the “Divine Right of Kings,” and a precedency in selfishness is no longer assumed to be the sacred privilege of masculine strength and wisdom then will become possible a conjugal love and union nobler and more tender by far than can ever exist while such claims are even tacitly supposed.145

The tradition of British liberty seems to have played a large part in the rhetoric of the women’s movement. Many women, like Cobbe, Bodichon, and Parkes, used literature and education as a means to attain political power. In order to improve their societal profile, they understood they needed to improve their civic engagement and turn their artistic and literary pursuits into political influence.

Cobbe is most remembered for her anti-vivisection crusade that further cemented separate spheres for men and women within society and was tied to the professionalization of the sciences, which was also taking place during the late nineteenth century. The anti-vivisection movement began in 1875 with the formation of the Victorian Street Society for the Protection of Animals Liable to Vivisection.146 The history of this organization and the role that Cobbe played has been discussed in the literature but what can be taken away from her work is that just as science was

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able to strategically isolate itself from the broader public, calling for an unquestioned
dominance of the natural world, Cobbe and her associates met this specialization with
resistance. Cobbe was also important in advocating for the reconciliation between
science and social science. In her essay, “Social Sciences Congresses, and Women’s
Part in Them,” Cobbe writes about how at the Dublin meeting of the Association for
the Promotion of Social Science there was one gentleman who felt the need to
denounce social science, calling it, “balderdash.” For many men, it seems that the use
of science in the betterment of society was a primarily female occupation. “Cure the
world by science. Don’t talk to me of your social science! Make people read their
Bibles, and teach children, and keep their houses clean, …Science indeed! Social
Science! pshaw! (sic)” Cobbe goes on to describe the difference between social
science and deductive science in order to draw a clear definition of the former. In
doing so, she argues for the strong role women have played within social reform and
the way that men have expected women to simply do these acts without offering any
concrete evidence to improve the function of social reform. Where Cobbe is most
astute is in quoting Lord Shaftsbury, who made the claim, “[m]en may do what must
be done on a large scale; but the instant the work becomes individual, and personal,
the instant it requires tact and feeling, from that instant it passes into the hands of

147 Hamilton, 66-69.
of Women (London: Emily Faithfull, 1863), 1. First published in Westminster Review, 1861. It should
be noted that Cobbe’s dramatization of this event and the comments she received were most likely
enhanced but the notion of science for men, social science for women that underlies this exchange
provides clues to the sentiment of the period.
149 Cobbe, 24.
women.”¹⁵⁰ She recognizes that women are consigned to the private, hands-on facets of social reform, and when this type of work reached a private level, it became the dominion of the female sex. Although the work of women was seen as inferior, Cobbe recognized that the restrictions of the period were not so limiting that they completely eradicated any sense of agency. By working within the roles society allowed them, women like Cobbe were able to exert their influence. Further, by embracing occupations that were extensions of domestic duties, women found a path for larger involvement with society.

The debate over the role of women and where they fit into society offers further evidence of how the home became a female centered space that was meant to be equal to that of men’s role in the public. As early as 1864, Ruskin, a friend of Octavia Hill and a cultural influence on the works of E.M. Forster, believed that even though the sexes were equal, the role of women was in the home.¹⁵¹ Ruskin writes that women’s roles are not to be subservient to men but to stand next to men, and they are to work together side by side. In making this point, Ruskin infers that women have an agency and he uses literature to make this point. Pointing to the great works of Shakespeare, Ruskin offers instances where female agency found a venue within the home and provided a model for female conduct within a public space, promoting a belief in separate but equal spheres. In his lecture, “Lilies: Of Queens Garden’s,” Ruskin advocates for a division in the duties of men and women. “Of Queen’s

¹⁵⁰ Cobbe, 37.
Garden,” is one of Ruskin’s most analyzed works because of his suggestion that women needed to be educated for this specific task of reviving British virtue. Men’s role in the development of a national heritage, for Ruskin, came through the defense of the state and further confined women to the home by limiting their role in the political life of England. For Ruskin, women had a role to play within the public sphere but it only pertained to the superficial appearance of the home and the British landscape. His need to develop a domestic identity for men that extended into the public sphere naturally led him to begin to address the roles women played within society. He lectured that men’s work both privately and publicly is tied to the duty to secure the home and the state; a woman’s public role is an extension of her duties in the home, “[s]o a woman has a personal work or duty, relating to her own home, and a public work or duty, which is also the expansion of that.” Ruskin expands this definition beyond the home, claiming that men’s public and private duty is to protect and defend, while “[t]he woman’s duty, as a member of the commonwealth is to assist in the ordering in the comforting, and in the beautiful adornment of the state.” His popularity with women was well established and the majority of the attendees at his lectures were always women. Ruskin developed a role for women that made them responsible for the maintenance of the English landscape as an extension of their domestic duties. If men were to use the public space as a forum for

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152 Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies, 331-332.
153 Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies, 156.
advancement of the English race, then it was the task of women to make sure that the English were protected through their abilities to nurture.

As women began to advocate for their own equality, Ruskin sought to limit the growing feminist intrusion into the public sphere by promoting a division between the sexes. He engages in a bit of linguistic deconstruction when he warns women about the adoption of the word ‘lady,’ a term that was originally only a designation for nobility. He claims that the term originally meant “bread-giver” or “loaf-giver” and that the corresponding male title of Lord means “maintainer of laws.”

Advocating for charity, Ruskin uses the metaphor of the feudal relationship to caution women that the use of the term lady denotes a reciprocal relationship between vassals and their lords suggesting, “a Lady has legal claim to her title only so far as she communicates that help to the poor representatives of her Master.” Ruskin promotes two ideas within this analysis: one, that women have themselves in the past taken a public role and two, they must accept the full set of responsibilities that have historically come with noble standing within society. Not only are women responsible to those below them but also for the moral fiber of their families. If a woman does not accept these duties, “misrule and violence” will take hold of men. Women were given responsibilities that made them beholden to the public sphere. The extension of responsibility resulted in the recognition of women’s contributions and gave value to

156 Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies, 161.
157 Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies, 160.
them. By framing equality as a reciprocal relationship, women were unintentionally
given greater access to the public sphere.

The development of a public role that was suitable for both single and married
women found a worthy model in Octavia Hill, who was able to develop an
independence while adhering to late Victorian English ideals of femininity. Social
reform became a cause for the rising middle class that grew during the nineteenth
century as the horrible living conditions of the lower class began to become known.158
The social reform movement began with Edwin Chadwick’s 1848 law that sought to
combat many of the health problems that arose from increased urbanization. Hill was
able to combine an independence drawn from a reforming spirit and a business
acumen that embodied the growing importance of social science and the development
of a woman-centered view of the landscape. A woman at the forefront of a movement
that embodied the traditional role of women in a newly modern way, she believed that
education and nature could provide a cure for society’s ills.

Born in 1838, Hill came from a family with a long history of charity and
social reform. Her thoughts about the role that the arts could have on society came
from her parents’ influence. Her father, James, was a merchant who supported the arts
and bought a local theatre in order to bring plays from London to their town of
Peterborough.159 Her mother, Caroline Southwood Smith, became the Hills’

(London, Faber and Faber, 1982), 2-3.
159 Nancy Boyd, Three Women Who Changed the World, Josephine Butler, Octavia Hill,
Florence Nightingale (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 95. For a brief description of the
development of Chadwick’s work and the relationship between social reform and religion see Michael
governess after James’ first wife died, and came from a family that was known for its leadership in social reform. Hill’s grandfather, Thomas Southwood Smith, was a medical practitioner who contributed to the 1842 Report of the Poor Law Board on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population Board and on the Means of its Improvement. Smith was instrumental in developing the correlation between the epidemics of cholera and typhoid and fought for state interference on behalf of the poor. Once married, both parents emphasized the importance of education and after the death of James, Caroline was instrumental in teaching her daughters Octavia and Miranda to accept domestic duties and manual labor even though these were roles that were considered unladylike or not fit for those of the middle class.

Ruskin also influenced a young Hill, whose ideas about reform and art found a worthy beneficiary in Hill. Through her, Ruskin found a path to imbue his ideas into the women’s movement. The relationship between Ruskin and Hill provides a unique perspective on the role that men had on the construction of female education and the establishment of ideologies of separate spheres. Ruskin was instrumental in pushing Hill into her role as reformer and helping her develop reform that incorporated the English landscape. This relationship gave Ruskin a protégé who could enact his philosophies by combining a late nineteenth-century reforming spirit with the protection of the physical beauty of Great Britain. The protection of the British land was merely an aesthetic defense from the ravages of industrialization, not the military.

Burleigh. Burleigh argues that throughout the nineteenth century resistance to social reform came from the Church of England, based upon Liberal and Nonconformist influence in social reform.

Boyd, 96.

Boyd, 97.
or economic defense he believed lay within the hands of men. Ruskin found a model in Hill who could epitomize his philosophies on gender and landscape, which she backed up with actions. Yet, her ability to set her own path provides an example of the way that narrow limits for women during the nineteenth century could be circumvented. Although women like Hill were not given full access to equality and were still living under a patriarchal society, they could find ways to develop and push the boundaries of female independence and agency. Hill and Ruskin’s relationship exemplifies the discourses within the public sphere that enabled shifts in gender expectations. For women to be viewed differently required a critical mass of individual changes in how men and women related to one another.

Ruskin and Hill met while she was working for the Ladies Cooperative Guild. Taken with her artistic ability, Ruskin invited Hill and her sister Miranda to his home after visiting the Guild. From this point on he encouraged her development artistically and also politically. Writing in 1869 to a friend, Hill described a dinner with Ruskin where they discussed all aspects of Greek mythology that interested her greatly. They not only shared intellectual ideas about the nature of art and landscape but they also shared a mutual desire for social reform through education that encouraged an intellectual exchange between those who think and those who do. Hill was able to act on Ruskin’s ideas, while he was a benefactor and a think-tank for the reforms that she would implement. Effectively, Hill’s efforts would be far more influential but there

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lacked any intellectual framework to connect her work to and elevating it to a level on par with Ruskin’s philosophies on work and landscape. Despite Hill being closely aligned ideologically with Ruskin, she receives no credit for embodying and enacting his ideas far more effectively than he ever did. There were limitations placed on the value of women’s discourse and in contestation to these impositions women had to substantiate their presence in a vernacular similar to the prevailing stereotypes, effectively altering the public sphere.

Hill’s reforming work began with her family’s acquisition of a property, Nottingham Place. In 1862 the family turned the property into a school. From this experience, Hill began to notice that many of the mothers and children that were being educated at the small school built on this property were malnourished because of the lack of adequate housing and any semblance of a ‘home life.’ Hill believed that she needed to do more for these families than simply educating them. If the poor did not have access to the securities of domestic life then all of the education could not help them achieve a modicum of humanity. Hill devised a scheme, aided by Ruskin. Noticing her appetite for social reform that coincided with his ideas about the ills of unchecked capitalism, Ruskin urged Hill to focus on helping those left behind by modernity. Advising her to “get her ideas clear,” Hill put together a business plan to help poor working people. In 1864, the death of Ruskin’s father resulted in a considerable inheritance, which he gave to Hill to purchase and renovate three homes

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163 Boyd, 107.
164 Boyd, 107.
165 Boyd, 108.
for the benefit of her endeavors.\(^{166}\) Managing these homes provided Hill with the impetus and the experience in social reform. She was able to use the home as a source for her work and demonstrate how women could work through the idealized philosophy of separate spheres. Hill’s work in social reform was grounded in altering the urban landscape and this strengthened the links between women and the landscape.

Hill and her sister Miranda had already been successful in acquiring land for historic preservation.\(^{167}\) Under the Kyrle Society, Miranda had been a social reformer who brought art, literature, and beauty to the poor. In 1875, Miranda read a paper to the girls at Nottingham School that detailed her views on art and from this sprung the idea for the Kyrle Society. Originally called The Society for the Diffusion of Beauty, the Kyrle Society was named after John Kyrle, who was known for his philanthropy and his idealization of the poetry of Alexander Pope. Kyrle was famous for creating a public park within his hometown. It was through the Kyrle Society that the Hill sisters were to make a name for themselves and bring their ideas into a manageable plan. Hill was clear in her disapproval of state intervention and the importance of an approach based upon individual private effects.\(^{168}\)

In her essay “District Visiting”, published in 1877, she emphasizes the need to bring together the work of those whose primary function in society is to think and those who ultimately do, adding, “if they could be brought into close communication, both would gain much; the people for

\(^{166}\) Boyd, 107, Lloyd, 331.

\(^{167}\) For clarity, Octavia Hill will be referred to under her last name, and her sister Miranda by her first name.

whom they are both labouring would gain much more.”\textsuperscript{169} The need for the middle classes to work for their neighbors, was all meant to serve her main goal of bringing beauty to the lower classes. Hill believed that, “[t]here are two great wants in the life of the poor of our large towns, which out to be realized more than they are—the want of space, and the want of beauty.”\textsuperscript{170} It is in her essay “Open Spaces” that Hill lays out her manifesto on the protection and establishment of parks throughout England. She believed that by offering the poor access to gardens, built upon the common grounds of England, the lives of the poor could be improved. For Hill, the stifling indoor tenements led to ill habits in men, women, and children such as drinking, fighting, and delinquency.\textsuperscript{171} With access to the outdoors, Hill believed that the horrors that the city fostered in the lower classes could be mitigated. She appeals, “for the man’s soul will long for the beauty, for the quiet, which the city does not, cannot give.”\textsuperscript{172} Hill echoes the concerns of Ruskin and other social critics who felt that urban spaces and modernity stifled the human spirit.

Although influenced by Ruskin’s belief that the poor offered a model of integrity for England and thus should be educated, Hill was the force that put in place his ideas on reform. Slowly Hill was able to manage more and more homes, showing that men trusted her with their property, offering an example of a woman using the traits assigned to her gender to gain access to power. In a letter to her workers in

\textsuperscript{171} Hill, “Open Spaces” \textit{Our Common Land}, 110.
\textsuperscript{172} Hill, “Open Space” \textit{Our Common Land}, 151.
1885, she writes how many men of business and many companies have trusted her to the care of their rental properties. She goes on to note, “a deeper sense of responsibility as to the conduct of them, a perception of how much in their management is better done by women, and I hope, a confidence that we try faithfully, and succeed tolerably, in the effort to make them prosperous, have led to this result.” By being able to improve the life of renters, Hill was also able to secure rental payments and improve the finances of both those she was working for and the poor she was helping. Her work was important in highlighting the importance of social reform and displaying how middle-class women were able to help the lower classes. The uniqueness of Hill was her ability to refurbish properties rather than have them demolished, creating a continuity in the neighborhoods she protected that was much different from the work of others at the time. Hill combined a nostalgia that drew on English heritage and a feminine paternalism that reinforced the social hierarchy to utilize the stereotypes of the period, demonstrating that women’s domestic duties were not consigned to the parlor room or the family garden. Even within the constraints of the Victorian era, Hill expanded what a woman could do.

Much of the expansion of women’s roles into the public sphere was directly an extension of the strict positions that were expected of late nineteenth-century women. This grew out of the increased role of the home as a source for social betterment. The home could foster aspects of an individual’s character and in doing

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174 Winters, 182.
so shows the opening of the home to the public that could reveal facets of an individual. Deborah Cohen in *Household Gods* conveys the British sentiment surrounding the home and the change that occurred in the nineteenth century that eventually tied morality to the consumption of furnishings. She details how artists like Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites became concerned with the decorative arts after 1851, a reversal of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century religious asceticism that tied greed to immorality. Coupled with the flight of men from the home, women were left to express themselves through increased purchasing power. Cohen describes how in 1876, the paper, *The World: A Journal for Men and Women* began a series that invited readers into the homes of ‘celebrities’ of the period and began a popular and telling genre that changed the view of the home as a private space. By the 1890s, the home was viewed as a window into the private souls of its inhabitants.\(^ {175}\)

The change in English law that gave women their own say in their dealings with both real and private property finally was passed in 1870, but it did not come without debate within many of the women’s movement circles of the time about what their goals as women should be. In November 1865, Bodichon spoke to the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women and asked whether extending the right to vote was one of the issues that the Society wanted to address.\(^ {176}\) Davies was wary of making this an issue, afraid that it would detract from the main goals of the Society, which was working for women’s education.\(^ {177}\) With the passage of the Married

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\(^ {175}\) Cohen, *Household Gods*, 123.
\(^ {176}\) Shanley, 51.
\(^ {177}\) Shanley, 51.
Property Act of 1870, women were slowly making headway into having dominion over their own financial holdings but some saw this as an attack on the traditional views of landowning and an attack on the patriarchy. The act gave married women primary care of their own finances and earnings on par with single women and any profit acquired through her own work was to be seen as separate from those of her husband. Additionally, any property a woman held could be used to pay off any debts she incurred. There has been debate on the actual ramifications of this act and how much women did truly benefit. One of the benefits was actually to protect the holdings of upper-middle-class women from predatory men. Families were increasingly concerned with protecting the inheritances of their daughters and became the impetus for a change in the law. There were detriments to the Act of 1870 and this led to further reforms that were eventually recognized in the Married Woman’s Property Act of 1882 that changed the language from a married woman’s “own property” to “separate property,” which allowed for further equality between the sexes with regard to the handling of one’s own finances. By 1882 a woman was considered a feme sole, when married, meaning that she had the same legal

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180 Griffin, 67.  
181 Holcombe, 24. For a detailed description of the political and legal issues debated in Parliament Holcombe offers a great overview. Within the notes, she also provides a very detailed historiography of the Married Woman’s Property Acts. Holcombe notes that the literature on the Acts is limited and intimates that much of the passage of these acts had much to do with the rise of the Liberal Party and especially by 1882, the election of William Gladstone as Prime Minister.
protections and rights as a single or widowed woman. Married women now were legally seen as being independent of their husbands and in charge of their own real and private property ending the practice of coverture, in theory and in law.

It is important to emphasize the differing experiences of married women and single women during the late nineteenth century. It is necessary to separate the view of the two roles in society in order to determine the very real limitations their sex had imposed on them and were fighting against. If many of the reforms of the period were a direct response to the limitations imposed on married women, then where do single women like Octavia Hill fit into this narrative and why was she able to capitalize on the changes that were meant to help married women gain currency within the public sphere? The answer lies in the establishment of the proper role for both married and single financially independent women, who were increasingly determined to be one and the same. It is also important to distinguish why unmarried women led many of the social reform movements. It has been generally argued that married women’s duties to the home left them little time to engage in any activities of social reform; however many single women had just as many domestic duties as did married women. Yet, the importance of useful work is most likely what drove many of these single women to find a respectable outlet for their road to perfectibility, an attribute of Victorian sensibilities. Philanthropy fulfilled this push for meaningful work, which was proffered as a method to help society deal with the industrial


economy. Additionally, any threats of revolution could be diffused through the preservation of social order.\textsuperscript{184} The surplus of single women benefitted from the fear that family resources could not sustain a spinster if not properly educated.\textsuperscript{185} As labor changed so did marriage. Victorian men and women increasingly put off marriage if they married at all.\textsuperscript{186} Many middle-class families were afraid that if their daughters were not educated, they would eventually end up in low-wage jobs suffering indignities such as being a governess.\textsuperscript{187} For single women, their work in social reform fulfilled not only the expectations of society but also provided them an arena to use their education. The expectation was that married women were to be paragons of the home, so single women had to find their own role within society and their search led to education reform and taking up the reins of social reform.

Women played an important role in the social reform movement, not just for the betterment of women, as previously mentioned but also for society as a whole. This was seen a goal for single women during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As single woman began to exert power in the public arena, their energy needed a productive outlet. Cobbe advocated for social reform, suggesting, “there must needs be a purpose for the lives of single women… each woman helps it who takes her part in the labours of poor school and asylums; of hospitals and visiting the

\textsuperscript{184} Walter E. Houghton, \textit{The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 274.  
\textsuperscript{185} Tosh, 152.  
\textsuperscript{186} Martin Pugh, \textit{Women and the Women’s Movement in Britain, 1914-1959.} 1992. (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2000, Second Edition), 1. Pugh points out that any any one time, 4 out of 10 women were single or widowed.  
\textsuperscript{187} Tosh, 152.
Many of these women lacked an immediate family unit of their own tying them down and their occupations outside of the home foreshadowed the future dilemma of the female. That these women simply were extending domestic duties beyond the family unit is what made this a natural and safe transition for single women.

Hill is known for her reforming work but one of her crowning achievements is the founding of the National Trust in 1884. It was her brainchild because she believed that preserving land in England would promote social reform and provide a much-needed respite to the growth of urban sprawl. The National Trust and the trio of Hill, Robert Hunter, and Hardwick Rownsley were the cornerstones of Victorian and Edwardian conservationism and preservation.

One of the components of Hill’s work was providing an open space, through parks and gardens, which could reveal to the urban and rural poor the beauty of the land. The initial goal was predicated on the ability of the land to inspire a thirst for education, leading to connections being made between art and culture as a method for the poor to improve their lives. The focus on physical health and mental wellness, a tenet of Hill’s earlier reform schemes, led to the preservation of many sites in both the country and the city. The protection of land in the country was determined by historical value and those spaces within the city were to be protected for the lower classes and placed within areas deemed necessary.

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190 Winters, 179.
based on urban decay. The National Trust is the lasting legacy of reformers who sought to incorporate the city and the country and make use of growing industry in order to protect both. It began as a non-profit organization that raised money by membership “promoting the permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of lands and tenements (including buildings) of beauty or historic interest.”\(^{191}\) It has become the second largest landowner in Britain with over 600,000 acres, over 200 historic houses, 8000 paintings, and a significant collection of material culture.\(^{192}\)

Although men like Sir Robert Hunter and Hardwick Rawnsley were instrumental in creating the National Trust, Hill has been given the credit for the idea in the popular consciousness, while she has remained noticeably absent from scholarly works on the environmental movement in England.\(^{193}\)

Perhaps this is because there were divisions within the group over which social group should be responsible for the preservation of the environment and the role of the National Trust in the affairs of small municipalities. This issue manifested itself over a property in Sheffield. In a letter to a friend, Hill noted that Hunter did not believe that saving treasures in the city of Sheffield should be a concern of the organization based on the abundance of wealthy people in the town. It would seem that for Hunter, the duty of land preservation is a responsibility left to the area’s richest, an example of British noblesse oblige at its finest. Hill felt that the poor


\(^{193}\) Nationaltrust.org.uk
should not suffer for the problems of the rich,\textsuperscript{194} arguing for a reevaluation of the role of non-governmental organizations in society and a more democratic discussion of land use. The role of the rich, and by association wealthy men, was questioned through the actions of the National Trust and the ownership of land by extending its use to the lower classes. By 1907, Hunter seems to have come around to the view that one of the main goals of the National Trust should be to acquire land regardless of the owners’ intentions that it would benefit historic preservation.\textsuperscript{195}

Hill provided Victorian society a model for female independence and methods for maneuvering through the physical and intellectual landscape of England; however, this should not indicate that she saw herself as part of the New Woman movement. Admired for both her business acumen and her adherence to protecting the land,\textsuperscript{196} Hill was from a middle-class family, unmarried, and unable to sustain herself financially at times. Yet, she refused to accept the help of her grandfather, claiming, “I detest any sort of dependence. It is almost hard for me even to imagine a person of whom I could, for myself, ask any assistance.”\textsuperscript{197} However, her personal views on dependency did not extend into an acceptance of women’s suffrage, believing that the enfranchisement of women would be a mistake. In a 1910 Letter to the Editor of \textit{The Times} she expounds on her reasoning: “I believe that men and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{194} Hill, \textit{Life of Octavia Hill}, 442.
\item \textsuperscript{195} Robert Hunter, “The Preservation of Places of Interest of Beauty,” A Lecture Delivered At The University On Tuesday, January 29th, 1907 (Manchester: Manchester at the University Press, 1907). \url{http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Preservation_of_Places_of_Interest_or_Beauty}.
\item \textsuperscript{196} Robert Hunter, “Miss Octavia Hill and Open Spaces” \textit{The Times} August 17, 1912.
\end{itemize}
women help one another because they are different, have different gifts and different spheres—one is the complement of the other; and it is because they have different powers and qualities that they become one in marriage.” Hill was a proponent of the separate spheres theory and she begins her letter stating that she is out of step with the younger reformers she works with, a consideration that points to her understanding that her views were becoming antiquated by the early twentieth century. With the growth of female independence and the rise of the New Woman, a term coined in 1894, many of the single women that Hill worked with were direct beneficiaries of the education that became a hallmark of the late Victorian period. Her rationale is that in giving women political power it would lessen the role they have carved out in the public sphere as social reformers. It is unclear how she saw women like herself who remained single in English society but what Hill provided was an alternative for men who saw the suffrage movement as a threat to their own power. Those who were bothered with the increasing role of women within society could take these comments as an excuse to deny women political power, keeping them under the English patriarchy and maintaining the status quo.

During the Victorian era, the division of spatial identities between men and women was advocated. Women as arbiters of change used the volatility of social and cultural change to alter political and intellectual perceptions of the landscape. The

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199 Tosh, 152. Tosh describes how the bicycle and smoking were hallmarks that show that the New Woman emerged as early as the 1880s. Fostered by their fathers to gain an education, there was a boon to the amount of women who were working, which led women to question authority and provide for themselves and their families.
varied responses to modernity, which led to social reform and the suffrage movement, offered an explanation about the way that women differed in their reactions to the changing world. For many women it would seem that the bonds of patriarchy were so constricting that the emphasis placed on separate spheres urged them to change Victorian society. Much of the woman’s movement of the second half of the nineteenth century was derived from the English tradition of radical politics and liberty. This work led to a greater incorporation of women into the public sphere, manifested in an appeal to use the landscape as an antidote for society’s ills. Reformers such as Octavia Hill went beyond the limitations imposed by society and expanded the role that was being offered to women. The impact would be long-lasting and the organizations that grew from social reform movements established the groundwork for the eventual fight for female enfranchisement. The development of the political public sphere was an appropriation of the literary sphere, which had institutionalized forums for discussion. This process had to reoccur so that women could be incorporated into the public sphere. Habermas’ opinion that the public sphere degenerated through compromise is false and was regenerated through the inclusion of minority voices. Bourgeois women’s reforming spirit successfully recalibrated land ownership to the British mind, incorporating women and the middle and lower classes, only furthered the instability of the period and brought to the forefront the question of whom Britain truly belong to? This question, fostered by the close connection between art and reform, would influence the works of E.M. Forster.

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200 Habermas, 51-52.
and help to further disperse many of the sentiments that influenced John Ruskin and Octavia Hill. As the nineteenth century ended, women’s role within society became even more contentious, requiring even further evaluation of the association between women and the landscape.
E. M. FORSTER AND THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE

The more people one knows the easier it becomes to replace them. It’s one of the curses of London. I quite expect to end my life caring most for a place.

Margaret Schlegel in E. M. Forster's Howards End

In his lecture Aspects of the Novel, delivered in 1927 at Trinity College, E.M. Forster laid out his beliefs on what makes a successful work of fiction by deconstructing the various elements of the novel.\(^{201}\) Ruminating on the development of the novel, he details the differences between the writing of history and the writing of fiction. For Forster the main difference between the two approaches is that, “History develops, Art stands still.”\(^{202}\) In this example, Forster elaborates about the way that each generation of authors has a specific literary movement that they use as a model for their artistic expressions. He considers himself a pseudo-scholar but goes on to claim that it is the pseudo-scholars who hold the education of the Empire within their hands.\(^{203}\) Further in his discussion of the difference between history and fiction he claims that the difference between the historian and the novelist is based on illuminating the hidden world; the historian must deal in concrete evidence and observable actions. Meanwhile, Forster uses a contemporary example to describe the novelist’s function, which “is to reveal the hidden life at its source: to tell us more

\(^{202}\) Forster, Aspects of the Novel, 39.
\(^{203}\) Forster, Aspects of the Novel, 23.
about Queen Victoria than could be known, and thus to produce a character who is
not the Victoria of history.\textsuperscript{204} Forster’s discourse on the novel provides an
understanding on the appeal of the novel as a historical framework that provides an
image of a specific time and space.

Writing in the Edwardian era, Forster’s two books set primarily in England
offer a perspective on the divisions between men and women that were being
idealized in the Victorian period. He explores the continued influence that changes to
masculinity and femininity had on the Edwardian era in \textit{A Room with a View} and
\textit{Howard’s End}.\textsuperscript{205} Published in 1908 and 1910 respectively, these books deal with
English class and identity and demonstrate how the clashes between progress, history,
and the land would have important consequences for England. His perspective on
English culture is expressed through his female characters, who are at once
independent and modern while remaining deeply traditional. Within the novels, the
characters have a relationship with the English landscape that is more than simply a
background to the actions of the story. The Suburban novels, as deemed by Mary
Lago,\textsuperscript{206} reveal that for Forster the landscape was a space that could alter and reveal
aspects of contemporary English life. It is within these two novels that women play a
central role in the discourse over the landscape, reveal a reticence over the
contemporary role of women within society, and offer a bridge between the aesthetic

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\textsuperscript{204} Forster, \textit{Aspects of the Novel}, 72.
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and political changes of the nineteenth century and the emerging relativism of the modernist movement.

Forster, with his focus on the landscape and the enchantment of the land, tried to merge within the literary narrative a space for intuition and beauty with scientific rationalism. The Enlightenment focus on scientific truth and rationality led to Max Weber’s famous assertion that growing secularization led to the “disenchantment with the world.” This led to a division between modernity and enchantment that relegated the latter to groups that were generally seen as inferior. Forster pushes against this division of enchantment and rationality in his novels, instead seeking an integration of the two. His novels show a redeveloped preoccupation with the landscape and the love for the rural that was centered on female identity.

So how did women come to be the purveyors of the land? Much of this was a development that originated from the industrialization of England, the Empire, and the commodification of the home. Forster personified the landscape in order to determine the space in which masculinity and femininity interacted in contemporary England. This eventually led to a gendered portrayal of the land reflective of Ruskin’s theory of separate spheres, which ceded to women a space apart from men within his novels. Forster paints his men as manifestations of progressive modernity, driving cars and exemplifying a hard rationalism that reflected the perceived male ownership of the public sphere. As his books progress, Forster is able to show that this

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208 Saler, 8.
separation of intellectual spheres is problematic and that there is a need for man to develop an understanding of nature and its inherent beauty and the best way to achieve this balance was through an emotionality that was generally perceived to be a feminine attribute. This developed from Victorian woman who defied traditional roles leading to a change in English masculinity at the end of nineteenth century. This was a response to the cultural, social, and political tumult that developed from the New Woman, seen as odd, and an anxiety over effeminate males and homosexuals. This dialectic, between women’s altered identities and a reactive masculinity, manifested in the belief that men needed to reconnect with the environment and was reflected in the struggle for England’s identity within Forster’s novels. Ironically, despite the presence of female protagonists, Forster’s novels reveal a reticence surrounding the women’s movement in the fin de siècle.

Edward Morgan Forster was born on New Years Day 1879 in Dorset Square in London. His father Eddie died before Morgan, as he was called, turned two. From this point on Morgan and his mother lived together for the rest of their lives. In his early life, he was surrounded and influenced by a coterie of Victorian elderly women introduced to him under the watchful care of his aunt Marianne Thornton. His mother Lily, unable to withstand the influence of her in-laws, moved herself and Forster to the country. His Aunt Marianne—or Monie, as she was ironically

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209 Nalin Jayasena, *Contested Masculinities: Crises in Colonial Male Identity from Joseph Conrad to Satyajit Ray* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1-2. Jayasena argues that the increased trouble in gender ideals at home led to a reinforcement of masculinity within the colonies. The result of this led to an increased presence in cultural representations of masculinity in literature.

monikered—left him a considerable sum for the purpose of paying for Forster’s education. The influence of these women in his life would have a profound influence on Forster and his literary works.

Forster’s literary perception of women grew out of his personal experience with the women of his life, full of contradictions and influenced by societal and cultural changes of the late nineteenth century. In a 1927 lecture, later published as *Aspects of the Novel*, he discusses the development of the women’s movement as it pertains to feminine writing. In this discussion, Forster negates the belief that the women’s movement developed in a chronological fashion and thus the female written novel has suffered for it.\footnote{E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927) 37-38.} Forster points out that critics believe there is a close connection between the women’s movement and fiction. These critics believe that, ‘[a]s women bettered their position the novel, they asserted, became better too. Quite wrong.’\footnote{Forster, 37-38.} His argument is that a historical moment does not necessarily evolve into productive writing but within his comments there is also a criticism of the women’s movement and the emergence of women into the public sphere. Lois Cucullu, in her analysis of *Howards End*, seeks to integrate the historical framework that surrounded the creation of the novel through a focus on imperial and economic factors, arguing that Forster sought to imbue into the cultural landscape a new masculine subject that was tied to his own perception of the land.\footnote{Lois Cucullu, “Shepherds in the Parlor: Forster’s Apostles, Pagans, and Native Sons” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* Vol. 32, No. 1, Reading Gender after Feminism (Autumn, 1998), 19-50.} She uses Forster’s lecture “The Feminist Note on Literature” as a companion piece to *Howards End* to argue that Forster was
against the growing feminist movement. This lecture given to the Apostles Group in 1910 inferred that the independence that women had gained had come at the expense of men. The ideology of female liberation that John Stuart Mill advocated for was carried out by women authors of the period and had affected literature by increasing their output and infusing an increasing sentiment into the medium. Yet in reading *Howards End* and *A Room with A View*, it is clear that Forster is much more ambivalent about the role of women in society. He seems to ridicule and satirize the protagonists for their modern views but also cedes to women control over the countryside and thus England. Forster added to the British literary tradition a gendered perception of the landscape that promoted a distinctly female response to anxiety over social changes affecting the home and the countryside.

Another strong influence on Forster was his education. After attending a day school for boys he eventually enrolled in Kings College. The development of Forster’s literary philosophy began upon his entering into the Apostles, a Cambridge conversation society. These males were influential in drawing Forster into a world of male friendship and establishing Edwardian ideas that were distinct from the Victorians. The Apostles were so named for their nomination of twelve men who were to join the group every year, which enabled Forster to mingle with other men who were to be influential, not just in Edwardian literary thought, but also in pre-war British sensibilities. Among the famous participants were John Maynard Keynes and Leonard Woolf, both of whom would later be a large part of the Bloomsbury Group.

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214 Cucullu, 22.
that would later define English intellectualism in the twentieth century. One of the main tenets of the Apostles was a distrust of Victorian values. This distrust was not with progress but rather came from a need to reconcile all the social and cultural changes that had occurred within Britain during the nineteenth century. The literary works of the members of the Bloomsbury group, of which Forster was a member, intended to supplant the Victorian focus on outward appearances influencing the inner. Many of these artists, painters, and writers felt that the Victorian period was beset with a growth of a type of morality that was increasingly tied to materialism. The Bloomsbury group proffered that their vision of modernity was the answer to the sense of materialism and surface identity that was emblematic of the Victorian era.

Literary critic Lionel Trilling believes Forster’s answer to the detriments of modernity and industrialization rested within class divisions explored within Forster’s novels. Yet it is also important to survey the role of gender in Forster’s novels since in the ones that are focused on England, women are the protagonists. Trilling argues that within these novels there exists a challenge to authority, and thus a challenge to the patriarchal society. He does not conclude that Forster may be trying to examine the role of women in society although he does point out the role of men in Forster’s novel. The rebellion against authority, according to Trilling, leads to a lack of a mature male hero and the lack of any good male role models. Nearly all of

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217 Trilling, 100.
the sympathetic characters lack a father figure and for those that do have a father figure, they are ineffective. Trilling points out that Henry Wilcox fails at being a father and Mr. Emerson in *A Room with A View* does not count because his actions are motherly.\(^{218}\) The absence of a strong father figure may be attributed to Forster’s upbringing but may also rest in the fact that Forster is trying to comprehend the modern role of women in society. Surprisingly, Trilling never questions why women are given such a prominent role in Forster’s novels. Although he comes close to a discussion of gender, he never fully develops an argument about the role of women in Forster’s novels and their reflection of society. He claims that Forster’s early novels offer hints of the ‘truth’ that is only fulfilled in *Howards End*.\(^{219}\) It is only in *Howards End*, according to Trilling, that Forster is able to offer an answer about the correct way to marry the ‘passion with the prose,’’ but Trilling was unable to see the importance of the feminine in Forster’s novels. For Forster it is the female sex, or those who embody feminine attributes, who have been able to make this connection between the interior self and the emergence of emotions. It is those who can marry the ‘prose and the passion’ who shall be the arbiters of England, and for Forster the ability to do so favors women.

*A Room with A View*, published in 1908, begins in Italy with the character of Lucy Honeychurch, a young woman of twenty years who is travelling with her cousin

\(^{218}\) Trilling, 101.
\(^{219}\) Trilling, 101. Trilling believes that it is through intellectuals, primarily of the middle class, that Forster offers an answer to who shall inherit England from the yeoman class that Ruth Wilcox represents. It is only within *Howards End* does Forster give an answer to who can marry the passion and the prose.
and chaperone Miss Bartlett. Although the first half of the book takes place abroad, most of the interactions are with other English travelers and sets up a standard of the proper way to be a tourist that reveal aspects of contemporary English mores. Immediately when the two women arrive at their pensione—a tourist lodge—they lament that they do not have a view of the Arno as originally promised when the rooms were booked. Then the women are introduced to father and son, Mr. Emerson and George, who offer the women their lodgings. This puts the women into a predicament in which they feel they would be obligated to the two men. The Emersons do not follow English customs even while abroad; they do not adhere to the masculine ideals set forth by society as demonstrated by the discussions of the women. The general consensus among the other women at the pensione is that sometimes gentlemen do not realize their actions but what Lucy has decided is that there exists in Mr. Emerson an appreciation for the sublime. Mr. Emerson recognizes that Lucy, in her search for beauty, is constrained by the formal methods she is using to achieve these goals. Later he suggests to Lucy, “But let yourself go. You are inclined to get muddled… Let yourself go.” He believes that she is unable to connect and by knowing his son, she may be able to change from a rational being into one who can focus on the beauty that surrounds them in Italy.

What Mr. Emerson recognizes in Lucy is that she is detached from beauty and the landscape. It is also important to note the use of Baedeker throughout the novel. Baedeker was a popular travel guide in the 1830s and 1840s that gave very specific

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instructions on how to be a tourist in a way that led to an objective distance from the land. This separateness keeps the tourist from being fully integrated into the landscape and fully appreciating all that travel has to offer.\(^{221}\) When Lucy uses her guidebooks, she gazes at Italy without having to truly get involved in what the landscape of Italy has to offer.\(^{222}\) It is Miss Lavish, a female author Lucy meets in Italy, who implores her to remove herself from the travel guide. Miss Lavish is seen as being unruly, and although a nice person, behaving outside of the bounds of English society as well. Forster may be using the tourist trope as a way to satirize the Victorian value of middle-class travel and adventure in a period of Empire but he is also speculating on the notion of how the English ethic of hard work and domination has separated the individual from the earth.

Italy is at once both foreign and familiar. Forster uses John Ruskin’s travel guides to ground the foreign nature of Italy through a distinctively British authors perception and provides a proxy for the English rural countryside. Forster never specifically mentions which books of Ruskin’s are being referenced, but it is most likely Mornings in Florence published in 1875. Whether this is done as a cultural signifier—a Victorian pop culture reference—to ground the novel in contemporary issues is one interpretation. Most likely, Forster uses Ruskin’s travel books because they seek to bring the traveler outside of the book and pay attention to the beauty around them.\(^{223}\) Lucy is unaware of her own self, unsure of which art she finds

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\(^{222}\) Buzard, 292.

\(^{223}\) Buzard, 290.
attractive without her travel guides. The travel guides represent Victorian civilization and only serve to distance one from the world around them despite Ruskin’s suggestion that one should appreciate art through one’s own discovery, a situation that she finds herself unable to do. Lucy is both psychically and mentally lost while abroad, a characteristic that will follow her home to England. Her interaction with the Emersons and Miss Lavish represent a questioning of English cultural values and Forster uses the backdrop of Italy to reinforce this. As Lucy comes closer and closer to a true appreciation of Italy, and then later the English countryside, she is able to find herself and eventually find love. One does not need to be a tourist to make the connection between the passion and the prose, one must simply avoid the constraints of civilization. Additionally, Forster makes a connection between the ethics of the late Victorian period and shows their continued influence on perceptions of beauty and acquired knowledge in the first decade of the twentieth century.

These exchanges open a door to one of Forster’s themes often repeated in his novels: the landscape as a liminal space. This is all part of a process that begins with Lucy traveling alone through the Piazza Signoria. Despite being an urban space, the piazza represents the landscape by embodying the uncivilized nature of Italy. In one of the most memorable moments of the novel, Lucy comes upon two men fighting and witnesses a murder. This scene represents Lucy’s entrance into a new phase of her life. Right before this moment she laments that nothing ever happens to her, and although she has been purchasing art in an exercise of intellectual growth she remains
unliberated. Her identity has been shaken—the product of being in a foreign land.²²⁴

It is at this point in the novel that Lucy begins to question her feminine intuition. James Buzard sees this scene as being a play on the loss of virginity, with allusions to a loss of innocence manifested in the sight of blood from the murder, but what Forster is trying to do is tie enchantment to femininity. In this context, enchantment encompasses all the attributes that the English have overlain in their construction of the myth of the land. This includes the forest with its liminal power and the countryside, so popular as a stabilizing force in the nineteenth century. Forster’s Italy is one that melds traditional views of Arcadia based upon classical and Greek perceptions with a modern view of the landscape.²²⁵ Yet this connection is also meant to be a warning. Lucy’s escapade, even though in a foreign country, represents her emergence into the public sphere. Traveling independently, Forster makes the public space dangerous through the murder and an unsuitable situation for a single woman. It is no accident that as Lucy faints at the sight of the violence, it is George who saves her, reinforcing the idea that Lucy requires male companionship in order to be complete and venture into the public sphere. Yet, it will be George who will make her feel liberated and offer her a path to true passion. Through their ensuing relationship, the landscape plays an important but peripheral role. George kisses Lucy, framed by the violets and the wildness of the Italian countryside in a moment of passion that

²²⁴ Buzard, 297.
²²⁵ This was a popular conceit of Forster whose Celestial Omnibus and Other Short Stories published in 1911 provide early depictions of this blending of Greek and Classical forms of the land with English beliefs in the countryside. The stories all previously published show that Forster was developing a role for enchantment within his novels that are sprinkled with Classical allusions.
begins a relationship based on a mutual need for beauty. It is not coincidental that the rest of the novel plays out between scenes of the parlor room and the countryside, in both Italy and in England.

The landscape also helps to develop an understanding of George Emerson. This kiss between the two characters is a turning point for George. Narratively, this is the point when he is no longer seen as aloof and odd but rather as romantic and passionate. George has also entered into a liminal stage and the Italian countryside becomes the space that foreshadows the eventual love between the two. Italy provides a space for change and growth for both characters. This is reiterated later in the novel when George moves to the country town of Windy Corners. Lucy’s younger brother Freddy invites George to bathe in the forest. The scene that takes place in the novel is one of redemption and psychological metamorphosis. George, it is claimed has been dour and quiet, but it is with this bath in the pond that a little of the English landscape and specifically the forest has changed George’s demeanor. The suggestion that is later presented to the reader is that the young man’s arrival into the town of Summer Street and the proximity to Lucy has lifted his spirits. Forster is using the tropes of the greenwood in order to develop his characters; the landscape facilitated the love between George and Lucy.226

Simon Schama believes there are two types of Arcadia, the orderly and kept and the more dangerous and dark.227 Forster employs both types within his novels,


\footnote{227 Simon Schama, \textit{Landscape and Memory} (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 517.}
using the woods as a representation of the dangerous and the country home the orderly. This is most evident when Cecil Vyse, Lucy’s fiancée, takes a walk with her through the forests of Summer Street, her hometown. He chides her for always keeping to the path whenever they are together never entering into the forest. The implication is that Lucy does not feel comfortable with Cecil to venture into the wild with him. He complains that she is more comfortable with him in a room than in the forest. Forster describes their first kiss as awkward and although full of feeling, containing a lack of connection between the two, conveying to the reader the incompatibility of the two characters.

Incidentally, Cecil is described as hating the environment of the countryside because it is full of gossipy women. When he is showed off to the country folk of Summer Street, he detests the way that the engagement between he and Lucy is perceived as a public matter; his rationale is that an engagement should remain private.228 Cecil’s implication is that these women should not be allowed free reign in the countryside to exert their influence within that sphere. His cosmopolitan city demeanor is contrasted to the rural and is portrayed as a detriment, implying that the enforced codes of conduct that have pervaded London are incorrect. The narrator, and thus Forster, supports this by claiming that these gossipy women were “racially correct” and had the “spirit of the generations” smiling through them, seeing the wedding engagement as a continuation of life on earth.229 Within A Room with A

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228 Forster, A Room with A View, 112.
229 Forster, A Room with A View, 112.
View Forster lays the groundwork for a gendered view of the city and the country and the superiority of the latter.

The association between the characters and the land reveal that Forster is emphasizing the feminine qualities of nature. It is no coincidence that historian A.A. Markley describes George as being sensitive and comfortable with his sexuality.230 The scene where the characters bathe contains a homosexual undertone for Markley, who emphasizes the homoerotic gaze. This reading of the novel overemphasizes the male gaze. Markley notes that this gaze is transferred to the character of Lucy but what Markley and many others who read queerness into the text have done is infuse too much of Forster within his writing.231 He uses a brief scene between Lucy’s younger brother Freddy and Mr. Beebe, a family friend, to draw attention to his analysis. Upon entering into the Emersons’ home, Freddy questions the type of people the Emerson’s are, asking, “[a]re they that sort?” based upon the books he sees on their shelves. Markley assumes a “homoerotic subtext” to the Emersons’ by anachronistically reading into that question. What Markley has done is give credence to the belief that homosexuality can be equated to femininity. Perhaps these scenes are highlighting George’s ability to blend the ‘passion and the prose’ and


231 Jeffrey Meyers, “Vacant Heart and Hand and Eye” The Homosexual Theme in A Room with a View” English Literature in Transition 1880-1920, Vol. 13, No. 3, (1970), 183. Accessed: 28/02/ 2014, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/elt/summary/v013/13.3.meyers.html. Meyers writes of the scene in which Freddy Honeychurch, George Emerson, and Mr. Beebe bathe in the forest as the moment when Mr. Beebe falls in love with George, altering his attitude in the rest of the novel. Meyers analysis completely disregards the role of Lucy within the novel in order to overstate Forster’s personal situation. He additionally reads into scenes in Howards End a homosexual undertone that in an ironic twist, tell us more about Meyers than it does about Forster.
this combination of masculine rationality and feminine understanding of beauty. Forster is merely showing that George has been able to surpass Victorian limitations of masculinity. These perceptions of masculinity have antecedents in the nineteenth century when stricter rules about gender were a hallmark and manifested themselves in a hyper-masculine focus on adventure by the 1890s. This is contrasted to the decadent Aesthetes like Oscar Wilde who were moving into the realms of women through literature and culture. George should be read as a Romantic figure who is the best of both chivalrous masculinity and aesthetic culture who has a relationship with the land resulting from his ability to perceive natural beauty.

By focusing on the materialism of the contemporary English spirit, Forster offers a different evaluation that aims to infuse within the literary tradition a mythological symbolism that allows the plot to remain realistic while infusing the narrative with “evocations, implications, insinuations, allusions, suggestion, and hints of every conceivable kind” that give a broader picture of the theme. The novel is at best a rumination on contemporary England that incorporates the growing modernist split between the rational and irrational. Yet, Forster does not assign to one gender either polarity within the novel, rather playing with internal individual divisions.

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232 For an example of literature that supports this idea look to the novels of H. Rider Haggard. Haggard wrote two enduring novels She and King Solomon's Mines. She specifically represents an anxiety about women’s growing independence, colonialism and brute masculinity. The novel tells the story of two Oxford men, a professor and his ward, who travel to East Africa and discover a tribe being ruled by an all-powerful 1000-year-old woman. Her portrayal as a vain and cruel ruler plays into the worst of stereotypes about women. Prompting action by the protagonists when they realize She wants rule the world.

Forster sets up a dichotomy between the rational Cecil Vyse and the romantic George Emerson in *A Room with A View*. Each character separately evokes the tensions between Enlightenment rationalism and the emotive Romantic spirit, with George as the embodiment of the latter. Cecil Vyse is an example of the modern man. His portrayal is one of pure rationality. He does not recognize the beauty or the truth that lies within the country town where the Honeychurches reside. Vyse is more concerned with the value of knowledge, but not in the search for truth. Forster takes it further by inferring that George’s emotive sensibilities render him a better suitor because he is not expressively stifled.

The idea that the land could reveal aspects of the themes and also of the characters is grounded in German Romantic literary tradition but it is not until *Howards End*, published in 1910, that Forster explores the nature of landscape through a gendered lens. *A Room with a View* is a stepping-stone to the idea that the landscape and the people of England were connected on a spiritual level. Within *A Room with a View*, much of the landscape plays a large part in the actions of the characters, but the land is ancillary to the plot. The connection between the characters and the landscape is shallow and is merely a space for change, compared to *Howards End* where many of the characters not only have a deep connection to the land but are manifestations of it. What Forster has borrowed from the German philosophical heritage is the need to romanticize and mythologize the land.\textsuperscript{234} Elizabeth J. Hodge believes Forster is trying to create a modern mythology for Britain through the use of

\textsuperscript{234} Hodge, 33.
German Romanticism. Focusing on the protagonist of the novel Margaret Schlegel’s question, “Why has not England a great mythology?,” as a starting point, Hodge focuses on aspects of German Romanticism that are evident in *Howards End*. She concedes that Forster’s goal in *Howards End* is not to merge materialism and the spirit but rather to identify them in order to separate them. Forster himself spent a period of time in Germany during the years between 1905-1906 and much of this experience was placed into *Howards End*. How much Forster truly understands about German culture is unclear, and much of his attitude was based on an Edwardian liberalism that abhorred the growing tension between the two nations.

In *Howards End*, Forster is at his most allegorical and presents the most ardent case for the importance of the landscape and its abilities to enchant. Primarily this is done through Ruth Wilcox who represents the magical realism of the landscape. She is at once tied to the present but also to the past and future—and most importantly—she is the embodiment of the wise forest sage with her “wisp of hay in her hands.” She seemed not to belong to the young people and their modern

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236 Hodge, 40.
238 Firchow, 51.
239 The existence of a female pastoral guide can be seen as far back as Boccacio but emerges in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth century pastoral. The Renaissance female pastoral guide was able to recognize the detriments of those around her and illuminate and guide her charges to see the immorality of the world and lead those around her to insight as a result of her harmony with nature. Sharon R. Yang in *Goddesses, Mages, and Wise Women* believes that there has been a neglect of the role of the female pastoral guide and cautions against any reading that supposes a female independence during the Renaissance. Yang’s illumination of this trope shows that the character of Ruth relies on cultural signifiers that were already held within England. She readily accepts that nature relieved many of the problems of urban and court world and shifted to reflect the philosophical values present within a specific era.
conveniences, “but to the house and to the tree that overshadowed it.” She is the modern Merlin, a person of the English forest that represents England’s past, present, and future. In her first scene she is described as having entered with her gown flowing across the wet grass, both hovering over the land and part of it. The opening conflict of *Howards End* begins with confusion between the Wilcox and the Schlegel families. A brief kiss between Paul Wilcox, son of Ruth, and Helen Schlegel, sister to Margaret, leads to an assumed proposal of marriage that is rescinded in the light of the next day. As the two families realize the folly of the situation they begin to quarrel. Ruth enters into this scene of confusion and immediately and without knowing the facts is able to understand the problems that have arisen from this indiscretion. Forster describes Ruth as having the ability to hear her ancestors telling her to separate the two parties and she complies offering suggestions and ending the confusion. Through the narrator, Forster attaches to Ruth a connection to the land that is aided by magical realism. Much different from *A Room with a View* where a kiss fostered by the mysteries of the landscape, this one leads nowhere for the two characters but begins a much different tale. There is an apocryphal suggestion that Forster’s Bloomsbury friends implored him to retreat from his fantastical Greenwood phase but the character of Ruth dispels this notion. Instead of the land being the source for change, Forster has imbued Ruth with an ability to become the mediator

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241 Ellem, 95.
between the landscape and the people who inhabit it; Forster bridges the binary between modern disillusionment and enchantment through her character.

Ruth’s entire existence pushes the plot of the novel forward and also provides a cultural touchstone for the entirety of Great Britain. She is seen as the salt of the earth but also as the reason that all of these characters come together and interact. Her intervention between the warring families only makes it possible for their later interaction. Although this may be a literary device to advance the plot, what Forster does is create a female character who embodies the characteristics of a motherly Puck. Additionally, Forster’s description of her forefathers as yeoman infers that she represents the Anglo-Saxon national identity and an appeal to the pastoral countryman, an admiration that was prevalent during the mid-nineteenth century. As with most of the actions of Ruth, the other characters are apt to rationalize her actions and a tension emerges between the rational and the irrational. In discussing the way that Ruth understood, without any prior knowledge, about Helen’s brief engagement to Paul, Helen suggests that she intuitively understood how to proceed without being able to reason how. In one scene Ruth is invited to dine with Margaret and her friends. Ruth finds these people and all their intellectual ideas tiresome. Forster gives the impression that the woman is unable to contribute due to a lack of understanding, but as the novel plays out and the philosophies of both the Schlegels and the Wilcox’s are seen to have detriments, it is Ruth, whose abilities and ties to the land are seen as superior.
The economic changes that occurred during the nineteenth century lead to an ambivalence in Forster about the role of money and the effect it had on morality. As the landed aristocracy began to acquire more wealth, during the Victorian era, they were emulated by the middle class who wanted to assimilate to aristocratic ideals of a life of leisure with a capitalistic zeal. The result was members of the intellectual bourgeoisie, such as Forster, by the turn of the century were concerned with the opportunity that money could provide and the detachment from society that it could harbor. Jesse Wolfe is insistent that *Howards End* “spurns” men who are buoyed by a patriarchal system that retards the men and requires men and women to find new ways of exerting their respective masculinity and femininity. Wolfe’s assertion is correct in that the male characters within *Howards End* are able to sustain their place in the world at the beginning of the novel but what he does not delve into is the role of the land and property rights that Forster uses to gain this effect. On one level, Forster is arguing for the end of patriarchal marriage. Legal changes and societal reforms slowly eroded the previous nature of marriage and the effects these factors would have on men and women of the period. *Howards End* gives a definitive answer to the question of who shall inherit England.

Forster’s personal life epitomized many of the social changes of the Victorian era that would then be echoed in his novels. His financial situation resulted from an

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244 Wolfe, 79.
economic windfall after the death of his aunt. Not only were the two close, but Forster’s homosexuality and lack of any male figure instilled within him a sense of dishonor for not working for his money. He was keenly aware that his position as an author was directly a result of the work of the women around him who made his life comfortable. Rather than personifying the masculine Victorian male, he represented the effeminate and degenerate male that became a source for concern for men during the fin de siècle. This fear developed from a generational divide. A legacy of men had subdued the British Isles so that their sons could be concerned with cultural rather than political or economic issues. Mary Lago in her analysis of the Suburban novels believes that Forster was working in contradictions. During this period there emerged a class of men who had been beneficiaries of their fathers. Forster infuses into Howards End his own ambivalence into Margaret, who in arguing over the suitability of Mr. Wilcox as a husband, points to the landscape and claims:

If Wilcoxes hadn’t worked and died in England for thousands of years, you and I couldn’t sit here without having our throats cut. There would be no trains, no ships to carry us literary people about in, no fields even. …. More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it. Forster is pointing out that the recent focus on the landscape helps to assuage the guilt of the middling middle class who felt torn between a modern existence that had come at the expense of the industrious entrepreneurs and the working class. This

246 Lago, 41.
247 Forster, Howards End, 182.
ambivalence over the role of the middle class intellectual and the ‘parasitic relationship’ with working class labor was also shared by Ruskin, who understood that much of his ability to be a man of leisure and letters was predicated upon the work of those below him. Although Margaret is referring only to the Wilcox family, Forster reveals that a lack of industriousness was a fault that had befallen Charles Wilcox. His motivation through much of the novel is attributed to his inability to be as productive as his father. He is seen as being the poorer for this quality and this drives him to make sure that Howards End remains his inheritance.

Charles is the embodiment of a man whose masculinity is in crisis. Adorned with all the accouterments of the period, he finds the Schlegel sisters insufferable and is immediately suspicious of their intentions. Having been the original benefactor of Howards End, he sees the two women as a threat on his property and a slight against his own dominance.

Jan Marsh, in her study of the move towards the country in the nineteenth century, does mention Forster but only through the context of the character of Leonard Bast in Howards End. For Marsh, the move to the countryside was indicative of the growth of civilization, which had “sucked into the town” lower middle class Leonard, depriving him of the any intellectual growth and had “lost the life of the body and failed to reach the life of the spirit.” Marsh continues to note

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250 Marsh, 1.
that Leonard, who takes a memorable walk through the countryside, is trying to return to the land but is at once unaccustomed to the country. As a historian, Marsh incorrectly categorizes Leonard as being part of the lower class but Forster does not mince words when he states that his novel is merely about the middle class, and classifies Leonard as being on the cusp of gentility.\textsuperscript{251} Marsh uses Leonard as a symbol of the move from the country to the city and makes assumptions about the character’s ancestors that were never developed within the novel.\textsuperscript{252} Forster is more concerned with the development of beauty and aesthetics and the search for such matters. Lago lays out the principal issue at work in \textit{Howards End} when describing the situation of Leonard. His developmental growth is based upon a need to better his intellect and he does so by reading Ruskin, which Lago attributes to Leonard having heard somewhere that reading Ruskin will help him to recognize beauty, and so he does with passion.\textsuperscript{253} This reading is incorrect. The problem for Leonard is not a lack of ability to “see the universe,” but rather that his economic situation has deprived him of so many opportunities.\textsuperscript{254} As Leonard continues reading Ruskin, he seeks to find ways to incorporate Ruskin’s writings into his daily life. In a comically imagined letter to a family member, Leonard composes a few sentences that resemble the prose of Ruskin, but then comes to the conclusion that no matter the style he will never rise

\textsuperscript{251} Forster, \textit{Howards End}, 47. Chapter 6 of the novel begins with the quote: “We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet.”

\textsuperscript{252} To be fair to Marsh, she only uses \textit{Howards End} as a bumper at the beginning and the end of her chapters, not truly delving into an in depth analysis of Forster.

\textsuperscript{253} Lago, 23.

\textsuperscript{254} Lago, 23.
above his surroundings, mentally writing: “My flat is dark and stuffy. Those were the words for him.”

The use of Ruskin by Forster is meant to take aim at the Victorian ideal of social reform, attacking the belief that beauty and art could change the suffering of those less economically well-off, and is a strike against the work of reformers such as Ruskin and Octavia Hill. Much of the novel furthers this point by showing that the intervention of the Schlegel sisters into Leonard’s life does more harm and brings him farther from understanding the beauty in life.

The role of modernity within the novels is another issue that Forster genders. Motoring and the need to move quickly are portrayed as masculine qualities. In Howards End, Charles is introduced in the first few chapters of the novel as being completely taken by the new fad of motoring through the countryside. The aunt of the Schlegel sisters, Mrs. Munt, accompanies him on one of these rides and is completely taken with his confidence and his driving.256 For Forster the city and the country represented the difference between the qualities that men and women should possess. The Wilcox men embody this spirit of business acumen, industriousness, and cold rationality but as the novel progresses it becomes apparent that these qualities are merely a façade. The male absence from the home, which became increasingly dominated by women, led to a loss of spirituality and an inability to connect with the inner soul. The two men most affected by this inability to connect the passion and the

255 Forster, Howard End, 51. (Emphasis is mine, for clarity)
256 Forster, Howards End, 17.
prose are Henry Wilcox, because of his obtuseness, and Leonard for his inability to secure his place in the world.

Forster is demeaning toward Leonard for his inability to converse properly with the Schlegels. His goal is to better himself and so he seeks conversation and ideas but Forster describes Leonard as being too uncivilized ever to be uncultured and ridicules his need for the admiration of the Schlegel sisters. The two women are not keen on his need to discuss philosophy and books, and only are endeared to him when he begins to talk of his walk in the woods. Leonard’s verbosity exposes the effort he must engage in to feel comfortable in the world of the Schlegels and it is only when Leonard can be himself, talking about his wandering through the countryside, are the women truly enthralled. The women recognize that Leonard is close to accepting enchantment and to marrying the ‘passion and the prose.’ Henry, at the other end of the class spectrum, is unconcerned by the need to improve oneself. Margaret considers this attribute of him charming at first, yet as the two become engaged she realizes that he lacks any ability to look inside himself. He has no room within himself for an enchanted nature. His existence does not reflect the binary of modern enchantment; Henry has only embraced a cold rationalism. Margaret, after experiencing her first kiss with Henry, sees him as a man who is half monk and half beast, a victim of Victorian ascetic nature regarding carnal passion that hinders his ability to be appropriately romantic. It is these two disparate qualities she sees as “unconnected arches that have never joined into a man.”

that Henry had a mistress and that Leonard is the father of Helen’s illegitimate child
does Margaret realize that Henry has been spoiled all his life and has never had to put
himself in another’s shoes. The sins of Leonard and Henry are the same. They both
ruined a woman and for Forster the implication is that neither is fit for admiration.
None of the men in Forster’s novels get much better treatment. Most of them are
peripheral and reveal a bias in favor of women. It is no surprise that Leonard
eventually dies at the hands of Charles, resulting in Henry falling into a depression.
These men are unable to understand beauty and therefore do not understand the truth
that lies within the landscape nor within their own spirit. They are victims of the
Schlegel sisters whose embrace of missionary aestheticism has only brought ruin to
them. However, Forster is not trying to paint these women as nefarious but rather
having reconciled the tensions between Romanticism and the Enlightenment are
therefore the rightful beneficiaries of England.

Forster subversively plays into fears of the New Woman who defied Victorian
values. The delicate balance of how England could falter with the expansion of
women’s rights is best exemplified in both Howards End and A Room with A View. In
the former novel, the entire plot revolves around Ruth’s deathbed will that bestowed
Howards End to Margaret. The Schlegel family are to be evicted from their London
home after their lease expires and Ruth believes, that the sisters, Margaret and Helen
would be suitable inheritors of the property. When the Wilcox family finds out about
this, it immediately turns them against her. The day before her death Mrs. Wilcox is

258 Forster, Howards End, 322.
considered a loving mother and once they find out about her will they quickly see her as lacking judgment and her actions as treacherous. The narrator echoes this sentiment, claiming, “Mrs. Wilcox had been treacherous to the family, to the laws of property, to her own written word.”

This plot device was one that could only recently be conceived of with the passing of the Married Women’s Property Act of 1882. The act changed the role of married woman from *feme covert* to *feme sole*, meaning that they could act on their own behalf in terms of their property.

By the end of the Edwardian era, the significance of the women’s movement and the consequences of legal changes benefitting women are brought into question within both novels. The narrator of *Howards End* states that Ruth’s action went against her husband to whom the land should legally belong to and if the will should be followed how would the improvements he made on the property be compensated.

It is here where it is hard to distinguish between the narrator and Forster. Although the narrator mentions Ruth’s betrayal of her family, there is an ambivalence presented. The narrator claims the remaining Wilcoxes only understood the home in terms of propriety and acquisition, not as Ruth did. She believed the home required a ‘spiritual

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260 H. Arthur Smith, *Married Women’s Property Act 1882 with An Introduction and Critical and Explanatory Notes and Appendix* (London: Stevens and Sons, 1882), 5. [https://archive.org/stream/marriedwomenspr00smitgoog#page/n4/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/marriedwomenspr00smitgoog#page/n4/mode/2up). Historically, these laws were attributed to the Norman Invasion of 1066, when feudalism entered into the British archipelago; Anglo-Saxon ideas of property were more equitable for women and they had encouraged women to hold their own property. Arianne Chernock in *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 91 shows how Enlightenment legal historians in the late eighteenth century revised the notion put forth by William Blackstone in *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, published between 1765 and 1769, that English marriage laws were just because women were to be protected. Many of the revisions promoted female equality based upon Anglo-Saxon customary law.
261 Forster, *Howards End*, 103-104.
heir,’ not an ancestral one. Land then becomes a site not only of ownership and expanding female independence but also a source of identity.

Within this exchange over the nature of property do we begin to see that although Forster is dealing in contemporary issues, he wraps them in a distinctively contemporary female English identity. Forster’s belief that land was best held by women because of a distinctly female otherworldliness is a common theme and is reflective of the growth of home as specifically female sphere. In A Room with A View, after Lucy decides to break off her engagement with the dull Cecil Vyse, she resigns herself to moving to London. She revels in becoming a woman who will be independent. The reason Lucy gives herself for breaking off the engagement is that Cecil and his gentlemanly manner wrapped Lucy in a claustrophobic security. Mrs. Honeychurch, Lucy’s mother, balks at the suggestion that her daughter will remain single in the city, “and mess with typewriters and latch-keys and agitate and scream, and be carried off kicking by the police.” The implication is that Lucy will join the Suffrage movement and become a ‘single’ woman. This is reiterated in the end of the novel when Lucy, who eventually marries George, realizes that it was the work of Miss Bartlett, her spinster cousin that has facilitated their courtship out of an implied need to save Lucy from a life of loneliness. Forster suggests the New Woman of the Edwardian era should not be emulated and women should be saved from this fate. Later, Forster reveals Lucy’s true feelings by claiming that her cry for independence was merely a front for wanting something else, a passion and a sincerity that she
recognizes in George Emerson.\textsuperscript{262} He insinuates that a woman should not be concerning herself with a reforming spirit but rather with a spirit of modern self-reflexive enchantment.

Passion and sincerity were tied to enchantment and was a reflection of the growing feminist movement that had taken hold of English women that concerned itself with land preservation. It is no coincidence that the characters of Margaret and Helen Schlegel bear a striking resemblance to Octavia and Miranda Hill. Hill shows the cultural ethos of \textit{fin de siècle} upper middle class English women and their penchant for promoting social reform through the land and art. Compare this to the description of the Schlegel sisters in \textit{Howards End}. The women are considered busy bodies, consumed by their goals of social reform. Perhaps the most telling comparison between the Hills and the Schlegels is their admiration for the land. The National Trust for Preserving Places of Natural Beauty and of Historic Interest, as it was officially known, is satirized in \textit{Howards End}. Forster calls it the Society for the Preservation of Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty.\textsuperscript{263} In a telling scene, the women of the Society discuss the role of social reform and the best way to help those who cannot help themselves. The women argue over whether it would be best to provide the poor of England—represented by Leonard in the discussion—with a lump sum of money in order to benefit their education or is it better to dole out a small amount of money over a longer period of time. By the end of the scene, the

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\item[\textsuperscript{262}] Forster, \textit{A Room with a View}, 224.
\item[\textsuperscript{263}] Forster, \textit{Howards End}, 132.
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women decide that they have come to no real conclusion about the best way to handle the poor but that they all had a wonderful time discussing the matter, showing that Forster does not believe these women either capable or serious about their role as reformers. If the Schlegels were to be seen as proxies for the Hills, their flippancy and eventual destruction of Leonard reveals Forster’s take on reforming women. Conversely, he advocates for a more traditional role for women. They are to act as the stewards of the land, reflecting Forster’s belief that women should embrace their irrational Romantic nature instead of adopting a purely rational one.

One of the most important discussions of imagination and reason occurs between Margaret and Henry. In surveying Howards End after their marriage, Henry discusses the land as merely another material object that he owns. One of the features of the property is a wych-elm that Ruth had wanted to show Margaret. The pig’s teeth that have been placed into the wych-elm, an ancient custom of the local country people which takes in Margaret. If one chewed the bark of the tree it could cure a toothache. In this instance Margaret, for all her Edwardian ideals, reveals that there is no need to turn away from the irrational. If her sister, Helen, had been ruled by passion and the imagination, Margaret had always used logic as her guide through life. Having consistently adhered to reason throughout the novel, it is at this point that she has seen the benefits of the imagination. She can, as historian Michael Saler claims, exist in a world of modern secularism while turning to the world of the “as if,” a world that allows for magic, spirituality, and delusion. In the two novels, the

women are seen as being frivolous and dealing in areas of spirituality and the occult while the men are portrayed as embracing a hard rationality. Enchantment and the use and protection of the land fell into the realm of women. Forster’s women all retain a certain sense of mysticism that is indicative of the way that the Romantics viewed nature. The Schlegels understand that there is more to the natural world than merely industry and ownership. Margaret is able to blend the irrational and the rational and it is this concept that Forster emphasizes in both novels.

The home for Forster has just as much of a place in the spirituality of England as does the forest. Forster claims, “the Schlegel’s were certainly poorer for the loss of Wickham Place. It had helped to balance their lives, and almost to counsel them.” He goes on to state that although it was a place of spirituality for the Schlegels, their landlord, who will turn the home into flats, is none the richer for doing so. The underlying issue at hand is property ownership. As evidenced by Lucy’s experience in the piazza, the only real location that is safe and protected for women is within the home. It is should be seen as no coincidence that the Schlegel sisters’ lives are turned upside down with the loss of their city home. The arc of the novel could truly be connected to the importance of finding a secure physical place in the world. Once the Schlegel family is turned out, their personal lives lead to turmoil for the women, since Tibby, the younger brother, seems oddly indifferent to the entire matter and does not suffer anguish from being without a permanent home. The denouement with the women enjoying Howards End (without Tibby around) offers Forster’s true intent.

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265 Forster, Howards End, 157.
Wolfe poses the question, “What happened to the new woman that Margaret once was?” For Wolfe, Margaret is enveloped in a rural mysticism that softens her independent nature and posits that “perhaps” the new woman is not beneficial for the twentieth century. He does not state affirmatively that this is Forster’s intent but clearly this is true. Much like Miss Bartlett saving Lucy from a life of spinsterhood, Ruth also understood that Margaret must be domiciled. Through this redemption, Forster provides the reasoning for the unique change within Margaret as inheritor of Victorian reforms and militant feminism to a woman who is able to meld modern ideas of femininity into a new form that allows for liberation while still upholding traditional English values. However, when Margaret is asked about leaving her property at Wickham Place, she brushed aside the notion that it meant much to her and it is not until the end of the novel that she is able to fully understand the need for a home. Although she contemplates the need for the men to marry the ‘passion and the prose,’ Margaret herself and her sister Helen are not fully complete until the end of the novel. This fulfillment has come at the expense of the men.

Writing in 1907, Ford Madox Ford wrote “It is not—the whole of Anglo-Saxondom—a matter of race, but one, quite simply, of place and of spirit being born of the environment.” He goes on to list the various racial groups that have contributed to the assimilated nature of the British. In A Room with A View, it is not the intellectual and urban Cecil Vyse that gains Lucy Honeychurch’s hand in marriage,
but the passionate and odd George Emerson. Lucy is informed by the land and it is through her connection between the Arcadia of her home and the Arcadia of the countryside that she is finally able to embrace the passion and the prose. The ending of *Howards End* culminates in Forster bringing an end to his personal uncertainty about Victorian values. Ruth Wilcox represents traditionalism and is the consummate mother compared to Helen, with an illegitimate child and an intellectual who will be the future mother of England. The men in Forster’s novels do not come to such realizations. The Wilcox men and Leonard Bast have suffered due to the women of *Howards End*. The interference of the Schlegels has led to the death of Leonard, the incarceration of Charles Wilcox, and a resigned Henry Wilcox, who has retired to Howards End to be comforted by Margaret. The women of *Howards End* win the balance between traditionalism and modernity and the feminine and the masculine. The eventual retreat of the Schlegel sisters into the countryside only reinforces Forster’s philosophical ideals: that women’s influence was invaluable but best suited within the confines of the country.

Forster offered his take on Victorian ideals and used them as models for his own view of the current state of English gender roles during the Edwardian period. His perceptions were based upon nostalgia, myth, and a uniquely feminine sensibility that was concerned with the land at the heart of English identity, attributes that were established well before the first decade of the twentieth century. If Forster is arguing against the stiff upper lip stereotype that has pervaded the global notion of what it means to be British, his answer lies within femininity. The Schlegel sisters of
*Howards End* and Lucy Honeychurch of *A Room with A View* represent a questioning of all that the Victorian middle class had become, replicas of the aristocracy with their attention to manners but also renters and nomads who become the feudal owners of the land. In the same vein, the Emersons, considered vulgar at the beginning *A Room with A View*, eventually are seen to be of the sort that does not hide from passion. The Wilcoxes of *Howards End* are conceived as being mechanical and superficial. Helen in one of the most telling examples describes the Wilcox family as never having uttered the word “I.” They only deal with issues such as death and life through hearsay, never contemplating issues of personal inquiry. This leads to an expansion of Forster’s assertion to “Only connect.” The enchantment of the land became a distinctly feminine characteristic in his novels as women become purveyors of the gifts of the landscape. Forster was emblematic of the cultural changes of the Victorian and Edwardian era and the approach of modernism. It was not until 1910, with the publication of *Howards End* that Forster fully synthesized the prose and the passion, the primary concern of his literary career, connecting, “the seen and the unseen, the inner and the outer,” that led to, “the formation of a link between art and life, the connection between the ideal and the real.”

As a member of the Bloomsbury Group, who as a group were instrumental in shaping many of the ideas of the twentieth century, Forster was always an outsider.

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269 Forster, *Howards End*, 156.
270 Forster, *Howards End*, 194
However, where the main members of this group—Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, and Lytton Strachey—were forward thinking in their morals and their perception of the world around them, Forster was distinctly focused on the middle class of the Edwardian era, whom seemed to be mired in issues that were distinctly Victorian. In 1910, the same year as the publication of *Howards End*, Forster delivered a previously mentioned lecture, “The Feminine Note in Literature,” which argues against John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women*.\(^{272}\) Where Mill saw the sexes as being equal, Forster saw men and women possessing distinctly separate attributes even though politically they were coming closer to being equal.

Concurrently the Suffrage Movement had recently entered into its militant form with the Black Friday incident on November 18, 1910, when police officers beat women in front of Parliament.\(^{273}\) Women, who in his view, “live nearer the truth of human nature” best represent his focus on the landscape of England and the romantic nature of art and beauty stating, “the Feminine Note is a preoccupation with personal worthiness.”\(^{274}\) It is this ability that Forster imbues within Margaret Schlegel, who in excoriating her husband for his obtuseness and inability to examine himself, ruminates,

> Now that she had time to think over her own tragedy, she was unrepentant. She neither forgave him for his behaviour nor wished to forgive him. Her speech to him seemed perfect. She would not have altered a word. It had to be uttered once in a life, to adjust the lopsidedness of the world. It was spoken not only to her husband, but

to thousands of men like him—a protest against the inner darkness in high places that comes with a commercial age.275

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CONCLUSION

Then in one moment, she put forth the charm
Of woven paces and of waving hands,
And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
And lost to life and use and name and fame.

Then crying ‘I have made his glory mine,’
And shrieking out ‘O fool!’ the harlot leapt
Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
Behind her, and the forest echoed ‘fool.’

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Vivien” Idylls of the King (1859)

Almost 80 years after being first published, the novels of E.M. Forster were introduced to a new audience through the film adaptations of his works Howards End and A Room with A View, released in 1985. In 1991, the film version of Howards End was released and soon became a critical darling for its portrayal of Edwardian England that found a ready audience in the wake of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s Britain. The film eventually won the British Academy Film Awards Best Picture and was nominated for the Academy Award. As part of the resurgence of the British film industry, these films also played into the issues of declension and the promotion of Little Britain during the Thatcher regime and gained critical acclaim. They spread the Victorian ideas of a gendered English landscape and a female domestic sphere to an entirely new audience. Forster’s focus on middle-class women’s mastery over the English landscape was meant to reflect contemporary issues of Edwardian England but the films, although light and humorous, smoothed over the shift in English identity that occurred in the transition from the nineteenth
into the twentieth century. Produced by Ismail Merchant and James Ivory, the films helped to solidify the bourgeoning independent film movement of the 1980s that romanticized the English landscape through the art house film. The filmmaking team of Merchant Ivory created an entire cottage industry of landscape books and reinvigorated an appreciation for the English landscape that extended beyond the British Isles, but also became synonymous with the staid literary adaption that harkened to a period when Britain was still a powerful nation.\textsuperscript{276} These movies provided the English a cultural code for ideas that had been percolating within Great Britain for a long period of time.

Peter Clarke in his essay, “The Rise and Fall of Thatcherism,” sees the battle of 1980s Britain as one that falls between two poles, the literate set of Bloomsbury against Thatcher’s allusions to her hometown of Grantham. The former “symbolizes the sophisticated errors of the cosmopolitan elite, ‘the chattering classes,’ while the other evokes the reliable common sense of plain folk in middle England.”\textsuperscript{277} By referencing the war between the competing visions of the past, Clarke reveals that the English would define themselves in opposition to or in admiration of Victorian values for the duration of the twentieth century. Echoing this sentiment in 1985, Andrew Sullivan in \textit{Greening the Tories} claims England’s landscape is an elemental component in the construction of the identity of the English. Reminiscent of Ruth


Wilcox’s affinity for the tree at Howards End, Sullivan recognizes that English trees are a political symbol for the nation. He states, “they are not simply large outcrops of vegetation,” but “they are part of our social and political history…they represent moreover a sense of continuity and cultural unity that conservatives might do well not to ignore.” These types of mythological constructions of English identity were used in the 1980s and are still esteemed markers of what it means to be uniquely English. Spurred on by the fear of declension, the Conservatives of the 1980s could not break from the perception of the era as being socially neo-Victorian, distinguished by a renewed attention on morals and Janus-faced repression. That many of the mores of the late nineteenth century were revisited as an antidote to the fear of the late twentieth century reveal two distinct paradigms. The first is the turn to English values of tradition when faced with a period of social change and secondly, a strict observance of gender ideals to assuage change. Both of these patterns were modified to their respective eras but both exploited the English relationship to the land. The speeches of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher given during the Falkland War demonstrate the way that land can and has been used foster identity. She uses the language of nationalism and the importance of maintaining heritage on a piece of land thousands of miles away to incite a patriotic fervor.

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279 Ibid.
It is no coincidence that the most current season of *Downtown Abbey* has answered the question posed by creator Julian Fellowes about women’s role in creating a distinct British identity. Through a series of deaths and births, Lady Mary, the eldest daughter of the Earl of Grantham has finally gained access to rule the land that had been previously denied to her. After the death of her husband, the next in line to inherit the title, and the birth of their son, Lady Mary is able to exert her influence. Alongside her father the current Earl of Grantham, Lady Mary is acting as regent for her infant son’s inheritance. Much like E.M. Forster’s intricate plot that allowed Margaret Schlegel to eventually own Howards End, Julian Fellowes has indirectly given Downtown Abbey to Lady Mary and circumvented law and tradition to place a woman as the rightful owner of England’s land and spirit.
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