

"THE OBJECT OF THEIR LIFE": DEFINING FEMALE SELF IN  
THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL AND MISS MARJORIBANKS

by

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**ABSTRACT**

In this thesis, I study genre and characterization choices made by Anne Brontë in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and Margaret Oliphant in Miss Marjoribanks. For the most part, these choices have been perceived negatively by critics because the resulting text does not produce evidence of either twentieth-century aesthetics or themes. However, as recent interpretations based on principles of cultural criticism suggest, these texts offer insights into Victorian women's interactions with their culture. Through texts like The Tenant and Miss Marjoribanks, we catch glimpses of acts of female self-definition which radically contradict individualistic notions of self. Essentially, this thesis seeks to trace the perspective these texts offer which is founded on the integration of masculine and feminine and not on the exclusion of either.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
<b>Chapter One:</b>	
An Alternative Definition of Self	1
<b>Chapter Two:</b>	
Integrating Masculine and Feminine: <u>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</u>	16
Sentimental Fiction	17
Romance Fiction	34
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	
Confronting Theories of Individualism: <u>Miss Marjoribanks</u>	45
Introduction	45
Domestic Fiction	46
A Cross-Gendered Definition of Self	50
Domestic Politics	54
"[N]onexclusion" and the Practical Self	59
Domestic Values	61
Individualism and Community	67
Integration	71
Theory and Practice	73
<b>Chapter Four:</b>	
Conclusion	83
Works Cited and Consulted	90

## AN ALTERNATIVE DEFINITION OF SELF

In A Literature of Their Own, Elaine Showalter describes women novelists as "always . . . self-conscious, but only rarely self-defining" (4). In other words, women<sup>1</sup> are self-reflexive writers but may have difficulty positing an autonomous self which would have an effect on society. Many women writers may be not aware of the influence their writing might have beyond their personal lives:

While they have been deeply and perennially aware of their individual identities and experiences, women writers have very infrequently considered whether these experiences might transcend the personal and local, assume a collective form in art, and reveal a history. (4)

As Showalter points out, nineteenth-century women novelists are very aware of the ramifications of their writing for their understanding of themselves and also for their culture's judgement of them. Consistently, critics find evidence of the anxiety these women felt about the very public nature of their writing. Further, their underrepresentation in this century's canon would indicate the accuracy of Showalter's comment on a nineteenth-century

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<sup>1</sup> Although I use the words "men" and "women" as defining categories throughout this essay, I wish to recognize that these terms are generalizations. While I use these words for their socially constructed meanings, I think crossing socially-constructed gender boundaries is a regular occurrence within a complex belief system. I use these terms to simplify the articulation of concepts that are rhetorically and socially gendered.

context: Victorian women's art does not generally transcend its cultural moment.

Anne Brontë and Margaret Oliphant fit Showalter's description well. Despite significant differences of subject and style, both authors wrote novels which engage issues arising out of the female protagonist's negotiations of the cultural definition of her self. Consequently both novels address issues of women's relationship to autonomy and power. Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848) plots a woman's struggle to maintain her moral integrity despite the life-long difficulties this resolve promises to bring her. Although the novel is very clear about the moral culpability of Helen's peers, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall does not, in the end, significantly undercut the world that has contributed to Helen's problems; and Helen's potentially socially disruptive thoughts and feelings about her situation stand obscured by her compliance with society's strictures. Margaret Oliphant's Miss Marjoribanks (1866) charts the difficulties that a self-conscious woman of "genius" has in defining herself as autonomous even while acting influentially within her limited sphere. The question raised in The Tenant, in Miss Marjoribanks, and by Showalter's comments on the relative absence of female self-definition is "why is self-definition difficult for women in this period?"

Showalter provides one potential response in her essay

"Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," in which she lays out clearly the largest schools of feminist criticism as they existed in 1979 (the time of writing). In the last section on cultural criticism, Showalter postulates the existence of a "Wild Zone"--a place of experiences unshared by men and unarticulated by women even to or among ourselves. As a patriarchal system does not have a place for those experiences, no words have been invented to explain them. As women exist within patriarchal discourse, our words are insufficient for the articulation of any of our experiences that lie outside such discourse. Carol Gilligan's research, recorded in In a Different Voice (1982), suggests that the implication of this "wild zone" is:

. . . men and women may speak different languages that they assume are the same, using similar words to encode disparate experiences of self and social relationships. Because these languages share an overlapping moral vocabulary, they contain a propensity for systematic mistranslation, creating misunderstandings which impede communication . . .  
 . (173)

Twentieth-century theories such as Gilligan's offer a way to re-read nineteenth-century fiction by women and to value these novelists in our twentieth-century context. These theories suggest that the critical standards we have

tended to apply to this fiction misunderstand their experience. They also suggest which words belonging to the current literary establishment Anne Brontë and Margaret Oliphant might misunderstand: "transcend," "personal," "local," and "collective."

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and Miss Marjoribanks are two texts whose critical evaluation suffers from "mistranslation." Past critics have judged Brontë and Oliphant according to the same standards they used for writers like George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë who fit aesthetic standards of realist prose and develop themes that were recognized as philosophical or psychological. George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë transcend their time to become "classics"; Anne Brontë and Margaret Oliphant do not. Typically Anne Brontë is seen as less imaginative but proportionally more moralistic than her sisters (Ewbank 49). Margaret Oliphant, we are told, wrote too much to write well (Colby 44). These judgements are sound within their evaluative base. Brontë was a moralist; Oliphant wrote stories full of repetitive phrases. I do not intend to claim that either Brontë or Oliphant is a "great" writer by the standards used to judge them. Instead, I assume that they aimed for different standards than the ones we have culled from reading particular nineteenth-century novels whose concerns more closely mirror our own. I further assume that reading their work can give contemporary readers some sense



of what their standards might have been.<sup>2</sup> With the widespread practice of cultural criticism, recent re-evaluations of these writers tend to examine how their art fits their context. I wish to follow this tradition. To attempt to read these books in a manner somewhat more suited to their aims has been part of my motivation for writing this thesis.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and Miss Marjoribanks are more distinct than comparable. The Tenant is an example of the realistic combination of sentimental and romance fiction and has an overt and serious social message. Miss Marjoribanks fits into the category of domestic fiction and is wickedly humourous in its form of social parody. One of the few characteristics that the two books share is that they are both examples of what remain critically unpopular genres. The denigration of these genres as places of artistic accomplishment is clearly illustrated in the case of the sentimental novel which is represented by the diary section of The Tenant.

To use the term sentimental in describing a novel seems almost automatically to consign that book to obscurity and "minor" status. Holman and Harmon, while placing the genre within a social context of "a reaction against orthodox Calvinist theology," give a definition that overtly denies the sentimental any value: "an overindulgence in

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<sup>2</sup> See Gillian Brown, Domestic Individualism (1990) for a discussion of how our contemporary standard of "uniqueness" evolved during this period.

emotion, . . . the failure to restrain or evaluate emotion through the exercise of judgement," and, most positively, "an optimistic overemphasis of the goodness of humanity" [emphasis mine] (Holman 462). Jane Tompkins takes on this vision of sentimental in a discussion of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, identifying the sentimental tradition with women (124-5). The criteria of good literature are clear in Holman and Harman's definition of sentimental: fiction should be tempered by rationality, emotion should not be excessive, moral representation should be realistic. While these criteria are more complex and fluid than I or Holman and Harman indicate here, critics do judge the sentimental according to a sense of its excessiveness. As Tompkins suggests, students have been taught to equate "popularity with debasement, emotionality with ineffectiveness . . . domesticity with triviality, and all of these, implicitly, with womanly inferiority" (Tompkins 123). The consequence of such equations is that:

. . . the tradition . . . has prevented even committed feminists from recognizing and asserting the value of a powerful and specifically female novelistic tradition. (Tompkins 123)

Tompkins works in an American context but her analysis seems valid for British fiction because it addresses twentieth-century values that judge both American and British nineteenth-century fiction. She sees canonical standards of

aesthetics as representing the critical establishment's world view. She makes it clear that critical denigration of sentimental prose as excessive is a denigration of values that sentimental fiction espouses.

Despite the suggestion that sentimental fiction is too emotionally-based, sentimental literature does have a philosophical basis: the combination of the emotional and the rational. Sentiment is "a moral reflection, a rational opinion usually about the rights and wrongs of human conduct . . . influenced by emotion" (Todd 7). Sentimental literature begins in a belief in the innate goodness of humankind and in literature's ability to touch this goodness and improve moral behaviour (Todd 4-7). In the sentimental's construction of human nature, our emotions are intricately connected with the decisions we make regarding social conduct, and therefore, a novel's ability to make us feel will influence how we behave. This philosophy encouraged prose designed to evoke emotion. One reason the genre's popularity declined in the early nineteenth century was the lack of moderation in the scenes intended to evoke emotion. Sentimental fiction became associated with those scenes and "sentimental" became a pejorative term. Other aspects of sentimental fiction were incorporated into other genres.<sup>3</sup>

As Tompkins suggests, the excessiveness of sentimental

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<sup>3</sup> For a full history and definition of sentimental fiction see Janet Todd, Sensibility: An Introduction (1986).

scenes is, however, only part of the problem. Gillian Brown, in a discussion of Melville's Pierre, supports Tompkins. Brown traces contemporary literary values to the rise of a rhetoric of masculine individuality: ". . . literary individualism appropriates the anti-market rhetoric of domestic individualism in order to distinguish male individuality from femininity, 'mature' from 'juvenile' authors, and, ultimately, classic American literature from mass-market productions" (Brown 136).<sup>4</sup> When placed in opposition to femininity, masculinity is privileged; this privilege is justified on the basis of individualism. Changing social conditions, particularly the increasing stability of the American economy, enabled Melville to exploit the marketability of his fiction by describing it as unique and therefore better than domestic fiction.<sup>5</sup> Melville wrote fiction that both reflected and participated in the rise of individualism within in his culture. In England, the publication of On Liberty (1859), which

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<sup>4</sup> Brown defines domestic individualism as an act of self-definition which removed the individual from interactions with the marketplace. In this way, domesticity was a factor in altering American individualist philosophy "updating and reshaping" it to include women's experience within it (1-4).

<sup>5</sup> Susan Coultrap-McQuin in Doing Literary Business (1990) discusses the changes in the American publishing industry that came from the stabilizing of the American economy. She suggests that authors competed for publishers rather than publishers seeking out authors as the market grew calmer than it had been. The increasing competitiveness of the market lead to preference for distinctive texts.

espouses individual rights as "sovereign," does the same. The production of such works indicate the presence of social changes that begin the move away from the ideal of community involvement in the propagation of moral values, an ideal associated with sentimentality. The critical tradition occurs within such movements; consequently, sentimental fiction does not figure in twentieth-century canons.

Domestic fiction suffered a similar devaluation, as the American example might suggest. Domestic fiction espouses values of community and moral piety that are contradictory to twentieth-century values. Its local specificity condemns it to obscurity. Even when it was written, domestic fiction was mocked; categorized as what constituted "novel reading" in a pejorative sense, it seemed to have little social relevance despite the fact that the large numbers of people who read domestic novels would be influenced by them. Even Oliphant, in Miss Marjoribanks, points out the fantasy nature of domestic fiction by connecting it with the sentimental. Upon her mother's death, Lucilla Marjoribanks decides with her mind "considerably enlightened by novels and popular philosophy" how she will:

. . . wind herself up to the duty of presiding at her papa's dinner-parties, and charming everybody . . . and how, when it was all over, she would withdraw and cry her eyes out . . . and be found in the morning languid and worn-out, but always

heroical, ready to go downstairs and assist at dear papa's breakfast, and keep up her smiles for him. . . . (Miss Marjoribanks 26)

Oliphant mocks Lucilla's melodramatic style, but, as her heroine does end up presiding charmingly at her father's dinners, albeit for a more serious purpose than her early fantasy acknowledges, Oliphant does not mock the ideals of domesticity Lucilla espouses. Oliphant's distinction was not recognized when the canon was formed.

Carol Gilligan offers another reason to re-evaluate the work of less-valued women writers. Her discussion of female patterns of psychological development suggests why women might not transcend the practice of their art in order to theorize about it (Literature 4):

. . . issues of femininity or feminine identity do not depend on the achievement of separation from the mother or on the progress of individuation. Since masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation. (Gilligan 8)

If women's developmental patterns do not include separating from others to achieve the status of unique individuals, then neither would they seek separation from their culture

in their fiction.<sup>6</sup> The transcendence of the cultural moment that contemporary critics of nineteenth-century fiction tend to value comes from this separation and would not generally be an aim of women's fiction. While the accuracy of this statement depends on the validity of applying Gilligan's theories with their contemporary subjects to nineteenth-century fictional characters, the rise of liberal theories of individualism in Victorian England suggests that the parallels I will draw are not misplaced. At any rate, Gilligan's theories suggest that the standards of critical evaluations originate from within a masculine experience (see also Showalter, Tompkins, Frey).

Much of this discussion has been culled from debates over canon. I have repeated it here because of canon's continued effect on reading and writing about Victorian women's writing. Furthermore, the composition of the canon seems to change but the concept itself remains, as do the consequences of its existence. Despite the amount of work done on the importance of canon revision in the last twenty years, affordable editions of marginalized writers are still

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<sup>6</sup> The interaction between cultural rhetoric, ideals, and psychological development is extremely complex and difficult to trace. That the interactions under discussion occurred in the nineteenth century only increases the complexity. However, Gilligan's description of women's valuation of attachment suggests that it could be a consequence of the Victorian concept of separate spheres based on gender. The community of domesticity would have connections among its members who shared similar experiences.

hard to find as are critical evaluations of their work. This critical marginality is one of the reasons I chose to write on Anne Brontë and Margaret Oliphant. Both of them are currently in print but they are not widely read. This status is changing, but courses on Victorian women concentrate on the other two Brontës, on Eliot and on Gaskell, as do books on the period. Other Victorian women writers have still not gained acceptance and I think that this might be because, while we have widened the range of canon, we have not successfully questioned the assumptions that lie behind its existence.

Those assumptions used to include the belief that men were great artists; now they include a residual attachment either to the historical insight provided by the text or to uniqueness of a work. The quality of uniqueness pervades critical assessments. As I have suggested, individualism is a philosophy that had noticeably wide acceptance in the nineteenth century. It is also the philosophy that underwrites the split between masculine and feminine spheres, just as male and female psychological patterns can be shown to develop respectively along lines of individuality and community. Psychological patterns and spheres of influence represent social developments and individuality is cultural justification for the privileging of socially-allotted masculine domains. This privileging occurs textually as well when critics prefer realism or



modernism to sentimentality or domesticity.

Just as both Brontë and Oliphant use canonically under-represented genres, so, too, do they both create uncommon protagonists through whom they address issues of individuality. Indeed, these protagonists provide my other point of comparison between the two texts for, despite differences in situation, setting, temperament, and goals, Brontë's Helen Huntingdon and Oliphant's Lucilla Marjoribanks are both strong and feminine. Although Brontë's and Oliphant's approaches are very different, they both create characters who conform psychologically to Gilligan's theories. This conformity suggests how women's roles were defined in the nineteenth century.

The other aspect of character development that I would like to trace through the novels illustrates another of Gilligan's ideas: that of integration. Gilligan postulates that in a mature stage of development, a person begins to have a "more inclusive morality" (165). This "inclusive morality" contains aspects of masculine and feminine morality; that is, maturity, like the morality which accompanies it, includes aspects of both spheres of life. Cultural privilege attached to gendered difference is ameliorated in maturity; people recognize that each way of life has benefits that can be incorporated into their own lives. Oliphant and Brontë in The Tenant and Miss Marjoribanks seem to reach this recognition. The process of

doing so involves, first, claiming that strong female characters are a positive representation of femininity. Femininity must be valued before integration with masculine qualities is possible. To this end, both authors question the social rhetoric of individuality in their novels. That "real" power resides solely in a masculine sphere of business and politics must be questioned.<sup>7</sup> Once these texts have done that, their authors incorporate the masculine presence in their female characters in such a way as to privilege the connections between the spheres not the differences.<sup>8</sup> Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and Oliphant's Miss Marjoribanks are "counterpoint[s] of identity and intimacy," according to Gilligan's definition, ". . . articulated through two different moralities whose complementarity is the discovery of maturity" (165). That these texts can be seen to take a moderate position in the discussion of women's role within culture makes their authors' interaction with their culture more apparent.

Showalter's understanding of the absence of "history" in women's writing can be rewritten as the appearance, in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and Miss Marjoribanks, of a present moment in which minor women writers are participants

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<sup>7</sup> The distinction made during the nineteenth century between women's influence and men's power suggests that the two were graded according to effectiveness and validity and that the masculine version of power was more forceful.

<sup>8</sup> See Marilyn R. Farwell (1990) for a discussion of the "disruptive space of sameness" (93).

within their culture negotiating for their position. As they do not need to understand their work in a "larger context," their novels address ways of making their relationships with culture work:

. . . belief in the restorative activity of care, lead [them] to see the actors in [a] dilemma arrayed not as opponents in a contest of rights but as members of a network of relationships on whose continuation they all depend. (Gilligan 30)

Culture relies on negotiation for its survival and women enable that survival by concentrating on their position within culture, not outside it. Juxtaposing Gilligan's "mistranslation" and "continuation" leads to another understanding of Showalter's "collective" that does not have to result in "transcendence" of their lives. If "collective" refers to women's understanding of the social nature of writing, then their work does not seek to move away from its social nature. Characterization of fiction such as Brontë's and Oliphant's as existing rooted in their culture does not deny women the ability to reflect: it merely defines women's reflection, collectiveness, and location according to their experiences of those words. This paper seeks such definition through close discussion of genre in each text and, more particularly, through studying the implications of Brontë's and Oliphant's characterizations of women.

INTEGRATING MASCULINE AND FEMININE:

THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL

In Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, a woman leaves her emotionally abusive husband and falls in love with another man. The novel's structure reflects this "tumultuous" plot: Brontë uses both sentimental and romance genres in the novel. She does not combine elements of each into a unified text however, but instead divides the text into different literary forms: writing to a friend to give him the details of his courtship, Gilbert Markham includes pages from a diary belonging to Helen Huntingdon. The diary follows generic conventions of the sentimental novel and the letters follow romance conventions. As a consequence, the genres remain distinct and offer two perspectives on the events of the story. These two perspectives are represented not only by genre but also by the narrator for each section: Helen Huntingdon and Gilbert Markham are sentimental and romantic heroes respectively. The relationship between these two parallels the relationship between the two genres that becomes evident as the novel progresses: again, the reader is presented with two points of view, and as a result, a refined perspective. In the relationship of Huntingdon and Markham, their characteristics, gendered feminine and masculine, complement each other and that complementarity indicates the characters' moves to maturity; similarly, the conjunction of sentimental and romance genres develops an

integrated, mature perspective on the central concerns of The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.

### Sentimental Fiction

Writing in the nineteenth century, Anne Brontë chose to write a novel in which one of the "halves" uses many sentimental techniques and, thematically, takes many sentimental philosophical positions. Helen Huntingdon's diary develops a portrait of a young woman who, through her own admitted error, is trapped in an unhappy marriage. She is portrayed as a victim of Arthur Huntingdon's debauchery and brutality. As Janet Todd says in her book, Sensibility: An Introduction (1986), two of the plots dominating sentimental fiction about women in the late eighteenth century are those of the powerful virgin and the unhappy wife (114). This novel has both, figured in one character: while she is unmarried, Helen is assertive and able to control men; when she marries, her power to control her husband, or, in the end, to escape him, is limited by legal and moral structures that define appropriate womanly behaviour.

Early in her narrative, Helen refuses a marriage that she knows would not be enjoyable or successful:

"Firstly, he is, at least forty years old . . .  
and . . . I have an aversion to his whole person  
that I never can surmount." (156)

While she is flippant, the reader cannot help but agree with Helen: Mr Wilmot or Mr Boarham are hardly the types to wake the kindly feelings of a young lady. One is an older version of a young degenerate and the other is boring and pompous. Neither can compete with Arthur Huntingdon's charms.

Presenting himself as a young, slightly mischievous man, Arthur rescues Helen from her two tormentors and flatters her by his attentions. The first characteristic she notes is his "laughing blue eyes" (154); she is captivated by his face which she keeps trying to paint. The problem with trying to paint Arthur is that the ability to do so would imply some knowledge and possession of the subject. Helen has neither; she is simply fascinated with his appearance which convinces her that he can comply with her ideas of a man's moral qualifications. She acknowledges that Arthur's conversation would be lacklustre ". . . without the adventitious aids of look, and tone, and gesture, and that ineffable but indefinite charm" (161). Earlier Helen does not scruple to label another young man "an empty-headed coxcomb" (152). Now she notes that Huntingdon would have been "a delight" to speak to even "if he had been talking positive nonsense" and her recollections of his conversation suggest that he is not an insightful conversationalist (161). Helen's diary shows us that her aunt's fears of her infatuation are well-founded. But this infatuation does not really impair Helen's judgement; she recognises Huntingdon's

flaws: "I cannot shut my eyes to Arthur's faults; and the more I love him the more they trouble me" (200). Her problem is that she has lost the ability to act on that judgement. She also assumes that he will be as captivated by her serious thoughtfulness as he is by her beauty. She thinks that he will yield to her as she yields to him; she believes him when he says "that a little daily talk with [her] would make him quite a saint" (166). And she does yield to Huntingdon: "'I couldn't help it, aunt,' I cried, bursting into tears. . . . the outbreak of the general tumultuous excitement of my feelings" (185).

Although distinct from other passive female characters by virtue of her determination, Helen displays the same powerlessness they do when she is in a difficult situation. Her inability to "help it" relieves her of responsibility for her attraction and her actions. She loses control as she becomes emotionally involved with a man; perhaps her physical attraction requires an emotional attachment to justify it. That powerlessness becomes characteristic of Helen's relationship with Huntingdon despite her struggles to maintain a partnership with him. Helen is increasingly emotionally abused in her relationship with Huntingdon. Her helplessness in the face of this abuse is a characteristic of the sentimental which places the virtuous in distressing, undeserved "predicaments" (Todd 2-3). And, despite the fact that Helen should share a portion of the blame for the state

of her marriage, she does not deserve abuse.

After they are married, Helen recognises that they are badly matched. She wants to share her husband's life; he wants her to exist in only one half of that life. Initially, Arthur's mistreatment amounts to neglect, but, as his debauchery starts to affect him negatively, he starts to subject her to its consequences: "though he is peevish and testy . . . he is gentle and kind to me. What he would be, if I did not . . . so carefully avoid, or immediately desist from, doing anything that has a tendency to irritate or disturb him . . . I cannot tell" (237). Huntingdon's behaviour becomes progressively worse and, eventually, he degenerates completely; he brings the two spheres he has created together in an attempt to humiliate Helen. He tells her of his previous relationships; he subjects her to living with him during his current ones. He humiliates her sexually by flaunting his affair with Annabella Lowborough once she has discovered it: "as the time of departure draws nigh, the more audacious and insolent she becomes. . . . And he rewards her by such smiles and glances, such whispered words, or boldly spoken insinuations" (323). Helen grows proportionally powerless as this abuse grows. She cannot stop it, she cannot leave, she has only her diary to withdraw into, and, as she confides to her diary, she feels herself degenerating morally (323).

To counter the consequences of living with Huntingdon



and to maintain her virtue, Helen concentrates her desire for life on her role as mother: "I cannot wish to go and leave my darling in this dark and wicked world alone, without a friend to guide him through its weary mazes" (334). She feels responsible for her son and wants to protect him from his father's influence. While her son offers her this comfort, he also shows the extent of her impotence; as he grows older, she must watch him be tempted into bad behaviour by the father's swearing and drinking. She is unable to fulfil her maternal function and only the man, Mr Hargrave, who insultingly suggests she have an illicit relationship with him, helps her:

But on one occasion, when Arthur had been behaving particularly ill, and Mr. Huntingdon and his guests had been particularly provoking and insulting to me in their encouragement of him, and I particularly anxious to get him out of the room, and on the very point of demeaning myself by a burst of uncontrollable passion--Mr Hargrave . . .  
. . . lifted the child from his father's knee . . .  
and . . . handed him out of the room. (357)

Paradoxically, even though her role as mother reveals the extent to which she is disempowered in relation to her husband, motherhood also empowers her when she is away from him. The social values embodied in motherhood are not then

compromised by Huntingdon's immorality.<sup>9</sup>

Contradicting the image of the powerless woman, Helen contemplates, plans, and enacts her escape from her oppressor. She tells very few people of her plans and asks for the minimum of assistance. Her brother is to prepare rooms; her servant helps her pack. She takes her son and leaves, shutting "the bedroom door" not only on her husband but also on the ideal of the submissive sentimental heroine. Yet in this departure from the sentimental norms, the two people from whom Helen asks assistance are still representatives of further aspects of the sentimental. As her brother, Mr. Lawrence is a familial male protector who shelters her as required. His protection is, however, always tailored to suit Helen's desires. Rachel's loyalty incorporates two elements of sentimental fiction. She is Helen's friend who replaces Millicent and Esther Hargrave-- first when Helen is alone at Grass-dale, and later when Helen lives in Wildfell Hall, apart from the fashionable circles her wealth would give her access to. Rachel insists on accompanying Helen and Helen succumbs to her request gratefully: "'Then you shan't [leave me], Rachel!' I cried, embracing my faithful friend" (390). This friendship encapsulates sentimental attitudes towards the lower

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<sup>9</sup> Valerie Sanders (1986) discusses the professionalization of mothers that occurs because of the value attached to the role. Janet Todd also discusses the mother's power.

classes: "Like fiction depicting men of feeling, novels with women of sensibility encourage the social fantasy of loyal service. Servants of the noble protagonists are familial and feudal, tied to their masters [mistresses] through sentiment, not money" (Todd 118). When Rachel requests that she be allowed to follow Helen to the desolate Wildfell Hall, she is hurt that Helen even thinks to resist her: "'Do you think, ma'am, I can't bear what my missus can?--surely I'm not so proud and so dainty as that comes to--'" (390). This theme of lower-class loyalty is repeated as Benson tearfully watches the three leave.

Helen's attitude towards her servants and their attitudes to her also illuminate the sentimental novel's response to money. Because sentimental heroines are often well-born, money floats along beside them, disassociated from labour or the process of building capital. Although Terry Eagleton says that "Helen's obscure social origins" render her status as traditional gentry problematic (128), she was born into class high enough to consort with lords and with men whose wealth has been inherited. However, when she departs from Grass-dale, she leaves her money behind and works, selling her art, in order to support her family. As there is a movement away from her established social position to a much more tenuous position at Wildfell Hall, there is a movement towards a more realistic understanding of money as enabling survival. Eagleton suggests that "The

Tenant portrays a working world which is overbred and a non-working context (Wildfell Hall) which is steeped in grimness and gloom" (131). On the contrary, Helen works despite her context and the "working" society around her spends a good deal of time visiting. Helen treats her work seriously and visits from her curious neighbours provide undesirable interruptions as Gilbert discovers when he drops by unexpectedly with his sister, Rose:

. . . she bid us be seated, and resumed her place beside the easel--not facing it exactly, but now and then glancing at the picture upon it while she conversed, and giving it an occasional touch with her brush, as if she found it impossible to wean her attention entirely from her occupation to fix it upon her guests. (68)

In escaping to Wildfell Hall and to the world of work, Helen separates her character from that of a sentimental heroine.

The Wildfell portions of Helen's story are told by Gilbert Markham. That Gilbert replaces Helen as the narrator might suggest that Helen is not necessarily stronger at Wildfell than she was at Grass-dale; nonetheless, she is more effectively powerful. Her status as a widow means that even though she has new social conventions to obey, she is free. The autonomous control she has over her son's upbringing is evidence of Helen's power. People may argue with her, but she does not have to follow their advice. Her

position of stranger in the village isolates her and the village's opinion of her as eccentric enforces that solitude. Her seclusion, the physical and social space between Helen and the community, acts as a buffer so that, for instance, when villagers comment on Helen's unusual behaviour, she does not hear many of those comments. Once she is separated from her husband, Helen is no longer a victim. Her independence makes victimization impossible.

Helen's escape from Arthur Huntingdon and her marriage makes a statement about feminine equality but only within the context of female moral superiority. This moral superiority regulating women and separating them from men in carefully defined ways creates false images of both. Helen, in her economic and emotional independence, may stand apart from many societal conventions, but when malicious rumours develop, she elects to leave Wildfell. The villagers call on those moral standards of motherhood which have justified her disobedience as a wife in order to judge her: "'Have you never observed,' said Eliza, 'what a striking likeness there is between that child of hers and -- [Lawrence, whom the villagers do not know is Helen's brother]'" (100). Although those judgements are based on rumours that Jane Wilson and Eliza Millward have spread, Helen submits to that judgement, perhaps because her developing feelings for Gilbert are adulterous and would be immoral if acted upon. Helen's submission may be disappointing to twentieth-century

readers, but her reaction to being described as immoral is an instance of the text negotiating cultural ideals. Nineteenth-century fiction seems to abound in such examples of such negotiation of women's roles from within cultural norms.

Creating space for a woman's voice within the constraints of domestic ideology is better than having no space, and Brontë's heroine has a strong voice, emphasized by the contrast with her friend, Millicent Hargrave. Millicent is confused and bullied into becoming Mrs Hattersley and, after much suffering, passively receives the happiness of a good marriage. Helen, on the other hand, wilfully asserts her preference and is punished because that wilfulness is youthfully blind. The moral is that one's determination must be fuelled by morality. Helen is not punished for refusing the suitors that her aunt approves of; she is punished for overestimating her ability to reform the one she loves and for not being able to examine his character more closely, for mistaking his physical beauty for potential goodness. Once experience has eradicated the temporality of her desires, Helen's determination is focused on Christian goals. In this case, the morality of her enterprise to bring Mr. Hattersley to recognize his wife's sufferings and worth ensures Helen's success which in turn grants Millicent happiness.

Brontë makes it very clear in The Tenant that the way

many of her characters use morality as a constraint is stultifying and inappropriate. Once Helen has given permission for her story to be told in order to refute the slur against her reputation, society forgives her. But while Helen's peers no longer believe her relationship with Lawrence to be immoral, they do not agree with the decision she has made: "for though now constrained to acknowledge himself mistaken in his former judgment," Reverend Millward still believes "that she had done wrong to leave her husband" (462). Undoubtedly, others would share his view that Helen has committed "a violation of her sacred duties as a wife" and that "nothing short of bodily ill usage (and that of no trifling nature) could excuse such a step . . . ." (462). Still, their failure to recognise or appreciate Helen's qualities gives credence to the view that Helen's actions are right because it is her view that remains unsullied by pettiness or malicious gossip: she is meant to rectify her mistake through her personal determination. Her punishment has not been for her determination but for her blindness. She remains determined throughout the novel and eventually earns the reward of persistence: a good marriage. In other words, Millicent's conventional passivity does not ensure her happiness in marriage and Helen's efforts do eventually ensure hers.

Early sentimental literature was intended to be morally instructive. Janet Todd paraphrases the eighteenth-century

writer, John Dennis, who counselled that:

art should never run 'counter to moral virtue'  
and, whatever its subject and genre, its purpose  
should always be the reformation or improvement of  
manners. (29)

One hundred and fifty years later, Brontë evidently accepted  
this:

Let it not be imagined, however, that I consider  
myself competent to reform the errors and abuses  
of society, but only that I would fain contribute  
my humble quota toward so good an aim. . . . [A]nd  
when I feel it my duty to speak an unpalatable  
truth, with the help of God, I will speak it.  
(Preface 29-30)

Brontë wrote her fiction within the context of this  
quotation, the context of a Christianity that accepted a  
universal moral standard that favoured the rich,  
particularly if they were men. No debate exists in the text  
over that moral standard: "Anne Brontë's novels find the  
world morally mixed, but they do not find morality in the  
least problematical" (Eagleton 123). Huntingdon does not  
live up to the moral standard and he is condemned; Markham  
learns to abide by it and he is rewarded. But the clarity of  
that standard does not make it comfortable: Brontë spoke  
"unpalatable truth[s]." Brontë's heroine is aware of her  
duty and such knowledge is communicated to Brontë's readers.



The duty that Brontë and Helen Huntingdon are determined to do, no matter how distressing it may be, is discussed in the rhetoric of maternal love and desire. Perhaps Hélène Cixous offers an insight into Brontë's motivations, "a woman," she says:

is never far from "mother" . . . There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink. (Cixous, "Laugh" 251)

This novel expresses a socially determined position of caring and moral fortitude. Helen leaves her home and its comforts ostensibly to protect her son from its corruption; Anne Brontë writes a novel that, according to her sister's account, threw her into depression: "She brooded over it till she believed it to be a duty to reproduce every detail. . . . She hated her work, but would pursue it" (C. Brontë, "Biographical Notice" 55). These women make themselves uncomfortable for the benefit of others. This self-sacrifice comes from a world view that privileges others and that has been traced, in theories of psychosocial development, to culturally-developed female ways of knowing.

Carol Gilligan in her book, In a Different Voice, discusses the characteristics of masculinity and femininity which, by the end of the novel, Helen seems to have integrated into herself. She marries Huntingdon because she desires him and because she desires to reform him. Even

inklings that this marriage might not be successful do not deter her: "I don't much mind it now; but if it be always so, what shall I do with the serious part of myself?" (214). She seeks his moral improvement and loses herself in the attempt. Gilligan's research shows that this self-sacrifice is a common desire for women: "[women's] insistence on care is at first self-critical rather than self-protective . . . [full of] self-destructive potential" (100). Moreover, the strong need for attachment (as opposed to masculine development patterns of separation) keeps Helen attached to someone who affronts her. Despite Huntingdon's idiocy and abuse, Helen continually wishes him to be in contact with her. His company would prevent loneliness and she would have a chance to reform him. His reformation means her happiness.

Helen's break with Huntingdon comes after she has developed an attachment with her son and after it is clear that Huntingdon has developed an illicit attachment to someone else. The need for attachment and for self-sacrifice at any cost has caused a great deal of pain for Helen as the sentimental portion of the novel shows. But the diary also reveals Helen's growth. As she is continuously insulted by Huntingdon, Helen learns the value of a justice-based system. She becomes able to rationalize and to remove herself from an unjust situation which is also potentially harmful to her son. Her physical removal from Grass-dale is preceded by her emotional withdrawal from her marriage. Such

inclusion of her own needs is unusual for women in this period and is typically associated with men. No surprise or upset accompanies the announcement of Lord Lowborough's initiation of a separation from Annabella because separation is a masculine prerogative (354). Helen demands that prerogative for herself when she leaves Huntingdon and supports herself. Brontë does not replace a feminine way of interacting with people with a masculine one however. Helen is helped by her female friends who maintain their connection with her throughout and despite her troubles: Millicent, Esther, and Rachel. Millicent's tears for Helen's predicament enable Helen to release her own emotions. Wishing to help Esther avoid a similar situation gives Helen some purpose, while Esther's gaiety relieves her loneliness. Rachel brings the news that catalyzes Helen's action for freedom and her support is both emotional and financial. Lawrence, as Helen's brother, also illustrates some feminine characteristics: his emotional support is crucial to Helen. Far from introducing masculine modes of interaction, this community of, predominantly, women maintains "care and concern for others" across strict class and gender lines (Gilligan 17) and supports Helen firmly in the standards she believes in.

Helen's diary chronicles her integration of gendered ideals and behaviours, her blend of justice and self-preservation, a state that Gilligan describes as "maturity"

(165). This integration or "maturity" is also reflected in two key sentimental stylistic techniques that the diary portion of The Tenant fulfils: repetition and fragmentation. The purpose of repetition is both to show the "proliferation of functions, so that every domestic and emotional possibility is manifest" and to allow the reader slowly to achieve a proper sentimental attitude (Todd 123; 124). Arthur Huntingdon is perpetually drunk and abusive. His friends come to visit cyclically, provoking his worst behaviour. Walter Hargrave tries regularly to corrupt Helen. Hargrave wears the reader down, his actions angering her almost as much as they anger Helen. The growing weight of the abuse builds support for Helen's case as does its seeming interminableness. Then the breaking of this abusive cycle is reflected by the fragmentation in the text. A characteristic of sentimental fiction, fragmentation consistently occurs in moments which show Helen's control. The textual fragments also highlight positive aspects of the repetitions Helen experiences; friendship, familial relationship, and support reoccur within the fragments, despite the chaotic nature of Helen's life. The journal form is inherently fragmented; Helen's journal is written irregularly, when she has time and for as long as she has time. The torn pages at the end of the journal are the most explicit fragmentation in the text and signify Helen's control over what she will share of her inner emotion with a

particular audience. "Broken syntax and typographical exuberance" (Todd 125) are rare in this novel, except for moments of high intensity, and, unlike those of other sentimental novels, they are rarely obtrusive. These smaller fragmentations of the text do exist though, and are important when seen in conjunction with Helen's actions of ripping pages from her journal and giving Markham her heart in a rose: "Since the lady of feeling must stress her non-verbal sensibility through emphasizing the limited nature of verbal communication" (Todd 125), Helen must be content with silent symbolism. Just as the maternal role empowers and also restricts freedom, these silences free Helen from a binding patriarchal language and remove her from a sphere of political action.

Helen's self-imposed exile at Wildfell Hall is an attempt to escape the immorality of her husband. His peers turn a blind eye to his immorality, yet the villagers at Ferndale cannot ignore rumours of Helen's immorality. Helen's diary, by dwelling on the injustices done to her by Huntingdon, questions double moral standards. The latter half of the novel, however, seems to bring Helen back within a social milieu and to obscure the existence of such questions. Perhaps because of the disjunctive nature of the text, critical judgement on Markham's frame varies. Terry Eagleton considers that "what is literally and imaginatively central to the novel [Helen's diary] is formally decentered

by the novel's curious structure, which throws into formal predominance the courtship: the stereotyped Romantic saga of the cold mistress and the baffled lover" (135). For Eagleton, the romance is the novel's failing. George Moore, however, celebrated "the atmosphere of a passionate and original love story" (Moore quoted in Gérin 14). Gérin, in 1979, supports his judgement, These critics, though, share their evaluation of this section of the novel as romance.

### **Romance Fiction**

Holman and Harman define romance as referring to works which are "relatively free of the more restrictive aspects of VERISIMILITUDE and expressive of profound, transcendent, or idealistic truths" (436). Many elements of sentimental fiction fit closely within this broad definition of romance. Indeed, many links exist between the two genres. First, characterization is not the primary concern of the "romancer" or the writer of sentimental fiction (Frye 304; Todd 3). Women characters are defined according to a dark/light dichotomy of those who represent pleasure and those who represent duty. Both play curious roles as ideological discourse:

In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the

threats to their ascendancy. . . . Yet there is a genuinely "proletarian" element in romance too which is never satisfied with its various incarnations. (Frye 186)

Sentimental fiction has, similarly, been shown to offer advice to women on how to behave, but also, through the illustration of difficult situations women are placed in, to raise questions about the situations created.<sup>10</sup> To delineate sentimental and romance into separate genres may thus seem futile. However, a basic distinction between the two genres exists: the sentimental offers advice by example and romance chronicles a mythic cycle of life and death. The distinction between the two genres is meant to be a representation of Helen and Gilbert's relationship. The switch to romance reveals the placement of Helen's narration to be a masculine attempt to control the untenable within her story. In other words, in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Brontë makes a gender distinction between these two literary genres: the sentimental uses a female narrator to reiterate a female experience, and the romance uses a male narrator to chart his response to that experience. This gendering within the text is an example of the negotiation between male and

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<sup>10</sup> For example, Charlotte Temple (1794) by Susanna Rowson places the female protagonist in a position that can only be corrected by her penitent death. The fact that she dies as punishment for being seduced when she had no protection or support around her raises the question of social complicity in her seduction as well as in her death.

female roles and the ways these shape each other.

The main effect of this gendering is not on the women characters who, in both sentimental and romance are polarized into the moral and the hedonistic: Helen remains the "good" character and Eliza Millward and Jane Wilson replace Annabella Lowborough as the "bad" characters. The primary difference in characterization between the sentimental diary and the romance frame occurs in the development of Gilbert Markham, who is not "a man of feeling." Although he shares characteristics of a sentimental character in that he is emotional and passionate, his motive for those feelings is not tenderness but jealousy. When Gilbert attacks Lawrence because he suspects Lawrence's relationship with Helen is illicit, his description of the scene suggests nervousness and lack of self-control:

. . . impelled by some fiend at my elbow, I had seized my whip by the small end, and--swift and sudden as flash of lightning--brought the other down upon his head. . . . not without a feeling of savage satisfaction. . . . [and] with a muttered execration, I left the fellow to his fate, and clapping spurs to my own horse, galloped away, excited by a combination of feelings. (134)

"Savage" seems an appropriate adjective to describe this scene of the hero vanquishing his foe. The hero of a romance



would feel this way, although his feelings would not necessarily be so compromised by immaturity. The romance hero is associated with libido, the "desiring self" (Frye 193). And, indeed, Gilbert's actions are motivated by the impossibility of satisfying his desire. Those actions fit the terms of the romance quest, which "is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality" (Frye 193). While Gilbert's quest for Helen is not as filled with activity as romance quests normally are or, rather, is filled with the activity of reading, it follows the romance pattern:

First, the agon or conflict itself. Second, the pathos or death, often the mutual death of the hero and monster. Third, the disappearance of the hero. . . . Fourth, the reappearance or recognition of the hero. . . . (Frye 192)

The conflict Gilbert must face in his section of The Tenant is over his love for Helen and his jealous belief in her immoral love for Lawrence. His desire for her, which is built on the challenge she represents, is erased by his own devaluation of the challenge; that is, he believes she is easily won by men which both negates her value (based on her exclusivity) and his prowess in overcoming her prejudices against him. His fight with Lawrence is symbolic of this conflict within himself. The inner turmoil not often given

to romance heroes is externalised here and Gilbert almost kills Lawrence. Gilbert's error in believing Helen to be a fallen woman and his disloyal behaviour disillusion the reader with the romance hero. Our disgust necessitates Gilbert's disappearance from the text during which he supposedly learns his error and atones for his behaviour--a type of purgatory. Gilbert's disappearance occurs when the diary is inserted at the moment Helen's innocence is about to become apparent even to him. Helen's voice replaces one that is shown to be immature.<sup>11</sup> Helen further enforces Gilbert's absence from her by insisting that he leave her alone for six months:

'Now Gilbert, you must leave me . . . and you must never come again.'

'. . . But . . . in six months you shall hear from Frederick precisely where I am; and if you still retain your wish to write to me, and think you can maintain a correspondence all thought, all spirit . . . disembodied . . . unimpassioned . . . [then] write. (405; 408-9)

This edict is followed by Helen's return to her husband and her husband's death, both of which make Gilbert feel he cannot approach her. He does not disappear from the text (in

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<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Gilbert's voice belongs to his later life--theoretically when he has matured--, while Helen's voice is that of the young girl who is learning and formulating her self on the basis of her experience. Brontë exiles Gilbert for some time.

fact, it is Helen who is mentioned less regularly); however, he cannot continue his quest, and he disappears from her life. By causing Gilbert's removal from her life, Helen has not only exerted an influence and control over Gilbert that enable him to grow morally but she has also asserted her primacy in his life, re-casting herself as the goal of his quest.

Having recognized his disloyalty and done penance, Gilbert has only one obstacle to overcome before the fulfilment of his desire: her wealth. Only the rumour of Helen's impending marriage spurs Markham to seek her out, long after the six months are up:

And could I bear that she should think me capable  
. . . of presuming upon the acquaintance--the love  
if you will--accidentally contracted, or rather  
forced upon her against her will, when she was an  
unknown fugitive, toiling for her own support,  
apparently without fortune, family, or connections  
. . . [to] claim a share in her prosperity, which,  
. . . would most certainly have kept her unknown  
to me for ever? (477)

The problem Gilbert faces is that, as a romance hero, he must act, but in order to achieve his goal he must depart from romantic principles. Nobility requires him not to remind Helen of their connection because she would be lowered in status by association with him.

Only an accident or, rather, Providence seems able to overcome the class structure in The Tenant. Gilbert is about to turn away from Staningley when Arthur, previously used by Gilbert to draw himself more into Helen's society (93), recognizes him and brings them together once more. He is an appropriate instigator because he has been the means, the rationale, by which Helen could leave his father and also the means by which Gilbert could approach his mother; he resides in both narratives easily. At Arthur's prompting, the marriage of the sentimental and the romance begins. Brontë has Helen teach Gilbert proper sentimental feeling when she says: "'I should not have offered myself to one too proud to take me, or too indifferent to make his affection outweigh my worldly goods'" (485). Money and class are not issues for her (as her narrative has shown). Instead, Helen's sentimental motivations come from "right feeling": morality and a belief in human goodness.

Gilbert learns to understand Helen's principles and to accept a mingling of the romance tradition with sentimental philosophies. Helen combines those principles with action and the action persuades Gilbert: she speaks to him of their "affection"; she picks a winter rose letting the symbolism of her action speak her proposal; she throws the rose out the window when he seems to "misunderstand" or "despise" her offer. These actions enable Gilbert:

'You misunderstood me cruelly,' I replied and

in a minute I had opened the window again, leaped out, picked up the flower, brought it in, and presented it to her, imploring her to give it me again, and I would keep it for ever for her sake, and prize it more highly than anything in the world I possessed. (485)

And he does. Helen is the rose Gilbert possesses through marriage.

This conclusion satisfies both sentimental and romance fiction's expectations. The victim, Helen, has been rescued from misery because potential human goodness is actualised. The hero receives his prize for successfully completing his quest--his bride, who has even undergone the romance genre's standard "removal of some stigma" in the death of her previous husband (Frye 193). Gilbert's letters to J. Halford reassert the novel's compliance with societal expectations of such fiction: that all will end in marriage. Helen's sentimental diary has not had a chance to reabsorb the protagonist into the existing social structure because the last few pages are ripped out. The likelihood of such reabsorption seems limited as the pages Gilbert does not see most certainly record Helen's growing and adulterous love for him. The absence of these no doubt tumultuous pages ensures Brontë's movement of characters back into a conventional plot and aids in the integration of sentimental and romance which is complete in this common goal.

Helen's refusal to share her interpretation of her relationship with Gilbert leaves us with only Gilbert's reading of it. After allowing Helen to tell her story powerfully, Brontë takes her out of the role of protagonist and makes her responsible for the switch of narrators; if we are to reach completion, we must hear the male voice. Brontë tears away Helen's voice through the character's tearing of the diary. She replaces the woman's voice with Gilbert's. He provides the conventional framework of societal moral regeneration within which we read Helen's problems. He also provides the resolution. This decision is jarring to a twentieth-century reader. Helen has a realistic voice and her self-silencing is not consistent with the reader's impressions of the character. The lack of textual unity undermines a simple reading of the text as "conservative": a woman's voice is heard. At the same time, Helen's silencing, which is more of that "lack of textual unity," also signals the refusal to hear a woman's voice in a sphere other than moral. Helen's diary offers a moral interpretation of marriage up to the point where she begins to examine her relationship with Gilbert, which is decidedly immoral although understandable. If Gilbert were to read Helen's comments on the beginning of their relationship, he would be faced with the reminder of its immorality. His relationship with Helen, not Lawrence's, was scandalous and must cause him to think about the relativity of his moral standards.

Gilbert recognizes this when he comments:

[at] any rate, I would have given much to have seen it all -- . . . but no, I had no right to see it: all this was too sacred for any eyes but her own, and she had done well to keep it from me.

(401)

Gilbert chooses "sacred" as his adjective because he elects to see their relationship as divinely sanctioned. However, his words actually encourage the effacement and the invisibility of the female character. Is this a failing in the novel? Does "the slamming of Helen's bedroom door against her husband" actually involve her shutting that door against herself?

Placing the diary that records emotions as they are experienced within the more conventional letters that recall the since-resolved torment of the observer shuts the door on the possibility of seeing Helen's plight as indicative of the way society treats women as if they were unequal. Nonetheless, Brontë retains, within her ideas of morality, a movement toward the articulation of women's concerns. The difference between the two genres illustrates the difference in gender construction--Brontë having split her narrators by gender. Helen's silence is a choice and actually prevents even a congenial male voice from appropriating an important part of her narration.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall splits the story into

halves of sentimental and romance fiction. The sentimental diary exposes the potential horrors of marriage while the "Romantic fable" offers its potential happiness. The very conspicuousness of the split allows a rift of silence to enter an ideological discourse about the position of women in the nineteenth century. The debate over whether silence or politically explicit language is more effective in a struggle for sexual equality may never be resolved. Neither may the question of the containing or liberating tendency of women's sentimental fiction be answered. However, in The Tenant, Brontë's stylistic "inconsistencies" allow her a wide range of techniques with which to address her concerns about the moral disintegration of society and women's responsibility for maintaining a proper environment for their families: that is, her concerns about women's responsibility for their own lives.



CONFRONTING THEORIES OF INDIVIDUALISM:

MISS MARJORIBANKS.

Introduction

Victorian values for women such as domesticity, female purity, and continuity were expressed, debated, and formed, in part, through the forum of domestic fiction. As an example of domestic fiction, Margaret Oliphant's Miss Marjoribanks demonstrates the subtlety of that formation and expression. The protagonist, Miss Lucilla Marjoribanks, is a complete embodiment of domestic ideals and she powerfully directs the social relationships in her community, Carlingford. We might expect such a character to espouse the division into separate spheres of women who provide caring and support and of men who provide rationality and a legalistic sense of justice. Lucilla does not disappoint us; she does support the ideal of separate spheres, although perhaps not as strongly as she undermines it.

Her conservatism is subversive in several ways. First of all, this powerfully feminine character combines masculine and feminine characteristics. Secondly, she carries her feminine practice into the masculine sphere and demonstrates that femininity is useful there. But Lucilla really undermines ideas of separate spheres when she questions the power of the individual. Theories of individualism have, as their goals, autonomy and separation from others. These theories began to gain prominence during

the Victorian period, one result being the privilege granted to men's lives. Individualism, further, ignores the practice of women's lives, which would instead offer ideals of community. Miss Marjoribanks values the feminine but, as her use of masculine characteristics shows, she does not value either at the expense of the other. Through her domestic novel, Miss Marjoribanks, Oliphant participates in the debate over women's roles and definition of the self through the creation of a character for whom gender integration is beneficial.

### **Domestic Fiction**

Domestic fiction provides a medium for discussion of the cultural issues of women's roles. As the genre where fiction interacts with domesticity, its regular features can be taken as illustrative of areas of cultural value and concern. One such concern is the formation of women characters into representative domestic ideals: in other words, a type. As Ann Romines says of one of Harriet Beecher Stowe's characters, ". . . even for the most sympathetic observer, it is almost impossible to perceive a woman such as Aunt Roxy as a distinguishable individual" (5). This blurring of individual personality occurs in Oliphant's characterization of Lucilla Marjoribanks as a moral exemplar. Other characteristics of the genre aid in this blurring. They include "flat" characterization and plots

that generally culminate in marriage. Most scenes in domestic fiction connect with the home, while world events, economic crises, and philosophical issues barely figure. As a consequence, reading domestic novels is comparable to reading for style or tone, rather than for plot, because the plot is already well-known. This blurring of potentially individual characters and unique plots into repetitive rhythms need not, however, be considered an artistic failing. Authors, like Oliphant, are "minor" because they use genres that we devalue. Oliphant's generic choices may not answer twentieth-century concerns, but she surely chose a genre which was developed within the literary tradition for important cultural reasons.

Unoriginality is the major criticism of Oliphant's prose which is full of "repetition, minor inaccuracies of detail, looseness and diffuseness of structure, clumsy padding and stretching" (Colby 44). But, just as Lucilla is not as conventional as surfaces might indicate, so stylistic repetition need not be merely an error. Repetition has a comedic effect in Miss Marjoribanks and it also produces a rhythmic text. The repetition of Lucilla's pat phrases, such as "'the grand object in my life is to be a comfort to papa,'" (Miss Marjoribanks passim) focuses Mrs Woodburn's mimicry. Oliphant uses the comedic aspects of repetition as part of the parody of domestic novels with which she begins Miss Marjoribanks and which Mrs Woodburn's ironic sketches

highlight. Some writers have suggested that the parodic nature of the text eases as the novel progresses, indicating that "Oliphant feels some affection for her own creation" (O'Mealy 48).<sup>12</sup> Whatever the cause, the reduction of sharply parodic elements in Miss Marjoribanks draws attention to the other effect of repetition, the production of a rhythmic text. That rhythm echoes the rhythms of domestic life and writers like Romines show how characters entwined in housekeeping rhythms use those rhythms as a means of "self-expression" (14).

Romines' argument for the room for self-expression within repetitive household tasks is an argument for the individuality of tasks not normally granted that status. This argument rests on differences that spring up in each repeated action: one housekeeper always places red flowers in the kitchen; another uses yellow ones in the livingroom. Difference marks individuality, which gives the activity value despite the task's unpleasantness or monotony. Repetition in Oliphant's novels is not meant to represent or give individuality to the world Oliphant is portraying and repetition is more overt in Miss Marjoribanks than in the other novels in this series.

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<sup>12</sup> See also Colby 44. Parody also ensures that feminine ideals do not replace the masculine ideals at the top of the hierarchy. When re-asserting the value of a femininity that has been neglected or marginalized, the feminine may be valued in such a way as to denigrate masculinity. This approach continues to isolate men and women into separate spheres.

Miss Marjoribanks provides the reader with a rhythm of familiarity and within that familiarity provides a definition of self that is different from individualist notions. Many of Lucilla Marjoribanks' crises feel familiar and the result is generally the same: someone threatens the social balance of Carlingford, Lucilla rights the difficulty, and her motives are misunderstood. With this plot, Oliphant chooses to characterize her heroine by strength of mind, by practicality, and by singlemindedness, and thus creates an unusual female protagonist for a novel whose resolution is marriage.<sup>13</sup>

Lucilla Marjoribanks' strategy is to deny any overt expression of individuality,<sup>14</sup> and the repetition then may be intended to obscure the "distinguishable individual" (Romines 5). The reoccurring scenes of crisis management and the characterization that consists of reoccurring phrases obscure the character and the life that one would think the text intended to illustrate. This novel of an exceptional woman is, in fact, a novel of the rhythms of Victorian life.

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<sup>13</sup> See Siefert, Dilemma of the Talented Heroine (1977) for a discussion of the talented heroine whose ambitions are compromised by social duty and who suffers conflict over those ambitions (1-19). Singlemindedness may well be Lucilla's most unusual characteristic.

<sup>14</sup> Individuality for a woman character involves a stated difference from societal norms, as defined by the critical tradition. When a woman is an individual, she is not valued as such. Instead, her individuality marks her as eccentric. Women writers and reformers suffered from this inconsistency (Warhol 163).

Oliphant has Lucilla self-consciously create her persona on the basis of models she finds in domestic fiction, in political economy, and in the Bible. The presence of those models creates a rhythm of tradition. As Oliphant's novel complies with domestic fiction's generic constraints, it becomes one among others like it. Furthermore, reading such fiction is itself a repetitive act, even a ritual, so domestic fiction is a rhythm even as it encompasses certain rhythms.

The rituals of domestic fiction provide a sense of continuity and security: "these strategies . . . [are] an effort to respond to, replicate, continue, interrogate, and extend the repetitive rhythms of domestic life, which emphasize continuance over triumphant climax" (Romines 293). This process often demands that the "vaunted individual" be "subordinate" (Romines 293). The genre, in other words, echoes Lucilla's concerns: continuity of community and relationship.

### **A Cross-Gendered Definition of Self**

Miss Lucilla Marjoribanks' preeminence in the novel named after her suggests that her characterization best demonstrates how Oliphant defines self. And from the beginning of the novel, Lucilla's characterization certainly offers a striking definition. Before her arrival home from school, no one had managed to take all the promising

elements of Carlingford and create a community: "you might have gone over Grange Lane," says the narrator, ". . . without encountering a single individual capable of making anything out of it. Such was the lamentable condition . . . of society in Carlingford" (43). Within weeks of her return, the community revolves around Lucilla. She has Evenings which, though not parties (100), bring Carlingford society together in her home once a week. Most of what occurs in the town's social life happens in Miss Marjoribanks' drawingroom. Her drawingroom is the physical representation of her sphere of influence and is therefore ingeniously decorated to suit her colouring (68). Lucilla's influence in the community increases as the evenings become "an institution" (124), particularly because "the matrons" recognize that "it was not for Them [the men], but for the good of the community in general that Lucilla exerted herself" (126). Just as her influence emanates from these Evenings in her home, so Miss Marjoribanks' self-presentation reflects her awareness of the importance of femininity to the maintenance of this domestic force: she dresses chastely (100), utters social truths (82), and does "her best to please Them" (125). The delicate green of Lucilla's parlour, her propriety, and her awareness of her community all point out the character's femininity as an essential aspect of her representation.

Clothing and social etiquette, however, are not the

only representative features of femininity. Domestic heroines also tend to have delicate features and health.<sup>15</sup> But, curiously enough, Lucilla is "a large girl"; she does not conform to this expectation of a heroine:

She was not to be described as a tall girl--  
which conveys an altogether different idea--but  
she was large in all particulars, full and well-  
developed, with somewhat large features, not at  
all pretty as yet. (26)

An anonymous person even suggests that Miss Marjoribanks may one day be "grandiose." Remaining always in control of the situation, Lucilla does not faint, sicken, or even neglect her food: "Lucilla," Mrs. Chiley notices, ". . . had strength of mind to eat her dinner" (118). Lucilla's health confronts notions that feminine weakness is attractive as does Oliphant's scornful representation of Mrs Mortimer's nerves: "Mrs Mortimer . . . now that she had done with

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell's Wives and Daughters (1866) demonstrates the normative state in fiction of women's ill-health and, indeed, its beautifying effect. The protagonist of that novel, Molly, is considered more beautiful after a near-fatal illness: "'I was so sorry to hear how ill you had been! You are looking but delicate' . . . [but he thought that she] 'had grown into delicate fragrant beauty'" (624-25). In Miss Marjoribanks, Mrs Chiley, Mrs Mortimer, the late Mrs Marjoribanks, and Lucilla's aunt all suffer from "nerves," all are or have been married, and all are genteelly helpless. Through them, Oliphant parodies their fictive role and the assumptions of those who find illness attractive.



fainting, manifested an inclination to cry" (88).<sup>16</sup>

Why not small and delicate? or at least "tall"? Why is Lucilla so unusually healthy? Integrating masculine descriptions of her feminine body, Miss Marjoribanks crosses boundaries of gendered physicality. Hélène Cixous' theories offer a parallel to Lucilla's boundary crossing.<sup>17</sup> She is one of those "women, who more or less strongly, inscribe their masculinity" (Cixous, "Sorties" 81). This physical difference emphasizes Lucilla's emotional fortitude which becomes, in turn, the most important signifier of her difference from social conceptions of domestic behaviour. When Mr Cavendish, the most eligible Carlingford bachelor, is interrupted when attempting to propose to Lucilla, she only regrets that she does not get to hear him say the words and that she does not get to refuse him (186). She has wanted explicit control over the conclusion of her story; the interruption has prevented her demonstration of that control. Mrs Chiley's consternation over having intruded on Cavendish accentuates Lucilla's unemotional response.

Lucilla's size, practicality, and imposing presence contradict her feminine surroundings and goals. They call to mind Victorian definitions of unwomanliness. Whereas women

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<sup>16</sup> See Bram Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture (1986) for a discussion of the cult of the invalid.

<sup>17</sup> Christine Stewart pointed out Cixous' theories to me during conversations we had in and after seminar meetings from Sept.-Dec. 1992.

in the theatre were considered to manifest female sexuality--Vashti of Charlotte Brontë's Villette (1853), for example--researchers such as Robin Warhol (1989) have shown that women who publicly sought reform were taunted with being unwomanly (163) because their activities moved them into the masculine sphere of politics. That Lucilla, even at a physical level, is considered unfeminine connects her with these masculinized women. It also raises questions about her aspirations for the power to affect her society and about her femininity's impact on that goal of social change.

#### Domestic Politics

Lucilla has certainly achieved power in her community. Carlingford is run within a domestic social sphere. Lucilla is a force in this domestic sphere and, without a husband to limit the range of her command, she becomes a potentially radical figure. Oliphant is careful, however, to contain the radical within the conservative. Her inclusion of both masculine and feminine physical and emotional characteristics within the female protagonist mitigates Miss Marjoribanks' directly revolutionary potential because the act of inclusion works silently within the system instead of overtly against it. Similarly, Lucilla mouths overtly conservative sentiments but her movement towards social poer contradicts the implications of her conservatism. Oliphant's representation of that social power as effective

even within a political sphere offers the twentieth-century reader, at least, a complex picture of the interaction between Victorians, their society, and their social language. Textual representations of Lucilla's interactions in that political sphere mirror her integration of masculine and feminine characteristics; she demurely denies and accepts the power of her social influence:

"but I have no vote, and what can a girl do? I am so sorry I don't understand politics. If we were going in for that sort of thing, I don't know what there would be left for the gentlemen to do."

(373)

But Miss Marjoribanks does understand and any ideological innovations this text makes originate from her knowledge. Lucilla's type of knowledge is displayed in an article Oliphant wrote three months after the last instalment of Miss Marjoribanks in Blackwood's. Mrs Oliphant published, also in Blackwood's, what amounts to a book review of John Stuart Mill's On the Subjection of Women (1866). This article addresses one of the issues Oliphant addresses in Miss Marjoribanks, namely women's negotiations for power within their conservative culture's definition of power. In "The Great Unrepresented," she both critiques and reacts to his suggestion of the vote for female householders. As she says, this group "is not the most interesting section of womankind" being made up of individuals who "are old enough

and stout-hearted enough to take care of themselves" (369). The irony throughout the opening pages of this article makes it quite clear that Oliphant is not overly impressed with Mill's argument that enfranchisement should not be universal but should be relayed to those women who are most like men: "Mr Mill's pity, nay, rather his sympathy and sense of justice beams upon us. We are not, as other women, cared for and ministered to. It is, then, only justice that compensation should be given us, and that we should be as other men" (370).

Mill is suggesting, according to Oliphant, that the vote is one indication of one's societal worth. Women who do not have the vote are therefore not worthy. On Liberty, while not mentioning women per se, draws attentions to arguments that Mill makes which do not take into account the situation of women and the working-classes, most notably, in his ideal of the individual's range of authority: "[o]ver himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign" (Mill 69). As Oliphant's article makes perfectly clear and as domestic novels show, only female homeowners have the privilege of being sovereign within the class of women. Women with families, particularly with husbands, are not sovereign: Mrs Woodburn contemplates the amount of work she has to do to help her brother win the election "all with the horrid sense upon her mind that if at any time the dinner should be a little less cared for than usual, or the

children more noisy, Woodburn would go on like a savage" (374); she may control the house but she answers to him. Similarly, Mill argues that only behaviour that affects society should be subjected to societal scrutiny; this too lacks validity when seen in context: women, indeed most people, cannot generally pursue actions that do not affect the people around them. Unlike most people, women rarely have the luxury of even pretending otherwise. Virginia Woolf's later exclamation of the need for privacy in order to create comes after a period in which women did not have privacy and created anyway. Oliphant notes that Mill considers a woman has "been deeply, fundamentally injured by not being made a man"; perusal of On Liberty supports her observation. Her response to this consideration--"the most unqualified contradiction" (376)--and her assertion that "[o]ur ambition is not of so small a character as to be satisfied with the privilege of voting for members of Parliament" (379) speak in a voice similar to the one Lucilla Marjoribanks uses. Lucilla goes further than this article of Oliphant's by procuring the election for her candidate despite her lack of desire for the vote.

During the campaign to elect Mr. Ashburton, Lucilla demonstrates an understanding of this male sphere of political life. Somehow she manages to convince her father and other leading men of the community, committed conservatives, to sit on Mr. Ashburton's committee. She

achieves this surprising victory in two steps. First, she convinces Mr. Ashburton not to discuss his economic and political principles. Then, she talks about him as the right man for Carlingford and convinces many men that Mr. Ashburton "'is not going to be Prime Minister; and I have always heard you say . . . that it was not opinions, you know, but a good man that people wanted'" (369). Lucilla has practically forced Colonel Chiley, the gentleman she addresses here, to think seriously about her candidate.

She plans a campaign aware of the fact that the unusual can be presented as usual by manipulating persona, diction, and personal associations. She converts her father in this manner. When he first tells Lucilla that Cavendish has returned to run for Parliament, Lucilla's complete conviction that her candidate is the right one convinces him to look more closely at Ashburton: "Lucilla, though taken unawares, had not given in, or shown any signs of weakness. And the effect . . . was such that he took up the paper again" (359). The re-examination leads Dr Marjoribanks to the conclusion that the right man cannot be the wrong man if he leaves you no opinions to attack: "when a man does not state any very distinct principles, it is difficult for any one . . . to disagree with him" (377). Mr Ashburton's steady quietness only supports Lucilla's confidence and strengthens the effect of that confidence within the community: "Mr Ashburton was a more satisfactory sort of person . . . a man

whom people knew everything about" (358). No wonder Dr Marjoribanks ends up "in a kind of odd incipient agreement with Lucilla" (358) and Colonel Chiley feels "that the sentiment which she had quoted from himself was a very just sentiment" (370). Lucilla advocates nothing radical and so achieves results that are radical indeed. They are revolutionary because they indicate change from habits of a lifetime. The knowledge acquired from within her domestic life enables her to understand the way people will react and respond to politicians. This type of understanding has been described as feminine because it emanates from experiences women are generally in a position to have. The connection between politics and social interactions, between masculine and feminine, is not a mystery for Miss Marjoribanks.

#### "[N]onexclusion" and the Practical Self

Lucilla Marjoribanks' ability to act effectively in both political and social settings comes from the inclusion in her behaviours of various characteristics despite their gendered significance. She is politically powerful because she understands how feminine and masculine spheres border on each other. She can enter both spheres because she knows that the differences between them are socially determined. Implied in her "'there would be nothing left for the men to do'" is her consciousness that if women did have the vote, the world's power structure would change. Lucilla's

knowledge makes her an effective "presence" because she practises "the nonexclusion of difference or of a sex" (Cixous, "Sorties" 85 [my emphasis]). This ability to incorporate behaviours despite ways in which they are gendered is not an essential ability, but rather a social one that women can give themselves "permission" to exercise (Cixous, "Sorties" 85). Lucilla gives herself this permission to integrate masculine qualities when she ignores the fact that difference might prevent her from behaving as she wants, even though she implies that it does. She incorporates male or female qualities on the basis of their usefulness to her, not on the basis of their gender, and thereby creates a practical self.

But beyond being aware of the practical benefits of cross-gendered behaviours, Lucilla gives permission to herself--that is, to incorporate her into the behaviours she chooses. Lucilla starts, as Cixous suggests, "with the permission one gives oneself" ("Sorties" 85); that is, Lucilla recognises her need to maintain her social standing in Carlingford because that standing provides her power. She further realizes that the best way to maintain this standing is to be indispensable to all aspects of life in Grange Lane. She makes her life provide her with what she wants and her insistence benefits everyone around her. Carlingford is better off for Lucilla's organization and her position, as indispensable social leader, pleases Lucilla.



Domestic Values

Lucilla's organizational skills are successful because her integration of male and female "ways of knowing" appeals to both men and women and so enlists their support. Whether Lucilla's motives are manipulative or not, she is a person who practises "nonexclusion." She recognizes relationship with the other; she recognizes interconnectedness and interdependence; she realizes that others "are members of a network of relationships on whose continuation they all depend" (Gilligan 30). Realization of a social network of relationships upon which the community depends for its continuous survival is a realization that people must interact despite their differences. In a world that rhetorically suggests that men and women inhabit different spheres, Lucilla recognizes that some differences are gendered and that community must interact despite them. She sees the worlds of business and of home as mutually dependent as are people within each of those worlds; she understands that men and women are mutually supporting.

Since interconnection and mutual support are domestic values, Mrs Woodburn recognizes them when she thinks to herself that if she and Lucilla were united "they would carry all before them" (372). Mrs Woodburn's recognition that her support or opposition would affect the strength of Lucilla's position comes rather late in the plot. Until this point, Mrs Woodburn, isolated in unhappy domesticity and

lacking community, has been a disruptive force in Carlingford. Her mimicry, based in her unhappiness, makes her peers fearful of her and prevents the growth of a support system that would ease her unhappiness. Lucilla, on the other hand, recognizes very early on that her presence in Carlingford's social network is crucial to the maintenance of that network. She also recognizes that ostensible infallibility is the necessary condition for the success of her "social mission." If she is shown to be wrong, her influence in Carlingford will fade and the town will be left without proper society. While the definition of proper society may seem, from the regularity of Lucilla's "Evenings," to be quantitative, a matter of enough social occasions, the lack of social gatherings indicates a different social problem. Despite a good deal of irony in the narrator's earlier lament about this lack, social gatherings, by this point in the text, create a network among the women who do not seem to have many other opportunities to develop connections. "Selfish husbands," social decorum, and familial commitments keep these women relatively isolated in their homes, unable to give or receive support.

"Society," in other words, becomes synonymous with "community." Lucilla's mission is more significant than numerous parties given for the elite because those occasions give people a chance to interact and to form a network of

community support. Consequently, when she knows Cavendish is in danger of being exposed as a fraud, Lucilla does not rejoice or further his downfall despite having cause to do so; instead, she rescues him without letting anyone else realize what she is doing:

If it should really come to pass that an adventurer had been received into the best society of Carlingford. . . . the judgment which might overtake the careless shepherds who had admitted the wolf into the fold was much more in Miss Marjoribanks's mind than any question of abstract justice. (172)

Societal concerns as well as maintenance of her own power contextualize Lucilla's manoeuverings: relationships must be maintained.

As we have seen in the discussion of Helen Huntingdon, Carol Gilligan's research into the psychological development of men and women indicates that men, generally, value separation (or individuation) and women value connection. The consequence of this difference is that men concentrate on justice and women concentrate on caring for others (Gilligan 50 ff). Behaviours that develop from these goals are both beneficial in that they offer autonomy and supportive environments respectively; they may also have drawbacks--namely aggressive behaviour and self-destructive self-sacrifice. Although the application of these values

tends to be gendered, the values are not intrinsically masculine and feminine. Instead, they are complementary and concentration on either value, to the exclusion of the other, only accentuates the negative results of that value. Gilligan describes the third stage of development as the one in which integration of those values occurs. Integration, as we have seen with Helen Huntingdon, is Gilligan's definition of maturity: "starting from . . . the different ideologies of justice and care, the men and women in the study come, in the course of becoming adult, to a greater understanding of both points of view and thus to a greater convergence in judgment" (167). Caring and practical justice are concerns Lucilla incorporates. Her sense of justice as practical, not "abstract," means she will not entertain Cavendish's future proposal because of his deceptions, but her sense of connection means that she will help him avoid detection. The result is not the characterization of a woman who is purely virtuous or purely mercenary. In this context, Lucilla's integration of qualities that enable her to maintain relationship cross gender boundaries just as the description of Lucilla's body as both masculine and feminine does.

Lucilla's relationship with her father displays her negotiation of cultural stereotypes which define femininity, any female desire to be powerful, and female caring. She repeatedly avows that "the grand object in [her] life is to be a comfort to papa," which is as it should be for a

daughter in domestic fiction (56). Yet, the object of Lucilla's life cannot be only to look after her father because she does a great deal more which might not be considered looking after him. The "Evenings," for example, are a revision of Dr Marjoribanks' dinners, but they are now Lucilla's. Dr Marjoribanks has been known to leave the party quietly: "The Doctor . . . had gradually veered into a corner, and from thence had finally managed to escape downstairs to his beloved library" (124).<sup>18</sup> Her duty to her father, instead of limiting Lucilla as one might suppose, gives her the freedom to influence a large social circle because his presence legitimizes her refusal of marriage and provides her with a chaperon who does not interfere with her plans, who even takes pleasure in her success.

Nonetheless, Lucilla's concern for his well-being and her grief over his death show that she does not consider her father a pawn in her social campaign either. As she grows older and further away from the girl who alarmed her father with "her sobs of . . . emotion" (31), she becomes solidly connected to the genre of domestic goodness. She does care

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<sup>18</sup> While Lucilla's father muses that it would have been "a much more sensible arrangement . . . if he had had [Tom], instead of his sister . . . who no doubt would have known how to manage [Lucilla]" (63-64), his influence no doubt contributes to her adeptness. In school Lucilla switches from fiction to political economy in an attempt to interact with him better: "'Papa thought me too young . . . but, dear Miss Martha, you will let me learn all about political economy and things, to help me manage everything'" (33). She realizes that her romantic imaginings are not suited to her father's temperament and adjusts.

for her father, but her concern for him gives her room to manoeuvre socially and she sees no difficulty in combining both goals. Although a critic might not describe Lucilla Marjoribanks as a realistically drawn character, she could not be described as simplistic. Lucilla incorporates her needs with others': she acknowledges that the justice that would condemn Cavendish, for example, is ineffectual unless placed in the context of social needs. Like Helen Huntingdon, she integrates qualities often seen as opposed to each other:

While an ethic of justice [masculine] proceeds from the premise of equality . . . an ethic of care [feminine] rests on the premise of nonviolence. . . . In the representation of maturity, both perspectives converge . . .

(Gilligan 174)

Convergent perspectives mean that autonomy is possible but separation is not. Brontë in The Tenant portrays convergence which rests on the complementarity of men and women. As the parallels between Helen Huntingdon and Lucilla Marjoribanks suggest, Oliphant follows Brontë's psychological portrait in Miss Marjoribanks as Lucilla's self develops as a result of convergence. That these two women writers share a particular psychological understanding implies its currency for their culture. If so, this pattern of development provides an alternative to an individualism that constructs an atomistic

self--that is, a person whose responsibilities are self-oriented instead of other-oriented.

### **Individualism and Community**

In Lucilla's self-construction, personal rights and social responsibility co-exist, then, in an understanding of self that avoids the negative aspects of atomism such as separation. Lucilla Marjoribanks "exists," in her mind as well as in ours, as a social creation; she is aware of social models and follows them. Oliphant draws her reader's attention to the books Lucilla is reading to highlight this awareness. As a result, Lucilla does not understand how to be an atomistic individual, although the concept is central to her society's liberalism. Mr Cavendish behaves atomistically. He flirts with Barbara Lake without any thought for the consequences. He runs away from Carlingford when difficulties arise, not worrying that he leaves behind his sister, Mrs Woodburn, to answer for him. But his sister's reaction to him counteracts his supposition that he has no effect on others: "'If you were to let things be said, and give people an advantage, think what would become of me'" (191). Cavendish's dependence on Lucilla's generosity further illustrates his mistake in believing himself separate from his peers. Lucilla is generous to him because she believes he is connected to his peers. Learning to "rule" Carlingford from her books of political economy,

Lucilla is aware of social forces shaping her life and that of her society. Similarly, she is a character about whom we read to see how she shapes and is shaped by social constraints.

Other female characters in Miss Marjoribanks also interact in complex ways with the constraints they live under but have a very different experience from Lucilla's. Their difficulties originate in society's devaluation of their supporting roles even while it demands that these roles be performed. This novel demands its readers recognize that women are expected to conform to two ideals, that of individualism and that of community, but these two ideals are constructed in such a way that they cannot both be achieved by any one person. Further, achievement patterns are gendered. Cavendish expects his sister to act as he does, as an individual; she should not hold him responsible for their difficulties, nor should she expect him to help her. She, however, cannot act as irresponsibly as he does. She is mired in domesticity. Domesticity may lead to a definition of community wherein the practice of women's lives translates into a privileging of social interaction. Individualism, on the other hand, fuels an understanding of self as developing apart from other people. Related to the idea of male and female spheres, a separation exists between individualism and community which leads to that conflict between valuing one's self and valuing others' selves.



All too easily this dualistic view which separates community and individuality acquires hierarchical overtones when it is represented and one view is privileged over the other. It is women like Mrs Woodburn who are left out. She, the mimic who keeps Carlingford in fear of her accurate and unkind portrayals, thinks of Lucilla as particularly privileged:

it would be very foolish of [her] to marry, and forfeit all her advantages, and take somebody else's anxieties upon her shoulders, and never have any money except what she asked from her husband. (374)

Mrs Woodburn's cynical comment not only indicates the state of her married life but also suggests that marriage is not as idyllic as conventionally presented. Her sourness reminds the reader that the community sees Lucilla's social power, however strong, as tied to her singleness; people assume that that power will change or diminish once she marries. Now that Lucilla has not married despite numerous predictions that she will, Mrs Woodburn is no longer certain of the inevitability of Lucilla's being caught in that smaller network of connection.

Since the smaller community of husband and children regulates Mrs Woodburn's life to an abusive extent, it is not surprising that she sees Lucilla as living outside of community. But, like all who indulge in social guesswork

about Lucilla's psychic make-up, she is wrong. Lucilla has formed an autonomous self without seeing the need to remove it from domestic principles of community. Oliphant mocks self-gratifying presentations of domesticity, but she endorses the principles behind domesticity. As Oliphant supports domesticity, her character, Miss Marjoribanks can take on everyone's anxieties without internalizing them. She is able, accordingly, to help Mrs Mortimer marry Archbishop Beverley even though she has expected his proposal herself, which was "enough to have driven a young woman of ordinary mind half out of her senses with disgust and indignation" (216). But, as she says, "' . . . it is not [Mrs Mortimer's] fault if she knew him before, or if he was in love with her,' . . . And . . . the crisis was at an end" (216). As this sacrifice shows, marriage will not be Lucilla's first experience of living in community. Marriage for Miss Marjoribanks can only be a sharpening of focus, not a change of direction. She will therefore be unlikely to forfeit her advantages; she has too much experience.

Lucilla wishes to control Carlingford because of her interest in maintaining community. To do so, she ignores the social rhetoric that refuses to acknowledge the gender differences it has constructed in its separation of the theory of individualism from the practice of community.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Although individualism and community consist of both theory and practice, individualism is represented more as theory and community as practice.

The division of women and men into different spheres results in a privileging of one way of living over another. Lucilla refuses to acknowledge the validity of that privileging and fulfils her "woman's" role as if it were valued. Lucilla privileges others, however complex her motivations for doing so might be.<sup>20</sup> Her choice to do so involves ignoring the ideal of the individual: she separates individualistic motivations completely from her own. She does nothing and says nothing that would place her in a male world of overt political action, a world of individuals.

### Integration

Indeed, Lucilla's marriage to Tom Marjoribanks may be construed as a further act of integration. The little description we have of Tom before his abrupt departure for India and after his precipitous return indicates that he has matured in the ten years in between the two events and become an interesting match for Lucilla. Initially, however, Tom seems the least likely candidate. In the beginning of the novel, she greets news of his arrival with: "'Tom Marjoribanks! . . . Of all people in the world, and at this moment!'" (51). Her anxiety proves well-founded; he is

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<sup>20</sup> Sections of the text demonstrate the irony directed at the heroine's inability to see anything but her grand design at the expense of others (Blackwood's 688). Excerpts in the Blackwood's edition, which do not appear in the Virago edition, are particularly ironic. Unfortunately, I do not yet know Oliphant's level of involvement in these revisions.

physically and socially clumsy and he nearly causes Lucilla to fumble at the beginning of her social mission. More importantly though, her consent to his proposal of marriage would involve the end of Lucilla's plans. "'I am called to the bar, and I can work for you, and make a reputation'" (95). Miss Marjoribanks hardly wants someone to work for her; she prefers to work for her father and for Carlingford and, through them, for her own reputation. Tom sees neither Lucilla's genius nor its transformative potential. He wants Lucilla to be responsible for what happens inside the home his work will have provided and then to play the stereotypical female role by acting as his moral guardian: "'and if you will not have me, I will not answer for the consequences. If I go off to India, or if I go to the bad --'" (96). Tom, having received Lucilla's firm "no," ignores her advice about packing and creates "a succession of dreadful thumps" jumping on his trunk (97). Even his inarticulate anger is a sign of his immaturity which contrasts clearly and ironically with Lucilla's calm magnanimity.

Tom's removal to India and immersion in the difference of that exotic land<sup>21</sup> seems to have a beneficial effect on him. Although he is quite as clumsy as ever, he is more articulate, a symptom of his "unlooked-for perspicuity"

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<sup>21</sup> The construction of India as exotic "other" and even as a container for English impulses towards nonconformity comes from Christine Stewart's presentation on Dec. 2, 1992.

(474) which is so surprising as to cause Lucilla to sit down "in consternation." Tom has become "clear-sighted" enough to understand a social situation and decisive enough to manoeuvre through it. Although these developed characteristics indicate Tom's refinement over the past ten years, they do not necessarily distinguish him from Lucilla's other suitors. His similarity to the other suitors is especially clear when he misunderstands Lucilla's plans and, consequently, tries to offer her a patriarchal alternative: "now you are in my hands I mean to take care of you, Lucilla" (484). He soon realizes his mistake and that recognition distinguishes him. Furthermore, his ability to be emotional sets him apart from Mr Cavendish and Mr Ashburton. Tom cries when Lucilla indirectly agrees to marry him: "and though he had such a beard, and was twice as big and strong as he used to be, there were big tears in the great fellow's eyes" (476). He has brought the feminine into his life. This integration of feminine and masculine characteristics makes him an acceptable complement to the controlled, but not unemotional, Lucilla.

### Theory and Practice

Lucilla's marriage to Tom is useful to her in a way that conventional marriages are not. His feminization and her retention of name and power both underline the integration of qualities by which Lucilla is defined. This

integration is complex and puzzles her friends. Lucilla moves so completely within a domestic ideal and yet is such an unusual person that other characters do not believe her sayings because they contradict her personality. Her personality is distinctive but each of her pronouncements indicates a lack of self. Her peers and her readers have difficulty believing her because we conflate eccentricity with individuality and maintenance of social relationships with self-sacrifice. Lucilla does not see the conflict: she finds her self in her connections with others. She theorizes an ideal of community out of her lived and read experience and then intensifies those experiences further, practising her theory. Her success at manoeuvring Carlingford society into alignment with her plans only reinforces her beliefs that social interactions prevent social calamities. Ten years after she has saved Mr Cavendish from exposure as a fraud by bringing him face to face with his enemies, Lucilla does not need to resort to such dramatic strategy to help her independent candidate face her conservative friends. Now her network has been built and prevents crises from developing beyond her control. The success of one venture gives Lucilla the experience to refine her strategies.

This characterization of Lucilla Marjoribanks creates a paradox. Living community thoroughly makes Miss Marjoribanks an individual, a "woman of genius." She reverses the theory/practice alignment: here, practice leads to the

articulation of a theory which is further practised. By theorising about the community aspects of her life she, one of the few people in the novel who does reflect (hooks 80), makes that desired "individuality" a by-product, not a goal, of her own communally based theory. Lucilla truly lives in community and acknowledges that fact: and that acknowledgement of community makes her unique. Lucilla takes individualism to its logical extreme of separation from lived experience by ignoring it in her lived experience and, thus, she deconstructs it. Individualism is proven a myth. People are never pure individuals; they always shape and are shaped by the people they live with and read about.<sup>22</sup> Mrs Woodburn and Miss Marjoribanks have an impact on each other; each is shaped by the experiences the other subjects her to. The existence of community may be made rhetorically invisible, but this discursive absence does not prevent community from exerting influence.

In domestic fiction and in Miss Marjoribanks, the articulation of moral understanding as a complex, interconnected negotiation of relationship is also an articulation of a theory of community. Further, a theory of community and moral understanding both derive from practice, from lived experience, whereas individualist practice derives from a commitment to the theory. Practice comes before theory in community, theory before practice in

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<sup>22</sup> See Karen Burke LeFevre, Invention As A Social Act (1987).

individualism. bell hooks (1992) speaks of "our lived experience of theorizing" and the possibility of practising "theorizing without ever possessing the term" (hooks 80). hooks' commonsense conception of theory links it to responsibility:

[the] privileged act of naming often affords those in power access to modes of communication that enable them to project a definition of their actions that may obscure what is really taking place. (80)

In the nineteenth century (and now) a privileging of the words "unique" and "individual" obscures the communal context for individuality. Oliphant depicts the reality of individual women's lives as she understood it. She shows women characters in half-antagonistic meetings in the snow as they seek to do what is right for the community and for their families (373-5). She creates scenes in which women share silent moments of acquiescence to plans that will keep community intact and their place in it continuous: "Lucilla, with an intonation that was not intended for Mrs Chiley [said], 'and I always stand by my friends.' . . . And she had her reward." For on this night, Mrs Woodburn rises to the occasion, helps Lucilla keep her "Evening" on track and, in the process, parodies the Archdeacon who threatens the cohesiveness of their community: "Whether it was that little speech of hers which touched the mimic's heart, or [not] . .



. [s]he shook off her languor as by a sudden inspiration, and gave such a sketch of the Archdeacon as up to this day is remembered more clearly in Carlingford than the man himself" (173-74). When Mrs Woodburn uses her talents, like Lucilla, in the service of her community, the result is spectacular.

But Oliphant does not assert the superiority of feminine domesticity over masculine individuality. Despite providing a space for women to practise power, domesticity is oppressive. It demands women's compliance and their subservience. Women are not given much freedom to choose to incorporate masculine behaviours into their lives. Because individualism is associated with a male sphere, women have very little autonomy and this lack disables women as much as separation disables men. When Miss Marjoribanks reverses the practice and theory of society, therefore, this negative aspect of domestic ideology is denied. Her autonomy lies in her commitment to domestic principles; the act of commitment is enabling.

Because a margin of resistance exists within any ideological structure,<sup>23</sup> Lucilla's commitment to domesticity further undermines domesticity. Lucilla's total compliance is surprising and ends up jolting the reader's

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<sup>23</sup> Christine Stewart and Jenny Lawn in a presentation on Dec. 2, 1992 highlight this aspect of ideology. Raymond Williams also points this out when he talks about dominant, residual, and emergent aspects of ideology.

expectations more than any incident of resistance that might end with the heroine's repentance. If we compare, for instance, Lucilla Marjoribanks with Elizabeth Bennet, we recognize that the discontent with the system that Elizabeth feels does not prevent her marriage to Darcy. She adjusts herself to extract the best from the system, but she does not challenge it. She matures and, consequently, becomes a moral leader in her society. Lucilla does not need to mature in the same way. She never deviates from her plan to live with her father and to marry ten years later. She always says the correct thing. The only discontent she articulates is only that her peers do not live up to her standards, though those standards might be difficult to uphold: "she had found out that the most powerful exertions in behalf of friends not only fail to procure their gratitude, but sometimes convert them into enemies" (338). Lucilla's perfect decorum and her refusal to articulate any discontent or to complain of any difficulties act like silence. Her refusal to speak becomes a place in which women's potential is protected from patriarchal interpretations. When Dr Marjoribanks tells Lucilla that Cavendish is coming home to compete in the election, for example, he expects her to realize that she deserves this setback, not having "'kept [her] own place'" (357). Even though all her plans are threatened by this news, Lucilla reveals very little of her turmoil. Her refusal to acknowledge upset or defeat

confounds her father who sees her strength as a reason to consider supporting her candidate. She does not share her problems with him, so he cannot interpret her difficulties to be the weakness that should have confined her to her place.

Miss Marjoribanks, in other words, achieves power and subversion by ignoring possible techniques of power and subversion. Her explicit compliance with all the rules of patriarchy makes both the rules and the system look ridiculous at the same time as it confirms her as an autonomous person. Oliphant denies external and internal power structures when she has her protagonist use phrases that are seemingly devoid of any meaning but are nonetheless socially sanctioned. The articulation of such phrases obscures Lucilla, just as Oliphant obscures herself in her Autobiography where she says, in regard to her decision to marry her cousin: "It is not a matter into which I can enter here" (Autobiography 28). Certainly Oliphant's reticence comes from her belief that it would not be proper to discuss something so personal nor to sell memories, but in addition, her refusal to speak about this issue, her silence, leaves an aspect of her life untouched by ideological meaning. She removes her life from the interpretation created by the reader's ability or need to construct meaning from her words within ideological constraints. She may not escape her own construction of those words, nor may she escape her reader's

construction of what she does or does not say, but she is safe from our divining her intent. Reading Lucilla as an embodiment of subversion rests on this understanding of manipulation of language. Lucilla may not offer her peers, nor Oliphant her readers, a clear sense of what lies behind the persona, but in Miss Marjoribanks someone clearly does exist who has goals larger than running Carlingford's social scene: "[she] was a Power in Carlingford . . . but there is little good in the existence of a Power unless it can be made use of for some worthy end" (395). Short glimpses of that complex self leave aspects of her character inaccessible, irresolvable, and "free."

Oliphant's characterizations of women question the validity of feminine stereotypes while upholding the authority which invests women with those stereotypes. Oliphant's Lucilla Marjoribanks is powerful because she is stereotypical. While Miss Marjoribanks' silence is not a viable strategy for modern-day negotiators of women's roles, the challenge of the text resides in the spaces it obscures. Nancy Armstrong talks about domestic fiction as the genre middle-class women used to address those challenges in their quest for power:

domestic fiction actively sought to disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics and, in so doing, to introduce a new form of political power. This power emerged with

the rise of the domestic woman and established its hold over British culture through her dominance over all those objects and practices we associate with private life. (3)

In this fashion, Armstrong grants women a great deal of agency for the separation of the domestic sphere from the business or public sphere. While I would not go so far as to suggest that women engineered domestic ideals, they probably recognized that some power could be achieved by complying with their new roles. Domestic fiction communicates those roles; the genre becomes authoritative, just as Lucilla Marjoribanks does, by obscuring the gaps between reality and role models: they "seized the authority to say what was female," or at least to refine the definition (Armstrong 5). That type of power and that redefinition of self is a matter of negotiation; it belongs to and differs from the place that gives rise to it. Any theory of the power inherent in community must take into account the rigid definition of community. The limitations of the domestic sphere are simultaneously mocked and upheld in Oliphant's work: another example of negotiating cultural ideology. These negotiations resemble our own negotiations in this century even with our own theories.

"[Theory] is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary" (hooks 80), not even feminist theory. Theory can have such effects, however, when it is based in women's

lives and pain, when women create their own theory. In the process of reading many women who write about ideology as being influenced by and influencing domestic novels, I have come to realize that Oliphant, that other women writers, and increasingly, that women critics write theory. All these women write their lives even when they aren't writing autobiography and all--consciously or not--seek to discover a woman's voice to write in. The theoretical debate about the power structure that informs domestic novels and characters is a necessary part of any feminist critique, with or without any resolution,<sup>24</sup> because it is a commitment to multiple readings. Feminist critics commit to possibility, not to definition, of the selves we encounter in reading the text. Miss Marjoribanks is named for a character who has feminine and masculine characteristics, who silences personal motivation in her community-based actions, and who refuses to separate herself from her community. Such characterization reflects the social nature of women's writing, of Oliphant's writing, which resists definition of self. Instead, Oliphant's novel is theory--theory about women and their place within culture--; Miss Marjoribanks is potential and possibility articulated somewhere in the silence.

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<sup>24</sup> See Judith Lauder Newton, Women, Power, Subversion (1981) and Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction (1987).

### CONCLUSION

In her 1992 Ms. Article, bell hooks talks about theory that is not named:

When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. . . . Yet . . . the possession of a term does not bring a process or practice into being; concurrently one may practice theorizing without ever possessing the term.

(hooks 80)

hooks neatly deflates any ideas that being able to theorize conveys superiority. Her discussion questions the appropriateness of forming canons based on new theories let alone on theories that have survived the old canon. The process involved in unnamed theorising--hooks' "reflecting"--describes The Tenant and Miss Marjoribanks; in these novels, women characters are depicted thinking about how they can manipulate the structures that define their daily schedule in order to serve themselves and their community best. Titles like mother, wife, and single social leader both constrain and enhance women's freedom. Consistently, Helen and Lucilla engage in a continuous series of complex negotiations with their culture, particularly with cultural definitions of their role.

In both The Tenant and Miss Marjoribanks, domesticity

is held in high esteem. The texts suggest that domestic values are not just for women but also for men. Brontë represents men as suffering great temptations due to exposure to degenerate behaviour but she does not suggest that men are inherently bad; rather she suggests that environmental pressures outside the home are difficult to overcome. When challenged about the extent she protects her son from the temptations that are considered a man's duty to overcome, Helen replies:

"as for my son--if I thought he would grow up to be what you call a man of the world . . . even though he should so far profit by it, as to sober down, at length, into a useful and respected member of society--I would rather that he died."

(57)

To make her point stronger, Helen compares the upbringing given to girls and boys. She criticizes the assumption that boys are more able to avoid temptation than girls (57). She thus notes that even though society prepares a space for women that is more conducive to their moral development than the space assigned to boys, this generosity is due to a belief in inherent female inferiority.

Oliphant, in Miss Marjoribanks, follows Brontë's conception of the domestic sphere as moral but also concentrates on the practical benefits men can derive from such a conception. Domesticity involves daily interactions



with people and sees attachment to those people as necessary for the maintenance of society. Oliphant manufactures events in which the men of the town rely on Miss Marjoribanks' judgement for social and political matters. Lucilla empathizes with people; she learns what they want by listening to them. That knowledge is invaluable in maintaining Mr Cavendish's social standing and for running Mr Ashburton's successful political campaign. Her experiences benefit these men, and her studies of their experiences--reading political economy--are partly responsible for her strategies for the maintenance of power among Carlingford's women.

Domestic ideology emphasizes connection, while the philosophy that fuels the masculine sphere emphasizes autonomy signified by expressions of individuality. Neither Brontë nor Oliphant privileges one goal over another. In fact, they reveal the potential pettiness and maliciousness of domestic life; Ferndale and Carlingford are full of rumours and gossip. Women spread slander and pass incorrect moral judgements. These texts do not gloss over the shortsightedness that may exist in communities of women, but aim instead for a combination of masculine and feminine qualities.

Marriage represents the complementarity of feminine and masculine in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. Brontë's deployment of narrative genders two distinct genres; Helen

Huntingdon's diary follows sentimental ideals, while Gilbert Markham's letters follow the conventions of romance. The marriage of Helen and Gilbert symbolizes a marriage of the genres and produces realist fiction. Similarly, this marriage represents the integration of feminine and masculine spheres. This integration can only happen because the individual characters have recognized the potential benefits of integrating their complementary characteristics.

Yet the marriage, the time at which this integration is achieved, also signals the removal of Helen's voice. Despite the recognition that people benefit from both masculine and feminine characteristics, the woman's voice is the one which disappears into the man's home life. This contradiction exemplifies the complexity of social interactions; spaces for women that are radical exist inside spaces that are conservative.

The presence of silence in Miss Marjoribanks only confirms the intricacy of women's negotiations. Here, silence is not so much an absence of words as an absence of a fuller sense of the character. Oliphant seems to deny the reader access to Lucilla's analyses of the people she encounters, her thoughts, her emotions, and her motivations. All the information we have about Lucilla fuels a belief in her characterization as stereotypical. But that typicality enhances the experience of community because reading the novel means participating in the community of readers and

recognizing the characteristics of domestic fiction that this novel adheres to. Here silence seems to protect the character from interpretation; Lucilla's freedom rests in not having her thoughts judged.

In Miss Marjoribanks, Oliphant places Lucilla in a seamless framework of domesticity protecting her character's thoughts from ideological interpretation even while her actions comply with domestic ideals. That Lucilla is indispensable to Carlingford clearly confirms the effectiveness of domestic power; even within domesticity and femininity, Lucilla is powerful across lines of gendered behaviour. At the same time as it is depicted as beneficial and positive, Lucilla's femininity is depicted as a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics. On physical and emotional levels, Lucilla incorporates masculinity into her persona. Her integration of these characteristics enables her effectiveness.

Oliphant's characterization of Lucilla directly challenges the philosophy of individualism. In individualism, autonomous personhood is the goal of development. Individualism provides the rhetoric that justifies the division of masculine and feminine spheres. These spheres, as we have seen, really break down into one place for men's individual achievement and another place in which women support men in their struggle for individual achievement. Clearly, individualism supports the idea of a

masculine sphere; it articulates and grants validity to what is already happening. The challenge to the philosophy centres in Lucilla's achievement of individuality. She is an individual, however, because she is immersed in community. The concept becomes ridiculous when its successful attainment clearly depends on dependency and connection among members of the community. Yet the presence in Miss Marjoribanks of women characters who suffer in a way Lucilla does not means that femininity is not expected to replace masculinity as the most viable social rhetoric. Lucilla has two benefits they do not: she is single, and she incorporates masculine autonomy into her personality. Being single allows her to develop over a period of time in which she is not subject to her husband's desires. Autonomy means that Lucilla will never be completely dependent and consequently her relationships with men will be based on mutual dependence.

The characters and genres used in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and in Miss Marjoribanks interact with their authors' nineteenth-century contexts and, consequently, produce fiction that is overtly located in its world. Critics and readers, aware of new historicism and aware of their own personality present in reading, articulate this interaction regularly. And yet, the difficulty of finding copies of these books--or, indeed, critical responses to them--suggests that critics must continue to pay attention

to the contexts of marginal writing. We need also, of course, to recognize that the philosophies that underpin Victorian fiction are forces in our own. Men and women live in different, socially-constructed spheres. Men's lives are still more highly valued on the basis of their individuality. Women's lives, as Nadya Aisenberg and Mona Harrington discuss in Women in Academe (1988), are still characterized as existing apart from men's world of action although supporting it, even when they hold professional positions within that world: "Around this central theme of support for men or male-run institutions, any number of subplots are possible, but not another major plot. The marriage plot preempts alternatives." This subordination continues to be the case "even among women who have come of age after the advent of the woman's movement" (Aisenberg 6-7). Brontë and Oliphant are clear that women are not innately domestic or supportive and that social expectations form the women characters and the plots we read. As novelists, they are aware of both masculine and feminine traditions of writing and also of the ways those traditions can complement each other; they interact with their culture through their novels. Brontë's and Oliphant's complex negotiations with cultural definitions of women offers an understanding of female self-definition to readers of The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and Miss Marjoribanks.

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