Anette Fossmo

Building space

The role of space in coming of age novels: *Evelina, Emma* and *Jane Eyre.*

Master's thesis in Allmenn litteraturvitenskap
Supervisor: Paola D'Andrea
June 2020

Master's thesis

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
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Kunnskap for en bedre verden

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Abstract

This thesis explores the dimension of space in three female coming-of-age narrative, respectively *Evelina, Emma* and *Jane Eyre*. The argument is that space could indeed be the main contributor for driving a plot forward; how the heroines experience and relate to space is crucial for the heroines to acquire the growth they need for a *Bildungsroman* plot. In examination different templates of space presented in the different novels, this work explore how Evelina gains knowledge throughout her experience different social spheres, while the home-loving Emma needs to learn how to become the true mistress of the house, and not just acting the part, the orphan Jane Eyre on the other hand, searches for a home and builds identity and self-confident as her journey unfolds. All though these three heroines have different base of departure and conditions, they have one thing in common, they are all growing through their experience with space.

Sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven undersøker bruken av rom i tre ulike dannelsesromaner, representert igjennom *Evelina, Emma* og *Jane Eyre*. Oppgaven argumenterer for at bruken av rom er hovedårsaken til at handlingen går forover i et *Bildungsroman* narrativ. Dette blir gjennomført ved å undersøke hvordan de ulike fremstillingene av rom er presentert i de ulike romanene. Evelina tilegner seg kunnskap igjennom hennes første møte med de ulike sosiale steder hun støter på under sin reise i London, mens Emmas hindring ligger i å ikke bare fremstå som husets overhode, men også lære seg hvordan hun skal oppføre seg i rollen. Foreldreløse Jane Eyre på sin side, bygger sin identitet og selvtillit parallelt med hennes søk etter et hjem. Som denne oppgaven skal vise, til tross for ulike utgangspunkt, har alle tre heltinnene en ting til felles: opplevelsen av rom er grunnleggende for at dannelsesforløpet skal utfolde seg.

Foreword

While working on this, there are a few people that deserve a little attention. I have received much support during this period, both emotional and by receiving valuable feedback. On a more general basis of my educational run, I want to thank Sylvi Karin Andreasen, who has always been helpful in answering every question and inquire I have had. I also want to thank Martin Wåhlberg for giving me an interest for the 1800-century literature and always being supporting and helpful, even after he stopped being one of my regular lecturers. As for my master thesis, I want to thank Knut Ove Eliassen, for leading me on this journey by recommending *Evelina*. I want to thank my family for always showing interest and listening to me talking of my work, even though I know the detailing of the matter goes in one ear and out the other, I appreciate the act of love. Thank you to my best friend, partner in crime and boyfriend. Who supported me in pursuing an education in literature at the age of 25, all though I know he would rather have me working a fulltime job, so he could sell the apartment and buy a house - preferably yesterday. I also want to thank my fellow student, for giving me constructive and helpful feedback, and just being good companionship throughout the year. And last but not least, big thank you to my supervisor Paola D'Andrea, who has given me detailed and good feedback, guided me on the right path and helped me so much with this thesis. Thank you so much for your support and patience during this time, not only in conjunction with my work, but also with personal matters. I will always be grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

My purpose in this thesis is to offer an examination of space dynamics in three key texts from the female *Bildungsroman* of the British tradition, namely Frances Burney's *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the world* (1778, henceforward *Evelina*), Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). The aim is to explore how the female protagonists experience with, and relate to, the notion of space, and how their narrative of personal development is catalysed by the interaction with different places and environments. The study will offer, for the first time, a joint analysis of space determinants in the three novels, on the basis of a combined approach that includes two separate scholarly strains: on the one hand, phenomenological theory; on the other one, narratology. These three novels serve as a foundation inasmuch as they offer three different perspectives on space. Indeed, Evelina, who allegedly belongs to the lower class, travels and experiences her first encounters with social life in the big city of London. Emma, who is already a part of the upper class, is restricted in mobility because of her secluded life of the countryside. As for Jane Eyre, who is both from the countryside and from the lower class, she does travel –but her movements are limited to the rural areas. The goal is to see how the different dealings with environment and space influence female progress of growth, in an arc of time from 1778 to 1847, from the Georgian era to the Victorian age, and if their development according to the relation of space differs somehow.

In what follows, we shall try to answer a main research question that can be thus formulated**:** how do the three female heroines of *Evelina, Emma* and *Jane Eyre* experience and relate to space, and how does space influence their narrative of development?

STATE-OF-ART

Evelina: or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the world, was at first published anonymously but became very popular. Frances Burney's respect for her father caused her to fear his reaction, if he were to find out she was the writer, which is why she preferred keeping her authorship a secret. However, the fear was uncalled for, as he proudly recognised her work when she was later revealed as the author.[1] The novel quickly gained popularity in London, finding its way to the literary circles of Hester Lynch Thrale, Edmund Burke and Dr Johnson.[2] The approval of the latter triggered the success of the novel, comparing its author with other talents like Richardson and Fielding.[3] The novel received several public reviews, one of them being the April issue of *Monthly Review,* stating "this novel has given us so much pleasure in the perusal, that we do not hesitate to pronounce it one of the most sprightly, entertaining, and agreeable productions of this kind"[4]. As one can acknowledge, the book made sensation just as much in the general public as it did in the literary circles of the time.

Jane Austen was an admirer of Burney and acknowledged the influence of her writing. However, as an author Austen experienced a much more difficult career than her model. Unlike Burney, she published her work in her own name and did not gain significant attention in her time, apart from few reviews in literary magazines. Especially with *Emma*, which was her fourth novel in order of publication, Austen obtained a total of ten reviews, which is by far the major number in her career. The novel was also the biggest publication of Austen, printing two thousand copies. Unfortunately, these copies did not sell out, notwithstanding the attention surrounding the novel.[5] One contributor to the scholarly debate about *Emma* was Sir Walter Scott, whose unsigned review was issued in the *Quarterly Review* in March 1816:

> The author's knowledge of the world, and the peculiar tact with which she presents characters that the reader cannot fail to recognize, reminds us something of the merits of the Flemish school of painting. The subjects are not often elegant, and certainly never grand; but they are finished up to nature, and with a precision which delights the reader.[6]

[1]Spencer, «Evelina and Cecilia», 24.
[2] Troide and Cooke, «introduction», x.
[3] Spencer, Evelina and Cecilia», 25.
[4] Anonymous, «Review of Frances Burney, *Evelina,* Monthly Review, No. 58 (1778) », 288.
[5] Fergus, « The Professional Woman Writer», 18.
[6] Scott, "Review of *Emma*, in *Quarterly Review*, vol 14 (1816), 40.

Scott acknowledges Jane Austen as a great author, praising her ability to encapsulate a realistic and ordinary setting, which results in an accurate picture of the everyday life.

Published in the fall of 1847, under the male pseudonym Currer Bell, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* was an immediate success. The first print of the novel sold out in only a couple of months, and was so popular that only a few months later the novel was published in America as well. The popularity of the novel was so extensive that the third edition did go to print only after a short while, receiving a number of reviews both in England and in America.[7] Although successful, the novel had a mixed reception, in terms of both praise and critique. While some admired Brontë for depicting a realistic heroine, which was not deprived of fault, others criticized the novel for being unmoral and its narrator for being too enraged. Another widespread topic in the reviews was the speculation surrounding the gender of the author, which some rightly concluded to be a female and not the male Currer Bell.[8]

In recent times, the three novels under consideration are still object of discussion in scholarly debate. Especially in the last decades, they have often been scrutinised under a feminist lens, in their potential for offering a critic to patriarchy. *Evelina*, *Emma* and *Jane Eyre* are also novels of interest in the ongoing debate concerning the female *Bildungsroman,* while the adaptation to other media, such as miniseries and movies, has introduced a whole other direction for literary critics to examine these works of fiction. One of the Norwegian contributors to the discussion on the female *Bildungsroman* is Gerd Bjørhovde, who in *Fra barn til kvinne*[9] compares Jane Eyre's developmental journey with fairy-tales, due to the novels blend of different opposites, such as realism and the supernatural. The scholar also stresses that "*Jane Eyre* er en romantisk kjærlighetsfortelling, men den er også en historie om opprør, om en kvinnes kamp for selvstendighet og egenverd."[10] In her view, the novel is a fully feminist work, displaying female fight as its main topic. One of the few Norwegian scholars specialised in Jane Austen, Marie Nedregotten Sørbø discusses the issues and challenges of translating Austen's works in other languages, with special focus on the Norwegian.[11] However, the critic pays little no none

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[7] Brennan, *Brontë's Jane Eyre,* 97/98.
[8]*Ivi,* 99–100.
[9] In English: *From child to woman*. My translation.
[10] Andersen et al, Fra barn til Kvinne, 65. Quotation in English "*Jane Eyre* is a love story, but it is also a story about rebellion, a females fight for independence and self-worth." My translation.
[11] In her work *Jane Austen Speaks Norwegian.*

attention to *Emma,* only mentioning the novel in passing. Seemingly*, Emma* has not been given as much attention as other works, such as *Pride and Prejudice.* In her master's thesis, entitled *Evelina: En følsom samfunnssatire?* Liv Mildrid Melkild Avset defines Burney's novel as "a sensible satire of society". This view is grounded on the combination of opposite impulses that are blended together in the text. The novel results thus in textualizing the two main paradoxes as in Avset's title: sensibility and satire.[12]

The dimension of space has not been given significant attention in approaching these three novels, except for few raids into sociability and domesticity by a limited number of scholars. Amongst these, Susan Morgan raises the question of how the characters experience home. In her own words: "Once a definition of home and of nation includes the imaginative geography required for women to acknowledge and then to participate in shaping a larger community, the way is cleared in *Emma* for the happy ending."[13] Morgan points at two diametrically opposite notions of home as the reason why the Knightley brothers end up with marrying different women; John is representing what Morgan calls a "domestic tyranny", and needs as such an entirely dependent wife: someone who has no problem with the husband speaking and making choices for her, and who can make his home safe in contrast to the chaotic world outside. George Knightley, on the other hand, appreciates life outside of home, and chooses therefore a wife who would never agree on staying home to keep the house in order for her husband.[14] Another scholar who extends his treatment of *Emma* to the topic of space is Thorell Porter Tsomondo, who in "Temporal, Spatial, and Linguistic Configurations and Geopolitics of Emma" discusses how the arguments between Emma and Knightley (which all take place in a small closed space, to underline the discomfort of Emma); the visit of Frank Churchill and the arrival of Mrs. Elton do all "disturb Highbury's routine by drawing new boundaries and frustrating old ones''.[15] As Tsomondo continues, "[t]hese temporal sequences are Austen's means for expanding Highbury's geographical and psychic space"[16]. In other words, the author is providing spatial indications to help the reader seeing beyond the borders of the small village,

[12] Avset, Evelina: *En følsom samfunnsatire?,* 89–92.
[13] Morgan, Adoring the Girl Next Door, 42.
[14] *Ibidem*, 42.
[15] Tsomondo, "Temporal, Spatial and Linguistic Configurations", 192.
[16] *Ibidem*.

towards bigger geographical and socio-political problematics of the time.[17] However focussed on spatial concerns, this approach has the limit of using space only in support of temporality.

Domestic and public spaces are addressed by Karen Lipsedge in her analysis of *Evelina*. According to the scholar, Burney's attention to the domestic premises, interiors and public spaces is an aspect that emphasises the heroine's inexperience and naïveté, as well as her lack of social status. Evelina's movements in space stand for her progress in redeeming her social status. One example that can stand for all is Evelina's self-positioning in Mrs. Beaumont's drawing room: while at the beginning of her stay she opts for a marginal window-seat, in the end she moves more and more confidently towards adopting a central position in the same room. Lipsedge puts the accent on the coherence between self-placement in the domestic space and self-perception in terms of social, family and emotional status: two aspects that change, in tandem, throughout the course of the novel.[18]

As for *Jane Eyre,* Carol Senf investigates the different spaces that the novel puts on display in a contribution entitled: "Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and the personal politics of space". For Senf, the issue of Jane's identity is connected not only to the main domestic spaces she inhabits, such as Lowood and Thornfield, but also to reference points beyond her own direct experience, like India, which the novel mentions in passing as the extreme exotic frontier. [19] As we read in Senf's analysis: "Jane is part of all that she has met, her life shaped by what was taking place not just in the domestic spaces she inhabits or even the England where all of the novel takes place but the world of the British Empire."[20] On the ideological level, the scholar also recognizes that different spaces provoke specific forms of struggle on different groups, such as slaves fighting for their freedom or, in Jane's case, women fighting for their personhood.[21]

[17] Tsomondo, "Temporal, Spatial and Linguistic Configurations", 201.
[18] Lipsedge, *Domestic Space in Eighteenth-Century British Novels*, 80.
[19] Senf, «Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and the personal politics of space",136.
[20] *Ivi*, 153.
[21] *Ibidem.*

NARRATOLOGY & SPACE

GASTON BACHELARD

This study examines the ways in which female protagonists relate to and experience with space in the three novels under scrutiny. The main hypothesis underlying here is that space represents the basic and most crucial factor within discourses of female *Bildung*. As will be shown, it is the abundance, or on the opposite pole the absence, of movements in space that helps the narrative moving forward. The first challenge in such an approach has been situating my scholarly analysis within a theoretical framework placing space at the centre of its concerns. Indeed, literary criticism of the past century has touched upon issues of space, but only occasionally, and always in a subordinate manner to other factors (first in the list, time).

From Bakhtin onwards, space has received some scholarly attention: the definition of the *chronotope*, in his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (1975), defines the new analytical tool (literally "time-space") as such:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully though-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic *generic* significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time.[22]

In other words, the core setting of the narrative consists of both time and space vectors. However, from the very beginning Bakhtin puts the stress on time as the primary parameter in in his perspective. The secondary aim of this thesis is to show how space can work fully and independently as a crucial scholarly tool on its own. To keep Bakhtin's formulation, the idea is to look at the "tope", leaving the "chrono" aside.

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[22] Bakhtin, «Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel", 84–85.

While connecting space and time together as part of the same mechanism, Bakhtin deprives space of an independent value. The aim of this work is to show that space in itself can be the major factor brining a narrative forward.

In this regard, the field of phenomenology, with its accent on perception and experience on the part of a single subject, seems to offer a more suitable approach. The scholar who most systematically has showed how space plays a central role in literary criticism is Gaston Bachelard. One of the pioneers in the field of phenomenology of art, the French philosopher has been the first to offer a notion of space as an aesthetic tool in both the plastic and the literary medium. In a collection of his essays entitled, tellingly, *The Poetics of Space* (1957) Bachelard paves the way for the introduction of space as a structuring criterion of the narrative discourse, within a phenomenological perspective that accounts for our cognitive experience as perceiving subjects. Indeed, phenomenology is concerned with the ways in which the objects and situations marking our experience in everyday life acquire a meaning, through the filter of consciousness. On a basic level, an accessible definition of this philosophical approach can be borrowed from Robert Sokolowski, who in his *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000) describes its main enquiry as "the study of human experience and the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience."[23]

According to Bachelard, the main dynamic of a narrative discourse lies in the interaction *in* and *with* space. Places and environments are textualised in such a way as to foreground the identity of a perceiving subject, which can be measured on the basis of the sense of familiarity, belonging or alienation or belonging towards space. Bachelard draws on a notion of space that is already connoted in terms of domesticity and daily routine. In doing so, the scholar insists on the cluster of the 'house/home' as the focal centre for the perceiving subject, while ascribing different values to a constellation of different markers (e.g. chests, nests, wardrobes, corners), which he examines on both the literary and the symbolical level.

[23] Sokolowsky, *Introduction to Phenomenology,* 2.

This emphasis on the domestic dimension leads Bachelard to devote two out of ten chapters in his essay to the subject of the house. As he writes, "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home."[24] Childhood memories are a crucial part of the subject's experience with the house: our home is the first space we explore and experience. As we grow up, we do nothing else than re-experiencing the images and space of the house. For the scholar, our notion of the house, along with the broader concept of space that it underpins, is directly tied to memory. We do not experience the house temporally; we experience it through "dwelling places"[25]. The latter category makes reference to images of the house or of a space that are familiar to the subject and deeply embedded in their memories. A certain kind of image presented in the literary work can evoke the memory of a number of "dwelling places" in a reader.[26] For instance, when reading about a summer house, the reader is suddenly aware of their own holidays, and is throwed back to the memory of their leisure home. Space re-evokes primary memories, which can remove temporarily the subject from the present back to their own past. In these experiences, the traditional concept of time is erased. This is why in Bachelard's view, the knowledge of dates and narrative timelines bears no sense or significance at all.[27] For Bachelard, the crucial aspect lies rather within the processes that trigger our memory and daydreams: namely, space-related associations. In this sense, we do not experience the image of the house temporally, but always through the dimension of space, which defines the background for our sites of intimacy.

Bachelard's second chapter, entitled "House and universe", defines the house as the archetype for the "dwelling places", which always evoke feelings of comfort, security and well-being. The house, or the home, is often represented in the midst of a storm. One of the examples Bachelard proposes is Henri Bosco's *Malicroix* (1948), where the house has been given the name of "La Redousse".[28] In this novel, Bachelard recognises the coincidence of the image of the mother and the image of the house, an association that stems from the protectiveness of the house. In other words, the house channels the image of the womb, and act in its textual existence as a surrogate maternal figure. Indeed, through protection, the house acquires human virtues.[29]

[24] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, transl. Jolas, 27.
[25] *Ibidem.*
[26] *Ivi*, 28.
[27] *Ivi*,31.
[28] *Ivi*, 64.
[29] *Ivi*, 66–67.

In this sense, the house represents a border: not only between inside and outside, but also between what is safe and what is not. The comfort of the house is inside, where the subject feels sheltered. For Bachelard, these are the most important qualities of the house. As the scholar proceeds to investigate the other markers of the domestic space, he argues that these in one way or another also bear the qualities of the house. In other words, the chest, nest, wardrobes and corners, are in the end, a variation on the main theme of the house.

Bachelard's scholarly work on space and narrative proves crucial in this thesis, for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the French scholar showed that space plays a significant function on its own. Claiming that experiences are made of, and evoked by, first and mainly, by space, implies as a consequence the possibility of removing time as a *sine qua non* in literary analysis. A further relevant aspect of Bachelard's theory is the emphasis on the subjective nature of space-tied experiences. Indeed, the ways in which we experience space, says something about who we are: two different individuals experience the so-called "dwelling places" differently according to the different associations they draw with earlier memory. As every new experience is connected with, as well as dependent upon, the former, space is therefore an integral part of how we build our identity. As the scholar claims: "there is ground for taking the house as a *tool for analysis* of the human soul."[30]We build our own 'character' in relation to space, and in this regard, the qualities we connect to the house are central; our primary notion of comfort, shelter and security will be projected onto other markers of domesticity.

Bachelard's dismissal of time, and exclusive attention to space dynamics, make his "poetics of space" a suitable scholarly lens for this thesis. However, few adjustments are necessary. Firstly, the notion of 'home' will make room for other spaces: although Bachelard uses the home as an archetype, there is a wide range of other spaces that can evoke an experience of meaning, not necessarily pertaining to domesticity (i.e. the school, the workplace, spaces devoted to sociability etc). Secondly, Bachelard stresses how the house inherently offers comfort and security and insists on the fact that this perspective can be applied onto other spaces. Therefore, the comfort of the house can potentially be searched for elsewhere, or indeed associated to a specific person. Last but not least, although Bachelard sees the archetypal house as a space of

[30] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, transl. Jolas, 21.

comfort, this view does not imply that, operatively speaking, all experiences with domesticity must be source of positive feelings and reactions. On the assumption that any experience is subjective, the houses that we come across in our phenomenological experience can be a source of distress and uneasiness. These realignments necessitate the integration of a narratological approach as a means to bringing into relief the role played by factors such as narrative voice, viewpoint and focalisation, so as to give account of the subjective nature of each experience.[31]

One of the most significant aspects of Bachelard's theory lies in its emphasis on the reader's experience. The plot of a *Bildungsroman* foregrounds a character whose experiences of development send back echoes in the readers (be they young, and in process of formation – as the main character whose adventures they are reading – or rather adult and evoking memories of their youth). This intersectional area that the *Bildungsroman* carves out between readers and main characters makes Bachelard's theory particularly suitable for this narrative genre. On the basis of this affinity, spaces will be scrutinised in their potential to mobilise experiences in the characters, but in the awareness that these characters are meant to establish empathy with the readers.

SEYMOUR CHATMAN

In the introductory book *Narratology* (1996) the analytical method is defined as "the science of narrative, which in turn is characterized as "the semiotic representation of a series of events meaningfully connected in a temporal and causal way."[32] In other words, it is the study of how the storyline is structured in a narrative plot. While narratology has its origins in the study of structuralism, where Vladimir Propp in 1928 makes an important contribution as the first to ever offer a structural analysis on a literary text[33], the term "narratology" became popular in the 1970s, influenced by structuralist like Gérard Genette, Mieke Bal and Gerald Prince to name a few.[34] Since then the method has developed a number of different approaches, and a wide range

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[31] For the key concepts of narratology, the main references here are Seymour Chatman (*Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, 1978) and Gérard Genette (*Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980); *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 1988).
[32] Onega & García Landa, «Introduction», 1-3.
[33] McGowan, "Structuralism and Semiotics", 7.
[34] Onega & García Landa, «Introduction», 1.

of both terminology and features is tied to narratology. [35] Some principal ones being “story and plot”, time, point of view and voice. The method is however very complex, and initiates endless variation of perspectives.[36] Since the purpose of this thesis is to assess the role and viewpoint of space in the chosen novels, it is necessary to limit the method to the very narratological terminology of space.

In narratological literary analysis, the dimension of space has mostly been overlooked, not to say deliberately neglected, at least in comparison to the notion of time, which has played an exclusively dominating role, for a number of reasons. The most intuitive one being that a narrative account can been envisioned, at its very basic level, as a structure leading a storyline from point A to point B in the chrono-logical sequence of events. This view has been introduced and corroborated in literary studies especially by the narratological approach. As a consequence, over the decades narratology has privileged a more direct connection between narrative and time, whereas space has received a marginal, not to say non-existent coverage.[37] In countertendency with this trend, Seymour Chatman has been perhaps the first, amongst the very few, to grant (partial) attention to space as a properly narratological tool of analysis. In his book *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978) the scholar establishes two new terms, namely *story-space* and *discourse-space.* In Earlier spatial readings, however, little attention has been given to space and environment described in the text, and what role it plays within the story and its characters. Chatman gives space the opportunity to play a much more important part by establishing it as the place the characters needs to exist. He says «story-space contains existents, as story-time contains events. Events are not spatial, though they occur in space; it is the entities that perform or are affected by them that are spatial»[38]. What the scholar means here, is that the event, which is temporal, needs a place to unfold. It happens in a space, in a setting. If the events are to exist, they need a place to exist within. A character cannot move from one place to another if there is no space to move in. They

[35] Wake, «Narrative and Narratology», 14.
[36] Onega & García Landa, «Introduction», 35.
[37] In the so-called modern age, scholarly reflection on space as aesthetic category dates back at least to G. E Lessing’s *Laocoön* (1766), where the German philosopher draws a distinction between plastic arts and literature according to which with two different perceptible media, the plastic arts are spatial, while literature above all makes use of words. (Lessing, «om lover og reglar for diktninga», 148–156) NB! This is just my short summary stating the main point for the text.) Lessing’s aesthetic thoughts exerted considerable impact on modern critics when it comes to the discussion of space and time in the literary domain.
[38] Chatman, *Discourse; Narrative Structure,* 96.

need space to exist. But since space can be seen in so many ways, and be used differently, the scholar finds it necessary to make a distinction. And that is why he comes up with the terms *story-space* and *discourse-space.*

According to Chatman, the notion of *story-space* is most easily spotted in the visual medium, especially the cinema, which best conveys the space to us who perceive, while the literal *story-space* is more abstract, and depends on the reader to use his imagination.[39] *Story-space* in cinema is explored by five different spatial structures that are used in film; 1. *Scale or size,* 2. *Contour, texture and density*, 3. *Position,* 4. *Degree, kind, and area of reflected illumination,* 5. *Clarity or degree of optical resolution*.[40] All these parameters are tools we use to visualise, what we observe on the screen helps us to imagine an environment. It gives the characters and the story an existing setting.

But even with these helping structure, the definition of *story-space* is not very clear, because it is not as logical as time. In Chatman's own words:

> The borders between story-space and discourse-space are not as easy to establish as those between story-time and discourse-time. Unlike temporal sequence, placement or physical disposition has no natural logic in the real world. Time passes for all of us in the same clock direction (if not psychological rate), but the spatial disposition of an object is relative to other objects and to the viewer's own position in space.[41]

Story-space is more problematic because there is no natural rule for how it works, like time does. A time sequence has a set course, it moves forward, and so the time passes. But the placement of an object in a space does not impact the story the same way. The object does not have a set course like the time sequence has. Therefore, the placement of an object might not mean anything at all for the narrative. Indeed, beside the five spatial parameters presented by Chatman, there is someone who has decided how these very criteria are to work in the movie. Furthermore, the reason for putting one character left in the room, is not as logical a choice as it would be for making one event happen. The event is initiating a plot, it happens for a reason.

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[39] Chatman, *Discourse; Narrative Structure* 96–97.
[40]*Ivi,* 97.
[41] *Ivi,* 98.

Whereas, the person standing in the left side of the room, could have been equally standing in the right, and would have probably not impacted the story too much.

But even though the choice of space is not logical, it gives the movie a substance, somewhere to exist. The scholar explains that there are more to a move than what we see in the limitation of its frames[42], because it has the ability to exist no matter what, even when the space is outside the framed screen, the tools of the media are implying its existence. In this regard, one of the important tools to make the audience aware of the space outside of the frames are the cameras. The flexibility granted by the combined usage of cameras is key to the working of the cinematic universe. As Chatman points out "constant mobility makes cinematic story-space highly elastic without destroying the crucial illusion that it is in fact *there*."[43] The viewer has perceived the story-space presented in the cinema, we have observed its existence in the movie-frame. We buy what is presented to us from screen because we can easily relate, and we see it as something that exists in the real world. In such a way that we can also imagine what is outside of the frames. For example, imagine you watch a TV-show, the characters are set in the first-floor living room, there is a stair that goes up to somewhere. You only see what is within the tv-frame, but you are impelled to imagine that on the same floor as the living room there might be a kitchen and that the stairs lead up to a second floor.

As mentioned, Chatman finds the verbal narrative to be more abstract than the visual. The scholar explains that the verbal *story-space* is indeed removed from the reader on two levels; there is no visual picture provided for us to see the existence of space, so we have to use our imagination to create the space. Secondly, the space is not real, it rather consists of words turned into mental projections.[44] According to the scholar *discourse-space* "can be defined as *focus of spatial attention (Sic)*. It is the framed area to which the implied audience's attention is directed by the discourse, that portion of the total story-space that is "remarked" or closed in upon"[45]. To make the reader create mental images to *story-space* in a verbal narrative, the scholar points out three important ways: 1, verbal qualifiers (such as "huge" or "small"), 2, a reference to something that is standardized ("like a skyscraper"), 3, the use of comparisons relating to these

[42] Meaning the actually black frames surrounding the picture when watching a movie on a screen.
[43] Chatman, *Discourse; Narrative Structure*, 101.
[44] *Ibidem.*
[45] *Ivi*, 102.

standards ("as big as a skyscraper"). Another important factor for Chatman is the acknowledgment of whose eyes we are seeing the depicted space through: in other words, the point of view.[46]

So, this is what verbal *story-space* is, namely the space we create through the observation of the character (or the narrator) describing them. We depend on the characters' description to produce an image of our own. Chatman says "verbal story-space […] is what the reader is prompted to create in imagination (to the extent that he does so), on the basis of the characters' perception and/or the narrator's reports. The two spaces may coincide, or the focus may shift back and forth freely".[47] The *discourse-space* is therefore the images we create in our mind as we read, based on the information we get from the narrator and his or her point of view. Our mental images of the space are coloured by how it is presented to us. If the narrator describes an old and ugly house, we see an old and ugly house in our imagination, we do not create a mental picture of a new and modern house. Another aspect of the verbal space, or the *discourse-space* is that our focus might shift according to whose point of view we are following. In the same paragraph we can both follow the narrator and the character back and forth, depending on whose vantage we perceive from.

Even though Chatman pays more attention to space that other scholars, by giving space a greater role as the very setting the characters exist in, he comes to neglect space as an important feature in relation to the narratology of space in literature. Because he comes to the conclusion that space is much better projected in the visual medium, then what it is in the literary form. He explains the difference between the cinematic presentation of space and the verbal description of space like this: "the filmed image of any object, no matter how large it is or how complex its part, may appear whole on the screen. We form an immediate visual synthesis. Verbal description, on the other hand, cannot avoid a linear detailing through time"[48]. Meaning that space in literature is inferior to space in the filmic presentation due to its medium.[49] Therefore

[46] Chatman, *Discourse; Narrative Structure*, 101.
[47] *Ivi,* 104.
[48]*Ivi,* 107.
[49] Consequently, making the same differentiate as Lessing did.

he, like many others, fails to recognize its important role in driving the storyline forward and the important relationship characters forms with its environment.

THE BILDUNGSROMAN

A panoramic overview of the genre: Moretti, Fraiman and Ellis

> The adolescent hero of the typical 'apprentice' novel sets out on his way through the world, meets with reverses usually due to his own temperament, falls in with various guides and counselors (*sic*), makes many false starts in choosing his friends, his wife, and his life work, and finally adjusts himself in some way to the demands of his time and environment by finding a sphere of action in which he may work effectively.[50]

This quotation by the scholar Susan Howe offers a classical definition of the *Bildungsroman* as a genre. The well-established archetype can easily be described as follows: a young hero goes into the world, often holding a rebellion towards society and his parents, to finally come back from the journey more mature, ready to accept his parents' and re-enter society. Although this seems like quite a simple and straightforward definition, the discussion around the genre of the *Bildungsroman* is far more complex. One of the issues on which scholars do not agree concerns the debate around the female *Bildungsroman.* Not only in the topic of the *Bildungsroman* having to be a male experience, including the question; could the female *Bildungsroman* really and realistically, exist? In trying to define this genre and the discussion around the topic, it can be useful to present three different scholars, with different point of views.

FRANCO MORETTI

In *The Way of the World* Franco Moretti offers a socio-historical exploration of the *Bildungsroman*: a genre that, in his own vision, boasts its starting point with the publication of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1795).[51] In Moretti's theorisation, the *Bildungsroman* represents by necessity a multi-layered product in the literary landscape, consisting of a combination of different elements. These components are originally in a highly dialectical relationship to each other – indeed, we may call them 'contrasts', and as such, they need to find a final

[50] Susanne Howe quoted in Ellis, *Appearing to diminish*, 24.
[51] Moretti, *The way of the world, transl. Sbragia,* 3. The same act of birth is assumed in Fraiman and Ellis, as we shall see.

amalgamation. This middle ground is the *sine qua non* for the development of the *Bildungsroman*. As Moretti claims:

> One must *internalize* them and fuse external compulsion and internal impulses into a new unity until the former is no longer distinguishable from the latter. This fusion is what we usually call 'consent' or 'legitimation'. If the *Bildungsroman* appears to us still today as an essential, pivotal point of our history, this is because it has succeeded in representing this fusion equalled again.[52]

Such a trend, Moretti observes, is also the typical feature of bourgeois mindset, and consists of the ability to compromise, by finding a silver lining between two contrasting ideas. A certain desirable thing cannot be realised without accepting a less satisfactory equivalent, because one thing cannot occur without the other. If you want to win something, you have to be prepared to be deprived of something else. And this is the base of his interpretation.[53]

One of Moretti's argument of the genre being in its very classical form, is that it requires a certain type of hero, one that rejects the possibility of, for instant, a female heroine. He's reasoning is that the Bildungsroman is in need of some essential elements, that were not common prerogatives for a large group of the population at the time. He explains "those exclusions lie in the very elements that characterize the *Bildungsroman* as a form: wide cultural formations, professional mobility, full social freedom – for a long time, the west European middle-class man held virtual monopoly of these"[54]. Because these privileges, at the time, was mostly associated with the middle-class man, Moretti recons it would be impossible to write a believable bildungsroman story adapted for women, the working class and others with similar conditions.[55] But then again, as he explores the young heroes of Wilhelm Meister, David Copperfield and Julien Sorel, he also leaves space for the very female heroines Elisabeth Bennet and Dorothea Brooke.

But there are also other components for the *Bildungsroman* that Moretti emphasizes as very important. One is the element of two different classes, the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, the other is the strong focus on youth as a requirement. The hero has to be young. The former

[52] Moretti, *The way of the world, transl. Sbragia*, 16.
[53] *Ivi*, 17.
[54] *Ivi,* ix (Preface).
[55] *Ibidem.*

component is important, because it again reflects the scholar's idea of the fusion of two different values. In the *Preface* he explains:

> How should one account for such double presence, then? The plausible: the encounter, and in fact the 'marriage' of the two classes is a way to heal the rupture that had generated (or so it seemed) the French revolution and to imagine a continuity between the old and the new regime.[56]

Once again, Moretti stresses the importance of compromise in the *Bildungsroman.* The genre's position is within the borders of two different social classes, the aristocracy and the bourgeois. Indeed, the bildungsroman tries to compromise, and fins middle ground between the old and the new, where the bourgeoise now has the possibility to become a part of the aristocracy. Moretti recons that the young heroes' eagerness to leave the bourgeoise for the aristocracy is based on the latter groups form of socialisation. While the older men of bourgeoise identified with great work ethic, the younger seemingly identify more with the socialization outside of work. Within typical activities that have started to exist within the aristocratic culture, such as journeys, conversation, music and dance. The *Bildungsroman* attempts to find middle ground between the old and new. His final point is that the bourgeoisie way of living is therefore to explore this compromise that exist among these two social classes: old and new, aristocracy and bourgeoise.[57]

The other crucial factor for the *Bildungsroman,* the matter of the youth, Moretti marks as the starting point of the paradigmatic shift where the epic, classical hero of mature man, loses his long time position, and a new younger hero enters the novel.[58] In the *Bildungsroman* the representation of a young hero is dominant, and in *Wilhelm Meister* and all other version of the *Bildungsroman* to come after, the youth is the very symbolic shift gets the honour of representing the meaning of life.[59] Moretti discusses why this is the case for the *Bildungsroman,* why this shift? The scholar concludes that Europe, in the eighteenth century, experiences a change of position, and are suddenly pushed into modernity. However, they do not have the tools to deal with the culture of modernity. Therefore, the youth becomes the symbol for the

[56] Moretti, *The way of the world*, transl. Sbragia, viii (Preface).
[57]Ivi*, ix* (Preface).
[58] *Ivi*, 3.
[59] *Ivi*, 4.

modernity.[60] His point being, the symbolic meaning of life is not so much attached to the young hero, as it is modernity. He says: "Youth is, to speak, modernity's 'essence', the sign of a world that seeks its meaning in the *future* rather than in the past."[61] But there is also a compromise here, modernity is dynamic and unstable, just as the youth, however, one are not young forever, and at a certain point, youth ends. The youth then, being the symbol of modernity, also gives the forever changing modernity and end, thus giving it a form. And by giving the boundless modernity a form, by giving it boundaries, the modernity through youth, can be represented. By making it less hostile and more human.[62]

Moretti discusses different kinds of topics that always makes a compromise between two contrasting components, and the scholar presents a lot of them to reason his thesis. To exhibit all of them would not be necessary, as we are able to understand what he tries to establish through the examples above. However, there would be worth just mentioning the scholar's thoughts on the theme of marriage and economics, and how he sees these themes in relation to the *Bildungsroman.* The theme of marriage, he elaborates, becomes important because it is a new form of social contract. There is a dualism in the words "I do", you say yes to family life, but also agrees to the contact between the subject and the world. To really enter the social life, you must marry, if you do not marry, you must leave the social life.[63]

In the last chapter of his work, Moretti explores the British *Bildungsroman,* and how it differs from the more traditional ones. For starters, the British one tends to give more attention to the hero's childhood, and his ability to hold on to his childhood innocence. This idealisation of childhood judgment however, is according to Moretti, reducing the value of the youth that is so important in the traditional bildungsroman. [64] Another point he makes, is that England in contrast to the European continent, was stable. Proud of its stability and tradition, the English hero's does not have the same adventurous attraction as the European youth.[65] Other features he touches upon while dealing with the British Bildungsroman, it is that is more of a fairy-tale,

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[60] Moretti, *The way of the world, transl. Sbragia*, 5.
[61] *Ibidem*.
[62] *Ivi,* 5/6.
[63] Ivi, *22-23.*
[64] *Ivi,182-184.*
[65] *Ivi, 185.*

as its heroes are unable to make an unmoral choice. He is more of a normal novel hero than a bildungsroman hero, as he sets out to make the world recognizable rather than forming his own moral universe. The British version gives neither much attention to adventures, but focuses more on security, in an attempt to combine narrative and democratic values.[66] Moretti recons that one of the things that makes the British version so fairy-talelike, is its insistence of giving everybody a happy ending – everybody, even bastards children, drunks, women etc has the right to tell his or her story and receive justice. However, if once view the British bildungsroman as cultural-political perspective, its build on the most elementary ideas of the democracy: "the desire that the realm of the law be certain, universalistic, and provided with mechanism for correction and control."[67]

SUSAN FRAIMAN

A scholar who offers a contrasting viewpoint to Moretti's take on the *Bildungsroman* is Susan Fraiman, who focusses on the female version of the genre in a book that is telling from the very title (*Unbecoming Woman*). As Fraiman admits, her scholarly interest does not lie in matters of historical context: what she wants to establish, rather, is a new model for "*reading as a woman*" by which to establish new hermeneutical tools to examine women's writing. She proposes that the female *Bildungsroman* is not restricted to one developmental story, but rather many developmental narratives.[68] The scholar explains that her readings would be a discussion between genre and gender, and that she in contrast to other scholars, would presuppose that some fiction is either 'female' or 'male'. In proposing a reading that shows how female writing and works by and about women, change how we view the narrative of growing up. However, the female bildungsroman is more of a "rivalry of stories" some struggles with the traditional bildungsroman, others are expressively "female", but as Fraiman highlights "never an entirely "other" story of becoming adult."[69]

Once established the existence of a female *Bildungsroman*, Fraiman proceeds debating the problematic limit of this subgenre in comparison to its most classical, male counterpart. Like

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[66] Moretti, *The way of the world, transl. Sbragia,* 188- 200.
[67] *Ivi*, 213.
[68] Fraiman, *Unbecoming women,* xiii (preface).
[69] *Ivi*, 2-3.

Moretti, the scholar takes Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* as the archetype of the genre. However, while in Goethe the hero is able to look past the social status and his connection to a certain kind of work, that say, his family traditionally would be doing, the same possibility is denied to a *Bildung* heroine. The issue of professional life for the scholar opens the way to freedom, for the male hero, since upon this choice the character will find the life path that is right for him.[70] But this way of life is much more problematic for the heroine, Fraiman argues, because she would not have the same opportunity to choose her way of life. In Fraiman's own words: " ...the contemporaneous heroines relation to choice, mentors, and mastery is rather different."[71] The female protagonist is more limited, in fact, as the scholar stresses, inasmuch as the only choice she has the liberty to make concerns her conjugal life, and that is, namely, to turn down unworthy husbands.

The possibility to turn down a man is again a far more restricted freedom, with comparison to the one granted to the male counterpart. As Fraiman emphasizes, there is little space for the middle-class female protagonist in the mythological way of the bourgeois opportunity novel.[72] Therefore, to reinvent the genre, we must "recognize a set of stories in which compromise and even coercion are more strongly thematized (*sic*) than choice."[73] The scholar goes on to describe how much the female *Bildungsroman* differs from the male, and points out a number of negative factors that in the end leads up to the heroine getting married, on the basis of successful guidance from a male figure. The woman eventually, by marriage, finds her mentor in the husband, and is forced to be controlled by him forever. For the scholar, this is the middle-class heroine's fate: if she chooses not to marry, she risks being scorned and disgraced from society.[74] As Fraiman explains: "Her paradoxical task is to see the world while avoiding violation by the world's gaze."[75] While the male bildungsroman hero encounters several lovers in his journey, the female bildungsroman view sexual activity fare more dangerous.

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[70] Fraiman, *Unbecoming women*, 5.
[71] *Ibidem.*
[72] *Ivi*, 6.
[73] *Ibidem.*
[74] *Ivi*, 6-7.
[75] *Ivi*, 7.

Therefore she sets out, as stated, to explore the female *Bildungsroman* in an unorthodox way. As the scholar has pointed out: instead of seeing the female bildungsroman as one big developmental story, she sets out to explore all the different developmental narratives within the story. These female novels, Fraiman argues, portray a story containing different plots in opposition that are never really resolved.[76] The scholar aim is to renew the way we explore the pattern of the *Bildungsroman* and the narrative of development, and she believes she can do so, by exploring the texts interested in women. As Wilhelm Meister's story of development leads up to the hero finding his place in the world, Fraiman recons Evelina is a reversed fairy-tale of impediment, the story of Evelina is "mini-tales of obstruction to the masterplot *(sic)* they indicate"[77], as much as Evelina wants to convey a story of growth, its coloured by its counternarrative of frustration and hinderance.[78] While she in Jane *Eyre* portraits rival narratives of marriage and working women with a conflicting, matured heroine: " the happy, rich and conventionally respectable lady *and* the overworked, always potentially irate nurse."[79] And it is through these multiple narrative and plots that she finds in the novel, that will do so, and form a new model for interpreting the female development.[80] Instead of asking "How does the hero of this novel come of age?" she wants to ask "What are the several developmental narratives at work in this novel and what can they tell us about competing ideologies of the feminine?"[81]

LORNA ELLIS

The last scholar to explore the genre of *Bildungsroman* is Lorna Ellis. In her book *Appearing to Diminish. Female Development and the British Bildungsroman, 1750-1850 (1999)* she explores the relationship between male and female *Bildungsroman,* and as we shall see, has yet another point of view than both Moretti and Fraiman. Where Moretti emphasized the classical *Bildungsroman* like a socio-historical study, mainly male. Fraiman, while dealing with female writings, dismisses the conventional development plot of the hero finding his place in the world, in favour of exploring the many different developmental narratives within the genre. Ellis proposes another approach. In Ellis' opinion, feminist critics large focus on the contrast

[76] Fraiman, *Unbecoming women*, 11.
[77] *Ivi*, 42.
[78] *Ivi,* 58.
[79] *Ivi*, 120.
[80] Ivi, 12.
[81] *Ibidem*.

between what's seen as the traditional and male *Bildungsroman* and the female *Bildungsroman* has caused an incorrect take on of the genre, and that the similarities between the two is really much more present than we are lead to believe.[82]

Ellis, like both Moretti and Fraiman, mentions the general opinion of *Wilhelm Meister* being the origin of the genre, but unlike the two other scholars, she does condemn that idea.[83] Ellis, in opposition to the others, actually argues that the female *Bildungsroman* originated long before *Wilhelm Meister,* and in support of her idea, she uses Haywood's *The history of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) to compare the resemblance and the differences of the male and female *Bildungsroman*. As she concludes: "The many similarities show that the two forms are indeed two versions of the same genre rather than two distinct genres".[84] Similarities, as the scholar feels, have been neglected in the study of the female development for too long. However, she does also acknowledge the differences between the two, and emphasizes that there are these very differences that will help support her arguments considering the origins of the genre. The scholar highlights the experience of alienation as an important factor, as the alienation of the female protagonist differs from the hero in the male *Bildungsroman*. This is attached to the very problem of female disempowerment and the expectations to the society, where the heroines' motivation works in opposition to the expectation of her appearance.[85]

Ellis then presents us with the three issues that she sees as necessary and crucial to both her comparison of the female and male bildungsroman and the theme of the *Bildungsroman* in general. The topics being:

> 1) the protagonist's agency, which shows that he or she is actively involved in his or her own development, 2) self-reflection, which shows the protagonist's ability to learn and grow from his or her experience, and 3) the protagonist's eventual reintegration with society, which demonstrates the fundamentally conservative nature of the genre.[86]

As the scholar explains, the first issue is more directly linked to the female *Bildungsroman,* whereas the second and the third ones are highly representative for both male and female

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[82] Ellis, *Appearing to diminish, 15.*
[83] *Ivi*, 22.
[84] *Ivi*, 23.
[85] Ivi, 23.
[86] *Ivi,* 25.

Bildungsroman.[87] However, the most important point is the last, that is, the issue of reintegration with society, which is the characteristic that most of all links the male and female *Bildungsroman* together.[88] The scholar also emphasize the necessity of the sacrifice that both the heroine/hero must make notwithstanding the happy ending.[89] As in Moretti's perspective, Ellis argues that the protagonist has to be deprived of something desirable, to gain another wishful thing.

It is precisely in this contrast between motivation and appearance, that Ellis finds the silver lining for the female protagonist of the *Bildungsroman.* Where Fraiman sees the heroines battle between seeing the world and not being rejected by it, Ellis sees:

> a model for female development that provided woman with a sophisticated understanding of their constricted place in society while encouraging them to manipulate societal expectations in order to promote their own welfare.[90]

Ellis' view of the female *Bildungsroman* emphasizes the role of a heroine that manages to find a way to live with her own limitations. Indeed, the female *Bildungsroman* presents restricted possibilities, but at the same time, it also displays the fault of society.[91] The scholar argues that one possible way in which the heroine maturates is by realizing that the view she has of herself does not necessarily coincide with the view that others have of her. In other words, the heroine has to learn to "experience herself as the object of others people's gaze."[92] Because of this, Ellis explains, the heroine begins to alter her appearances, and by doing so she controls how others perceive her.[93] It is at this point that the scholar makes a suggestion, that is: "What if the attitudes and behaviors (*sic*) that are supposed to indicate submissiveness are able, instead, to create a manipulative form of control?"[94]

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[87] Ellis, *Appearing to Diminish,* 26.
[88] *Ivi*, 27.
[89] *Ivi,* 29.
[90] *Ivi*, 23.
[91] *Ivi*, 29.
[92] *Ivi*, 30.
[93] *Ivi*, 31.
[94] *Ivi*, 33.

Looking at how these three scholars have positioned themselves in trying to define the *Bildungsroman*, it is very clear that the genre's definition is somehow loose. They are all presenting different approaches for understanding the *Bildungsroman*, and while Moretti is analysing the genre historically, he also emphasizes the traditional definition that the *Bildungsroman* is primarily male. Fraiman and Ellis on the other hand, are both exploring the genre through female writers and protagonists, but where the former's reading of the female *Bildungsroman* focuses on the several different developing narratives within a story written by and for women, arguing that these fictions, are distinguishingly female. Separating the male bildungsroman from the female. Ellis however, sees enough similarities between the two, causing her to dismiss there being two different genres, seeing the female and the male bildungsroman as one. Her main argument however, is that the female protagonist manipulates how she appears, in order to maintain her subjectivity whilst acting according to societies expectation.

EVELINA: NEW TO THE WORLD, AND UNUSED TO ACT FOR HERSELF

Evelina tells the story of the eponymous heroine and her emancipatory journey from the English countryside to the social sphere of London. The narrative is delivered through a number of letters from several characters, amongst which Evelina is the main contributor in her communication reporting back to her guardian, Mr. Villars. The first letters of the novel constitute an epistolary exchange between Mr. Villars and his friend Lady Howard and provide the readers with a glimpse on the protagonist's precarious situation. The heiress of a wealthy baronet, the young girl cannot claim her legitimate place in society due to the back story of her origins. Before her birth, her aristocratic father, Sir John Belmont a libertine of questionable reputation (in the words of Mr. Villars, who defines him as ["a profligate"[95]]), had denied validity to the marriage with Evelina's mother, Miss Evelyn. The latter dies giving birth and Evelina is deprived of her family name because of her irregular status. As her legal tutor, Mr. Villars has always been particularly protective towards Evelina, and despite his initial hesitation, eventually allows her to visit Lady Howard at Howard Grove. This permit to travel sets the main plot in motion: Evelina joins the daughter and granddaughter of Lady Howard, Mrs. Mirvan and Miss Mirvan in their journey to London, where her introduction to the social scene begins.

In London Evelina is exposed to a new range of experiences, both in terms of environment and social conduct. The circles of London are completely new for a naïve girl who has grown up in the countryside. The dangers of London's social sphere are the reasons of Mr. Villars' hesitation at letting her tutee go, in the fear she will repeat the same path of her mother. Indeed, a considerable portion of the plot consists of Evelina's attempts to avoid such dangers: the protagonist learns to become a regular and functional member of social life in London. These twofold themes, namely travel and apprenticeship, provide the work with the main features of a *Bildungsroman.* There is yet another ingredient to consider: namely, the rehabilitation of her social status. As the story unfolds, the protagonist reconnects with her family network, gaining back a respectable name and a considerable inheritance. On these premises, the *Bildung*

[95] Burney, *Evelina*, 17.

trajectory is complete, and ready to be concluded with a marriage that is worthy of her cleared reputation.

THE EPISTOLARY FORM OF THE NOVEL

One of the quintessential features of *Evelina* is the epistolary style, which grants the novel a unique status with respect to the other works here under scrutiny. Some preliminary remarks on this fictional form, and the ways it affects the narrative voice, are necessary. In its basic appearance, a letter reports and tells a series of circumstances, as well as the feelings and reactions that the characters experience in relation to them. However, the ways in which the narrator arranges the story, as well as the relationship between sender and addressee, are of crucial importance. Julia Epstein, in *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (1989) draws attention to Burney's usage of the epistolary form to convey a specifically subjective point of view. As the scholar claims, "A high degree of duplicity is inherent in the narrative form of the letter. The tricks of voice this duplicity allows invade and control the "innocent" and "artless" self-presentation of the eighteen-century heroines such as Pamela, Clarissa and Evelina."[96] The first-person view, which is the main feature of the epistolary form, provides the heroines with a powerful tool to manipulate their self-presentation. Furthermore, Epstein highlights that the principal receiver of Evelina's letters, Mr. Villars, has a legal and moral control over Evelina. As a consequence, she has to represent herself in such a way as to obtain Mr. Villars' approval. This premise leads Epstein to conclude that "We cannot expect, […], that her letters to this guardian, to whom she writes most regularly and frequently, will be straightforward."[97]

Evelina's first experiences in London are written in first-person letters, which she writes to her mentor in the solitude of her private room. Significantly, this standpoint casts a retrospective glance on the heroine's perspective: events, encounters and more in general dealings with the social environment are conveyed through her *ex post* perception. As readers, we are not granted a real-time access to Evelina's story, but we have to wait for the moment in which she looks back in hindsight at the events she has experienced in her recent past. This "gaze on the

[96] Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, 50.
[97] *Ivi*, 98–99.

aftermath" gives the heroine time to reflect on her own behaviour, before giving full report to Mr Villars. Based on such premises, her reconstruction of past events can be achieved in such a way as to meet her interlocutor's favour.

In *Appearing to Diminish* (1999) Lorna Ellis argues that the heroines of a *Bildungsroman* learn to manipulate their appearances in front of the others, with a view to meeting society's expectation while keeping a firm hold on agency. Such an apprenticeship is indeed a shared feature in the three novels we are considering. However, the epistolary form makes Evelina's case slightly different. In Ellis' words, "Evelina is the story that could be told of a *Bildungsroman* protagonist after she has completed her internal *Bildung* by learning to understand the dialectic between self and society".[98] As I am persuaded, Evelina's overall naïve nature hardly fits in the profile of a manipulative narrative voice. The attitude marking her reconstructing approach in her letters can be explained in the light of her authentic wish not to disappoint her tutor, instead than in a deliberate strategy to propose a false and praise- deserving picture of herself. Evelina faces a number of new situations, in which she regularly make some mistakes and faux pas. On the other hand, in her innocence she desires to please her guardian, while reflecting on the lessons she must draw thanks to her remarkable understanding. The epistolary mode provides her with the opportunity to reprocess her experiences and ponder over her previous actions and behaviours. On top of that, writing ex post facto allows her to alter the story in such a way as to gratify Mr. Villars in his expectations.

Upon closer inspection, Mr Villars is not a mere addressee of letters that are meant to provoke his approving reaction. He is indeed the viewpoint behind Evelina's retrospective attitude. The protagonist constantly revisits her story by applying her tutor's viewpoint. From the very beginning, to the end of the story, Evelina's opinions do not display an independent nature, but match with those of Mr Villars. In other words, Evelina looks at herself through Mr. Villars's eyes, and then acts accordingly. An example of this pre-oriented self-perception lies in a specific episode: in letter 21 (xxi) Sir Clement offers Evelina a ride home from the Opera, but gives the wrong directions to the rider, a trick that is part of a deliberate strategy to spend more time alone with the girl. When Evelina writes to Mr. Villars about this unsettling incident, she

[98] Ellis, *Appearing to Diminish*, 90.

perfectly anticipates the reaction the letter will provoke on him. As implied in her words, she does not need to wait for his answer to guess what her mentor thinks:

> You are already displeased with Sir Clement: to be sure, then, his behaviour after the opera will not make his peace with you. Indeed, the more I reflect upon it, the more angry I am. I was entirely in his power, and it was cruel in him to cause me so much terror.[99]

She already realises that Mr. Villars has not a good opinion of Sir Clements, and as she writes her letter, all of her efforts are dedicated to ensuring him that his viewpoint on such a lamentable event is also hers. As reader, we are left with no glimpse on Evelina's immediate reaction on the spur of the moment. The retrospective stance gave her the time to arrange her presentation in the way that she believes will provoke Villars approval. She describes herself as a product of his principles, which are always in Evelina's mind.

The answer from Mr. Villars confirms *in toto* Evelina's accuracy at guessing his reaction:

> Sir Clement Willoughby must be an artful, designing man; I am extremely irritated at his conduct. The passion he pretends for you has neither sincerity nor honour; the manner and the opportunities he has chosen to declare it, are bordering upon insult.[100]

Therefore, the hidden dynamic at play in their communication finally emerges: all of Evelina's actions, both in appearances and in writing, are performed with Villar's voice in her head. Mr. Villars opinions are so pervasively affecting Evelina's mind, that she always manages to foresee his reaction. But, more importantly, her mentor's viewpoint acts as a fully interiorised moral compass. Not only does Evelina lean on his guidance, she also tries to act and think like he does.

A further concern in Evelina's letters is the reiterated expression of her gratitude towards Mr. Villars. When Madame Duval, her grandmother, wants to take her to Paris, she expresses how thankful she is for his kindness towards her, she says "unable as I am to act for myself, or to judge what conduct I ought to pursue, how grateful do I feel myself, that I have such a guide and director to counsel and instruct me as yourself!"[101] This is why she wishes, at least ideally,

[99] Burney, *Evelina,* 105.
[100] *Ivi,*116.
[101] *Ivi*, 162.

to act in a manner that always elicits his approval. While she might not always succeed in doing so in real life, she can fit his wishes in her letters. An emblematic case in this regard is when Mrs. Selwyn makes pressure on Evelina to sort out the affair concerning her biological father. Struggling on how to act, with the only intention to obtain Mr. Villars' approval, Evelina expresses her feelings of uneasiness in her letter to him: "for my part, I have no wish but to act by your direction."[102] She has no precedent to take as a model for action, therefore she does not dare to act on her own. Here it becomes clear that to navigate through more and more delicate circumstances, Evelina is utterly dependent on Mr. Villars's advice and direction.

The influence of Mr. Villars is crucial, and Evelina does her best to act according to his moral principles. While at times she might well alter her perception on her incidents, most of the times she ends up making the same judgements as Mr. Villars, whose values are so deeply grounded in her. When her grandmother insists on taking her to Paris, Evelina grows suspicious of her. As she tells Mr. Villars: "I started at this intimation, which very much surprised me. But I am very glad she has discovered her intentions, as I shall be carefully upon my guard not to venture from town with her."[103] This choice, which apparently looks like a deliberate resolution she has made by herself, highly resents from Mr. Villars' perspective, who does not approve of her grandmother. Had Evelina not been reminded, all along her childhood, of her grandmother's dreadful nature, she might have approached her proposal with a more trustworthy state of mind.

Both Evelina and Mr. Villars are aware of the fact that London social sphere represents uncharted territory for her. She has received a thorough education under her tutor's wing, but only on the theoretical level. She is unprepared to the impact that, she is sure to make some mistakes that would not please Mr. Villars. However, Mr. Villars is aware of this, telling Mrs. Howard "You must not, Madam, expect too much from my pupil. She is quite a little rustic, and knows nothing of the world".[104] In morals however he has educated her well, and throughout the course of the novel we learn that Mr. Villars works as a psychological and moral compass for her. She sees herself, and the world around her, through his eyes, causing her to behave accordingly. Her letters might therefore be more a combination of Evelina's attempt at

[102] Burney, *Evelina*, 316.
[103] *Ivi,* 167.
[104] *Ivi*, 21.

adapting his moral, but at the same time, knowing she might have done wrong, trying to construct her epistles in a way that portraits her in a much better light than she acted.

THE FIRST VISIT TO LONDON

In the previous paragraphs, we have considered how the epistolary nature of the narrative affects the temporal dimension of the rendered plot arrangement. The letters, which are written after the events they are describing, reporting the events in a delayed temporal perspective that makes room for a retrospective attitude. However, what brings the *Bildungsroman*-plot forward in *Evelina*, are not the events themselves, but the environment where the events take place. Space is therefore an important feature for bringing Evelina's coming of age process forward in the story. In Bachelard's perspective, the house is a physical space but also a tool for identity formation. To remind the scholar's main argument, *where* we are and *how* we act in space tells something about who we are.[105] Indeed, Evelina's journeys will provide her with a number of places and environments to experience and from which to draw her lessons for life.

In Evelina's first letter, reporting back to Mr. Villars after arriving at Howard Grove, we are introduced to a rather ignorant and excited Evelina. She is not even in London at the time, but as a young girl from rural Berry Hill, the different surroundings of Howard Grove are enough to make her happy. Her first impression of Howard Grove she describes as "This seems to be the house of joy; every face wears a smile, and laugh is at every body's service."[106] For somebody who has been living a guarded and secluded life, even the home of Mr. Howard bears a whole other atmosphere than she is used to. In the same letter she asks Mr. Villars to accompany Mrs. and Miss Mirvan to London, and her excitement over yet another environment is translucent "They tell me that London is now in full splendour. Two playhouses are open, – the opera-house, – Ranelagh, – the Pantheon. – You see I have learned all their names."[107] She is eager to go, so she begs Mr. Villars to let her, and conclude with "I shall probably never meet with such another opportunity."[108]

[105] Bachelard, *The poetics of space, 21.*
[106] Burney, *Evelina*, 25
[107] Ibidem.
[108] *Ivi,* 26.

London, where she has to face a number of public places: the opera, the theatre, the park, the museum and other spaces for social gatherings. Her first impression of London is ambivalent, as a lot is not as elegant as she had expected. When she walks through the Mall in St. James's Park, the landscape does not match with her expectations, she says it "it is a long straight walk, of dirty gravel, very uneasy to the feet; and at each end, instead of an open prospect, nothing to be seen but houses built of brick."[109] On the other hand, she enjoys shopping like the Londoners, telling Mr. Villars " The shops are really very entertaining, especially the mercers"[110]. But the one thing that seems to surprise her the most and what she finds very agreeable, is the one working at the shops "But what diverted me was, that we were more frequently served by men that by woman; and such men! So finical, so affected!"[111] Even though some parts of London are not what she expected, she finds her first big city outing quite exciting.

However, that same night she is to go to her first ball, an event she describes she is half-afraid of for Mr. Villars, as she has never been on anything but a school ball. That Evelina is not at all familiar with these kinds of environments can be easily grasped from her first reactions, which are often described in terms of a paralysing naïveté, as it evokes such an astonishment in her. One such characterisation is given up on her first public social event, the ridotto. Where she portraits the room for Mr. Villars like this "The room was very magnificent, the lights and decoration were brilliant".[112] These kind of characterisations of the places she visits we can find throughout the first part of the novel, and her sense of astonishment shows us that these are spaces where she does not fit in.

Regardless of her describing her first expression with amazement, it becomes evident that the young heroine does not really feel at home in the social gatherings that are tied to such places. It is in gatherings like the ball or parties that she feels particularly alienated. One occasion that highlights the difference between Evelina and those who are familiar with London and the big city culture, is for instance, when she attends the private ball where she first meets Lord Orville.

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[109] Burney, *Evelina*, 28.
[110] *Ibidem.*
[111] *Ivi*, 29.
[112] *Ivi*, 41.

It is in the course of a conversation with Lord Orville that she realises for the first time her own lack of knowledge and growing a discomfort at her display of awkwardness, as her interlocutor perhaps realises alike "he […] talked of public places, and public performers; but soon discovered I was totally ignorant of them."[113]

By the same token, Evelina's first visit to the museum marks a similar trajectory, from excitement to hesitation. In her letter to Mr. Villars, Evelina let us know how the events unfolded. Again, the account of her first impressions describes the place as astonishing, but it is rather the requirement and expectations attached to the very spot that make the experience quite uncomfortable. As she says:

> This museum is very astonishing, and very superb; yet, it afforded me little pleasure, for it is a mere show, though a wonderful one. Sir Clement Willoughby, in our walk round the room, asked me what my opinion was of this brilliant spectacle? `It is very fine, and very ingenious, `answered I, `and yet – I don't know how it is, – but I seem to miss something`.[114]

To her unaccustomed eye, the place itself is very attractive, but still, there is something she does not manage to understand fully. As earlier at the party, she feels like an active contribute is expected from her, but at the same time she does not have any idea of how to make it. The protagonist finds herself at the centre of a psychological charade: she misses out on something everybody around her has information about, which makes her feel like she stands ignorant on the side-line. These places that require a token of participation from her are soon to become the symbol of her inherently not fitting in.

Another similar occasion occurs during her visit to the Ranelagh, another place for parties and social assemblies. Once again overwhelmed by the visual impact of the physical environments, the narrative voice reports a minute description that evokes the effect of a magic enchantment: " It is a charming place, and the brilliancy of lights, on my first entrance, made me almost think I was in some enchanted castle, or fairy palace, for all looked like magic to me."[115] The novel's subjective viewpoint could not be any clearer than here. This account, which casts the first-

[113] Burney, *Evelina*, 34.
[114] *Ivi*, 77/78.
[115] *Ivi*, 38.

person narrator under the suggestion of a spell, contribute to highlighting how alien these locations are for Evelina. However, the first impression is not confirmed by her subsequent experience of the very place: “We soon walked on, not liking our situation”.[116] Yet again, the feeling of alienation prevails: Evelina realises that she is not an integral part of this social atmosphere. On top of that, she also becomes aware of Lord Orville’s description of her as a “poor, weak, ignorant girl”. Although these words hurt her self-esteem, she cannot help understanding their foundations: “It is true, my own behaviour incurred it.”[117] She therefore concludes that she is done with social gatherings, a resolution that clearly indicates she finds these environments unpleasant, and she is willing to distance herself from these places, to ensure she is not making a fool of herself again.

A considerable number of places in London exert an unpleasant effect on Evelina. However, it seems that in some specific locations the feeling of inferiority disappear, and she can naturally enjoy being there. One of the examples that she describes to Mr. Villars, the theatre gives her a feeling of ease and well-being: “I would have given the world to have had the whole play acted over again. […] I intend to ask Mrs. Mirvan to go to the play every night while we stay in town.”[118] Even more so, Evelina finds a congenial place at the opera, of which she has only favourable comments to make: “ We have been to the opera, and I am still more pleased than I was on Tuesday. I could have thought myself in paradise, but for the continual talking company around me.”[119] The only limit in experiencing the opera is represented by the obligation to keep the conversation going. As earlier at the ball, Evelina assumes that she can potentially be dragged into a topic she does not know how to lead. Once again, the negative side lies in the interactive aspect, of which she does not feel in control. Engaging with the environment implies commitment, on her part, to make an active contribution to the general atmosphere of the place.

The reason behind her preference for places like the park, the theatre, or the opera consists on the reduced amount of participation that these locations require on her part. Parties, balls and places like the museum are more demanding insofar as they require her a constant effort at

[116] Burney, *Evelina,* 39.
[117] *Ibidem.*
[118] *Ivi*, 28.
[119] *Ivi,* 40.

socialising. When she attends the theatre or the opera, she can limit herself to stay by her company, who will guide her to the right place: social conventions do not ask her to play an active role: she can passively enjoy the entertainment, without the anxiety of contributing to the contents of conversations in which her intellect and cultural background are mobilised. These places represent just as much as a challenge she is willing to handle: on the one hand, she is capable to follow the expected social rules; on the other one, she does not have to worry about ending up making gaffes and *faux pas*.

As seen, the opera offers the heroine an agreeable scenario, where the usual sense of alienation is absent. It is here that Evelina's confidence begins to grow. The first indication of this turning point lies in her feeling at ease at the idea of a second visit. When she is compelled by Madame Duval and her relatives to accompany them to the opera, she does it by experiencing a sense of fulfilling superiority at the discovery that she is the only member of the party who masters the social codes of the place:

> If I had not been too much chagrined to laugh, I should have been extremely diverted at their ignorance of whatever belongs to an opera. In the first place, they could not at what door we ought to enter, and we wandered about for some time, without knowing which way to turn: they did not chuse to apply to me, though I was the only person of the party who had ever before been at an opera; because they were unwilling to suppose that their *country cousin,* as they were pleased to call me, should be better acquainted with any London public space than themselves.[120]

At last, Evelina finds herself in a position of total control, where she knows the manners that are conventionally tied to the place she is visiting. Instead of reflecting over her own lacking, she can now triumph over the others' ignorance. This is the reason why in her reporting the episode to Mr. Villars, Evelina displays a very different attitude towards the theatre, in remarkable contrast with what experienced up to that moment in other places of public assembly. She gains confidence in herself when she acknowledges that on this very situation she is the reference point for her companions. The opera house shows us Evelina's first steps from unsafety to safety, from the feeling of not belonging, to the achievement of a sense of confidence with her immediate surroundings. Therefore, the opera becomes the starting point of Evelina's growing progression on her way to adulthood.

[120] Burney, *Evelina, 90.*

This newly acquired confidence as well as her advancing knowledge of social manners prove to be useful for Evelina especially when, at the end of her first London journey, she visits the Pantheon during a last celebrating trip. Once again, the protagonist's first reaction is of astonishment:

> I was extremely struck with the beauty of the building, which greatly surpassed whatever I could have expected or imagined. Yet, it has more the appearance of a chapel, than of a place of diversion; and, though I was quite charmed with the magnificent of the room, I felt that I could not be as gay and thoughtless as at Ranelagh, for there is something in it which rather inspires awe and solemnity, than mirth and pleasure. However, perhaps it may only have this effect upon such a novice as myself.[121]

However, a sense of self-awareness emerge from Evelina's retrospective take on the event: upon entering the room, she display the confidence of somebody who knows how to behave. All her mishaps in the past have led her to understand how to act, even in an entirely new place where she cannot help feeling as a beginner. For the first time, Evelina lives through the whole experience without making a fool of herself. Not only she abide by the social rules, she is also able to single out those who are not acting according to conduct, who, to her utter surprise, is of high rank:

> *Lordship!* – how extraordinary! that a *nobleman,* accustomed, in all probability, to the first rank of company in the kingdom, from his earliest infancy can possible be deficient in *good manners*, however faulty in moral and principles! Even Sir Clement Willoughby appeared modest in comparison with this person.[122]

Evelina has learned her lesson and refined her manners. As she reports back to Mr. Villars, at the end of the visit the company is not in good spirit: but for the first time, the cause of the sombre mood does not lie in her faults and overall ignorance. As her first journey to London ends, she can finally write to Mr. Villars without the need to reflect over her own mistakes.

THE SECOND JOURNEY TO LONDON

[121] Burney, *Evelina*, 106.
[122] *Ivi*, 107.

Not long after Evelina is back at Howard Grove, she once again sets off to London, but this time the experience is much more disagreeable for her, one of the reasons being that she is in the company of her grandmother Madame Duval. As she enters Branghton House at Snow-hill, her emotions are somewhat less enthusiastic:

> Mr. Brangthon's house is small and inconvenient, though his shop, which takes in all the ground floor, is large and commodious. I believe I told you before that he is a silver-smith. We were conducted up two pair of stairs, for the dining-room […] They had waited some time for Madame Duval, but I found they had not any expectation that I should accompany her; and the young ladies, I believe, were rather more surprised that pleased when I made my appearances; for they seemed hurt I should see their apartment. Indeed, I would willingly have saved them that pain, had it been in my power.[123]

The apartment is humble, however, the reason of Evelina's uncomfortableness lies more in the company. As she has begun to internalise London social rules, she can now reckon that both Madame Duval and her acquaintance do not make proof of immaculate manners. Hence, the relief she expresses when the group is separated. As she writes to Mr. Villars: "I was very glad when the time for our departing arrived […] I am sure I have a thousand reasons to rejoice that I am so little known; for my present situation is, in every respect, very unenviable, and I would not, for the world, be seen by any acquaintance of Mrs. Mirvan."[124] The only comfort she can derive from the situation is that she has not many acquaintances in London: therefore, the prospect of being seen in such company by people who matters is of no relevance to her.

The first trip to London has provided Evelina with an ambivalent experience. On the one hand, her ignorance of society unwritten rules caused her embarrassing lessons to be learnt; on the other hand, the prospect of refining her manners gave a boost to her longing to self-improvement. Thanks to this mix of feelings, London becomes a place for Evelina to enjoy. However, the second visit to London does not exert the same effect on the heroine. As she tells to her friend Miss Mirvan: "London now seems no longer the same place where I lately enjoyed so much happiness; every thing is new and strange to me; even the town itself has not the same aspect"[125]. The reason for this change resides in the new setting: as she is exposed to an unknown environment, the learning process must start over again in an uncharted territory.

[123] Burney, *Evelina*, 169.
[124] *Ivi*, 172.
[125] *Ivi,* 173.

Once again, she shows uncertainty towards the big city, and as a consequence, her view of the city alters according to her feelings.

The heroine's first visit to London has provided her with a valid training for her future dealings with new places and environments. However, she has not yet grown into being fully secure in all of them. As we have seen, Evelina expresses a particular dislike for social gathering such as balls, parties and similar places that require a certain knowledge of self-deportment, such as conversations and dancing. When Madame Duval exhorts her to accept Mr. Smith's invitation to the Hampstead assembly, the protagonist repeats the pattern of from her first visit to London. That is, at first she tries to refuse, only to realise that an attempt at convincing her grandmother is of no use: "As soon as I could find an opportunity, I ventured, in the most humble manner, to entreat Madame Duval would not insist upon my attending her to this ball; […] but she laughed at my scruples, called me a foolish, ignorant country girl, and said she should make it her business to teach me something of the world."[126] Evelina is painfully aware of her inexperience, and remembering her last encounters with similar circumstances, would do anything to avoid it. In her words we can distinguish the self-scrutinising attitude by which she lucidly realises the cause of her feeling of uneasiness: "I am sure it is not more improper for, than unpleasant to me"[127].

Evelina resigns to the idea of attending the ball against her will to please Madame Duval. As in her previous visit to London, the heroine puts a number of strategies into act for the sake of self-protection, for example her resistance to dance. The pattern repeats, as in the notorious accident at the first ball, where she breaks social codes in turning down Mr. Lovel, to later accept Mr. Orville's hand when he asks her. When she finds herself in the same situation, she remembers her lesson well: "For a few moments I very much rejoiced at being relieved from this troublesome man; but scarce had time to congratulate myself, ere I was accosted by another, who *begged the favour of hopping a dance* with me. I told him that I should not dance at all"[128]. The former lesson comes to use at a crucial moment that night: when she is invited to dance by Mr. Smith, she firmly rejects any form of pressure, as she remembers her past *faux pas* in a

[126] Burney, *Evelina,* 182.
[127] *Ibidem*.
[128] *Ivi*, 224.

similar situation, when she refused one dance partner and later accepted another one. To avoid any embarrassment as in the previous ball, she has no other option but to refuse Mr. Smith's request as well all Madame Duval's wishes.

> Mr. Smith teased me till I was weary of resistance; and I should at last have been obliged to submit, had I not fortunately recollected the affair of Mr. Lovel, and told my persecutor, that it was impossible I should dance with him, even if I wished it, as I had refused several persons in his absence.[129]

Evelina proves that she has thoroughly learned the right social conduct required in a ball. Nevertheless, a refusal on her part, albeit this time in compliance with the social code, gives her trouble, as both Madame Duval and Mr. Smith do not accept her choice. Especially the latter makes sure Evelina hears his reaction, and comments her ungratefulness in a deliberately offensive tone: "Next time I take the trouble get any tickets for a young lady, I'll make a bargain beforehand that she sha'n't turn me over to her grandmother."[130]

Madame Duval has a different reaction, limiting herself to putting the accent on Evelina's ignorance. In Evelina's words, the affair ended likes this: "I then placed myself behind the chair of Madame Duval; who, when she heard of the partners I had refused, pitied my ignorance of the world, but no longer insisted upon my dancing."[131] Despite the shared disapproval of her behaviour, Evelina does not make confusion as to the right thing to do. Her determination to refuse shows that she has learned how the behave according social manners. Here we come across a turning point, because once again Evelina shows progress in her experience of space.

While in her first visit to London Evelina was dumbfounded and amazed by almost every new space to which she was exposed, this time her reports on places and environments have a different tone. In a letter to Mr. Villars, for example, she offers the following considerations on the Hampstead assembly: "The ball was at the *long room* at Hampstead. This room seems very well named, for I believe it would be difficult to find any other epithet which might, with propriety, distinguish it, as it is without ornament, elegance, or any sort of singularity, and

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[129] Burney, *Evelina*, 225.
[130] *Ivi.* 226.
[131] *Ibidem.*

merely to be marked by its length."[132] A similar feedback is expressed after her visit to Marylebone-gardens, which she describes as "neither striking for magnificence nor for beauty"[133]. Compared to her first dealings with London, Evelina's experience in, and perception of, new spaces have significantly changed.

Why is Evelina so unimpressed with the places she visits, on this second journey to London? In all probability the answer lies in a combination of reasons: on the one hand, the previous knowledge on which she can rely; on the other one, her increasing sense of mastery of the social environment, which is even more striking in light of the objective awkwardness of her company. The irony between her opinion of the matter versus Madame Duval becomes clear as Evelina herself describes her now company: "I live with those to whom even civility is unknown, and decorum a stranger."[134] Implying that she is superior when it comes to social manners, while her grandmother keeps repeating that she is going to teach her something of the world. As she feels she has already learned something of the world in the proper way, Madame Duval's lessons are not really welcome in Evelina's opinion.

An example of Evelina not being as impressed with the Branghtons and Madame Duval's introduction to London, is when they are to visit to Vauxhall. A place to which she actually expresses a liking to the place itself, in contrast to the other spaces she has visited in her second exploration of London. "The scene of the cascade I thought extremely pretty, and the general effect striking and lively."[135] But she is less impressed when her acquaintances make it their mission to show her all these new places, telling Mr. Villars: "for they led me about the garden, purposely to enjoy my first sights of various other deceptions."[136] This tour to show her London and teach her about the world outside the countryside, Evelina finds extremely repetitive, as she feels she has already taken this journey before with companions who were far more appropriate to the task.

[132] Burney, *Evelina*, 223.
[133] *Ivi*. 233.
[134] *Ivi,* 240.
[135] *Ivi*, 194.
[136] *Ibidem.*

The second journey to London ends with Evelina rejecting Madame Duval's plans of making a match between the grand-daughter and young Branghton. Eventually free of her grandmother's grip, the protagonist returns to Berry Hill. A journey Evelina from the start shows resentment towards, as she is yet again set to encounter new and uncomfortable places and situations. However, this time she has already experienced the places tied to the social scene of London, making her more prepared for her second visit. even though she expresses uncertainty in attending yet another ball, she remembers her last experience with the space, and the second time, she acts accordingly to the place's social codes. indeed, she has had a conscious experience with the space beforehand, she has now altered herself to behave according to the space's rules. Leading up to her again having a revelation of herself, although her companions claim her to be so, she is not the most ignorant person in the party. She actually shows herself to be the most accustomed member, therefore, she is not impressed with her exposure to the second social scene of London, as she is more well mannered than the persons who claim to teach her something of the world. Yet again, Evelina shows some progress, as she is not only feeling superior to her acquaintances in relation to the space she is visiting, she also makes use of her former lessons to avoid an embarrassing situation. Showing that Evelina in her second journey of London, although still not liking it, learned to conquer one of the spaces she previously so much feared: the spaces of prescribed social conduct, such as assemblies, parties and balls.

BERRY HILL - THE NOTION OF HOME

The reports from Evelina to Mr. Villars mark the steppingstones in Evelina's *Bildung*, which takes place in the form of a journey across new places and environments. However, there is still one space that, in Bachelard's perspective, needs to be scrutinised: namely, Berry Hill, the closest thing Evelina has to a home. The sense of nostalgy for her surrogate home is rekindled each and every time the protagonist is embarrassed and indisposed with the spaces of London. As Bachelard puts it, the house is a space for shelter and comfort.[137] For Evelina, the shelter of the house is represented by Mr. Villars and his protection.

[137] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 64.

Whenever she feels she does not fit in London social life, she seeks a natural safeness in her correspondence with Mr. Villars, whose judgement she completely trusts. Mr. Villars offers support, when circumstances become too difficult to handle, and she wishes she could go back to Berry Hill as the only place where she feels secure. When leaving London for Howard Grove, she reports her many impressions back to Mr. Villars, and after some intense experiences, she misses her mentor and father-like figure. As she tells him: "Adieu, my dear Sir; Heaven restore me safely to you! I wish I was to go immediately to Berry Hill".[138] Berry Hill is where she grew up and represents for her the safety of the home: something that Mr. Villars has made possible. The feeling of comfort and safety that the home offers are connected to, and represented by, the figure of Mr. Villars. On those very moments when she feels like she does not have the tools to handle the situation in the right way, she wishes herself back to Berry Hill and its master. It is not necessarily an experience of homesickness, rather a lack of confidence: Evelina likes the thrill of exploring new places, as long as they do not put her in uncomfortable situations.

One of those very situations occurs at the discovery that Madame Duval, her maternal grandmother whom she has never met, has come to England from France, demanding that Evelina acknowledges her as a close family member. At first, Evelina is sceptical, because by instinct she does not like her grandmother, but out of fear she agrees to go through with Madame Duval's wishes. Yet again, she seeks out to Mr. Villars for advice:

> The assurance of your support and protection in regard to Madame Duval, though what I never doubted, excites my utmost gratitude: how, indeed, cherished under your roof, the happy object of your constant indulgence[139]

It is interesting to notice that Evelina does not refer to Berry Hill as their shared roof, but as "his roof". The usage of the possessive adjective in male form casts Berry Hill as a secure symbol tied, first and foremost, to Mr. Villars, who offers her the comfort and shelter usually ascribed to the concept of "home".

As the situation with Madame Duval develops, Evelina finds herself in distress, which causes her to miss the comfort of Berry Hill, to the point of erasing the joy of experiencing new spaces.

[138] Burney, *Evelina*, 50.
[139] *Ivi,* 105.

She wants to go back where she is safe: "A thousand times I wished I had never left Berry Hill; however, my return thither shall be accelerated to the utmost of my power; and, once more in that abode of tranquil happiness, I will suffer no temptation to allure me elsewhere."[140] Again, Evelina ends up projecting the qualities of the house onto Mr. Villars: in the letter's conclusion, she explicitly associates him with a shelter, and she writes that "[the] only hope, is to get safe to Berry Hill; where, counselled and <u>sheltered by you,</u> I shall have nothing more to fear."[141] Bachelard would perhaps comment that she seeks for the protectiveness of Mr. Villars, who in turn represents the protectiveness of the house.

According to Bachelard, one of the most emblematic examples in which the concept of the house acquires human features lies in a specific textual usage: namely, the depiction of the midst of a storm, where the house becomes a surrogate for the maternal figure.[142] Indeed, Evelina finds herself in a similar situation, albeit metaphorically: being on unknown territory, she finds shelter in imagining herself back home. Mr. Villars assumes the qualities of a home, becoming the picture of a house: the latter in turn gains the human virtues of a father-like figure. Just as the house, Mr. Villars represents a liminal entity, separating the comfort of being sheltered under the roof of the house from the chaos and uncertainness of being outside in the storm.

BRISTOL – THE END OF A JOURNEY

Remarkably, coming back to her putative home does not turn out as she expected. As Evelina confesses to her friend Miss Mirvan: "I had flattered myself, that, when restored to Berry Hill, I should be restored to tranquillity: far otherwise have I found it, for never yet had tranquillity and Evelina so little intercourse."[143] Despite being safe under Mr. Villars' roof, she still feels the usual uneasiness of her time in London. As Mr. Villars becomes aware of Evelina's difficulties, he tries to distract her with the proposal of another trip to Bristol with another acquaintance of his, Mrs. Selwyn.

[140] Burney, *Evelina*, 54.
[141] *Ivi,* 55. My highlighting.
[142] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 66–67.
[143] Burney, *Evelina*, 255.

The first weeks in Bristol mark a pleasing stay, and the protagonist finds the means to calm herself. However, Evelina is soon to find out that displeasure and disappointment are in store also there. As she writes to Mr. Villars: "by the present state of mind, the calm will be succeeded by a storm, of which I dread the violence."[144] The metaphor of the imminent storm channels a sense of urgency: once again far from the comfort of Mr. Villars' shelter, she finds herself in uncharted ground. The reason of her anxiety lies on the fact that Lord Orville (who is the cause of her bad health) is about to visit Bristol as well. The prospect of meeting him at some point suddenly transforms Bristol into an unpleasant place. As with her second journey to London, the space Evelina visits alters according to her feelings.

The appearance of Lord Orville, and the memory of the displeasing letter she attributes to him, contribute to renegotiating her perception of Bristol. However, as much as she dreads meeting Lord Orville, she manages to see through the dinner party at Clifton-Hill without causing incidents. In contrast with her previous adventures in London, where her ignorance failed her in social gatherings, this time she has learned to avoid reason for embarrassment.

However, Mr. Lovel is also there, and he is still injured by his first meeting with Evelina in London. In revenge, he tries to humiliate her by acting amongst his peers like he does not know her. Although Evelina is offended by his conduct, she finds it best not to act upon the scheme and just retreat in her own company: "I seated myself quietly on a window, and not very near to anybody: Lord Merton, Mr. Coverley and Mr. Lovel, severally passed me without notice"[145]. While she previously would have expressed great discomfort and anxiety, she now distances herself from the situation. However, when she learns that he had called her a "toad eater", her instant reaction is embarrassment. [146] But when Mrs. Selwyn advises her to try to get his approval, as he has the power to do her harm, she reports to Mr. Villars the intention to not do so: " I shall disdain myself as much as I do him, were I capable of such duplicity, as to flatter a man whom I scorn and despise."[147] Earlier in London, whenever she received ill-mannered

[144] Burney, *Evelina,* 273. My highlighting.
[145] *Ivi,* 288–289.
[146] In the footnotes of the novel, page 449, a toad eater is defined as "a cruelly contemptuous term for someone who depends for their living on acting as companion or attendant to a more wealthy patron".
[147] Burney, *Evelina*, 294.

comments on her behalf, she explained them in light of her inappropriate behaviour. This time however, she puts the blame on Mr. Lovel, proving that her journey across different places has also provided her the necessary objectivity to evaluate her own (as well as the others') behaviour.

Compared to her previous expeditions, Evelina handles the rules of society more appropriately. At this point in the plot, she is ready to recognize the only lucky event connected to her second trip to London, that is, the discovery of her long-lost brother. Again, all her misery connected to the memory of London is changed:

> Is not this a strange event? God Heaven, how little did I think that the visits I so unwillingly paid at Mr. Branghton's would have introduced me so near a relation! I will never again regret the time I spent in town this summer: a circumstance so fortunate will always make me think of it with pleasure.[148]

As her feelings change to a lighter state of mind, so do her feelings towards the city, to which she has always related ambivalently until that moment. Even the unpleasant home of the Branghtons is now turned into a dear memory she will never forget. Yet again, Evelina shows a certain degree of maturation, which is textualized in her spatial interactions. Had she never gone to London to experience a new environment with all its mishaps, she would never have met her brother either.

As in her previous journeys, Bristol will provide the opportunity of a ball. Once again, Evelina is compelled to deal with the kind of social gathering that she dislikes the most. However, it is also in similar environments that she has proven to have learnt how to participate in the right manner. Upon receiving the invitation to the ball, Evelina declares that she does not want to go but is pushed by her companion Mrs. Selwyn to do so. Although more familiar with the experience, the ball is not without discomfort. Earlier in the day she had refused Sir Clement's hand, but as he asks for a dance a second time in front of Mrs. Selwyn, she dares not to reject him: "I only bowed, – for the dread of Mrs. Selwyn's raillery made me not dare to refuse him"[149]. Later that evening, when Lord Orville makes the same offer, she does realize that she

[148] Burney, *Evelina*, 321.
[149] *Ivi,* 329.

is engaged for the evening. "If I *do* dance, said I, in great confusion, I believe I am engaged"[150]. Once again, she remembers the lessons from her previous interactions in a comparable space. This situation mirrors her first encounters with the social scene of London, when she failed to understand the rules of the ball, or bluntly refused to dance at all. This time, however, the outcome is a different one, because she has learned that the different places and environments come with a set of social rules.

This shows the extent to which Evelina's learning process depends on the aspect of space. Were we to remove factors such as place and the environment from this equation, how would Evelina acquire her development? The reason Evelina is growing is because she is exposed, throughout the novel, to different social places: each of them with a set of different social rules that she first fails to display, but later learns. Therefore, her development is highly dependent on her exposure to a number of environments, as everything she has learned thus far has been in relation to a space.

As the novel reaches its end, Evelina has proved she is able to learn and modify her behaviour according to social manners. Nevertheless, she never appears to have become thoroughly inquisitive or capable to offer a deeper understanding. Indeed, the heroine's judgement keeps depending entirely on the advice of those around her, first of all Mr. Villars. While at the novel's beginning she describes herself as ignorant of the ways of the world, similar epithets recur when speaking of herself at the end of the story. For example, when talking to Lord Orville about her affairs with Mr. Macartney (who is soon to be revealed as her brother), she confides to him that she is "new to the world, and unused to acting for myself, […] I have hitherto been blest with the most affectionate of friends, and, indeed, the ablest of men, to guide and instruct me upon every occasion"[151]. Acquiring the right manners to act in society does not imply the capacity to think and make decisions on her own.

When the truth surrounding the authentic sender of the epistle is brought to light, and Sir John Belmont acknowledges Evelina as his daughter, the heroine's *Bildung* journey approaches for

[150] Burney, *Evelina*, 332.
[151] *Ivi*, 306.

the conclusion. The engagement to Lord Orville is a union she agrees upon without the counsel of Mr. Villars, who gives his consent only at a later stage. The heroine has internalised her tutor's viewpoint so well, that she can only make those choices that will obtain his approval.

Evelina goes from being an orphan to a nobleman's daughter, with a fortune, a name, and an honourable marriage. However, she fails to acquire a conscious mind, her only growth derives from the experience of the different environment she encounters, of which she learns the "rules of the game". Evelina's development narrative is therefore entirely dependent on space, because it is only her experience from the different places she encounters that gives her some expertise. This training makes her a more fitting person into the social society: it is a superficial advancement, though. Evelina learns from her mistakes, one by one, in order to avoid the traps of *faux pas* and gaffes for the future. For the rest, she is like an empty vessel ready to receive instructions by the mentoring figure (her putative father Mr. Villars, first; her husband Lord Orville, later), who shapes and moulds her inclinations at their own interest. Therefore, there is a *Bildung* in *Evelina*, but only partial and superficial, and entirely dependent on the shifts and oscillations connected to her interactions with the dimension of space.

EMMA: WITH A COMFORTABLE HOME AND HAPPY DISPOSITION

"Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her."[152] This is the very first sentence of Jane Austen's novel *Emma,* where Austen manage to encapsulate the very essence of our young heroine in her phrasing, as the mansion Emma is born and raised is a structured part of her identity. The eponymous heroine in Jane Austen's *Emma* is extremely tied to her house and home. In striking contrast to Evelina and Jane Eyre, she never visits anything outside the town of Highbury. As Mrs Weston, her former governess, says of her: "she goes so seldom from home."[153] Indeed, we never really see Emma visiting anything outside her own hometown, neither does she seem to have any aim to do so. But she is also very fond of staying at home in her house, where much of the narrative takes place.

As we have seen, Franco Moretti stresses that the prospect of traveling is one of the essential requirements of the *Bildungsroman,* he also consider it a male genre. For Moretti then, not only it is problematic that Emma is female but because Emma never leaves Highbury, she lacks one of the major requirements for the genre. What this thesis intends to demonstrate is that lack of mobility does not necessarily mean that Emma is unable to experience a coming of age process. In the case of Emma, it is apparent that she does not need to travel in her progress of growth, she needs grow alongside the space she is inhabiting. With Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1958) we learned that the house shapes identity, how we are in the space says something about our identity[154] Of all our heroines, nobody is as tied to her home as Emma. It seems that Bachelard has written his consideration on space with the first sentence of *Emma* in his mind! And as we shall see with Emma, the home is an important piece of the puzzle for her growth and maturation. Because although Emma believes she is the mistress of the house, she fails to connect herself with the home, delegating that role to another person. It is only when Emma learns to identify herself with her own home, that she enters the process of maturing.

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[152] Austen, *Emma*, 1. The critical edition of reference to date is the Norton one, however, this thesis uses the Wordsworth edition of 2007.
[153] *Ivi,* 30.
[154] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 21.

Emma's protracted staying home, however, has nothing to do with her being unsocial. On the contrary, she enjoys being around people. But on one condition: she prefers to have people come to their house, rather than going out. Neither Emma nor her father enjoys leaving the house for dinner, and would much rather stay at home. When they are invited to dine with Mr and Mrs Weston at Randalls, both father and daughter are characterized as this: " In general their evenings were less engaged with friends than their mornings; but one complete dinner engagement, and out of the house too, there was no avoiding".[155] Even though the dinner party is hosted by a close friend, Emma still would rather stay at home – especially since it is evening, but out of respect she goes. However, while she is there, she is homesick "but Emma could not so entirely give up the hope of their being all able to get away".[156] Even though she loves her friend and former governess, Mrs Weston, she longs for her beloved home Hartfield.

But as also described in the former quotation, Emma does like to spend her days with her friends. And although Emma sometimes goes outside for a walk, goes to town or visiting other friends, most of the time during the day is also spent at her home. For instance, we never really join Emma to visit her friend Harriet at Mrs. Goddard's, Harriet is always visiting Hartfield, so much that she gets a bedroom for herself: "Harriet slept at Hartfield that night. For some weeks past she had been spending more than half her time there, and gradually getting to have a bedroom appropriated to herself."[157] The associates of Emma spend so much time there that we rarely see a morning or daytime where there are no friends of the family visiting. Even when she schemes to match Harriet with Mr Elton, it is not she who seeks Mr Elton, it is Mr. Elton who comes to visit Emma. The home of Emma Woodhouse is the centre for social company in Highbury.

THE MISSING PIECE

Even though Emma loves her house, we learn early in the story that the house is missing a piece: her former governess Miss Taylor, now Mrs. Weston, have married and leaves Hartfield

[155] Austen, *Emma*, 86.
[156] *Ivi*, 102.
[157] *Ivi,* 44.

to live with her husband at Randall's. Miss Taylor played a significant part in the house of Hartfield, from the time Emma's mother had passed away, and especially since her sister married and moved to London. Despite the fact she lives nearby, Emma grieves the loss of her friend.

> How was she to bear the change? It was true that her friend was going only half a mile from them; but Emma was aware that great must be difference between a Mrs Weston, only a half a mile away from them, and a Miss Taylor in the house[158]

All though Mrs Weston is living nearby, the problem is that for the longest time she has been a big part of Emma's home, but not anymore, now it is just Emma and her father inhabiting the space. And Emma who has been used to Mrs Weston's intimacy since a child, now feels like the house is missing an important part.

Miss Taylor clearly has exerted an important role in the house, as underlined by the attention given to her departure in the very first chapter of the novel. Not only is she missed in her role as a governess, but also as a beloved friend and companion. Emma's home does rarely miss companionship as there is always a lot of visitors coming over, but none of them is as much appreciated as Miss Taylor:

> Even before Miss Taylor had ceased to hold nominal office of governess, the mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint; and the shadow of authority being now long passed away, they had been living together as friend and friend very mutually attached, and Emma doing just what she liked; Highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgement, but directed chiefly by her own.[159]

The absence of Miss Taylor does not reflect the absence of a former employee, but the loss of someone who has had an impact on the atmosphere of the house. She is much more a member of the family than a member of the staff. This is becoming even clearer when Emma reflects on how life at Hartfield would be after Miss Taylor's departure: "her father and herself were left to dine together, with no prospect of a third to cheer a long evening. Her father composed himself to sleep after dinner, as usual, and she had then only to sit and think of what she had

[158] Austen, *Emma*, 2. My highlighting.
[159] *Ivi,* 1.

lost." [160] For Emma, Miss Taylor had the role of bringing joy and warmness to her home, when she is now gone then, the home suffers in her absent.

But it is not only Emma who is missing the atmosphere of Miss Taylor at Hartfield. The impact she has had on the Woodhouses' home becomes more emphasized as Mr. Woodhouse also grieves the departure of their former governess. Just like Emma, Mr. Woodhouse consider Miss Taylor as an integral part of their home, but unlike Emma he reflects his own feeling over on Miss Taylor, thinking she must be as miserable as them:

> […] when he was now obliged to part with Miss Taylor too; and from his habits of gentle selfishness, and of being never able to suppose that other people could feel differently from himself, he was very much disposed to think Miss Taylor had done a sad thing for herself as for them, and would have been a great deal happier if she had spent all the rest of her life at Hartfield.[161]

Miss Taylor has been functioning as the mistress of the house, raising Emma as she was her own child. For Mr. Woodhouse then it would be like losing yet another member of his family, living him and Emma once again to be alone.

That both father and daughter display such a reaction at the governess' departure, is the proof of the extent to which Miss Taylor (now Mrs Weston) was considered an essential part of the family:

> She recalled her past kindness – the kindness, the affection of sixteen years – how she had taught and how she had played with her from five years old – how she had devoted all her powers to attach and amuse her in health – and how nursed her through the various illnesses of childhood.[162]

In the light of these reflections from Emma, it sure implies the qualities and affection of a motherlike figure. Seeing that Emma lost her mother in a young age, and even though she

[160] Austen, *Emma,* 1.
[161] *Ivi,* 3.
[162] *Ivi*, 2.

describes Miss Taylor as a friend, it would be just naturally for Emma to also (unconsciously) consider her a surrogate mother.

An reason why Miss Taylor might be seen as Emma's surrogate mother is right in the beginning of the novel, where we are informed of the death of Emma's real mother, and the family's relationship with Miss Taylor is explained like this: "Her mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses; and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection.[163] Not only is Miss Taylor described as an equal of a mother, it also becomes clear that Emma has little to none recollection of her birthmother, leaving Miss Taylor the only motherlike figure for Emma to truly remember. Despite the fact that Emma calls her a dear friend, it becomes clear that her important role at Hartfield might also be tied to her being more the mother figure of the house, rather than a governess and a friend.

Given the words Emma uses to describe her former governess, as a playmate, nurse and mother figure, it becomes clear how important Miss Taylor's role really is. In light of what she has done for the Woodhouses and what she represents, it is clear that the one that both Emma and Mr. Woodhouse tie to the identity of the house, it is not themselves, but Miss Taylor. Seemingly, Miss Taylor is the one who has made a light and warm atmosphere for the pair, it is her that has taken care of them both in many years, leaving her to embody the safety of the house. At this point, at the very beginning of the novel, it is Miss Taylor then, that is the heart of Hartfield, not Emma. Which is proven by the grieve of her departure and the very hole she leaves in the house when she is gone. Leaving Emma to desperately seeking something to make her home whole again.

However, Emma soon finds a replacement to fulfil the empty space and loss of her home, and this replacement is Harriet. Emma does not herself understand that it is in fact herself that feels empty after Mrs. Weston's departure, but rather ties the loss to her house. And when she is just getting to know Harriet, her thoughts about her young friend are these: " Altogether she was

[163] Austen, *Emma*, 1.

quite convinced of Harriet Smith's being exactly the young friend she wanted – exactly the something which her home required."[164] The most interesting part in this sentence is how she explains why Harriet is needed. For herself, Harriet could be the friend she wanted, but when it comes to the house, Harriet is required. In other words, Harriet is needed for the home because the home is missing an important part, and it is Harriet's task to make it whole again.

We find similar examples further as the narrative unfolds, where Emma refers to Harriet as both her friend, but at the same time makes her an important part of her home. When Harriet receives a letter from her friend and farmer Mr. Martin where he proposes to her, Emma advices her to refuse him. In Emma's reasoning, Harriet is way too good for the farmer, and she could not manage to lose her friend to lower society. She says "Nor, if you were, could I ever bear to part with you, my Harriet. You are a great deal to necessary at Hartfield to be spared to Abbey Mill."[165] Again we see the double attachment in Emma towards Harriet: on the one hand she calls her "my Harriet", which again makes us think about her seeing her as a friend. On the other hand, she stresses how important she is to her home, she is needed at Hartfield. Harriet has a role to play in her home. And both Emma and her house cannot lose Harriet to marriage where she, like Mrs. Weston, moves away. Harriet is Mrs. Weston's the replacement.

This urge to have Harriet close to her home, to be the very thing she needs to fill the empty space of the house, might also be one of the motivating factors for choosing Mr. Elton as Harriet's love interest. It is not that Emma does not want Harriet to experience love and get married, quite the contrary. She just does not want her to marry bad, and she needs to live close to her. Mr. Martin at Abbey Mill is therefore no match in Emma's reasoning. However, Mr. Elton is, and we soon discover one of her motives to choose Mr. Elton. She explains to her young friend:

> This is a connection which offers nothing but good. It will give you everything that you want – consideration, independence, a proper home – it will fix you in the centre of all your real friends,

[164] Austen, *Emma,* 18.
[165] *Ivi*, 42.

> close to Hartfield and to me, and confirm our intimacy forever. This, Harriet, is an alliance which can never raise a blush in either of us.[166]

Again, we see Emma presenting explanations which leads Harriet to think she is just a good friend. Which she also is, she does really want Harriet to be married in a proper family, to bring her the social status Emma believe she deserves. But there is also another great value that comes with a marriage to Mr. Elton, namely proximity: it would mean that she will still be close to Hartfield. Because Harriet plays such a part in mending the loss of Hartfield, she has to be close to Emma, or, as Emma puts it, "her real friend".

It is not that Emma does not think herself Harriet's real friend, even in all her matchmaking and trying to make Harriet to her liking, she shows real love for her. When she says she cannot bear the thought of her leaving Hartfield, when she says Harriet is just the friend she wants, she means it. We do watch her have sympathy for her friend over and over again. An example is when she realises that she has been wrong about Mr. Elton's affection, and that he is not interested in Harriet, but in Emma. As she has to break the news for her dear friend she says:

> "Here have I", said she, "actually talked poor Harriet into being very much attached to this man. She might never have thought of him but for me; and certainly never would have thought of him with hope, if I had not assured her of his attachment, for she is as modest and humble as I used to think him".[167]

So, she does think very highly of Harriet indeed, and she does want the best for her friend. But that does not mean that she can also have other motives for her friendship. As we have seen, Emma also thinks of her as a substitute for Mrs. Weston, as an important piece that will fill the empty space she believes exist in her house.

However, as good friends Emma gets with Harriet, she never truly succeeds in getting Harriet to fulfil the empty space left by Miss Taylor. Emma mistakenly believe Harriet is the right person for the task because she fails to recognize Miss Taylor's true impact on the house. She considers her and describes her as a good friend, not yet understanding that she really is more of a motherlike figure and the for the moment the source of love and happiness, a family

[166] Austen, *Emma*, 58.
[167] *Ivi*, 109.

member. Since Emma yet does not understand that she has unconsciously made Miss Taylor the heart of Hartfield, rather than herself, she believes Harriet to have a greater impact on her home than she really has. Emma is mistakenly certain of this because she confuses the role of a family friend and family member. Both Miss Taylor and Harriet are considered friends of the family, when Miss Taylor leaves and become Mrs. Weston, Emma seeks out for a friend to replace her. But the new friend will never be enough to replace the empty space in the house left by Miss Taylor, because she has had such a significant role at Hartfield. Harriet will never achieve what Emma has set out for her, because she would have had to be a nursing mother, to have played with Emma since she was five years old and amused her for over sixteen years. The task Emma has set out for Harriet is impossible, therefore it is never going to succeed.

Emma wants and believes herself to be the mistress of the house, but as Emma is not yet fitting the part, she projects the house onto Miss Taylor, connecting the identity of the house with Miss Taylor and not herself. Therefore, Emma fails to find her own place in her home, as she believes her home relies on Miss Taylor's qualities, qualities that she is unable to fulfil herself. As a consequence, because of the safeness Miss Taylor represents and her motherlike figure, the role of the mistress of the house is tied to Miss Taylor and not Emma. The truth is that Emma has a long journey if she is to become the mistress of the house, the true head of her home, because she lacks a lot of the abilities to become so. If Emma is to realise her potential, she needs to learn to connect herself with the home, and stop trying to replace the hole she believes is in her home with Harriet.

THE PLACES OF *EMMA* AND THE HEROINE'S SNOBBISH NATURE

For Emma, Hartfield is always the best place. She sees herself as the best, as she and her father are the most respected families. In the first chapter, both the Woodhouses and their home is described like this:

> Highbury, the large and populous village almost amounting to a town, to which Hartfield, in spite of its separate lawn, and shrubberies, and name, did really belong, afforded her no equals. The Woodhouses where the first in consequence there. All looked up to them.[168]

[168] Austen, *Emma,* 3.

We soon learn that Emma is painfully aware of this, as her opinion of her own home reflects her arrogance. Nothing bad can be said about her home, but she has no hesitation to talk down the homes of the other inhabitants of Highbury, especially those less privileged than herself.

In Emma's mind, Hartfield is the finest home in Highbury, and she takes pride in both her home environment and people who live there. How she speaks of other people's homes is sometimes less charming, especially if they are from a lower social class than herself. She tells her friend Harriet:

> At Hartfield, you have had very good specimens of well-educated, well-bred men. I should be surprised if, after seeing them, you could be in company with Mr. Martin again without perceiving him to be a very inferior creature – and rather wondering at yourself for having ever thought him at all agreeable before.[169]

Here we experience Emma's snobby side. She ties the values of people to the house they live in and the environment surrounding their homes. And for Emma, there is one place that is far more superior compared to the other, and that is Hartfield.

Aside from adoring her own home, and talking down others, Emma also seems to have little to none opinion about the environment surrounding her. As mentioned, Emma does not travel and does spend most of her time in her own home, which stands in contrasts to both Evelina and Jane Eyre. Most of the environment and space surrounding Emma, for large parts of the novel, is mainly domestic as it is her home. However, that does not mean that she is not going to places in her familiar surroundings, and are regularly visiting social spaces in her neighbourhood. But unlike Evelina, who experiences many of the social spaces for the first time, she is used to her social scene of her neighbourhood.

One of these being the popular town shop "Fords", which is defined like this: "Ford's was the principal woollen-draper, linen-draper, and haberdasher's shop united – the shop first in size and fashion in the place."[170] The description gives an impression of what kind of status this

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[169] Austen, *Emma,* 24.
[170] *Ivi*, 14.

shop has in Highbury and there are reasons to believe it is of some importance for the citizens of the village. The impression of the shop's status is even more increased when Emma visits Ford's with Frank Churchill, who insists on going by after his father has told him he visits regularly. He believes it will make him a proper citizen of Highbury, something Emma confirms by saying: "I do admire your patriotism. You will be adored in Highbury. You were very popular before you came, because you were Mr Weston's son; but lay out half a guinea at Ford's and your popularity will stand upon your own virtues."[171] But other than acknowledging that the shop is precious to the inhabitants of the village and jokingly implying that if he were to leave money there, he will be accepted as a true citizen of Highbury, Emma leaves little to none attention to the shop. It is simply a place she frequently visits, it does not impact on her on any other level than supplying her with what she needs.

The same attitude Emma seems to have towards most of the social places mentioned in the novel, she simply does not seem to be giving them as much consideration. The same is valid for the bigger cities mention – Emma does not express any desire to travel to other locations outside her hometown. One example of this is London, the home of her sister Isabella, Mr. John Knightley and their children. We never really hear Emma express a wish to pay a visit to her sister in London at all, indeed she does not seem to give London, as Ford's, any reflection at all. When Isabella and her family finally visit at Christmas, after spending the holiday elsewhere, Isabella and Mr Woodhouse goes into an argument about London under a dinner. Mr. Woodhouse, the hypochondriac as he is, is convinced London is anything but a good place to live, claiming "It is a dreadful thing to have you forced to live there – so far off! – and the air so bad."[172] Isabella on her hand is defending her home, explaining the area they live in is perfectly fine, with clean air too. Emma however, has no interest in participating in the conversation, and gives the big city no attention at all. She is so little interested that would rather join the conversation of Mr. John Knightley and his brother about an acquaintance of Mr. John Knightley who is about to go to Scotland to look after his estate. Seemingly, Emma has no interest in London at all. A similar attitude towards London is also found when she is told that Frank Churchill is leaving to London to (apparently) have his hair cut. Emma gives once again no thought to the big city, her only comment is "There was certainly no harm in his

[171] Austen, *Emma,* 159.
[172] *Ivi*, 81.

travelling sixteen miles twice over on such an errand; but there was an air of foppery and nonsense in it which she could not approve."[173]

Another social city spoken off in the novel is the city of Bath. But just like London, Emma does not seem to be interested. After Mr Elton announces that he is going to Bath following Emma's rejection, her reaction is of course to be relieved: "Emma was most agreeably surprised. Mr Elton's absence just at this time was the very thing to be desired."[174] But then again makes no reflection on Bath itself, and is certainly not expressing a wish to visit the herself. Though Bath is described as a desirable place to visit, Emma is uninterested, which becomes clear when Mrs Elton is trying to convince her to go to Bath. Mrs Elton says: "The advantages of Bath to the young are pretty generally understood. It would be a charming introduction for you, who have lived <u>such a secluded life</u>: and I could immediately secure you some of the best society in the place."[175] And Mrs. Elton is right, Emma has lived a secluded life, but shows no interest in broadening her horizons. Emma herself believes she is in no need of an introduction to another society outside of Highbury, as she already (in her opinion) the best of society. Failing to recognize the world outside of her little village. Therefore, Emma responds: "but their going to Bath was quite out of the question."[176] Expressing no interest in the place and no wish to leave Highbury.

London and Bath are two cities which receive some attention in the novel. One might believe that a young woman like Emma, living in a small village in the countryside, would have loved to travel to a more social, bigger city. However, Emma is seemingly uninterested. Even the prospect of exploring places that are just nearby does not seem to wake curiosity in Emma. When Mrs Elton talks about her and her sister's family exploring King's-Weston, and expresses a desire to gather some people to explore the grounds around Highbury, she asks Emma: "You have many parties of that kind here, I suppose, Miss Woodhouse, every summer?"[177] Where Emma's cold response to Mrs Elton's question is: "We are rather out of distance of the very striking beauties which attract the sort of parties you speak of; and we are a very quiet set of

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[173] Austen, *Emma*, 163.
[174] *Ivi,* 112.
[175] *Ivi*, 219, my highlighting.
[176] *Ivi*, 220.
[177] *Ivi*, 218.

people, I believe; more disposed to stay at home than engage in schemes of pleasure."[178] Again, Emma emphasizes that she has no desire to explore other places, neither the big cities or more local destinations. She also makes it clear that she favours her home village, and has everything she needs at home.

One might be inclined to believe that just because Emma does not mention nor express the desire to visit other places, she might indeed have a wish to go outside her home village anyway. But if she had wanted to go somewhere, she would have expressed the wish for doing it. There is one place that Emma explicitly mentions as a place she really wants to visit, and that is the sea. When her sister Isabella talks of their trip to the sea, Emma tells her: "I must beg you not to talk of the sea. It makes me envious and miserable; I who have never seen it! Southend is prohibited, if you please."[179] The sea is the only place outside of Hartfield and Highbury that Emma seems to truly care to visit. She does not mention the sea as much throughout the novel, but the clear message to her sister is enough to understand that she truly has a desire for the sea. Unlike the other places, Bath and London, which she gives no reflection at all.

While Emma is almost too quiet towards the spaces in her environment and the desire to visit other places, she is too loud when it comes to commenting on other people's home and social status. Not yet matured, she has a rather arrogant nature and keeps no hesitation to act and speak snobbishly against those she considers below her. The first chapter of the novel defines Emma like this: "The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself."[180] Emma is brought up in privileged surroundings, as we seen before, everybody in the town looks up to the Woodhouse's. Which has given the young heroine a too high thought of herself. But her high opinion on herself and her family is not her snobbiest feature, her most charmless trait is to talk down to those not as fortunate as herself. Emma having everything she needs, has yet to learn that to really be the person she believes herself to be, it also means to behave respectfully to those who are less privileged than herself.

[178] Austen, *Emma*, 219.
[179] *Ivi,* 80.
[180] *Ivi*, 1.

One of the places that Emma is being really pretentious about is Abbey Hill Farm, the home of the Martins. Emma expresses a dislike towards both the Martins and their home. After she has convinced Harriet to decline Mr. Martin's proposal, she says "I could not have visited Mrs. Robert Martin, of Abbey Hill Farm. Now I am secure of you for ever."[181] It is clear that both the family and the place are not good enough for Emma, if Harriet were to marry Robert Martin, Emma could simply not be her associate any longer. She continues her reasoning with "You would have thrown yourself out of all good society. I must have given you up."[182] If Harriet were to be married and moved to Abbey Hill Farm, she would not only have been living in a home Emma cannot acknowledge as a place to visit, Harriet would also have been beneath Emma in status in a way Emma could no longer justify, and she could simply not have been her friend anymore. She explains why "You, banished to Abbey Mill Farm! *You* (sic) confined to the society of the illiterate and vulgar all your life!"[183] For Emma, it seems like the home and the environment surrounding your home also have an effect on you as a person. Just like her mansion has structured her as a person, Abby Mill Farm has made the Martins (inn Emma's mind) vulgar. In her reasoning the Martins and Abbey Mill would have transformed Harriet into a lesser person.

It seems like Emma believes that there is a coherence between where you live and who you are, if Abbey Mill makes the Martins lesser people, then also Hartfield would make Harriet a more valuable person. As she had stressed before, Highbury is a place with well-bred men. It is therefore important for Emma that Harriet spends as little time as possible with the people she believes will pollute her from all the great things she has learned from her time with Emma in Highbury. This we see when the sister of Mr. Martin has visited Harriet when she was not at home, and Harriet wishes to return the visit. Emma allows her to, but goes with her to wait and make sure she spends no more time than needed in their home, as well as making some rules for the visit.

[181] Austen, *Emma*, 41.
[182] *Ibidem.*
[183] *Ibidem.*

> She meant to take her in the carriage, leave her at the Abbey Mill, while she drove a little further and call for her again so soon as to allow no time for insidious applications or dangerous recurrences to the past, and give the most decided proof of what degree of intimacy was chosen for the future.[184]

Emma wants to make sure that they do not believe Harriet is to once again become their friend, she cannot approve of Harriet being associated with them, because she is too afraid of what could happen with Harriet if she did. Emma sees Harriet as a work in progress to become a real fair lady in Highbury society, and she is scared that companionship with the Martins would reset the progress and make her worse.

But it is not only those of lower social rank that Emma considers below herself. She also seems to distinguish between old money and new money. Her next object of judgement is then the Coles. The Coles are described as people who moved to Highbury a few years back. They are good and friendly people, but of low origin. However, due to fortune they have now become one of the wealthiest families in Highbury, close to the Woodhouse's standards in both house and fortune. But even though they are now almost as rich as Emma herself, she has no hesitation distancing herself from them when it comes to social classes. The Coles do not belong to the old, rich families in Highbury, Emma not only sees herself as superior to the Coles, she also thinks they are to show respect to Donwell Abbey and Randalls. As the Coles have become richer, they had grown a liking for dinner parties, but according to Emma they need to remember who they really are and where they are coming from. Despite their new fortune, they are not to believe they are on the same level as the other families. As the narrator says: "The regular and best families Emma could hardly suppose they would presume to invite – neither Donwell, nor Hartfield, nor Randalls. […] The Coles were very respectable in their way, but they ought to be taught that it was not for them to arrange the terms on which the superior families would visit them."[185] Even though the Coles have become rich, something that you would believe would have them rise in the social ladder, they are still not good enough for Emma. Because for her, there would always lay more respect in coming from old money, than of new.

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[184] Austen, *Emma,* 146.
[185] *Ivi,* 164.

The Coles are a very good example of Emma's snobbery. It is neither justified or nice of her to talk down to those who are less fortunate than herself. However, her privileged upbringing has led her to believe she is better than others, and her judgement is based on what they have or lack in wealth. She is not really inclined to behave or think so low about others, but somehow it is understandable that she herself believes so. What is harder to understand is how she feels inclined to be the judge of who are allowed as a member of higher society, and who is not. The Coles, who have been working hard to the point where it is finally paid off, is not allowed in her higher society. Harriet Smith, however, who is vaguely described as "the natural daughter of somebody."[186] Has at the beginning no known family, which could easily mean that she came from lower origin, just as the Coles, but Emma cannot help basing her judgement on her subjective criteria. As things stands for her Harriet's beautiful looks must be the sign of being born in a respectable family: "Somebody had placed her, several years back, at Mrs. Goddard's school"[187]. Therefore, letting her imagination create the image of Harriet as something that pleases her. The Coles on the other hand, who have known origins, do not receive the same favourable treatment.

Despite Emma's opinion that the Coles are to know their place in society, they are having a dinner party, an invitation which Emma has decided beforehand not to accept. As it is explained "she had made up her mind how to meet this presumption so many weeks before it appeared, that when the insult came at last it found her very differently affected."[188] The guest list consisting of both the Westons, The Knightleys and other acquaintances of Emma that she holds dear, but the invitation to the Woodhouses is nowhere to be seen. And Emma is indeed insulted. But not in the way that she first thought she would be, as Emma considers her family to be superior to the rest of Highbury, the Coles have not only offended her by not inviting her, they have also taken away from her the opportunity to refuse their invitation, as it says "She felt that she should like to have had the power of refusal".[189] In Emma's mind, the power structure, where she is to be considered higher, is disrespected by the Coles. However, she is happy when she finally gets the invitation from the Coles, seeing as all her beloved friends are also going to attend. In her pride, since Mr. and Mrs. Weston, who are aware of the Woodhouses not receiving

[186] Austen, *Emma*, 16.
[187] *Ibidem*.
[188] *Ivi*, 165–166.
[189] *Ivi*, 166.

an invitation at first is visiting, she claims she has to decline it. But secretly, she is very happy to receive their advice to go anyway.

Towards the Coles, Emma has just an overall arrogant attitude, but makes comments about their home. And there is probably not much negative to say about their home, but her view is that they are from lower origins and should act that way, even if they now have money. But there is another home she has lesser thoughts of, in a much more discreet way than Abbey Mill farm, and that is the home of Mr. Elton. Even before her scheme of matching Harriet and Mr. Elton failed, it is very clear that Emma never considered Mr. Elton as an equal for herself. The most obvious evidence for that is that she tries to match him with a girl that nobody thus far knows the origin of, another is that she is highly insulted when he says he wants to marry her. Her exact words were: "He must know that the Woodhouses had been settled several generations at Hartfield, the younger branch of a very ancient family, and that the Eltons were nobody."[190] Once again, Emma points out the superiority of her family. But as mentioned, even before all of this, Emma has made comments that indicate that the Eltons are way below the Woodhouses. When she and Harriet are out walking, they go by Mr. Elton's house. In her mind, Emma labels his house "an old and not very good house, almost as close to the road as it could be."[191] Once again, she makes a negative remark towards somebody else's home, a home that does not bear the same standards as her own home.

The most unfair judgments Emma makes overall are towards the Bates. Despite not having much money and living quite modestly in comparison to many other characters in the novel, the Bates receive almost as much visitors as the Woodhouses do in Hartfield. And even though they are not as rich in money they are rich in hospitality, their home and the Bates are described like this: "Mrs. and Miss Bates occupied the drawing-room floor; and there, in the very moderate sized apartment, which was everything to them, the visitors were most cordially and even gratefully welcomed"[192]. The Bates, even with small place and little money, always try to give their guests a pleasant stay – and seem to offer no less than when the richer inhabitants of the village are taken in guest. For this, Mr. Knightley, Mrs. Weston, even Emma's own father

[190] Austen, *Emma,* 108.
[191] *Ivi*, 66.
[192] *Ivi*, 121.

and other characters appear to respect the Bates regardless of their humble circumstances, but not Emma. Even though she knows she should visit, she has a hard time justifying it, thinking "it's being very disagreeable – a waste of time – tiresome women – and the horror of being in danger of falling in with the second rate and third rate of Highbury, who were calling on them for ever, and therefore she seldom went near them."[193] Once again, showing of her snobbish nature, having a hard time being associated with the "lesser" people of Highbury.

What makes Emma's snobbery worst is that the Bates are always grateful for the kindness they have received from the Woodhouses. When Mr. Woodhouse and Emma had gifted them a hindquarter of pork, they express their deepest gratitude by saying "our friends are only too good to us. If ever there were people who, without having a great wealth themselves, had everything they could wish for, I am sure it is us."[194] But Emma's arrogance takes an even worst turn when she makes a rude comment towards Miss Bates in public, during a trip to Box Hill with several of the principal characters of the novel. Frank Churchill suggests a game for entertainment, where they either are to say one clever thing, two moderately clever or three dull things. To which Miss Bates responds: "Three things dull indeed. That will just do for me, you know. I shall be sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth, shan't I?"[195] However, Miss Bates is saying it half-jokingly, as a way to make a god atmosphere in the group. Emma on the other hand, can no longer keep her impolite thoughts for herself, saying "Ah! Ma'am, but there may be a difficulty. Pardon me, but you will be limited as to number – only three at once."[196] A comment Miss Bates is clearly upset about, but even then, she has so much respect for Emma, that she believes Emma's comment to be caused by her own disagreeable behaviour, rather than Emma being a snobbish mean girl.

THE HEART OF HARTFIELD, OR THE TRUE MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE

The snobbery and judgement Emma feel inclined to make towards her fellow citizens of Highbury is one of those reasons Emma is yet unmatured. The consequences are that she

[193] Austen, *Emma,* 120.
[194] *Ivi*, 137.
[195] *Ivi,* 299.
[196] *Ibidem.*

neglects to find her true place as the mistress of Hartfield. Emma's wrong opinion about herself and those around her, shows how incorrect her judgement truly is. She has her whole life been led to believe that she is somehow superior to the others, consequently she is convinced that she always has the right opinion. Because she was lucky with the matchmaking between Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston, she believes she has a talent for putting people together. And even though it fails the first time with Harriet, she does not give up, and tries to match Harriet with Frank Churchill when she fails with Mr. Elton. For these matches to work, she takes on the task to rase Harriet to her own liking, believing if she makes her more like herself, Harriet will become a desirable object. Because she was lucky with her first scheme of matchmaking, and having high thoughts of herself, she fails to recognize that she really does not know what she is doing.

Emma claims to almost have the right answer to everything, when truthfully, she does not know much at all. Mrs. Elton is right when she says that Emma has lived a secluded life, because Emma has, as far as we know, never been much outside Highbury. The truth is, Emma is not really suitable as a guide for Harriet at all when it comes to teach her about good manners and society in an objective way. Because Emma holds her own opinion and knowledge as some sort of truth, when the reality is, she is rather ignorant herself. We have seen how opinionated and arrogant she has been towards the others, not really showing the well-mannered behaviour she talks about. Her ignorance surrounding her own reality becomes clear when she describes Mrs. Elton as:

> extremely well satisfied with herself, and thinking much of her own importance; that she meant to shine and be very superior, but with manners which had been formed in a bad school; pert and familiar; that all her notion were drawn from one set of people, and one style of living, that, if not foolish, she was ignorant[197]

If we were to think of how Emma's upbringing has been: a daughter from the richest and oldest family in a small village. Who has had her own way, and adored so much by her neighbours that she believes she is more important than others, leading her to feel inclined to look down at people who are less fortunate than herself. With this in mind, it would not be too far off to say,

[197] Austen, *Emma*, 217.

that some parts of the very description she gives to Mrs. Elton, would just as much suit herself. Because truth is, a young woman of twenty-one, does not know of life to teach others.

Because Emma is so ignorant, she fails to take the role as the true mistress of the house. Which thus far, as we have seen, is taken by Miss Taylor. And even though Miss Taylor has moved out, Emma is still not ready to truly grow into becoming the heart of Hartfield. To begin to build her identity in coherence with her home, she has to grow out of both her ignorance and arrogance. Namely, she has to start treating other people with respect. And not only those she believes to be her equals, but also the likes of the Bates, the Coles and the Martins. Because even though there are several things that, for the moment, separate Miss Taylor, the mistress of Hartfield and Mr. Woodhouse (who will then be the mister of Hartfield) from our heroine, the most striking difference is their good manners and kind approach to those around them. Mr. Woodhouse has a very different tone than his daughter, when speaking of the Bates. "Miss Bates was very chatty and good-humoured, as she always is, though she speaks rather too quick. However, she is very agreeable, and Mrs. Bates, too, in a different way. I like old friends."[198] Showing he honestly is grateful for his acquaintances, while Emma shows a patronizing attitude towards them, being more motivated by obligation than true kindness. If Emma is to really mature and grow into the head woman of the house, she has to learn she is not as righteous as she claims to be.

The revelation begins slowly by a hard lesson, starting with Emma realising how badly she behaved towards Miss Bates in the Box Hill trip. Something she becomes aware of after having a conversation with Mr. Knightley, who lectures her how she cannot laugh at someone who is not as fortunate as herself, in front of a group of people where some are likely to copy her behaviours. Emphasizing it is especially mean as Miss Bate is an old friend of Emma's family. At this point Emma starts to understand how ill-mannered she has been thus far. Her thoughts of Mr. Knightley's hard lessons are: "The truth of his representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart. How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates! How could she

[198] Austen, *Emma*, 134.

have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued!"[199] At this point Emma starts to realise how wrong she is, and thus begins her journey to grow out of her arrogance.

The evidence of her starting to grow up, is that she starts to take responsibility, instead of believing that her opinion is always right. Earlier Emma would have continued whatever scheme she was engaged in, but this time she understands her wrongdoings, and in an attempt to make amends for her attitude, she visits the Bates in shame. Let us look to what Emma states before the visit: "If attention in future could do away the past she might hope to be forgiven. She had been often remiss, for conscience told her so; remiss, perhaps, more in thought than in fact: scornful, ungracious. But it should be so no more."[200] And while talking to Miss Bates about Jane Fairfax's both being sick and about to leave working as a governess, Emma shows a more mature and honest approach: " She spoke as she felt, with earnest regret and solitude – sincerely wishing that the circumstances which she collected from Mrs. Bates to be now actually determined on, might be as much for Miss Fairfax's advantage and comfort as possible."[201] Previously Emma could not care of Jane Fairfax at all, but this time we can see that she genuinely wishes her the best.

Emma has always felt a dislike towards Jane Fairfax. Earlier in the novel, Emma tries to justify why she does not like her: "But she could never get acquainted with her; she did not know how it was, but there was such coldness and reserve; such apparent indifference whether she pleased or not"[202]. However, after the revelation caused by Mr. Knightley, her opinion of Jane Fairfax changes completely, and she realises she should have been kinder to her. Admitting she should have listened more to Mr. Knightley earlier, she says:

> Had she followed Mr. Knightley's known wishes, in paying attention to Miss Fairfax which was every way her due; had she tried to know her better; had she done her part towards intimacy; had she endeavoured to find a friend there instead of Harriet Smith; she must, in all probability, have been spared from every pain which pressed on her now.[203]

[199] Austen, *Emma*, 303.
[200] *Ivi*, 304.
[201] *Ivi*, 306.
[202] *Ivi,* 130.
[203] *Ivi,* 338.

Once again, Emma is confronted with her former unkind behaviour, and once more she is faced with the fact that she has been wrong. She realises that the coldness between the pair is all on her, that it is her fault they never became friends. Had she been less stubborn in her ways, she might have been spared from the mess she is now going through. She is starting to see her own blindness, and reality starts to unfold in front of her.

The former dislike of Jane Fairfax is most likely motivated by envy. As Emma herself notes "Mr. Knightley had once told her it was because she saw in her the really accomplished young woman which she wanted to be thought herself; and though the accusation had been eagerly refuted at the time, there were moments of self-examination in which her conscience could not quite acquit her."[204] And it is easy to understand why she would feel jealous towards Jane Fairfax, as she is described as remarkably elegant, overall pretty and well-mannered. Raised by the family of Colonel Campbell in London, Jane Fairfax has been well educated in all her talents. Both her and Emma play the piano, but Jane Fairfax, due to her training, is better than Emma. Last but not least, Jane has accompanied the Campbells on their travels and experienced new places, something the home-loving Emma is clearly not.

As already noted, Moretti claims that mobility is a requirement for the coming of age process. But Emma does not travel. As pointed out, she has lived a secluded life, with little to none mentions of her ever being far outside of Highbury. As she has shown some jealousy towards Jane Fairfax before, it is not unthinkable that she is envious of the journeys Jane Fairfax has undertaken following the Campbells. But as we have discovered, Emma really never expresses any wish to go somewhere else, she is found of staying at home. As we have seen, Emma is now starting to show signs of interior growth realising her previous mistakes. The travel part is not a really a necessary condition, at least not in Emma's case, to gain the knowledge she needs to mature into societal expectations. Emma is already showing development, making her an immobile *Bildungsroman* heroine. Emma is not jealous of Jane's travels, she has the means, freedom and money to do so if she pleases. The main difference between Emma and Jane, in the case of travelling, is that Jane does not really have the freedom to go where she wants, she has to follow the Campbells lead. In her article "Adoring the girl next door: Geography in

[204] Austen, *Emma*, 130.

Austen's Novels", Susan Morgan notes that "Jane Fairfax has mobility because she travels with a Colonel and his family, not because she has the economic right to control her own location. Without money, Jane must move around as others dictate"[205]. Whereas Emma is potentially free to go whenever she wants, she just chooses not to do so. At least not outside of Highbury, inside her small village however, she pays visits to the sick and poor, partial fulfilling her role as the mistress.

Although she is not dependent on the mobility part of the *Bildungsroman*, and she has accepted that her previously conduct was misjudged by her part, she is still not entirely done with her journey towards adulthood. As Lorna Ellis explains: "the protagonist begins as self-assured young woman who question their subordinate place in society, but the endings find them less active, less assertive, and reintegrated into society through marriage."[206] Emma has no intention to become married at all, since she finds her actual position quite suited for herself, she explains to her friend Harriet:

> Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing; but I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want; I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house as I am of Hartfield; and never, never, could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man's eyes as I am in my father's.[207]

Emma is situated in a privileged position at the time, and she does believe she is the mistress of the house, although as we have seen, she is quite not there yet. Emma's main reason to not marry is that she is afraid to lose power. As she says herself, she is in an excellent situation: not only she is adored by the man of the house, she is also free to make decisions as she pleases. If she were to get married and move to a gentleman's house, she might lose some of her freedom. Therefore, Emma makes her decision of not getting married, so she can stay in Hartfield forever.

Even though Emma refuses to get married, those around her seem to believe she should. As Ellis clarifies, marriage is the goal on the journey to re-enter society. Society in Highbury, those

[205] Morgan, "Adoring the girl next door", 40.
[206] Ellis, *Appearing to diminish*, 16.
[207] Austen, *Emma*, 67.

surrounding Emma, do expect her to end up married nevertheless. When she reveals to Harriet that she is not to be married, Harriet's response is: "Ah, so you say, but I cannot believe it."[208] Emma's news is troubling, and Harriet has a hard time really believing Emma is sincere with her statements. For Harriet, not being married seems like a sad fate, afraid Emma will end up as "an old maid at last, like Miss Bates!"[209], thinking her friend choosing a somewhat dreadful path in her choice not to be married. Harriet is not alone in her wishes to see Emma married. Mrs. Weston also declares that she wants Emma to get married. In a conversation with Mr. Knightley she says "She always declares she will never marry, which of course, means just nothing at all. But I have no idea that she has yet ever seen a man she cared for. It would not be a bad thing for her to be very much in love with a proper object."[210] And just as Harriet, she has a hard time believing Emma when she states she will not marry, she seems to think that Emma's stubborn opinion is nonsense. So even though Emma is very clear in her speech, she gets little support from her friends. Who on the contrary, as most of society, believe she indeed should be married.

Even though Emma blatantly refuses marriage, there is yet another turning point for our heroine, that is to change her path and attitude again. When she finds out that Harriet is in love with Mr. Knightley, Emma's reaction is distress. All this time she has been taking Mr. Knightley's company for granted, without ever realising how important his companionship is for her: "Till now that she was threatened with its loss, Emma had never known how much of her happiness depending on being *first* with Mr. Knightley, first in interest and affection."[211] Probably, Emma has reflected when it comes to her own view of marriage, believing everything would just stay the same. However, what she has neglected to realise is that those around her would move forward, meaning Mr. Knightley might get married even though Emma is not. Emma, who has been so very used to Mr. Knightley's affection, realises that his affection would change if he were to marry. Once again Emma gets a new revelation of reality, and understanding she does not want to lose Mr. Knightley.

[208] Austen, *Emma*, 67.
[209] *Ibidem*.
[210] *Ivi*, 30.
[211] *Ivi*, 333.

After this realisation, everything starts to unfold for Emma, as she realises that she has been wrong on several levels, now leaving her to feel humbled. When speaking with Mr. Knightley about the relationship between Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill, she admits "My blindness to what was going on led me to act by them in a way that I must always be ashamed of , and I was very foolishly tempted to say and do many things which may well lay me open to unpleasant conjectures, but I have no other reason to regret that I was not in the secret earlier."[212] The young girl who have earlier seemed to have the answer and truth to everything is finally starting to see the truth. Not only she is admitting she is wrong, she also indicates that she never felt affection towards Frank Churchill herself, emphasising that her bad manners are the only reason she has to feel bad about not knowing about their relationship, eventually leading up to Emma and Mr. Knightley revealing their feelings for each other.

After accepting her feelings towards Mr. Knightley, Emma is finally on her journey's end. Realising that she has been wrong, and that marriage is not as bad as she first has thought, she is in the end able to connect her own feelings with her home, as explained "What totally different feelings did Emma take back into the house from what she had brought out!"[213] From this point forward, she has taken her real place as the heart of Hartfield, she will be the one making sure the atmosphere is warm and lovely, as previously done by Miss Taylor. In doing so, she becomes the one thing that she has claimed to be, but failed to fulfil, which is to truly become the mistress of Hartfield.

And it is not only Emma herself who now feels the influence she has on her home. Also Mr. Knightley admits that the atmosphere Emma brings to the house has an effect on his own mood. He reflects: "She was his own Emma, by hand and word, when they returned into the house; and if he could have thought of Frank Churchill then, he might have deemed him a very good sort of fellow."[214] As he enters the house with Emma, after she has had her revelation of her connection with the house, he confesses that the atmosphere brought by Emma is strong enough to convince him to forget his ill opinion of Frank Churchill. Emma's influence has become so strong, that there is no denying she has truly found her place as the heart of her home.

[212] Austen, *Emma*, 341.
[213] *Ivi*, 348.
[214] *Ibidem.*

As we remembered the Woodhouses experience great loss at Miss Taylor's departure, since she then was the main contributor to a warm domestic atmosphere. However, this role is now being fulfilled by Emma. But as soon as she has accepted her role, Emma also connects her identity so much with the house that is impossible for her to leave Hartfield, and even in her union with Mr. Knightley, she stubbornly refuses to leave her home. It is described:

> Emma hung about him affectionately, and smiled, and said it must be so; and that he must not class her with Isabella and Mrs. Weston, whose marriages taking them from Hartfield had, indeed made a melancholy change: but she was not going from Hartfield; she should be always there, she was introducing no change in their numbers or comforts but for the better.[215]

Emma cannot leave as she knows she is now the only one who can make their home pleasant for Mr. Woodhouse. Although the loss of Miss Taylor and Isabella was hard, it would be unbearable for Mr. Woodhouse if Emma were to go. As she now has finally learnt how to be a proper mistress, learning she is not always right and to treat those around her with kindness and respect, it is impossible for her to leave.

Emma's decision never to leave Hartfield, is something Mr. Knightley understands, and therefore he resolves the problem leaving Donwell to go live with Emma and her father at Hartfield. And as Emma promises to her father, changing the numbers of the home for better rather than making it worse. Emma is fairly sure their decision would serve her father well "she and Mr. Knightley meant to marry; by which means Hartfield would receive the constant addition of that person's company, whom she knew loved, next to his daughters and Mrs. Weston, best the world."[216] Finally, Emma's journey to integrate into society is at an end, by marriage with Mr. Knightley. A marriage that does not take away Emma's power or the role as the mistress of the house. Her fear of losing her power, which was the reason for not getting married in the first place, proved to be wrong through a union with Mr. Knightley. A marriage of freedom Emma did not think possible, thinking: "How very few of those men in a rank of life to address Emma would have renounced their own home for Hartfield!"[217], continuing with: "It was all right, all open, all equal. No sacrifice on any side worth the name. It was a union of

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[215] Austen, *Emma*, 375.
[216] *Ivi*, 374.
[217] *Ivi*, 377.

the highest promise of felicity in itself, and without one real, rational difficulty to oppose or delay it."[218] In other words, Emma finally goes through what those around her always thought she should, namely getting married, without giving up her own principles.

Emma's coming of age story has never relied on her travelling, because her true journey always was depending on her to become mature enough to take on the part of being the true heart of Hartfield. Meaning she had to learn to build her identity in connection with her home. Her development starts when she stops confusing Miss Taylor as a missing piece, and starts letting her own identity grow as she realises she is enough of a mistress, and her home does not rely on Miss Taylor. When she finally stops trying to replace the hole with Harriet, becoming aware of her own misconduct and learning to treat her fellow citizens with the respect and kindness that are required for a mistress of a household, she comes to realise her place in society, and her place at home.

Emma's development is ensured because she spends so much time in her home, making her *Bildungsroman* progress depending entirely on her growth in coherence with her home, rather than any other factors. In other words, her progress is dependent on space – the space of her home. She manages to grow because she lacks mobility, not despite of it, and finally takes her place in society as a married woman. The real challenge for Emma has always been connected to her home; from believing her big and pretty house made her better than the other, consequently having manners which made her unsuitable for the role she so highly wanted – to realise her mistake and finally growing into becoming the real mistress of Hartfield. In growing out of her arrogance, she becomes a mature and humble person, ensuring her to be able to get married without losing her values, power and home. And when she finally has re-entered society and finished her journey, the immobile heroine takes her first trip out of town, to the only place we have ever known Emma desiring to visit, the sea-side.

[218] Austen, *Emma, 377.*

JANE EYRE: RAISING IN THE SCALE OF SOCIAL EXISTENCE

As noted, Evelina enjoys a degree of spatial mobility in London, whereas Emma is relegated to the substantial immobility of her small country village. Jane Eyre marks an intermediate stage between the two. Indeed, she experiences mobility, albeit to a certain extent. On the one hand, her freedom of movement is limited to the countryside; on the other one, her travels are caused by stringent necessity, rather than the prospect of social enjoyments at public assemblies, dinner parties and balls. Like Evelina, she is an orphan of both parents. Plot-wise, the loss of her family is the major event that triggers the plot. In a significant contrast with both the previous heroines, in the case of Jane we are offered more than superficial glimpses on her childhood. The story begins when she is left in the care of Mrs. Reed, her late uncle's wife, who is anything but delighted of the settlement. When she is ten years old, Jane is sent to the charity school of Lowood. Neither Gateshead Hall, which is her aunt's house, and where she lives the first ten years of her life, or Lowood are especially kind to young Jane. In comparison with the earlier heroines, Jane cannot lean on trusting and loving companions (her own words: "being absolutely without home and friends."[219]). This is the reason why her journeys are motivated either by despair (i.e. when she leaves Gateshead Hall and Thornfield) or simply by the necessity of a change (when she leaves Lowood).

Jane Eyre starts her life with nothing: she is even less fortunate than Evelina, who at least finds a surrogate home at Berry Hill, where she is welcomed and loved. Not only has Jane Eyre no real home, but she does not remember neither her parents nor the home where she was born and raised. She spends her first ten years constantly feeling unwelcomed and alienated at the Gateshead Hall. On such premises, the attempt to find her place in the world, later in her life, coincides with her searching for that home she has been deprived of. As she arrives at new places and environments, she unconsciously searches for the 'missing piece'. Namely, a place she might relate to as the one she had never experienced, where she could feel at home. As we follow Jane Eyre on her developmental story of growth, we are also following her in a search for a home.

[219] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 495.

The red-room and Gateshead Hall

As earlier mentioned, Jane spends her first years of childhood in a house where she is neither wanted nor loved. As a result, Jane feels alienated to the house she is currently living in. Being excluded from shared family time in the dinner room at the beginning of the novel, she retreats herself to what she calls "the small breakfast room", to avoid troubles. This choice is part of a strategy she puts in place to make herself invisible: "I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat crossed-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement."[220] This passive and withdrawing attitude is her psychological answer to her feelings of alienation and helplessness. Secluding herself as much as she can from the rest of the family. Not only does she take shelter in the little window corner of a room that is not being used. She is also hiding behind the curtain, making sure she is not easily found, and when her cousin John Reeds enters the room looking for her, he exclaims "where the dickens is she"[221], as he fails to find Jane without the support of his sister.

And as Jane feared, he came to cause her trouble. As a result, she is locked up in what she calls the red-room. As Bachelard puts it, the spaces of the house are never "sources of fear; on the contrary, they are spaces where we feel well, by experiencing comfort and love".[222] This is not the case with Jane Eyre, as she experiences neither love or comfort in the house where she lives. On the contrary, Reed house conveys feelings of hostility and desertion. And these feelings is particularly present in the red-room, where the former master of the house, Mr. Reed, died long before. In this sinister place, her thoughts wander in a specific direction: the supernatural. She sees the room through a looking glass and describes it as follows: "All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit"[223]. Jane's imagination has already brought her onto a supernatural path, as she explains: "Superstition was with me at that moment; but it was not yet her hour of complete victory"[224]. She finds herself in a path towards discomfort, and the longer she stays there, the worse her experience will be.

[220] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 6.
[221] *Ivi*, 8.
[222] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 34.
[223] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 16.
[224]Ivi, 16.

As she stays, the experience with the room symbolising her abused condition becomes more and more unsettling. As times passes, the room is influenced by the fact that it is getting darker and darker outside, she says:

> Daylight began to forsake the red-room; it was past four o'clock, and the beclouded afternoon was tending to drear Twilight. I heard the rain still beating continuously on the window and the wind howling in the grove behind the hall; I grew by degrees cold as stone, and my courage sank.[225]

There is no fire in the room, as it is very seldom used after Mr. Reeds death. But her feeling cold as stone could very much be because of her rising fear as well, as she points out herself, her courage is getting lower. And as we shall see, as she goes further down the avenue of paranormal, she starts to experience more discomfort and dread. The red-room now starts to fully transform into a room of horror:

> A ray from the moon penetrating some aperture in the blind? No; moonlight was still, and this stirred; while I gazed, it glided up to the ceiling and quivered over my head. I can now conjecture readily that this streak of light was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern, carried by some one across the lawn: but then, prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I though the swift-darting beam was herald of some coming vision from another world.[226]

As much as she tries to reason, it is too late: the association between the room and a feeling of terror and dread is deeply rooted in her conscience. There is no possibility for young Jane to experience the room as nothing but a place of utter discomfort.

At this point in the plot her own foretelling occurs and superstition takes over. She starts to panic, as she explains retrospectively: "My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings: something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down"[227]. In all probability, the head growing hot and the sound effect are the results of the combination of two factors: on the one side, the head injury caused

[225] Brontë, *Jane Eyre,*18.
[226] *Ivi*,19.
[227] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 20.

by being pulled off in the altercation with John Reed; on the other one, the increasing fear that is affecting her vivid imagination. Once again, the inclination to supernatural prevails: she becomes convinced there is a ghost haunting her in the room. Her determination to escape collides with Mrs. Reed's plan of punishment. She is well aware of the consequences of going against her aunt's will, but despair prevails as she starts begging her: "let me be punished some other way! I shall be killed if— "[228]. However, the heroine is not given the chance to finish her sentence, before the aunt yet again has locked her alone in the room. Jane understands that her battle against the red-room is lost. The frightful thoughts have now taken Jane completely over: as she believes she would die, the attempt to leave the room terminates with Jane passing out in fear.

But just like the breakfast-room, the red-room is ambivalent. Not only the spectre of supernatural presences makes Jane tie negative experiences and thoughts to this place; it also reflects her alienation from the other members of the house. As she feels trapped and separated from the rest of the family, she cannot escape her lowliness. As she notes: "Alas! Yes: no jail was ever more secure."[229] She has no other choice than being imprisoned: physically, in the empty room that becomes her refuge, and psychologically, in her negative thoughts. Where the idea that her presence is unwelcomed at Gateshead Hall are a returning matter: "I was a discord in Gateshead Hall; I was like nobody there; I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed and her children, or her chosen vassalage. If they did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them."[230] The space surrounding Jane Eyre expresses anything than the comfort Bachelard connects to the home space, because Jane Eyre does not have a home. Gateshead Hall does not have the means to secure Jane from her terrors, and therefore it is neither qualified to be a home in relation to Jane's situation.

And since it feels unsecure to her, the whole of Gateshead Hall soon adopts the same assets as the red-room, and the whole "home" becomes a place of discomfort and dread and she is in need of outside resources to lose feeling of being unsafe. After she faints, the doctor, Mr Lloyd, comes to see her, and she describes the experience of him leaving like this: "I felt so sheltered

[228] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 20.
[229] *Ivi*, 15.
[230] *Ivi,* 17.

and befriended while he sat in the chair near my pillow; and as he closed the door after him, all the room darkened and my heart again sank: inexpressible sadness weighed it down."[231] It is not the house, who Bachelard has given the task to shelter, who is making Jane feel secure. The house does not have the means to shelter Jane, therefore the only time she feels that comfort, is when another being is entering the house. And as fast as he is gone, the house becomes again the dark and unloving space where she is not welcome. When Mr. Lloyd comes back, he asks Jane of her feeling towards the house, if she does not think her home beautiful, and Jane answers "It is not my house sir; I have less right to be here than a servant."[232] And she continues " If I had anywhere else to go, I should be glad to leave it".[233] The house does not express a notion of home for Jane, it expresses a notion of alienation and misery.

So, the terror emanating from the red-room expands to affect the whole of Gateshead Hall, to the point that Jane can no longer distinguish the room from the house in its entirety; she is just as unsecure under the roof of the building as she feels in the red-room. Sitting alone becomes part of her daily routine, and this habit of hers take place in other deserted rooms in the house, where she can isolate herself from the rest of the residents "with the doll on my knee, till the fire got low, glancing round occasionally, to make sure that nothing worse than myself haunted the shadowy room"[234]. The feeling of insecurity linked to the red room has become a pervasive state of alert, which takes hold of her mind. What earlier was the threat once limited to the red-room, with its supernatural traits, has now become a general feature in the whole house, where she has always to check for her own safety. When she gets the news that she is going to attend a school far away from Gateshead Hall, Jane cannot wait to leave. She explicitly begs her aunt: "send me to school soon, Mrs. Reed, for I hate to live here."[235] The prospect of leaving the place she is supposed to call home triggers, for the first times, expressions of ease and relief: "That afternoon lapsed in peace and harmony […] even for me life had its gleams of sunshine"[236]. And so we join Jane Eyre on her first stop in her journey to find a secure, comforting and loving home.

[231] Brontë, *Jane Eyre,* 23.
[232] *Ivi*, 30.
[233] *Ibidem.*
[234] *Ivi*, 37.
[235] *Ivi*, 49.
[236]Ivi, 53.

Lowood School

Jane's first viewing of Lowood is somewhat sober, it is not described as beautiful nor scary, it is just very plain and institution-like. On her first day she is standing outside watching the building that from now on would be her new home, where she "looked round the convent-like garden, and then up at the house: a large building, half of which seemed grey and old, the other half quite new. The new part, containing the school-room and dormitory, was lit by mullioned and latticed windows, which gave it a church-like aspect"[237]. This description involving both convent and church-like is highlighting the somewhat "public-building" atmosphere the place has. As Jane is not experienced as a traveller, one of the few places outside her former home at Gateshead Hall she might have seen, is Gateshead church, as it is the only other place she mentions apart from than the house.[238] So she relies on reference points that she knows to describe her new home. Which bears more the feeling of a moderate and practical institution than the warm sense of a home. But considering where Jane comes from, she does not seem to see the new place with hostile connotations. She limits herself to observing it, seemingly "as it is".

Although Lowood provides Jane with an overall impression of average, functional anonymity, this new place soon shows the potential to offer her the home that Gateshead never was. Specifically, one 'new entry' have a beneficial effect on Jane on a better path than what she where. The first one being Jane experience the feeling of being safe and cared for, for the first time, through Miss Temple. And it is motivating her to do good, until the incident with Mr. Brocklehurst calls her a liar in front the whole school, she fears she will be disliked again. She says:

> I had meant to be so good, and to do so much at Lowood; to make so many friends, to earn respect, and win affection. Already I had made visible progress: that very morning I had reach head of my class […] now, here I lie again crushed and trodden on; and could I ever rise more? 'Never'[239].

[237] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 66.
[238] Jane mentions the church while she is locked up in the red-room, page 18.
[239] *Ivi,* 94.

In light of the treatment she constantly received at Gateshead Hall, Jane's reaction is easy to explain. However, to her surprise, Miss Temple is giving her the opportunity to speak her case, telling her "We shall think you what you prove yourself to be, my child. Continue to act as a good girl, and you will satisfy me."[240] At the same time she promises to send a letter to Mr. Lloyd, who has witnessed to her story of horrific episode in the red-room, to clear her from the false liar accusation.

When Miss Temple get the confirmation from Mr. Lloyd, she announces in front of the school that Jane Eyre is free of all charges. The act of kindness from Miss Temple is the direct reason for the second important element in changing of Jane's path. She shows her first step to growth. While Mr. Lloyd was visiting her after the red-room incident, she tells him that although she hated Gateshead Hall, she was not willing to move away if it meant she would live in poverty. This despise him telling her that she might be surrounded with people who were kinder to her. After Miss Temple, for the first time in Jane's life, shows she believes Jane to be a trustworthy person, and act accordingly towards Jane, she experiences both love and being secure. And after arriving at Lowood, she has a change of mind when it comes to the necessities of a proper home, she says "Well has Solomon said:– 'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred within.' I would not now have exchanged Lowood with all its privation, for Gateshead and its daily luxuries."[241] Here we come across Jane's first conscious and developmental thought.

After telling her readers about this episode, Jane fast tracks her story eight years ahead, where she is now eighteen and a teacher at Lowood. Just as institution of a school she has called home for the last eight years, Jane has become orderly, but by in no means in a negative way. As she says: "During these eight years my life was uniform: but not unhappy, because it was not inactive. I had the means of an excellent education placed within my reach"[242]. Most likely, Lowood is the best that has happened to Jane thus far – had she been living with the Reeds still, she would not have been given education and a teaching-experience. It has been a good life for Jane. However, when the secure and kind Miss Temple leaves the school to be married, Lowood

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[240] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 98.
[241] *Ivi*, 104.
[242] *Ivi*, 117.

loses an important piece: “From the day she left I was no longer the same: with her was gone every settled feeling, every association that had made Lowood in some degree a home to me.”[243] The school no longer gives the feeling of a home, as the person representing in, is now gone. Jane starts to feel restless again, as the stability she seeks for can no longer be offered by Lowood.

As Lowood has done its part for Jane, she sets out for a new adventure as a governess at Thornfield. She has learned everything she can at Lowood, so now she wants to move on. When she gets the offer from Thornfield, she reflects about how it differs from her current situation:

> – shire was seventy miles nearer London than the remote county where I now resided: that was a recommendation to me. I longed to go where there was life and movement: Millcote was a large manufacturing town on the banks of the A – ; a busy place enough, doubtless: so much the better, it would be a complete change at least.[244]

As Lowood no longer can offer her the feeling of a home, nor improve her development further, Jane is indeed looking for a change, something that would be new and exciting, and help her gain some new experiences. The more she thinks, the more she knows it is the right choice: she has to leave Lowood in favour of Thornfield. As she says: “my plans could no longer be confined to my breast; I must impart them in order to achieve their success.”[245] When she makes her final decision, she has no hesitation to set her plan for a new and exciting adventure of her life.

THORNFIELD

When Jane arrives at Thornfield, her first impression of the place is of utter, if not excessive, tranquillity and silence. Let us read the description of her first meeting with the housekeeper: “a cozy *(sic)* and agreeable picture presented itself to my view. A snug, small room; a round table by a cheerful fire; an armchair high-backed and old-fashioned, wherein sat the neatest imaginable little elderly lady”[246]. In comparison with Gateshead Hall and Lowood, the

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[243] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 118.
[244] *Ivi*, 124.
[245] *Ibidem.*
[246] *Ivi,* 134.

experience of Thornfield has a completely new tone, of overtly positive disposition. Even if Lowood did not present itself as disagreeable, it was described very plain and modest, and no epithets like ‘snug’, ‘cheerful’ and ‘cozy’ has ever been used to describe her experience at her former institutional home. Her first impression of Thornfield shows that Jane is optimistic in the view of her new home.

The agreeable sense of expectation of her new home is not limited to the first impression. When she sees her chamber where she is to live during her stay at Thornfield, another example of comfort experience by Jane is presented. She says “The chamber looked such a bright little place to me as the sun shone between the gay blue chintz window curtains, showing papered walls and carpeted floor, so unlike the bare planks and stained plaster of Lowood, that my spirit rose at the view.”[247] Compared to her former home, Thornfield is such an upgrade that it has a direct effect on her mood. She has gone from living in a modest place to a place that is much beyond her expectations, both in appearances and sprit. Compared to Lowood, where she was dependent on Miss Temple for safety and comfort, the first impression of Thornfield is enough for Jane to believe she has found a place where she is secure, and she says “by the livelier aspect of my little room, I remembered that after a day of bodily fatigue and mental anxiety, I was now at last in safe haven.”[248] She has finally found a place where she feels the comfort of a home.

Jane’s astonishment for the prettiness of Thornfield is present at almost every new room she gets to know. Her impression of the dining room is no exception “‘What a beautiful room!’ I exclaimed, as I looked around; for I had never before seen any half so imposing.”[249] Although not being quite so affected mood-wise this time, Jane is still impressed by the different spaces of her new home. As she gets a glimpse of the drawing-room further in, she is once again blown away with amazement: “I thought I caught a glimpse of a fairy place: so bright to my novice-eyes appeared the view beyond. Yet it was merely a very pretty drawing-room”[250]. Thornfield

[247] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 138.
[248] *Ibidem.*
[249] *Ivi*, 146.
[250] *Ivi*, 147.

is so beautiful being so much different from what she is used to, it is almost not real, as she says, it seems like a “fairy place”.

She is happy with Thornfield, as it has lived up to her expectation, she explains: “The promise of a smooth career, which my first calm introduction to Thornfield seemed to pledge, was not belied on a longer acquaintance with the place and its inmates.”[251] But despite that her good impression turns out to be true, her opinion of the place being cheerful and cozy has altered a bit. Thornfield is quite a distance from the town of Millcote, and the life at Thornfield would at times feel very quiet and limited. As Jane reflects: “I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit; which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never possessed; more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character”[252]. Although she is comfortable and happy at Thornfield, the place lacks in pulse, and Jane starts longing towards a more lively existence.

Therefore, when Jane gets the opportunity of an errand to the town, she willingly grabs it. Upon going back to Thornfield, her thoughts about her new home take a different, and rather sombre turn: “I did not like re-entering Thornfield. To pass its threshold was to return to stagnation: to cross the silent hall, to ascend the darksome staircase, to seek my own lonely little room”[253]. What earlier was very agreeable, cozy and cheerful has now become dark and lonely. Thornfield is now the mirror that reflects the image of her static existence. She has started to become restless; the place seemingly fails to cover Jane’s need for a more various life, and her experience of the place therefore changes according to her spirit towards it. What was earlier her safe heaven is now the tangible sign of her limitedness.

However, this perception of Thornfield as a claustrophobic cage radically changes concomitantly with a plot twist: the turning point in this regard is the arrival of the master himself. As Mr Rochester enters the house, the atmosphere in the place gets a whole other level of impulses and trepidation:

[251] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 153.
[252] *Ivi*, 154.
[253] *Ivi,* 164.

> I discern in the course of the morning that Thornfield Hall was a changed place: no longer silent as a church, it echoed every hour or two a knock at the door or a clang of the bell; steps, too, often traversed the hall, and new voices spoke in different keys below: a rill from the outer world was flowing through it; it had a master: for my part, I liked it better.[254]

This sense of expectation is not comparable to the hustle and bustle of a lively town: nevertheless, Jane is more than pleased with the new addition to the place, as it brings with it a new and worldly thrill. Not only the arrival of Mr. Rochester impact the place, which brims with a faster-paced existence; it also influences Jane's essence: "So happy, so gratified did I become with this new interest added to life, that I ceased to pine after kindred: my thin crescent-destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up; my bodily health improved; I gathered flesh and strength."[255] Both her spirit and health are affected by how she experiences Thornfield, and when the place is adding, once again, new impulse to her life, her perception of it alters accordingly.

Once again, Jane is pleased with her newly inhabited space. Mr. Rochester becomes a companion and a good friend. However, her reduced self-awareness soon intervenes to remind her not to indulge hubristically on her new situation. While for a few brief moments she entertains the idea of a potential affinity with Mr. Rochester, her (distorted) sense of reality prevents her from building false hopes: "*You (Sic)* of importance to him in any way? Go! your folly sickens me. And you have derived pleasure from occasional tokens of preference – equivocal tokens, shown by a gentleman of family, and a man of the world, to a dependant and a novice. How dared you? Poor stupid dupe!"[256]. Humble origins and lack of status are not the credentials required to become the companion of a gentleman like Mr Rochester: as a permanent warning against futile vanity, she produces a self-portrait, which she entitles, emblematically, "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain."[257] The reality check, heavily affected, as it is, by her low self-esteem, will make sure she remembers her place and position.

[254] Brontë, *Jane Eyre,* 167.
[255] *Ivi*, 207.
[256] *Ivi*, 226–227.
[257] *Ivi*, 227.

Thornfield is thus far the place that Jane finds most comforting and agreeable; but as far as considering the place a real home, she still seems to resent from her feeling of inferiority. She gets along well with both the servants and Mr. Rochester, but her inclination to self-censorship regularly takes over, as she often reminds herself that she has no right to do so. Such an attitude towards self-denial is best exemplified by her frequent attempts to make up reasons for her not having anything but an employee-employer relationship with the master: "Be sure that is the only tie he seriously acknowledges between you and him"[258]. But to keep this stern appearance of their relationship is not as easy and consistent as Jane wishes it to be. Upon his first night arriving with guests, she cannot help thinking that he does not fit in with his company as much as he suits her:

> 'he is not to them what he is to me', I thought: 'he is not of their kind. I believe he is of mine; – I am sure he is, – I feel akin to him, – I understand the language of his countenance and movements: though rank and wealth serve us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him.[259]

Jane constantly oscillates from excessive restraint to substantial expectation: the moment she finds reasons for hope coincides with the immediate sense of disbelief at the prospect of an harmonious relationship with her surroundings.

This internal struggle with Thornfield and its inhabitants grows out of the self-diminishing tendency that is the distinctive feature of her nature. As a consequence of this wavering, the heroine cannot interpret factual reality objectively: for example, she does consider Mr. Rochester superior, yet they have a relationship where he treats her differently from the other tenants at the house, more like his own equal. These premises are factual, but in Jane's stubborn sense of justice, Mr. Rochester is to be with someone like Miss Ingram, and not somebody as mediocre as herself. This intense activity of Jane's conscience finds confirmation in her dream material: "I dreamt of Miss Ingram all of the night: in a vivid morning dream I saw her closing the gates of Thornfield against me and pointing me out another road; and Mr. Rochester looked on with his arms folded – smiling sardonically, as it seemed, at both her and me."[260] The dream reflects her own inner fears that just as Gateshead Hall, Thornfield is not really her home, and

[258] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 230.
[259] *Ivi*, 247–248.
[260] *Ivi*, 348.

she does not deserve to consider it so, for as much as she feels connected to it. Mr. Rochester's mocking gaze at her and Miss Ingram, however, might symbolise that he finds Jane's self-diminishing thoughts a matter of nonsense. The same can be valid for her belief that if Miss Ingram and Mr. Rochester were to be married, Jane would no longer be welcomed at Thornfield.

Jane is adored by the inhabitants at Thornfield, and even missed by the master when she has to leave for a month, on her visit to the Reeds. Mr Rochester even confirms that Thornfield do consider Jane one of their own. As she tries to sneak into the house at night, he welcomes her on the doorway, much to her surprise:

> And this is Jane Eyre? Are you coming from Millcote, and on foot? Yes – just one of your tricks: not to send for a carriage, and come clattering over the street and road like a common mortal, but to steal into the vicinage of your <u>home</u> along with twilight […] What the deuce have you done with yourself this last month?[261]

More is implied than is declared in these words: the emphasis on the final question is suggestive of Mr Rochester's impatience at having her back. However, Jane's attention is immediately grasped by a specific expression used by the master: "he had spoken of Thornfield as my home – would that it were my home!"[262] Deep down, Jane might have known this, but she has yet to grow the self-confidence to believe in herself fully, and believe she deserves of Thornfield, without necessarily relying on her master's approval. However, she is grateful, so much so as she has a Freudian slip: "Thank you, Mr. Rochester, for your great kindness. I am strangely glad to get back again to you; and whenever you are is my home, – my only home."[263]

After being awarded what she believes is her master's approval, namely, that Thornfield is indeed her home, Jane finds herself in the urgency of leaving the house at the prospect of an imminent marriage between Mr. Rochester and Miss Ingram. At this point, she confirms to Mr. Rochester that she is "attached to it, indeed."[264] Let us focus on her speech entirely:

> I grieve to leave Thornfield: I love Thornfield: – I love it, because I have lived in it a full and delightful life, – momentarily at least. I have not been trampled on. I have not been petrified. I

[261]Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 350. My highlighting.
[262] Ivi, 35.
[263] *Ivi*. 352.
[264] *Ivi,* 358.

> have not been buried with inferior minds, and excluded from every glimpse of communication with what is bright and energetic, and high. I have talked, face to face, with what I reverence; with what I delight in, – with an original, a vigorous, an expanded mind. I have known you Mr. Rochester; and it strikes me with terror and anguish to feel I absolutely must be torn from you for ever. I see the necessity of departure; and its like looking on the necessity of death.[265]

Jane has finally found the place she could consider her home, which includes everything she has lacked from every previous space she has inhabited. Thornfield, which she has previously described as her 'safe heaven', lacks the terror of Gateshead Hall, whilst also treating her as an equal, something Gateshead never did. She feels secure and comforted at Thornfield, the sort of comfort of a real home, where she is seen as an individual and not only as a member of a uniform crowd, as she was considered at Lowood's School. While almost everybody else has treated Jane as either a nobody or an inferior, Mr. Rochester, despite being her master, has treated her as an active subject and as a respected companion. She is devastated by the prospect of leaving Thornfield, when she finally has found what she has searched for so long; a home where she feels secure, which can welcome her as a person with an identity.

As this revelation unfolds, Jane's self-esteem grows, while she realises that she is indeed deserving of a such a home as Thornfield, which includes everything she has been deprived of in her childhood and teenage years. Together with this discovery of place belonging, the recognition of her dignity emerges: her modest origins cannot justify the abusive treatment she has received as a child. The expression of this newly achieved self-awareness surfaces as an answer to Rochester's mocking attitude concerning his marriage prospect:

> Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you thing I am an automation? – a machine without feelings? […] Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? – You think wrong! – I have as much soul as you, – and full as much heart! And if God has gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you.[266]

Jane's rising self-esteem is the sign of a crucial development in her. As she finally understands, she is indeed a worthy person, and as such she is entitled to speak up for herself when she feels she has received wrong or unjust treatment. This stance marks a contrast with her past: when

[265] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 362–363.
[266] *Ivi,* 363.

she was a child, the threat of punishment prevailed, as well as the fear of being branded as wicked (one of the many derogatory words used to describe her at Reeds House). At Thornfield, Jane gradually learns she has an individual identity, as well as a right to a secure and comforting home, where she is treated as an equal.

As things really stand, a marriage plan with Miss Ingram was never contemplated by Mr. Rochester, who was just trying to taste Jane's reaction at the idea. However, happiness soon turns into misery as Jane discovers Mr. Rochester's back story in the imminence of their wedding date. One night, she has an unsettling dream, which for the first time casts a sinister shadow inside the walls of Thornfield: "I was aware of her lurid visage flame over mine, and lost consciousness: for the second time in my life – only the second time – I became insensible from terror."[267] The dream is an anticipation of what is about to happen in the immediate future, that is, Thornfield would soon cease to be her safe, comforting and long lost home. Later, after the discovery of Bertha, another dream confirms this gloomy sequel in store for her: "That night I never thought to sleep; but a slumber fell on me as soon as I lay down in bed. I was transported in thought to the scene of childhood: I dreamt I lay in the red-room at Gateshead; that the night was dark, and my mind impressed with strange fears."[268] After the event, Thornfield – which previously was considered secure and comforting, gains the same qualities of the red-room from her childhood. By association, the new home reflects the terror of her former childhood "home". At this point, Jane Eyre is no longer capable of seeing Thornfield as what it used to be, only as the fearful place it so swiftly has become. After the discovery of Rochester's past, she cannot stay: she has to leave Thornfield and search for yet another home.

MOOR-HOUSE

After fleeing Thornfield, she ends up staying with a family of three siblings; St. John, Diana and Mary Rivers at Moor House. Jane's first impression of the place is different from Thornfield and rather similar to Lowood:

[267] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 407.
[268] *Ivi*, 457.

> The parlour was rather a small room, very plainly furnished; yet comfortable, because clean and neat. The old-fashioned chairs were very bright, and the walnut-wood table was like a looking-glass. […] There was no superfluous ornament in the room – not one modern piece of furniture, save a brace of work-boxes and lady's desk in rosewood, which stood on a side table: everything – including the carpet and curtains – looked at once well-worn and well saved.[269]

Upon arriving at Thornfield, Jane's perception, as well as experience, of the place was affected by the atmosphere of cheerfulness she found there. The association is, again, immediate: as soon as she stepped in Thornfield, she realised the place would have offered her comfort and quietness. However, at Moor-house she finds the same modesty and ordinariness she had left at Lowood. With the difference that this is a private family house, not a school institution, the place has nonetheless something of that neutral, functional frugality and cleanliness and is far from evoking feeling of full happiness. However, as Jane gets to know its inhabitants, Moor-house changes, and she comes to enjoy it: "They loved their sequestered home. I too, in the grey, small, antique structure, with its low roof, its latticed casement, its mouldering walls"[270]. Still though, her descriptions do not yet exactly consist of the positive epithets she had used with reference to Thornfield.

As it turns out, the Rivers are only temporarily at Moor-House and will soon get back to their regular life elsewhere. Thanks to St. John, Jane finds herself a teaching job, along with an independent home and the means to run it: "My home, then, – when I at last find a home, – is a cottage: a little room with white-washed walls, and a sandy floor; containing four painted chairs and a table, a clock, a cupboard, with two or three plates and dishes, and a set of tea-things in delf *(sic)*."[271] However, as grateful as she wishes to be, after her revelation that she is indeed worthy of happiness, she cannot help associating this change in her life to a latent feeling of degradation, when the memory of Thornfield takes over: "Much enjoyment I do not expect in the life opening up before me […] I felt – yes, idiot that I am – I felt degraded. I doubted I had taken a step which sank instead of raising me in the scale of social existence."[272] The new cottage has nothing of the promises of Thornfield: in light of her recent conquest in terms of

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[269] Brönte, *Jane Eyre,* 493–494.
[270] *Ivi,* 501.
[271] Ivi, 514.
[272] *Ivi,* 515.

self-awareness, the comparison is inevitable: the basic functionality of Moor House, with its sandy floors, is there to remind Jane of her demotion.

However, she knows she ought to be thankful for the independence she has conquered. A new home, a way of earning a living: these new circumstances are more than she could hope for. As she tells St. John: "My cottage is clean and weather-proof; my furniture sufficient and commodious. All I see has made me thankful, not despondent. I am absolutely such a fool and sensualist as to regret the absence of a carpet, a sofa, and a silver-plate: besides, five weeks ago I had nothing[273]". The mention to the "extra luxuries" of Thornfield betrays a comprehensible sense of nostalgia.

As time passes, Jane gradually comes to term with her new situation, and even starts to genuinely be thankful for her new opportunity: "I felt I became a favourite in the neighbourhood. Whenever I went out, I heard all sides cordial salutations, and was welcomed with friendly smiles […] At this period of my life, my heart far oftener swelled with thankfulness than sank with dejection"[274]. More happiness is to come for Jane Eyre, at last it seems like she is on the path to get a better life. At this crucial point in the plot, two new discoveries are in store for her: first, the death of an uncle she had never met, who has left his whole inheritance to her; second, and related to first, a new family network.

Hearing about her inherited property, Jane reacts first with scepticism and shock, whereas the idea of acquiring blood-relatives fills her with joy: "Oh, I am glad! – I am glad […] It may be of no moment to you: you have sisters, and don't care for a cousin; but I had nobody; and now three relations"[275]. Family is prioritised over money, and she decides to equally divide the latter between her, St. John, Diana and Mary. As she explains to St. John: "I have intimated my view of the case: I am incapable of taking any other. I am not brutally selfish, blindly unjust, or fiendishly ungrateful. Besides, I am resolved I will have a home and connexions. I like Moor-house, and I will live at Moor-house; I like Diana and Mary, and I will attach myself for life to

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[273] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 517.
[274] *Ivi*, 526.
[275] *Ivi,* 553.

Diana and Mary."[276] Suddenly, Jane has all she has ever wished for: not only a home she loves, but also fortune and family – everything Jane has been deprived of in her life.

After being forced to leave the place she at first identified as her true home, Jane has finally found an adequate substitute: Moor-House, including all its inhabitants. Upon the arrival of Diana and Mary, Jane wastes no time to fix the house up, she explains she intends "to *clean down* Moore-House from chamber to cellar; my next to rub it up with beeswax, oil, and an indefinite number of cloths, till it glitters again […] My purpose, in short, is to have all things in an absolutely perfect state of readiness for Diana and Mary"[277]. Understanding she has a home and a family, she takes on the role of the hostess, making sure everything is perfect when the rest of the family arrives. She is no more a visitor; she is now a true inhabitant of the house.

Although her next few days consist of hard work, Jane is truly in a good space, in a space to which she finally belongs: "Happy at Moor-House I was, and hard I worked; and so did Hannah: she was charmed to see how jovial I could be amidst the bustle of a house turned topsy-turvey (*sic*) – how I could brush, and dust, and clean, and cook."[278] In her pure bliss of happiness, the duty of domestic chores is completed by Jane with a cheerful heart. She could not be happier with her new circumstances, and when Diana and Mary finally arrive, Jane once again is at peace, and her Christmas spent in tranquillity in "the air of the moors, the freedom of home, the dawn of prosperity."[279]

For a considerable amount of time, Jane lives in happiness and harmony with her kinsmen. But when St. John makes a marriage offer to her, another turning point is reached in the plot. The emphasis on Jane's industriousness, which is an argument the cousin stresses to convince her to follow him on his pastoral mission in India, contains an enlightening subliminal array of revelations for her. Indeed, St. John's description of Jane's inclination to work – in his own words, "God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental

[276] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 555.
[277] *Ivi*, 561.
[278] *Ivi*, 563.
[279] *Ivi*, 567.

endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love."[280]– immediately exert an effect of familiarity in Jane: his cousin's opinion matches the portrait of herself that she once attributed to Mr. Rochester. With a different turn of words, she finds herself depicted in the terms of a creature made exclusively for labour and mental exertion: "an automation or a machine without feelings"[281]. Realising that St. John does not care for love, but only wants to marry Jane on practical terms, triggers for Jane an excruciating meditation over duty and passion, as she considers the proposal of her highly respected cousin. However, Jane's decision prioritises passion: "If I join St. John, I abandon half myself: if I go to India, I go to premature death."[282]

As St. John leaves for India, Jane leaves Moor-house. Just as she has learned that she was deserving of a better life in a safe and loving home, she also comes to realise that a life entirely dedicated to work, no matter how good at it she might be, is not for her. In the awareness that she is indeed able to make her own decisions, she deliberately sets out to get back to the only the place she can ever associate to happiness: "Once more on the road to Thornfield, I felt like the messenger-pigeon flying home."[283]

The experiences *in* and *with* the breakfast room and the red-room at Reed house left an indelible mark in Jane's growth, inasmuch as her dealings with inhabited space are always double-sided. While she first learns she is worthy of all the things she never have in her childhood (happiness, family, love and comfort), she also understands that she is indeed her own person, worthy of respect and equality, despite her humble origins. However, as she gains a lot of what she lacked in her childhood for real –family, the home and a fortune, she still thinks her present situation would deprive her of love. When she is forced to choose between passion and commitment in India, she also understands that she does not have to live without love either. Jane's developmental process has reached the end line: a certainty that is, emblematically, encapsulated in Jane's comment at the thought of such a revelation – "'My journey is closed,'

[280] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 578.
[281] Ivi, 363.
[282] *Ivi*, 581.
[283] *Ivi,* 607.

I thought to myself."[284] With this in mind, she goes and conquests the two missing pieces after becoming a rich and independent individual: her true home and the love of her life.

Jane's journey across space is illustrative of Bachelard's concept of home: being deprived of a place to belong from childhood, for the rest of her life the heroine struggles to form a subjective identity. Feeling she does not have any real connection to anybody prevents her from feeling connection to a place she can call home. Therefore, in her search for a meaning in life, she looks for specific emotions and qualities to attach to the different places of which she becomes part. The trauma of her homeless identity as a child is so pervasive that even when Mr. Rochester treats her as his equal, and acknowledges her as someone worthy, she does not believe it. Thornfield and Moor-House are the spaces where Jane achieves her developmental progress as an adult, ready to take the opportunities to make her own decisions without paying the price of compromise or self-sacrifice. When she finally learns this lesson and seeks out to Thornfield as the inhabited space which comprehends all the qualities she considers part of her authentic home, she can finally be herself.

Jane has fully achieved self-awareness, as is evident from the efforts she makes to prevent her young pupil Adèle from enduring the same abusive upbringing as she once did. As soon as she grasps Adèle's misery and precarious health conditions at the new school, she does everything in her power to spare her further suffering: "I found the rules of the establishment were too strict, its course of study too severe, for a child her age: I took her <u>home</u> with me. […] I sought out a school conducted on a more indulgent system; and near enough to permit of my visiting her often, and bringing her <u>home</u> sometimes."[285] The progress Jane has made in her troublesome growth is evident in the way she promptly recognises, and prevents, the risk of history repeating itself in the case of Adèle. The only possible antidote is providing the young girl with a home where she can feel safe and comfortable, welcomed and love. The act of generosity towards Adèle, who has never really been Jane's responsibility, shows how complex a woman the protagonist turns out at the end of her story, when she has finally returned home. Not home to

[284] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 608.
[285] *Ivi,* 648. My highlighting.

who she wanted to be, but home to the person she deep down always was – because, after all, she just had to learn how to unlock the key.

CONCLUSION

This work has presented arguments, along with examples offered in their support, to show how the main heroines in the three novels experience with, and relate to, the dimension of space. Although each of them encounters different types of space in different kind of ways, their interaction with the spatial horizon is a crucial ingredient for their *Bildung* progress. In doing so, the thesis has also offered a new methodological paradigm, namely a notion of space that combines Bachelard's philosophical approach within a narratological perspective.

Evelina, Emma and *Jane Eyre* are published in an arc of time of almost seventy years. Nevertheless, they have a number of traits in common: all three novels feature a young female protagonist who sets out to find her own place in the world. Their journey is only fulfilled after overcoming a series of obstacles, with the acquisition of important knowledge on how to re-enter society through marriage. These narratives of female maturation are now the object of a polarised scholarly debate. On the one hand, some critics deem the aforementioned elements sufficient to inscribe the texts within the subgenre of the *Bildungsroman*; on the other hand, other scholars deny such membership, on the basis of the very same elements. The application of space is a crucial tool that offers a positive answer to the question; as I have shown, these are all narratives of *Bildung*. Evelina, Emma and Jane are three characters with different origins and outcomes. However, a common ground can be found in their developmental journey, which depend on the ways in which space is perceived, experienced and lately textualized in their novels.

The first heroine, Evelina, starts her journey as an ignorant country girl not at all equipped to manoeuvre the social sphere of London. She has lived a secluded life in the country, never learning the rules of social life in the big city. As a consequence of her inexperience, she ends up in a series of embarrassing situations. However, by interacting with the environment she is exposed to, she slowly learns to behave in the different kinds of places, and grows accordingly. The first sign of development occurs when she visits the opera with her grandmother Madame Duval and her relatives, the Branghtons. While her companionship shows great ignorance, and does not seem to understand the social manners of the place, Evelina proves, for the first time,

to be the one who is best accustomed to the social space. Rather than being embarrassed with her own ignorance, she shows signs of self-confidence. From there onwards, her process of *Bildung* proceeds as she encounters further notions of space. The arc-figure for her process is presented in the environments such as the ball, assemblies and similar social spaces. The balls are the spaces where Evelina has experienced most embarrassment during her journey. In every ball she attends, she ends up in an uneasy situation, which is also why she dislikes these spaces so much. On the other hand, the ball becomes the symbol of her developmental process. For each social assembly she attends, she learns more and more about the environment, and although sometimes in a painful way, she learns lessons that take her one step closer to the goal: a full and legitimate entrance into the world. Therefore, her developmental process relies on the aspect of space: her "learning by doing" is made possible by her interaction with different types of space. Interaction with places is the basic structure in her journey. If these environments were not there for Evelina to explore, she would have not accomplished her progress of growth. Evelina becomes more and more mature precisely because she learns to relate to space, by experiencing spaces that all have their set of rules – social codes that she at first fails to understand, but that she eventually learns in due time. Every knowledge she acquires derives from her exposure to the environment around her. In other words, her *Bildung* is triggered by, and derives from, her relationship with space.

Like Evelina, Emma is also highly dependent on space. However, Jane Austen's heroine follows a rather different path in her journey towards maturity. Indeed, Emma never leaves her country village at all, and spends most of her time in the space she loves the most: Hartfield, her own home. The protagonist here is almost immobile, she does not travel and has little desire to do so. Her true development lies in realising her own possibilities to actually become the head of her household, to be the heart of her home. Emma appears as the mistress of the household, and acts accordingly, quite exemplary in her ways. However, she is too self-centred, a fault that at times jeopardises the image of immaculate mistress that she embodies. On closer scrutiny, we have found out that while she believes herself to be the head of the household, she has unconsciously delegated that role to her former governess, Mrs. Weston. The mission of Emma, throughout the course of the novel, is to make order in this confusion of prerogatives: Mrs. Weston and Harriet must be granted an existence on their own, not as the missing pieces in the protagonist's horizon. In parallel to that, she learns that being the head of a household implies some duties: i.e. showing hospitality and respect towards her companions, and

acquiring the right manners to build a welcoming and loving home. This gradual realisation is crucial for Emma's developmental process: becoming ready to let go of Mrs. Weston and learning how to identify herself with the home make her the real mistress of Hartfield. In Emma's case, space – in the form of her home –, is crucial for her coming of age: the *Bildung* trajectory is made possible thanks to (and not despite of) the absence of mobility, when Emma learns how to identify with the qualities of a warm and loving household.

In her *Bildung*, Evelina fails to acquire a more conscious and independent mind: her only partial growth comes from the experience of the different environments she encounters. Evelina's narrative of development, albeit incomplete, is entirely dependent on space, because only her experience in the different places she encounters gives her some kind of expertise, and this training makes her a more fitting person in society. Evelina's path marks only a superficial advancement: she learns from her mistakes, one by one, in order to avoid faux pas and gaffes in the future. For the rest, she is like an "empty vessel" ready to be directed by anybody who is willing to do it, by shaping and moulding her at their own interest. If Evelina was not exposed to different places and new surroundings, she would not have achieved any development at all. Because she is able the travel, she at least learns how to behave in society, something the heroine prides herself with having achieved. Hence, her *Bildungsroman*, albeit defective, depends entirely on the dimension of space: indeed, it is the change of places that draws the story forward, giving the heroine the knowledge she needs for learning how to behave, at least on the level of appearances.

Last but not least, Jane Eyre searches for a home as she does not really have one. In contrast with the privileged and rich Emma, who builds her identity in coherence with her home, Jane's development emerges from a desire to find her place in the world, first and foremost a proper home. While Evelina learns from the different spaces she encounters, Jane searches for a place she can inhabit as a home, which can include all the qualities she was deprived from in her childhood. Struggling with her identity as a nobody causes her a pervasive sense of disbelief in herself: the hopes to find a home collide with the conviction, which is deeply rooted in her, that she is undeserving of such a home. As she encounters different substitutes of home, namely Lowood, Thornfield and Moor-House, her self-confidence slowly grows, and the search for a home becomes the equivalent for her developing a subjective identity. Thornfield is

experienced as a secure comforting space, while her interaction with Moor-House gives Jane a family and a place to belong. While experiencing these spaces of home, she slowly abandons being a homeless nobody, and learns that she has the right to consider herself as equal to her companions. Her journey ends when she realises that she is worthy and can make her own decisions, without having to compromise between duty and passion. When these lessons are learned, Jane can finally "conquer" Thornfield as the inhabited space where she identifies her own home. Finding a space to identify with is the core engine in her development process: her mastery of space provides her with the basic structure of her also coming to terms with her own identity. The journey home is double-sided, as she finds her long lost home in Thornfield, she is also able to find her long lost self, the self with a subjective identity with opportunities. The return to a physical home, is the return to the psychological home, and Jane's interaction with space makes sure she finally arrives home.

As this work shows, the dimension of space is crucial in the heroines' coming of age story. The application of space as analytical tool in a comparative perspective shows that the three heroines are at the centre of a *Bildung* narrative, notwithstanding their different profiles and stories. However, as Emma and Jane Eyre acquire a more conscious and reflective mind in their experience of space, in Evelina the outcome is superficial. Emma and Jane show deep insight in their situations, as they are always reflecting upon their choices and behaviours, giving them the possibility to build an identity in coherence with the encountered space. Evelina's development, on the other hand, is partial – her only progress breeds out of her experiences with new places and environments, but we are far from the conscious reflections of an independent mind. Space does have an impact on her growth: but in her case, growth is limited to learning to look at herself with Mr Villar's eyes, in order to avoid mistakes of behaviour in the future.

Such a new interpretation offers a fresh look at the three novels, by shedding light on the paradigm of space as a vital aspect for experience and relations, which has received so far little to no attention. By exploring the different templates of space, both in the social and the domestic sphere, this work proves that the developmental process in these *Bildungsroman* narratives depends on how the ways in which the heroines relate to, and experience with, space.

With this in mind, it is hoped that this work might set a precedent in helping the notion of space emerge as a useful scholarly tool, and receive as much consideration as time, which has often been preferred in literary studies so far. The usage of space as a critical tool paves the way for further avenues of investigation. Indeed, the analytical framework of this thesis can be applied to other works within the same literary context, i.e. other female novels from the Georgian to the Victorian era, whose membership within the *Bildungs*-narrative is still under discussion.

As a final consideration, the appropriateness and potential scope of a new take on these novels should be considered in light of the relevance that these titles bear in popular culture today. Not only the works of Burney, Austen and Brontë have been discussed in literary scholarship: indeed, their enduring success is also reflected globally in mainstream culture, as witnessed by the countless number of adaptions in different languages and media. Narratives of female *Bildung* are amongst the most requested by the modern audience: especially *Jane Eyre* and *Emma* have been transformed in film and miniseries – the latest version of *Emma* from the BBC dates back to 2020 and is therefore coterminous with the writing of this thesis.[286]

[286] Although, unfortunately, still not available for users outside the UK.

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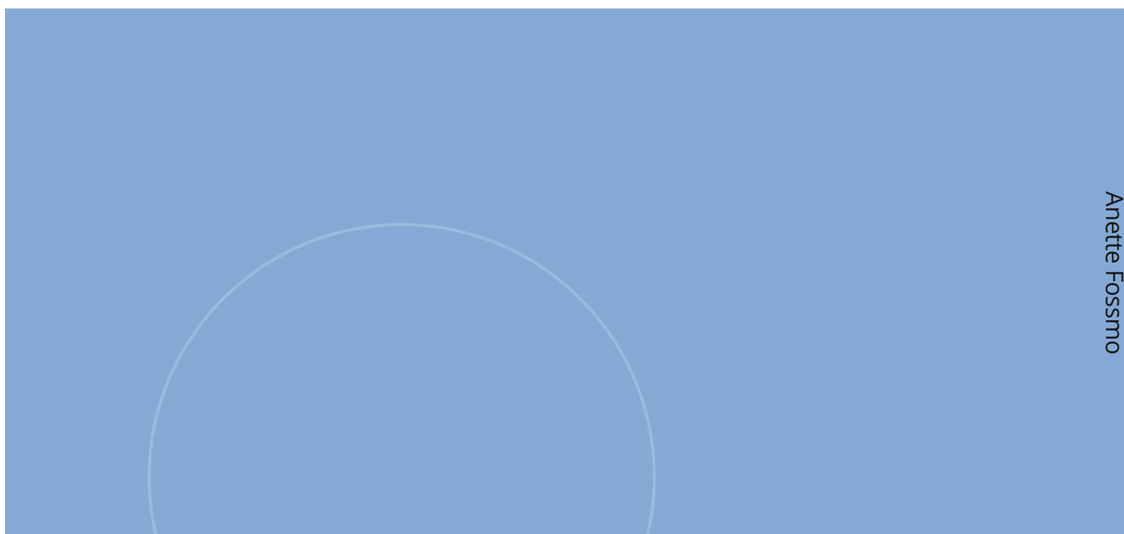
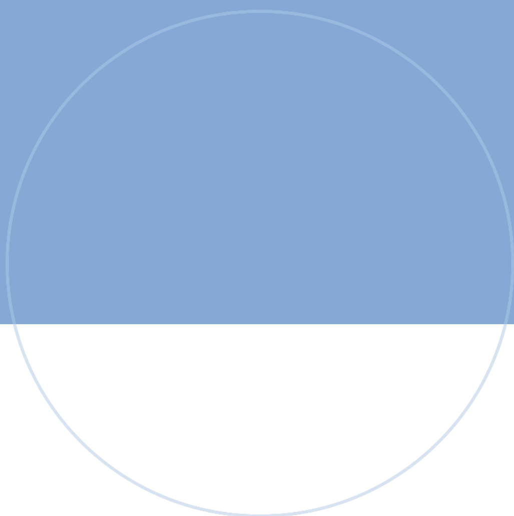

Anette Fossmo

Building space

NTNU
Kunnskap for en bedre verden