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Writing Fanny's Room & Reading Emma's House Jane Austen's Spatial Construction of a Subjective, Social Self

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Writing Fanny's Room & Reading Emma's House
Jane Austen's Spatial Construction of a Subjective, Social Self

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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“Things should be ordered immediately”

(Pride and Prejudice 290)

This work is concerned with space in Austen, and begins by identifying how the role of shelter, shifting cultural conceptions of space, and Austen’s own frugality in spatial descriptors reveal the importance of spaces in Austen, in contrast to critics who assert otherwise.

Next, the construction in Austen—through space—of a subjective, social self is developed alongside the changing role of the country house in history and in literature. The country house, and its fictive corollary, both embodies and universalizes the self through the emergence of individuated, domestic, female agency—subjectivity. Therefore, the development of a modern, subjective self, capably traced by Nancy Armstrong, in Austen is first realized through space, not through universalized language or through erotic embodiment. Agency over such space, and its correspondent individuation, allows Austen heroines to develop a subjective self at a time when spatial power is in flux, as evidenced in the country house of the 18th-19th centuries. Domestic power, which develops into the modern self, thus begins in spatial terms—not in linguistic or sexual ones, as Armstrong and Keiko Kagawa respectively contend.

Finally, this spatial, subjective self must become expansively social—its spaces in Austen are not simply imaginative, as Leland Person suggests. Rather,

through free indirect discourse, and free indirect interaction with space, this self must be able to expand and contract in objective space and act subjectively upon it, an agency which, in Austen, is as much a part of “style”—to use D. A. Miller’s terminology—as discourse is. The subjective, social self, the modern equivalent of which is rooted in Austen, is itself a constructive process which begins first in objective space, continues through subjective agency, and is finally fully realized socially. It is in the intersection of objective and subjective space—the country house which this self inhabits and acts upon—that Austen creates an embodied person from a universalized style, refuting Miller’s argument that such a creation is not found in Austen, since he finds her *Style*—the agency of universalizing self—must be abandoned for the *Person*—the embodiment within social unions—such that “style is typically obedient to this dialectic of its eventual dispensability” (53). Austen’s development of such Person *and* Style, culminating in *Emma*, rebuts the ultimate triumph of such a dialectic.

Such development requires a close intimacy with Austen’s text—of which those works published in her lifetime are examined consecutively—and a free, indirect discourse between author, narrator, narrative subjects, and critical voices. In *Pride and Prejudice*, spatial agency exerted by the heroine is yet to be found. Its narrator, and its narrative themes and subjects, are consequently universalized but disembodied as Elizabeth cultivates passive domestic indifference in societal peripheries as a reaction against the myopic acquisitive tendencies that

accompany the development of subjective space in the 18th and 19th centuries—*Sense and Sensibility* exhibits similar tendencies, as its titular similarity would suggest, and is not examined. In *Mansfield Park*, Austen introduces the spatially active subjective self in Fanny Price, who subverts masculine conceptions of agency present in Elizabeth, and cultivates a domestic agency spatially through her “nest of comforts,” an agency which challenges the analysis of Tony Tanner, Edward Said, and Alistair Duckworth. However, Fanny’s agency remains relegated to societal peripheries, and it is only in *Emma* that this spatial, subjective agent begins expansion and contraction to encompass, and empower, her society. In doing so, Austen creates a heroine who is at once universalized and embodied, whose Person has become Style, and vice versa—refuting D. A. Miller’s claim that Style must fall to Person. Through her spatial agency, Emma is able to engage in and restructure her destabilized country house society, and it is this very destabilization which shifts the locus of power from Darcys to newly-formed Emmas, who move from the periphery to the center and prove the enduring power of spatially constructed subjective, social selves.

“She arranges it in her imagination”

(Mansfield Park 80)

“Liveliness,” “splendor,” “handsome,” “decent,” “modern,” “well-situated,” “tired,” “fine,” “uselessly fine,” “delightful,” “gaudy,” “real elegance,” “great,” “very pretty,” “delightful,” “charming,” “sweet,” “good.” Such are the descriptors of interior space employed by Austen in one of her most enduring works, *Pride and Prejudice*. A comprehensive list, its brevity suggests the author’s own terse treatment of interior space (Pevsner 407-408). Indeed, she faults Anna Austen, a niece, for committing the opposite folly, advising “your descriptions are often more minute than will be liked. You give too many particulars to the right hand and the left” (LeFaye 268). However, Austen rarely follows this oft-cited advice, given in 1814, in her own letters. In them, she demonstrates an acute personal awareness of interior detail. In a letter to her sister Cassandra, narrating house hunting in Bath, Austen describes the architectural merits of domestic interiors, including precise spatial proportions:

When my Uncle went to take his second glass of water, I walked with him, & in our morning’s circuit we looked at two Houses in Green Park Buildings, one of which pleased me very well.—We walked all over it except into the Garrets;—the dining room is of a comfortable size, just as large as you like to fancy it, the 2d room about 14 ft square;—The

apartment over the Drawing-room pleased me particularly, because it divided into two, the smaller one a very nice sized Dressing-room, which upon occasion might admit a bed. The aspect is South-East— (LeFaye 82-83).

While the relative lack of such description in the novels leads Claudia Johnson, among others, to suppose that “domestic interiors are actually not very interesting to Austen,” citing the lack of personal belongings left in Chawton Cottage, Austen’s home at her death (160), the presence of such passages in her letters conversely supports Alistair Duckworth’s case “that Jane Austen was known for the accuracy of her geographical detail and was meticulously careful to ground her world in a precise temporal and spatial frame” (Herbert 200). The scarcity of detail acknowledged by Johnson is not exclusive to Austen; it is characteristic of the novel as it emerges in the eighteenth century. Unlike letters, which may be given over to specific personal concerns and spaces, Austen is following novelistic conventions where “specific interior details appear precisely—and in isolation—when they are needed, rather than being presented as connected visual wholes. Windows, closets, and wainscotings emerge when jumped out of, hidden in, or fainted against, and not a moment sooner; space is created in the act of narrative. Occasional set pieces of long description are remarkable for their rarity—and their length” (Wall, *The Prose of Things* 4). One reason for this lack of “visual wholes” occurring in novels themselves is the presence of shared visual

understanding among readers. With relatively limited, localized readership, authors could depend on “early eighteenth-century readers [being] able to see—to fill out, expand on, rehydrate—the local, immediate signs of a shared culture, a shared visual of meaningful, referential detail” (Wall, *The Prose of Things* 9).

It is, therefore, unremarkable that Austen should not furnish lush descriptions of spaces, nor does such a lack preclude the possibility that space means a great deal to Austen. A brief survey of the spatial situations of each book reveals that space—a place to inhabit—is central to each novel, as each heroine finds herself, at one point or another, in spatial jeopardy—much as Austen herself was throughout her life—“accommodation, in the sense of a place to live, was a preoccupation of Jane Austen and of the heroines she wrote about” (Duckworth, “Jane Austen’s Accommodations” 67). Cast out of Norland, exiled to Portsmouth, stranded by good grace at Barton Cottage, precariously perched at Longbourne or Mansfield Park, aspiring to Pemberley, Netherfield Park, Delaford, even reconciling Hartfield with Donwell, Austen’s heroine’s are rarely firmly settled until the final pages of their narrative, making one of the novels’ chief concerns finding a space of one’s own.

More than simply shelter, though, Austen is concerned with how these spaces shape and define the self, especially how they define the self in relation to others, leading “critics including Laura Mooneyham White, Francis Hart, and John Skinner [to] pay close attention to Austen’s interior material spaces as sites

for constructing the private interior spaces of her heroine's interiority—spaces that shape and construct subjectivity” (Kagawa, “Jane Austen” 134). Spaces emerge as a way for individuals to define selfhood, and Austen becomes “a builder of both narrative and architectural space [who] makes visible for the first time women who are consciously acknowledging, talking about, and representing their spaces” (Kagawa, “Jane Austen” 142). In this, Austen is participating in a growing movement at the end of the long eighteenth century away from the shared culture which novelists had relied upon, and towards an individuation in which, as Simon Varey points out, “the self is defined, to a remarkable degree, by space” (4).

Well before Bachelard, Lefebvre, and de Certeau's spatial theories of self, Austen begins to define self spatially. Spatial details emerge not just to set action—to faint against—but to represent selfhood in a pre-Jungian manner, “I built the house in sections, always following the concrete needs of the moment. It might also be said that I built it in a kind of dream” it was “ a kind of representation in stone of my innermost thoughts and of the knowledge I had acquired” (qtd. in Knapp vi). The “house of fiction,” to borrow from James (46), which Austen builds, and which her heroines adopt, follows concrete needs, is built in a kind of dream (of imagination), and becomes a representation of a character's innermost thoughts and knowledge acquired over the course of the narrative. The fictive endeavor allows Austen to build beyond her bounds, both in space and consciousness, allowing place to become “a key concept within humanistic

geography and it is from this set of ideas that studies of place in imaginative literature have drawn their terms of reference. Place in these terms is much more than a territory or location which can objectively be defined and described, it is inseparable from the consciousness of people who occupy it” (Herbert 194). Place—and space—becomes “much more than a territory or location,” but it must first begin as this, as a physical, objective one; as John Searle suggests, “where consciousness is concerned the existence of the appearance is the reality” (qtd. in Eakin 4). Therefore, space becomes the intersection of objectivity and subjectivity, defining the self both through its location and its relationship with other selves. In building such structures, Austen participates dynamically in Bachelard’s notion of writing a room, and her novels become acts of reading a house (14). As Philippa Tristram notes, “the novel is invincibly domestic, partly because it functions, like the house, as a little world we think we can control. When it applies its language to the house, it makes continual discoveries, bringing to consciousness aspects of our environment that normally go unrecognized” (268). Thus, there are two structures which Austen adopts as her own; first, the novel, a relatively new structure through which she creates and shapes a universalized narrator, and second, the country house, a relatively old structure through which Austen embodies the spaces of her heroines, and which they—with Austen and her readers—will come to both shape and re-create.

In a legacy bequeathed by Elizabeth I and established in perpetuity by James I, the British country house around which Austen's works revolve was—and is—a dynamic cultural institution (Armstrong 70). It is a fitting space for the novel to inhabit, fusing the objective and subjective:

The country house differs from a work of art which can be displayed in different settings while the subject matter, form and intrinsic meaning remain unchanged. The physical structure of a country house is continually altered over time as additions and alterations are made. Moreover, the country house can change its function as it meets the different demands of its occupants although its exterior appearance may be superficially unaltered. And its meaning may change depending on the nature of the context (Arnold xiii).

Houses in Austen interact dynamically with their inhabitants—"the spaces of domesticity and of fiction shape the people who inhabit them; conversely, people and characters create and shape the spaces they inhabit" (Mezei 840). It is the *emergence* in Austen of individual agency on these spaces which is noteworthy; as material production increases in the nineteenth century, Austen begins to anticipate "social relations imagined as relations among things . . . the extension of self into home presented the owner's capacity of locating him- or herself in a world of things" (Sholz 158). Avoiding the multiplication of things which Victorians, and their novels, would experience, Philippa Tristram observes that

Austen is not concerned with objects of themselves, but rather her “sparing detail serves a different purpose; for her houses are always human spaces, defined by and in turn defining their fictional inhabitants” (Arnold 140). However, with new production and distribution, things do “start filling and then *differentiating* houses, with the result that a domestic interior was no longer, as Tristram says, “what every courteous author must assume was already known to his readers” . . . the market for and arrangement of things in the world created the space for the description of things in texts; interiors produced interiors; surfaces produced meanings” (Wall, *The Prose of Things* 200).

These houses, and the way they are shaped by their inhabitants, serve to spatially parallel the development of self in Austen’s narratives; where Austen succeeds in constructing self, the country house becomes representative of a physical entity—a body or a structure—which is continually in process, for good or ill, and reflects Paul John Eakin’s suggestion to “think of ‘self’ less as an entity and more as a kind of awareness in process” (x). This process is not simply the development of interiority—through language, as Nancy Armstrong would have, or through bodies in space, as Keiko Kagawa suggests—but the process of ‘self’ becomes, as Austen constructs it, a social, external, and outwardly-moving self, at once connected to the past, present, and future. Like the country house which Austen’s selves begin to shape, these selves which she creates must adapt within their changing world to survive.

“We must have one Cottager’s wife”

(Mansfield Park 126)

Much as the men in *Mansfield Park* bicker over the roles their women should play in the drama of their production, “*Lover’s Vows*,” so too is the social role of women in flux; their role in space likewise fluctuates at the end of the long eighteenth century. Particularly in British society, in their power-houses, as Mark Girouard terms them, “aspects of the country house served to shape, determine or give physical expression to the role of women in Georgian culture and society” (Arnold 79). Austen was not alone as an (albeit fictive) architect; women began to take an active role in planning, designing, building and rebuilding the country house, expanding their influence upon space in the late eighteenth century (Arnold 86-87). A change was afoot—femininity begins to be defined as interior agency; decoration, design, and hospitality—specific actions which once were the role of men—shift to be largely the role of women. Whereas the ‘lord of the manor’ would traditionally have been the one to welcome and coordinate the arrangement of guests—Darcy exists in Austen as an unchanged exemplar of this—this increasingly falls to the mistress of the house—as it does to Emma when Knightley marries—as the mistress begins to enact herself both socially and architecturally and “often seemed to determine the position and size as well as the

decoration of the drawing-room,” the place of social meeting (Wall, “Gendering Rooms” 353). Their role was twofold: first, they advised on the general choice of materials and fabrics and the overall design, the structure (Arnold 90); second, women made more specific contributions through activities like wall decoration, carpet-work, and needlecraft as the proliferation of needlework, paper hangings, print-rooms spread through country house culture (Arnold 91). Even the layout of rooms altered to reflect women’s preferences—bedchambers were separated to accommodate the reception of various groups, rooms were allotted specific purposes for these groups, and the traditional role of the country house in administering an estate increasingly came under the control of women as they became agents of their interiors (Arnold 87).

This contributes to a shift in power; “women were an active part of [the ruling elite] and their interventions in the decoration and fabric of the country house and its estate are essential” (Arnold 99). As Nancy Armstrong articulates, this evolution of agency and burgeoning power develops through “the rise of the domestic woman” and her “hold over British culture through her dominance over all those objects and practices we associate with private life” (3). This shift is evident in the distribution of titles:

The number of title-bearing women outnumbered men in the eighteenth century. Moreover, the conventions governing the conferment of titles were greatly in women’s favour. If a woman married she took the

female equivalent of her husband's title whether this was of higher or lower rank than her own. But women retained their own titles when they married commoners, although their husbands' status remained unaltered (Arnold 79-80).

This titular advantage represents more than simply a social advantage; it signals an advantage of power contributing to an emerging agency for women through the country house structure, and thus "it was the new domestic woman rather than her counterpart, the new economic man, who first encroached upon aristocratic culture and seized authority from it" (Armstrong 59). Perhaps Wollstonecraft underestimates the power of domesticity when she decries "How grossly do they insult us who thus advise us only to render ourselves gentle, domestic brutes!" (36).

In the country house, it is the agency upon objective, physical spaces wherein the locus of this domestic power lies. Here, Nancy Armstrong's thesis is not developed; objective, physical domesticity is never addressed as a means of power to form the subjective self—for her, it is only language which empowers, as "modern culture depends on a form of power that works through language—and particularly the printed word—to constitute subjectivity" (25). However, domesticity is, in fact, the work of assigning, or re-assigning, spaces to constitute subjectivity, a social subjectivity, and this Armstrong overlooks. As critics point out, she "accords an implausibly monolithic power to language" (May 270).

Subjectivity is understood only when examining the interaction with objective domestic spaces which are used to create—the power of discourse begins first as power over space(s). Without this spatial connection of the objective with the subjective, the Brontës would be right to regard Austen’s work “as an aesthetics of the surface” or as Charlotte says “her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well” (qtd in Armstrong 191). Interiority, subjectivity, is developed, and seen, on the objective surfaces of the interior spaces Austen creates, so that she joins other women writers “in writing from a domestic space of house, household, and family, [to] create a position in the field of cultural production from which to value ordinary women’s lives, the quotidian, the minute” (Mezei 843). This valuation of the ordinary is necessary, in that it connects and enriches a particular feminine understanding of self, echoed by Mr. Knightley, “she will give you all the minute particulars, which only woman’s language can make interesting” (*E* 142). Therefore, it is not domestic *literature* which “produce[d] a specifically female form of subjectivity” and even “made subjectivity a female domain” (Armstrong 14, 4). Rather, it is a female interaction with, and agency within, the spaces of domesticity which creates this subjectivity; the objective space is the “domain” in which the subjective self is made.

Subjectivity finds its realization only in the domestic space, as desires are revealed and satisfied. In an early letter to Cassandra, Austen equates housekeeping with the ability to please one’s own appetites:

My mother desires me to tell you that I am a very good housekeeper, which I have no reluctance in doing, because I really think it my peculiar excellence, and for this reason—I always take care to provide such things as please my own appetite, which I consider as the chief merit in housekeeping. (LeFaye 20)

The formation of the self, with its “own appetite,” is the merit of housekeeping, and therefore “the ‘appetites’ of daydream and wish-fulfillment, psychologically considered, play a major role in determining housekeeping values in each of her novels” (Person 62). This relationship extends to her heroines, as they also “try to find places where they, too, can safely ‘write’ fictions” which “only shows the depth of Jane Austen’s commitment to fabulous space” (Person 64).

This “fabulous space” must be, at least in some way, objectively physical. While Armstrong eschews the Marxist understanding of the development of self as rising from ‘cattle and grain,’ objective economic factors, she fails to recognize that this development does not proceed solely “through knowledge and . . . through discourse” (190). If the modern self is, in fact, the middle-class self which, in turn, is derived from the female self—which is domestic—as Armstrong suggests, the discourse of fiction which allows self to develop must be understood also through its occupation, and representation, of domestic spaces. Objective space must be the domain in which this self develops subjectivity, and is understood in relation to others, creating the subjective social self. It is not only

fiction, but fictitious spaces paralleling a physical country house structure which act “both as the document and as the agency of cultural history” (23) where domestic (fictive) space “helped to formulate the ordered space we now recognize as the household” and “made that space totally functional” (Armstrong 24). This functionality can exist in the self only if it can also find ordered space—and participate in the ordering of this space—outside the self. Neither can this functionality, this engagement outside the self, be limited only to the arrangement of the physical body. Elizabeth Bennet is able to order her body, to place herself outside, but she is unable to order, or re-order, the physical space around her—she removes from the space, but does not rearrange it—and, consequently, Elizabeth loses her self in Darcy’s space. However, her successor, Fanny, begins to develop that agency which allows her to build a selfhood:

Austen maps Fanny’s bildungsroman journey from the peripheries of society to its center to accord with her physical movements from outside Mansfield Park into its domestic center, the drawing room . . . Fanny maneuvers through her domestic interior spaces in order to gain entry into the family both as a social institution and physical domicile, hoping to attain a permanent position at the center of this large country estate as its mistress (Kagawa, *Bodies* 16)

While Keiko Kagawa’s thesis traces this journey in Fanny, it fails to connect these physical movements to Fanny’s agency upon her physical spaces,

placing the impetus of this movement not on defining space, but upon her desire for Edmund. Kagawa, in effect, retains Edmund as the primary agent, as Darcy is to Elizabeth, who reorders her body but not her space, such that “Fanny’s formative desire, her implicit erotic desire for Edmund, initiates her movements and props her through each room until she is physically proximate and socially equal to Edmund as his wife” (*Bodies* 106). In doing so, Kagawa neglects the possibility that this movement may occur with or without sexual desire; the impetus of movement may actually be the desire to define the self—a movement understood and more fully developed later, in *Emma*. It is true, as Kawaga asserts, that the position of mistress—mistress of one’s space *and* one’s self—begins with Fanny in *Mansfield Park*, however, it does not end conclusively here; Austen begins to develop a construction of ‘self’ formation, of self in process through space, but it is in *Emma* that this process continues and is refined.

Kagawa’s focus, and that of Francis Hart and other critics whose work she admirably distills, is primarily on the function of the body—specifically the female body—in space, as she posits that, for Austen, “the imbrication of space and body is inextricable . . . [her] novels are partly about bodies—about women’s bodies often sequestered in specific spaces, and the construction of those spaces and the practices that a body performs within them” (*Bodies* 11). However, this is an incomplete picture in two ways: first, as mentioned, it reduces Fanny’s development as a response to erotic desire for Edmund, “sequestering” Fanny not

to a space, but to her own physical body, rather than allowing for an individual agency to be at work developing her—universalized—self; second, Kagawa's understanding of the body and space does not connect this burgeoning, individual self to the shifting social framework within which Fanny, and Austen, are constructing self and space.

These shifting social structures are represented through Austen's interior structures which, as Nikolaus Pevsner points out, reflect a greater public awareness of the social function of space: "Austen's highly charged attention to the distribution and occupation (if not the appearance) of interior domestic space not only reveals her own interest in architectural significance, but also matches the larger public interest in the definitions and implications of structural space" (qtd. in Wall, "Gendering Rooms" 354). The interaction of room and inhabitant, though the appearance of the room may not be fully articulated, allows space to take whatever form and function is desired in the creation of identity. Austen's free indirect discourse has its corollary in her free indirect space; as the narrator moves freely in and out of the minds of various characters, so to do these characters move freely in and out of spaces which, at times, lack definition.

The interiority of narration is echoed in the interiority of habitation so that "Austen in her role in material culture as a narrator is an architect. Her literary representation of space in fiction creates for us the lived experience of built spaces" (Kagawa, "Jane Austen" 126). Her spaces function subjectively as a

“lived experience,” in that the reader sees only those objective spaces which are necessary to develop subjective experience; likewise her narration, while representing objective fact, is highly subjective. Much as free indirect discourse allows expansion and contraction of thought, so “Austen consistently employs spatial metaphors to express her heroines’ ambivalent impulses for experience and withdrawal: the expansion and contraction of the self . . . the most valuable spaces for her heroines, therefore, become symbols of the withdrawn and liberated self . . . whatever their physical size, [spaces] allow their tenants an expansive exercise of imagination and support the heroines’ desire to project a fabulous internal order on their surroundings” (Person 62).

Thus, Austen succeeds in constructing not just a linguistic or corporeal self, but in constructing social selves which are, like the country houses within which they reside, understood not as entities but as process, and in this, Austen anticipates and marks a changing understanding of embodiment and self-hood. Through free, indirect narration, these interior processes are understood without codifying the self into an entity—the “I.” Paul John Eakin’s work on the construction of self in narration illuminates Austen’s success, such that her stories “compound our sense of being in full command of our knowledge of our selves and stories; it not only conveniently bridges the gaps between who we were once and who we are today, but it tends as well to make our sense of self in any present moment seem more unified and organized than it possibly could be” (Eakin ix).

The selves which Austen constructs “make sense” of their own story, largely because they understand—in Eakin’s autobiographical work and in Austen’s narrative—that the “I” has become entirely relational, such that “the ‘I’ is neither singular nor first” (Eakin 43). Austen’s infrequent narrative slippage into the “I” reveals this sense-making, and blurs the line between who is story-telling and whose story is being told. As Marilyn Butler points out, “Jane Austen has a wholly distinct attitude to the inward thought-process, and to dialogue, and therefore to the proper relation between the two. Private imaginings tend, as she conceives them, to be irrational and fallible; direct speech may be right or wrong, true or false, but crucially it has become externalized, evidential, a part of the given world of fact” (264).

Yet it is not first through directly shaping *speech* that Austen externalizes the self, but through the process of directly shaping *spaces*, which only once established is followed by linguistic agency. While Miller suggest that, “nowhere else in nineteenth-century English narration have the claims of the ‘person’ . . . been more completely denied” (32), is it an actual denial of person, here, which Austen accomplishes through her out-of-body voice which “scanted person even in the linguistic sense, rarely acknowledging, by saying *I*, its origination in an authoring self, or, by saying *you*, its reception by any other” (Miller 1)? Or rather, is the construction of person, of the self, located somewhere other than the external presence of this authorial voice? If the discursive quality of Austen denies the self,

then it is in spatial actions, closely followed by social—as evidenced by linguistic—agency, that first must shape personhood. These first spatial, then subjective, and finally social selves provide an enduring understanding of the process of Austen’s self-making.

Austen’s fluidity in exploring selves paradoxically accomplishes two purposes; it at once disembodies her narrator and characters, allowing them to be universal, while conversely embodying them through their relation to space and other selves. This marks a break with the feminized embodied self, which Sidonie Smith, in *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body*, addresses, noting that in a “patriarchal culture men enjoy the privilege of conceiving of themselves as “the universal subject” rational, self-determining, transcendent, and *disembodied*” (Eakin 36). Austen’s narrative voice marks such a universality, but because it is eventually, in *Emma* embodied freely through the agency of her characters, Austen breaks the understanding of the female subject as the inverse of the universal, “the subject of embodiment,” overcoming the denial of selfhood which Judith Butler contends against, where “masculine disembodiment is only possible on the condition that women occupy their bodies as their essential and enslaving identities . . . By defining women as “Other,” men are able through the shortcut of definition to dispose of their bodies, to make themselves other than their bodies . . . From this belief that the body is Other, it is not a far leap to the conclusion that others *are* their bodies, while the masculine “I” is the noncorporeal soul” (qtd. in Eakin 37).

It is in universalizing *and* embodying her narrator and narrative subjects—through their interaction in space—that Austen demonstrates an ability to move beyond the primary consciousness of the body alone, and to grasp, as Gerald Edelman lays out, a secondary consciousness, which “involves the ability to construct a socially based selfhood, to model the world in terms of the past and the future, and to be directly aware” (Eakin 14). This awareness extends beyond the immediate corporeal self, and onto the frameworks and relations of society—the social spaces, in Austen and England, the country houses—demonstrating Elizabeth Grosz’s conception of outward, expanding selves with the “ability of bodies to always extend the frameworks which attempt to contain them, to seep beyond their domains of control” (Eakin 12). This shift exhibits Wall’s observation that, during the eighteenth-century, “the culture shifts from an emphasis on the universal to a celebration of the particular” (*The Prose of Things* 11). Austen both observes and participates in this shift, but it is in reconciling the universal and the particular, within the feminine self, that Austen transcends her culture.

Both Armstrong and Kagawa understand the growing self-defining agency and awareness of Austen heroines through the control they take in arranging their own bodies and minds, agreeing with Elizabeth Grosz’s helpful example of a “möbius strip to illustrate the dynamic interrelation of body and mind, ‘the torsion of the one into the other.’ With its endless looping between dimensions of surface and depth, this model brilliantly captures her sense of the subject as

process, as at once ‘psychical interior and . . . corporeal exterior’” (Eakin 11). However, they both limit this emerging self to the “möbius strip” and do not examine how this torsion, this movement and agency, actually participates in reordering social frameworks. To understand the self as process, one must examine its interaction with, and action upon, space—energy is only observable when passing through a medium, and it is its affect upon that medium which allows us to understand it. Where Armstrong understands this process, this energy, through language, and Kagawa observes it through the placement of the body, I contend this process must ultimately be observed materially, through linguistic *and* corporeal agency on the spaces, the framework, the objective physical structures surrounding the self to comprehend how Austen illumines a developing socially subjective self.

Discourse which universalizes and action which embodies must be understood, first, as agency over space(s). Where such agency over space is lacking, the self is either universal *or* embodied, or neither, but never both. This universalizing and embodying agency progressively develops in Austen—the marriage of objectivity and subjectivity is not always present. Individual spatial agency connects two unlikely heroines—Emma Woodhouse and Fanny Price—but is not found in that heroine most associated with individuality, with a developed self—Elizabeth Bennet. *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* both feature a female protagonist who is shaped by her space(s), but also participates in actively shaping them as she

creates a subjective social self; *Pride and Prejudice* is antithetical. In contrast to Fanny and Emma, Elizabeth is almost entirely passive while interacting with the interior spaces which she travels through—spaces which by in large are the domain of men, of Darcy particularly. Not once does she shift or alter her surroundings; instead, she may be substantively altered by them, failing to develop the agency which defines a subjective social self. Where she is passive, Fanny and Emma act upon their environments, altering them according to their fancy, and ultimately, to their character (which in turn is shaped by their environments). This construction of agency develops not only in the characters over the course of the novel, but it evolves in Austen's work over the course of the three years which separate *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) from *Mansfield Park* (1814) from *Emma* (1815). Her titular progression mirrors this construction; what starts as unformed ideas—*Pride and Prejudice*—takes physical shape—*Mansfield Park*—and leads to a fully-formed self—*Emma*. By tracing the heroine's interaction with her surroundings, a burgeoning agency may be traced which parallels the increasing agency of women, revealing Austen's developing construction of social subjectivity and selfhood which both universalizes and embodies.

“Watching Mr. Darcy’s progress through his book”

(Pride and Prejudice 54)

From the very opening line of *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen begins the work of constructing a “universal” self through her narrative voice. However, this universality is disembodied, located in a narrative voice which eschews the use of “I”—located, also, from the first sentence, within a man who is in want of a wife, echoing Judith Butler’s “enslaving identity.” It is, as the title suggests, a novel of disembodied *ideas*, divided from the corporeal, physical world, especially from the females who inhabit that world. Darcy, the one figure who comfortably inhabits his *own* space, has a body which is hardly mentioned, unlike the frequent references to Elizabeth’s fine eyes. It is Darcy’s qualities of self—as represented through Pemberley—which define him. The Bennet sisters inhabit this world of masculine selves; while they interact with it from its peripheries, they never act upon it. Elizabeth’s engagement is largely through books, but these—represented spatially by libraries—are the domain of men. It is Darcy’s book, and Elizabeth must be only a passive character within it.

Elizabeth, instead, must learn passive indifference to avoid the selfish, myopic acquisitiveness so frequently, so most uniformly betrayed by the John Dashwoods of *Sense and Sensibility*, and continued here by the de Bourghs, by the Collinses, and occasionally even by the Bennets. Elizabeth is thus subdued—even

her language is excluded from participation with space where the narrator's lack of free indirect discourse echoes Elizabeth's own inhibited physical movement and complete lack of spatial agency. Women are subsumed into men—Style falls to Person, Charlotte to Collins, and Elizabeth to Darcy—where they continue to remain on the periphery, visitors within their own society. Austen does not, as Armstrong contends, develop an individual self in Elizabeth, but rather retreats from such a self in order to fit within Darcy's spatiality while avoiding the emerging acquisitive, self-consuming subjectivity of an increasingly individuated society.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Susan Fraiman's observation is justified, that "paintings and pianos, curtains and crucifixes in James are always already in their places - as they are also, say, in Jane Austen - and we hardly expect Isabel Archer or Elizabeth Bennet to lift a finger in their care" (349). Applying the trend of rising female agency within the country house which Dana Arnold explores generally, Cynthia Wall develops spaces in eighteenth-century fiction as specifically gendered. Responses and action within the space, then, become a means of self-definition for Austen's characters, specifically in *Pride and Prejudice*, who are all working "to define, protect, or resist the boundaries of inhabited space" ("Gendering Rooms" 350). In contrast with Alistair Duckworth's interpretation of Austen upholding traditional societal roles and values, Wall understands Elizabeth to be asserting her own individual identity by playing with

spatial identity at the boundaries; rather than conforming and settling into her role within a country house, as Duckworth understands her to learn to do. Wall sees Elizabeth standing at the thresholds of masculine spaces and refusing to settle in her place, as Elizabeth “begins to push against the now-codified boundaries of masculine and feminine spaces: although much of the sustained dialogue takes place within drawing or dining-rooms, some of the most significant moments occur in more ambiguous, liminal spaces, both physical and social - from windows, through doorways, on staircases; the character as wallflower, eavesdropper, or tourist” (“Gendering Rooms” 351). The inaction which Duckworth does not address is here understood as an act of individuality, but if it is an example of agency, it is a weak one. Elizabeth stays at the boundaries; she neither enters nor shapes physical—or psychological—interiors. She lingers at the edge until she is brought in by an external force to her father’s library, or to Pemberley.

Elizabeth is often at the window, looking out, looking in. She is not embodied—her interactions are rarely physical, she interacts with Darcy through representations and through windows. Even Jane’s marriage, whose happiness she perhaps has the most desire for, she is unable to act upon, as “she saw her in idea settled in that very house;” *in idea*—not in reality (96). She inhabits the boundaries, from fear and from desire, but these prevent her from fully engaging in her own spatial reality. When Darcy arrives at Lambton to greet her, “she retreated from the window, fearful of being seen” (248). When Elizabeth and the Gardiner’s re-

enter Pemberley with Darcy, as invited guests, there is an emphasis on the windows, and not on the rooms—or the man—whereupon “reaching the house, they were shown through the hall into the saloon, whose northern aspect rendered it delightful for summer” (255). When Elizabeth sees Darcy in Herfordshire, coming for her, it is “from her dressing-room window” and later “to satisfy her mother, [she] went to the window” (315).

Elizabeth’s social interaction is at the edges of inhabited space, she herself does not inhabit or act upon it. Rather, she becomes an embodiment of Darcy’s agency. Those women who exhibit spatial agency—from Georgiana’s “beautiful little design for a table” (47) to Caroline Bingley’s desire to “take a turn about the room” (55)—are acting for Darcy’s benefit. Elizabeth, especially, demurs to Darcy, taking the place of observer; “Elizabeth took up some needlework, and was sufficiently amused in attending to what passed between Darcy and his companion” (46).

The library is the most gendered room of the novel, to borrow a term from Cynthia Wall. It is here that we first see Mr. Bingley—in Mr. Bennett’s library (11). It is here we first come into contact with the defining space of the novel, Pemberley, when Bingley’s small library at Netherfield is compared to Pemberley (38). It is a domain which may be intruded, as Mr. Bennett desires Mr. Collins to leave “my room. I shall be glad to have the library to myself as soon as may be” (110). It is a place of decision, of a masculine finality where Elizabeth is

forced in by her mother to refuse Mr. Collin's proposal before her father, the arbiter and judge—and it is in a library where Fanny is later invited in to refuse a similar offer. Later, when Lydia's calamity befalls the family, the girls “ran through the vestibule into the breakfast room; from thence to the library” looking for their father, who instead was “walking towards the little copse,” when he has symbolically left his place of authority and gone to a place of wildness (285). When Mr. Bennet returns to the house, he “went to the library to write, and the girls walked into the breakfast-room” as the rooms maintain their gendered divisions (288). When Darcy and Elizabeth confess their affection, it is out of doors, but it is Darcy who, in the end, concludes the arrangement with her father when “Mr. Bennet withdrew to the library, [and Elizabeth] saw Mr. Darcy rise also and follow him” before she is summoned (355). Locating social power here, within the library, and retaining its central position apart from the drawing room, maintains men at the locus of power. While women read, they do so in men's libraries.

The shifting culture of women's agency within the country house, as noted by Dana Arnold, is not found here, in *Pride and Prejudice*. Darcy continues as ‘lord of the manor,’ upholding the past within the present, and later being the one to welcome and coordinate the arrangement of guests. This is sufficient for him, but its sufficiency will later be questioned. The stability of such inherited status which wards off artifice and acquisitiveness will be challenged by the removal of Sir

Thomas's bookshelf at Mansfield Park. Later, Emma wonders "Why should [Knightley] marry?—He is as happy as possible by himself; with his farm, and his sheep, and his library, and all the parish to manage" the answer emerges that he should marry—nay, he must marry—for her, the domestic woman who will empower a destabilized heritage whose own sufficiency no longer is enough (*E* 210). Austen prefigures this insufficiency in Mr. Bennet's library; while it still represents the heritage of power with which men are endowed, in Mr. Bennet it has come to represent the growing instability of that power as it becomes for him a retreat from responsibility. Even as the locus of social power is shifting from the country house library to the drawing room, so too Knightley's power will shift from Donwell's library to Emma's Hartfield. However, in *Pride and Prejudice*, the domestic woman has yet to rise in Austen; Elizabeth remains on the periphery.

Where Elizabeth's individuality is celebrated, Armstrong points out that "her particular assets are the traditional masculine qualities of rational intelligence, honesty, self-possession, and especially a good command of language" (Armstrong 50). However, this language never takes physical shape—she is excluded from the traditional masculine spaces—and while her command of language marks her, Marilyn Butler observes that "the most striking omission from the novel's stylistic techniques is continuous free indirect speech, the simulated flow of the heroine's consciousness which is the narrative vehicle of the other mature novels" (215). In Elizabeth, a consciousness of self is never fully formed.

As D. A. Miller points out, Elizabeth's wit "draws the chief of its energies from a plainly visible psychic process of denial, the denial of everything in her vulgar, dysfunctional family and its imperiled economic position" (43). Elizabeth's only agency is that of negation. The narrator and characters engage with each other at the boundaries, and do not act upon one another's spaces.

If Nancy Armstrong is right, that "the modern individual was first and foremost a woman" who takes and enacts agency in language, body and space, this modern individual is yet to be found in Elizabeth Bennet (8). Elizabeth is unable to locate her self, her place, within the house, the structures and framework of society. She is drawn to a wildness observed in her father, perhaps motivated from the same lack of agency which propels him out towards the little copse. When stifled by her time at Rosings, she seeks out "a nice sheltered path, which no one seemed to value but herself" (165). It is here, on the edges, and in the places of movement, where she seeks any sort of definition, but it is unable to stand when she returns to the house; her agency is peripheral. It is here, on the edges, and in the places of movement, that she and Darcy connect in the end—their affirmation of one another's affection occurs on such a path—however, when they return to a place of structure, they do not maintain their connection. The work of their engagement ends when they enter the house, they do not enter it together, but instead "in the hall they parted" (351).

In fact, Elizabeth cultivates an indifference towards the structure which Darcy inhabits, inoculating herself against it through the increasingly popular house tour. Where Elizabeth only possesses ideas, in terms of spatial ownership, she allows only indifference; “she must own that she was tired of great houses; after going over so many, she really had no pleasure in fine carpets or satin curtains” (232). Only after Mrs. Gardiner calls attention to the grounds does Elizabeth allow herself license to enter spatially; “if it were merely a fine house richly furnished . . . I should not care about it myself; but the grounds are delightful” (232). While Elizabeth admits to “a great deal of curiosity to see the house herself,” this is coupled “with a proper air of indifference” (232).

***“of all the views which . . . the country or kingdom could boast,
none were to be compared with the prospect of Rosings”***

(Pride and Prejudice 155)

Such indifference on Elizabeth’s part towards spatiality contrasts with the acquisitive, inward-looking, and often self-consuming subjectivity attached to the rising middle classes—embodiment without universalization—and may be Austen’s intended reaction against it. However, Elizabeth Bennet’s avoidance of space is unsatisfactory as a solution—such self-consuming subjectivity will be found later in the Rushworths, the Crawfords, and the Eltons, but will be

answered differently by Austen, as she will offer heroines who embody their space differently, rather than avoid it. Yet in *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth never engages spatially with her surroundings, choosing instead to avoid them. This avoidance casts a much starker contrast with the acquisitive impulse in those who do engage spatially and enact change, and has the effect of stigmatizing such change. Duckworth's supposition that Austen rejects modern "improvements" upon the traditional framework may break down when Fanny begins to "improve" her space, but this rejection is still present—as is Austen's traditionalism—and finds its clearest fulfillment in the likes of Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine.

The first discussion of interior space occurs with Mr. Bingley, who "was pleased with the situation and principal rooms" of Netherfield (42). Bingley, for all the good he is to Jane, is conceived as a modern, his fortune having been made in trade, and is constantly moving; everything he does, including his engagement with language through letter writing, is done in a hurry (42). Mrs. Bennett here chimes in that Netherfield has a "sweet room" and "charming prospect," though the view is described to be of a gravel walk, a place of movement (42). Neither of these characters are condemned for this spatial engagement, but through it they are both understood "perfectly" by Elizabeth and her narrator (42). Later, Mrs. Bennet's foolishness is compounded spatially as she attempts to fit the disgraced Lydia and Wickham into the societal framework, as she was "busily searching through the neighbourhood for a proper situation . . . rejected many as deficient in

size and importance . . . ‘Haye-Park might do . . . or the great house at Stoke, if the drawing-room were larger . . . as for Purvis Lodge, the attics are dreadful’ (294). Spatial engagement here is depicted as a myopic reaction to a greater issue, and signals Austen’s rejection of it.

This rejection becomes most clear in Mr. Collins, who upon entering Longbourne engages spatially, and not socially, as “the hall, the dining-room, and all its furniture were examined and praised” (64). He participates in banal comparison and reduces society to size and cost when the “size and furniture of the apartment” at Mrs. Philips’ is valued not by the company kept—which is taken as a faux-pas—but by its comparison to Rosings and its “chimney-piece alone [that] had cost eight hundred pounds” (74).

This valuation extends to Lady Catherine who, while certainly not middle class, is depicted as a social climber much like the Bingleys. The spatial description which is entirely obtuse at Longbourne and Netherfield becomes acute at Rosings, as it is seen by Elizabeth *through* Collins, beginning first with the view from his own garden with “the prospect of Rosings, afforded by an opening in the trees that bordered the park nearly opposite the front of his house” (155). Collins *affords* this view, he has acquired it, and the language used at Rosings is one of overwhelming acquisition, where “the sight of such rooms” serves to “wholly overpower them” (157). Upon entering Rosings “Maria’s alarm was every moment increasing, and even Sir William did not look perfectly calm.—Elizabeth’s courage

did not fail her” (158). When Collins points out “with a rapturous air, the fine proportion and finished ornaments” (158), already Austen has cultivated in Elizabeth a solution—disengagement with the spatial structures—to this overpowering acquisition, for where “Elizabeth saw much to be pleased with” in the *park* “she could not be in such raptures as Mr. Collins expected the scene to inspire, and was but slightly affected by his enumeration of the windows in front of the house, and his relation of what the glazing altogether had originally cost Sir Lewis De Bourgh” (158). Here, lavish glazing and expensive fireplaces at Rosings are not mentioned to define the house but to contrast with Pemberley’s natural adornments and pass judgement on Lady Catherine (Arnold 141). That Sir Lewis de Bourgh oversaw the glazing means that he built the house himself; the de Bourgh’s are not really of an ancient family, as Lady Catherine would assert herself to be, and in this the “narrator undercut Lady Catherine’s pride by giving her a ‘modern-built house,’ rather than a distinguished older house” (Ray 68). She is an improver, and it is distasteful.

Collins is equally undercut, as his parsonage is also seen through “his pointing out the neatness of the entrance” and its “ostentatious formality” (153). He hopes to solicit regret in Elizabeth’s failure to acquire; “in displaying the good proportion of the room, its aspect and its furniture, he addressed himself particularly to her, as if wishing to make her feel what she had lost in refusing him. But though everything seemed neat and comfortable, she was not able to gratify

him” (154). While she is obligated to “admire every article of furniture in the room, from the sideboard to the fender,” she remains indifferent to them, disengaging (154). Upon leaving, Mr. Collins uses a spatial apology for their “plain manner of living, our small rooms, and few domestics” to acquire a compliment and force Elizabeth to engage within his space, and she is “eager with her thanks and assurance of happiness” (208).

In the parsonage, especially, Lady Catherine’s improving nature “had perfectly approved all the alterations [Mr. Collins] had been making, and had even vouchsafed to suggest some herself,—some shelves in the closets up stairs” even as she had “found fault with the arrangement of the furniture” (165). Her judgment is undercut with her condescension, and her spatial engagement is negatively portrayed; even Darcy observes of the parsonage that “this seems a very comfortable house. Lady Catherine, I believe, did a great deal to it,” even as he sits uncomfortably within (174). Lady Catherine’s attempt to arrange extends even to the placement of Charlotte within the structures of her house, admitting her to “play on the piano forte in Mrs. Jenkinson’s room. She would be in nobody’s way, you know, in that part of the house” (169). Her judgment extends to Longbourne, when entering the house to persuade Elizabeth from Darcy, she critiques “this must be a most inconvenient sitting room for the evening, in summer; the windows are full west” (333). Such criticism continues “as they passed through the hall, Lady Catherine opened the doors into the dining-parlour and

drawing-room, and pronouncing them, after a short survey, to be decent looking rooms, walked on” (334). Here, spatial engagement contrasts with social development; the only solution is to leave the house and escape to a “prettyish little kind of a wilderness” where Elizabeth is able to assert herself (333).

Elizabeth’s cultivated indifference is echoed in Charlotte’s spatial engagement. She is also seen as passive, in becoming Mrs. Collins, Austen observes passively that “the wedding took place” (144). Elizabeth, who is usually indifferent, admits “curiosity to know how she would speak of her new home” and finds that “the house, furniture, neighbourhood, and roads, were all to her taste” (144). Charlotte exhibits a passivity towards her space, as it is a space defined by Collins, which she is occupying. Of the parsonage itself, Elizabeth gives a rare observation of space, but it is through Charlotte that she engages with it as “rather small, but well built and convenient; and every thing was fitted up and arranged with a neatness and consistency of which Elizabeth gave Charlotte all the credit” (155). When Elizabeth withdraws at the Collins’ “in the solitude of her chamber,” she decides that Charlotte has guided and bore her husband well and she “anticipated how her visit would pass . . . a lively imagination soon settled it all” (155). Again, Elizabeth’s withdrawal and indifference, and her engagement with ideas, not spaces, separates her from the acquisitive impulses around her.

Charlotte, then, is one of the few agents who, after marriage, actively engages with her space, though this is still acquisitive; Mr. Collins is the price she

must pay for “a great air of comfort” (155). Spatial engagement, then becomes an almost last-resort, a way for the self to prevent its own dissolution into another whom one has been acquired by. When Charlotte enters Mr. Collins’ space, she begins the work of shaping it, and thus shaping her own self, anticipating the engagement which will occur in *Fanny Price* and culminate in *Emma*. Yet her agency is reactionary; in the Collinses’ house “the room in which the ladies sat was backwards” (165). The inversion of rooms is made to accommodate a purpose, as the drawing room where the ladies would normally sit “was a better sized room, and had a pleasanter aspect . . . [but] Mr. Collins would undoubtedly have been much less in his own apartment, had they sat in one equally lively; and she gave Charlotte credit for the arrangement” (164). *Credit* is given to Charlotte, as she makes an acquisition through arrangement—Mr. Collins being the perceived active agent, but Charlotte being the actual. Here, as Wall notes, Elizabeth approves Charlotte’s “quietly aggressive redistribution of space at Hunsford Parsonage” (“Gendering Rooms” 354). Charlotte “appears to sacrifice superior space in order to control personal space” (Wall, “Gendering Rooms” 368). However, this control is derivative, and the redistribution fails to make up for Charlotte’s own bodily redistribution to Hunsford; in the end this redistribution is not enough, she must return to her father’s home, Lucas Lodge, to evade the wrath of Lady Catherine’s failure to acquire Darcy for herself (362).

“Every idea of the impropriety of her being found there”

(Pride and Prejudice 241)

It is Darcy alone who—through Pemberley—actively engages with his space and avoids the pitfall of self-consuming acquisitiveness and subjectivity. Perhaps ironically, this is accomplished through his pride, which he contrasts with vanity, in that “pride—where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will be always under good regulation” (56). This pride stems from his spatial framework—Pemberley—as it is from here that both his character and his superiority are founded. Elizabeth reacts to this first by pulling away—to his comment on pride she “turned away to hide a smile” (56). Yet this pulling away acquiesces into indifference, and finally acceptance of her place within his world.

From the start, Elizabeth acknowledges that it is Darcy, and not she, who must engage spatially, as she prompts him while dancing that “*you* ought to make some kind of remark on the size of the room” (90). It is Darcy, and with him the men of the novel, who occupy and act upon the spaces around them. Yet by this embodiment, Darcy too must resist becoming an object to acquire, for he is in danger of being reduced to just another piece of furniture within the space of the de Bourghs’ and Collinsets’, which their language suggests in that “his coming would furnish one comparatively new to look at in their Rosings parties” (166). Darcy does resist this reduction through his own spatial placement, both of his

body at Rosings, “Mr. Darcy, who was leaning against the mantle-piece with his eyes fixed on her face” (186) and of his disembodied self, where at Pemberley, also over the mantle-piece “pointing to another of the miniatures” Mrs Reynolds says that “is my master—and very like him” (237). His proximity to the mantle, to the hearth, the center of domestic life, places him as owner over the domestic spaces. In contrast, women, especially Elizabeth, are passively directed by men, as Colonel Fitzwilliam directs Elizabeth to the piano, though she would rather not, as he “reminded Elizabeth of having promised to play to him; and she sat down directly to the instrument. He drew a chair near her” (169). The action originates and ends with the men, as Bingley, in the end, “would take the place, which, in all former parties, had belonged to him, by her sister . . . He placed himself by her” (321). Even Wickham has a share in space, “suspended [in Pemberley], amongst several other miniatures, over the mantle-piece” (237). In contrast, Elizabeth is unable, even in the end, to act upon her space, as foreseen by Caroline Bingley when she suggests that “Elizabeth’s picture . . . must not attempt to have it taken, for what painter could do justice to those beautiful eyes” (51). Elizabeth is reduced to a body within space, which conversely cannot even be represented spatially. When Elizabeth and Darcy meet again in Longbourn, after Pemberley, it is Darcy who walks about the room, but Elizabeth cannot go to him; instead, she waits by the coffee for him to come to her, but “there was not a single vacancy near her, which would admit of a chair” (322). While men consistently

draw a chair near, placing themselves, Elizabeth is unable to act upon her space; the girls who are crowded around prohibit Elizabeth from breaking away, instead “she followed him with her eyes, envied every one to whom he spoke” (322). This scene, before she becomes fully aware of his affections and accepts her place within his space, is one of enslavement and entrapment to a body which cannot act. Elizabeth is stuck playing games with her mother (323).

While Elizabeth is active in the “liveliness of her mind”—in her ideas—and in the boundaries and wild spaces, she is altogether passive within interior spaces—within the framework of her society. Even en route to Derbyshire, Elizabeth supposes that she “may enter his county with impunity, and rob it of a few petrified spars without his perceiving me” (231). She hopes to pass, unnoticed, through Darcy’s space, acquiring only specimens of fossilized wood, and yet she hopes to “rob” or acquire wood formerly used in building habitation, though these petrified spars are not mentioned again, nor does she actually rob him, it is only in her mind that she conceives to do this (OED). She therefore enters into Pemberley as passive visitor, where she observes his space as “they followed [the housekeeper] into the dining-parlour. It was a large, well-proportioned room, handsomely fitted up. Elizabeth, after slightly surveying it, went to a window to enjoy its prospect” (236). She has learnt indifference to his space, and connects only at the boundaries, where she furnishes a lush description of the prospect from this window. While she remarks that “the rooms were lofty and handsome, and their

furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor . . . it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less of splendor, and more real elegance, than the furniture of Rosings,” these are merely seen as a reflection of their owner, and not available for her own use (236). She has come to occupy his space, but is not involved in it, she instead focuses on the windows, “as they passed into other rooms, these objects [hill, wood, river, trees, valley] were taking different positions; but from every window there were beauties to be seen” (236). This touring experience of Pemberley provides a unique opportunity for Austen to showcase Elizabeth’s passivity to her surroundings, such that:

Elizabeth’s experience as a tourist at Pemberley is conceptually different from her experience as an invited guest at Rosings. There, under Lady Catherine's penetrating gaze, she is actively engaged in the exchanges of polite society, assessing personalities, observing behaviour, noting interiors, and failing to conceal her independence of mind. At Pemberley, in the presence of the housekeeper and the gardener, virtually nothing is given of herself, other than the unwilling acknowledgement, forced from her by Mrs. Gardiner, of her knowing Darcy a little. Mr. Gardiner manipulates the housekeeper to expand her praises of her master, but otherwise the housekeeper's role is to display, and the visitors' essentially passive role is to admire (Clarke 201).

Elizabeth desires to discover more of Darcy, while doing so at a safe distance. Unlike other country-house visitors who admire the rooms, Elizabeth is interested in their proprietor—“Mrs. Reynolds could interest her on no other point. She related the subject of the pictures, the dimensions of the rooms, and the price of the furniture, in vain” (239). She maintains spatial interest only inasmuch as it sheds light on Darcy’s society, thinking “In what an amiable light does this place him!” (239). His spaces serve to illuminate him, but also to distance Darcy from Elizabeth; after the visit, the Gardiners and Elizabeth discuss “his house, his fruit, of every thing but himself” (259). She is a visitor, an interloper in his space and struggles to fit “every idea of the impropriety of her being found there, recurring to her mind, the few minutes in which they continued together, were some of the most uncomfortable of her life” (241). This discomfort is dealt with only through avoidance and removal to the boundaries; Elizabeth is unable to assert herself in his space. The structure of the novel frames this discomfort and indifference. Volume I ends with coming displacement, the discussion of the entail which will uproot the Bennets (128). Volume II ends “to Pemberley, therefore, they were to go” once Elizabeth has established her perceived indifference to Darcy (232). Volume III finds Elizabeth brought into Derbyshire, by the Gardiners—the domesticators—and not by her own agency (367). Hers is a journey to indifferent domestication, an acceptance of another’s subjectivity and society, not a process towards her own subjective social self.

“Have you anything else to propose for my domestic felicity?”

(Pride and Prejudice 51)

With this question, posed by Darcy to Caroline Bingley while they are walking in shrubbery, Darcy places himself as the domestic, and happiness is to be established through him. This conversation is the first image we gain of Pemberley, and it comes not from Elizabeth’s experience, or Darcy’s description, but from the domesticated Miss Bingley, walking among shrubbery, a place of tamed wildness at the boundary of the house. Caroline represents the navigation of boundaries which Elizabeth is attempting; while Elizabeth is subjectively and objectively “out” of Pemberley, she will eventually be placed, by Darcy and the Gardiners, “in” while Miss Bingley, now subjectively in and objectively out, is able to furnish the reader with the information of Pemberley, going so far as to attempt to modify the space in the placement of portraits, which Darcy rebuffs (McCann 69). Caroline does not stay safely at the boundaries; she attempts to push into the space and enact her own agency, through herself and through her brother, who is “an inmate of Mr. Darcy’s house,” and assert her understanding of his having “mentioned with raptures, some plans of the latter with regard to new furniture” (131). Her attempts at spatial agency cause Elizabeth to hear her talk of

Pemberley with “silent indignation” (131). Caroline, attempting to act as her own agent, remains at the boundaries, as Elizabeth is moved in by Darcy.

Austen presents in Elizabeth a story of domestication, she lingers at the boundaries but eventually is brought within Darcy’s space. It is he who shapes and forms it for the women within the frame, as he does to “a very pretty sitting-room, lately fitted up with greater elegance and lightness from the apartments below; and were informed that it was but just done, to give pleasure to Miss Darcy, who had taken a liking to the room, when last at Pemberley” (239). Such masculine agency on interiors further disrupts the necessity of female agency in Nancy Armstrong’s thesis, where she discusses *The Compleat Housewife or, Accomplish’d Gentlewoman’s Companion* and other similar conduct books which “either suggest or openly state that without the domestic woman the entire domestic framework would collapse” (83). In *Pride and Prejudice*, such agency has not yet been realized. Action, especially action upon ideas, is, like the library, still the domain of men. Armstrong acknowledges that Elizabeth, in the end, “renounces all pertness the instant she agrees to marry him” (51). The active, wild mind is made passive and domestic, the result of the indifference necessary to enter into the masculine framework without falling prey to an acquisitive subjectivity.

This acquisitive tendency is present, however, in Elizabeth’s mind, and must be released through discomfort, martyred even, before she could be moved, with proper passivity and indifference, in to Pemberley. Elizabeth’s action is always

imaginary. She imagines herself acquiring Pemberley, she feels it, when “at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something” (235). When visiting it as a passive guest, her thoughts become acquisitive, but she imagines this self-actualizing acquisition as outwardly-directed socially, in contradistinction to the inwardly-directed self-consuming acquisitiveness of the de Bourghs and Collinses; “I might have been mistress! With these rooms I might now have been familiarly acquainted! Instead of viewing them as a stranger, I might have rejoiced in them as my own, and welcomed to them as visitors my uncle and aunt—But no” (236). Assuming she would lose the family of her own creating—that the Gardiners would not be welcomed by Darcy—increases her indifference, saving her from “something like regret” (236). Where Jane’s marriage is openly acquisitive for the younger girls—not only does it satisfy Mrs. Bennett’s want of further society, but “Mary petitioned for the use of the library at Netherfield; and Kitty begged very hard for a few balls there every winter” (329)—Elizabeth’s marriage is a social acquisition, and one which allows her to remain on the periphery of society, interacting only with those of her choosing. Dorothy Van Ghent, following the pattern of Locke and Addison that sight is related to ownership, suggests that Elizabeth has simply been “smitten with an acquisitive temptation,” but it is really her ability to change her family, borne from the longing to shape society herself—taking the Gardiners as surrogate parents, etc.—where “Elizabeth thus realizes the remarkable power to restructure and

rehabilitate the Longbourn family which has limited and abused her” (Person 66). Her agency is social restructuring, prefiguring what Austen will develop in *Emma*, though Elizabeth exerts this agency only within the confines of another’s space.

Duckworth’s thesis, though drawn from *Mansfield Park*, seems more plausible with the character of Elizabeth, where “given the irresponsibility of others” it is “incumbent upon the Austen heroine to support and maintain an inherited structure of values and behavior . . . Austen has a continuous awareness of the dangers as well as the values of individualism” (7). She works within this inherited structure to minimally shape her social arrangements, but is unable to enact physical change within it. She does not, as Armstrong contends, develop an individual self, but rather retreats from such a self in order to fit within Darcy’s spatiality while avoiding the acquisitive, self-consuming subjectivity of the de Bourghs and Collinsets. Pemberley—Darcy’s space—reveals both morality and character, but it is not altered and does not grow, just as Elizabeth’s. Finally, while “the existence of Pemberley hints at a future life of active social involvement” in the end, the agency of Elizabeth is only “a history of changing attitudes” (Butler 215). A future of active social involvement is neither realized, nor even foreshadowed, by Austen in this novel. It will take a very different sort of heroine to do this.

“Fanny . . . was fixed at Mansfield Park”

(Mansfield Park 20)

In Fanny Price, Austen conceives the subjective social self; through the womb of spatial Mansfield Park, Austen gives it birth. Throughout the novel, this nascent self emerges through Fanny’s interaction with her space(s). Through her manipulation of space, the agency, individuality, and selfhood which characterizes Austen’s next heroine, Emma, begins to emerge in Fanny. Few have noted her unique agency over space, and instead construe her as passive. Tony Tanner summarizes the field, describing Fanny’s *Mansfield Park* as:

The story of a girl who triumphs by doing nothing. She sits, she waits, she endures; and, when she is finally promoted, through marriage, into an unexpectedly high social position, it seems to be not so much a reward for her vitality, but for her immobility . . . we are used to seeing [Austen’s] heroes and heroines confused, fallible, error-prone. But Fanny always thinks, feels, speaks, and behaves exactly as she ought. Every other character in the book, without exception, falls into error—some fall irredeemably. But not Fanny. She does not put a foot wrong. Indeed, she hardly risks any steps at all: there is an intimate and significant connection between her virtue and her immobility (Tanner, *Jane Austen* 143).

If mobility is defined as movement within space, such an assertion could not be farther from the truth; her virtue—her moral intentions, decisions, and actions which define her self—is intimately and significantly connected to her mobility, and her movement, interaction, and agency upon her physical spaces. She experiences dislocation from her home, and must exercise her own agency to create a home in Mansfield Park, which she does through her action. Edward Said interprets such action and mobility as passive, dependent upon those around her to be the active agents, where “in this pattern of affiliation and in her assumption of authority, Fanny Price is relatively passive . . . [Fanny] requires direction, requires the patronage and outside authority that her own impoverished experience cannot provide” (Said 85).

However, it is Fanny who, in effect, colonizes Mansfield Park—where Sir Thomas, in the end, cedes his subjective territory—the moral control is yielded to Fanny as viceroy, as she becomes a moral force to rectify the “principle ‘wanting *within*’” (Said 92). Her position as an outsider uniquely positions her to define and construct her own space and self, yet as such she remains an outsider; Fanny’s spatial agency is exerted from the periphery, whether it be the East room or her eventual parsonage. Her spatial construction is the lasting structure—not the theatre, not the Crawford’s parsonage—her own subjective self which shapes and corrects inherited societal structures, answering acquisitiveness by developing social expansiveness through a spatial agency which becomes moral power. Fanny,

the unlikely locus of power, only achieves such power spatially, not through linguistic or bodily prowess, as Armstrong and Kagawa would have, or through a lack thereof, as Nina Auerbach contends. In *Fanny*, Austen shapes a subjective self, which survives even its own exile as it moves outward into society, but never fully encompasses or inhabits society's objective center.

“The little girl performed her long journey in safety” (13). So enters Fanny Price into Mansfield, and so commences her agency. This is the sentence construction chosen by Austen, and yet how many ways Austen might have brought Fanny to Mansfield, and how more akin to the reader's perception of Fanny these ways might have been. From the start, however, there is no passivity, no grammatical dependence, no passive construction. Fanny performs, and it is not until later when we see how particularly she shapes this performance, shaping it through and within her spaces, such that it is not a hollow performance, like her cousin's theatricals, but a substantial one that enacts lasting change upon her surroundings.

As a dislocated figure, Fanny embodies Susan Fraiman's concept of shelter writing, which “center[s] on anyone whose smallest domestic endeavors have become urgent and precious in the wake of dislocation, whether as the result of migration, divorce, poverty, or a stigmatized sexuality” (341). Unlike in *Elizabeth*, whose dislocation is only impending and not realized, in *Fanny* every domestic endeavor becomes an act of creating space—shelter—for in this new space she

remains an outsider, and “whether in the school-room, the drawing room, or the shrubbery, [she] was equally forlorn” (15). Her dislocation equally destabilizes her subjectivity, her self. She struggles, at first, to create a “proper relation between ground and figure” between “dreaming and desire, materialism and realism” (Fraiman 345). Her spatial awareness is both limited and foreign. Her knowledge of her place in the world, both spatially and temporally, is exposed by her cousins, who observe “she thinks of nothing but the Isle of Wight, and she calls it *the Island*, as if there were no other island in the world” and she is equally ignorant of “the chronological order of the kings of England, with the dates of their accession, and most of the principal events of their reigns” and her material knowledge fails to reach “the Heathen mythology, and all the Metals, Semi-Metals, Planets, and distinguished philosophers” (19).

Her dislocation, however, does not inhibit her from creating a space for herself; “Fanny with all her faults of ignorance and timidity was fixed at Mansfield Park, and learning to transfer in its favor much of her attachment to her former home, grew up there not unhappily among her cousins” (20). When this position becomes jeopardized, Fanny appeals to Edmund, demonstrating her fixedness in desiring to stay in the park as, “I love this house and every thing in it” (25-6). She has shaped a love around every “thing,” denoting her physical attachment to the place itself which, despite her low consequence, leads her to “love the place so well” (27). Her consequence is not so low as she would have Edmund, and the

reader, imagine; to Lady Bertram she has become “avowedly useful as her aunt’s companion” (34). Foreshadowing Emma’s relationship with Mr. Woodhouse, the power to act lies with Fanny, who is always acting and “getting through the few difficulties of [Lady Bertram’s] work for her” (117).

Thus, through her interaction with every *thing* in this *place*, Fanny begins to move inwards spatially and outwards socially, constructing a space and a self. For though Marilyn Butler may assert “worldly characters are the real subject of the first half, and Jane Austen is ingenious in letting them occupy the centre of the stage while Fanny as yet remains in the wings. Her consciousness is deliberately left slightly childish and unformed” (227); yet even from her position “in the wings” she is steadily shaping the space which she occupies.

As Fanny develops, Austen contrasts her agency with the ways in which construction of one’s space, and consequently of self, may err. The first real survey of Mansfield, that which begins to define the free indirect narrative space and consequently the discourse, comes from another outsider, Mary Crawford:

She looked about her with due consideration, and found almost everything in its favor, a park, a real park five miles round, a spacious modern-built house, so well placed and well screened as to deserve to be in any collection of engravings of gentlemen’s seats in the kingdom, and wanting only to be completely new furnished (46).

An acquisitiveness characterizes Mary's interaction with space, which becomes darkly mercenary at Tom Bertram's illness. The object with which she most shapes her physical space, the harp, is primarily for show, to tempt, and which disrupts the order and rhythm of the land as she attempts to bring it to the parsonage (55). She is an outsider, who performs at the edges, "a young woman, pretty lively, with a harp as elegant as herself; and both placed near a window, cut down to the ground" (62). For Mary Crawford and her harp, "the goal of each woman, then, is to 'maneuver' through her spaces in order to gain entry into a house as its mistress by way of marriage to a potential husband vetted according to his income and property" (Kagawa, *Bodies* 75). The function of the harp is to gain entry to a space of her own, but it fails to shape her interior self. Hers is a hollow agency, built on the desire for the mere show of power, of agency, even of Style, which is "central to *Mansfield Park*—domestic power, including what Mary Crawford calls the maneuvering business' of marrying" (Fergus 419). D. A. Miller interprets Mary as the ultimate stylothete, and at once becomes Style's "saint and martyr" as she sacrifices her Person for ultimate Style (54).

In this hollow maneuvering, she is not unlike her brother, Henry Crawford, who "loves to be doing" (55). One of their first "doings" is the visit to Sotherton, which they visit as outsiders, but outsiders with an *in*. The entire company of Bertrams, Crawfords, and Rushworth rush headlong into what they consider "worth." To the improvers, the place "looked like a prison—quite a

dismal old prison” which need be broken out of, while Mrs. Norris holds it “the noblest old place in the world” (51). This destructive power of improvement, in *Mansfield Park* especially, is developed extensively in Alistair Duckworth’s *The Improvement of the Estate*, which positions Austen against these improvers and develops her conservatism therein:

The estate as an ordered physical structure is a metonym for other inherited structures—society as a whole, a code of morality, a body of manners, a system of language—and “improvements,” or the manner in which individuals relate to their cultural inheritance, are a means of distinguishing responsible from irresponsible action and of defining a proper attitude toward social change (Duckworth xxix).

This manner places the aforementioned party—Edmund, included, though he does resist—as those irresponsible actors who seek to make “improvement.” For them, traditional spatial configuration stands much as the avenue of oaks at the west front; it is in its twilight and must be torn down (78). Mrs. Rushworth as representative of the traditional inheritance, does little to counter irresponsible action, as she tours the group up the “spacious stone steps before the principal entrance” (78) and through only the “principal” rooms (84). All is ostentation and artifice, with “many more rooms than could be supposed to be of any other use than to contribute to the window tax” (80). However, it is not the space which is hollow artifice, but the people who have shaped the space so,

the senior Mr. Rushworth having overseen the reconstruction of façades and dying conveniently enough that his widow might relocate to Bath and “parade over the wonders of Sotherton in her evening parties—enjoying them as thoroughly perhaps in the animation of a card table as she had ever done on the spot” (188).

Hollow spatial construction reigns even in the chapel, where an improvement leaves it bereft of prayer and morality, “with nothing more striking or more solemn than the profusion of mahogany, and the crimson velvet cushions appearing over the ledge” (80). Fanny, and at her insistence, Edmund, laments this departure from “a code of morality” (81). This departure, and thirst for improvement without the development of interior depth, characterizes the gathered party, and from this artifice their desire for a theatre precipitates. Consequently, they become performers, yet these “characters who *only* perform”—Rushworth, Crawfords, Bertram children and especially John Yates—“exist in a kind of placelessness” (Gillis 118)

The party, who narratively link the improvement of space with artifice, endeavors to “raise a little theatre at Mansfield . . . any room in this house might suffice”—it exists as placelessness—and this theatre must conceal its space, it “must have a curtain . . . a few yards of green baize for a curtain” (115). The room that does suffice spatially joins concepts of play and work, pleasure and purpose, though these concepts are divided, objectively, by a bookcase, knowledge,

in Sir Thomas's study. Tom insists that "father's room will be an excellent green-room. It seems to join the billiard room on purpose" (117). The agency, or purpose, of Sir Thomas is overcome in his absence, as the bookshelf, the library, which divides sense, heritage, power, and agency from nonsense and weakness, is removed to make way for the theatre. Indeed, on his return to "his own dear room" he finds it with "candles burning" and "other symptoms of recent habitation, and a general air of confusion in the furniture. The removal of the book-case from before the billiard room door struck him especially" (169). This striking, an act of violence, contrasts with Tom Bertram's expectation that "every thing will be right with Sir Thomas" as he urges Edmund to not judge subjectively—"Don't imagine that nobody in this house can see or judge but yourself" (119). Ironically, nobody *in this house* can, Edmund included. Fanny, protected by her role as outsider is the only one proven to judge.

Fanny's position on the edge has been maintained, as in the episode at Mansfield where "Miss Crawford was standing at an open window with Edmund and Fanny looking out on a twilight scene" (101). There, standing at the edge of the house, Fanny still continues to identify spatially as an outsider when, while still creating her place, Fanny turns "farther into the window" (105). She does not impose where the others do, which becomes all the more evident in the spatial juxtaposition of the "actor's" table and Fanny in the drawing-room; as they attempt to pull her into their center, she resists by moving outwards (135).

Her movement is outward, only that she might move inwards again by her own agency, into her own space, avoiding the theatrical placelessness performed by these “improvers,” who hire “a scene painter arrived from town, and was at work, much to the increase of the expenses” (152). This scenery Maria Bertram feels of necessity, as she is caught in her own form of placelessness between Sotherton and Mansfield, Rushworth and Crawford. The style of scenery itself is placeless; for “in eighteenth-century stage scenery there was little attempt to bond what we might call the verbal and the visual; the same scenery was used over and over again, the same grottoes, groves, and rural prospects. Scene is disassociated from action” (Gillis 118). Here, Style, of the scene, of the imagery, trumps Person, the development of self through agency, or plot, in the theatre. The bonding of the verbal and the visual, the subjective with the objective which is necessary for the formation of self, is accomplished alone by Fanny, “the only one who has judged rightly throughout, who has been consistent” (174). Hers is a process of association, arranging, ordering and, “because Fanny does hold out, she will be the one who truly saves Mansfield Park [from] disorder” (Tanner, *Mansfield Park* 459). For her, “place is more than a backdrop for human activity”—it is that which may be shaped when acted upon (Gillis 118).

Even when coerced to read a part in the ill-fated theatrics, Fanny takes the part of the Cottager’s wife “the most trivial, paltry, insignificant part; the merest common-place—not a tolerable speech in the whole,” though the company insists

that the part must be played (126). Fanny, however, never performs that part, in the “play,” but rather becomes its inversion in the narrative, playing a sheltering, stabilizing role, because she “really cannot act” (136). Hers is not a performance based on artifice, but on artifact; unlike the actors, she shapes her space objectively to form her own subjectivity.

Fanny’s is the lasting structure—and her agency the enduring performance—for though “the carpenter had received his orders and taken his measurements,” (120) all these alterations, which are quickly done and quickly undone do not stand as they cannot be reconciled with the dominant power, Sir Thomas. Upon his return, Sir Thomas oversees “the destruction of every theatrical preparation at Mansfield, the removal of every thing appertaining to the play” and sees the house restored to “the soberness of its general character” (181). His glance at “the ceiling and stucco of the room,” a fleeting detail, signals his concern with the spatial structure of the room, that it remain intact, and that his spatial configuration of furniture should remain in his concern for “the fate of the billiard table” (170).

As this locus of power returns to Mansfield, Fanny aligns herself with it. She begins to move, by her own subjective agency, towards the center of the house, and to envelop it. When Sir Thomas is greeting his family, and each goes to the drawing-room to attend to him, Fanny at first remains with the outsiders, the Crawfords and Yates. She feels separate from the family, questioning her place. As

the outsiders leave, however, she does not return to her room to await a summons; rather, it is she who “turned the lock in desperation” and enters the drawing-room on her own, unlocking and entering the center of the house by her own agency (165). Here, she moves of her own accord, uncoerced, towards the center of power; “she is no longer the passive architect of her subjectivity as she begins to construct her own space” and this space, from which she moves, is “—a room of her own in the East room” (Kagawa, *Bodies* 111).

“This nest of comforts”

(*Mansfield Park* 141)

Fanny’s dynamic construction of space is most realized in the East room, which she is shaping, privately, according to her desires throughout the first volume. Her imaginative use of space is indicated earlier in the narrative as she considers the chapel at Sotherton: “Fanny’s imagination had prepared her for something grander than a mere, spacious oblong room . . . with nothing more striking or more solemn than the profusion of mahogany, and the crimson velvet cushions appearing over the ledge” she is “disappointed, cousin . . . This is not my idea of a chapel” (80). Her desires imagine the chapel to be more melancholy and grand; thus, she “arranges it in her imagination with aisles, arches, inscriptions, and banners to be ‘blown by the wind of Heaven’” (80).

Fanny's imaginative space manifests Bachelard's "hut dreams"—the human desire to find "well-determined centers of revery" and a hope to live elsewhere, far from the over-crowded house, far from city cares (Person 63). She locates this space in the East Room, but she does not simply sit in revery there. She shapes it, and in doing so, begins to shape her space and, by extension, her self. Leland Person connects this power, or powerlessness, which Austen's respective heroines have over their space to a story from the *Juvenilia* entitled, "Catharine, or, The Bower" to understand the power Fanny has to project a fabulous "nest of comforts" out of herself by which she defines herself through her spaces. Person locates this power exclusively in the imagination, however there is importance in the distinction between imagining a nest of comforts and physically building one, a distinction which Person does not identify and makes a critical difference in determining Fanny's agency in her space. Fanny Price is more than simply an "imaginative improver of space" (Person 66); she is an objective, physical improver of space as well.

As Cynthia Wall indicates, "occasional set pieces of long description are remarkable for their rarity—and their length" (*The Prose of Things* 4). Therefore, Fanny's East room is worth more than a cursory remark; it forms the substance of her identity in *Mansfield Park* and nuances her relationship with the house, the family, and her self. When Fanny's place is first "imagined," by outsiders, it is Mrs. Norris who instructs the Bertrams to "put the child in the little white Attic . . . not

far from the girls, and close by the housemaids” (11). In what, presumably, was her first movement in the house and first exercise over the space around her, she appropriates the “old schoolroom” as her own; it takes on a new name, indicating her purpose within, and the newly christened East room “was now considered Fanny’s, almost as decidedly as the white Attic” (140). So begins her colonization, her shaping of space.

It is a center of revery for her, and she is able to escape to it and “find immediate consolation in some pursuit . . . —Her plants, her books—of which she had been a collector, from the first hour of her commanding a shilling—her writing desk, and her works of charity and ingenuity, were all within her reach” (140). Her. Her. Her. As Fanny is accused of passivity throughout the first volume, her own active agency has shaped and acquired—and not simply in her imagination. In her landscapes and books, her imagination takes a physical form, as she even covers the windows with transparencies, with which she may define her own views, improving an already good aspect. The East room thus signals the “strength of Fanny’s interiority—her imagination and its pains and illusions—which speaks as much to the power of narrative technique as it does to Fanny’s character” (Park 172). Through her interaction with space, she defines her own narrative, her own self.

Barbara Hardy, in discussing the objects of the East room, observes that Austen’s objects “are not endowed with a very conspicuous sensuous life, and

accrete their symbolic significance slowly, piecemeal, unobtrusively” (Hardy 181). Hardy interprets these objects as symbolic, but fails to recognize the symbolism of Fanny’s active arrangement of them; the objects, the ‘comforts,’ become “[Fanny’s] materials for nest-building, as well as the shelter, warmth and nourishment that a nest should provide” (185). Hardy’s study of the objects of the room suggests that they are also means of Fanny expanding out of her self; they are remembrances of things past, through which Fanny becomes the archiver and caretaker of Mansfield Park, “the nestling, the builder, and a brooding maternal presence” (186).

This is not to say, however, that such gathering likens her to the acquisitive Mary Crawford; rather, Fanny’s objects stand in contrast to the consumerism and materialism exhibited in other characters, from Lady Catherine to Mrs. Elton. These materialists acquire and shape in order to perform, in contrast with Fanny’s East room, which “is plain and furnished not to be looked at but to be lived in” (Sholz 165). Unfortunately, Susanne Sholz and Martina Stange’s argument is unfounded when they assert that “it is precisely the circumstance that [these objects] have entered her room not as commodities but as gifts that make them so precious to her. For it is Fanny’s sense of a value beyond the mere exchange value of commodities that makes her qualify, more than anyone else in the novel, as its moral centre” (Sholz 167). Many of the objects are, in fact, gifts, but there is an explicit mention of commodification embedded in Austen’s description, that

[Fanny] valued and collected “from the first hour of her commanding a shilling” (140). Oddly, Fanny herself seems to forget this fact later, when in Portsmouth she is “amazed at being anything *in propria personq*, amazed at her own doings in every way; to be a renter, a chuser of books” (370). However, in her spatial arrangement in the East room, Austen suggests she has been at her own doings, choosing books *in propria persona* from “the first hour of her commanding a shilling” most likely through an allowance, though this allowance is never mentioned. This discrepancy, then, locates Fanny’s agency not in a commercial vein, but rather a spatial one. It is in the safety of her “nest” that she acts within her own character; only when she leaves that nest does she recognize her actions as socially defining her self. It is the outwardness of these objects and possessions—and the outwardness of her later acquisition, directed towards Susan, not herself—through which Fanny escapes the hollow materialism of the Crawfords and their ilk. She eschews the new furniture Mary Crawford would have, privileging the social identification of her space over material acquisition—“The room was most dear to her [for its social associations], and she would not have changed its furniture for the handsomest in the house” (141)—this social attachment is realized fully in Emma, as Mr. Woodhouse, like Fanny, is drawn to Mr. Knightley’s collections at Donwell, but Emma is not bound by them, as Mr. Woodhouse is in his constricted space “looking over views of Swisserland” (*E* 342),

instead Emma will travel socially and physically outwards, in movement begun here through Fanny.

This outwardness is demonstrated as others enter into her space, both imaginatively—through gifts—and physically—by her permission. Edmund professes to “admire your little establishment exceedingly” as he suggests all the places she might go by means of the books and transparencies with which she surrounds herself (141). There is an outward, social movement within these objects, retained and arranged for “an interesting remembrance connected with it” (140). The objects themselves become spatial intimates, as “every thing was a friend, or bore her thoughts to a friend” (140). The outwardness of Fanny here contrasts decidedly with the selfishness, the inward bent of others, especially Mrs. Norris. She too had taken the smallest habitation, the White house, similar in name and consequence to the little white Attic. While she insists on a spare-room, perhaps a corollary to Fanny’s East room, it is not to invite people, for “the spare-rooms at the parsonage had never been wanted” but is needed simply to inconvenience others, or to boast of, or to please herself (27). With regard to objects, Mrs. Norris acquires the green baize curtain (181), a representative of performance and artifice, while in a final act of selfishness towards the Prices, she decides to keep a Prayer book from them, echoing the hollowness of the chapel at Sotherton (359).

Fanny's outwardness in the shaping of her space and self is reflected spatially at the departure of her cousins; she "wandered about the house and thought of them" (189). Conversely, gifts which she deems to be inappropriate or unearned by her own agency produce guilt, as with the gifts of Tom Bertram "she grew bewildered as to the amount of the debt which all these remembrances produced" (142) and again with the debacle of the chain from the Crawfords (238). Each object reflects her social concerns, and the arrangement of her self within a social context. The privacy of her nest allows this social function, as "self was a wholeness to be restored by temporary retreat to a space where the person can 'collect' or 'compose' herself, and to be nourished and sustained in the social privacy of a stable domestic company of true intimates" (Hart 310). These true intimates find both a physical and imaginative space in Fanny's "room of her own, a centre of a large and expanding sphere" (Hardy 187). Though these relational configurations begin as spatial arrangements of objects, they extend to encompass the self in relationships, so that ultimately, "it is relations rather than things - whether they are commodities or relics - that compel and that carry [Austen's] moral and artistic allegiance" (Johnson 171)—but first, these relationships must be arranged in a nest of comforts to construct a social self, and so each one finds a place within this nest.

All enter this nest, beginning with Edmund, who enters to consult her about the follies of acting, where she develops in her role as moral touchstone

(142). Miss Crawford then enters “to intreat [her] help” with acting, and Edmund enters again, to rehearse (156-7). This is certainly a low point for Fanny, as she has not yet developed enough to be “the judge and critic” (157). Yet she takes an active role, prompts them, arranges them (158) and is finally justified in her implicit judgment, as Edmund affirms later that “Fanny is the only one who has judged rightly throughout, who has been consistent” (174). Even when Miss Crawford returns conspicuously—“am I here again? The East room. Only once was I in this room before!”—it is Fanny who remains firm in their long interaction, able, perhaps from the strength of her space, her chairs, her comforts, to remain “safe” from Crawford’s surreptitious advances (331).

It is really on Edmund’s merit, who Fanny has admitted into her “stable domestic company of true intimates,” that Mary Crawford is admitted at all. While Mary, in the end, is expelled, Edmund remains. He is found, “writing at the table” (241) both physically, and imaginatively as she places him there—“suppose I find him there again to-day!” (247)—at which point he does meet her, but from a different stair-well than she had expected. There is motion, movement towards Fanny, even as she uses the East room to move out from. Still, it retains its position as a space of temporary retreat from Crawford’s advances, as “she would not stir further from the east-room than the head of the great staircase, till she had satisfied herself of Mr. Crawford’s having left the house” (279). He never enters the room; spatially she is never compromised by his intrusion.

Eventually, even Sir Thomas comes to her, and she brings him there by her action of refusing Crawford. Yet he, the master of the house, enters the room which she has colonized only by her permission: “It was indeed Sir Thomas, who opened the door, and asked if she were there, and if he might come in” (288). Here, the master submits to Fanny as mistress of her own space, and though he does so to influence her against her own self, he acknowledges her mastery of space, lighting a fire, and thus “when the fire is eventually put on, this significant act acknowledges her role as a home-maker for the rest of the Bertram family and also mirrors Edmund’s growing affection for her . . . the symbolic significance of the fireplace is drawn upon, providing a highly gendered instance of creating meaning via interior decoration” (Sholz 167). The outsider has moved in.

“She was at liberty, she was busy, she was protected”

(Mansfield Park 318)

As other characters move about, going hither and yon, Fanny has remained the one who “would rather stay at home” (66). This attachment to home is the source of her agency and the material with which she constructs her own social self, so that “from being a bystander, Fanny becomes the active heroine” (Butler 236). Here, though, critics such as Marilyn Butler consider the story to unravel, as Austen dramatically shifts Fanny’s unlikable, unshifting

character from passive to active. Fanny is criticized as an unlikeable heroine, and it is especially through her unexpected agency that this unlikability is grounded. This shift is neither as dramatic, nor this character as unshifting, when Fanny's active spatiality is considered from the start. She has been interacting actively with her space(s) from her entry into Mansfield, as evidenced. Even early in the drawing-room, where she remains an outsider, she is found "idling away all the evening upon a sofa," using spatial arrangement in the room to move on her own, neither at her Aunt Norris's beck and call, nor anyone else's for that matter (67). Even her unattractive headaches, tears, etc. which are derided by critics and readers alike for their similar unlikability, are used by Fanny as tools to draw Edmund's attention and physical proximity towards her, maneuvering the arrangement of relationships within her space to fulfill her desires and form her self (Kagawa, *Bodies* 124).

So she is found, amidst her long journey, at the very center of the estate and its space, opening the ball with—or perhaps, against—the obliging Crawford (254). These two enter the center of society together, but their constructed selves could not be more diametrically opposed. Thus, her agency and self-definition culminates in her decided action of refusing his hand (291). This action summons her spatially to Sir Thomas' room, the locus of power, when "Sir Thomas wishes to speak with you, Ma'am, in his own room," and therefore, by her action of refusal, she supplants her Aunt Norris as an accessory to Sir Thomas's power (299)

and accordingly receives “the felicity of having a fire to sit over and think of it” (304).

The domestic spaces she has arranged, and the self which she has created through her action, is realized as she once again evades Crawford’s advances, when the service of tea “delivered her from a grievous imprisonment of body and mind. Mr. Crawford was obliged to move. She was at liberty, she was busy, she was protected” (318). Through the domestic order created at Mansfield by her own subjectivity, she is protected, and the domestic objects—tea, coffee, chocolate—become symbols of freedom for Fanny, and more broadly for women creating a social self in the country house, where “the pouring of these luxurious hot drinks from expensive and decorative services was seen as a bench-mark of feminine virtue and grace” (Arnold 84). The ordering of this domestic space, and its objects, grants Fanny power, and “the drawing room [dictates] Fanny’s movements, even while her actions can override spatial constraints . . . Fanny shapes her space to accommodate her own needs” (Kagawa, *Bodies*120). This power is actively taken up and, in the end, conceded to Fanny, its prefigured in an earlier card game, where each player wrestles for power, and Crawford announces to Fanny “The game will be yours, turning to her again—it will certainly be yours” (225).

“Being only a passage-room to something better”

(*Mansfield Park* 350)

Drawing from the biblical trope which has its antecedent in her other novels, Austen tests this newfound power in Fanny with exile before she may take “the game.” This exile brings Fanny cyclically back to her former home in Portsmouth, but as Hardy observes, “She is not too time bound or too creepmouse to find in her nest what we should find in all proper nests, the strength to fly away” (189)—and to return.

It is the strength of her nest, and her resulting influence upon Mansfield, which leads William to attribute the orderliness of Mansfield Park to Fanny herself:

We seem to want some of your nice ways and orderliness at my father’s. The house is always in confusion. You will set things going in a better way, I am sure. You will tell my mother how it all ought to be, and you will be so useful to Susan, and you will teach Betsey, and make the boys love and mind you. How right and comfortable it will be! (344)

Fanny has expanded, has arranged, has colonized and created a subjective self. Now, however, she experiences narrowing and contraction of the space in which this self exists, as she enters Portsmouth, “passed the Drawbridge, and entered the town . . . rattled into a narrow street . . . drawn up before the door of a small house” (349) and again “Fanny was in the narrow entrance-passage of the

house” (350) with the room “so small that her first conviction was of its being only a passage-room to something better” (350). Indeed, this smallness has been, for her, a passage to something better, a point of entry to Mansfield, but now “there was no other door” (350); she is subsequently trapped in Portsmouth, being cut off from the center of reverie which has shaped and sustained herself, such that “the smallness of the house, and thinness of the walls, brought every thing so close to her . . . she hardly knew how to bear it” (354).

Her imagination, as well as her connection to objective physical space, is likewise overpowered, as “the smallness of the rooms above and below indeed, and the narrowness of the passage and staircase, struck her beyond her imagination” (359) in dynamic contrast to the spaces she has created. Portsmouth “severely cramps Fanny’s imaginative freedom”—she cannot improve the space imaginatively; it is ‘beyond her imagination’” (Person 68). This overpowering is linked to spatial arrangement; “Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought to be” (361). As Fanny loses the power to order, subjectively and imaginatively, objectively and spatially, and thus Portsmouth is to her “a place of chaos. Nothing has been done to shape and restrain life into any decency or decorum. Human impulses here are not perverted; but they are unregulated” (Tanner, *Mansfield Park* 445).

Fanny’s power, her agency, is only effective in the space which she may order and arrange for her self, presaging Emma’s own loss of power on Box Hill.

Even though she was “very anxious to be useful,” in Portsmouth, she is only able to work on behalf of her brother Sam, and not engage spatially for herself (362). As her spatial agency is limited, so is her social power. The house, like her youngest, unformed, disordered brothers, is “quite untamable by any means of address which she had spirits or time to attempt” (363). Her mother reflects this passivity, afforded to Mrs. Price through her preoccupation with “domestic grievances” which cause her to both forget her family and to feel powerless in aiding them (357). Thus, the powerlessness of Portsmouth is contrasted with the domain of the country house, the privilege of access to at least a little wealth, which allows Fanny the space she needs to create a self; the self is materially connected with possession. Without this spatial and material possession, her self, through which she experiences the space(s) in which she inhabits, is diminished; for “though Mansfield Park, might have some pains, Portsmouth could have no pleasures” (364).

In Portsmouth, however Fanny does find a power to contrive pleasure, to provide such things as please her own appetite, but it is not, as Nancy Armstrong would have, a power which arises from discourse, where “language constitutes a material reality in its own right as it displaces the world of things” (Armstrong 157). Rather, through Fanny’s entrance into the world of things with the gift of an object, the silver knife, to restore order, she effectively severs her sister Susan’s

connection with Portsmouth's preoccupations and connects her sister to herself, which "was a material advantage to each" (369).

This *material* advantage takes material form, commencing with the buying of the knife, the purchase of food, and the trade in books. Through these acquisitions, Fanny endeavours to improve her sister, making her materialism outwardly, rather than inwardly, focused as she fulfills her own outward agency begun in the East room, using the wealth which "is luxurious and daring" which "found its way to a circulating library. She became a subscriber—amazed at being anything *in propria persona*, amazed at her own doings in every way . . . to be having any one's improvement in view in her choice!" (370). Her own power is unacknowledged by herself in resisting the theatre, in ordering her room, in denying Crawford her space and her self, in any mode of discourse; it is acknowledged to herself only in her interaction "in her own person" with the material objects and spaces of her former home and society. Language, discourse, does not have the same power that the knife buys her, as language is of little use in the noise of commercial Portsmouth—even the subjective discourse represented in the books must take objective physical form, and be engaged with in material form, not through the ideas contained therein. Through her creation of an inner self at Mansfield Park, her power is realized only as that self shapes objects and spaces which connect her place in society. Even as "restriction becomes increasingly difficult and increasingly necessary," Fanny begins to act consciously

as her own restrictive, ordering agent (Hart 312). While she reflects that “were *she* likely to have a home to invite [Susan] to, what a blessing it would be!” (389), she acknowledges that she has, in fact, created such a home, which is later fully realized for herself and Susan, and she herself asserts that “Mansfield was home” (400).

“Within the view and patronage of Mansfield Park”

(Mansfield Park 439)

Her home within Mansfield Park is assured as the other players in the game of power concede, their hands are laid bare, as Crawford had augured they would be. Again, this revelation takes a spatial dimension; her return to Mansfield begins with a precision of Portsmouth details yet unmatched in Austen—“the sun’s rays falling strongly into the parlour, instead of cheering, made her still more melancholy . . . its power was only a glare, a stifling, sickly glare, serving but to bring forward stains and dirt that might otherwise have slept . . . She sat in a blaze of oppressive heat, in a cloud of moving dust” with soured milk, dirt, food, and the “ragged carpet” which cannot be mended (408). There follows the revelation of a corresponding moral filth—Maria and Crawford’s societal betrayal—spatialized by her Portsmouth surroundings (408-9). With this revelation, she is summoned back to Mansfield, along with her sister, and her mastery is affirmed as

the Bertrams, with augural Crawford, assert “Your judgment is my rule of right” (383). Her departure from Mansfield has disrupted the balance of order, first in Tom’s illness, and now in the double scandal and elopement; only the outsider, who has “judged rightly throughout, who has been consistent” can restore this order.

Her spatial agency becomes her moral power; “knowing where one is, recognizing the pattern and the limits, is a moral act” (Gillis 119). What had been beyond her imagination in Portsmouth, bringing order, becomes within her power and prerogative, a natural outworking of her developed spatial, social self in relation to the built environment of Mansfield. Here, Duckworth recognizes this essential difference between the two “homes” and thus in Austen’s treatment of objective physical structures in relation to the subjective self:

“imaginative limitation is welcome, for it is proof that there is a center to reality other than the individual mind. In her close attention to physical fact Jane Austen declares her belief, not in man as the creator of order but in man’s freedom to create within a prior order. Thus her individualism as author, like the individualism of her heroines, respects finally the given structure of her world. Her careful attention to topographical details” and one might add, her treatment of the interior functioning and life of the house, “takes on in this regard something of an ontological significance” (Duckworth 34).

This ontological significance, then, is located in the construction of a subjective self which spatial ordering has enabled Fanny to create. Her assertion of a true home in Mansfield Park, which is seemingly contrary to objective fact, follows Hart's formulation that "if the home is to function as the place of true intimacy, it must preserve its own humane order - which requires spaciousness, proportion, comfort, cultural resources, manners (the proper deference and concern for others and oneself), continuity, and authority" (Hart 312). Fanny, who has practiced the preservation of Mansfield Park, is thereby restored to it. Her objects remain intact, as does her created identity. As Armstrong notes, "the turnover of country property destabilized the signs of personal identity," so the converse is true, that with its preservation, the space of the country house stabilizes the personal identity of those who dwell within (159). The improvers, new-furnishers, and performers are out; the replanting of the apricot tree and improvements to the parsonage never occurs (53). Fanny inherits the parsonage, which had been colonized and threatened by the improving Crawfords and Grants—and by their antecedents, the de Bourghs and Collinsets. It is she, with Edmund, who is "removed to Mansfield;" is she who colonizes the parsonage, restoring its moral power against the acquisitive threat, and it too becomes her space, which "soon grew as dear to her heart, and as thoroughly perfect in her eyes, as every thing else, within the view and patronage of Mansfield Park had long been" (439).

Fanny, in effect, colonizes Mansfield Park—where Sir Thomas, in the end, cannot control his territory, it is yielded to Fanny in an inversion of Said’s formulation “to hold and rule Mansfield Park is to hold and rule an imperial estate . . . what assures the domestic tranquility and attractive harmony of one is the productivity and regulated discipline of the other” (87). It is Fanny herself who provides the sustenance, the productivity, the regulated discipline, and becomes its moral center, so that the “principle ‘wanting *within*’” comes, physically, to dwell *within* its view and patronage by the self she has created therein (Said 92).

However, this is not as simple a conservative formula—preserve the structure, banish improvers—as Alistair Duckworth would suppose. Where he casts Wollstonecraft the radical and Austen the conservative, it is worth noting that Austen does have Fanny actively “improve” the estate in spatial terms. Though Duckworth claims that “Jane Austen could find accommodations for her heroines in existing structures; Mary Wollstonecraft could not” (“Jane Austen’s Accommodations 74), these existing structures need to be altered considerably by the heroine in order for her to dwell therein, as Fanny Price evidences. Fanny’s ascension to a position of power is not as neat as Duckworth suggests; she does not conclude objective mistress of Mansfield, though she is, as he suggests, its new moral center. Rather, her power—social, outwardly moving—is located in the patronage of Mansfield Park; yet it remains at its boundaries.

The feminine subjective social self which Fanny constructs leads neither to an identity subjected to existing power structures, nor to a fully empowered identity which exerts agency over its society. Edmund, the younger son of the estate, prevents her both through his position and through his removal from the house at the center, from fulfilling her role as mistress of the manner, a role Elizabeth takes in subjection to the masculine spaces which Darcy controls, but that Emma will be empowered by.

In a fleeting, but significant, episode, Lady Bertram attempts to grant a power of agency within the estate to Fanny, inciting her mobility, “Fanny, ring the bell” she instructs—but “Edmund, preventing Fanny” says that “Sir Thomas would not like it” (131). This construction—Edmund preventing Fanny— signals the way in which he keeps her from attaining fully to the power which she alone is enacting through her spatial agency in Mansfield Park, and perhaps a power which would be expelled by Sir Thomas, as he expelled the theatrical spatiality. Edmund will keep her with himself, thereby subverting the established center of power through a spatial rearrangement. The manor, then, is left without a physical mistress as the locus of power moves outside its physical walls. Through this movement, Fanny’s self ultimately avoids the acquisitive subjectivity which Austen has first rejected in Elizabeth; Fanny retains an agency of self from the boundaries whereas Elizabeth moved from the boundaries to indifference and inaction. Not until Emma will a domestic, spatial agency be realized in the center

of the structures of power. In *Mansfield Park*, it is enough for power to begin its shift from the masculine inherited structures.

This shift in power is likewise evidenced by the inheritance of the Price children who, as representatives of a new community, develop “a new language of kinship relations capable of reproducing this privileged community on a personal scale within society at large . . . a paradoxical configuration that can only be called a middle-class aristocracy” (Armstrong 160). So while Duckworth claims that “unlike Wollstonecraft, [Austen] has no structural changes to propose in her world” (x), the spatial movement of agency from Bertram to Price proposes a distribution of privilege to subjective selves.

Fanny’s appropriation of Mansfield continues even after she departs Mansfield Park proper, not *in propria persona*, but *in absentia*, *in personam*, and *in perpetuity*, as Susan “was now left a good deal to herself, to get acquainted with the house and grounds as she could, and spent her days very happily in so doing” (417) as later, “Susan remained to supply her place . . . first as a comfort to Fanny, then as auxiliary, and last as her substitute, she was established at Mansfield, with every appearance of equal permanency” (438). If Austen’s “deepest impulse was not to subvert but to maintain and properly improve a social heritage” (Duckworth 80), she has indeed undercut, or subverted, even her own deepest impulse. It is Fanny’s power which, from the beginning, contrives to bring “William to England,” a phrase replete with conquest, colonization, and shifting

English identity (34). Consequently, William, the soldier, sees the house through Fanny's eyes; she has become its interpreter and conqueror, as he is "ready to think of every member of that home as she directed" (217).

Through her free indirect interaction with space, moving and shaping her own and other's spaces, the discourse itself becomes her own; "Fanny's free indirect speech becomes the vehicle of the narrative, and the special quality of her mind colours, or dominates, the story" (Butler 237). Austen has made it possible for readers to inhabit her consciousness only insofar as they may inhabit her spaces; the reader not only sees what flows through the narrative through her spaces, but also, with William, sees this narrative from her perspective (Park 172). In the end, it is Fanny, and by her, Austen, who constructs a new spatial, subjective self.

Finally, it is not, as Nina Auerbach would have, Fanny's *unattractiveness* which makes her monstrously consume, or colonize, her setting, but Fanny's *agency* in acting upon space that makes "the mobility and malleability of *Mansfield Park*"—realized in opposition through the improving Crawfords and the self-creating Fanny—"a dark realization of an essentially Romantic vision, of which Fanny Price represents both the horror and the best hope" (Auerbach 457). The construction of the modern self, provided it is outwardly moving, social, embedded in spatiality, holds hope, and it is in Fanny that Austen begins the

endeavor of this construction, as “the little girl performed her long journey in safety” (13).

In *Fanny*, Austen has created a subjective, increasingly social self through her performative agency in interior spaces, one that allows her—and Austen—to contest the kind of acquisitive, inward-looking, and often self-consuming subjectivity attached to the rising middle classes—associated with the Crawfords, Rushworth, and the Bertram girls, and formerly with the Collinses, the de Bourghs and, to a lesser extent, the Bingleys—with a kind of relational self that is at once stabilizing to traditional power structures but also invested in middle class values of mutuality that subtly subvert those values. With this, Austen is equipped to create a fully embodied and universalized self—spatial, subjective, and social.

“The fair mistress of the mansion”

(*Emma* 23)

What Austen began in Fanny finds its continuance—and fulfillment—in Emma. The story begins, and extends, through spatial configuration; each narrative element, each figure, is defined spatially, from minuscule objects constructing character to the weather itself, and this spatiality reveals the increasing importance of spaces in Austen. Emma herself is defined as that spatial, subjective agent, which developed in Fanny, from the start. However, this agency is threatened, no longer by myopic acquisitiveness, which Fanny has overcome, but by solitude, by a lack of true social intercourse. This embodied agency, whose danger is to remain only embodied and relegated to the immaturity of “schemes” and “games,” achieves genuine power as it is universalized through free indirect movement, expanding and contracting socially, which subsequently empowers the free indirect discourse which expands and contracts fluidly between the narrator and narrative subject. Through this fluidity, power shifts to Emma herself, who no longer need exert it from the boundaries, from Elizabeth’s periphery, from Fanny’s parsonage, or from her own Box Hill, where her own agency exerted from outside causes society to fracture. The very instability of existing social structures compounds the need for her to restructure them from the center. Austen conceives this agency first spatially—through Emma’s table—and

only after through her linguistic union with the universalized narrator and her bodily union with masculine inherited structures.

From the very beginning of her story, Emma may be the culmination of Austen heroines; “Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition” (7). She begins where Elizabeth Bennet has left off, but without the necessity of marriage to secure her a space of her own. House, in fact, being in her name, united with the wild which drew Elizabeth outwards, Emma Wood-house begins life with “very little to vex her” (7). In *Emma*, there is a preeminence given to space which is absent from earlier novels. Emma is described by the narrator, almost playfully, as the “fair mistress of the mansion” (23). She not only orders her space, but orders, and reorders, the spaces of those around her, as Knightley observes, “Emma has been mistress of the house and of you all” (36). Her agency within both private and public spaces is asserted by Frank Churchill, “Miss Woodhouse (who, wherever she is, presides)” (346) and by the narrator at the Cole’s “it suited Emma best to lead” (211). In *Emma*, Austen begins where Fanny left off—an embodied agency—and in *Emma* she expands this spatial agency to incorporate a universal society in representative Highbury.

In *Emma*, it really is the house, the spatial framework, within which Emma’s agency is enacted, as, “the landed property of Hartfield certainly was inconsiderable” (129). However, within this house, there is concern that these

spatial constructs may be limiting without further social development—Emma, with “all her advantages, natural and domestic” stands “in great danger of suffering from intellectual solitude” (8). Mr. Elton, too, trades “his own blank solitude for the elegancies and society of Mr. Woodhouse’s drawing-room” (21). Expansion of the self socially becomes a theme developed by the motif of hospitality. Emma, from the start takes pride in hosting, often in opposition to her father as she extends her hospitality, hoping that she is “not often deficient in what is due to guests at Hartfield” (160).

This outwardly expanding agency clearly is evident in her matchmaking, but it begins as a function of spatial agency, within her “mansion.” Here, food serves symbolically to demarcate her hospitality in contrast with Mr. Woodhouse, who “loved to have the cloth laid” but eats only gruel (25). Emma’s interaction within her interiors extends to domestic matters as Elizabeth’s never did, and in a way that Fanny’s domesticity is only hinted at, the effect of her hospitality beginning with the “best of the fish and the chicken” (15). Indeed, Austen discusses food almost ten times more in *Emma* than she does in either *Pride and Prejudice* or *Mansfield Park*, and the food generally centers around decisions made by Emma, rather than comments made by ancillary characters, as in the other novels. Emma is the domestic woman which Armstrong attempts to identify in Elizabeth Bennet—as she concerns herself with the ordering of her home with precision observed regularly by the narrator. It is equally her position of pre-eminence in

choosing the food which demonstrates Emma's agency, shaping her house in a way Fanny began and Elizabeth avoided; "Emma allowed her father to talk—but supplied her visitors in a much more satisfactory style" (25).

This "much more satisfactory style," which included "minced chicken and scalloped oysters . . . apple tarts" (25), contrasts with the traditional elements of her father's gruel and with the acquisitive nature here represented by the Cole's; Emma is initially disappointed "that she was come in herself for the Stilton cheese, the north Wiltshire, the butter, the cellery, the beet-rood and all the dessert" (86). The Cole's serve traditional English food, cheeses identified by their terroir, substantiating their position and increasing prominence as part of British society. Food becomes representative of agency, even as Jane's dilemma is represented nutritionally, as her inhibited agency is reflected by an inhibited diet when her aunt remarks on "how little bread and butter she ate for breakfast, and how small a slice of mutton for dinner" (159). Likewise, the relationship between Hartfield and Highbury, the outward, social self is mediated through Emma's gifts of the salting-pan and pork for the Bates (163) and later by pigeon-pies and cold lamb (331) and arrowroot, which is not accepted and represents the social rupture created (366).

Through her agency, Emma's relationship with her father expands from Fanny's relationship to Sir Thomas; each "father" grants the "daughter" heroine a large measure of spatial power; he supports her right to play house (Person 69).

Like Fanny, she is an “imaginist” of her spaces, a creator (314). Unlike Fanny, this creation is not derivative; where Harriet’s certainly is, the narrator emphasizes how Harriet was writing onto Emma’s “hot-pressed paper” (67). The physical materials onto which Harriet is shaped—by Emma—are of Emma’s own creation, not an assortment of treasures appropriated or gifted by others. This agency of creation—a physical formation, an embodiment, of self—is demonstrated over her space; the drawing-room is “rich in specimens of your landscapes and flowers” and even extends her influence, physically, over other houses in the village, as Mrs Weston has “some inimitable figure-pieces [of Emma’s creation] in her drawing-room, at Randalls” (42). In *Pride and Prejudice*, the Bennet girls’ action of creation is indifferent, they “examine their own indifferent imitations of china on the mantelpiece” (*PP* 75), whereas Emma’s involvement in her “inimitable figure-pieces” and “specimens of [her] landscapes and flowers” is active and engaged (*E* 42). This is most clearly evident in “The Picture” (67) Emma creates—“an exquisite possession” (43)—in her representation—both objectively and subjectively—of Harriet.

Emma is an organic part of the house; and it is of her. Without the need of settling with a husband, Emma sees herself unchanged, remaining an active domestic “if I give up music, I shall take to carpet-work” to sustain the house—this is her life (83). The agency with which she maintains this action finds her positioning people within the house—mirroring her positioning of people within

her society. She appropriates a bed-room to Harriet (56) and the decision of Isabella's rooms is made by Emma, deferred to her by Mr. Woodhouse: "Have you thought, my dear, where you shall put her—and what room there will be for the children?" to which Emma has a quick answer, having already arranged that "she will have her own room, of course" (77). Emma, from the start, is an active spatial agent within her house, and her development of self in process is one of outward social expansion, having already spatially developed a subjective self.

"Your neighbourhood is increasing, and you mix more with it"

(Emma 290)

Having cultivated Emma's agency through the medium of interior spaces, and only after having done so, Austen begins to expand this subjective, embodied self into a social, universal self; "society remains . . . the necessary context of individual action" (Duckworth 82). However, this context, this medium through which Emma's agency may be actualized, remains spatially bound even outside of the house, as John Wiltshire recognizes her society to be construed and constructed spatially (426). E.M. Forster's observation of this social, spatial shift in Austen from earlier writers, is useful:

When we say that a character in Jane Austen, Miss Bates for instance, is 'so like life' we mean that each bit of her coincides with a bit of

life, but that she as a whole only parallels the chatty spinster we met at tea. Miss Bates is bound by a hundred threads to Highbury. We cannot tear her away without bringing her mother too, and Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill, and the whole of Box Hill; whereas we could tear Moll Flanders away, at least for the purposes of experiment. A Jane Austen novel is more complicated than a Defoe, because the characters are inter-dependent . . . the result is a closely woven fabric from which nothing can be removed. Miss Bates and Emma herself are like bushes in a shrubbery—not isolated trees like Moll—and anyone who has tried to thin out a shrubbery knows how wretched the bushes look if they are transplanted elsewhere and how wretched is the look of the bushes that remain (65-66).

It is not coincidence that *Emma* is used by Forster as illustration—the novel, succeeds in locating a self spatially within society where earlier novels fall short. Here, Austen locates people in their physical situations more than in any other novels; where there is little description of the homes of ancillary characters in *Pride and Prejudice* or *Mansfield Park*, except where an acquisitive nature is present, the narrator identifies Mrs. Goddard’s “neat parlor hung round with fancywork” which is, in fact, never entered into over the course of the narrative. This description, if minute, represents Mrs. Goddard spatially with a degree of detail not yet developed in Austen; a detail, not simply meant to be jumped out of, hidden in, or fainted against, but to represent a character’s personhood. Likewise,

Martin's suitability is prefigured by "*two* parlours, two very good parlors indeed; one of them quite as large as Mrs. Goddard's drawing-room" (27) and his ability to "live very comfortably" (30)—signaling an increasing influence and rise of aristocratic values in the middle-class, and anticipating an intermixing of these classes and values.

This mixing, intermixing, and engagement between social classes occurs spatially through the Bates' social decline, and Emma's continuing interaction with them. The Bates "occupied the drawing-room floor . . . in the very moderate sized apartment, which was everything to them" (146). Again, their position is defined by their space, as is Elton's house, which Frank Churchill "could not believe it a bad house; not such a house as a man was to be pitied for having" (191). Elton, the acquisitive social climber, has likewise "fitted up his house so comfortably" for it not to be engaged socially (14), adding "the yellow curtains" to be admired (81). The Coles, though not as egregiously as Elton may seem, do expand from "their want of a larger house . . . they added to their house . . . their new dining-room" (194) to aid in their establishment in society. They acquire, but it is for social respectability and ease, as with the screen for Mr. Woodhouse and the pianoforté to use at parties. Theirs is an outwardly moving society, and Emma eventually mixes with it.

The Coles' sociability contrasts with Mrs. Elton's vulgarity—echoing the Collinses, etc.—in comparing everything to Maple Grove (253-4) and defining

Mrs. Bragge's affluence by "wax-candles in the school-room!" (279). Even those removed from the scene, such as Mrs. Churchill, are depicted spatially; Enscombe has a conservatory, from which Mrs. Churchill needs assistance to move between, and which signals the agency she exerts on Frank (285). The acquisitive tendency is evident in the narrator's language. People are described as objects—Elton is "deposited" (122), Jane is "the property . . . of her grandmother and aunt" (153), houses could "furnish" numbers for a ball (186). Houses are also ascribed the character of people; metonym functions when "Enscombe however was gracious" (238), and when "the room at the Crown was to witness it" (299). Self and space are more clearly interchangeable here than in previous novels.

Likewise, Emma uses architectural terms to imagine Elton's attraction "that he thought Harriet a beautiful girl . . . was foundation enough on his side" (34). Spatial placement is important, especially in her "creation" of this relationship; Harriet remembers where everyone sat as evidence of her affection for Elton, and his for her (319). It is Harriet who engages with Mr. Elton at the window which has the favorable aspect (87) while Emma is in adjoining room, where the door, which she wants closed, is ajar (87). Both the arrangement and the dis-arrangement of space signals the disjunction between objective and subjective social intercourse. It is an interposition in space which gives Elton away, as he is interposes himself between Mrs. Weston and Emma on the sofa, "and with scarcely and invitation, seated himself between them" (118). Similarly, Mrs.

Weston extends her own spatial attachment of Hartfield to Highbury, of Emma to Frank as “she trusted to its bearing the same construction with him” (182).

As with *Pride and Prejudice*, the unsettled takes place on the periphery, in the boundaries between these places; the relationship between Jane and Frank is unsettled at the Cole’s dinner, which lays at the edges of Highbury society, both spatially and socially (207). When Frank attempts to reveal his relationship to Emma, which she conceives to be unsettled attraction to herself, “He hesitated, got up, walked to a window” (242). Later, the difficulty of Frank’s “blunder” before Jane while playing the word “game,” is also construed spatially, as the narrator makes point of mentioning that, though everyone is at the round table together, Frank is reaching to a “table behind him” (325) to intimate his blunder to Jane. This spatial unsettledness likewise extends to Knightley, who is in a doorway when questioned about his affections for Jane Fairfax (267). Alternatively, John Knightley proves himself agreeable by not “drawing his brother off to a window,” remaining, instead, among the company at Hartfield (271). Finally, in keeping with the architectural descriptors of people, the unevenness of Jane and Frank’s relationship is compared by the narrator to “an unevenness of the floor” at the Bates’ cottage, which causes vexation over his gift and is deemed inappropriate (224). Finally, if the edges, the periphery, signal an unsettledness, Harriet Smith is perhaps the most unsettled of all. Where does Harriet belong? Goddard’s or Hartfield? She has been plucked from her “place” by Emma. This confusion is

represented spatially when Harriet cannot decide the destination of the parcel she orders, see-sawing back and forth, back and forth over where to send the package (219).

Such spatial characterization is woven throughout the novel. Frank's economic uncertainty is perceived as it relates to his ability to establish himself in a house, or his inability to do so in one befitting his person, who is "used only to a large house himself, and without ever thinking how many advantages and accommodations were attached to size, he could be no judge of the privations inevitably belonging to a small one." Emma, however, acknowledges the sacrifices he may be able to make, as she reads his attraction to her in terms of settling into a smaller house, the sacrifice he makes being portrayed through "the inroads on domestic peace to be occasioned by no housekeeper's room, or a bad butler's pantry, but . . . he would willingly give up much of wealth to be allowed an early establishment" (191).

Likewise, objects feature as spatial representations for displaced peoples. Like Fanny, Harriet collects and assembles "treasures" which identify her placement in Hartfield society, and which she ultimately must give up (318). These treasures act as avatars for her personal hopes. Objects also function as persons themselves, or as personal hopes, as when Jane speaks to her pianoforté—"You must go," said she. "You and I must part. You have no business here" (359). Her

displacement is seen through her quickly enclosing spaces which do not allow her the hope of Frank Churchill.

In contrast, Emma is not displaced; she perceives detachment from the start of the novel, but it is not the immediate displacement of Fanny, or the eventual displacement of Elizabeth. For, where “Emma is also detached (Fanny because of low status, Emma because of high place)” (Peson 69), Emma indeed belongs to the town—she is intrinsically social—as from the beginning, Highbury is the society, the spatial relations, “to which Hartfield, in spite of its separate lawn and shrubberies and name, did really belong” (9). So Emma begins with perceived detachment from this society, but realizes her position within it as she moves from private to public spaces. This is especially evident in Emma’s increasing engagement in society through balls, which are understood in spatial terms, beginning with the Cole’s dinner, when “the proposal of dancing . . . was so effectually promoted by Mr. and Mrs. Cole, that everything was rapidly clearing away, to give proper space” (213). Here, when she accepts the Coles invitation, Emma begins to increasingly interact with that society which she had initially perceived herself being detached from and her social space is expanded. Later, when the company finds that “Mr. Weston’s dining-room does not accommodate more than ten comfortably” (110), Frank and Emma move outward to an even more public space, the Crown, where Frank “stopt for several minutes at the two

superior sashed windows which were open, to look in and contemplate its capabilities, and lament that its original purpose should have ceased” (185).

The cessation of activity at the Crown reflects the contraction of social spaces which Emma experiences at the start of the novel, a self formed in private. However, even though she and Frank attempt to retain the privacy of their society by returning back to Randalls and measuring the parlours, this privacy is found to be too small (232), too constricting—indeed this is reflected in the negativity of Enscombe being its lack of society “very little going on . . . their visitings were among a range of great families, none very near” (206). The society returns to the Crown, and they exert agency upon those expanding social spaces which need improvement “this paper is worse than I expected. Look! in places you see it is dreadfully dirty, and the wainscot is more yellow and forlorn” (232). The expansion of space, as Mrs. Weston takes control “all the minor arrangements of table and chair, lights and music, tea and supper” (238), is fully realized when we see the ball, not through Mrs. Weston or Emma, but through Miss Bates, on the periphery of society, who praises it thoroughly (302-9). Where Elizabeth and Fanny experience selfhood through contraction of space, Emma’s selfhood, which has been established in the contracted space of Hartfield, is now realized through spatial expansion into an encompassing society. Jane Fairfax, through her constriction and eventual expansion, reflects the expansion that takes place in Emma; as this expansion is observed in Emma, so she observes it in Jane, who was

“—confined always to one room” (365) in her illness, but later is seen walking outside. Expansion, even private, is a tonic to that which constricts, and this expansion is realized as characters themselves move outwards, as Fanny began to do, as Jane ventures to accomplish, and as Emma fully realizes:

In *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and to a lesser extent *Persuasion*, Austen is interested in exploring more profoundly the complex power relationships between women and a social world that reduces their options and makes them marginal. She is less interested, in other words, in portraying some like Elizabeth Bennet and Catherine Morland [in *Northanger Abbey*] who figuratively get away with murder—who rather easily triumph over their circumstances—than in rendering the way that women are enmeshed in circumstance. Enmeshed, not trapped, for Austen’s women can to some extent shape their circumstances to accommodate their desires. But these possibilities have to be seized within a more fully realised social world, one that is less ready to permit individuals to evade its laws. *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* show women not escaping and evading but working within or reforming their worlds (Fergus 419).

This reforming of her world becomes most clear in the social spaces, and especially those public gatherings prefigured by the Mansfield Park ball, which initiates, if not movement itself, than the *desire* for outward movement in Fanny Price: “Fanny thought and thought again of the difference which twenty-four

hours had made in that room, and all that part of the house. Last night it had been hope and smiles, bustle and motion, noise and brilliancy in the drawing-room and out of the drawing-room and every where. Now it was languor and all but solitude” (*Mansfield Park* 261). This is later reflected as Emma finds all to be “dull and insipid about the house!” (244) when she is dissatisfied with her perceived social attachments/detachments. Finally, after her social errors at Box Hill, when she exiles herself, however briefly, from society, she no longer finds her home sufficient to satisfy her: “—she sat still, she walked about, she tried her own room, she tried the shrubbery—in every place, every posture, she perceived that she had acted most weakly” (386). Emma increasingly finds her own perceived detachment uncomfortable, as the imaginist finds that she finds that her own home, even her own person on Box Hill, is not sufficient, and she experiences “the steady and often painful expansion and complication of world for one who has arrogantly assumed the sufficiency of her home and her rigidly fixed social station and has found larger spaces only in . . . her fancy” (Hart 329).

Even the weather, the most external, expanded space, reflects the expansion and complication in Emma’s life. Whereas the weather often moves against the agency of some—Mr. Woodhouse’s snow—for Emma, it serves to reflect the expansion of herself—so much so that, when it snows, Mr. Woodhouse responds with “What is to be done, my dear Emma?—what is to be done?” appealing to Emma alone (120). Indeed, weather both serves Emma and reflects

Emma, as “the weather was most favorable for her” so that when she is unsettled by Elton and would like to remain at home, so is “the ground sobered with snow, and the atmosphere in that unsettled state between frost and snow . . . she was for many days a most honorable prisoner” (131). This perceived agency over her outward spaces culminates in the end, when she fears eventual detachment from Knightley, such that “the weather added what it could of gloom” (395). However, in a striking image of the expansion of her social self to encompass her entire world, this gloomy weather “continued much the same all the following morning; and the same loneliness, and the same melancholy, seemed to reign at Hartfield—but in the afternoon it cleared; the wind changed into a softer quarter; the clouds were carried off; the sun appeared; it was summer again” (397) even as the clouds over Emma are carried off by her social interaction with Knightley, in which she ultimately exerts her own agency to shape her society.

“I will hear whatever you like. I will tell you exactly what I think”

(Emma 402)

Emma’s maturing agency becomes most evident in her exchange with Frank on Box Hill:

“You are comfortable because you are under command.”

“Your command?—Yes.”

“Perhaps I intended you to say so, but I meant self-command. You had, somehow or other, broken bounds yesterday, and run away from your own management; but to-day you are got back again—and as I cannot always be with you, it is best to believe you remoter under your own command rather than mine.”

“It comes to the same thing. I can have no self-command without a motive. You order me, whether you speak or not. And you can be always with me. You are always with me” (346).

It is a maturing agency, because it still flirts—both literally and figuratively,—with the selfish agency inherent in Frank, and in the Eltons, Rushworths, de Bourghs, etc. Whereas Marilyn Butler locates in Emma a heroine who exhibits how Austen “thinks of goodness as an active, analytical process, not at all the same thing as passive good nature . . . [Emma’s] impulses are fundamentally social. At times of great personal emotion she thinks of others” (272), this outward is not yet fully developed. Whether it is fundamental in Emma is questionable; Emma must develop this social agency, as Fanny developed spatial agency before her. While she has shaped a spatial conception of self, in that “Emma glories in her freedom to define her world outward from a center of self,” however, this “outward” direction is the fundamental distinction between her goodness and the selfish, acquisitive desires of previous characters, as “we are to be aware of how closely she comes to fragmenting the little world of Highbury with her ‘schemes’

and of how heinously she fails in her social responsibility when she insults Miss Bates on Box Hill” (Duckworth 8).

“Scheming,” or the playing of games, features prominently in *Emma*. Her agency from the first is demonstrated in Hartfield by her arrangement of games, such that the “backgammon-table was placed” by Emma who “spared no exertions” (11). Emma always could “make up a card-table for [her father]” (21). These games become increasingly social, as she launches into her arranging lives (13-15), or “matches” (13), a term which in itself connotes sporting. She claims to have “planned the match” (13), using language of movement, though the genuineness of such agency is questioned by Knightley, as he contests whether such arranging “supposes endeavor” (14). Here is her maturing agency, and these early games which she plays are childlike, immature, and tend towards a self interest causing harm—the letters between Frank and Jane—rather than good. The complications of these games finds her reverting to her earliest, simplest arrangements, as when Emma is silenced by John Knightley in the carriage on the score of Elton and Harriet, she “arranged the glasses” as a contraction from the social space she is inhabiting, a contraction later evident when, after the wretchedness of Box Hill, “a whole evening of back-gammon with her father, was felicity to it. *There*, indeed, lay real pleasure” (353). However, this contraction of space is clearly a negative movement, a movement which constricts her social self. Ever the movement must be outward, she must first command her own spaces, as

Fanny does in the end of *Mansfield Park*, but then expand this agency to encompass her society, while remaining at the center of the social structures which Donwell and Hartfield represent, in contrast with the wild periphery of Box Hill. Emma's speech to Knightley, then, is an inversion of Fanny's to Edmund.

“I will hear whatever you like. I will tell you exactly what I think” (*E*, 402).

“Tell me whatever you like” (*MP*, 249).

In the end, Fanny submits her agency to Edmund and, while retaining spatial agency in the position at the gate of Mansfield Park, the agent in their engagement is Edmund as Fanny opens herself to him, becoming his object and relinquishing her space at Mansfield. Conversely, Emma remains the agent in her engagement, asserting “I will hear,” “I will tell,” “I think.” In this, Knightley is “more easily manipulated into the magic circle of Emma's imagination” (Person 70), yet more than that, in this action, Emma ceases to inhabit the imaginary spaces of immature games, but as the removal of clouds and the entrance of sun forecasts, she opens herself to a more fully realized, mature selfhood. Knightley here is the object which is acted upon, Emma the acting subject.

Emma's agency draws Knightley to Hartfield, despite the barriers which confront him, even as he is “irritated into an absolute fever, by the fire which Mr. Woodhouse's tender habits required” he is still drawn to this fire, Emma's fire, from “the coolness and solitude of Donwell Abbey” (329). While the Knightley's agency is exerted outside the house, each mention of it—“the plan of a drain, the

change of a fence, the felling of a tree, and the destination of every acre” (96) and the discussion of moving the path (102)—is made considerately by Knightley for Emma’s sake, to shift the conversation from a topic which made either Miss. or Mr. Woodhouse uncomfortable.

Many of Knightley’s actions regarding his property are done for Emma’s sake; his refusal to cede control to Mrs. Elton preserves a space for Emma, the future “Mrs. Knightley;—and, till she is in being” Knightley “will manage such matters myself” (333). A position of management, both social and spatial, is reserved for her, and it may be this position which draws Emma to Knightley as much as it is Knightley himself. When Emma is first seen at Donwell Abbey, the acquisitiveness present in Elizabeth’s visit to Pemberley is markedly absent. Whereas Elizabeth rejects Pemberley for social reasons—it was inconceivable that Darcy would accept her beloved aunt and uncle—Emma admires the social implications of Donwell, “the respectable size and style of the building, its suitable, becoming characteristic situation” (335). She contrasts this “respect” with, but does not negate the value of, her own home, as Donwell’s position “was larger than Hartfield, and totally unlike it, covering a good deal of ground, rambling and irregular, with many comfortable and one or two handsome rooms. —It was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was—and Emma felt an increasing respect for it, as the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding” (336). Her increasing respect for the

position of Donwell is described socially, as well as spatially; it is the residence of *true* gentility. As she expands outward, first to Donwell, then to Box Hill, it is Donwell, low and sheltered, where “freedom is liberty structured within an ordered, established social world” which takes precedence as a place of social power, while Box Hill is quite the reverse, its “open air is an empty space, people wander off in all directions, social relations are unstructured, and the limitations of innovation and freedom are manifest” (Wiltshire 434). When Emma’s agency is not socially structured, its limitations become clear, and she withdraws from the wild-ness of Box Hill, which echoes the wild peripheries of Elizabeth’s walks; Emma instead is able to freely expand or contract in order to take her active position in structured society without relinquishing her spatial, subjective self.

“The small band of true friends”

(Emma 453)

Unlike Elizabeth’s removal to Pemberley and consequent subsumption into Darcy’s space, or Fanny’s removal from her own space to a new one which she might inhabit with Edmund, Emma is able to retain that space through which she has defined her own agency while attaining, simultaneously to the social position which Donwell affords her. She does not experience “the fall” which D. A. Miller assigns to all Austen heroines, which consists of reversion to “Woman at last,” a

release of agency which allows them to become an embodied person, and not just a Style, a universalized but disembodied (socially separate) self (Miller 46). Emma retains her spatially-defined self, her *Style*, as represented through her agency over Hartfield, while becoming *woman at last* in her corporeal, spatial union with Knightley. This union is not accomplished through her subsumption, but rather through another's subsumption into her own agency.

In another inversion, Austen reconstructs the endings of her previous novels, and she does it by revealing the increasing fragility of social structures and their need for subjective social selves to exert agency to protect them. In the end, it is a threat to *space*, real or perceived, which enables this union to continue, and allows Emma to hold her position of authority. There are reports of thieves in the neighborhood, threatening the society of Hartfield; since “pilfering was *housebreaking* to Mr. Woodhouse's fears” and he therefore invites Knightley in to keep the *house* from *breaking*. Rather than Emma being stolen away, subsumed by Knightley, Knightley is united at Hartfield with Emma. This threat, unmentioned previously—though the gypsies stand at the edge of society and threaten those who are displaced—contradicts Susan Fraiman's assertion that “homes in Austen are also generally secure,” asserting Austen's characters are unlike Crusoe or Jane Eyre, those who are bereft of shelter altogether (349). Austen recognizes that spatial—and social—structures are tenuous, and must be protected. In *Emma*, there is an acknowledged shift from the stability of the country house—Pemberley

—which, along with its owner, is secure. While Stephen Clarke suggests that “Darcy, in a sense, is Pemberley, as Mr. Knightley is Donwell; the estate becomes him” (201), the growing instability of the country houses which Austen’s characters—and Austen herself—inhabit is realized in *Emma*. Knightley, in fact, leaves Donwell, Darcy does not; in *Emma*, the power shift connected to the agency of its heroine reflects the shifting power of the country house, and the growing power of marginalized groups, specifically women. Marilyn Butler points out that “in her domestic ascendancy [Emma] is unique among Jane Austen heroines. Every other Austen leading lady is socially neglected or discounted: even the confident and energetic Elizabeth is denied a positive, managerial role in events” (251). In this ascendancy, Emma fulfills Fanny’s ill-fated opportunity; Crawford would have left his estate and come to her, but he would not have been able to offer the social agency which Emma attains (*MP* 270). Yet without the establishment of her self from the start, spatially and subjectively defined in context to her society, even if seemingly detached, Emma could not have been “about to assume a clearly defined and permanent role in the community” (Butler 273).

The dependency of this expanded, social self on the agency of Emma’s spatial, subjective self is made clear when, at the culmination of her social expansion into Mrs. Knightley, “they sat down to tea—the same party round the same table—how often it had been collected!” (325). It is this table which, from

the start, has foreshadowed Emma's eventual expansion; "Mr. Knightley must take his seat with the rest round the large modern circular table which Emma had introduced at Hartfield, and which none but Emma could have had power to place there and persuade her father to use, instead of the small-sized Pembroke" (325). This shift, which Emma initiates and exerts power over, enables her to encompass her own society. Such a table would have been placed in the center of the room, as a "large modern circular table" would not be designed to relegate society to the side, as the Pembroke, a small drop-leaf table designed to be contracted and moved against the wall, would have done. Indeed, Austen recognizes the importance of just such a table:

Interior design, including placement and dimensions of furniture, also configures Austen's notion of an ideal space or room. Furnishing the family's house in Sevenon is for Austen both noteworthy and newsworthy as she writes in a letter to Cassandra dated 8-9 November 1800. She describes the design, smith finishings and texture of furniture that should contribute to a room's aesthetic excellence and the "general contentment" and "fancy" of its inhabitants. A table placed at the center of a central room literally becomes the "center piece" of Austen family life or "our constant Table for everything," and is meant to facilitate the specified activities of the family (LeFaye 55).

Through spatial agency, through her spatial, subjective self which “introduced” and “had power to place and persuade,” *Emma* creates an expanding social self which allows her to exert increasing power even in a threatened, destabilized society. While the end of *Pride and Prejudice* is characterized by social constriction, as Elizabeth’s family is reshaped by her subsumption into Darcy’s space, and *Mansfield Park* ends with Fanny taking over another’s space, such that her new space “soon grew as dear to her heart, and as thoroughly perfect in her eyes, as every thing else, within the view and patronage of Mansfield Park had long been” (*MP* 439), *Emma* concludes, or continues—both of the earlier novels end with *FINIS*, a finality missing from *Emma*—to expand with a socially encompassing wedding, which brings all of her society, including the Eltons and Bates, and earlier, Harriet and the Martins, into her sphere, such that “the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends...were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union” (453). In this *small band of true friends*, this society gathered around Emma’s modern social space, are many disparate members of society, such that, in *Emma*, “we must see Austen’s novels striving to empower a new class of people—not powerful people, but normal people—whose ability to interpret human behavior qualifies them to regulate the conduct of daily life and reproduce their form of individuality,” Nancy Armstrong asserts, yet adding that this is formed “in and through writing” (136). Though, at times, Emma’s agency is exerted through language, it is as much physical as it is

discursive. The shaping she has done ends where it began, with an ever-expanding social circle gathered in her space, which has been defined and shaped by her own subjective self.

“It was desirable that she should appear, in general, like her usual self”

(Emma 136-137)

In *Emma*, that “gentle, domestic brute,” Austen succeeds in universalizing and embodying a subjective social self, a female individuality, first and foremost through Emma’s agency over her space. The narrator is subsumed into this subjective self, here more than in any other writing, such that the “I” of *Emma* has become relational, a self which is not subsumed by other selves and other spaces, but is able to assert its own agency, first materially, then socially, and, finally, linguistically over her society. The heroine’s interaction with her surroundings reveals an agency which parallels the increasing agency of women, revealing Austen’s ultimate construction of social subjectivity and selfhood. Thus, Austen succeeds in constructing not just a linguistic or corporeal self, but in constructing social selves which are, like the country houses within which they reside, understood not as entities but as process, and in this, Austen anticipates and marks the changing understanding of embodiment and self-hood. Austen fulfills both the social connectivity and the subjective unfolding of female faculties, and its corresponding dignity, which Wollstonecraft defines as the “grand end” for shifting female power: “connected with man as daughters, wives, and mothers, their moral character may be estimated by their manner of fulfilling those simple duties; but

the end, the grand end of their exertions should be to unfold their own faculties and acquire the dignity of conscious virtue” (43)

Elizabeth only enters into the connection, but must learn obedience to Darcy, who in turn carries out her “simple duties” by his own agency. Fanny enters into this connection and its requisite duties, but in the end cannot unfold her own faculties independently within her whole society, inhabiting rather a shared space. Emma, in contradistinction, both learns and teaches obedience, expanding and contracting with those around her, and her exertions unfold her conscious virtue in the context of her own society, redacting Rousseau who “declares that a woman should never, for a moment, feel herself independent . . . obedience is the grand lesson which ought to be impressed with unrelenting rigour” (Wollstonecraft 43). By beginning at Fanny’s conclusion, Emma is able to expand from her own spatial self to inhabit a subjective self which shapes the society around her; not falsely through games and diversions, but truly through the position which structured Donwell offers to her, and the power which she has developed through subjective agency to protect her own societal structures, maintaining the spaces which allow intimacy to grow. Thus, Austen’s “urgent sense of true and false society, of true and false intimacy, of privacy threatened and achieved, is defined architecturally and geometrically . . . the history of the organization of domestic space is inseparable from the history of privacy and intimacy in human interaction” (Hart 307). Emma’s free indirect speech and

space—her expansion and contraction—is the fulfillment of Austen’s instruction that her sister concern herself with the narrative of only a few country families, an instruction which echoes Rousseau’s desire to create “a narrow but exquisitely chosen clan over which I felt confident I would rule” (Hart 310). Austen’s heroines journey outward in an attempt to shape the society surrounding them; in *Emma*, this society, and even its narrator, is encompassed entirely by its heroine’s spatial, subjective, and social self.

Yet what of this narrator, its author, Austen herself? Is *Emma* “the most perfect *and* the most melancholy” of all Austen novels, where Emma possesses that which the narrator never can possess, a universal *and* embodied self (Miller 68)? For it is in universalizing *and* embodying her narrator and her narrative subjects, through their interaction in space—done most fluidly in *Emma*—that Austen demonstrates an ability to move beyond the primary consciousness of the body alone and allow awareness to extend beyond the immediate corporeal self, and onto the frameworks and relations of society into outward, expanding selves. Austen’s legacy is that of converting Style *into* Person (Miller 53). She does this even as social structures which enable women to be both universalized *and* embodied are only just developing, and thus does not partake in such embodiment in her lifetime. The melancholy which Miller identifies is the inability of the narrator to enter into, as E.M. Forster puts it, this extended life, although “all the Jane Austen characters are ready for an extended life, for a life which the scheme

of her books seldom requires them to lead, and that is why they lead their actual lives so satisfactorily” (75-76).

Still, some centuries after her actual life, the life of such a universalized narrator continues to be embodied in Austen’s works and in the enduring legacy which she alone has leant to the spaces which her characters are imagined to inhabit, still incites “the complete transformation of a house from an important property, though one relatively unknown to the general public, to a property linked to the ‘Jane Austen’ brand and all that this connection confers in terms of marketing and public awareness” (Parry 113).

Her work, like Emma’s, continues to shape spaces as Jane Austen, subsumed herself into Emma—or perhaps it is the other way around—now exerts more power over her inhabited spaces than perhaps any other author has done. In doing so, she inhabits a space of her own *in absentia*, *in personam*, and *in perpetuity*, continuing her work spatially constructing subjective, social selves.

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