The Construction of Domestic Space in Nineteenth-century Britain: Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*

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Abstract

Domestic space is an important sphere of intimate politics. Nineteenth-century Britain was marked by developments in a number of areas. While the Industrial Revolution became one of the most influential events to take place, the lack of women's rights made progress difficult. In a predominantly patriarchal society that lacked avenues for women's empowerment but was also on the way to opening up economic opportunities, such a disparity made its way into the literature of the time. Through an analysis of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) this paper attempts to engage with questions of domesticity, morality and the condition of the urban working classes. The paper also seeks to trace the influence of Hannah More (1745-1833) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) in women-centric literature of the time.

Keywords: nineteenth century, domesticity, working class, British literature

Nineteenth-century English literature reflects every aspect of contemporary society which incorporates the rise of the traders, colonial expeditions, the industrial revolution, condition of the working class, status of women in the domestic sphere and their subjugation by patriarchal society. By focusing on women's conditions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this paper throws light on the role of Hannah More (1745-1833) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) in women-centric literature followed by a critical evaluation of moral and domestic issues in the British countryside as depicted in *Mansfield Park* (1814) by Jane Austen, and the condition of urban

working classes within the framework of *Mary Barton* (1848) by Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865). This paper has also attempted to examine the Industrial Revolution and its effects on the domesticity of the working class.

In late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain, lack of any socio-political and economic rights led to dismal conditions for women. They were confined to domesticity and patriarchal society dictated that liberty was not necessary for women. In his treatise *Emile* (1762), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) wrote that liberty should not be extended to women. The fifth chapter of this work describes the role of women in the domestic arena and also provides directions on how women should nourish their children and follow established patriarchal norms. Rousseau goes on to say that men should be the active partner while women should be feminine and passive.

Property is closely linked to domesticity. Since women did not have the right to own property, inheritance was transferred either to the male members of the family or closest male kin. The immediate consequence of objectifying women was reflected in the status of women who had no rights, as men were privileged enough to treat them in whatever manner they wanted. Women could not claim rights over their self-owned possessions as legally all domestic property belonged to the husband. Rebellious women were sent away to asylums and branded as "mad". An example of this is found in *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) by Mary Wollstonecraft in the context of Jemima and Maria. In *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Novel of Social Crisis*, Coral Lansbury (1975) writes: "[t]o be born a woman in the Victorian era was to enter a world of social and cultural deprivation unknown to a man. But to be born a woman and a Unitarian was to be released from much of the prejudice and oppression enjoined upon other women." (p. 134)

Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, in *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (1987) write about the role of marriage in the family foundation. They discuss what was considered to be the man's duty and the woman's duty in matrimonial alliances - "On marriage men assumed economic and jural responsibility for their wives and the expected brood of children. With marriage,

women assumed their full adult status. The process of courtship and marriage was a serious step for both men and women." (p. 322).

The prominent women thinkers – Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft – tried to break away from patriarchal shackles through their literary works like *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) and *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). In her work *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft demands socio-political and economic rights for women. Through her works, it is apparent that she is in favour of women's education along with training them in etiquette and manners. She argues that if women get a good education they can build strong nations. She also emphasizes the importance of the mother-child relationship and shares her views to mothers on how to treat their children. She is against prostitution and suggests that women should read books on conduct. Patsy Stoneman (2007) in her essay "Gaskell, Gender and Family" highlights the relevance of conduct books for women in 18th and 19th century Britain. She remarks:

> 'Conduct books' for women, recommending how they could best fulfil theirdomestic responsibilities, were common throughout the eighteenth century,consolidating an idea of the family as an essential unit of society with the wife asits moral centre. In the nineteenth century the number of books directed at women and their conduct in the home greatly increased, while their direction subtly changed. In addition to moral rectitude came social propriety, giving rise to superficial patterns of behaviour, particularly in the middle class, which assumed enormous importance as indicators of class status and social acceptability (p. 140)

Wollstonecraft's ideas are full of contradictions. She demands equal rights for women in social and political spheres, but while discussing the role of women in the domestic arena she emphasizes that a woman should nourish her children and fulfil other household duties. To some extent, her views echo Hannah More.

More's ideas about women are entirely expressed in the context of religion. She was an Evangelist and started Sunday school for poor children. She believes that women should perform their social duties and help orphans and poor people. She is also against prostitution and pre-marital relations. She says that women should fulfil their sexual desire within matrimonial boundaries. Her book, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), focuses on women's morality

and adheres to patriarchal norms to a great extent. For instance, according to her, women should not talk much and silence is the vehicle of good conversation for women. More's ideas were indicative of the conservative nineteenth-century Victorian era– issues that reflect in More's views. Women revolting against oppressive norms gave shape to Wollstonecraft's ideas.

Jack Trotter (2010) in his essay "Liberty, Restraint, and Social Order in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*" remarks:

> Throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, it was generally taken for granted that Jane Austen's novels reflected the conservative values of the landed English gentry. But if she was recognized as a brilliant satirist of her own milieu, little attempt was made to place Austen within a broader historical and political context (p. 470).

In the early nineteenth century, all novels, especially those by Jane Austen (1775-1817), follow set social conventions. Austen has written only domestic novels like her contemporaries Hannah More, Elizabeth Inchbald, Charlotte Smith and Fanny Burney. On matrimony, she opines that marriage is the origin of fortune for women, and is therefore, necessary for happiness. In *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) she writes that a man cannot live single his whole life. The novel begins with the well-known opening line "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (p. 3). Mitchell Kalpakgian (2010) in her essay "The Economic, Social, Romantic, and Moral Aspects of Marriage in *Mansfield Park*" remarks:

> Like most of Jane Austen's novels, Mansfield Park concentrates on the universal theme of love, romance, and marriage and on the distinguishing qualities of marriages in rural eighteenth century society. In Austen's novels, marriage is not only a respectable, honorable institution of civilization but also a complex decision that encompasses both the wishes of families and the sensibilities of a person's mind, heart, and soul (p. 437).

Mansfield Park (1814) is different from her other novels in its depiction of the female protagonist's response to marriage. Fanny Price, the female protagonist of the novel, comes from a poor family while her aunt Mrs. Bertram is extremely rich. Mrs. Bertram brings Fanny to Mansfield Park from Portsmouth. Fanny's cousins treat her in a callous manner

as she lacks in accomplishments as compared to her cousin sisters Julia and Maria. For Mrs. Bertram, she is like a servant who has come to assist her. The economic and social hierarchy between the family members is visible.

Trotter in his essay continues:

> Some feminists have argued that Austen must have read and approved of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), but it is more likely that her views on women and education owe something to Hannah More, a conservative reformer who wrote dozens of novels and tracts dealing with moral and political issues, especially those involving the education of women (p. 479).

In *Mansfield Park*, Julia and Maria have superficial education. They only like music, dance and other things that can entertain them. But Fanny's ideas are extremely contradictory to their idea of education. She has the potential for learning and thinking, her only 'shortcoming' is that she comes from a poorer class. She receives affection only from her cousin Edmund who respects her curiosity and intellect. Edmund aims to be a clergyman. Thus both Fanny and Edmund's views on education and virtue are very similar. He helps to raise her social position as well as intellectual capacity. On several occasions, Mrs. Norris, sister of Mrs. Bertram, tries to degrade Fanny by comparing her to her cousins, and each time Edmund protects her.

In the study of nineteenth-century English novels, it is observed that outsiders create problems in the domestic sphere. In *Mansfield Park* the siblings of Henry and Mary Crawford come to Mansfield Park and try to create chaos in the domestic life of Mrs. Bertram's family, aided by the insensibility of Mrs. Bertram's two daughters, both of whom give much indulgence to Henry and Mary Crawford. Henry plays with the emotions of both Maria and Julia, even though Maria is already engaged to Mr. Rushworth. Maria gives in to his charms and is often found in a compromising position by Fanny. Henry's sister Mary has designs on Mrs. Bertram's elder son Tom who is slated to inherit all the family property. Meanwhile, Henry expresses his feelings for Fanny before her. But Fanny is sensible and she waits for Edmund till the end.In this novel, it seems that a woman's future and her duties are interwoven with matrimony. Fanny is a little different since she does not rush into marriage and is not impatient enough to accept Henry's

proposal. She is different from Elizabeth Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice* and much closer to Jane Bennet. Elizabeth marries Mr. Darcy because of his high social status and immense wealth, but Fanny does not have any desire of marrying a wealthy man. Her fortune is deeply connected with intellectual endeavors rather than materialistic pleasures. In Fanny Price, the anti-Jacobin idea of Hanna More is visible. She loves Edmund wholeheartedly even though he has decided to spend his life away from extravagance, as a clergyman. In the character of Henry, we see that he performs good deeds for evil reasons – he helps Fanny's brother William get a promotion in the Navy but Henry's sole purpose in helping William is to achieve Fanny's love. Fanny disagrees with her uncle Sir Thomas Bertram and her aunt over the issue of her marriage with Henry. The Bertrams are dismayed by Fanny's rejection of Henry's proposal since it is an extremely advantageous match for a poor girl like her. Sir Thomas rebukes her for her 'ingratitude' and sends her back to her poor family so that she might realize how useful it is to have a rich husband. When she is thrown out of the Bertram family, Fanny uncomplainingly goes back to Portsmouth and in her parental house, she once again starts to live her old life. Only her younger sister Susan is close to her and Fanny tries to educate her like herself. But some upheavals in *Mansfield Park* give Fanny another opportunity to enter the domesticity of Mrs. Bertram's house. After her marriage, Maria goes to London with Mr. Rushworth and Julia also accompanies them. In the meantime, Mary Crawford comes to know about Tom's illness. His illness leaves no hope. Now Mary shifts her affections to Edmund and tries to gain his love, since, after Tom's death, Edmund would be the successor to the Bertram fortune. For Maria, love becomes a tool to climb up the social ladder and attain prosperity.

On comparing life of the countryside with towns, we realise that city life is more corrupt than the 19th century British countryside. In this novel, the city of London is depicted as being mercantile, with the rules of commerce governing human relationships. As per Victorian norms, there is no morality in the city. Eighteenth-century literature also brings out this idea and it is evident in Samuel Johnson's "London: A Poem, in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal" (1738) and William Blake's poem "London" (1794). *Mansfield Park* also provides an instance of this lack of Victorian morals in its depiction of the relationships of convenience between Maria and Henry, and between Julia and Yeats.

Like Lydia and George Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*, Maria elopes with Henry and Julia elopes with Yeats, and consequently, Mr. Rushworth breaks all matrimonial relations with Maria. The Bertrams does not allow Mary's entry into their house, although Julia and Yeats achieve reconciliation with the Bertram family. Simply put, in the plot of the story Maria, Henry, Julia and Yeats break the social and moral norms of nineteenth-century Britain. Eleanor Donlon (2010) writes:

> Like *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield* presents a young woman's fall from morality; unlike in the other two novels, the fallen woman of *Mansfield* is not to be pitied. She cannot be excused because of naïveté or unschooled principles. Hers is a wilful and deliberated defiance of all social and moral expectations. *Mansfield* unerringly displays the depth of Austen's wisdom, especially in her understanding of the spiritual, psychological, and cultural complexities of morality (p. 20).

But some contradiction is evident in the reaction to this breaking of social conventions. While Maria has been thrown out of her parental house and is disowned by the family, Julia and Yeats are brought back into the fold.

In this novel, we also see how people inculcated with superficial education look down upon and make fun of real educational values. For instance, in the theatrical play to be performed at Mansfield Park, everyone is ready to play their stage roles under the influence of Henry and Mary. Only Fanny Price and Edmund retain their senses and are against the staging of the play. They choose to maintain a distance from these shenanigans for which they are ridiculed by others. Mary Poovey (1984) in her book *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* writes:

> The rehearsals of this play at Mansfield liberate each character's repressed desires, preoccupations or anxieties, once indulged, will inevitably find an outlet, also point to the dangers this new ethic poses (p. 214).

In London, Mary is always making fun of Edmund's wish to be a clergyman. Finally, Edmund realises Mary's superficial superiority and finds that although her manners are fashionable, they hide a lack of principles. Now he emotionally turns to Fanny Price and establishes a committed relationship with her ending in matrimony.

A duality is present in the character of Fanny Price. Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert have tried to indicate in their book *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) that every character of Jane Austen's novel is full of contradictions. Poovey argues that Jane Austen is no different from Mary Wollstonecraft. Poovey's argument is appropriate because Mary Wollstonecraft's ideology about the emancipation of women is also full of contradictory aspects like the characters of Jane Austen. While Fanny Price rejects a man like Henry Crawford who is economically powerful with a high social status, she prioritizes education over intellect, marries her cousin Edmund and follows patriarchal norms that allow for an incestuous relationship. With this decision, she rejects the conventional societal norm that argues against women placing value on education, and adheres to other conservative traditions of marrying within the family. In nineteenth century British society, to keep the property among relatives, it was a tradition to establish matrimonial ties between cousins. Through matrimonial alliances between cousins, outsiders were not allowed to become successors to the family name and property. The issue of incestuous relationships is found in other nineteenth-century novels too. For instance, Heathcliff Junior and Catherine Linton's relationship in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and Jane's cousin John proposing to her in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

Coming back to *Mansfield Park*, it is clear that Fanny Price emerges as the most superior in education. Apart from conventional education, she has imbibed her values through individual efforts and her upbringing. Socially, she is an enlightened being. Indirectly, she fights for her own desires and wishes against the dictates of society, and establishes what she wants in Mansfield Park. Nancy Armstrong (1987), in the introduction to *Desire and Domestic Fiction* states that:

> From the beginning, domestic fiction actively sought to disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics and in so doing to introduce a new form of political power. This power emerged with the rise of the domestic women and established its hold over British culture through her dominance over all those objects and practices we associate with private life (p. 3).

Armstrong's statement is noteworthy because, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, women writers tried to portray women's struggle

to gain authority in the domestic sphere through their literary work. The Bronte sisters, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell are prominent women authors who have discussed the same. All of them are different from Jane Austen whose novels have adhered to existing social norms. Only *Mansfield Park* is different from Austen's other novels to some extent, but other female authors go beyond *Mansfield Park*. In their novels, the female protagonist always struggles for her self-existence against patriarchal norms. For instance, in Gaskell's *Mary Barton* where she portrays the life of working-class women in Manchester and how women in the Victorian era were doubly oppressed because of their class and gender. This novel is entirely different from Austen's *Mansfield Park* where the author discusses domestic issues of the countryside. The protagonist of the novel *Mary Barton* is more active than Fanny Price since the former faces many upheavals in her life. The novel vividly describes dirty streets and houses of the working class. Jill L. Matus (2007) in the Introduction to *Cambridge Companion of Elizabeth Gaskell* writes:

> Gaskell was by no means the first woman novelist to concern herself with the plight of the poor. Industrial fiction by Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Frances Trollope, and Harriet Martineau had already established a genre of writing sympathetically about the social ills of industrialism. Gaskell entered this developing tradition primed by what she had witnessed in Manchester and by her own experience of suffering. While the preface makes only the briefest of allusions to those personal circumstances of grief which prompted her writing, it does go on to dwell on the question of sympathy (p. 30).

Mansfield Park has been narrated in the third person. On the other hand, Gaskell gives voice to Mary Barton throughout the novel. Initially, the title of the work was "John Barton", but she highlights the female character Mary with the final title named after the protagonist. Shirley Foster (2006) discusses the confession of the author:

> "John Barton" was the original name [of the work], as being the central figure to my mind . . . he was my "hero"; and it was a London thought coming from the publisher that it must be called *Mary* B. . . . Round the character of John Barton all the others formed themselves (p. 19).

Gaskell talks about the "sufferings and anxieties of the working class" as prime sources of her inspiration. It is believed that Gaskell has borrowed the plot of the novel from the real life of Thomas Ashton,

but according to Foster, Gaskell has denied such postulation. This novel is very close to Frederick Engel's treatise 'The Condition of the Working class in England' (1845) where he throws light upon the working class' conditions, again in the city of Manchester. In "Mary Barton and North and South" of *Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell*, Jill L. Matus (2007) discusses how Mary Barton is the reflection of the nineteenth-century British working class:

> Elizabeth Gaskell's two ''Manchester'' novels have often been paired in critical discussion in order to compare their representation of industrial life and their purchase on the relations of workers and masters, labour and capital. The process of industrialization in Britain had precipitated rapid shifts of population into the cities to seek work in the factories. Crowding, lack of sanitation, and other ills of urban expansion gave rise to concerns about ''the condition of England,'' as Thomas Carlyle famously put it. Fluctuations in the economy had in the 1830s and 1840s resulted in poverty and starvation among the labouring classes, leading to protests and demands for reform on the part of workers and fears of social unrest or, worse, revolution on the part of the middle and upper classes (p. 27).

Before all this discussion, it is better to develop an understanding of the Industrial Revolution. Industrial Revolution stands for those big changes and inventions of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century which brought a revolution in the industrial setup of England. Nancy Henry (2007) in her essay "Elizabeth Gaskell and social transformation" remarks:

> The nineteenth-century social transformation known as ''industrialization'' raised questions about what constituted progress. Technology was improving; markets were opening; finance was becoming more sophisticated; many grew rich. Yet the working classes suffered, first through loss of jobs to machines and later through unregulated factory conditions and the fluctuations of trade (p. 156).

Industrial Revolution was not an event but a process. As the nineteenth century wore on, an ever increasing proportion of the population was harnessed to the new machinery while the realm of the factory was extended every year at the expense of domestic and out-of-door occupations. When animal or human labor is replaced by mechanical labour, it becomes an industrial revolution. The Industrial Revolution had far-reaching results. It affected the entire social setup, political ideas and economic structure of the human race as a whole.

While studying the condition of the working class in England, Engels argues that the Industrial Revolution made workers worse off. He discusses the daily life of the factory hands, the horrible industrial accidents and pollution in the city. In his description, there is compassion for the working class and anger against the capitalists. He juxtaposes the squalid living conditions of the working poor and the luxury of the bourgeois manufacturers and also compares Manchester with other Victorian cities. He says that due to capitalism, workers begin to negotiate with employers about the price of labour. While it seems that a labor market would be good for both sides, the problem was that in the absence of labor laws and regulations there was always someone willing to work for less money. As a result, the price of labour dropped drastically. This cycle left the proletariat in a permanently impoverished situation. They had no means to earn more or to improve their conditions, upward mobility was not possible.

During a minute study of this treatise, one comes to know that the working class people did not have any job security and received very low wages. Engels compares the English workers with African slaves and says that these slaves were comparatively better off since they at least had the assurance that they would be clothed and fed at the end of the day. He says that the bourgeois probably did not realize the abysmal workers' conditions because of how the cities were segregated.

Engels writes that the capitalist society not only perpetuates poverty but also the conditions that go with it. He describes that alcohol, pre-marital sex, and adultery were rampant among the working class, and for this, they were belittled by the bourgeois. But Engels believes that the workers deserved whatever little pleasure they could attain. The capitalist system took away all the dignity and life out of the proletariat and then tried to take away even their escape.

Engels also discusses the Industrial Revolution's impact on family dynamics. He states that the new practice of women working, often while their husbands stayed at home, was diluting England's masculinity. Women and children were employed by factories and mills because of their small nimble hands which allowed them to work more efficiently with equipment like textile looms. In his words, the introduction of women into the workforce caused a transposition of the traditional patriarchal society. Here, it is important to mention Engels. The Industrial

Revolution did destroy the domesticity of the working class. The women of this class were working in factories and playing a prominent role in the domestic sphere. *Mary Barton* is a good example of this dual role played by working-class women. In the Introduction to the novel, Shirley Foster (2006) also indicates this:

> While she does not sentimentalize the factory workers (a particularly notorious example of this is the figure of Stephen Blackpool in Dickens's later industrial novel, *Hard Times* (1854)), she does not merely cast them as symbolic victims of oppression (p. xiii).

John Barton, the male protagonist of this novel, is an enlightened man who understands the condition of working-class people. His wife works with him in the textile mills. We also come across George Wilson and his wife, both working in the same place. After working hours, both women engage in domestic work. Armstrong (1987) says, "Mrs. Gaskell extended this code of values into the households of the laboring poor " (p. 87). Further, she gives examples from *Mary Barton* of the fact that a woman's devoted application of domestic economy might enhance the value of a man's meagre wages:

> In the corner between the window and the fireside was a cupboard, apparently full of plates and dishes, cups and saucers, and some more nondescript articles, for which one would have fancied their possessors could find no use – such as triangular pieces of glass to save carving knives and forks from dirtying tablecloths (p. 49).

John Barton realises the woman's double burden only after the death of his wife. He does not allow his daughter Mary Barton to work in the mill and tries to keep her engaged in the domestic arena. His actions prove that he finally realises a woman's value in the domestic sphere. John Barton is involved in the workers' Union and after losing his job, he does not want to depend on others. It is an irony that he spends a tragic life till the end of the novel. He kills Harry Carson by mistake and later on, dies in the arms of the mill owner. According to him, his sister-in-law Esther's bad conduct was the cause of his wife's death as after Esther's disappearance people asked the Barton family about her whereabouts. That kind of insinuation proved intolerable for John Barton's wife and she meets an untimely death.

Young Mary had a troubled childhood – she had lost her mother, and belonged to the poorer classes. Circumstances compel her to think that the working class never gets to enjoy the pleasures of life. Mary's life would have been more complicated had she not made a good friend who helps her to learn about morality and good conduct. Two women, Alice Wilson and Margaret play a prominent role in improving young Mary Barton's life. Alice Wilson comes to take up domestic work in Manchester and from her Mary learns how to handle domestic issues. Mary's love life also sees some affairs. Two men come into her life, Jem Wilson and Harry Carson. Initially, she rejects Wilson's proposal and Carson seems very attractive to her. Needless to say, she tries to explore moving up from her class and condition, as well as fulfilment of emotional needs. In her infatuation she almost commits the same mistake as her aunt Esther does. But she realizes her follies and comes to recognise Harry Carson's true colours, and finally turns towards Jem Wilson to accomplish true love. Catherine Gallagher (1985) in *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction* compares Mary and Esther with Sally Leadbitter and Harry Carson, saying, "Esther and young Mary hold the sentimental perspective; Sally Leadbitter and Harry Carson hold the complementary viewpoint of farce " (p. 68-69).

Mary faces many difficulties in her relationship with Jem Wilson. The situation becomes very painful for her when John Barton kills Harry and Jem is blamed for the murder. On the one hand, she has lost her father and on the other, her lover is in trouble. Mary plays an important role in freeing Jem from prison. This act proves that Mary Barton, a working-class woman is more active and stronger than the man. Armstrong indicates that working-class women were trying to compete with masculine authority and at some point were emerging as a force to reckon with.

When it comes to Esther, her sentimental thinking compels her to elope with her lover. It is only after being seduced does she realise that she is flowing in a stream of uncontrolled emotions. It is she who tries to restrain Mary when she is about to commit the same mistake of eloping. Esther first tries to inform John Barton but he does not give any attention to her. She then expresses her concern about Mary and says, "What shall I do? How can I keep her from being such a one as I am; such a wretched, loathsome creature! She was listening just as I listened, and loving just as I loved, and the end will be just

like my end. How shall I save her? She won't hearken to warning, or heed it more than I did" (p. 170). Later, when Mary is successful in rescuing Jem Wilson, both of them search for Esther and think of ways of redeeming her position in the society. Eleanour Bourg Donlon (2010) in the Introduction to *Mansfield Park: Ignatius Critical Editions* highlights the domestic issue by stating:

> It is clear that calling *Mansfield* a novel about ordination at the same time acknowledges that it is a novel of family and of the intricacies of a lived morality, delving into questions of the education and upbringing of children, of conservative values, of conflict between the family community of the landed gentry and the expectations of an urban social scene, of parental authority, of the propriety and place of romantic love, of the tension between propriety and sophistication, and of the dangers of undue familiarity outside the family circle... (p. 18-19).

To conclude, in *Mansfield Park* domestic issues of the countryside are based on morality, property and upliftment of social status. The woman's settlement on marriage is parallel to the man's advances in career. Bad elements are evident in the domesticity of the countryside, brought by Henry and Mary Crawford from the city of London. Critic Kalpakgian (2010) in her essay discusses how "the novel also portrays the flirtatious, philandering manoeuvres of Henry Crawford, who trivializes marriage, turning it into games of conquest" (p. 447). In the comparative analysis of the nineteenth-century countryside and city life in Britain, it is seen that in cities prostitution and other evils are damaging the domestic sphere. The Industrial Revolution also emerged as a damaging element that destroyed the domesticity of the working class. People working in industrial areas ended up suffering from many diseases. The death of John Barton's son in *Mary Barton* is an example of how children were dying due to the poor living conditions brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Lawrence Stone (1977) in *The Family, Sex and Marriage: England 1500-1800* discusses these evils of the Industrial Revolution. He writes:

> The family as it evolved in England during the Early Modern period was limited in its options by certain unyielding facts. The first was the very high level of mortality, particularly infant and child mortality, which affected all classes of society, although the poor suffered more than the rich. Until this mortality rate began to fall in the late eighteenth century, family limitation was a gamble with death, since at any moment all the

> children might be wiped out by an epidemic disease, leaving none to inherit the property and family name (p. 651).

After the death of John Barton's son, nobody remains in the Barton family to carry forward the family name. On the issue of morality and marriage it is comprehensible that in cities, men tried to objectify women and to some extent, women also went for extra-marital affairs. These incidents took place in the life of some Victorian literary figures too. Gertrude Himmelfarb in her book *Marriage and Morals among the Victorians* (1986) discusses the life of five couples – the Carlyles, the Ruskins, the Mills, the Dickens, George Eliot and George Henry Lewes. She says:

> These couples are notorious for the "irregularity" of their relationships. Two pairs (the Carlyles and the Ruskins) never consummated their marriage; one (Eliot and Lewes) lived together without benefit of marriage; another (the Mills) had a long-standing, intimate relationship while she was married to another man; and the fifth (the Dickens) separated when he fell in love with another woman (p. 5).

It is evident that some literary personages' lives were full of upheavals. The point being that city life in 19th century Britain was quite at odds with conventional norms of morality compared to country life, where morality was very important. But the condition of women was the same in different ways in both places. It is ironic that for more than half of the 19th century, Britain was ruled by Queen Victoria, and yet the Victorian era was a time of misery and patriarchal subjugation for women in both the countryside as well as in the cities of Britain.

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