

ON THE THRESHOLD:
HOSPITALITY AND THE IDEA OF ENGLAND IN LATE ROMANTIC WRITING

A dissertation

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

May 2012

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Abstract

This dissertation puts hospitable discourse at the center of the crises of representation agitating England during the 1820s and 1830s. I begin with a detailed account of the literary, philosophical, and historical tradition of hospitality, including Enlightenment paradigms that assigned it a key role in securing world peace. Here Derrida's reading of Kant provides a vocabulary for my argument that threshold encounters between host and guest figure prominently in the construction of England as an imagined community. I also pursue the transatlantic mobility of hospitable discourse in the late Romantic period, for William Cobbett, among others, asserted that hospitality was specifically a matter between England and America and might serve as a powerful catalyst for reform.

After constructing the conceptual framework for my study, I consider Walter Scott's Waverley and its reanimation of hospitable convention as a means of performing the nation. I then turn to three writers to elaborate my argument that hospitable discourse was deployed in the late Romantic period to disrupt tropes of national organicism. In Chapter Two, I discuss Mary Shelley's Lodore as a series of versatile reformulations of hospitable discourse, and I argue that the novel's fractured structure gives formal expression to the alienation that is manifested on both sides of the Atlantic. Chapter Three reads across a broad range of Felicia Hemans's poetry to demonstrate that through specific poetic strategies, home and hospitality are de-coupled in her work. I show also that by representing the threshold as a site of foreclosure, this work constructs an inhospitable England, which significantly adjusts how we read her as a national poet. Chapter Four reverses the tide of English emigration to America to argue that James

Fenimore Cooper's The Pilot puts displacement at the heart of both nation-building and generic innovation. Cooper's text constructs an elaborate threshold zone along the coast of England in which all claims of belonging are provisional. Together and with critical force, these texts reanimate hospitable discourse to express a pervasive instability that prophesies an alienated metropole.

Acknowledgements

Several months ago as a friend and I were having tea in my living room, she asked me how I came upon the topic of my dissertation. Serendipity mostly, I said, and I mentioned a few key texts. But then I looked toward my front door and took in a piece of art that's been hanging above the lintel for nearly twenty years. It's a stave from a whiskey barrel, hung horizontally on a piece of twisted wire, and on it is a diminutive scene painted in oils: to the left, a barn in snow (an image I would need pages to unpack) and across the center in simple black letters, "He who enters here is a stranger but once." Well, of course! I've been working on this dissertation longer than I knew.

Given that this project has been so long in the making, I have many people to thank. First, my parents, for absolutely everything. They meet me where I am, and in the world of parenting, there is no more hospitable gesture. And for their unwavering confidence, I want to thank my siblings: my brothers Jonathan, Geoffrey, and Adrian (no one has better brothers) and my sister Catherine for her humor and nurture, and all the rest of our motley, merry crew. Every single member of both our families has made me feel supported. Much closer to home, I want to acknowledge my daughters—Emily, who was right by my side when I started graduate school, and Caroline, who is right by my side as I finish. We've logged many hours together at the kitchen table, and I am so grateful for these bright, beautiful, courageous young women. And today as I complete this project, I don't think there could be a happier man than Doug Williams, who's still so unexpected, even after all our years together. It's been a joy to discover with him that life is long and so is love.

To all my fine teachers in childhood, at Princeton, at the University of Louisville, and of course at Tufts, I want to say thank you. I am especially grateful for the encouragement and mentorship of Sonia Hofkosh, whose intellectual rigor has always been welcome. If you can answer a question posed by Sonia, you're in good shape. And I am sincerely grateful for the interest, example, and challenge offered by the rest of my dissertation committee, Joe Litvak, Liz Ammons, and Libby Fay.

Finally, I want to thank all the Tufts community who've made this adventure so rewarding—faculty, students, and staff. My dissertation writing partners, Anne Moore and Claudia Stumpf, deserve a special mention and a big thank you. They have been real stalwarts, no matter how preliminary my ideas have been when I've shared them. And I count myself very fortunate to have the friendship of Kristina Aikens and Amy Woodbury Tease, who have made the Somerville years so much fun.

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AN INVITATION

When Odysseus finally awakens on the coast of his homeland, he does not recognize the place: “to the king himself all Ithaca looked strange . . . /the winding beaten paths, the coves where ships can ride,/the steep rock face of the cliffs and the tall leafy trees” (13.221-23). Pallas Athena has “showered mist over all” (13.216), and he is agonized by his confusion, for he has been promised by the Phaeacians that they would set a course for his native country. Yet here he is, on what seems to be another foreign shore: ““Man of misery, whose land have I lit on now?/What are they here?”” Odysseus wonders. Will they be ““friendly to strangers, god-fearing men?”” (13.277-79).

Yes and no. Eumaeus, the loyal swineherd, will act the consummate host when Odysseus appears at his humble lodging. With modest fare on offer, he nonetheless fulfills—and in fact exceeds—every expectation a traveler in The Odyssey might carry to the threshold. Though unsure who the stranger is, Eumaeus enacts the rituals of welcome with a simplicity that belies not only the profundity of the familiar sequence, but also the very real danger that ritual itself is designed to blunt.

Soon, however, Odysseus approaches his own palace. To recross the threshold after an absence of twenty wandering years, he dons an even deeper disguise and enters his estate as a beggar, subjected to the taunts and cruelty of guests who have set themselves up as masters of his household. After a lengthy denouement, the punishment the king metes out is thorough and uncompromising. Excessive, perhaps, as a scene of revenge, the destruction of the suitors achieves a kind of broader social order and reinstalls Odysseus as host of his own domain.

These two contrasting scenes—that of Eumaeus, poor but generous, alert to the possibility that the unassuming stranger might be a god, and that of the usurpers, who misuse the very tools of welcome, hurling chairs at the “beggar” rather than offering him a seat—together bear many of the characteristics of hospitality as it will be proffered in the readings that follow. Odysseus’s transformative homecoming has begun in failure, displacement, and isolation. His welcome is encoded through a series of formulaic elements that recognize the mystery of the outsider and seek to move him along a spectrum of incorporation. It acknowledges the asymmetries of power that are constitutive of hospitable encounter, for host and guest (or host and stranger) do not stand at either side of the threshold as equals, regardless of whether their vulnerability might feel comparable.

Pared down to essentials (threshold, disguise, meal, revelation), these two scenes also evoke other ancient stories housed in the archive of our dominant culture: not just the Greek tradition, with its elaborate rules for feeding and lodging a guest, but also the Old Testament story of Abraham, whose welcome of disguised angels secured his place as patriarch, or the question Jesus of Nazareth put to his audience, “Who then is your neighbor?” Much more recently—and on the margins of dominant culture—exigent situations have added to the annals of this lore. In our own country, for example, during the Great Depression as hundreds of thousands of men set out on roads and railways looking for work, they developed their own ideograms to indicate hospitable houses along their route. (Some fencepost near my great-grandparents’ farm must have been marked, for in the stories I was told as a child, “tramps” regularly knocked at the back door, and they were always offered the front room for sleeping.)

Hospitable encounters connect the ancient with the modern, the mythic with the historical, because they address a problem every culture and every household has had to solve, namely, what to do when interrupted by a knock at the door. In this sense, hospitality seems transhistorical or, dare I say, universal. Shared characteristics lend it an almost structural sameness. At the threshold, however, issues of obligation, possession, and self-possession come into play, and therefore, despite similarities that seem to announce themselves in fables and practices across the globe and throughout time, hospitable encounters are culturally inflected. Thus, as I will elaborate in the first chapter, hospitality is an experience and discourse of paradox. Scenes of welcome evoke, suspend, and defy many of our most powerful binaries.

By “suspend” I mean hold in abeyance, for an important function of hospitality in the classical world was to hold off violence for the duration of a visit; in other words, a host and guest whose people were at war could live in peace for the time of sheltering. Moreover, in the Homeric tradition, no questions about identity or lineage could politely be posed until after a meal had been shared. This capacity to suspend (time, meaning, identity) will come to the foreground in chapters that follow; I highlight it here only to suggest that this ability to hold in abeyance contributes to our thinking of hospitality as being somehow out of time.

I mention it also because it is time to cross the threshold of my study, to hold it no longer in abeyance. And so from a tradition redolent of myth and ancient customs, I turn to a specific moment in the making of modernity. From a foundational epic of our literary canon, I approach a considerably more marginal set of texts that take up the compelling question of welcome in the late Romantic era. This was a time in our

Anglophone heritage when lively political discourse included a consideration of hospitality and attendant concepts such as universality, individuality, rights, and obligation. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, as political theorists debated what constitutes a nation, a people, or a culture, Romantic writers brought heightened sensitivity to the status of the strange, to movement across borders both domestic and political. They took up the aesthetic challenge of representing the nation at a time when representation and reform were in fact the key political issues of the day. Intimate and global; estranged and local: these are the designations that are agitated in the liminal spaces I will be exploring. If The Odyssey comprises a set of threshold encounters that form a transition from the end of a long and bloody war, so, too, do the texts gathered in this study. Politically efficacious parables, they reanimate hospitable discourse at the moment when a key military victory brought England to the threshold of an invigorated imperialism.

Great Britain emerged from the defeat of Napoleon the largest empire the world had ever known, and yet the 1820s were years of fatigue, alienation, and severe slumps in agriculture, trade, and manufacturing. This was a period of “profound but generalized uncertainty,” as Linda Colley explains in Britons: Forging a Nation 1707-1837, one that put tremendous pressure on the category of citizen. So while England basked in the glory of victory, a number of writers explored the shadows: they unsettled the triumphalism of the moment and questioned the implications for subjectivity, affiliation, and national identity, which they accessed through cogitating on the practices and discourse of hospitality. Moreover, by virtue of the victory at Waterloo, as James Chandler has noted,

America displaced France as the other against which England's identity was defined (459). Both because it reminded the English of what it once was and because the defeat of Napoleon recouped the humiliation felt after losing the American colonies, Waterloo reanimated the War for American Independence, making it available as a locus for imaginatively pondering the costs and mechanisms of empire.

Focusing on the period between the Battle of Waterloo and the ascension of Victoria—roughly the period Benedict Anderson has called the era of high nationalism (11)—this project asks a series of questions about estrangement, belonging, and nation-building in an Anglo-American context: What are the domestic implications when a nation (here, England) exceeds its own boundaries? or when emigration between England and America becomes a form of self-encounter? What does it mean that the other does not always bear the marks of exotic culture but is, at times, strangely familiar? If, as Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas have opined, the hospitable encounter is the root of all ethical behavior (On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness 16-17), thresholds designating self and other, host and guest, richly reward scrutiny, for how they are constituted and disrupted raises questions that go to the very heart of whether the other can ever truly be welcomed.

The texts I have chosen manifest a shared preoccupation with how belonging is established and threatened in both the personal and political registers, for if the home is where one may regulate the access of others, domestic thresholds and political borders function as homologous structures that become particularly freighted during this period. I will argue that Sir Walter Scott, Mary Shelley, Felicia Hemans, and James Fenimore Cooper evoke, adjust, and deploy the conventions of hospitality in order to explore the

possibilities for belonging in the nineteenth century, when the legacy of Enlightenment cosmopolitan ideals collided with the reality of precisely-drawn national borders in the aftermath of war. Engaging, too, with the text itself as hospitable space, these writers generated literary innovations that invite their readers to a fresh consideration of form and affiliation. Scott's Waverley novels (1814 ff), which magisterially established the genre of historical fiction; Shelley's Lodore (1835), which comprises two quite differently-structured stories provocatively sutured between the first and second volumes; Hemans's poetry of the 1820s and 1830s, which figures England as an evacuated space; and Cooper's The Pilot (1824), the influential first sea novel—all of these suggest that alienation and liminality can be given formal expression. As political leaders harnessed the power of language to construct the fictions of “empire” and “nation,” these writers did the same in order to interrogate those very structures. In the primary texts under consideration, each of these writers resorts to America to access a shared past that enables meditation on dispossession and belonging, and looming over Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper stands Scott, whose staging of hospitable rituals in the Scottish borderland made those practices available as a discourse for representing “England.”

Those of us who reside in the West know only too well that while an individual—or a nation—may aspire to an ideal hospitableness, one that would not, in saying, “Make yourself at home,” exert some coercive potential, fulfilling that aspiration seems always to remain just beyond praxis. So, too, did the writers in this project: at the turn of their own century, efforts to assert hospitableness as a defining national characteristic were accompanied by a violent countervailing impulse; the very concept of fraternity promoted exclusion (Rosello 4). Astute theorists of the threshold, they recognized it as an

especially charged locus for reckoning with the competing imperatives of universal rights, local affiliation, and the global reach of empire. It is a locus that remains super-charged for us today, for even as we acknowledge the historical particulars of the late Romantic period, the questions Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper posed about subjectivity and national identity—and about America as simultaneously repository of England's past and hope for the world's future—continue to be open and motivating questions when the trope of the global village shares the discursive field with the trope of clashing civilizations. Their post-Waterloo representations of a particularly risky provocation—the apparition of the stranger—constitute a dynamic and hospitable archive for twenty-first-century consideration of our abiding obligations to the other.

CHAPTER ONE

Keeping Hospitality

When habeas corpus was suspended in England in 1816, radical publisher William Cobbett fled, for the second time, to America. Ensnared the next spring on a farm on Long Island, he produced out of this sojourn one of his best selling texts, A Year's Residence in the United States of America (1819), which remarks on a striking and enduring connection between his homeland and the young republic:

When one sees this sort of [American] living, with the houses full of good beds, ready for the guests as well as the family to sleep in, we cannot help perceiving, that this is that “English Hospitality,” of which we have read so much; but, which Boroughmongers’ taxes and pawns have long since driven out of England. (196-97)

The Americans’ way of life, he says, recalls the England of four hundred years earlier, and this, with the polish of modern times added, is now the state of the Americans. Their forefathers brought the “English Hospitality” with them [. . .]. Her hospitality along with her freedom have crossed the Atlantic; and here they are to shame our ruffian tyrants if they were sensible of shame, and to give shelter to those who may be disposed to deal them distant blows. (198)

Cobbett’s complaint—that England had exported her identity—came a scant two decades after Edmund Burke asserted so provocatively, “Nation is a moral essence, not a geographic arrangement” (Thoughts on the Prospect of a Regicide Peace 58). Part

farmer's almanac and part household ledger, A Year's Residence tests the truth of Burke's assertion by probing the connections among liberty, hospitality, and national identity. His own loyalty to England never in doubt, Cobbett draws instructive contrasts between English and American agricultural, social, and political practices, concluding that by seeking asylum in America he has encountered both England's glorious past and her hope for the future. His book is a way to thank America for shelter in his hour of need, and he writes it hoping that the birthright of England might someday re-cross the Atlantic to be transplanted in her own soil, much as he had earlier sent seeds from Pennsylvania to Hampshire, where the trees were now forty feet high (iv).

Thus Cobbett will never say with Morris Birkbeck (whom he takes to task at some length), "where liberty is, there is my country" (Letters from the Illinois qtd. in Cobbett A Year's Residence 304). No, says Cobbett, "England is my country, and to England I shall return. I like it best, and shall always like it best; but, then, in the word England many things are included besides climate and soil and seasons, and eating and drinking" (44). It also comprises "her wise just, and merciful laws [that] form the basis of that freedom which we here enjoy" ("here" meaning not in Hampshire, but on Long Island) and, equally important, her tradition of hospitality (323). But this fertile heritage has been despoiled in recent years by villainous taxation and priest-craft, and Cobbett seems apprehensive that through such cruelty, nation and location might indeed be decoupled. To forestall widespread emigration, Cobbett directs each observation to the homeland, like a plant turning always toward the sun: "Every object almost, that strikes my view, sends my mind and heart back to England," he remarks on more than one occasion (32).

Such will be my own rhythm in the chapters that follow, tracing selected texts of Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper as they move back and forth across the Atlantic. My emphasis, however—my central concern—will always be the construction of England, rather than the equally interesting, and perhaps more commonly encountered, engagement with transatlanticism for what it can tell us about American history, American literature, or the influence of British letters in America. In some sense, then, I am like the sailors in The Pilot, taking the battle home to Britain. In the process of doing so, I will suggest that a transatlantic dynamic is key to the particular deployment of hospitality I find operating in these works, a dilation upon the threshold that suspends the encounter between host and guest. By prolonging or forestalling the moment when self and other are named and differentiated, the primary texts in this study are especially capacious in providing space and time to cogitate on affiliation. Highly mediated, written in a period framed by the passing of second-generation Romantics on the one side and the instantiation of the Victorian era on the other, these works literalize the liminality that they explore, giving formal expression to the struggles of belonging in the post-Waterloo era.

In declaring hospitality both the catalyst and the reward for reform in England, Cobbett regards transatlantic relations as a matter of some urgency, as a closer look at A Year's Residence reveals. If as James Chandler has declared, “the connection between emigration and national character lies in the perception that England was facing a crisis of its own destiny and that this crisis was formulated as a problem of national identity” (464), Cobbett felt America held many of the answers, even as he vehemently discouraged emigrating there. For him, I suggest, the nation was not solely an essence or

a geographic arrangement, but a matter of both at once, emerging from praxis, and no way of life exhibits this so well as farming. Weaving praise for the “never servile, but always civil” American (183) into his discussions of soil, seeds, animal husbandry, and the like, Cobbett sees in the American farmer all that could be true of the English (25-31 passim). If only reform could sweep away the treachery of the seat-sellers and excise taxers, England could once again be a nation of honest and industrious people: “Let me hope, that a relief from grinding taxation will soon relieve men of their fears of dying in poverty, and will, thereby, restore to England the ‘hospitality,’ for which she was once famed, but which now really exists no where but in America” (184).

In fact, he declares it is the “first business” of every farmer to “‘keep hospitality,’ as the old English saying was” (184), an obligation which is even ingrained in his descriptions of field work. Very early in Part One, for example, Cobbett alludes to the Book of Ruth while contrasting harvest time in America with the same season in England, where dampness is a constant worry:

The crop is sometimes [. . .] carried into the barn’s floor, where three or four horses, or oxen, going abreast, trample out the grain as the sheaves, or swarths, are brought in. And this explains to us the humane precept of Moses, ‘not to muzzle the ox as he treadeth out the grain,’ which we country people in England cannot make out. I used to be puzzled too, in the story of Ruth, to imagine how Boaz could be busy amongst his threshers in the height of harvest. (11-12)

Cobbett evokes the moment when Ruth, a voluntary exile and convert, gleanes from the margins of Boaz’s field, availing herself of an ancient provision for the poor, and then at night offers herself to him at the threshing floor (Ruth 3:2). Out of their coupling comes

her redemption through Levirate Law—a scene that occurs, according to custom, at the city gates—and her loyalty to Naomi receives the imprimatur of the greater community.

Ruth's arrival in Bethlehem at harvest time highlights the sense that hospitality, a sharing of abundance, must begin with differentiation. Indeed, the word "threshold" shares an etymological root with the verb "to thresh," to separate out (OED). To present oneself at a threshold or at the gates is to acknowledge separation and then seek to overcome it. In Ruth's case, however, her alienation is never fully recuperated. Despite her conversion, her legal incorporation, and her eventual instantiation as matriarch of David's lineage, Ruth remains the icon of the never fully assimilable. Her foreignness persists (her son Obed, for example, is given to Naomi to nurse) perhaps to remind the Israelites of their moment of conversion (Cynthia Ozick's reading) or, according to Julia Kristeva, to provide a beneficial disruption to the host's fantasy of self-mastery. However one chooses to regard Ruth—dutiful convert or admonitory foreign presence—her difference is never fully erased among her chosen people.¹

Cobbett's nod to Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor, brief as it is, not only acknowledges the limit of the hospitable gesture, that is, its inability to erase the lingering effects of alien status, but it also underscores his fear that English hospitality might have become entirely apocryphal. We recall that when he experiences American good living it is "that English hospitality of which we have read so much" (197). Part of the work of

¹ Bonnie Honig has contrasted Ozick's and Kristeva's readings in her article "Ruth, the Model Emigrée: Mourning and the Symbolic Politics of Immigration," arguing on the one hand that Ozick splits the figure of the immigrant in two, turning Orpah into "the Other whose absence keeps the community's boundaries and identity secure, while Ruth [. . .] refurbishes the order's boundaries through her conversion to it" (119); Kristeva, on the other hand, disregards Orpah altogether, so that in the end, Kristeva's "own acceptance of strangeness turns out to depend upon [Ruth's] willingness to affirm the existence and the worth of the order she supplements and disturbs" (123). In place of both these readings, Honig sees Ruth as endlessly mourning, unable to acknowledge her connection to Orpah and Moab: "the reinvigoration of this community and the stabilization of David's monarchy depend not only upon the supplement of Ruth's inspiring example but also, and at the same time, upon her marginalization" (131).

this chapter will be to follow the literary traces of the hospitality Cobbett has so often encountered, for he argues that hospitality must be rescued from books and put into general practice once again.

As Cobbett makes clear, offering a hearty welcome will not weaken the threshold or make it dangerously porous; on the contrary, practicing hospitality will fortify the threshold, enabling the host to control access and rebuff unwanted incursion. He agitates for the day when householders need no longer submit to the excise man's inspections or live in fear of transportation for, say, turning an unreported bit of tallow into candles in the privacy of the home-space (21). When pernicious laws are undone, such "interruption" by the government will no longer be endured (197). Nor will a foreign presence be tolerated on British soil: as he recounts in a regular refrain throughout A Year's Residence, "the Borough-tyrants had me in Newgate for two years, with a thousand pounds fine, for having expressed my indignation at their flogging of Englishmen, in the heart of England, under a guard of Hanoverian sabers" (v, 208). If England had not been weakened by debt and oppression, her threshold would have been more robust, and such an imposition could not have taken place. Reinvigorating England's laws will restore her people and allow them to keep hospitality according to the old ways.

This is not to say, one should add, that even in America hospitality cannot be imposed upon. In the closing pages of Part 3, Cobbett defends himself against a fellow Englishman who claims to have been his guest on Long Island. Cobbett, Henry Fearon says, fancied himself "the Atlas of the British nation" (351) but kept a slovenly home (353). Counterattacking with a torrent of data, dates, and testimonials, Cobbett asserts

Fearon's turpitude by pointing out his offenses against hospitable decorum. He got a "hearty, unostentatious welcome" from Cobbett and his sons but repaid the kindness ("my conversation of a few minutes with an utter stranger") with lies (353). This breach of convention is easily managed by one of Cobbett's volubility, and in fact admitting Fearon is well worth the inconvenience, for it gives the author an opportunity to rally his defenses, stake his claim to the status of host, and testify to his own superior knowledge of the people he was living among. After all, he says of Fearon, "such a man can know nothing of the people of America" (353), having never slept under one of their roofs (349). Apparently Fearon always lodged at inns.

For Cobbett, then, the wherewithal to be hospitable is a gauge of national prosperity and just governance, a method of homeland security, and a display of self-possession on the part of the host. It is both a manifestation of liberty and a re-institution of it. Freedom to work the land, which he knows is a great inducement for hard-pressed English farmers to emigrate in "colonies" to America, is freedom to "keep hospitality" (184). An interesting phrase, that, for to keep hospitality—that is, to observe it—can only be done through not keeping, through sharing one's provisions. So despite the profusion of data that tabulates the economy of farming (the entire second chapter of A Year's Residence is aptly named "the Treatise of the Rutabaga"), hospitality is finally not reduced to a matter of accounting (144). Its material basis is never in doubt; debt and taxation can, after all, render it obsolete. Yet as Cobbett has construed it, hospitality is a form of giving that reinforces plenitude; it is an open door policy that allows one to deny admission; it is a way of controlling the threshold that prevents total evacuation. Where wise governance prevails, hospitality escapes the logic of the ledger book. But when

liberty is infringed upon, Cobbett fears a more ominous kind of escape—to America, where the bond between liberty and hospitality has never been sundered.

Cobbett's veneration of the farmer and his anxious assessments about hospitality situate him in the strain of nationalism that has come to be regarded as "Romantic": the idea, after Herder and Fichte, that every people can be identified and invigorated by a particular Volkgeist. Expressions of this "affection for the land and rurality in general—folk culture, the original national language, and the local (in distinction to the cosmopolitan or global)" (Sauer and Wright 5) come easily to mind: antiquarian enthusiasms of the eighteenth century, for example, or Burke's devotion to progress without change. These assert "the immateriality of national power, the attachment to land as the source of harmony, and the natural organicity of 'the People'" (Ross "Romancing" 63). Despite his almost constitutional pessimism about unity (his Rural Rides of 1830 exposes the fissures of class struggle), Cobbett nevertheless sought "to create a national audience around an idea of the local" and of the ancient (Helsing 111).

Meanwhile, alongside this phenomenon Marlon Ross has called pastoral nationalism (84), the controlling elite of England made complementary moves to shore up its own position and power. As Linda Colley explains, following the loss of the American colonies, they undertook "re-ordering their authority, their image, their ideas and their composition. In the process, they not only reshaped the exercise of power in Great Britain, they also contributed to a substantial change in the content of British patriotism" (149). Casting the royal family as the domestic ideal, developing the cult of military heroism, enhancing the majesty of the monarch, asserting the stately home as part of the national heritage (192)—all of these projects required the mobilization of vast

numbers of “apparently more conventional [people] who, for many different reasons, supported” these efforts because they felt something was in it for them (Colley 4).

Nevertheless, fear grew that England would be dissipated by these very acts of power. Could the trope of organicism smooth over the logical inconsistencies incurred by expansion beyond England’s borders? As Ross poses the challenge:

How does a nation grow to become itself? Must it seek its limits by expanding to the point of its own potential dissolution, losing its sense of oneness demarcated originally by the closeness of its geographical borders and loosening its bonds to that indigenous tradition that initially marked its sense of self-identity? This question, a specter haunting Britain at the verge of the nineteenth century, appears on the threshold of Britain’s modernization of itself as a nation-state. (56)

Ross explores “how the nation, in a crisis of potential breakdown, [. . .] actually intensifies its sense of identity in order to prevent fragmentation and disruption from within and thus the inevitable conquest that would follow from without” (75).

In the post-Waterloo period, as Julia Wright has described it, “[e]ven as concepts of national character, print culture, and emerging bureaucracies worked to homogenize the national space, the movement of national subjects across the borders that nationalism would privilege constitutes an ongoing irritant to this unifying project” (Sauer and Wright 13).² In such a dynamic, the threshold becomes a site of tremendous interest, for it stages this very irritation, the challenging confrontation of host and guest, where local and foreign are brought into sharp relief. Thus the reading of threshold encounters, a

² Anne Frey has also focused on this “period of imperial expansion, rising nationalist sentiment, and increasing bureaucratization. (3)” Her recent book British State Romanticism argues that as state institutions helped shape national identity, some Romantic writers aligned with those goals.

central preoccupation of this study, allows us to scrutinize a moment when multiple relations must be negotiated: self and other, known and unknown, private and public. At a time when the nation-state is most energetically constituted as an “imagined community,” threshold encounters help us to see how affiliation is imagined. Reading scenes of welcome and displacement provides the opportunity to observe how a select group of writers staged an anxiety of belonging that is at once intensely personal (“Do you know me?” Ethel repeatedly asks her mother in Lodore) and of national significance (the most poignant of their mother-daughter scenes takes place at the prorogation of Parliament).

I do not mean to suggest, however, that such moments operate allegorically so that every personal encounter carries an easily-legible political correlate, but rather that the authors studied here harness the energy of the hospitable encounter both to explore the mechanisms of affiliation and to consider the effects of re-imagining community and relatedness per se. If, as Wright has said, nationalism exerts its influence so that “all who belong to that nation will be comfortably familiar” (Blake xxv), these works posit the familiar as strange and question the degree to which familiarity can be founded on alienation, instability, and at times disintegration. Just as Saree Makdisi has identified certain Romantic sites as resisting the homogenizing process of empire (13), so too do hospitable practices offer yet another optic through which we might observe reformulations and alternatives to the logic of nation: the works included in this study indict the very claim that belonging is based on stable categories.

Against the backdrop of a burgeoning global empire that re-set the coordinates for an English sense of identity, Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper revisited the shared history of

their countries, recognizing that it is not only the exotic other who disabuses a nation of its fantasy of identity, but also the alienated familiar. So while many works by these authors explore exotic locales, the particular works I focus on attend to the local, the intimate, and the transatlantic. As Amanda Anderson asserts, “the development of national culture is conceived not [any longer] in romantic terms, as the recognition of inward essence, a Volkgeist, but rather as the dynamic product of social transfer” (271). The force of that transfer is foregrounded in these works, not (only) at remote or exotic sites of British imperialism, but rather via the local, domestic, and even generic practices that embrace, undo, and reconstitute the designations of familiar and strange, inside and outside, private and public. In the process, the interiorizing and psychologizing that are hallmarks of canonical first-generation Romanticism are complemented or, one might even say, succeeded by engagements with larger transnational processes manifested formally as well as thematically.

With varying degrees of emphasis on the obviously political, Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper offer a set of idiosyncratic responses to this period of generalized uncertainty, when, as Stuart Curran has recently reminded us, displacement had become a given across the face of Europe. “Romanticism,” he declares, “created an entire literature of displacement” (“Romanticism” 638).³ Indeed we know this to be true: Curran himself focuses on massive troop deployment and the arrival of huge numbers of émigrés from France; he also describes how a small number of writers (most obviously Byron and Percy Shelley) seem to have seen exile as liberation (644). What I will suggest,

³ As Curran stresses, “Displacement, however, is not merely a psychological phenomenon to be associated with exile or with a distinct people who are stateless, partitioned among more powerful nations [such as was the experience of Poland, for example]. In the Romantic age it was a transcontinental European phenomenon” (640).

somewhat differently, is that Mary Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper pause at the borders that reify displacement; rather than transcend or dispense with the border, these writers privilege hospitality as the dynamic that puts the threshold under the brightest light. In their works, liminality becomes a figure of hospitality, sounding an important contrapuntal note to the cosmopolitanism that Curran and others have detected in the works of contemporary writers.

In preparing to make this argument, I will introduce some key concepts that inform my own investigation into hospitality. For the remainder of the chapter, then, I will consider the following questions: How does Enlightenment cosmopolitanism set up the logic for my inquiry, and how does it intersect with the transatlantic axis of my study? How has hospitality, integral to both English national-identity formation and European cosmopolitanism more generally, been represented in the English literary tradition? Here a digression to Sir Walter Scott's Waverley assesses his compelling contribution to this discourse. And finally, I will ask, what tools do I have at my disposal via late twentieth-century critical theory?

Enlightenment Ideals after Waterloo

The out-size ambitions of Napoleon very nearly dashed continental hopes that nationalism and universalism might be reconciled in the name of perpetual peace. Ironically, as Celeste Langan explains in her engaging article "Coup de Tête: Napoleon's Supposed Epilepsy," "between 1793 and 1815, it was Napoleon and his armies who gave witness to the possibility of a 'borderless world'" (246). Bonaparte's "dystopian cosmopolitanism" was "predicated purely on ethnocentric nationalism, but justified as

universalist” (Heydt-Stevenson and Cox 138), highlighting what violence can be unleashed when these two models of affiliation, the universal and the local, are conflated. Yet it had long been difficult to hold these two concepts in binary opposition. As Sophie Wahnich explains in her work, particularly L'impossible citoyen: L'étranger dans le discours de la Révolution française (1997), Revolutionary France inscribed in its foundational documents statements that, for all their assertions about hospitality being a specifically French attribute, nonetheless treat it as a universal principle. Moreover, Saint-Just announced in the Essai de constitution of 1793: “The French people declares itself to be the friend of all peoples [. . .]. Foreigners and their customs will be respected in its bosom” (qtd. in Rosello 3). As Napoleon conquered region after region, however, taking foreigners to its bosom acquired sinister meaning. Despite—or perhaps because of—his brutal negotiation of the impasse between the national and supranational, interest in “universal history” rekindled on the continent after Waterloo, “subordinating the individual and the national to the universal, [so that] it regards humanity as a complete whole developing towards one destiny” (Wohlgemut 144). Such a conviction provided “an alternative to the more prominent national teleologies” being worked out in European nations individually (144-45).

Thus it is that while particular European nations claimed hospitableness as a defining characteristic, such receptivity became the sine qua non of a cosmopolitanism that might require a renegotiation of “nationness” itself. Immanuel Kant indexed Europeans according to their hospitable dispositions in Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (Germany, he declares, is the most hospitable nation [220-21]), yet ultimately, all western states must adhere to certain precepts regarding the practice of

hospitality. Laying the foundation for late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century universalist discourse, he conceived of cosmopolitanism as the culmination of a long and gradual historical process that would secure perpetual peace. In “Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent” (1784), he expresses the hope “that after many revolutions, the transformation will finally come about of that which nature has as its highest intent, namely a general cosmopolitan condition as the womb to which all the original predispositions of the human species will be developed” (130). Nature’s and history’s ultimate aim is developing both the individual man’s and the species’ capacity for reason, its gradual enlightenment, which will be manifested in a cosmopolitan purpose. Even wars can be rationalized into this telos, for antagonism and competition, the “unsociable sociability of man” (“Idea” 122), will result in “the most beautiful social order” (124). In the words of Kant scholar Michael Scrivener, armed conflicts “develop necessary aspects of human nature until the species would be compelled to find cosmopolitan law as the most suitable form of international relations if civilization were to develop its moral capacities more fully” (13).⁴

Kant stresses in his later essay “To Eternal Peace” (1795) that such a perpetual state is not “a mere truce” (435), but an end to all hostilities: “Reason,” he says, “makes [the achievement of] the state of peace a direct duty” (446). It will require three conditions. First, “The civil constitution in each state should be republican” (441) because consent of the citizens would be required to initiate a war (442). Second, “The law of nations should be based upon a federalism of free states” (444). Republics will be key to an expanding federation (447), but states will not be inclined to enter into this

⁴ It was not lost on his contemporaries such as Herder that Kant theorized this universal destiny while suggesting that many races were in a pre-moral stage of development (Scrivener 18).

arrangement: “Therefore, unless all is to be lost, the positive idea of a world republic must be replaced by the negative substitute of a union of nations which maintains itself, prevents wars, and steadily expands. Only such a union may under existing conditions stem the tide of the law-evading, bellicose propensities in man” (448). As Suh-Reen Han paraphrases, “The organicity of the hospitable world not only keeps the natural right of individuals intact; it also secures the boundaries of the states that comprise that world” (688). Third, and most important here, Kant asserts, “The Cosmopolitan or World Law shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality” (448). By this he means “the right of a foreigner not to be treated with hostility when he arrives upon the soil of another” (448). He is careful to stipulate that foreigners should not expect to be granted permanent residence, as a treaty between nations would have to be enjoined for this to be granted, but all men have “the right to visit [. . .] on account of the common possession of the surface of the earth. Since it is a globe, they cannot disperse infinitely, but must tolerate each other. No man has a greater fundamental right to occupy a particular spot than any other” (449).

Twentieth-century critics including Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida have pointed out the ironies and limitations of Kant’s reasoning: first, for example, that humanity is being compelled to freedom. As Scrivener puts it,

The right of hospitality is both a precondition for cosmopolitan order and an effect of having such an order (as the prohibition against abusing the stranger weakens the social motivations of war-making), but an effective outright prohibition is impossible to imagine unless underwritten by coercive cosmopolitan law. (16)

Kant himself admits the point: the teleology of nature is “to produce harmony from the very disharmony of men even against their will” (450). Yet he believes that unsociable sociability tends toward nature’s end, call it “fate” or “providence” (450). In other words, “man, although not a morally good man, is compelled to be a good citizen” (454), and “nature wants irresistibly that law achieve superior force” (455). Second, Habermas and others (especially contributors to the recent volumes Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice and Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant’s Cosmopolitan Ideal) have argued that Kant did not go far enough, requiring that nations “transfer portions of their sovereignty to cosmopolitan institutions” (Scrivener 20).⁵ Nationalism and cosmopolitanism might co-exist, they suggest, but in such a case there must be a “rights-based system of global governance” that would safeguard many more human rights than the right to Kantian hospitality (Kaldor 276). His right of resort, which applies when citizens of one country sojourn in another, makes no accommodation for the non-citizen.

As Kathleen Arnold points out, however, any process that designates friend and enemy makes statelessness an inevitability (17).⁶ Leveling the same criticism, Derrida explains that there can be “[n]o hospitality [. . .] without sovereignty of oneself over one’s home, but [. . .] sovereignty can only be exercised by filtering, choosing, and thus by excluding and doing violence” (Of Hospitality 55). A theory of justice for strangers is needed, these thinkers opine (Scrivener 22), a goal toward which the late work of Derrida

⁵Scrivener traces the range in current critique of Kant’s model. Those toward the right doubt that it is possible to overcome nationalisms rooted in local affiliation. From the left comes the observation that Kant’s constitutionalism is “fatally tied to Eurocentrism and American power” (25).

⁶In On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness Derrida notes Hannah Arendt’s similar assertion; between the two world wars, she says, many groups and individuals lost all status—“not only their citizenship,” says Derrida, “but even the title of ‘stateless people’” (9). He is referencing The Origins of Totalitarianism.

also labored, for if the guest lacks the right of welcome juridically construed, then he becomes a parasite: “Without this right, a new arrival can only be introduced ‘in my home,’ in the host’s ‘at home’ as a parasite, a guest who is wrong, illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion or arrest” (Of Hospitality 61).⁷ What I would highlight here is the determinative role of the threshold moment, crucial enough in Kant’s schema that, despite these perceived shortcomings, its peaceful consummation is enforceable by law. It is a rupture that is necessary to the overcoming of rupture, to the progress of perpetual peace and international federation. Interaction between host and guest or insider and outsider, even at the domestic threshold, thus becomes a privileged activity in elaborating the relationship between states and the federations to which they might belong.

Across the Channel, though, Burke, who took it as a personal responsibility to separate England’s destiny wholly from France (if not, by implication, the entire continent), maintained a forthright “oppositional relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism that was to inform mainstream British reception of cosmopolitanism throughout the nineteenth century” (Wohlgemut 25). In England, “cosmopolitanism was always a contested term, suggesting now a worldly, urbane outlook, now a distinctly un-British, perhaps particularly French distortion of home truths” (Heydt-Stevenson and Cox 130-31). Historians concur that as a whole England, “on the verge of an unprecedented economic take-off fuelled by the Industrial Revolution, with an empire that spanned the globe, [. . .] was not eager to embrace cosmopolitan political ideas that would weaken

⁷ Derrida offers the logic for correcting the Kantian conceptualization, saying of hospitality as it ought to be reconceived, “It is not only a question of the link between birth and nationality; it is not only a question of citizenship offered to someone who had none previously, but of the right granted to the foreigner as such, to the foreigner remaining a foreigner” (Of Hospitality 21-23).

state sovereignty and promote international cooperation” (Scrivener 201). This is not to say, of course, that cosmopolitan outlook was wholly absent: I have noted Curran’s reading of Byron and Shelley; he has also studied Charlotte Smith and other women writers who overcame their lack of political standing by claiming to be citizens of the world (“Romanticism” 637). Furthermore, Gregory Maertz has recently done work on early reception of Kant in England via Henry Crabbe Robinson, which was much more favorable than previously thought. So despite Burke’s loud insistence on anti-cosmopolitanism and the various concerted efforts to forge a British identity that Colley catalogues, we find that some number of writers used transnational approaches to resist co-optation in a homogeneous imagined community.

What we see through this cursory overview is that England’s expansion from nation to empire occurs over against philosophical debate about how and whether nation might be reconceived in a cosmopolitan affiliation. Thus when writers such as Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper evoke and deploy the myths and rituals of hospitality, they do so in the context of a discourse that conceives of hospitality as particularly paradoxical. On the one hand, the Kantian right to peaceful welcome will foster a new co-existence that will in turn compel humanity to its full cosmopolitan potential. On the other, however, as Cobbett and his cohort Thomas Hulme make clear, investment in hospitality is desirable not because of its key role in a supranational or universalist project, but rather because it is quintessentially English.⁸ Cobbett wishes to promote a specific image of his country through reanimating an antique set of behaviors, and he resolutely regards this project not as a matter of universal or cosmopolitan urgency, but rather as a more local matter, specifically a matter between England and America. For him and for the writers explored

⁸ Cobbett includes Hulme’s manuscript in *A Year’s Residence*.

more closely in the chapters that follow, crossing the Atlantic releases the generative capacities of mutual history. While political theorists on the post-Napoleonic continent debated nationalism versus supranationalism, some writers were asking, “How does one belong at all?” and transatlantic relations provided a way to consider that broader question.

Fully characterizing the fluid reciprocal influences between England and America is beyond the scope of this project, but that it was in fact a complex dynamic in the years after 1815 bears repeating. Despite the drama and destruction of what the former colony calls the War of 1812, America became a highly attractive destination for Britons at its conclusion, due in no small part to encomia of Birkbeck, whose Notes on a Journey in America (1818) and Letters from Illinois (1818) capitalized on British fascination with the young republic. In his magisterial study of Anglo-American letters during this period, Chandler cautions that “[g]reat as Birkbeck’s impact was, however, it is important to stress that he merely crystallized an issue that had begun to occasion concern with the first jump in the levels of emigration from Britain to America soon after Waterloo” (458-59). In such a context, “America-watching soon became something of a British national hobby” (453), and many English travelers undertook “an elaborate ethnography” of “post-Constitutional America” (448). Cobbett, for his part, felt Birkbeck gave all the wrong advice in suggesting that Englishmen settle in colonies in the Illinois Territory; if they must go, they should stay in cities, he argued, preferably next door to a native-born American citizen, and leave the wilderness to second-generation Americans at the least. Nevertheless, Englishmen went there in droves.

With rampant emigration engendering animosity and hyperbole in equal measure (prompting Washington Irving to play mediator in his essay “English Writers on America” in 1819), the young republic, I suggest, offered a liminal space for English self-regard. No longer a political outpost of English culture, it was instead a site where the Englishman found himself dispossessed and estranged. Discursive use of the other side of the Atlantic in the texts of Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper suggests that the business of nineteenth-century nation-building constitutes a process of disarticulation, in both senses of the word. Separation and alienation are foregrounded on the level of plot, even in scenes of conviviality, but displacement is also, I hope to show, a problem of language, particularly for Cooper. I read these texts not for what they can elucidate about American manners and morals (the prime English motivation, according to Chandler), but rather for what they illuminate about the idea of England, English national identity, and national identity per se. The transatlantic, then, is a space for self-encounter, where the other is strangely familiar, and displacement takes on new forms.

Hospitality and the Literary Canon

In its nineteenth-century afterlife, merry old England was broadly imagined as “the period between medieval rudeness and aristocratic over-refinement” that characterized the Restoration (Mandler 31).⁹ It is “an idyllic and non-specific period, which somehow combines the virtues of medieval communal rites with modern liberalism,” a rich combination that by the early nineteenth century seemed to have been lost (Waithe 17). While this perceived decline is indicative of pastoral lament more

⁹ Cobbett himself locates merry old England quite specifically, valorizing the days of Sir John Fortescue (1394-1476), author of *De laudibus legume Angliae* and touchstone for a time when just laws, happy people, and generous conviviality coincided (*A Year’s Residence*).

generally, it is punctuated in the English tradition by a specific cultural and historical phenomenon: the Reformation, which transformed both the practice of hospitality as well as the place it occupied in the national imaginary.

Medieval and early modern England, Felicity Heal explains, was a culture “deeply committed to the practice of open hospitality” (389), by which she means both the generous reception of outsiders and the “strong transactional quality” of the tenant feast (402). Hospitality thus had symbolic force on two levels, both of which ensured the vitality of the household (399). Put perhaps too simply, these two levels or modes might be called the Roman and the Greek. As Douglas Murray has pointed out, from the Restoration onward, two sorts of hospitality were represented in the English canon, one based on Horace, emphasizing the virtues of plain fare and sober conversation in strengthening bonds among male friends, and the other based on Greek and Judeo-Christian texts that encourage accepting the outsider (1404). When an aristocrat offered both types of welcome, it strengthened his authority, for it bestowed honor on beneficence and shame on avarice (Heal 390). As one scholar puts it, hospitality “is the capital laid out to ensure a return of good will” (McClung 126).

As long as society functioned on a gift-exchange model rather than on commodity-exchange, hospitality was intimately tied to charitable practices (Heal 389), but the Tudor policy of “centralizing politics deprived the great household of part of its political power, and the need for a national response to the problem of the poor also shifted the focus of local charitable behaviour” (402). After the Tudor period, when the newly-landed set was disinclined to perpetuate the gift-exchange mentality, hospitality to the poor became increasingly separate from the practice of the open table (393). These

charitable models are debated in Lodore to underscore the sense that social relations in late Romantic England are askew in quite specific ways. Society seems no longer to have a satisfactory answer to a set of problems hospitality connotes: not just what to do when there is a knock at the door, but also whether cohesion can be created across class lines, such as the tenant feast was believed to have achieved, and how to provide for the poor and dispossessed. So hospitality, which I have presented on the macro-level as a characteristic many European nations wanted to lay claim to and a vital catalyst to reconceiving international cooperation is also, in the English context, a vexing domestic issue arising from social change that created a Protestant nation.¹⁰ In this, too, incidentally, Cobbett draws our attention, for as Marcus Waithe argues, he was “a pioneer, as one of the first writers who brought a nostalgic reading of the Middle Ages into direct, polemical confrontation with contemporary modes of existence” (Waithe 16), preferring as he did Catholic charity to legal pauperism.¹¹ In certain discursive instances, then, the deployment of antique hospitable conventions becomes an indicator of whether nineteenth-century society is equipped to meet its domestic obligations. The “just governance” that Cobbett so passionately wanted to see re-established in England seems to have included a better model for delivering what we would call social services.

Interestingly enough, Heal points out that from early days of colonization, America was appreciated for maintaining practices already falling into disuse in England itself. There, for example, the orchards of great houses were opened to all, and especially in the Tidewater region, ancient practices were retained, permitting “the alien to take the

¹⁰When the monasteries were destroyed during the Tudor period, care for the poor began to be funded by means of a compulsory tax collected by the local parish (Hindle 556-68).

¹¹ Cobbett expresses this view explicitly in a text not published until 1825: A History of the Protestant “Reformation,” in England and Ireland, specifically pages 330-32.

first crucial step into the domus” (396-99). In the end, however, she contends that “Englishmen [of the early modern period] often found that hospitality served their purposes best when it was used as a rhetorical weapon, to challenge the dominance of the market-place in their own culture by a return to a mythical past of open generosity” (403).

Certainly the literary canon attests to the abiding importance of this trope. The country house poem, for example, both elaborated the myth of the well-run, hospitable manor as central to the health of English society and registered regret at its passing (McClung 3). G. R. Hibbard is credited with defining this genre in 1956, based on six seventeenth-century poems. Exemplary texts such as Ben Jonson’s “To Penshurst” (1616) and Andrew Marvell’s “Upon Appleton House” (1651) praise “building and grounds, gardens, fields and meadows, the master’s virtue, his charity to his dependents, and his hospitality to friends (the poet among them) and to strangers” (McClung 18). Although Roman precursors such as Juvenal, Ovid, and Martial did not emphasize the villa’s centrality to the well-being of broader society, these English writers affirmed the manor house’s “serious obligations to the whole community of Christians, even strangers” (McClung 45). They augmented classical allusions with a sharper focus on housekeeping and hospitable behavior to unknown folk, not just dependents (McClung 181-82). Claiming to represent “the stable, hierarchical, and ‘natural’ commonwealth that the ideal country estate embodies,” these poems established an ideal against which the poets’ contemporary society could be contrasted, and from these country life values national virtue could be inferred (Jenkins 12).

Even after magnificent seats began to overshadow the country house in the early 1700s, the latter nevertheless “had lasting power as an image” (Kenney 8-9). As Virginia C. Kenney argues in her study of what she calls the “country house ethos” after 1688, “the image keeps reappearing in an almost pure form” (19), but whether it ever governed the behaviour of more than a handful of landlords is very doubtful, and it is certain that when Ben Jonson wrote “To Penshurst” [. . .] he was already memorialising a golden age. The concrete image of the lord’s traditional manorial housekeeping was, however, a powerful conservative symbol. (x)

Following the Glorious Revolution, “the house reconciled national divisions” (204) and remained a “touchstone of gentility and code of good behaviour, [transformed] into a theory of right use of wealth and power applicable by all to the problems of a new age” (210).¹² Through contrast both with the niggardly estate and with the values of the city, the country house abides as a “time-honored metonym” for the good society (Kenney 204).

In looking ahead to the middle of the nineteenth century, Waithe concurs that the “performance of hospitality was seen by many Victorians as suggestive of order, a notion convenient in its concise evocation of prudent and benevolent government, whether of a household or a realm” (Waithe 1). At that time, he explains, growing interest in idealized medieval hospitality was pragmatic and perhaps surprisingly optimistic, given that it was catalyzed by punitive aspects of the new Poor Law of 1834. By the 1840s and

¹² She points out that in *Tom Jones*, for example, the squire’s estate “is further evidence of the continuing strength of the familiar images surrounding the country-house ethos as a means of structuring responses to the challenges of a world from which the social, economic and epistemological certainties had gone” (210).

onward, the myth of Merry England appealed to a wide range of political persuasions as a “superior way of organizing relations between men” (197).¹³

In the Romantic period, however, I want to suggest that reference to the ideal of manorial housekeeping is not always concerned with the institution or maintenance of order, but rather with social relations in flux. While one might imagine hospitable scenes being put to work as a unifying force, an image around which one such as Cobbett would cluster his audience (he after all wants to restore hospitality to its rightful place on English soil), Romantic-era preoccupation with “the romance of entertainment and welcome” (Waithe 4) registers uncertainty about status and belonging—even in Scott’s Waverley novels, devoted as they are to staging hospitable scenes that shore up the social matrix of the Scottish borderland. Retrieving merry Old England would help conjure the imagined community of the burgeoning imperial power, but centered as it is in the activities of welcome, this venerated tradition invites—consists of—disruption. In other words, nostalgia such as Cobbett’s need not always be conservative, but rather might provide the opportunity for a more progressive deployment of the archaic. Perhaps counter-intuitively, this evocation of old English hospitality marks a moment when new social alignments become imaginable.

At the same time, though, evocation of hospitality (its use as a rhetorical weapon, to use Heal’s phrase) draws out the darker potential that has always in fact shadowed the threshold encounter. For every country house poem that extols the host who is likewise generous to tenants and strangers, one can find a canonical example of hospitality that devolves into invasion and violence. As far back as the fabliau tradition, Waithe points out, “the admission of a guest is as likely to announce the unleashing of internal disorder

¹³ John Ruskin and William Morris, he says, pull together various strands of medievalism and politics.

as the domestication or taming of external forces” (2). Often this danger derives from the lingering superstitious fear that travelers have the power to bless or to curse—that is, from their connection with the supernatural, which can be seen most clearly in classical and Judeo-Christian texts. In both these traditions, strangers and guests are associated with the divine, as Julian Pitt-Rivers explains in his influential 1963 paper “The Stranger, the Guest, and the Hostile Host”:

the sacredness of hospitality and the honour which it confers derive [. . .] from the fact that the meeting with the stranger is a confrontation between the known world and the world of mystery. The stranger belongs to the ‘extra-ordinary’ world, and the mystery surrounding him allies him to the sacred and makes him a suitable vehicle for the apparition of the God, the revelation of a mystery. (20)

The protection of strangers is important enough that in classical Greece it is assigned to Zeus, and any unknown traveler is suspected of being a deity cloaked in the form of another, come “to test the hospitality of mortals” (Reece 10). Often in these cases the rich dismiss the stranger, while “the impoverished but generous” welcome the divine in this moment referred to as theoxeny (10).¹⁴

In the Biblical tradition, this “discreet liaison between the divine and human realms is often achieved, as in the Greek myths, through the visitation of intermediary spirits or angels” (Waithe 10). Genesis 18, for example, recounts the story of Abram, who entertains three strangers later revealed to be angels, and his generous welcome

¹⁴ Harry L. Levy enumerates such several moments in *The Odyssey*: Antinous is reproved, for example, when he “strikes Odysseus, who is disguised as a wandering beggar [. . .]: ‘You are doomed if by chance he is some god from heaven! And indeed gods in the likeness of strangers, assuming all sorts of shapes, visit the cities of men, beholding their outrageousness and their righteousness’ (17.483-87; qtd. in Levy 149). “Reverence the gods,” says Odysseus to the cyclopes; “for we are your suppliants. Zeus is the imparter of honor to suppliants and strangers, Zeus, the strangers’ god, who is always at the side of strangers, who are to be revered” (9.269-71; qtd. in Levy 149).

results in his being made patriarch of the Israelites. An entire people—and three world religions—are founded on this moment of disguise and welcome. Later, this scene will be invoked when the writer of Hebrews entreats his audience, “be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2). In the gospels, Matthew 25:35 has Jesus blessing those who are inclined to be hospitable: “For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in.” Jesus himself was often a guest during his years of ministry, a status memorialized in the Rule of St. Benedict, which requires a vow of hospitality. Finally, the Christian ritual of Holy Communion is often interpreted as a sacrament of sacred welcome, for in “food, in wine, in hospitality, the divine and the human find both temporary meeting-place and the promise of permanent union” (Waithe 11).

Yet it is not always the case that the special status of the stranger imbues the threshold encounter with unity, mutual blessing, and honor to the host. Zeus’s protection offers no guarantee that hospitality to strangers will go well, for the guest might force his way in or overstay his welcome. We think, for example, of the suitors who have ensconced themselves as masters of Odysseus’s home. Alternatively, the host might not allow the guest to leave: ““It’s bad either way,/spurring the stranger home who wants to linger,/holding the one who longs to leave,”” Telemachus is assured (15.78-80). One could say the entire *Odyssey* is a case of impeded homecoming (Reece 35) and that the Homeric epic tradition was catalyzed by a violation of hospitality via adultery. Throughout *The Odyssey*, in fact, one can see “the basic ambivalence of archaic Greek society toward strangers, a dubious class who could prove to be either friendly or hostile”

(Reece 18). Thus it is that Oedipus, drawn from a different Greek source, can embody “the two archetypal functions of the guest,” that is, redemption but also violent disruption (Waithe 2).

For a stranger to be made less threatening, he must be moved along a continuum from feared outsider to accepted member of the community, even if temporarily. Often this is achieved through rituals that domesticate the stranger; duels, for example, give a brutally clear answer to whether a stranger can be made family, which I will consider more closely in Lodore. Pitt-Rivers describes the necessary inversion:

If his [that is, the unknown’s] danger is to be avoided he must either be denied admittance, chased or enticed away like evil spirits or vampires, or, if granted admittance he must be socialized, that is to say secularized, a process which necessarily involves inversion. [. . .] from being shunned and treated with hostility, he must be clasped to the bosom and honoured and given precedence; no longer to be suborned, he must be succoured; from being last, he must be first; from being a person who can be freely insulted he becomes one who under no conditions must be disparaged. (20)

It seems fitting that Pitt-Rivers’s language here echoes the Sermon on the Mount, for the tradition of theoxeny bestows a bounteous reward on those willing to entertain a god in human form. According to the inversions of the Beatitudes, for those who welcome Christ, hierarchies will be overturned, sovereignties will be overthrown, those with host status will be dislodged in favor of the dispossessed (Matthew 5:3-12). This derives from Old Testament injunctions to show kindness to strangers out of a sense of empathy, such as Exodus 22:21, which entreats the people of Israel never to oppress strangers, for they

themselves were once strangers in Egypt. For Christianity, a faith in which transfiguration carries enormous metaphorical meaning, the face-to-face encounter with the stranger is especially powerful, even as appearances themselves remain suspect. Perhaps counter-intuitively, as Steve Reece explains in his book The Stranger's Welcome, Greek epic convention dictates that the guest's name not be queried until after the ritual meal (11). Risk, then—the risk of invasion, transformation, even revolution—is constitutive of the hospitable encounter.

So, too, of course, is ritual. In The Odyssey, which Reece calls essentially “a sequence of hospitality scenes” (191), the Homeric welcome follows a highly formulaic pattern “from the moment a visitor approaches someone's house until the moment he departs” (5). Homer's audience would have been familiar with the sequence, regarding these scenes as “signposts that guide the poet and his audience through the lengthy narrative” (191), so that divergences from the rigidly-fixed formula would stand out all the more starkly, calling the reader's attention to the architectonics of oral poetry. In other words, evocation of this ritualized pattern and then departure from it highlights a moment that demands to be read anew.

In this regard, Sir Walter Scott warrants particular attention, for his innovation of the historical novel consciously adopts the rich literary heritage just recounted (including, explicitly at times, the Odyssey and its formulae) and deploys it in his formation of Scotland as an imagined community within the British imperium. If lament for more generous days when hospitality was constitutive of English identity is part of Romantic nationalism's search for origins, that nostalgia is heavily inflected by Scott's revisioning and re-presenting the past to transform the present and future into “living intentions”

(McGann 125). Given his almost unparalleled influence, it is worthwhile to pause to understand the impact of the genre he invented and his sustained engagement with hospitality.

Scott and Hospitality in the Border

Certainly Scott's influence after Waterloo can hardly be overstated. As Ian Duncan explains, the *Waverley Novels*, as they came to be called, addressed "the great questions of modernization, nation formation, and 'internal colonialism'" (Introduction 24). In doing so, that series

established the major trends in British Romantic fiction publishing: the displacement of poetry from the summit of the genre system by the novel, the heightened formal definition of the novel, the professionalization of production and marketing, the standardization of format for new works [. . .], and even a masculine takeover of what had hitherto been characterized as a feminine kind of writing. ("Scotland" 251-52)

Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since, Scott's first novel, which recounts the adventures of a young Englishman in the Highlands during the Jacobite uprising of 1745, unfolds, Duncan argues, by working out "an internal allegory of the rise of the novel as modern national form, in which the movement from primitive imaginary modes of 'romance' through an empirically exigent 'history' yields a third, synthetic term, the combination of romance and history that is realized in Waverley itself" ("Scotland" 258). Propelling the historical novel into dominance, the narrative also elaborates a newly-imagined space in which to express the uniquely Scottish dialectic of local and universal, colonizer and

colonized, archaic and modern. According to Duncan and his co-authors, “Scott’s centrality installs the ‘Border’ chronotope of a dynamic liminality [. . .], the space-time of an historical modernity that [. . .] looks backwards in order to move forwards” (Duncan, Davis, Sorenson 13).¹⁵

Moreover, as Andrew Lincoln has argued, “Scottish history is the lens through which Scott brings into focus a wider condition rooted in the progress to modernity itself, the condition of the individual disembedded from traditional social relations, for whom identity and community have become problematic” (*Modernity* 189). The Border provides the setting for this struggle between belonging and alienation, and there, I suggest, hospitable discourse resonates powerfully, for it contends with just this predicament. The ancient, folkloric rituals that Scott reanimates figure prominently in critical arguments that his novels fabricate a mystified Scottish “national character” that persists into our own day (*Waverley* 364-65); his texts, it has been argued, produce a Highland myth that covers over reality and offers a fraudulent concept of the nation.¹⁶ But in his first novel the staging of threshold events also works against the putative coherence of such a myth.

As Marcus Waithe has explained, Scott’s engagement with hospitality is evident as early as 1799, when he published a translation of Goethe’s play *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), regarded by many as “the first and arguably most important Romantic exploration of hospitality” (Waithe 5). Waithe has drawn connections between the German play and

¹⁵ These scholars elaborate further: “Scotland’s temporal unevenness found its spatial equivalence in the dialectic between discourses of locality and abstraction, the former representing ancient, traditionally embedded ways of life, the latter of a scientific, universalizing framework of taxonomies and systems” (Duncan, Davis, Sorenson 14).

¹⁶ Scott did not create this phenomenon alone, of course, but his successes influenced other phenomena, such as the founding of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, which shaped “a modern (Romantic) discourse of cultural nationalism” (Duncan, Davis, Sorenson 13). See also Andrew Lincoln’s “Walter Scott and the Birth of the Nation.”

Scott's Ivanhoe (1820), both of which emphasize the transformative power of extending welcome to a sworn enemy. Scott, he says, follows Goethe's lead in putting emphasis "on the host's assumption (ill-advised, but ultimately rewarded) that hospitality will automatically inspire mannerly conduct in his guest" (5).¹⁷ But in Waverley, not a medievalist text, hospitable exchanges provide not so much the means of living out chivalric ideals; rather they gesture toward a social order increasingly giving way as the modern civil society emerges. Occurring primarily in the first part of the novel, these scenes participate in the initial stage of the Humean dialectics Duncan has traced (Duncan, Davis, Sorenson 8).

Despite its consignment to a vanishing world, this ancient pattern of obligation and reciprocity still exerts some degree of power, in scenes that both welcome the stranger and shore up the clan system. These run the gamut, from the elaborate dinner that celebrates Waverley's arrival at the manor-house Tully-Veolan to the decidedly more rustic welcome he receives in the cave of the perfidious Donald Bean Lean. In addition to such ritualized events, several scenes recount strangers nursing the wounded and sick. Edward himself, for example, regains his health while guest in two quite different settings, one that appears to the home of an "old Highland Esculapius" (190) and later the house of Farmer Jopson, who refuses all "recompence of their hospitality" (299).¹⁸ Such passages are grounded in and perpetuate a complex system of obligation in the Highlands, and it extends to guests such as Waverley, for when he is under arrest in

¹⁷ Waithe also mentions Marmion as a text in which hosts often fail in the execution of hospitality. He reads Scott's attitude toward unconditional welcome as ambivalent (4). I am viewing it not as something Scott judges so much as something he puts to use.

¹⁸ When referring to the novel, I employ the Edinburgh Press's 2007 publication of the three-volume 1814 text. Later references to the two-volume "magnum opus" edition will be marked by "m.o." followed by volume number and page. In my own prose, because the chapters are not numbered in a consistent way between the two editions, I adopt the Edinburgh Press's continuous numbering of chapters from 1 to 72, unaffected by volume breaks.

Chapter 31, for example, he is offered lenient treatment by the English on the condition that he divulge the Jacobites' plans. Waverley is duly outraged: "you presume to esteem me mean enough to commence informer against others, who received me, whatever may be their public misconduct, as a guest and friend" (179). He'll not say a word about matters he "could only become acquainted with in the full confidence of unsuspecting hospitality" (179). Here the obligations engendered by the welcome of a stranger collide with the English legal system, as it does again—with fatal consequences—at the trial of Evan Dhu, who before being sentenced is chastised by the English judge as "a striking example how the loyalty due to the king and state alone, is [. . .] transferred to some ambitious individual," that is, to Fergus (342).

The fullest sense of how this elaborate system of reciprocity is actively maintained comes in the Highland feast at Glennaquoich, the chieftain's estate, on which Scott lavishes four full chapters. There Mac-Ivor hosts the entire clan, from dinner with bag-pipes through a performance by the bard to dancing that lasts into the wee hours. One stated goal is to welcome Edward and to dispel any suspicion that falls on him as an Englishman, and in this the feast succeeds (although a couple of ancients hold against him his connection with the Baron of Bradwardine). It also ignites unanimity in the Jacobite cause: "Hospitallity to the exile," a toast resounds, "and broken bones to the tyrant" (106).

Despite its success, however, the feast is an expensive bit of theater, and Fergus is frank about the cost: "Mac-Ivor, indeed, apologised for the confusion occasioned by so large a party, and pleaded the necessity of his situation, on which unlimited hospitality was imposed as a paramount duty" (104). The bard's tip in fact costs him "the last

silver cup in the castle [. . . but w]hen the hand of the chief ceases to bestow, the breath of the bard is frozen in the utterance” (110). Likewise, his sister Flora’s apartment is surprisingly plain for someone of her standing, but “at Glennnaquoich every other sort of expenditure was retrenched as much as possible, for the purpose of maintaining in its full dignity, the hospitality of the Chieftain” (106).

Thriftiness, however, reveals itself at the meal: “This hospitality, apparently unbounded, had yet its line of economy” (103). Meat and liquor are distributed according to rank, as Scott corroborates in a footnote. Customarily, a chalk line on the table marks where the quality of food and drink will devolve from “dishes of fish, game, etc., which were at the upper end of the table” to “[b]roth, onions, cheese, and the fragments of the feast” enjoyed by lower-class attendees who “feasted in the open air” (103; m.o. I.213 n.2). Apparently this hierarchical arrangement has become naturalized over time:

Every one present understood that his taste was to be formed according to the rank which he held at table; and, consequently, the tacksmen and their dependants always professed the wine was too cold for their stomachs, and called, apparently out of choice, for the liquor which was assigned to them from economy. (103-04)

To Waverley’s eye, “the apparatus for dinner was simple, even to rudeness, and the company numerous, even to crowding” (103), nor does the text recoup this rusticity as picturesque. Nevertheless, the feast serves its purpose: it neutralizes the threat Waverley poses as an Englishman, it stabilizes hierarchies, and it shores up identities of host and guests. So we see that hospitable ritual, most elaborately displayed in the feast, is part of the social infrastructure of the Highlands. At the same time, though, the narrative exposes the machinery by which this hospitality is produced.

Moreover, the scene is marked as a literary artifact. For example, upon entering the hall at Glennaquoich, Waverley is offered the opportunity to freshen up:

He was not, indeed, so luxuriously attended upon this occasion as the heroic travelers in the *Odyssey*; the task of ablution and abstersion being performed, not by a beautiful damsel, trained “To chafe the limb, and pour the fragrant oil,” but by a smoke-dried skinny old Highland woman, who did not seem to think herself much honoured by the duty imposed upon her. (102)

The appearance of a guest does not inspire her to play the epic part, nor could a shared personal history spark much enthusiasm: ““Our fathers’ herds did not feed so near together, that I should do you this service,”” the elderly woman makes clear (102).

Debunking the Homeric precedent bestows the kind of realism to the scene that has earned Scott high praise in the Lukácsian vein of criticism, but overwriting the *Odyssey* also reveals the rhetorical aspect of hospitable tradition.¹⁹ We see this again shortly thereafter when the Highland feast draws to a close at the end of Chapter 23; Scott follows this immediately with an authorial intrusion to open Chapter 24. “Shall this be a long or a short chapter?” (121), he begins, his abrupt transition emphasizing the contingency of the elaborate set piece just concluded.²⁰ Other moments sprinkled throughout the text also disrupt the simulated world of the narrative and highlight hospitality as a discursive construct. This transparency can only qualify long-standing arguments that Scott has created a coherent yet inauthentic simulation of Scotland, for the text seems to own up to the performance.

¹⁹ McGann offers an overview of Lukács’s influential canonization of Scott as a realist (114).

²⁰ When published as a triple decker, the first volume ends after Chapter 23. In the magnum opus edition, which is two volumes, the transition from Chapter 23 to 24 happens within the first volume.

Nevertheless, Scott is held responsible for this fabrication that favors the myth of the Highland past over the realities of lived experience (Craig 15). In this argument, as Cairns Craig summarizes it, “Scott’s manipulation of history into national theater comes to be a crucial instance of how the nation—an entirely modern phenomenon—disguises itself as something ancient and conceals from its citizens the truth about their own historical position” (16). In answer to this critique, Craig mounts a defense of the author, saying instead that his novels offer the nation as “a space of conflict [. . .] about alternative value systems” (26):

It is of the very nature of the nation, as Scott conceives it, that its apparently bounded space is riddled with connections, visible or concealed, with other places, and that its apparently unified territory is full of concealed spaces and places where apparently historically redundant forms of society live on. (26)

Hospitable exchange has a similar effect in Waverley, performing a collective identity through scenes of welcome but also revealing these passages as heavily mediated.

Literary allusion and authorial commentary expose the mechanics of this theatricality, so that rituals one might expect to stabilize and unify also signal rupture.

A similar kind of authorial gesture is made in the notes, prefaces, and appendices Scott prepared for the grand, forty-eight-volume “magnum opus” edition that began publication in 1829. This project, undertaken in the wake of Scott’s revelation as the hitherto anonymous “Author of Waverley,” gave him the opportunity to add a General Preface and appendices, to pen introductions to individual works, and to accompany each tale with fairly elaborate notes.²¹ In the Waverley volume, such elements create a curious

²¹ Some of this material had been included in Chronicles of Canongate. For details on the magnum opus edition see Millgate.

doubling effect, grounding plot points in “fact” (pointing out, for example, that many of the English infantry did their duty in the battle that killed Col. Gardiner [m.o. II.170 n.2]) while also revealing the author’s hand as he imaginatively recasts his source material.

This is especially true on the subject of hospitality. Among his “Notes to Waverley” are entries titled “Scottish Inns,” “Stirrup-Cup,” “Rob Roy,” “Caterans,” and “Scottish Dinner Table,” which corroborate the veracity of instances of hospitality reworked in the novel. But they are also the occasion for Scott to tell more tales about welcome.

“Scottish Inns,” for example, explains that traditionally, whenever a guest calls for liquor at an inn, he is expected to offer some to the proprietor, who then sits down to gather the news. This single note contains three different anecdotes on the custom, one of which refers to two early modern plays, Shakespeare’s The Merry Wives of Windsor and The Merry Devil of Edmonton (m.o. I.71 n.2). So these notes are “factual” (“Scottish Dinner Table,” for example, explains that the hierarchical arrangement of Fergus’s Highland feast follows a pattern ‘formerly universally observed throughout Scotland’ [m.o. I.213 n.2]). But they are also heavily narrative, offering a proliferation of oral and written texts that treat the matter of welcome.

The magnum opus appendices also emphasize hospitality, but generally this is to recount offenses against it, such as dominate the medievalist “Fragment of a Romance Which Was to Have Been Entitled Thomas the Rhymer.” This first appendix, a piece of one of Scott’s very early forays into prose, focuses legalistically and almost claustrophobically on offenses against “unsuspicious hospitality” (m.o. I. xliii), pondering such matters as: who is the host? what rights pertain to the guest? can a foreigner be a host? and is the right to resort actually guaranteed in the Border? Although

Scott claims that such remnants have no “intrinsic value” except for the reader curious about his first attempts at composition (m.o. I. xli n.1), they serve the important function of situating the historical novel’s origins in the discourse of hospitality. To be sure, not every note to Waverley or appendix to the General Preface treats threshold encounters; these references fade somewhat after dominating the first third of the book, and Scott is greatly occupied with his “incognito” in the General Preface. Nevertheless, hospitality announces itself as a key component of these addenda, positioning hospitable discourse as what precedes the tale of national formation. If, as Duncan claims, the novel Waverley tells the tale of its own origins—that is, “produces the plot of its own production” (“Scotland” 258)—so too, does the much-expanded magnum opus edition offer a similar accounting through its array of material revealing Scott’s preoccupations in his earliest days as a writer.

In Katie Trumpener’s view, the paratextual apparatus creates a “textualist vision of history” (152) that distances the narrative from lived histories, which she says are more powerfully presented in the national tales of writers such as Sydney Owenson. Indeed, one experiences this distancing effect when immersed in a note to the appendix to the general preface to the new edition. Yet somewhat paradoxically, this layering opens up the text and invites important connections between the hospitable scene and Scott’s self-authorizing impulse. Jerome McGann has argued that through the “Shandean material scattered about the Preface, Postscripts, Appendices, and Notes of Scott’s novels” he “makes the making of the book one of his least disguised central subjects” (127). Both within the diegesis and without, McGann explains, the narrative is

supplemented and disrupted by “elaborate comic apparatus Scott created to support and transmit his novels to the public” (114).²²

So while it might be the case that the addition of the endnotes on topics such as who crafted the best Scottish broadswords (m.o. II.194 n.1) build up the textual density of the tale so as to render it a rather dry antiquarian historiography (Trumpener 152), these notes and appendices also cross the border into extradiegetic space to reveal the porosity of that barrier. In the 1814 Waverley, Scott achieves this effect within the narrative, but he does so much more extensively in the material added for the magnum opus edition, where hospitality is not only the subject of many addenda, but is also in a sense enacted by them. Including this material creates a threshold to the narrative, a liminal space that often takes liminality as its subject. Constituting a border themselves, the paratextual elements added in the late 1820s offer an analog to the chronotope Scott devised for puzzling out the “dynamic liminality [. . . of] historical modernity” (Duncan, Davis, Sorenson 13).

When Waverley ends, hospitality contributes to its uneasy stasis, what Duncan would call the synthesis in his dialectical reading of the novel. The Jacobite cause and the culture in which it is expressed have been all but obliterated. Scotland has been transformed in the “sixty years since,” and the narrative is clear about what has enabled this “progress”:

the destruction of patriarchal power of the Highland chiefs—the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions of the Lowland nobility and barons—the total eradication

²²Here McGann is specifically speaking about Ivanhoe, but the first Waverley novel reveals a similar dynamic. His narratives “regularly, if also randomly, break out of their narrative enclosures into the freedom of self-conscious romance” (121), and therefore McGann views Scott as “our herald of the postmodern consensus” (128-29). Lincoln, however, argues that while Scott’s work does indeed reach a consensus without unifying principles, this is not liberating (Modernity 216).

of the Jacobite party, which, averse to intermingle with the English, or adopt their customs, long continued to pride themselves upon maintaining ancient Scottish manners and customs—commenced this innovation. (363)

Only brief regret is voiced over the loss of those “living examples of singular and disinterested attachment to the principles of loyalty which they received from their fathers, and of old Scottish faith, hospitality, worth, and honour” (363).

We see how this modern synthesis is achieved when Waverley and his bride make their wedding trip to the Border. Having passed over the festivities that welcome the prodigal Edward back to the family estate in England, the text instead follows the couple’s visit to Tully-Veolan, reinforcing what it implies is Scotland’s special identification with hospitality as a national trait. Yet the scene also signals the belatedness of that claim. The rehabilitated estate reverts to the Baron only through the largesse of Englishmen, and when it dawns on him that he might once again be host of the manor, he appears “a little awkward, as uncertain how he should answer the necessary claims of hospitality to his guests, and forward the festivity of his tenants” (360). Neither host nor guest—or perhaps both at once—the Baron cannot help but be discomfited, for his guests (or rather, his hosts) the Talbots have managed those accommodations as well. Hospitality is not so much extinct, then, as it is transformed. It is appropriated into the terms of Union after the destruction of the clans, for English hospitality has supplanted Scottish, signaling a contentious connection with displacement that will surface repeatedly in the chapters that follow.

Hospitality, then, is a way to perform relationships—to create, commemorate, and reflect them—and it is also in this text a performance that is opened up, exposing the

means of its own production. So although Hugh Trevor-Roper and other historians suggest that Scott's Highland myth covers over reality, I read the text as self-conscious and therefore unable fully to seal off a fraudulent "unified territory," to borrow Craig's terms (26).²³ If the narrative were intent only on creating such a fully bounded space, it would handle quite differently, for example, the Baron's "lurking place" (324). This is that curious setting

where two or three bushes concealed the mouth of a hole, resembling an oven, into which the Baron insinuated, first his head and shoulders, and then, by slow gradation, the rest of his long body, his legs and feet finally disappearing, coiled up like a huge snake entering his retreat, or a long pedigree introduced with care and difficulty into the narrow pigeon-hole of an old cabinet. (324)

Following the Battle of Culloden, this is where the Baron has taken refuge, in a cave so small he has room only to lie down and read a book, if there is daylight, or scratch on the stone roof. Here exists utter ipseity; he is entirely removed from the provocations of welcome. The Baron is literally embedded—and sealed off—but his isolation, paradoxically, insists all the more strenuously on the threshold, insists on his emerging from that space no other person could ever enter, even if doing so yields him up to a life "disembedded from traditional social relations" (Lincoln *Modernity* 189). The Baron's hiding place is the image of social relations made utterly extinct, and the text offers it, I suggest, to insist on the transformation of social relations rather than their obliteration.

One of Craig's goals in mounting his defense of Scott is to intervene in critical conversation surrounding Benedict Anderson's notion of the imagined community.

²³ Craig references Trevor-Roper's article "The Highland Tradition in Scotland" and Tom Nairn's book The Break-Up of Britain.

Anderson's concept relies too heavily, he feels, on the mistaken notion that pre-modern communities were somehow more authentic—and thus less “imagined”—than the modern nation. Despite his differences, however, Craig concludes that the greatest power of Anderson's work “is that it perhaps ironically makes the nation an aesthetic construction” (27). And Scott, he feels, would agree, for he “understood that the dramatization of the nation was not about its fictionality or its truth, but about the values which its imagining tested” (27). Scott's *Waverley* series, then, is a “vast investigation of the new forms of the nation to which the nineteenth century was giving birth” (17). The author accepts the aesthetic challenge of representing the nation, and, as I argue, in his work hospitality becomes a particularly capacious and pliable discourse. In *Waverley* it plays an important role in forming national identity not only through feasts and other scenes of welcome, but also through authorial intrusions that reveal their discursive nature and through the liminal textual space created for the novel when it was expanded into its final form.

In these ways, then, *Waverley* helps to forge the “rhetorical weapon” that was wielded to such effect in the post-Waterloo era. When Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper bring it with them to the threshold, it bears the imprint of Scott's influence. For all three of them, the threshold is just as powerfully a conceptual realm as it is geographic. Like Scott, these authors will treat hospitality as both a set of familiar practices imported into the text as plot points and as a discourse that shapes the text itself. This is most powerfully the case for Shelley, and for this reason the chapter on her work follows this one.

Moreover, the three writers in this study, like Scott, deal with the proximity of otherness. That is to say that as alien as the Highlanders seem to be in Waverley, they are local. For Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper as well, the challenges of belonging in the nation emphasize the estranged or alienated familiar. Saree Makdisi has argued that certain “spots of time” exerted their discursive energies in the Romantic period to resist modernization: along with Nature and the Orient, Scotland, he argues, disrupted the flow of continuous time and thereby created a particularly Romantic representation of what he calls anti-modern otherness (8). Such celebrations of exoticism, he says, comprise the first articulated opposition to empire (9), resisting as they do the homogenization that will by the second half of the nineteenth century make all temporal and spatial zones comparable.²⁴ One could certainly query whether hospitable encounters are simply another such “obsession with the pre- or anti-modern” (10). Yet the works I am reading do not create, as Makdisi’s chosen texts do, self-enclosed enclaves of exoticism (13); they work against the image of the Baron’s cave to make space for the liminal. However, there is one important way in which these three writers do diverge from hospitable discourse as Scott offers it in Waverley: that text does not deploy the Atlantic, whereas the three writers I study in depth do use the transatlantic to explore the relations among hospitality, national identity, and belonging.

I trace these myriad literary and historical threads to capture the richness of hospitable discourse as it informed the aesthetics of the late Romantic period. This heritage offers quite a sturdy conceptual framework for my engagement with the central

²⁴Furthermore, Makdisi argues, as industrialization picked up speed in England, anti-modern “peripheries,” where particular cities are perpetually behind the times, were established far from London (itself being constituted as the metropole). Manchester, Birmingham, and Glasgow, for example, become the “outside” as London becomes, via modernization, the “inside” (176).

texts of this study, but in the twenty-first century, when we ourselves approach the threshold, it is most commonly in response to one further invitation. Because post-structuralist meditations on hospitality offer such a clear and trenchant vocabulary, I turn to those formulations as a further aid. My aim is to illuminate how Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper theorize threshold encounters as constitutive of the imagined community; our current discourse of welcome offers a language through which to do so.

Twentieth-Century Critical Tools

Any discussion of literary representations of hospitality must take Jacques Derrida into account, for he has asserted most productively that the hospitable encounter is the root of all ethical behavior.²⁵ His enormously generative theorization of welcome emerges from the key criticism of Kantian cosmopolitanism already mentioned, namely, that for Kant hospitality is constructed juridically. The right not to be treated with hostility pertains to the guest, stranger, or foreigner who has status, who does not lack status; however, this right is exceeded and undone in Derrida's formulation by the possibility of welcoming precisely the one who has no status. Thus, he says, the laws of hospitality are undone by the Law of hospitality, the welcome to one who is more

²⁵ As he elaborates, "Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others. Insofar as it has to do with the ethos, that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, ethics is hospitality; ethics is so thoroughly coextensive with the experience of hospitality" (On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness 16-17).

foreign, who is absolutely other.²⁶ Such an unconditional welcome responds not to a visit, for which one might prepare, but to a visitation—by the uninvited or, one might say, the unanticipated. So whereas welcoming xenos is ruled by elaborate conventions, welcoming barbaros must suspend those very expectations (Of Hospitality 21 and 29). The absolute other might comprise the ghostly, angelic, or supernatural presences that disrupt the natural order of things.

Conditional hospitality, Derrida says, reinstates the host's sovereignty, inscribing the violence that subtends the designation of host from the very beginning. Absolute hospitality, however, puts that sovereignty at profound risk. The inversion that Pitt-Rivers describes as mitigating the danger posed by the guest may yet undo the host, for it derives from "the guest's power to hold not only the home but the host's subjectivity hostage" (Saint-Amour 95). As Derrida explains in a dialogue with students,

if you exclude the possibility that the newcomer is coming to destroy your house—if you want to control this and exclude in advance this possibility—there is no hospitality. [. . .] For unconditional hospitality to take place you have to accept the risk of the other coming and destroying the place, initiating the revolution, stealing everything, or killing everyone. That is the risk of pure hospitality and pure gift. ("Hospitality, Justice" 70-71)

Whereas Pitt-Rivers writes from an anthropological perspective, describing the mechanics of decorum that produce this inversion (catering to the needs and wishes of a

²⁶Derrida goes further to say that "the thinker of the cosmopolitan right to universal hospitality [. . .] is also [. . .] the one who destroys at its source the very possibility [. . .]. And that is due to the juridicality of his discourse, to the inscription in a law of this principle of hospitality whose infinite idea should resist the law itself—or at any rate go beyond it at the point where it governs it" (Of Hospitality 69 and 71).

heretofore unregarded person), Derrida goes further to suggest that the host might be changed utterly by the hospitable encounter. As Paul Saint-Amour puts it, “radical hospitality carries with it the possibility that the host may become homeless, or truly haunted, or utterly transformed” (95).

The danger of this hostage-taking is revealed in the shared etymological heritage of “hospitality” and “hostility,” a common root Pitt-Rivers explores in his 1963 paper and Emile Benveniste expounds upon at length in his multivolume Indo-European Language and Society. As Derrida reminds us by crafting the neologism “hostipitality,” Benveniste traced the etymology of hospitality back to two Indo-European families of words, the Latin hostis and the Greek potis. The latter means both “master of the home” and “personal identity,” or the notion that the head of the household is in full possession of his power. As this etymology suggests, Tracy McNulty explains, “The master who is eminently himself offers hospitality from the place where he is ‘at home,’ from a position of ipseity as self-identity” (McNulty x). Hostis, the other root, originally denoted a pact of reciprocity, so hostis meant both host and guest. Eventually, due to developments in Roman law, hostis was distilled to mean “resident alien” and began to carry a suspicious connotation; thus the oppositional terms “hospitality” and “hostility” emerge from the same root.

The English language later conjoined hostis and potis in the word “hospitality,” expressing a vertiginous concept, namely, that hospitality exerts some kind of mastery over the guest, who brings with him the potential for hostility. As Derrida says, the word “hospitality” “carries its own contradiction incorporated into itself, a Latin word which allows the parasitism on itself of its contrary, hostility, the undesirable guest, which it

harbours as the contradiction of itself in its own body” (“Hostipitality” Stocker 244).²⁷ Despite the fact that reciprocity is hidden in the root of “hospitality,” host and guest stand at either side of the threshold at risk not of exchanging positions—for they are not equivalences—but rather of collapsing into each other, becoming entangled. Derrida’s innovation of the word “hostipitality” seeks to expose the hostile potential that resides in the word “hospitality,” as well as the reciprocity that was originally conveyed by hostis.

As this brief etymological foray suggests, the two regimes of hospitality, conditional and unconditional, are mutually constitutive, for a radical, absolute, unconditional welcome could not be such without the conventions it overwhelms. By the same token, hospitality by right (that is, conditional hospitality, the right not to be treated with hostility, grounded on an expectation of reciprocity) “would cease to be laws of hospitality if they were not guided, given inspiration, given aspiration, even, for the law of unconditional hospitality” (Of Hospitality 79). Hence the close association between hospitality and transcendence that we have seen in classical and Judeo-Christian texts: both religion and hospitality are the “opening up of the possible onto the impossible” (“Hostipitality” Anidjar 387).

In the chapters that follow, the simultaneous operation of these two realms of hospitality—the conventional reciprocity subject to the logic of the ledgerbook and the apparition of the guest who renders reciprocity beside the point—will yield quite useful insights, but it is important to note Derrida’s insistence that absolute welcome must always, finally, fail. Hospitality, he reasons, is possible only on the condition of its impossibility: “There must be a threshold. But if there is a threshold, there is no more hospitality” (“Hostipitality” Stocker 261-62). Or, put another way: if hospitality

²⁷ Because two texts are titled “Hostipitality,” I include the editor’s name.

succeeds in making the guest feel at home, then the host-guest relationship itself is voided. As Peter Melville puts it, “The very inequity that makes the relation of the welcoming gesture possible in the first place would be annulled” (14).

In a practical sense, the host can never entirely eradicate the asymmetries of power that have established his status as host, and so a hospitable act, founded on inequity, can never entirely overcome this violence: the stranger “has to ask for hospitality in a language that is not his own, the one imposed on him by the master of the house [. . .] and that’s the first act of violence” (*Of Hospitality* 15). In conditional hospitality, the host is always bound to this asymmetry, this disparity between himself and the guest. Thus, hospitality must always stop short of true welcome. Absolute hospitality (could it be achieved) would dissolve foundational disparities; as one of Derrida’s editors puts it, “The absolute hospitality would be an impossible and self-destructive state in which the host is not the host anymore, is not the master or proprietor anymore” (“Hostipitality” Stocker 238). Furthermore, in this moment of binary dissolution, hospitality would then welcome its other, which is hostility, thereby re-introducing the disparity it has sought to overcome. For this reason—its structural impossibility—radical hospitality must always remain an aspiration, imaginable only on an ever-receding horizon. As Derrida says, “the temporal contradiction of hospitality is such that the experience cannot last; it can only pre-form itself in the imminence of what is ‘on the point of happening’ and can only last an instant” (“Hostipitality” Stocker 258). “The threshold is the ‘not yet’” (255).

The structural impossibility of hospitality as Derrida construes it provides the impetus for Melville’s recent book Romantic Hospitality and the Resistance to

Accommodation (2007), in which he presents a series of readings of Romantic texts that are themselves scenes of reading the foreign. In specific works of Kant, Rousseau, Coleridge, and Mary Shelley, he argues, “figures for the strange come to operate as normative phantasms whose function is precisely to ground and ‘naturalize’ the repudiative discourses by which the Romantic subject produces and sustains its own self-sovereignty” (12). In the end, these excluded figures haunt the texts that otherwise resist their accommodation, and so Romantic hospitality becomes “a figure for the contradictory responses of a subject who both fears and sympathizes with spectres of alterity and difference” (21). Lionel Verney, for example, the eponymous last man of Shelley’s novel, finally encounters no difference but self-difference when the rest of humanity perishes (10).

Melville’s readings provide a case study for the productive affinity between Derridean interpretation and the work of Julia Kristeva. For example, he construes the stranger as referring “less to the existence of actual alterities beyond the consciousness of the Romantic ‘subject’ than it does to an internal difference that constitutes the subject’s own self-dividedness” (9).²⁸ While the notion of the stranger within has some commonality with what I detect as the estrangement of the familiar, I will be considering alterity not as a figure for the self, but as a marker for alienation that is culturally and historically inflected. Therefore, when the writers in my study expose the “moment of violence that turns against host and guest alike” (J. M. Baker 740), I trace the shock of that moment not to the surprise of “internal differences that constitutes that subject’s own self-dividedness” (Melville 9), but rather to the surprising fall-out of the encounter with—as Melville puts it—“actual alterities beyond the consciousness of the Romantic

²⁸ Melville refers to Kristeva’s Strangers to Ourselves.

‘subject’” (9). In this I take to heart Julia Wright’s point about William Blake’s own idiosyncratic nationalism: “free individuals are not hermits: they require audiences, fellow citizens, lovers, and families” (xiv).²⁹ In other words, thresholds offer the opportunity to reconceive the self, but in relation to others.

Tracy McNulty also takes a psychoanalytic approach “to sort out the implications of the hospitality relation for the [. . .] subject of the unconscious” (xxiii), and in so doing, she foregrounds sexual difference. She argues that “the feminine contests the autonomy of the host by giving voice to the alterity within personhood, functioning as the internal marking or the Other” (xxv). It is not necessary, she asserts, to view the feminine as “an alternative approach to hospitality, one that is more open to inviting the other,” as if women are more naturally nurturing (xxvi). Rather, one may focus on “the extralegal status of the feminine, its ‘thingly’ quality, its status as a possession or property ‘internal’ to man” (xxvii) and be alert to the ways in which a woman’s hospitality “is always closely related to that of men, whether by ‘softening’ it, commenting upon or questioning it, or aiding or undercutting it in ambiguous ways” (xxvii). Although I am not undertaking a psychoanalytic reading, McNulty’s erudite treatment helps me distinguish between women who act as ambassadors for male hosts and women who take hospitable initiative differently—Cornelia, for example, in Lodore. Furthermore, McNulty rightfully demands that we attend to the cruelty to women unleashed in foundational Judeo-Christian stories of hospitality.³⁰

²⁹ Wright elaborates her point by saying: “Blake is concerned almost exclusively with attacks on the existing system, bursting [. . .] various other enforced cultural norms, and hence his idolization as a fighter of the good fight for individual liberty. But in Blake’s larger corpus [. . .] individual liberty is inseparable from, though often at odds with, the dominant concern of Jerusalem: an engagement with community, particularly national community” (xiv).

³⁰She speaks of the extended story of Lot’s family. Derrida also mentions Judges 19:23-30 and Genesis 19:1-9 (Of Hospitality 155).

Post-structuralist thought is also applied in fresh theoretical terrain in Mireille Rosello's Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Stranger (2001). Working with twentieth-century text and film, Rosello takes up the Derridean asymmetries of power that erect the threshold between host and guest. This is a violence that cannot be eradicated, she cautions, for "a total absence of friction might signify that other inhospitalities (such as usurpation of land by colonizers, for example) have instituted a Pax Romana [or Britannia?] in which hosts are always hosts, where guests are always guests" (173). Indeed, colonialism provides a special case in reading through the discourse of hospitality. Paul Saint-Amour asks, for example, "How can absolute hospitality be thought when colonialism has resignified hospitality tout court, underscoring the historical proximity of visitation and occupation, guest and invader?" (111). The challenge of "an occupied non-nation" (111) exposes the incommensurability of absolute hospitality and Kantian cosmopolitanism, for as Saint-Amour demonstrates using the example of Ireland, unconditional welcome cannot be enacted between nations; it is proffered only through personal contact. As he sees it, Kantian cosmopolitanism excludes "the face-to-face encounter in which absolute hospitality is offered to a stranger" (110).³¹ So although Kant provides for the border-crossing of individuals (as opposed to invading armies), he has confined that within the discourse of rights, excluding those without status, and "universal hospitality" compounds the offense by eliding the individual colonized or immigrant subject.

³¹ Derrida acknowledges his indebtedness to Levinas on the subject of the face-to-face of ethics and discusses it in, among other texts, "Hostipitality" (ed. Anidjar), especially page 390.

Derrida's writings on cosmopolitanism and hospitality constitute what scholars have called his turn toward ethics later in life.³² It seems, however, that absolute hospitality, receding as it does always into the future, threatens to remove hospitality from ethical discourse altogether, detouring away from any kind of welcome we can envision. Saint-Amour offers an example of how this aporia appears in narrative in his reading of the final scene of James Joyce's "The Dead," when all of the world is blanketed with snow. Given Ireland's status as an occupied non-nation, the ending of the story "allows the political future of the colony to remain shrouded despite having named the absolute necessity of that future's arrival" (111-12). Bringing Kantian cosmopolitanism back into the conversation, Saint-Amour asks,

What perpetual peace besides that of the dead can be imagined by [. . .] people who have lived in a condition of perpetual hostility and have good reason to suspect, as Joyce famously did, the form and legacy of the nation-state that is supposed to end that hostility? Rather than try to represent the political form of a future Ireland, Joyce's story immerses its readers in the ethical and political reasons for maintaining that form's unrepresentability, its unknowability, and draws a veil. (111)

Doing so, Saint-Amour declares, "The Dead" "holds out the possibility of an absolutely strange political form of the sort one has not already welcomed, a form far stranger than the nation-state" (111). So as Saint-Amour structures his reading, conditional and absolute hospitality—configured differently, yet mutually constitutive—nonetheless are together opposed to or differentiated from cosmopolitanism (or universal hospitality).

³² These include Adieu to Levinas, "Hostipitality" ed. Stocker, "Hostipitality" ed. Anidjar, and Of Hospitality.

The nation and the subject hang in the balance in “The Dead,” and this unknowability is given expression as a form that cannot yet be represented.

Imagining a future that takes into account changing models of affiliation is precisely the work Scott undertakes in Waverley and that Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper do in the texts under I will be considering. Rather than theorize their way to aporia, they stop just short of the structural impossibility of hospitality and fashion innovations that arise from alienation. While Joyce draws a veil over forms not yet imaginable, drawing attention to that very quality of being unimaginable, these post-Waterloo writers devise strategies for confronting and grappling with destabilization, subjectivity, alienation, and the question of nation; their texts’ preoccupation with hospitality (the entanglement of conditional and unconditional hospitality) construct elaborate thresholds in which to house that exploration. Notwithstanding Derrida’s construction of hospitality as structurally impossible, these writers wrestle with the limits of the possible during a time that endured a crisis of representation in both senses of the word.

If hospitality is, paradoxically, a disruption in the effort to make everyone feel “at home” in the nation, Derrida helps us recognize the coercive potential of that very phrase, and a Derridean approach allows me to engage with the binary nature of the discursive heritage these writers mobilize. For example, the division of hospitality into two types—which were approximated by Donald Murray as the Roman and the Greek; by Heal as on the one hand the transactions of the tenant feast and on the other charity to the poor; by scripture as both theoxeny and an appeal to welcome the oppressed—lends itself to deconstructive reading. Yet approaching Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper through the discourse of hospitality also reveals dynamics that are not readily accommodated by a

Derridean reading. Or perhaps I should say that these dynamics require emphasizing one aspect of the deconstructive reading of hospitality over others. Derrida asserts that “the question of hospitality is also the question of waiting, of the time of waiting and of waiting beyond time” (“Hostipitality” Anidjar 359). He suggests both the willingness to prepare for the visitor (tending toward the visitor by anticipating his arrival), as well as, contradictorily, the impossibility of waiting: radical hospitality consists in “receiving without invitation” (360).³³ That tension and the sense of waiting evoke a characteristic of hospitality I find in the works of these quite different late Romantic authors. Pitt-Rivers has said that the stranger must be transformed from one “whose hostile intentions are assumed to one whose hostility is held in abeyance” (21). It is that abeyance that becomes crucial to the threshold moments in Lodore and The Pilot and, with more emphasis on marginalization, the poetry of Hemans. In Lodore, the title character’s emigration, recounted numerous times, entraps the first volume in a looping temporality that disorders altogether the ideal of stable location; in Hemans’s poetry the centrifugal force of empire evacuates the metropole and strands the returning Englishman on the threshold of his nation; in The Pilot, which takes place in a liminal zone along the coast of England, various formal elements including the rhetorical use of oxymoron reveal the alienation that subtends the nation per se.

Digressing for a moment to Derrida’s discussion of forgiveness, I come at my point another way. He notes in “Hostipitality” (edited by Anidjar for Acts of Religion) that the paradox of forgiveness is akin to the paradox of hospitality, which, he reminds us, is structurally impossible: “I have to ask the hôte [i.e., guest] for forgiveness

³³ He relies on the French verb “s’attendre” to link the notions of hospitality as extending itself (se tendre) or an invitation (tendre), waiting (attendre), and expecting (s’attendre à). (“Hostipitality,” Anidjar 360).

because, unable to ever receive and give him enough [that is, receive him as a foreigner while still allowing him to remain foreign], I always abandon him too much, but inversely, in asking the other for forgiveness and in receiving from him the forgiveness of him, I abandon myself to him” (389). Thus, he says, forgiveness must always fail; this is the ordeal two people endure at the threshold of their mutual accusations. Furthermore, just as welcoming the anticipated guest is not a true welcome, forgiving what is forgivable is not meaningful forgiveness: what matters is forgiving the unforgivable, which is (semantically and logically) impossible (385). Here, however, Derrida makes an important, albeit brief, concession, acknowledging that “to describe oneself as unforgivable for not forgiving [. . .] is to bear with [compatir avec] the other in the test and ordeal of the impossible” (387).

Here in this “bearing with” I see a point of intervention for the texts I am studying, for it admits the possibility of work that must be done in a moment of suspension or liminality—work that makes the structurally impossible imaginable and equips evolving genres to represent the struggle of alienation and belonging. When in the same essay Derrida expounds on the “autodeconstruction of every concept,” he undoes dialectics by declaring, “Each concept becomes hospitable to its other, to an other than itself that is no longer its other” (“Hostipitality” Anidjar 362); that is to say, the hospitable encounter is nothing less than the birth of deconstruction itself. Whereas Derrida asserts that hospitality (that is, the concept of hospitality) would welcome its other (hostility), thereby proving the structural impossibility of hospitality, the works I am studying position themselves in the liminal space opened up by the confrontation of self and other that inaugurates this chain of events. They dilate upon it and upon the

possibility that some rapprochement might be negotiated not between concepts, but between subject positions. Thus can Cornelia become a host in Lodore, for example, even as Fanny Derham remains un-narratable. Suspending time and narrative, these writers invest in the state and space of liminality to represent the struggle to belong and to posit new ways of belonging.

CHAPTER TWO

Mary Shelley at the Threshold: Displacement and Form in Lodore

For a full year, the creature watches and listens. There in his hovel, peering through a “small and almost imperceptible chink” in a wooden plank, he observes the De Lacey family in the adjacent cottage (85). Attracted to their gentleness of spirit, he comes to know their routines, discerning their emotions and eventually understanding their language. Eavesdropping on Safie’s lessons, he becomes acquainted with the “strange system of human society” (96), and into this growing body of knowledge he assimilates the workings of hospitality. He sees that “the poor that stopped at their door were never driven away” (107), and when Safie first appears, exotically dressed and speaking an altogether different tongue, she is immediately welcomed. Witnessing these transactions, the creature feels sure the De Laceys will somehow “compassionate” him (106). “Could they turn from their door one, however monstrous, who solicited their [. . .] friendship?” (106) Having imbibed lessons of virtue and sympathy from his three precious tomes, the creature imagines “a thousand pictures” of kind reception, when he might move from one side of the cottage wall to another (91). But it will not be enough simply to present himself at the door as beggars have done. He knows he will have to make a subtler approach, and so he plans to take advantage of the old man’s blindness, to adjust the moment of welcome so they might speak, exile-to-exile. If hospitality is

always an exchange over time, this is especially true for Frankenstein's creature if he has any hope of "mak[ing] them overlook the deformity of [his] figure" (90).

He seizes his chance one fall day when he observes the young people leave for a walk in the country. Knocking and entering, he presents himself as a traveler in need of rest, and once inside, he engages the blind man in conversation. Thus far, all goes according to plan. The threshold moment expands, becoming capacious enough to accommodate a tranquil and philosophical exchange about just this topic—how an outsider might be welcomed—before the horror of the sighted family members ejects the creature from the scene. The old man's blindness, in other words, allows for a dilated threshold encounter, deferring the moment of sighted perception that is also the moment of rejection and failure.

One of the desolating arguments of this early text is that sympathy does not cross the species barrier. In Frankenstein there is no welcome for the radically other, and what Derrida calls absolute hospitality is foreclosed over and over again: during the animation scene itself, of course, when Frankenstein turns away from his creature's gaze, and later at the river's edge, when the creature is cruelly rebuffed despite saving the little girl. Now the rejection by his beloved "protectors" (97), which he forever afterward nurses as a cherished resentment, puts the creature beyond the systems of society he has come to understand through his vicarious education. The humanities do not, in the end, humanize him.³⁴ He has observed the threshold as a place of transaction, where alienation is reified and then, ostensibly, overcome, but he himself remains outside the embrace of that

³⁴ Maureen McLane's Romanticism and the Human Sciences examines the connection between poetry and conceptions of the human.

exchange, and so in revenge he declares his murderous, “everlasting war against the species” (111).

Despite the finality and clarity of the creature’s rejection, the De Lacey passage nonetheless makes room for the liminal, that is, for an in-between or suspended condition. The prolonged moment of exchange between the old man and the creature enacts that liminality in a temporal sense; so, too, does the narrative reconfigure space to accommodate this threshold state, for it has a structural analog in the hovel the creature has made his “asylum” (83). His lean-to, attached to the house, affords only visual access, by means of the creature’s spy-hole. Neither part of human habitation nor part of the pig sty that encompasses it, his shelter is an indeterminate space, and upon entering it, he settles into a kind of inertia, “resolved to reside [there] until something should occur which might alter [his] determination” (84). Not altogether confined, he ventures every night into the nearby woods, itself a buffer zone to his liminal locale, for the forest is a region of transience where the creature detects the ghostly presence of others who have left traces passing through: a fire, some food, a cloak, the leather portmanteau. So as uncompromising as the creature’s rejection at the cottage is, it happens in the context of this liminality, the indeterminate zone in which he has lived. Housing him there, the text dilates on the threshold and concretizes it, giving both the narrative and the creature time and space to meditate on whether the other can ever truly be welcomed.

As I hope to show, Lodore, published seventeen years after Frankenstein, proves particularly expansive in just this way, presenting an array of configurations that the threshold encounter might take when the intimate is made strange. Just as the creature inhabits a liminal sphere, so, too, does Lord Lodore’s alienation suspend him in a looping

narrative structure that disrupts temporal progression. In the later novel, however, this personal plight is projected onto the broader historical and political canvas as well, for America becomes the liminal space in which the title character lives a suspended existence. At a time when the coordinates for English identity were being reset by global expansion, Lodore unsettles the notion of location through a series of transatlantic mediations. Thereafter, in the second and third volumes, Shelley repatriates Lodore's displacement by bringing the novel home to England, where his daughter and her husband rhetorically overinvest in an alien condition. Finally, the threshold scene is recast once again through the Greek trope of theoxeny, deployed as a gendered intervention into this meditation on displacement and belonging.

One of the forces that unifies what I will be arguing is a highly-idiosyncratic, fractured narrative is the insight, offered early in the text, that "the consequences of our actions never die" (156). Lodore, as a story of family relations, certainly bears this out in the private sphere. Yet this is a tale of collective belonging as well, and reconstituting the family occurs within the larger setting of reconstituting a reformed nation. In this period Benedict Anderson has called the era of high nationalism, the identity formation of Englishness included efforts to make everyone feel at home; however, Shelley's characteristic preoccupation with alienated intimacy disrupts the process that might conflate "home" and "nation" into an organic whole. Immersed in emigration and reform as historical and textual phenomena, Lodore constructs England through intimate displacements that call into question the possibility of a coherent national identity. According to this novel, bearing displaced or indeterminate status is not only a problem of the exotic, colonized subject; it is a domestic problem as well. Although Sara Suleri

has said that English nationalism is “vexed by its formulation in other worlds” (10), in Lodore, the imagined community of England is vexed by confrontations and mediations staged in uncanny English spaces. Liminality (the suspended condition, the state of being at the threshold) is both the form alienation takes and, as I hope to show, the condition of possibility for change.

So while Fiona Stafford has read Lodore as a rather confused point-to-point comparison between English aristocracy and American democracy, I will be arguing that the novel engages with the young republic not to judge the particulars of one political system over another, but to attest to the mutually constitutive relationship of these two cultures. In this text, America is a highly mediated dislocation, and when the text returns to England, life in the metropole is all the more obviously an experience of mobile alienation. The text’s move from the wilds of the Illinois Territory to the environs of London is not an argument for one system of government over another or commentary on specific planks in a reform platform, but rather a meditation on how belonging—in a personal and a political sense—is achieved and undone. Thus thresholds in this text are both actual (the doorway to the prison, for example) and conceptual (the figurative boundary erected by Ethel and her estranged mother at every chance encounter). Shelley’s text pauses at these various boundaries, calling our attention to how they are constructed and what transpires there. Taken together, these instances of confrontation evoke, adjust, and reconstrue hospitable convention to argue that liminality is itself both a subject position and a principle of representation.

In his reading of The Last Man, Melville contends that the novel “cautions its contemporary readers constantly to re-evaluate and revise their current hospitable

practices; the other demands it, even and especially when we are least prepared to offer it refuge” (170). The note must be cautionary, he explains, because in The Last Man England fails to be hospitable, despite making itself a hospital for all of Europe, by rejecting the plague-ridden African body. I would put my reading of Lodore in conversation with his fine work to suggest a change of vector. Whereas Melville concludes that The Last Man makes an argument about hospitality—that amended hospitable practice is the end, so to speak, of the work—I would suggest that in Lodore the structure of hospitable encounter is the means: the means by which Shelley troubles the logic of clear borders and queries the mechanisms of establishing collective belonging from individual placement and dislocation.

Moreover, while it has been suggested that Shelley’s later novels are formally less experimental than her earlier works (Carlson England’s First Family 199), I argue on the contrary that Shelley’s versatile permutations of the threshold have designs on the novel’s form. Lodore comprises, I suggest, two tales sutured between the first and second volumes. The opening section enacts the eponymous aristocrat’s self-exile in America, while the subsequent volumes, following Lodore’s death, relate the long rapprochement between Lodore’s daughter, Ethel, and her mother, Cornelia. Although the deceased Lodore remains a reference point for the women of Volumes Two and Three, the text invests in those characters to expand upon questions raised in the earlier tale. As a single entity, the narrative both rejects linear story-telling and disrupts tropes of structural organicism. I will begin my argument by considering how the first volume gives formal expression to displacement, but before tracing that transatlantic loop, a brief summary of Shelley’s triple-decker is in order.

Straightened out, the plot relates the story of Henry Fitzhenry, Lord Lodore, who ignominiously refuses to duel Casimir, his secret illegitimate son, and flees to America late in 1817 without his wife Cornelia. He does take with him their three-year-old daughter Ethel, whom he raises on a farm in the Illinois Territory. After twelve years there, she begins to attract suitors, so Lodore decides it is time to return to England—for her sake and for his own, for he wishes to reclaim his good name, and he senses that “his native country must be the scene of his exertions” (141). Perhaps, too, he will reconcile with his wife, who is ambivalent about having chosen life in London with her mother over life in America with her husband and child. A modest yet fashionable figure, Cornelia has had one romance during the dozen years of her husband’s absence, with the wealthy, upstanding Horatio Saville, but he has never been sure of her affection, and so on a trip to the continent he impulsively marries an unstable young Italian woman, with whom he has a child.

A violent death means Lodore never makes the return trip to England, but his daughter Ethel does. Denied contact with her mother by the stipulations of Lodore’s will, she lives for a time with her aunt Elizabeth at the family estate and at various addresses in and around London, where she meets and marries Edward Villiers. This young man, Horatio’s cousin, has been ruined by his own father’s profligacy, but when the young couple’s financial situation becomes dire, Cornelia enters the scene as deus ex machina, settling her son-in-law’s debts and vacating her home so that Ethel can live there. Although this generosity severely reduces her own circumstances, Cornelia soon marries the widowed Horatio. At crucial junctures throughout these events, Fanny Derham, a

young woman of about Ethel's age and far more ably prepared for the exigencies of life, intervenes to aid her friends and move the plot forward.

Shelley's novel has been variously interpreted: as a hybrid of realism "tempered by a sentimental attachment to the ideal" that will influence George Eliot (Cronin 52); as a critique of the domestic ideology that leaves women "powerless when disaster strikes" (Ellis 153); as a silver fork novel (Stafford 182); as consolation for Shelley's own personal misfortunes (Vallins 176). In what has become the standard reading, Lisa Vargo, editor of the Broadview edition, argues that Lodore contrasts two models of female education (Ethel's and Fanny's) and thematizes the lasting consequences of human action (chiefly Lodore's). Most recently, Julie Carlson has situated the novel in the broader context of the Wollstonecraft-Godwin-Shelley reimagining of family as an intimate privilege that must be earned (England's First Family 107). In Shelley's work, Carlson argues, families would benefit from opening themselves to non-blood relations, including those who have gone before: "this entails perceiving family as the encounter with otherness that it actually phantasmatically is" (107). Carlson's astute reading highlights the role of fancy in the work of England's first family of writers, and fancy, she says (in contrast to imagination), "understands any relation as begun in estrangement" (38). To be sure, in Shelley's oeuvre identity and estrangement are inextricably and painfully bound up in each other. In fact, one need look no further than Lodore's given name to see that in this text displacement is constitutive of identity: "Henry Fitzhenry," a palindrome of sorts, offers an equipoise that might well be the fondest wish of his family, "the magnates of the village" who have resided at Longfield "[f]rom time immemorial" (50). Yet the fulcrum of that symmetrical name—"Fitz"—is

the prefix connoting the illegitimate line, the avowed disavowal of hereditary right. We know, then, that in Lodore disruption is lodged in the claim to identity. This is not to suggest that Lodore is himself illegitimate or a pretender to his title, but rather that in this novel the strange and the intimate operate in close proximity.

This is true, too, for England and America, and while this relation is crucial to the text's argument about alienation and belonging, a few instances of the more obviously exotic intersect with this transatlantic tale. For the text's continental figures, nationality is treated as an ethnic designation. Theodora Lyzinski, the Polish countess who is Casimir's mother, has "dark full oriental eyes [. . .]. Her manners were singular, for she mingled so strangely, stateliness and affability, disdain and sweetness" (108). During their liaison, she held the young Lodore in "long-drawn thralldom" (89), her seductive foreignness making him "cold to the attractions of his fair countrywomen" (88) and inured to the hopes of his people that he might marry "some distinguished beauty, with blue eyes, and auburn locks" (89). Similarly, the instability of Horatio's Neopolitan wife Clorinda is attributed to "the violence of passion and ill-regulated feelings native to her country" (398). Her husband worries she will be unappreciated by her "unrefined, uneducated countrymen" (400), but when he suggests decamping to England, Clorinda decries the plan with fellow Italians, who "from the shape of the earth [. . .] absolutely proved that it was impossible to get there" from Naples (404). Leaving England, they concede, is easily accomplished, for "the earth slopes down, and the sun is before them; but when they have to go back, ah! It is quite another affair; the Alps rise, and the sea boils over, and they have to toil up the wall of the world itself into winter and darkness" (404). Far from being able to colonize the globe, it appears the Italians cannot even

visualize it, and when Clorinda shows signs of madness, Horatio aims to escape violent scenes “an English person must cross the Alps and Apennines to behold” (263).

Although some scholars regard the Shelleys’ engagement with Italy as evidence of progressive cosmopolitanism, the portrayal of Clorinda corroborates Peter Melville’s observation that Mary Shelley found some foreign bodies problematic indeed (168).³⁵ Drawn with broad brushstrokes, the foreignness of Theodore and Clorinda is easily legible, and in Clorinda’s case especially, it derives from her attachments to her homeland. Despite Horatio’s nostalgic descriptions of a “true English home scene” (405), she roundly declares she will never be taken to England “but as a corpse” (402), and this is very nearly what comes to pass, for she dies from a burst blood vessel just as they arrange their voyage. England, then, is safeguarded, for Clorinda refuses to enter, and her volatility is denied admission. As anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers reminds us, exclusion is always the host’s prerogative: “If [the foreigner’s] danger is to be avoided he must either be denied admittance, chased or enticed away [. . .] or, if granted admittance he must be socialized” (20). Here, Clorinda is tidily dispensed with through a melodramatic bit of border patrolling.

In contrast, Casimir, the stranger who is not, after all, fully a stranger, poses a more vexing problem. Bitter jealousy arises in Lodore when his son arrives in London and strikes up a friendship with his wife Cornelia, who is the same age. In social gatherings, Lodore finds Casimir insufferably arrogant, and one night at a dinner party when his temper gets the better of him, he slaps the younger man and is instantly challenged to a duel. This creates a painful conundrum: if Lodore stands impassive, he will make his unsuspecting son a parricide, but firing his own weapon is unthinkable.

³⁵ Michael Scrivener reads Shelleys’ Italian-inflected cosmopolitanism (210-13).

“It’s as if,” to use Derrida’s phrasing, “the master, qua master, were prisoner of his place and his power” (Of Hospitality 123). Nominally host, Lodore “becomes the hostage—and [. . .] really always has been” (125). His dramatic encounter with this intimate stranger consigns Lodore to a lingering liminal status, for in desperation he flees to America, heaping scorn on his own name but preserving the younger man. There he lives for twelve years, caught in a transatlantic loop that gives shape to the first volume.

Out of Time in America

It is actually at the conclusion of Lodore’s self-exile that the novel opens. Reading the first paragraphs, we become acquainted with Lodore’s older sister, who, ensconced on the family estate, fondly awaits his return, for she expects he will soon embark from New York City on his voyage home. However, once the text offers this brief orientation, it travels back in time, and the narrative begins to cycle. Lodore’s arrival in America is presented three times in just as many chapters, first to establish his status as a stranger there (“there was an insurmountable barrier between him and the other inhabitants of the colony” [54]), then to describe the deep sorrow he experienced upon arrival in the wilderness (“Sadness sat on his brow, and dwelt in eyes, whose dark large orbs were peculiarly expressive of tenderness and melancholy” [56]), and then once again to incorporate his daughter Ethel into the story. She comes as a complete surprise, for she has not yet been mentioned, but apparently the little girl cheers her father in the “bitter task to forget that he had a name and country, both abandoned for ever” (64). Finally, in Chapter 4, narrative time catches up to the opening scene—Elizabeth at home awaiting her brother—to explain his desire to repatriate as Ethel reaches marriageable

age. Chapter 5, however, then reaches back fifty years to begin a lengthy biography of Lodore from birth through his affair with the Countess, to his marriage to Cornelia, and finally on to the fateful encounter with Casimir, which has caused him to “quit country, home, good name—all that is dear to man” (125). This biography culminates in Chapter 11 with the fourth rendition of his and Ethel’s emigration; self-exile is the only option he can see, and Ethel is better off with him anyway, he thinks, given Cornelia’s active social life.

By the time Chapter 13 ends with the fifth such description, the reader is almost irritated by the text’s insistent looping back to tell again and yet again the tale of Lodore’s emigration. Doing so has impeded but not altogether halted the forward motion of the narrative (we do, after all, get that biography), and even through thirteen chapters Shelley’s deft handling has allowed us to maintain a sense of where the narrative present has been staked out: Lodore’s imminent return to England. On the very next page, however, an intriguing moment of temporal confusion occurs. Chapter 14 begins: “Fitzhenry and daughter traveled for many days in rain and sunshine, across the vast plains of America” (138). Which voyage is being described, heading west twelve years ago or heading east in the present of narrative time? For clarification, one might look to the epigraph at the top of the chapter, which quotes Letitia Landon: “Time and Change together take their flight” (138). As Vargo’s footnote points out, however, Shelley has reversed “time” and “change” from the original, emphasizing a confusion of temporal coordinates.³⁶

³⁶ Lodore and his daughter are heading east to New York, where they will book passage. Vargo points out this reversal as a misquotation taken from Landon’s “The Ring: The German Minnesinger’s Tale” 39, The Golden Violet, 1827.

So our reading experience begins in the gap produced by Lodore's absence (in fact, absence is the subject of the opening epigraph by Pope), and we reside there somewhat dizzily for the entire first volume.³⁷ Through its looping structure, Shelley's text threatens to disorder the notion of location altogether, an entrapment the narrative can exit only when history seems to repeat itself: awaiting their boat in New York City, Lodore is dining out when he hears an American denigrate his father and derisively recount the story of Lodore's own cowardice (160). Losing his temper, he reveals his identity, strikes the rude man, and within hours lies dead of a gunshot wound.

Dueling, as Vargo explains in her edition, was a compelling topic in Shelley's day. (Cooper, for example, in his 1828 Notions of the Americans, felt he should to rebut the claim that Americans are more prone to the practice than Europeans.³⁸) In Shelley's text, I suggest, dueling functions as the bracketing event for Lodore's conflict and alienation. Speaking from the anthropological point of view, Pitt-Rivers explains that man-to-man combat is used as a ritual of incorporation when hospitable conventions cannot be properly enacted, when there is no chance a guest will ever be able to reciprocate a welcome, or when a permanent change of status is sought (29). In other words, a displaced man may be put through such an ordeal to determine his affiliation: "Its significance is essentially that it marks an irreversible passage" (29). Here it is Lodore who is displaced, despite his putative status as host, for when he fails to give satisfaction to his son, a long-smoldering sense of dispossession reaches a crisis point.

³⁷ "Absent or dead, still let a friend be dear,/A sigh the absent claims, the dead a tear." "Epistle to Robert Earl of Oxford, and Earl Mortimer" (1722) ll 13-14. Lodore 49.

³⁸ Vargo includes an excerpt from this work; Lodore 495. Stafford regards dueling as both a sign of the aristocracy's arrogance and as a sign of America's "feudal barbarism" (191). This is difficult to reconcile with other, more positive judgments about America in the novel, as she admits, but I am arguing that deciding which nation is superior—America or England—is not the goal of the transatlantic dynamic of the novel.

He has long felt like a guest in his own house: “Lord Lodore found that he had no home” (101). Given his wife’s exaggerated attachment to her mother, “Lodore was one apart, banished” (100), we are told. “Home! A Tartar beneath his tent—a wild Indian in his hut may speak of home—I have none” (107), he inwardly despairs while still in London with his wife. By the time Casimir arrives on the scene, Lodore’s sense of injury has already displaced him, so the contretemps with his son provokes a more extreme destabilization. With Lodore caught at an “aporetic crossroads” (Derrida “Hostipitality” Stocker 258), a potentially transformative ritual is derailed, and he flees across the Atlantic. Thus we might read the challenge by Casimir in London as a ritual of incorporation that Lodore fails decisively to conclude and Volume One as suspending him between two such threshold events. Separated by twelve years, the two challenges, one unconsummated and the other fatally concluded, bracket Lodore’s sojourn in America and in a sense construct the limits for the repetition compulsion of Volume One.

How fitting, then, that Lodore serves his suspended sentence not at the far-flung reaches of empire, but in America, a locale that shares with Lodore’s native land a cultural and political history, for that common origin contributes to his liminal status, troubling the distinction between insider and outsider because both—and neither—apply. Whereas Lodore’s father once worried that time on the continent might “unnationalize” his son (87), he would not have worried about time in America, where, during the war for independence he himself won his title and where, as Cobbett opined, Englishmen might encounter a purer form of Englishness. By that he meant that America had become the repository of all that once made England great: her wise and just laws, her freedom from oppression and vile priest-craft, and her venerable traditions of hospitality.

Shelley's depiction of "the Illinois," where Lodore spends those twelve years, is notably vague, "cursory," as one reviewer at the time noted (The Sun qtd. in Vargo 547). Possibly no detail was needed: as historian Paul M. Angle explains, "For perhaps a dozen years a tract of land in southeastern Illinois, containing no more than 100 square miles [. . .], was known to more people in the United States, Great Britain, and western Europe than almost any other place in North America" (xiii). This is owing to the enormous popularity of Morris Birkbeck's Notes on a Journey in America and Letters from Illinois (both 1818), as well as a whole series of works whose authors sought to delineate American manners and morals (Chandler 454). These include Henry Fearon, whose Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles was published in 1818; Cobbett himself, of course, whose book A Year's Residence in the United States takes Birkbeck to task for declaring, "where liberty is, there is my country" (Cobbett 304); the Scottish radical abolitionist Frances Wright, who visited the Illinois Territory in 1819 and befriended Shelley a few years later—indeed, an entire discourse community taken up with a fervor to understand America and its role, if any, in England's future. Chandler cautions, however, that Birkbeck's encomia "merely crystallized" a phenomenon that began "with the first jump in [British] emigration [. . .] to America soon after Waterloo" (458-59). In 1815, 1209 English people made that trip, but by 1819 the number grew higher than ten thousand (Chandler 461). Initially the impetus was to leave behind post-war privation, but just a few years later, Fearon noted a significant shift in class: "it was no longer merely the poor, the idle, the profligate, or the wildly speculative, who were proposing to quit their native country; but men also of capital, of industry, of sober habits and regular pursuits [. . .] who wished to provide for the future support and prosperity of

their offspring” (qtd. in Chandler 456-57). Furthermore, many “colonies” were associated with quite famous, if short-lived, utopian experiments. Birkbeck himself, for example, established a settlement with George Flower, who later had a hand in Robert Owen’s community (455). So numerous, in fact, were immigrants from the British Isles that Cobbett addressed his correspondence for Birkbeck to the “English Prairie” (A Year’s Residence 300).

In addition to offering opportunity, America was a fascinating subject of study; hence the touristic quality of Horatio’s meanderings in Shelley’s text when he and young Edward Villiers seek to persuade Lodore to send Ethel back to her mother. Arriving in the Illinois only to find they have just missed their compatriot, Horatio “planned a long tour through the various states [and having] studied their laws and customs, he endeavoured to form a just estimate of the institutions of the New World, and their influence on those governed by them” (199). Given its currency in the culture at the time, the Illinois, that wild edge of a former colony that everyone thought they knew, was available as a kind of shorthand by which Shelley might evoke this transatlantic phenomenon, the construction of an uncannily English place in a former English colony.

If the Illinois was the most widely-known place at the time of Lodore’s emigration there, Gertrude of Wyoming (Pennsylvania) was the best-known girl. Thomas Campbell’s long Spenserian poem by that title was published in 1809 to great success on both sides of the Atlantic. Although invoked explicitly only once in Lodore, reviewers detected or imputed a strong connection between Ethel and Campbell’s heroine, for both girls are raised by their fathers in the wilderness of America and both texts depict “the soul-absorbing affection of the one [i.e., the parent], and the filial love

and reverence of the other” (The Sun, qtd. in Vargo 547). Yet despite the connections readers, reviewers, and recent scholars have made between Ethel and Gertrude (Mazzeo 74), the narrative itself is more ambiguous:

A Gertrude or an Haidée [from Byron’s Don Juan], brought up in the wild, innocent and free, and bestowing the treasure of their hearts on some accomplished stranger, brought on purpose to realize the ideal of their dreamy existences, is a picture of beauty, that requires a miracle to change into an actual event in life. (138-39)³⁹

In other words, it is highly unlikely that Ethel will ever be a Gertrude (that she will find a worthy mate on the frontier), and even if she were to do so, that allusion is itself complicated. As Timothy Fulford has explained, English readers were puzzled by Campbell’s poem (despite its popularity), due to its silence on a huge controversy, the Revolutionary-era policy of hiring Indians to attack colonists on their behalf. In fact, Burke and Coleridge were among the many who in 1778 publicly decried this new practice, denouncing it for compromising English claims to civilized superiority (211). Fulford argues that by eliding this historical fact altogether, Campbell leaves his poem “vitiating by omissions, stereotypes, and tensions” that would not have been lost on his readers at the time (221). Thus while Shelley’s allusion to Gertrude in Lodore bestows on Ethel all the positive qualities of that character, most especially her filial piety, it also evokes a counter-vailing brutality the memory of which English readers found shameful, and it could not smooth over an obvious void in the historical record. If Campbell’s poem is vitiating, alluding to it lends Shelley’s novel a curiously similar sense of elision.

³⁹ Byron’s Haidée, introduced in Canto Two of Don Juan, became an idealized, albeit doomed, figure of feminine selflessness. Having rescued the title character from a storm at sea, she cares for him in a remote island cave, but her piratical father violently separates the lovers, and Haidée, pregnant, dies of despair.

This is not to suggest that Ethel's character is somehow tarnished by the connection to Gertrude, but rather that reference to Campbell's poem is one means by which elision, historical gaps, and reductive stereotypes compound the sense of America as a mediated discursive construct intended for an English audience.

Of course, because the novel predicts that short of a miracle Ethel is not likely to be a Gertrude, Shelley deploys Campbell's poem even as she distances her narrative from it. A similar effect is created with regard to Ethel's father: his emigration at the height of renewed curiosity and debate on America and his settlement among compatriots in a place all of Western Europe apparently had in its imaginary situate him at a highly-charged nexus, the connection between emigration and English national identity.⁴⁰ Yet Lodore does not in fact go there for any of the reasons the majority of his countrymen did; he is not looking for financial opportunity or to understand American manners and morals, nor does he become integrated in the emigrant community he helps to shape. Instead, he holds himself aloof: "Like a Corinthian column, left single amidst the ruder forms of the forest oaks, standing in alien beauty" (61). Moreover, when "that busy enterprising stir" prompts many of his neighbors to push even further westward, resettling at a more promising location a few miles away, Lodore stays where he is, "rejoic[ing] in an accident that tended to render his abode so entirely secluded" (54-55). He stands suspended, in other words, as the master narrative of American settlement sweeps past him.

Rather than shoring up the reader's sense of location, these mediating references expose the degree to which location per se is a discursive construct and underscore liminality as the pervasive mode of the first volume. Here liminality connotes not

⁴⁰ Chandler probes this connection (464, e.g.), as I have discussed in Chapter One.

primarily existence on the edge (although the Illinois Territory is indeed on the edge of “civilization”), but rather a state of being neither host nor guest, yet also both host and guest. Familiarity with the Illinois and with Gertrude, as well as mediation via a whole host of Scots, might be expected to make America more “real” for Shelley’s readers, a sturdy platform on which to stage Lodore’s refuge. On the contrary, by virtue of its being so highly mediated by literary representation, America becomes a fitting narrative space in which to register the unstable relation between the familiar and the foreign. Here in this elaborate threshold space Shelley has constructed as America, such designations become entangled; heimlich and unheimlich become blurred. If the first volume of Shelley’s novel is suspended temporally—that is, deterred from making clear linear progress by an undertow that pulls it recurrently to the moment of emigration—it is also suspended in a liminal place, an America constructed through popular British texts of Shelley’s day. Cobbett hoped that crossing the Atlantic would release the generative capacities of mutual history, providing the English visitor to America with a kind of self-encounter, one that would ultimately benefit England through political reform; in Shelley’s novel, getting caught up in transatlantic traffic compounds the sense of displacement the narrative has created in multiple registers.

Although transatlantic scholars work assiduously to liberate the field of study from the limitations of an Anglo-American dyad, to create a robust “Atlantic” that encompasses the Caribbean and South and Central America, Lodore puts that dyad to constructive use.⁴¹ Suspended precisely in that duality, Lord Lodore is in fact at home nowhere, and in America as Shelley has conceived it, how could the case be otherwise? What better place than America to be held in such abeyance, to bide his time suspended

⁴¹ Key figures in this reconception include Paul Gilroy, Marcus Rediker, and Joselyn Almeida.

between two threshold encounters? Lodore presents America, the other against which post-Waterloo Britain understood itself, as a mediated construct. In that liminal conceptual space, that bracketed arena, alienation also finds expression through a highly idiosyncratic narrative form. The transatlantic rhythms of the first volume, trapping and suspending Lodore as well as his story, trace an ellipse that might be expected to evoke a sense of the whole. On the contrary, the looping narrative shape works against linear movement and temporal progression, disrupting the formation of a continuous story—or of an organic history of Englishness such as Burke, for example, might assert. Invoking the shared history of these two countries thus becomes a powerful means of constructing the idea of England through displacements and suspensions that call into question the possibility of national belonging.

Similarly, the embassies that make brief appearance in the novel gesture toward the putative coherence of “nation” even as they undermine it. A bit of home in a strange place, an embassy is a clearly-delineated enclave of alternate jurisdiction, where the law of the land is wholly superseded by the law of another—or, one could say, where designations of host and guest, easily legible, are nonetheless exactly reversed. Not quite a national boundary, the perimeter of an embassy nonetheless functions as such; these spaces thus defy the borders privileged by nationalism even as they bolster the logic thereof. Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, western diplomatic ranks were hugely expanded and precisely codified, elaborating the hierarchy and function of ambassadorial outposts to assert a foreign presence. In Lodore, however, the embassy is associated with aggressive eruption: Clorinda and Horatio are disastrously married at the English embassy in Naples, for example, and it is at the Russian ambassador’s home that

Lodore fatefully strikes Casimir; twelve years later the rude American, that “chance visitant” and “unwelcome guest” who kills Lodore, is a man “attached to the American embassy in England” (158). Read through the discourse of hospitality, embassy scenes, relatively minor though they are, underscore the violence that subtends all host-guest relations, whether domestic or political.

In contrast to the logic of the clear border, then, Shelley’s text offers up the liminal state, and thus the first volume’s liminal elements provide a provocative gloss on her novel’s original subtitle, “A Tale of the Present Time.” With a high degree of specificity, Shelley has situated her text in a period when England was both (re)forging an identity to fuel its imperial ambitions and losing huge numbers of subjects by emigration to its former colony. But that destination, constructed as it is by other texts and discourses, works through mediation to unsettle both time and place, providing a particularly vertiginous locus for Shelley’s inquiry into her country’s post-Waterloo crisis of identity. Resorting to America in Lodore exposes the degree to which displacement and liminality disrupt the imagined community of England—or, perhaps, constitute that imagined community as fundamentally alienated. Moreover, as I have suggested, the “present time” of the novel is also suspended, for its anti-teleological looping exerts a drag force on temporal progression just as England gathered momentum for colonial expansion. Had Lodore lived to make his return trip, the journey would have worked against this swelling tide of emigration and expansion, but his death leaves Ethel to recross the Atlantic without him. She lands in England at a time when representing the nation is the political topic of the day, and with her arrival, repatriation becomes its own form of alienation.

Playing the Incognito

If the shape of the first volume offers a looping analog to Lodore's displacement, Volumes Two and Three tell the story straight: the long rapprochement between mother and daughter (which Shelley herself declared to be the subject of her novel) proceeds in a conventionally linear fashion (Letters 2.185). The few backstories that it contains are brief, and no single moment exerts a recurrent temporal tug. Rather, the consequences of Lodore's actions unfold in a logical progression until, at the novel's close, the family has been reconstituted and Ethel finally feels at home in the world.

When she first arrives in London, however, the narrative tosses out a profusion of figures in quick succession to represent the young girl's alienation:

There is no uninhabited desert so dreary as the peopled streets of London, to those who have no ties with its inhabitants, nor any pursuits in common with its busy crowds. A drop of water in the ocean is no symbol of the situation of an isolated individual thrown upon the stream of metropolitan life; that amalgamates with its kindred element; but the solitary being finds no pole of attraction to cause a union with its fellows, and bastilled by the laws of society, it is condemned to incommunicative solitude. (173)

Desert sands, a drop of water, organic chemistry, the physics of attraction, allusions to the French Revolution: all of these proliferate as source material for how to communicate Ethel's inability to communicate. She herself ventures into several additional discourses to express her alienation. Upon arriving from America, for example, the fifteen-year-old "found herself in a new country, [. . .] speaking a new language" (168); this is figurative

only, merely a dialectal difference, but very shortly she muses, with the rather halting syntax of one who might indeed be speaking in translation, “I live here as if not only I inhabited a land whose language was unknown to me, for then I might converse by signs,—but as if I had fallen among beings of another species, with whom I have no affinity: I should almost say that I walked among them invisible” (174). Traveling the “mazy streets” of London compounds her acute sense of “exclusion” (173): “All the moving crowd of men and women now around her seemed so many automata: she started when she heard them address each other, and express any feeling or intention that distinguished them from the shadows of a phantasmagoria” (173). Here again a flow of highly mutable images renders her displacement in her native country, and nowhere does Ethel find traces of the London her father described to her in glowing terms. As precisely as the text maps her physical location (Hyde Park, Duke Street, Salt Hill, Brixton), Ethel’s casting about among a seemingly inexhaustible supply of texts, images, and memories nonetheless leaves her ungrounded, so it comes as no surprise when the narrative asks, “Where then was she?” (166). Regardless of whether she happens to have others with her (occasional mention is made of “her party” or “friends”), Ethel’s isolation is a personal state of being that circulates with her “upon the stream of metropolitan life.”⁴²

Marriage to Edward Villiers provides her with the sympathy she seeks, allowing the two of them to lavish on each other “[m]utual esteem and gratitude” (297). On their wedding trip to the continent, for example, the compatible young couple are happy to avoid “large towns, and every place where there was any chance of meeting an

⁴²When living outside London soon after her return, Ethel senses a similar, exaggerated loneliness: she “no longer concealed from herself that she and the worthy spinster were solitary wanderers on earth, cut off from human intercourse” (243).

acquaintance. They passed up the Rhine, and Ethel often imaged forth, in her fancy, a dear home in a secluded nook; and longed to remain there, cut off from the world, for ever” (252). Back in London, she delights in the privacy enjoined on them by their lack of means; embracing a romance of penury, she “brought the same fortitude and love into the crooked and sordid ways of modern London, which had adorned heroines of old, as they wandered amidst trackless forests, and over barren mountains” (300).

Yet secluded, spousal intimacy does not entirely alleviate her sense of alienation or her husband’s developing identification as an outcast. From the time they declare their love, they increasingly express their sense of foreignness through a rhetorical alienation that somewhat distorts the facts of their case. Villiers, financially strapped, often refers to himself as a beggar, ““the most poverty-stricken of beggars”” (229-30), long before his troubles are acute: “I am a beggar [. . .] while each [day] menaces me” (237). When a shabby scheme of his father backfires, Villiers claims he is reduced to “absolute beggary” (287). Yet a beggar is what he steadfastly refuses to be; even on the lam from bailiffs, he stands firm against asking anyone for funds, and he has not, as yet, exhausted all possibilities. As financial difficulties multiply, he and Ethel conjure alternative, adventurous stories for themselves. Drawing their curtains in the evening, for example, they “might have been at the top of Mount Caucasus, instead of the centre of London” (300). Ethel, separated from him for a few days, feels exaggeratedly “cut off from every one, with such a sense of desolation as Mungo Park might have felt in central Africa, or a shipwrecked mariner on an uninhabited island” (303). He vows to write her “letters as long as if they were to go to India” (327). Grown increasingly desperate, Villiers entreats, “Let us instead fancy, sweet love, that we were born to what we have—that we

are cottagers, the children of mechanics, or wanderers in a barbarous country, where money is not” (338).

The young couple’s difficulties are often read biographically, for Percy and Mary Shelley experienced similar anxieties both abroad and in London; indeed, Shelley herself draws the connection in a letter to Maria Gisbourne (Letters 2.261). In the novel, however, this rich investment in the rhetoric of alienation ultimately works to conflate notions of public and private. To be beggars, to belong nowhere, to claim orphan status even if it does not apply—“we are orphans, dearest—step-children,” Villiers insists (338)—is to be in a sense thoroughly public: the homeless reside exclusively in public spaces, and orphans become the responsibility of the public sphere. At the same time, to “play the incognito in [. . .] style” as Villiers cajoles his wife into doing—to hide in plain sight—is in another sense to be intensely private, to publicly disguise one’s personal or private identity by displacing it (334). So while their fugitive status eventually becomes quite real, rhetorical over-investment precedes it as Ethel and her husband persistently re-create a figurative threshold at which they stage the alienating moment of differentiation.

In doing so, they repeat a logic enacted by Lodore; after all, he went to America to live incognito (142). Cornelia, too, grasps the role of outcast with over-anxious enthusiasm. When Horatio learns of her generosity, for example, he becomes “at once aware that Cornelia had beggared herself for Ethel’s sake [. . .] and wandered away, poor and alone” (413). Later, she is the “beautiful exile” (440) who shudders at the thought of transacting business in London, a city “in which she would now wander an alien” (441)—although, because her decision to settle Villiers’s debts has remained secret, none

of her set in London would have found anything amiss. Remaining self-sufficient, Cornelia is not in fact reduced to begging for food or lodging, and no one casts her out. Quite the opposite: when she becomes seriously ill with scarlet fever after vacating her home, an innkeeper and his wife nurse her for six weeks without hope of gain or knowing who she is.

In his recent book Anonymous Life: Romanticism and Dispossession, Jacques Khalip argues that “anonymity is a pervasive topic of romanticism” that promotes or sets in motion “an ethics of engaged withdrawal or strategic reticence” (2-3). Speaking specifically of Matilda, he says that for Shelley, “loss can constitute a resistance to the declarative posturings of knowingness that surface in Wollstonecraft’s models of civic responsibility and public engagement” (152), a resistance he detects in the desire of Shelley herself “for an anonymity or invisibility of self beyond ‘the bitter hard world’s commentaries’” (134). Breaking with “the traditional theories of identity and agency we have erroneously ascribed to the romantic subject” (9), he says, second-generation romantic culture “approaches subjectivity as dispossessed and anonymous” (135). Concerned with “certain affects or modes of cognition that challenge the tidiness of claiming an autonomous ‘I’ as the core of our moral actions” (135), Khalip quite usefully argues that in Matilda a “resisting absence” (159) “fundamentally disarticulates personal fulfillment from self-presentation and self-assertion” (135). In Lodore, however, “anonymous mobility” circulates in London to reconfigure space (166).⁴³ In the second and third volumes, possessing or even provisionally claiming a sense of belonging requires wondering over and over, as Ethel wonders about her mother, Do I know you?

⁴³ Khalip uses this phrase specifically in reference to Anne Elliot of Jane Austen’s Persuasion, but with a different inflection it captures the dynamic I detect in Lodore.

Will you know me? It insists upon foregrounding the imagined or conceptual threshold. This has not to do so much with challenging “the tidiness of claiming an autonomous ‘I’” (Khalip 152) by withdrawing from public view to live like a hermit as Matilda does; rather it alerts us to how a mediated and mobile sense of alienation blurs the differentiation between public and private into an isolation that comprises both. This is not a resisting absence, not disengagement, but rather most assuredly an engagement in the dynamic process of forcing alienation into the open.

This is especially true in places where representation and performance might be expected to redeem an alienated condition. As Carlson has argued, Romantic-era theater was valued “for its capacity to unite people, humanize them, reconcile their conflicting interests and give them something to talk about”; the prevailing critical view was that “collective diversion is central to a social body’s coherence and social functioning” (“Hazlitt” 146). So it is significant that Ethel’s London entertainments are not the socially restricted, elite venues of Almack’s or private balls, but those in which, as numerous scholars have demonstrated, national belonging and national identity are forged through spectacle: playhouses, exhibitions, panoramas, and the opera.⁴⁴ These are all arenas, however, where the audience itself becomes spectacle, a danger Cornelia wants to avoid at all costs, unable herself to hide publicly and unwilling to acknowledge her daughter. Upon hearing from Villiers that Ethel has returned to London, “‘One thing only I cannot endure,’ said the lady hastily, ‘to present a domestic tragedy or farce at the Opera House—we [she and Ethel] must not meet in public’” (213).

⁴⁴ Of particular note are Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging a Nation*; Eric Gidal, *Poetic Exhibitions: Romantic Aesthetics and the Pleasures of the British Museum*. Lewisburg PA: Bucknell, UP, 2001; Christopher Rovee, *Imagining the Gallery: The Social Body of British Romanticism*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2006; and Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864*. Chicago: U Chicago, 1995.

Nevertheless, the estranged mother and daughter encounter each other only in institutional spaces or venues for performance: several times at the opera, once at Parliament, and once in prison. The most elaborate of these scenes occurs in the House of Lords when Ethel and Cornelia independently attend the King's prorogation speech. Having arrived late, Ethel is "obliged to be separated from her party, and sat half annoyed at being surrounded by strangers" (272). Suddenly, though, she hears a voice: "Could it be her mother?" She becomes "agitated, as if possessed by terror" (272). Then, just as the king enters, Cornelia reaches down to fix her daughter's jewelry, and "Ethel felt her mother's hand touch her cheek; her very life stood suspended" (273). She is sure now that her mother will own her and love her, but when she turns again, Cornelia has taken a more distant seat, and afterward, "Lady Lodore went out hurriedly, with averted face, as if to escape her recognition" (273). Now Ethel must quell her hopes: "She believed her mother obviously signified that they should continue strangers to each other" (273). See-sawing between acknowledgment and disavowal, the scene in Westminster is worth pausing over, for Ethel's distress competes with a significant historical drama enacted for public consumption.

Although the annual prorogation of Parliament ordinarily occurred pro forma amid tightly-choreographed displays of pomp and heraldry, the scene in Shelley's text is anything but customary, for a tantalizing detail dropped several pages later allows us to deduce that Ethel's one or two visits to "the ventilator of St. Stephen's"—that is, to the House of Commons—and this more elaborate visit to the House of Lords take place in the spring of 1831 (270). In Chapter 4 of Volume Two we are told, seemingly gratuitously, that the 28th of November is a Monday (289), and although this date falls

several months after the prorogation, the mention nonetheless allows one to trace the novel's internal chronology. We know then that this particular prorogation was in fact epochal, as it was part of the complicated struggle to pass the Reform Bill of 1832. Precious little political contention finds its ways into Shelley's text, but as Cobbett describes in his Weekly Register, the peers attended in great numbers on that April day, although many were not robed, "on account of the suddenness of the announcement of the King's intention to come down to the House" (Cobbett "House of Lords" 342). Despite the hurry, a "considerable number of peeresses were seated," and the members of Commons were dutifully, if restively, in attendance. Discussion before the King's arrival was "clamorous," cacophonous even, with the Speaker calling the house to order "twice or thrice" while the monarch made his entrance (342). As Cobbett reports it the next day, "The sight at this moment was very imposing, when it is considered that the Three Estates of the Realm were assembled on perhaps the most important occasion in the history of the country" (342). Having dissolved Parliament so that he might "meet our people" on the issue of reform, the king made his way back to the palace, "again every where [sic] greeted on his return with enthusiastic cheers. The people calling out, 'Down with Boroughmongering,' [. . . and] 'God bless your Majesty for thinking of your people'" (Cobbett "Pray Read!").

Rather than explicitly acknowledging this political turbulence, Shelley's narrative traces instead the titanic shifts of Ethel's emotions, the "bitter pain" and "pleasure inconceivable" that overtake her in her mother's presence, but if we pursue the novel's internal chronology, we see that when "the peers were ordered to take their seats," taking a seat in Parliament was precisely the issue of the day (273). Ethel's private pain thus

opens up to larger national questions of belonging and alienation. The agonizingly unresolved question of whether she and her mother will continue as strangers coincides with the never stable but continually-reconstituted relationship between the monarch and the representatives of the people. Just so, the business of political representation prompts us to draw such analogies, once again blurring the distinction between public and private as the violent tide of Ethel's feelings evokes the violence of that season in England.⁴⁵

Narrative representation, however, foregrounds the private over the public, for Ethel's alienation never yields focal prominence despite the oblique detail that invites us to infer the agitated context in which she sits. The emergency of national belonging remains behind the scrim, so to speak; we are offered only a limited view of that crucially important moment in what Leigh Hunt called the "King's Theatre."⁴⁶ Presenting the reform bill crisis in this way suggests, characteristically for Shelley, not only that family trumps nation, but also that reaching for those broader analogies, situating the individual's predicament in the national story, will necessarily involve asymmetry, displacement, occluded lines of sight. So even as political representation is thematized in the scene, private, affective representation is also performed—in such a way as to query whether matters of collective belonging can ever be viewed from anything but an individual, alienated position.

The collision of the solitary and the sociable literalized in the prorogation scene exposes, I contend, a fundamental alienation that in Lodore works against the efforts, aesthetic and political, to represent a coherent imagined community of England. While

⁴⁵ Rioting and mass demonstrations occurred fitfully throughout the fall and winter of 1830-31.

⁴⁶ This is the Examiner's term for the House of Lords, punning on the name of the opera company Ethel happens to have visited. See, for example: Leigh Hunt, Albany William Fonblanque, and John Forster, eds. "The King's Theatre." Examiner 1281. Aug. 19, 1832. 534-35.

the threshold of a house or nation is meant to draw a clear line between public and private or between foreign and domestic, thus creating spatial boundaries, here in the house of state that line is obscured. Questions that are asked at any threshold—will you know me? are we strangers? what are our mutual obligations?—disrupt concerted efforts to make a social body.

It is worth remembering, too, that this scene in Westminster presents the reforming Parliament toward which Cobbett, for one, had been energetically working for decades, and he took boisterous satisfaction in noting that respectable journalists were now parroting his rhetoric, much maligned since he composed A Year's Residence from his farm on Long Island: "I have [. . .] lived to see the 'polite' and 'refined' daily papers call them the [. . .] 'RAPACIOUS boroughmongers'" (Weekly Register April 30, 1831, 262). It was his wish in that earlier text that English emigrants to America would return to their native country and bring with them a renewed sense of English liberty, which he believed was exported to America, along with old English hospitality, in the first days of colonization (A Year's Residence 193-98). He might then have been gratified by Ethel's unassuming accomplishment of just this task. Despite her quiet ways and what the narrative argues was a faulty education, she holds strong opinions about the dignity of labor, the importance of resourcefulness, and the imperatives of empathy that accompany her almost serene lack of interest in matters of money. Although Villiers scoffs at her notions, calling them "'philosophy for the back-woods only,'" she believes that a "'community of goods'" would yield a better system of "'generosity, benevolence, and gratitude'" (337). To this he responds, "'We have got beyond the primeval simplicity of barter and exchange among gentlemen'" (337). Yet Ethel credits her having been raised

in America with values that seem at once redolent of days long past and aspirational for a reformed future. If her ideas seem outdated to her husband, they would nonetheless sound radically progressive in England.

Although the conservatively-educated Ethel is not politically oriented, her repatriation rehearses the return of the native—so politically complicated since the days of the Revolutionary War, when loyalists streamed back to England from the rebellious colony—and closes the larger transatlantic loop that began in this novel with Lodore's harried flight.⁴⁷ The Parliament scene, in which her alienation has been most powerfully expressed in its public subtext, foreshadows the reconstitution of the nation. The family, however, is not yet reformed. Its repair begins not in Westminster, but in prison, another institutional space where public and private are blurred, the scene to which I now turn. Here the transatlantic valence recedes as Shelley takes up the classical tropes of welcome to make an important gendered intervention in hospitable discourse.

"Make my home yours, you'll make me your debtor"⁴⁸

When Villiers is arrested for debt, Ethel joins him in prison—or rather, not in prison for he lives “within the rules,” lodging in a house adjacent to the general population of prisoners (361).⁴⁹ Like Frankenstein's creature in his hovel, Ethel and Villiers inhabit an in-between locale attached to the main building, and it is in this liminal

⁴⁷ The Grevilles, friends of Fanny's family, are also back and forth across the Atlantic: descended from loyalists who repatriated after the war, they are forced to emigrate to America during Lodore's time there because they can not afford to turn down a wealthy relative's bequest of land in the United States.

⁴⁸ This forms part of Cornelia's appeal to Ethel (391).

⁴⁹ Villiers is caught up in the consumer revolution that Margot C. Finn analyzes in her book The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740-1914. Her project is to offer a corrective to the meta-narrative that “celebrate[s] the economic agency of autonomous individuals in the market” by stressing that the English economy “was fundamentally structured by credit relations,” and not just the free circulation of goods (2). Old and new practices clashed as changes developed in how imprisonment for debt was carried out.

space that mother and daughter finally overcome their estrangement. Yet as she travels there to retrieve Ethel, Cornelia has decidedly mixed feelings:

She was grieved for her daughter, but she was exceedingly vexed for herself. She had desired some interest, some employment in life, but she recoiled from any that should link her with Ethel. She desired occupation, and not slavery; but to bring the young wife to her house, and make it a home for her, was at once destructive of her own independence. (361)

Standing outside the door of their quarters, Cornelia is very nearly undone, for she realizes that by crossing the threshold she will become, as Derrida might put it, a hostage to her guest. Hence, as she knocks, “her self-possession was failing her” (363), and throughout the ensuing conversation she must struggle “to resume her self-command” (365).

Although Ethel disarms her a bit by coping so well, Cornelia presses on with her invitation, offering three times to take her in: ““You shall come to me immediately, my house is quite large enough to accommodate you—I am come to fetch you.” And then, ““Come then, dear Ethel, you will not refuse my request—you will come with me?”” (364) Her third attempt carries an edge: ““I deserve your acquiescence”” (364), and this more peremptory request has the desired effect—not of removing Ethel from debtors’ lodging, for she will never leave her husband, but rather of setting in motion the repair of their relationship. “Ethel shook her head smilingly. [. . .] ‘the wall between us is broken down, and we shall not become strangers again’” (364).

Thereafter, Cornelia undergoes a rapturous transformation. Exhilarated, she experiences a second birth (371) as she secretly sets about to transfer her fortune to her

daughter in defiance of Lodore's will. Along with the allowance of six hundred pounds that has come to her annually for as long as she has remained estranged from her daughter, her house, where a welcome has never been offered (353), will become Ethel's. In reduced circumstances, Cornelia herself will live economically in Wales and sell her jointure to meet Villiers's debt. In doing all this, she feels "irrepressible exultation at the idea of heaping obligation on him,--and knowing herself to be deserving of his deepest gratitude" (380).

All does not go entirely to plan, however, for a dangerous fever detours Cornelia from Wales first to an inn and then to the Fitzhenry estate, where she recuperates anonymously in the tenant cottage of Dame Nixon. Many of her activities there are uncharacteristically generous: she helps the lovelorn Margaret over a romantic disappointment and nurses the old woman in what appears to be her final illness. One might think that Cornelia is enacting a strategic withdrawal such as Khalip has described, but in the end she does not decouple "personal fulfillment from self-presentation and self-assertion" (135). From this quaint place, I suggest, Cornelia assumes the role of host through the Greek trope of theoxeny, that is, the god who comes disguised as a traveler. One day, when Elizabeth Fitzhenry hears gossip that someone resembling Lady Lodore has been living in the cottage, she marches over there, determined that Ethel must stay away from her mother. Yet once in Cornelia's presence, the older woman seems to fall under a spell: she senses some "mystery" and "strangeness" in Lady Lodore; through some "web of enchantment," she believes, there has been a metamorphosis in Cornelia (434), a "miraculous" change in her (429). Cornelia even agrees to Elizabeth's demands, leaving the elderly matron somewhat puzzled and dazed. (Nor does Elizabeth ever

awaken from this spell, for we learn in the end that she comes to love Cornelia even more than she does Ethel [447].)

When Cornelia has acquiesced to her sister-in-law's request, she walks Elizabeth to the garden gate (a gesture, Pitt-Rivers reminds us, that enacts the host's status by drawing attention to the extent of his holdings), and then an odd passage completes her apotheosis.⁵⁰ Cornelia, now alone, begins to worry about whether she will be able to stand a life of continued separation from the daughter she has secretly saved and housed, nor is she sure how she will occupy herself. Surrounded by spring flowers, she muses on the relationships among women, gardens, and domesticity, concluding that "nature is the refuge and home for women: they have no public career—no aim nor end beyond their domestic circle; but they can extend that, and make all the creations of nature their own, to foster and do good to" (442). For a moment or two, she draws encouragement from contrasting her present sense of well-being with her former life in "the world," but finally she rejects these rationalizations. It is not, after all, enough "to love, to be of use to one of these flowers" (443). Her loneliness will not be cured by turning her steps "to the habitation which God has given as befitting his creatures" (443). Determined to find a different way, she offers up an unusual meditation that evolves into an apostrophe to Ethel:

"God blesses all things," she thought, "and he will also bless me. Much wrong have I done, but love pure and disinterested is in my heart, and I shall be repaid. My own sweet Ethel! I have sacrificed every thing except my life for your safety, and I would add my life to the gift, could it avail you. I ask but for you and your

⁵⁰ "[T]he courtesy of showing a guest to the door or the gate both underlines a concern in his welfare as long as he is guest, but it also defines precisely the point at which he ceases to be so" (Pitt-Rivers 26).

love. The world has many blessings, and I have asked for them before, with tears and anguish, but I give up all now, except you, my child. You are all the world to me! Will you not come, even now, as I implore Heaven to give you to me? (444)

A rustle in the woods, and the young woman appears.

Although Cornelia has raised her eyes “in prayer” to offer this speech, believing that “God will grant the earnest entreaty of a loving heart,” she never actually addresses the deity (444). Rather, she moves from referencing a vague transcendent power to proclaiming her own desires, thereby fusing the two, a pattern that is not entirely new for Cornelia’s thoughts to follow. Seven chapters earlier, for example, as she is preparing to leave her London home forever, she learns of Clorinda Saville’s death, and although she is momentarily stymied by the possibility of reuniting with Horatio, she decides to stay the course of giving everything to Ethel: ““my destiny is in other and higher hands than my own. [. . .] I submit. Let Providence work out its own ends [. . .]!” (393)

Immediately, however, her self-deception is unmasked:

While she boasted of her resignation, she was yielding not to a high moral power, but to the pride of her soul. Her resolutions were in accordance with the haughtiness of her disposition, and she felt satisfied, not because she was making a noble sacrifice, but because she thus adorned more magnificently the idol she set up for worship, and believed herself to be more worthy of applause and love. (393)

Now, in the garden scene, her “prayer” becomes an invocation of the girl she most wants to see, and Cornelia herself appears to exercise the power to summon Ethel’s presence. Just as Zeus, the traveling deity, inhabits both guest and host positions at once

in a display of power, so, too, does the narrative transform this lonely “glass of fashion” into the divine guest who sets human affairs aright. Dame Nixon and Margaret seem to have gotten it right when they put it about the village an angel was staying with them (429). A deus ex machina who resolves numerous material problems and heals the breach with her child, Cornelia and her transfiguration make a powerful gendered intervention into Shelley’s discourse of hospitality. What appears as a sacrifice is not abnegation worthy of a Victorian angel in the house, but rather a demonstration of rights in property to affect the outcome of several subplots developing in the novel. Handing over her home to the Villierses, privately settling her son-in-law’s debts, summoning her daughter to her presence at the cottage, and displacing Providence itself in the passage quoted just above: Cornelia achieves all this, and without unsexing herself, for she marries again (447). Although Fanny Derham is rightly held up as the novel’s progressive woman, Cornelia, too, is a progressive figure, succeeding where her husband has failed. While his encounter with an estranged intimate consigns him to a threshold condition, Cornelia seizes the opportunity, overturning the dominant paradigm about women’s domestic roles and transforming herself through an act of hospitality.

As Tracy McNulty argues in her book The Hostess: Hospitality, Femininity, and the Exploration of Identity, the hospitable scene is historically foreclosed to women, save as possessions to be shared among men. The “hostess,” she argues in her psychoanalytic reading, “marks the insistence of the Other within the [male] self” (xxvi).⁵¹ Shelley’s character, however, works not to become this hostess, but rather to assume the role much further beyond her reach, that of host. Losing her self-possession on the threshold of the

⁵¹ As I explain in Chapter One, McNulty stipulates that woman should not be posited as more hospitable to the other because of inherent feminine qualities. Rather, the feminine traditionally has had a structural function predicated on its extralegal status.

prison house, Cornelia then fully accepts the invitation of the threshold moment. Entering into that risk, she devises a way to maintain power from the margin, so that venturing into the liminal space of the prison lodging allows her to re-assert herself more thoroughly in the end, much as Odysseus loses his way in order to return, disguised, to Ithaca. Momentarily considering a retired life of gardening and solitude, Cornelia rejects that withdrawal and emerges from her meditation with the power to summon Ethel's presence.

This gendered intervention overcomes the limitations put on women in the ancient, inherited paradigm. It transforms Cornelia, and it transforms the designation of "host" by empowering a woman to ascend to it. It does not, however, despite its significance, utterly transform the hospitable encounter. That structure is not fundamentally altered. It is important to note that Cornelia's evolution does not extend a radical welcome, that acceptance of the truly foreign that overwhelms all paradigms and designations. Nor does Cornelia give a "free gift," to use Derrida's term, for Cornelia assumes it is her prerogative to exact payment.⁵² Her gift comes with strings attached, for in her estimation, "disinterested" love can demand reciprocity. So although the text grants Cornelia the means by which a woman can assume a role traditionally reserved for men, the transcendent references—the "prayer" and the deployment of theoxeny—do not lift her generosity to the realm of absolute welcome as Derrida has described it.

With the series of actions she has taken that make a home for Ethel and culminate in her own transfiguration, Cornelia repairs the rupture in her family. The linear story that has emerged in Volumes Two and Three from the ellipse of Lodore's displacement seems to have its denouement. The task of the final pages appears to be simply tidying

⁵² Derrida discusses the gift in Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money. See especially pp. 23-28.

up—although one character who wanders off the page is Villiers; he almost totally disappears from the narrative once Cornelia's payment becomes known. But attending to details does not in fact provide a resolution to the narrative. Cornelia's apotheosis, her attainment of host status, is itself displaced just as Lodore draws to a close, when attention turns to Fanny Derham. With this young woman, the provocative final lines of the novel adumbrate a future in which the very power Cornelia has just seized upon, the power to control one's threshold, is once again unsettled.

Scenes of Cottage Distress

If Cornelia is described as an angel for her kindness to Dame Nixon and young Margaret, so, too, is Fanny a compassionate care-giver. From an early age, her thirst for knowledge and her desire to be useful to other people imbue her with a Wollstonecraftian combination of theory and praxis; she relieves the poor in practical ways while also philosophizing how to end political oppression. But beyond praising her progressive perseverance, the narrative seems as concerned with its own formal limitations as it is with Fanny's future. The novel ends:

What the events are, that have already diversified her existence, cannot now be recounted; and it would require the gift of prophecy to foretell the conclusion. In after times these may be told, and the life of Fanny Derham be presented as a useful lesson, at once to teach what goodness and genius can achieve in palliating the woes of life, and to encourage those, who would in any way imitate her [. . . in] observance of those moral laws on which all human excellence is founded—a love of truth in ourselves, and a sincere sympathy with our fellow-creatures. (448)

Fanny's unexpected appearance in the final passage has elicited various critical responses. Vargo reads the vagueness of the ending as "a challenge [. . .] to recognize the possibilities of social transformation" (37), substituting "an open-ended conclusion for 'they lived happily ever after'" (38). Anne Mellor, too, has explained the novel's ending as a critique of the conventional celebration of marriage and family (207). Carlson calls Fanny "the new Eve" whose unwritten future will extend Wollstonecraft's views on "granting wider worlds" to women (England's First Family 127).

Fanny's remaining unmarried is not, however, the topic of the final paragraph, as justified as these scholars might be in assuming that by remaining "single-minded" Fanny remains single (448). Rather than refer to her marital status, the passage refers to her work, and so I suggest that the open ending be read in the historical context of Fanny's vocation, which in this period was evolving from charity to what we would call social work. While the Public Health Acts were a Victorian phenomenon, the debate over who should undertake these efforts (private or religious philanthropists or government agencies) became increasingly heated during the years in which Shelley was preparing her manuscript for publication (Woodruffe). Culminating in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, this discourse prompted a vast proliferation of societies to conduct home visits in relief of the poor. The reform of England, in other words, included debate over the right or responsibility of the state to enter homes for the good of the residents. Fanny's work, described as vaguely proto-professional, certainly raises the stakes, then, in any discussion of privacy and the wherewithal of a host to control the threshold, for home visiting relegates the resident (or putative host) to guest status—through the very largesse of the visiting "guest."

Her vocation, begun with her father and continued beyond the close of Lodore, will take Fanny into the neediest homes, but her laudable efforts will not always be appreciated. She has told Ethel that she “aspire[s] to be useful to [her] fellow-creatures” (316). “Religion, reason, and justice—these were the landmarks of her life” (322). To that end she studies the Greeks and Romans to clarify her motivations, but even with so sturdy a preparation, the final passage of the novel tells us that Fanny “cannot hope to pass from youth to age unharmed,” for “deceit, and selfishness,” the “unworthiness of her fellow creatures,” and “calumny” will beset her (448). We conclude that “palliating the woes of life” will cause her to suffer, but through it all (an “all” that cannot yet be described), she will not “be contaminated—she will turn neither to the right nor left, but pursue her way unflinching” (448). Although the passage does not give much detail, we infer that this singular person, dedicated, self-reliant, and without means to speak of, will search out ways to continue to do as her father has taught her, to help those who have less, even if it provokes ill-treatment. Yet while the narrative praises her as a role model, a pioneer of sorts, a worried tone injects a note of danger. Just what the threat is “would require the gift of prophecy to foretell,” but to better understand this foreshadowing, one might turn to a much earlier tale, Maurice, or The Fisher’s Cot, which Shelley wrote in 1820 as a gift for a child. Digressing briefly to Maurice sharpens the focus of the final lines of Lodore, for the juvenile tale expresses an ambivalence about charitable home visiting that I believe informs the later novel.

Having endured years of mistreatment by his father, twelve-year-old Maurice Smithson wanders across southern England in search of a better situation. He eventually ends up at the Torquay cottage of a widowed fisherman, but after several months of

living together, old Barnet dies. Just as Maurice is threatened with eviction, a middle-aged traveler rides into town. They meet only briefly because the man's destination is elsewhere, but he returns a few days later. Maurice offers him shelter in the fisherman's cottage, and over the course of their conversation the next day, the traveler explains his itinerary: every summer, he rides from London to Devonshire in search of his son, who was kidnapped as a toddler eleven years earlier. He relates the sad story of the day the nurse fell asleep and woke to find her charge gone, the only trace of him a single tiny shoe. Then the traveler elaborates on his inquiries over the previous weeks—where his search has taken him and whom he has encountered. The chance mention of Dame Smithson reveals to Maurice his true identity as the traveler's long-lamented Henry. Father and son are joyfully reunited, and Maurice is taken to the city to be raised by his biological parents. They buy the fisher's cot, and Maurice and his father return every summer to help the poor people, a practice Maurice continues into his own adulthood.

Even in this brief re-telling, the Greek tradition of hospitality is readily apparent. A wandering father comes to know his son in a rustic setting that is proper home to neither of them, just as Telemachus and Odysseus meet in the cottage of the swineherd Eumaeus, where their own mutual recognition develops falteringly. Telemachus is the consummate host, and Maurice, too, offers his guest every courtesy; in fact, he seems to invoke the traveler's second appearance, for that night, "quite exhausted by sorrow [at the news of his eviction . . .], he got up and opening the cottage door, without eating any supper or striking a light, he knelt down and said his prayers and then went to bed" (91). Moments later the traveler arrives.

All's well that ends well. The family is reconstituted, and Maurice's "innate

goodness survives ill treatment” (Tomalin 14). Yet this happy ending cannot erase the ambivalence that haunts the tale. From early in the story, the traveler exhibits an almost willed blindness regarding Maurice. He spends two months out of every year searching for a boy just Maurice’s age, but when he hears about the boy’s relatively recent arrival on the scene, his fractured personal history, his living with the old fisherman, the traveler says to himself, “This poor boy can be nothing to me” (77). As with Odysseus and Telemachus, although the father anxiously anticipates a scene of recognition, his first encounter with Maurice is actually a scene of misrecognition. In fact, until the very instant that Maurice pieces together the puzzle, the threat of yet another abandonment remains quite real. Maurice’s enlightenment comes just as the traveler is saying, ““If I never find my darling boy you shall be a son to me, and if I do find him—”” (110). The conditional of the traveler’s statement (“and if I do find him”) may be lost on Maurice, but not on the reader. How, one wonders, is that sentence intended to end?

Indeed, the young boy’s identity has always been contingent, and his acting as host of the fisher’s cot is one very brief phase in what has been a life of constantly shifting status. For ten years he has lived as son to a man not his father. He then welcomes a traveler to a cottage to which he has no legal claim. (Barnet’s brother and heir drives this point home with cruel repetitiveness, “[B]y the laws [. . . t]here is no possible reason you should remain in the cottage. [. . .] I need hardly tell you that nothing in the cottage belongs to you” [89-90].) Although both father and son travel a good deal, it is Maurice whose identity is truly mobile, for his status with regard to home and family is constantly changing, whereas his father’s status does not change; it is simply revealed. The contingent nature of the boy’s standing is inscribed in the title as well, for Maurice is

not his real name (he simply adopts it when he escapes Smithson), and the fisher's cot eventually washes away.

Nor does the revelation scene involve corroborating evidence. An engraved coral necklace and a shoe whose partner remains in the biological parents' possession are never marshaled to ground the reunion in any material reality, and because they are not, Maurice's claim is substantiated by narrative alone. Moreover, Dame Smithson explains to the traveler that she kidnapped the boy all those years ago to take the place of an imaginary child she created in letters to her sailor husband (106). From the moment of abduction Maurice has been displaced into and onto narrative, and he never, in fact, loses his alterity; his attachments remain subject to dissolution. In this way the novella supports Peter Melville's thesis that in the dynamic of Romantic hospitality strangers haunt the texts that reject them, disrupting closure and causing hospitality to fail, which is inevitable from the start.

At the close of Maurice, that alterity circulates to disrupt the homes of others, and this is its key relevance to Lodore. Early on, the traveler explains, "I dress myself meanly that I may enter the cottages with greater freedom and make enquiries of the country people in a familiar manner; I [. . .] never pass a solitary cottage without looking at the children, and asking questions concerning them" (105). Later, after they are reunited and reside most of the year in the city, Maurice and his father return annually to the area, where Maurice "put[s] on a coarse country dress, and his father clothe[s] himself as he used when he traveled about the country to seek for his child" (112). Their intentions disguised, they presume they will be able to enter wherever they like, to dispense generosity. So while Maurice and his father have admirable motives, a coercive

element informs their charitable endeavor. They enter freely, reenacting an earlier search that, unbeknownst to the cottagers, might have ended with a child's being taken.

In his own stories for children, William Godwin promoted familiarity with Greek myths, for he apparently envied that culture's "total absence of abstraction" (Carlson England's First Family 238). Uninhibited commerce between gods and men lent a coherence to the Greek worldview, and familiarity with myths and fables built up for children a strong resource and foundation for later encounter with more complicated tales (238). Just so does Maurice stand in relation to the much more complicated Lodore. The charitable work of Fanny echoes the home visiting referred to at the close of Maurice. So, too, does Fanny's entry into "scenes of cottage distress" (316) carry an ambivalent note, for although the final lines of Lodore voice a hope many will follow in her footsteps, intimations of danger are sounded as well. Fanny will persevere in doing good, but her appearances are always an interruption. Certainly they are in the story of Ethel and Cornelia, for it is Fanny who takes news to each of these women that Villiers has been arrested, and on two earlier occasions, she surprises Ethel by arriving to warn her that the bailiffs are in pursuit (333). Fanny is, then, an angel in two senses, both because of her acts of kindness and also because she is a messenger whose annunciations bring unsettling news. She is one who interrupts; she surprises; she gestures to an unknowable future. In all of these ways, I suggest, Fanny Derham is a figure of hospitality. Hazy references to her vocation as it evolves in the future gesture to an unknowability that opens up the final lines of the novel. Giving her pride of place at the end reminds us that hospitality is always to come; its next formulation remains beyond the purview of the text, and according to Lodore's ending, it remains beyond imagining.

Conclusion

John Bowen has observed (in a different context) that the opposite of death is not life, but hospitality (1315). If so, then perhaps it is all the more fitting that a prophecy constitutes the ending of a novel titled Lodore, for even after death, the title character has continued to exert influence over the women in his life: his wife, his sister, and most especially his daughter. “[H]is memory is the presiding genius” of Ethel’s life, we learn in the last chapter (446), and she seeks to act in ways that would win his approval. Her faulty education notwithstanding, he has given her a loving foundation, and her character attests to his own better nature (446). Cornelia and Elizabeth also refer to him in their decision-making and philosophizing, Cornelia especially coming to understand her own culpability in the failure of their marriage. Asserting this gentle presence from the grave, Lodore, like Fanny, hints at a kind of threshold crossing that lies beyond our knowing.

In his own study of Romantic hospitality, Melville has contended that the stranger is never fully welcomed, and his reading is founded on the Derridean premise that hospitality must always, the end, fail: it works toward its own effacement. As reliable and trenchant a tool as Derrida’s formulation is in my reading of Lodore, I would contend that the structural impossibility of hospitality is not the argument of this unusual work of literature. The point is not, as Melville suggests regarding other works and authors, that the Romantics anticipate Derrida. Nor would I wish to conclude, as he does, that the logical foreclosures of hospitality derive from a fundamental self-dividedness of human subjectivity. In Lodore, individual instances of hospitality do fail: Casimir’s appearance leaves Lodore himself at an impasse. Cornelia’s offer to Ethel exacts a price. The scene

in Parliament—part of a massive effort to adjust and redefine designations of citizenship—blurs public and private to accentuate Ethel’s alienation. As an event, then, hospitable encounter in this novel does indeed fall short of true welcome, the welcome that would allow the other to remain other, that would eschew conventions of reciprocity and aim for a dynamic of human interaction that exceeds all we can imagine. But as a discourse of hospitality, Lodore succeeds beautifully. It poses questions about the possibilities of belonging, about how the threshold might be constructed, about how to enter into welcome and what barriers prevent it, and Shelley’s abiding preoccupation with alienation and belonging is manifested in a specific historic context. In other words, the argument in Lodore is not that human encounter must fall short of a hospitable ideal, but rather that hospitality is always at work. The confrontation between alienation and belonging is constant, active and evolving. As in Frankenstein, where Shelley dilates on the threshold moment to introduce liminality as structural component of hospitable encounter, so, too, in Lodore does she present an array of threshold encounters, and rather than emphasize this variety as a similar, repeated kind of failure, I suggest that together and with the force of argument, these scenes assert liminality and displacement as pervasive. Moreover, the struggle to belong becomes particularly poignant when estrangement is intimate. In Lodore, otherness is a matter of shared origin. Alienated intimacy is not a new subject for Shelley, of course, but in this novel it becomes a political issue as well, for it is steeped in the contexts of emigration, expansion, and reform. Harnessing the transatlantic dynamic, she demonstrates that national identity is constructed through displacement and mediation. Liminality is a predicament not just for

the individual subject, but in the context of England's post-Waterloo crisis of national identity, for all those who would be at home in the nation.

If hospitality is a means of organizing encounter, it is also, I have argued, a means of organizing this novel. Tracing the text's nimble construction of thresholds and threshold spaces has illuminated the formal idiosyncrasies of a narrative that has all too often been regarded as formally conventional. The first volume resists teleology by returning to the moment of emigration, exerting a drag force on temporal progression and unsettling stable location. America, as a conceptual realm, is offered up as a mediated discursive construct. Emerging from the loop of Lodore's displacement, the plot appears to be told in linear fashion, but the ending disrupts a sense of closure. In Volumes Two and Three, alienation becomes a mobile, metropolitan phenomenon as several characters invest in dispossession. Finally, Cornelia's actions foreground the Greek roots of hospitable tradition, offering a workable solution to the personal ruptures in the novel. Restlessly, however, the text moves to another configuration of the threshold, that of charity, to sound a final ambivalent note about new patterns that will redefine the threshold as subject to entry by those who would be generous. The question in all of these permutations is not whether hospitality is inevitably working toward its own effacement, but how hospitality is at work. At one point in the novel, Horatio imagines expressing to Cornelia his admiration for her generosity to Ethel: "while others theorize, you embody" (413). Likewise, Shelley both thematizes the liminality that disrupts tropes of organicism and performs that dynamic as well.

Upon its publication, an admiring reviewer for The Sun enthused, "This tale possesses one recommendation, which is by no means of frequent occurrence among the

fictions of the day. It excites attention at the threshold” (Vargo 546). That is, Lodore engages its reader from the opening page. I have taken the point rather differently, contending that the narrative commands our attention to the threshold. Some of these thresholds are entirely conceptual, as when Ethel and Villiers move from place to place in London as if they are strangers. In other instances the threshold is quite “real” or mappable—the grounds of the embassy, for example. Sometimes the threshold dynamic takes an ancient form, and sometimes it gestures to the still-evolving. So in addition to charting the successful attachment of Ethel to her husband (Carlson England’s First Family 124); to contrasting models of education for women (Vargo); to offering a nuanced analysis of a troubled marriage (Cronin), Lodore participates in a broad cultural discourse about how to imagine England. It cannot be done, the novel argues, without accounting for displacement, and in Lodore, Shelley gives formal expression to that truth, innovatively meeting the aesthetic challenge of how to represent the struggle of national belonging, of belonging in the metropole, of belonging at all.

CHAPTER THREE

England as Centrifuge:

Felicia Hemans and the Threshold Foreclosed

In the summer of 1823, the British Critic declared that when a woman can write as Felicia Hemans could, “she ought to write. Her mind is national property” (53). Indeed, in the heyday of Hemans’s commercial and critical success, she seemed to speak for all of England. What Stuart Curran has called her “laureate manqué” status (“Hemans”) surely derived from her ability to express a potent “fusion of domestic and military values” (Lootens “Internal” 241) that both fueled and reflected England’s post-Waterloo triumphalism. And although she regretted at the time of her death that she had not crafted the one “noble and complete work [. . .] which might permanently take its place as the work of an English poetess,” the Victorian afterlife of her poetry suggests that her oeuvre, taken as a whole, certainly achieved this aim.⁵³ Her enormously popular “feminine poetic national sentimentality” (Lootens “States of Exile” 31) continued to be vital posthumously, both in the British Isles and at the farthest reaches of empire, where “Victorian culture tells soldiers that they fight for home, and it often does so in the voice of Felicia Hemans” (Lootens “Internal” 239).

If those soldiers were listening closely, they might have heard the curious harmonics Heman’s poetry always seems to produce: the lament that keens high above

⁵³Hemans expresses her disappointment in letter dated 13 Feb. 1835 to Rose Lawrence, included in Susan Wolfson’s volume on page 521.

her praise of valor; the “martial predilection” that threatens a discordant note in hymns of devotion to the hearthside (Eubanks 342). By the time Victorian soldiers were marching to her rhythms, such dissonances were willfully resolved in favor of a cleaner chord. Routinely anthologized in the nineteenth century as evangelist for England’s global mission, Hemans has figured prominently in Victorian studies. Tricia Lootens, for example, speaks extensively of Hemans as a patriot in The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry; Curran explains that along with Laetitia Landon, she functions as “an actual transition into the characteristic preoccupations of Victorian verse” (“I” 188); and publishing records indicate that Hemans was even more widely read in the last half of the nineteenth century than in the first (Feldman xii). Yet as closely identified with Victorian culture as she was (so much so that she shared its fate, decisively disavowed by modernist aesthetics), Hemans died two years before the young queen was crowned. Alternatively situating her in the post-Waterloo era—that is, reading her in the context of her own day—allows us to grapple with tensions that were smoothed over as her arguably progressive aims were recatalogued to Tory objectives.⁵⁴ Fashioning Hemans as the mouthpiece of empire could only be done in the nineteenth century by ignoring certain persistent frictions in her work, one of the most important of which is sited at the threshold—and by “threshold” I mean both domestic and national boundaries, for in Hemans’s poetry, one is insistently extrapolated to figure as the other.

Recently Susan Wolfson has positioned the poet “along the borders of gender” to explore the “instabilities and complexities” of masculine and feminine constructions in

⁵⁴ Sweet and Melnyk remark: “Variously she is the last Romantic and the first Victorian” (Introduction 4). Wolfson and Fay touch on the susceptibility of Hemans’s work to opposing political interpretations: “The sensitivity of Tory reviews to Hemans’s emergent critique of military patriotism in post-Napoleonic England is evident both in their refusal to acknowledge this perspective and in the negative rhetoric of their praise for her other virtues” (22).

the post-Waterloo period (Borderlines 3, 35). I will be looking at borders in a different way, using the discourse of hospitality to shine new light on the troublesome, fascinating frisson between the domestic and the foreign in Hemans's work. In doing so, I find in a surprisingly vigorous resistance to homecoming, a paucity of welcome that commands our attention, given her status as poet of the domestic sphere.

Oddly enough, for example, in the oeuvre of a woman who has been celebrated for helping to forge British national identity (and as Tricia Lootens has argued, “[f]ew poetic careers can have been more thoroughly devoted to the construction of national identity than was that of Felicia Hemans”), England is not the central focus (“Hemans and Home” 239). On the contrary, Hemans's work is, with a few notable exceptions, replete with national tales, historic scenes, and portraits from other times and cultures.⁵⁵ Her “exotic historical and cultural displacements” (Wolfson and Fay 22), viewed in conjunction with Hemans's far less numerous representations of her own country, suggest that while she contributed significantly to the idea of England and the forging of a British identity, she did so by citing the legends of other peoples. Her own country, for example, might be inspired by Mediterranean culture to reimagine itself as a reformed republic, as Nanora Sweet has argued (“Lorenzo”), but such reimagining does not incorporate Mediterranean figures into the English scene. Neither do exemplary characters or qualities proliferate from within. Thus if England is the center, the metropole, in the work of this laureate manqué, its boundaries are shaped by exemplars of non-British

⁵⁵ As the dates of these exceptions suggest, monarchs and military heroes of England became less intriguing as Hemans's work matured: “Richard Coeur de Lion,” “The Burial of William the Conqueror,” “Sacred to the Memory of Lord Nelson” (1808), England and Spain, “The Call of Liberty,” “The Name of England,” “Stanzas on the Death of the Princess Charlotte” (1818), War and Peace, Stanzas to the Memory of the Late King (1820), and Dartmoor: A Prize Poem (1821). Wolfson and Fay date her “national emergence” to 1820 (7).

heritage. These laudable foreigners cluster just beyond the pale, so to speak and, as I will be arguing, give form to an emptied-out and largely uncharacterized imaginative center they themselves never actually enter.

On the relatively infrequent occasions when Hemans does depict her homeland, it is most often rendered as a series of de-populated homes and cherished graves, set in an undifferentiated landscape. Lacking specificity, the domestic space itself is synecdochically reduced to the hearth and the vine-covered porch or doorway where characters linger to say their good-byes, and one seems to be the same as any other. Located anywhere or nowhere, the home becomes an abstract site where traffic flows in one direction only: outward, either through abandonment (by the emigrant, the bride, the prodigal son) or through military service. The family unit mourns in isolation, and the home, while valorized in the abstract, fails to be comprehended with any specificity or locale. Pondering this lack of detail, Herbert Tucker has suggested that in choosing not to describe the interior of any particular English home, Hemans breaks down barriers of class, and although he has been gently chided for expecting such specifics from the poet, his hypothesis highlights a salient feature of Hemans's texts, an abstraction that distinguishes her work from the quotidian detail of contemporaries or near-contemporaries such as Landon, Anna Barbauld, Mary Robinson, or Jane West.⁵⁶ An exceptional poem that seems to prove this rule about Hemans's work is "A Father Reading the Bible," which does indeed paint the scene of sunlight streaming in upon an elderly man as he "commune[s] with the page/Of heaven's recorded love" (Rosetti ll. 7-

⁵⁶ In the introductory essay to their volume on Hemans, Sweet and Melnyk suggest that in "requir[ing] that she furnish that 'home'" Tucker attempts to confine Hemans to the domestic milieu (4). Barbauld, Landon, Robinson, and West figure prominently in Curran's essay "Romantic Poetry: The 'I' Altered," in which he takes this group to be similar in their emphasis on two things: "an investment in quotidian tones and details and a portrayal of alienated sensibility" (203).

8).⁵⁷ This poem was privately commissioned, however, to describe this very moment, a highly unusual circumstance for Hemans. Almost without exception otherwise, home remains an idea, represented by the synecdoches of hearth and threshold, both of which are invoked to signify England and (much the same thing) what is not there. As I will elaborate below, Hemans, having established an equivalence among the hearth, home, and nation, deploys several strategies to render that place inaccessible.

It is this complex resistance to hospitable encounter that I will be examining by looking first at how foreigners figure in a body of work that contemporaries viewed as quintessentially English and then at how Hemans's poetry presents the threshold itself. Doing so, I will be reading a number of poems that have remained obscure within the Hemans canon, as yet unattended to in the scholarly recovery of her work. These texts, preoccupied with welcome as unfulfilled, suggest that despite the ideals of domesticity with which Hemans has been so closely aligned, home and hospitality are de-coupled in her work. Through three particular strategies (compromise, occlusion, and consigning the speaker to a liminal space), she forestalls and frustrates the welcome her poetry has been understood to extend.

William Hazlitt opined in 1814 that natural affection for his country could no longer expand "in circles of latitude and longitude" (67). Given England's imperial ambition, patriotism will require a degree of abstraction, for "our country is no longer contained within the narrow circles of the same walls" (67). A poet of abstraction herself, Hemans employs those images—circles and walls—in her poetry of the late 1820s and 1830s, constructing an England that works, I will be arguing, like a centrifuge.

⁵⁷ Because I am reading across so many volumes, I include the editor(s) or place of publication if that helps to identify the volume, in addition to line numbers.

With its energy flowing ever outward, no centrifuge allows for return. Likewise in Hemans's poetry, thresholds (walls, doorways, shorelines, national borders) become surprisingly resistant to contrary motion as the home and nation are lamentably subjected to this process of evacuation. It is not possible for the returning Englishman, let alone the more obviously estranged, to gain admission to the domestic space. It is possible in a few texts, however, to linger, to be suspended in a liminal state; pausing at the threshold, Hemans draws our attention to the moment of hospitable potential, all the more forcefully to undo it.

It is worth noting that centrifugal motion does not dissolve limits, for in the working of a mechanical centrifuge, substrate is dispersed to edges that both contain and give form to it in its transformed state. So, too, is the case with Hemans's poetry: ever-widening circles of latitude and longitude—England's expansion beyond the island home—send inhabitants to the farthest reaches. Her poetry explores both that outward flow and the consequences for the center, where hospitable encounter is persistently denied. I will trace the formal expression of this foreclosure later in the chapter, pursuing the three strategies I mentioned above, and then I will turn to the transatlantic valence of her work, for as in Shelley's Lodore, the young republic becomes the site for meditation on Englishness as an experience of displacement. First, though, I consider her deployment of the foreign by offering a quick tally of her subject matter.

Where have all the émigrés gone?

From her first published collection to her final volumes, Hemans frequently adopted what must have been her preferred mode, the genre she called the "record," a

poem recounting a particularly provocative incident in the life of a well-known historical or legendary figure. Casting one's eyes over the contents of her seven major collections, one discerns immediately the transnational and transhistorical range of these characters. As early as 1812, for example, at the age of nineteen, when she privately published The Domestic Affections and Other Poems, an orientation toward other cultures announces itself, the title of the volume notwithstanding: a poem about a dying gladiator is followed by "A Sonnet to Italy," "War-Song of the Spanish Patriots," and more. In Tales, and Historic Scenes, in Verse, which followed seven years later, she presents the widow of Crescentius (a tenth-century Roman), Antony and Cleopatra, the wife of Asdrubal (an imprisoned Carthaginian), Conradin (Bavarian claimant to power in the wars between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines), among many disparate others. Also included in the Tales was A Selection of Welsh Airs, which was followed by the separate publication of Welsh Melodies in 1821. Two years later, her dramatic poem The Siege of Valencia appeared, accompanied by "Songs of El Cid," "Greek Songs," and several miscellaneous pieces ranging across the globe and throughout history, and her play The Vespers of Palermo, recounting episodes in thirteenth-century Italian conflict, was staged in Edinburgh. The Forest Sanctuary (1825) included "Lays of Many Lands," following the transnational, transhistorical pattern she was developing.

Then in 1828 came Records of Woman, her best-selling and most popular book, "a cohesive tour de force marking the height of Hemans's poetic achievement" (Feldman xx). Here she retells nineteen incidents from the woman's point of view, speaking, for example, for the Swiss patriot's wife who sends her husband off to fight, rather than for the soldier himself. Also praised in Records of Woman is the fidelity and affection of

Gertrude (who stayed by her husband as he was tortured to death in the early fourteenth century), the valor of Joan of Arc and of Pauline (a German princess who died saving her daughter in a fire), and others whose stories fill “a gap in the patriarchal account” of Western history (Feldman xxi). The miscellaneous pieces of the volume include “The Sicilian Captive,” “Roman Girl’s Song,” “The Image in Lava,” “The Kaiser’s Feast,” and “Körner and His Sister” (which recounts not only the German poet’s death in a skirmish against the French in 1813, but also his sister’s perishing from grief).

One cannot appreciate this transcultural pantheon without also noting the relatively poor showing of Hemans’s compatriots in her poems. Julie Melnyk, sensing discrepancy in Records of Woman, has counted international poems versus those with a connection to England, and the domestic setting appears in fewer than 1 in 5 (“Wordsworth and Hemans” 145).⁵⁸ One might even skew that downward, for “The Grave of a Poetess,” which has been noted as the only poem in Records to be set in Hemans’s England (Feldman xx), actually takes place in Ireland, and “An Hour of Romance,” which Andrews Norton praised for its depiction of “the English scene” (Feldman 203 n.), is set in Wales, another contested “British” space.

To be sure, the miscellaneous pieces of this volume include several of her most heavily-anthologized poems, which do have English topics: “The Homes of England” and “The Graves of a Household” became standard English lyrics, and “The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England” flourished as a recitation piece in the United States into the twentieth century. Additionally, two poems are dedicated to admired Englishmen, William Wordsworth and Reginald Heber. In the “Records” section itself, however,

⁵⁸ Melnyk does this in order to argue that after 1830 Hemans took Wordsworth as her model rather than Byron.

populated as it is with exemplars and laudable ideals, England makes a poor showing: “Arabella Stuart” and “The Memorial Pillar” (which marks the location where Anne, Countess of Pembroke, parted from her beloved mother) are the only two native topics, a gap Lootens incidentally draws attention to by referring to the Switzer’s wife as “an honorary English national heroine” (“Internal” 243).

The underrepresentation of compatriots in her most popular volume is repeated in National Lyrics, and Songs for Music, in which one might expect to find a strong English presence. This volume, published in 1834, contains poems or clusters of songs on Germany, Greece, Italy, Normandy, Spain, Ireland, Norway, and more, but only six of the 111 poems are even remotely concerned with the country that claimed Hemans’s mind as its national property.⁵⁹ Similarly, in Songs of the Affections (1830) and Scenes and Hymns from Life (1834), Hemans recreated the stories of, for example, Sappho and Corinne, and although Melnyk argues that English settings are more evident in Scenes because there are several pieces praising English churchyards, through nineteen volumes published in her lifetime, Hemans depicted characters from English lore on very few occasions, and no figure in her mature oeuvre stands as the avatar of liberty, which she suggests early on is her country’s special claim.⁶⁰ Thus one cannot help but sense a jarring asymmetry to read in Blackwood’s that “Scotland has her Baillie—Ireland her Tighe—England her Hemans” (Sept. 1819; qtd. in Wolfson and Fay 7), for Hemans’s status as laureate manqué derives upon closer inspection from a retelling of tales set across the globe rather than in England.

⁵⁹ These six are: “The Burial of William the Conqueror,” “The Curfew-Song of England,” “England’s Dead,” “The Name of England,” “The English Soldier’s Song of Memory,” “Written after Visiting a Tomb near Woodstock.” One might also include “A Farewell to Abbotsford.”

⁶⁰ “Sacred to the Memory of Lord Nelson” was included in Poems, 1808, and Stanzas to the Memory of the Late King was published in 1820.

Even given the predominance of foreign figures over English, Hemans was phenomenally successful at repackaging her records and tales for consumption by Britons living abroad, as Wolfson has amply demonstrated in several publications. Hemans's poetry was praised resoundingly for its "able broadcasting of English standards" all over globe ("Dilemma of Gender" 132). Francis Jeffrey, for example, extols her in the pages of the Edinburgh Review of 1829, explaining that her records

retain much of what is interesting and peculiar in each of [the different nations] without adopting, along with it, any of the revolting or extravagant excesses which may characterise the taste or manners of the people or the age from which it has been derived. (qtd. Wolfson 552)

In other words, Hemans recast these traits as quintessentially English, which proved remarkably appealing.⁶¹ Similarly, as another contemporary critic noted, her excellence "has been acknowledged, not only in her own land, but wherever the English tongue is spoken, whether on the banks of the eastern Ganges, or the western Mississippi" (qtd. in Borderlines 43). Looking back from the year 1861, Jane Williams recalled, "The writings of Mrs. Hemans met with immediate and extensive popularity, alike in the most distant and alienated colonial settlements and in the old home of the British race" (qtd. in Wolfson 602).

An international scope might be expected in the work of a woman born in Liverpool to a merchant father and a mother of Italian and German descent. Although Hemans found herself relatively isolated during long periods of residence in Wales, bustling Liverpool no doubt provided early impressions of diverse cultural experience to complement her broad program of reading, which from a young age she undertook in

⁶¹Wolfson has called this "the happy Englishing of world literature" ("Dilemma of Gender" 132).

original languages (she read at least six in addition to English). These kinds of exposure surely stimulated what has rightly been praised as a facility across temporal and geographic borders. Yet the eclecticism of the port city and her particular family history does not find its way into Hemans's individual texts or the scenes represented in her poetry. Thus, although Marlon Ross has attributed the poet's nineteenth-century popularity to her championing "civilizing conventions" that while permanent (according to the standards of dominant Victorian culture) are "fearfully permeable by savage others" (Foreword xii), I would contend, on the contrary, that others, whether "savage" or "civilized," only ever enter England when they appear on the pages of her printed texts.⁶² By that means, to be sure, even Indian mothers are brought "familiarily into the comfortable parlor," as Ross suggests [Foreword xii]), but in fact exceedingly few cross-cultural encounters are depicted within her texts themselves. In other words, her volumes of poetry effect a permeability as material objects that her individual poems as textual works do not allow. On the level of diegesis, permeability—of convention, of home, and most especially of England—is roundly rejected. Assembled in the pages of her poetry, the widow of Crescentius, the Queen of Prussia, the mother from Herculaneum, the boy on the burning deck of the French frigate, and many, many others remain insulated; they certainly stand discretely separate from English characters. Thus, although Wolfson suggests (in a slightly different context) that the transhistorical categories deployed in her occasional poems constitute "the foreign scene returning a sign of a universal condition" (Introduction xvi), I argue here that we need to adjust this assessment, for, as I hope to show, "return" is a crucially problematic concept in Hemans's work, and "universal" in

⁶² This is the irony of imperial discourse, as David Spurr explains: "the desire to emphasize racial and cultural difference as a means of establishing superiority takes place alongside the desire to efface difference and to gather the colonized into the fold of an all-embracing civilization" (32).

the post-Waterloo period implies a right of hospitality that is specifically forestalled in Hemans's poetry.⁶³

It is by engaging in this transnational, transhistorical process, posting other cultures' stories to the far corners of the English-speaking world—at the same time that her own homeland appears to stimulate so few texts in comparison—that we begin to see Hemans's poetry acting as a centrifuge. English subjects remain almost entirely absent from her roster of brave exemplars, foreign subjects are introduced only to be flung back out to the farthest Anglophone reaches, and no native English qualities are identified beyond an abstracted freedom. As “Liberty's immortal fane”—an image that itself conjures up a hollow space, in quite an early poem—England will defend the cause of freedom across the globe, instituting a reign of peace that will “circle all mankind!” (“War and Peace” Domestic Affections ll. 129, 577).⁶⁴ But this vision of England exporting its liberty, we cannot help but notice, creates an unchecked outward flow. Meanwhile, England itself is presented as a series of reduced and isolated homes, insulated from the provocations of welcome.

From the early days of scholarly recovery work, feminists have commented on the dispersal of the home in Hemans's poetry. Anne Mellor, for example, has quite powerfully described the various ways in which families are destroyed when they are made vulnerable to the public sphere, especially through war (Romanticism and Gender).⁶⁵ But, as I will be demonstrating, Englishness is so associated with

⁶³ The categories they mention include “boy,” “Father,” “battle,” and “post of death.” (22).

⁶⁴ “War and Peace” justifies England's engagement in the Napoleonic Wars: “Nor sanction'd e'er by purer, nobler laws;/Has Albion seiz'd the saber and the shield,/Or rush'd impetuous to th' ensanguin'd field!” (ll 475-77). Triumphant in a war to end all wars, English imperialism will thereby realize progressive ends, mounted as it is against the volcanic aggressions of Napoleon.

⁶⁵ Mellor describes the collapse of the domestic ideology she sees Hemans as championing; this results in an emptied out domestic ideology (Romanticism and Gender 135-36).

estrangement and displacement in her poetry, and the outward tide is so strong, that an even more complex picture emerges. Constructed through transactions at the threshold, England seems to be in danger of being emptied out—not literally, of course, but conceptually. So while Lydia Sigourney praised Hemans a few years after her death for having oriented her poetry toward the “whole sweet circle of the domestic affections,—the hallowed ministries of woman, at the cradle, the hearth-stone, and the death-bed,” this appreciation for the closely-circumscribed sites of a woman’s domestic responsibilities only tells part of the story (qtd. in Wolfson xviii). Hemans is also most assuredly a poet of mobility. Characters are on the move in her work, and when these mobile figures pause, the thresholds at which they present themselves do not offer a welcome. When we examine what transpires at domestic and national boundaries, England comes into focus as notably inhospitable.

That inhospitableness begins at the hearth, which as several scholars have noted is the prime site of cultural transmission in Hemans’s poetry.⁶⁶ As Lootens puts it, “in an imperialist country, [. . .] the hearth must be an imperialist site” (“Internal” 248). A synecdoche for home and nation, it nonetheless generates the seeds of its own destruction, for there young people imbibe the very values that will ultimately threaten the home’s integrity. “Song of Our Fathers,” for example, obliges its readers to transmit cultural heritage through verse and melodies that have been sung since “harps were in the hall” (Rosetti l.9). Youngsters should hear them “round the hearth” and in the fields and “on the hills of deer” so that when, inevitably, this next generation roams across other continents, they will be able to access the “voices of their household band” through the melodies their fathers loved (ll. 33, 43). As bracing as those melodies will be, however,

⁶⁶ Burke was one of the key articulators of this symbolism.

the goals engendered at the hearth will threaten to destroy both family and domestic space. In “The Graves of a Household,” for example, the expanding empire becomes a world-encompassing graveyard. Four siblings who played together as children now lie separated by thousands of miles: one is buried in India, another rests at the bottom of the ocean, one has died on a battlefield in Spain, and the youngest, a daughter, has “faded” in Italy (Wolfson l. 23). In a haunting evocation of Wordsworth’s “We Are Seven,” a once-happy household is dispersed over the face of the globe, measuring the country’s vast reach by plotting a series of absences.

Furthermore, the cherished verses taught hearthside remain mysteriously content-free. “Song of Our Fathers” champions the “how” and the “why” and the “where” of cultural transmission without expressing the “what.” The message of the patrimony goes uncharacterized, intimating that culture—something like a Volkgeist—cannot be articulated for England. That it exists can be asserted, that love of country is laudable can be sung, but the words and ideas that constitute the songs remain elusive and unrecorded. “To Patriotism” conveys a similar sense of nullity as the poet exhorts love of country simply to “Teach [Britannia’s sons] to conquer or to die/With firm unshaken loyalty” (Poems 1808 ll. 15-16).⁶⁷

This construction of national identity out of absence or abstraction receives its most powerful treatment in “England’s Dead,” one of Hemans’s most frequently anthologized pieces. Generations of English schoolchildren recited the poem, which somewhat morbidly celebrates England’s dominion by declaring not once, but twice, “Wave may not foam, nor wild wind sweep,/Where rest not England’s dead” (Wolfson ll.

⁶⁷ According to “The Name of England” (National Tales 273), it has been enough since ancient times simply to announce the word for other nations to concede England’s superior worth and might.

7, 59). Syntax asserts the ubiquity of empire through a negative construction, the repeated “not” and “nor” signaling a presence (England) that is itself a sign of absence: a nation is constituted from those final resting places, many of which are nonexistent or, at the very least, unlocatable.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the opening two stanzas of the poem explicitly catechize the addressee in just this move. As if calling the attention of a student (or perhaps a child sitting at the hearth), the text begins,

Son of the ocean isle!
 Where sleep your mighty dead?
 Show me what high and stately pile
 Is rear'd o'er Glory's bed. (ll 1-4)

Commencing like a geography quiz, the poem suddenly drops the pedagogical tone to deliver a sentence of banishment, as if the student has failed to answer adequately:

Go, stranger! track the deep,
 Free, free the white sail spread!
 Wave may not foam, nor wild wind sweep,
 Where rest not England's dead. (ll 5-8, 53-56)

The abrupt shift from calling the young Englishman to banishing him, transforming him so quickly from son and initiate to stranger, suggests that to learn the lessons of Englishness is to undergo estrangement.

Evidently the exportation of liberty is part of that process, for the son-student-stranger must in tracking the deep “[f]ree, free the white sail spread!” (ll 6, 54). The doubling of “free” celebrates unfurling the sail to the breeze, but alternatively the first

⁶⁸Samuel Baker reads the poem as arguing that the sea is the ultimate resting place for all of England's dead, since it laps against the shores of the many countries where England's dead slumber (48).

“free” could be read as describing the son: being free yourself, spread the sail freely. Yet to be free in this poem is to be alienated and to have failed to locate the coordinates of “Glory’s bed” (l. 4). Developing into Englishness, then, is more than becoming a stranger; it is also a process of detecting and manufacturing a presence in absence, inferring national identity in the trackless ocean depths, the protean waves and winds so curiously represented in the negative. This doomed dynamic, when considered alongside the two others already described—the imputation of Englishness through the “record” of the non-English and the abstraction of home rather than a description of its plenitude—suggests that England in Hemans’s poetry is depicted as a center that does not hold. The values embedded in and imbibed at the hearth deplete the domestic space; culture is transmitted through pedagogical scenes of banishment and estrangement; and in several registers something or some place is asserted from nothing or nowhere. By these means, I am arguing, England in Hemans’s poetry is an evacuated space, generating its force centrifugally in an ever-widening scope that reaches its limits when the remains of English expatriates are deposited in far-away graves.

No evacuee can count on being able to return. Even in poems that stage a homeward journey, arrival and the anticipated welcome is always in the end compromised, occluded, or frustrated. These are three strategies that I will consider in turn, and in each, welcome is steadfastly denied. “The Spells of Home,” for example, celebrates the “household mirth” that casts a glow over the life of the young freeman who, under its influence, is “led [. . .] forth to stand/In the mountain-battles of his land” (Wolfson ll. 17, 28). This particular soldier appears to make it back home safely, lured by that same hearth-generated spell “[t]o die on the hills of his own fresh breeze” (l 30).

What appears at first to be a straightforward return is complicated, however, by a close reading of that infinitive phrase. “[H]ills of his own fresh breeze” suggests that he is claiming the hills as his own because they stand in his native region, a reasonable enough assertion; the breeze therefore is in some sense his as well. Yet “to die [. . .] of” something also implies a cause of death; the soldier might die, then, because of his breeze, the breeze created upon his return—his having breezed into the area, one might say. In this secondary reading, it is the return itself that proves fatal. Alternatively, to die “on” the hills rather than “in” them seems to suggest the soldier has been disembodied, that indeed he might already have died and it is his spirit, therefore, that wafts back like a breeze to his homeland. In any of these overlapping readings, his return is compromised or incomplete.

Such spells are cast in other poems to compromise hospitality by revealing their threshold-crossing to be unreal. For example, in “The Haunted House,” “Guests come thither and, depart,” suggesting an unusual and rather surprising sociability in Hemans’s poetry, but here the voices “murmuring round its hearth,/Soft and low” are ghostly (National Lyrics ll. 5-6). The guests crossing the threshold “[f]ree of step, and light of heart” have died long ago, and only “one lone woman’s entering tread” makes its way through the house, which previously enjoyed a flow of people (ll. 10 & 20). She alone meets these emissaries at “yon low porch” (l. 18), but we learn in the final lines that this solitary feminine figure is not in fact wandering the halls; her “entering tread” is an act of memory, for “[s]he is dwelling far away” (l. 50). In this brief example, admission to the social space of the home is doubly compromised: one kind of entrance is supernatural,

and another is revealed to be a nostalgic act of imagination. Traffic across the threshold is represented, but only to be in more than one sense disqualified.

In still other poems, entry or return to the home space is “real” (in that it is not ghostly or part of a reverie), but it nonetheless stops short of fulfillment by making it impossible for the reader to envision. In “The Penitent’s Return,” for example, approaching the boyhood home is clouded with foreboding. Viewed only from outside, the home seems to wear a gloomy aspect, repellent to the remorseful speaker, who comes to realize that his own absence has created the miasma of sadness hanging over the house. He resolves not to show himself at the doorway, for he feels “worthy now no more/To pass” (Boston collection ll. 39-40), but just as he is turning away, he hears his mother praying for him: “My name!—I caught the sound! [. . .] Now receive thy child,” he calls to her; “Take back the lost and found!” (ll. 45-48). Abruptly, however, the poem ends, truncating its dance of approach and avoidance by eclipsing the welcome from the reader’s view. The reunion may be inferred, but it is never represented, for the scene is withheld, and we are left staring at a blank space on the page.

Such occlusion finds even more elaborate expression in “The Curfew-Song of England,” in which local inhabitants of “olden time” are required to return home at the sound of the church bell (National Lyrics 1.10). With ponderous monosyllables, Hemans evokes “[t]he deep slow curfew’s chime!” (l. 2). If it tolls, however, for the farmer, the pilgrim, the toiling scholar, the parent of an ailing child, it also tolls for the reader, for when these figures cross their thresholds, they are required by the local ordinance to extinguish their lights. The reader, too, is then left in the dark as Hemans employs a kind of visual occultatio, illustrating certain moments by describing the impossibility of seeing

to illustrate them. The tolling, for example, is agonizing “[f]or the mother, doom’d unseen to keep/By the dying babe, her place” (ll. 29-32). The use of “unseen” would appear to be an error of syntax, for surely “unseeing” would better describe the anxious woman. Yet she is indeed unseen by the reader. With “[d]arkness in chieftain’s hall!/Darkness in peasant’s cot!” (ll. 33 and 34), the reader, too, is prevented from making out these scenes.

The poem tells us, however, that it has not always been this way: The “sullen boding knell” (l. 13) quenches the glow of fires “which had cheered the board with the mirthful word,/And the red wine’s foaming flow!” (ll. 11 and 12). Former scenes of convivial sociality are joyously recalled in order to be thus more forcefully extinguished, and the reader is denied full access in that the bedside and hearthside are pitched into darkness. It would be a sign of liberty to be able to illuminate one’s home: “Heap the yule-faggots high,” the poem exhorts its audience, for it is the “home’s own hour” when light can be made out of darkness. In other words, the home is most thoroughly and sturdily constituted when liberty allows for illumination. Similarly, the host most fully inhabits his status when he controls the comings and goings across his threshold. In this poem, however, civil unrest has subverted the rights of the host, for he is compelled by law to return to his own home. Denying the reader’s visual entrance thus further achieves the decoupling of home and hospitality. Both signal a loss of liberty (an assault on the host’s sovereignty) and deny the reader’s access.

In addition to compromise and occlusion, one further strategy frustrates access to the domestic scene, both the characters’ and our own as readers. In a number of poems the natural borders of England keep the returning native waiting at a distance. “The

Return of the Mariners,” for example, stages a reunion “on the strand” at the base of the “cliffs of Albion,” but the scene never ventures beyond the coast, pausing instead just at the threshold of the nation (Reiman ll. 21, 14). Likewise, in “The Cliffs of Dover,” a returning Englishman gazes on that natural defense, celebrating the geological formations that “like a fortress proud” “forever guard the land” of his home (Wolfson ll. 3 and 7). But after the opening two stanzas, in which he addresses the cliffs themselves, he recounts in three stanzas the journey that has brought him there from warmer climes. By the time he completes this brief travel narrative and returns to the present, his addressee has shifted. No longer does he express himself to the cliffs themselves, but rather to the “land of home” (l. 20), which he now celebrates for its “Sabbath peace,” “guarded hearth,” and noble dead. Recounting his return—that is, repeating it—effects a kind of equivalence between the apostrophe that precedes it and the apostrophe that follows, or between the cliffs that guard the homeland and that homeland itself. In other words, the cliffs function simultaneously as a symbol for the nation and an impregnable threshold to it, emphasizing the island form of England. The act of return trips a defensive mechanism that collapses the difference and distance between England and the threshold that gives form to it.⁶⁹

These cliffs guard the land under the sign of violence, for England is the “sever’d land of home!” (ll. 7-8)—severed in the sense that it is geologically separate, but what in the epigraph from Byron is “the inviolate Island” (Wolfson 438n.1) now becomes cut off,

⁶⁹ One of Hemans’s most famous poems, “The Homes of England,” enacts a similar identity between the domestic space and the boundaries that give shape to it. Arrayed in such a way as to naturalize class hierarchies, the homes are façades seen from the outside, arising on a continuous landscape. Perhaps, as some scholars have suggested, the poem constructs a mystifying Burkean organicism, but if this is the case, the organic is once again uncharacterized. In other words, whether grand estate or peasant’s cottage, every English home has a hearth where “woman’s voice flows forth in song,/Or childhood’s tale is told,/Or lips move tunefully along/Some glorious page of old” (Wolfson ll. 13-16). As we have seen before, songs of old function as markers for a culture the poet declines to describe.

a bit of bloodletting that helps to make England what it is. The dead of the nation have consecrated the soil, making it “holy earth” (l. 24) and in fact have also materially added to the channel itself:

Their blood hath mingled with the tide
Of thine exulting sea;--
Oh, be it still a joy, a pride,
To live and die for thee! (ll. 29-32)

Although the spirits of these noble dead venture out to meet the speaker shipboard (“Their voices meet me in thy breeze” [l. 25]), the poem undercuts their proffered welcome, for even as the returning sailor approaches the threshold (that is, the cliffs), the sea offers its own form of resistance (l. 25). It is figured as an effluence of blood, hence a counterflow that in rushing out with the tide slows the sailor’s approach. He is left lingering there, fended off by the bloody tidal forces that have also consecrated the soil as English.

Homecoming, then, in the work of the de facto national poet of England, is consistently compromised and truncated, obscured from view, or resisted—this despite the fact that numerous poems call out to the wanderer or prodigal begging his return. In “Come Home!” (the bluntest of these), the speaker’s brother is told he can rejuvenate the home that has become gloomy in his absence:

the hour
Of many a greeting tone,
The time of hearth-light and of song
Returns—and ye are gone! (ll. 11-12 Rosetti 211)

Four stanzas repeat the invocation: “Come home!” (l. 1), “O ye beloved! Come home!” (l. 9), “Back, ye beloved, come home!” (l. 24), “Come [. . .] o’er the main!” (ll. 24-25). Likewise, in “The Voice of Home to the Prodigal,” (Rosetti 338), the home itself actually calls to the wanderer, assuring him that “Still at thy father’s board/There is kept a place for thee” (ll 37-38). This glimpse of the table is unusual in Hemans; overwhelmingly the home is empty except for a single chair at hearthside, but here this added detail, the empty space at the table, signifies the conceptual emptiness of home and nation.

We see, then, that although several poems repeatedly send out a call inviting the wanderer to return, it is virtually impossible for him to do so. Poems that stage an answer to the question, “When wilt thou return/To thy spirit’s early loves?” almost without exception also create an obstacle (“The Voice of Home to the Prodigal” Rosetti ll. 1-2).⁷⁰ Myriad barriers prevent or disturb the representation of a threshold re-crossed: such depictions turn out to be mirages, fantasies; approaches are veiled from view or pitched into darkness; soldiers and sailors enchanted by “spells of home” return there to die or to be held in a liminal place, working against the tide. The domestic threshold is particularly resistant, so that although the hearth figures prominently in Hemans’s poetry as a symbol for domesticity and the coherence of the nation, it remains notably inaccessible, unreachable in a body of work that depicts the value of approaching the home but then strikingly forbids entrance. The vast majority of Hemans’s poems that deal with homecoming describe English subjects who have been caught up in the outgoing tide, figuratively and literally. In fact, as we have seen, to be an English subject at all is

⁷⁰The exception is the song of joy offered up in “Hymn of the Traveller’s Household on His Return” (Boston collection), in which a weathered warrior makes his way back from the crusades. His people, given voice by the speaker of the poem, call for an elaborate celebration: “Brethren! Spread his festal board,/ [. . .] While this long, long silent hall/Joyfully doth hear again voice and string” exulting in thanksgiving (ll. 41-46).

to be estranged; to be English is to become the stranger whose inevitable emigration leaves that native island hollowed out, its homes deserted (as in the poem by that title) and defined not by interior features, but by external boundaries, those liminal constructs that repel approach or keep the returning Englishman in limbo, contemplating his home and his homeland from afar but not from within.

Together, these numerous poems call out for a return in order to suggest that return is impossible. If, as Kevin Hutchings and Julia Wright explain, a “national literature” is intended to stabilize a sense of the nation “against a backdrop of increasing cultural mixing” (Introduction 3), Hemans’s work stabilizes “England” by fortifying a variety of homologous borders against return, rendering the nation a conceptually empty center. So we can see that the dispersal of the family, familiar to us from insightful feminist readings of Hemans’s work, is part of a larger dynamic that renders England itself dispersed—as well as inaccessible. When we read Hemans as a poet of mobility, the impossibility of return exposes new tensions in the imperial project. Claims of cultural integrity, such as “Song of Our Fathers” asserts, are accompanied by intimations that the connection between Englishness and emptiness is more constitutive than it might appear. The globalized system of dispersal is generating an alienating and inhospitable metropole.

“The Lady of the Castle” and Death at the Threshold

While one can trace the resistance to welcome so persistently at work in Hemans’s poetry, it is much more difficult, of course, to explain its source. Yet one highly unusual poem provides key insights into this pervasive denial. “The Lady of the

Castle,” a medievalist poem published in 1825, tells the story of aristocratic Ermengarde, who, yielding to some innate flaw in her nature, leaves her husband and young daughter to live as mistress of a powerful man. Soon after, her mournful husband “[g]irt on his sword for scenes of distant strife” (Wolfson l. 26), and following his death in battle, their estate, once the site of festivity, becomes isolated. “[T]he minstrel pass’d their walls;/The warder’s horn hung mute” (ll. 30-31), two symptoms of break-down in the social compact of the medieval world. Suggesting it is impossible now to maintain open hospitality or the tenant feast, the poem explains that the young daughter, “blighted spirit!” though she is (l. 43), attempts to continue almsgiving. Thus one morning “before her castle gate she stood,” ready at her threshold to aid the local peasants, when “A stranger thro’ them broke” (ll. 60, 63). It is none other than her mother, who, prostrating herself before Isaure, reveals her identity. Isaure, however, instinctively recoils, a rejection that kills Ermengarde on the spot:

She [Isaure] shrank—‘twas but a moment—yet too much

For that all humbled one; its mortal stroke

Came down like lightning, and her full heart broke

At once in silence. Heavily and prone

She sank [. . .] o’er her castle’s threshold-stone. (ll. 84-88)

The poem ends when the errant woman dies literally stretched across the entrance, where her “long, fair tresses” “swept the dust” (ll. 89, 92) in a sense burnishing the site of her rejection.

Ermengarde’s shame is the greatest sin a woman could commit, the poem argues, for she abandoned her baby. “She fell!/That mother left that child!” the poet cries,

spondees pounding out judgment. Perhaps she deserves her fate, “For she went on!” (ll. 16-21, emphasis original). Because this moral is offered in the epigraph, however, the burden of the poem is to explain instead the younger woman’s cold reaction.⁷¹ When the third stanza ends with Ermengarde’s cry, “I am thy mother—spurn me not, my child!” (l. 74), a line break suspends the action to explain her daughter’s state of mind, and this suspension allows time for contemplation on whether welcome will be possible. The new stanza then begins meditatively: “Isaure had pray’d for that lost mother” (l. 75); she had wept for her and longed for her. She had stood hours before her portrait, but feeling unlovable herself, she has been isolated under the almost unbearable weight of her mother’s shame. It is no shame of her own, then, that she cannot be more welcoming: “What marvel if the anguish, the surprise,/The dark remembrances, the alter’d guise,/Awhile o’erpowered her?” (ll. 81-83). She instinctively shrinks from her mother, a disavowal that starts up the action again. This recoil proves fatal for Ermengarde, but the poem exonerates the younger woman. “Dead lay the wanderer at her own proud gate!” (l. 94): again spondees sound the finality of judgment passed on the errant mother. If it is lamentable to perish far away, as Isaure’s father does, it is far crueler punishment to die at the threshold of one’s own home. In her reluctance to extend a welcome to her mother, however, Isaure is blameless, her somatic response natural, and the foreclosure of the threshold even reinforced by Ermengarde’s falling just there.

Other elements in the poem enact a waywardness analogous to Ermengarde’s.

The story is told, for example, in a meandering stichic style. Whereas Hemans

⁷¹ The epigraph reads:
 If there be but one spot upon thy name,
 One eye thou fear’st to meet, one human voice
 Whose tones thou shrink’st from—Woman! veil thy face,
 And bow thy head—and die!

customarily employed highly regularized stanzas (the ballad, the Spenserian, the short measure, all strophic and rhymed according to custom), “The Lady of the Castle” consists of five iambic pentameter stanzas of varying lengths: the first is twenty-four lines, the second thirty-five, the third and fourth are fourteen and eighteen lines, respectively, and the poem closes with a quatrain. The first and third stanzas begin with a quatrain rhymed abab, but then they continue on rather indefinitely in rhymed couplets.⁷² In other words, the poem exhibits a kind of formal desultoriness. Like Ermengarde’s tresses that “burst their fillet” (l. 91), the stanzas enact Ermengarde’s wandering or, more broadly, the mobility that is thematized throughout Hemans’s oeuvre. That wandering finally comes to an end not when the repentant mother is received back into the home, but when she dies rejected at its threshold.⁷³

“The Lady of the Castle” thus offers a tale of forgiveness not of the fallen, repentant woman, but of the daughter who rejects her. As Derrida reminds us, the paradox of forgiveness shares a structural similarity with hospitality in that forgiving what is forgivable is not meaningful forgiveness, just as welcoming the anticipated guest is not a true welcome (“Hostipitality” Anidjar 389). In Hemans’s poem, when Isaure’s hesitation is explained away, it is she who is offered absolution (forgiveness for the act of not forgiving), a reversal that reinforces the poem’s foreclosure of hospitality, for the text

⁷² The second, long stanza is interrupted by a quatrain at lines 47 through 50, suggesting perhaps that the stanza should have broken there. That emendation would not, however, restore regular meter and rhyme, for the fourth stanza does not follow the pattern of beginning with a quatrain rhymed abab, and the final four-line stanza rhymes aabb.

⁷³ The finality with which Isaure rejects her mother also goes some way to explain the fate of a larger project in which the poem was originally to be included. Hemans envisioned “The Lady” as part of a series titled “The Portrait Gallery,” which she designed to comprise several tales linked within a frame narrative, a young woman giving her new husband a tour of her ancestral home. In the gallery they would have paused before a double portrait of Isaure and her mother to recount the cautionary tale. Yet the frame narrative was never completed, and “The Lady of the Castle” remains the sole remnant of the project. Harriet Hughes records that her sister outlined eight stories for the Gallery. Chorley explains that the responsibility of supporting her family distracted Hemans (Feldman 191n.).

offers little critique of Isaure's lack of charity. As Derrida says, "to describe oneself as unforgivable for not forgiving [. . .] is to bear with the other in the test and ordeal of the impossible" ("Hostipitality" Anidjar 387). Isaure might then regard herself as unforgivable for not simply embracing the mother she has longed for. To recognize her own falling short might have forged a compassionate link along the lines of the transaction Derrida describes. In the moment of suspension, when the action of the poem is halted by the mother's request ("spurn me not, my child!"), the possibility of forgiveness and of welcome opens up. Nevertheless, the poem lets stand the instinctive recoil from the returning wanderer.

This is not an "English" poem; Ermengarde and Isaure are Provencale, according to Hemans's sister (Feldman 192n.). Yet "The Lady" provides an important insight into how persistently domestic borders are patrolled in Hemans's poetry. "What marvel" if thresholds prove so impermeable? What marvel if so many poems call the wanderer home, only to derail, put off, or obscure that return? To shrink from the stranger is natural, instinctual, we are given to understand. Even the native-born is held aloof by strategies that make the hearth, home, and nation inaccessible. So while this poem is not overtly political, its mechanics of rejection operate across the broad range of Hemans's work, in which return is repeatedly evoked in order to register its impossibility. Thus Ermengarde is reminiscent of the penitent who wistfully surveys his boyhood home from a distance and of the returning mariners delayed just off shore. In this way, one could say the poet occupies, at different times, both positions staked out in hospitable encounter: the one implored to return and the domiciled one who puts out the doomed call. Between them stands the recalcitrant threshold.

In Hemans's body of work, only the poet can cross that boundary. Discussing the figure of the bard in her Welsh Melodies, William Brewer explains that Hemans's years in Wales imparted a strong reverence for the bard, in whom "transcultural values" were reconciled with "respect for patriotism" (180). After doing some research herself, Hemans remarked that historically the bard "passed unmolested from one hostile country to another, and if he appeared [. . .] between two contending armies, the battle was immediately suspended" (Chorley I.98-99). This ancient figure, then, achieved in his own wandering what a poet such as Hemans might hope to achieve literarily by creating a transhistorical, transnational body of work. Yet within the texts themselves, such nimble border-crossing remains impossible.

Given Hemans's status as the icon of domesticity, it is striking that, with a few exceptions, welcome is not offered in her poetry. Populated as the broader Romantic canon is with wanderers, tourists, and visitors, the home space in Hemans's poetry seems to have been taken off the route: no Malay knocks at the door, as in de Quincey's Confessions, no gypsy appears at the kitchen stoop as in Dorothy Wordsworth's journal. Threshold scenes are persistently staged in Hemans's poetry, but they almost exclusively involve the returning native, rather than foreigners or domestic others, and welcome, in the end, fails. The resulting insularity profoundly affects how we understand Hemans's construction of England as well as the international scope of her subject matter.

Cosmopolitan and national outlooks need not be opposed, Esther Wohlgenut reminds us. Indeed, "in a Kantian sense, cosmopolitanism [. . .] involves the co-existence of national demarcations and universal belonging, of form and freedom, and in early nineteenth-century Britain, it appears alongside Romantic nationalism in the struggle to

represent the nation” (1-2). But without the face-to-face encounter with the other—without some form of border-crossing or welcome, fraught and provisional as it may be—cosmopolitanism cannot be achieved, and in Hemans’s poetry, I contend, welcome is consistently denied, resisted, or undone. Unable to admit even the welcome home of a family member, the threshold in Hemans’s work is all but impermeable to strangers. Thus, although exotic vegetation may thrive transplanted in English soil (as in “The Palm Tree”), and statues may be acquired by the British people for their national museum (as in Modern Greece, her celebration of the Parthenon marbles purchase), foreign people enter England exceedingly rarely in Hemans’s poetry. While emigration functions as a key preoccupation, immigration—to England—is steadfastly refused. The home and nation remain fortified against encounter with the other, even (or perhaps most especially) against the alienated familiar. In her oeuvre, confronting the other requires displacement, removal from the homeland for which many have felt she spoke, and one of the key sites of this dislocation is North America.

Staging Encounter in America

In the poems examined thus far, the person denied entrance is an estranged intimate, not a true foreigner. According to my research, only three poems in all of Hemans’s oeuvre admit foreigners on English soil. The first is “Dartmoor,” a prize winner from 1821, but the foreigners presented in the text are prisoners of war from France and Spain who arrive shackled, doomed to pine in bondage for their homelands (Reiman). For them, crossing the threshold of the English nation is an experience of

punishment and humiliation, surely the opposite of the liberty Hemans explicitly celebrated as England's chief export. The second is one I have just mentioned, "The Palm Tree," which Hemans adapted from a poem of Jacques J. Montanier Abbé de Lille (Wolfson n.1). Here a South Asian man "of dusky mien" attends a kind of garden party, where he is moved to tears by the sight of an "exil'd Palm-tree" (ll. 27, 7). "A stranger" himself (l. 30), he embraces its trunk and weeps, a show of emotion the poet admonishes us not to deride, for the same feelings that provoke his tears, an association with "[h]is mother's cabin" (l. 43), also inspire "[t]h'unconquerable power" of patriots in battle (l. 51). Wonderfully succinct, the poem achieves the amalgamation of domestic and military values for which Hemans was celebrated.

The only other poem to show a traveler and a native interacting on English soil is "The Two Homes" (and actually one can only infer the poem's setting; no detail affirms the location). In this text, a man and his foreign companion stand together on a rise to survey the vista, and from a safe distance they catch a glimpse of the family residence: "There laughs my home—sad stranger! where is thine?" (l. 20) After assuring the reader that the foreigner loves his own home even though "dark seas roll between" (Wolfson l. 36), the poem ends, presumably as the men part company. There is no invitation for the stranger to go any further, but even if he were to, we know from Hemans's broader work that "[a] yearning anguish is his lot" (Rosetti l. 2). According to "The Stranger's Heart," any happy experience he might witness in a hospitable home would inflict pain:

Thou think'st it sweet when friend with friend
 Beneath one roof in prayer may blend;
 Then doth the stranger's eye grow dim

Far, far are those who prayed with him. (ll. 13-16)

So although the late poem entitled “Ruth” suggests that home is a portable concept, able to be established wherever affection is found (“to the sense of home [. . .] beats thy calm heart” [Kelly ll. 8-11]), all non-scriptural stories contradict this portability, and in fact go further to suggest that the alien will never find affection among strangers, nor will he ever overcome a sense of estrangement.⁷⁴

Other than these three poems, no scenes of cross-cultural encounter occur in England.⁷⁵ Far more common is it for Hemans to displace that possibility; in fact, several texts take pains to do so. “The Meeting of the Ships,” for example, recounts the gam of two vessels becalmed in the Indian Ocean. The men aboard share “mirth” (l. 7), “dancing step, and festive strain” (l. 11) in a brief interlude of conviviality that comes to an end when the wind picks up again (National Lyrics). In its passing sociability the poem echoes the rather lengthy prose epigraph from Washington Irving: “We take each other by the hand, and we exchange a few words and looks of kindness, and we rejoice together for a few short moments;—and then days, months, years intervene—and we see and know nothing of each other” (217). Taken from Bracebridge Hall, the quotation describes a gathering in England on St. Mark’s Eve, when according to a custom dating from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, parishioners would watch together on the church porch for ghosts crossing the threshold into the sanctuary.⁷⁶ Engaging in his own transatlantic circuit, Irving offers the scene to his American readers, but Hemans takes it

⁷⁴ In Hemans’s poetry, even desiring to go home is painful; in “The Voyager’s Dream of Land,” it is even pathological, for the sailor, whose nationality is not specified, is so desperate to return home that he is in danger of jumping overboard (Feldman).

⁷⁵ I have to acknowledge that in claiming that Hemans declines to represent cross-cultural encounter, I am bracketing the scene of war.

⁷⁶ Apparently this would be an indication of who would die in the coming year (Simpson and Roud 308-09).

up again as an English poet, only to displace it to an ocean half a world away. Relocating the scene to the open sea strips away the association with radical threshold-crossing (the ghosts alluded to in Irving's rendition), to offer a more conventional scene of socializing—dancing and drinking during an interlude from travel. In other words, her poem entertains the possibility that through chance encounter two groups of men might embark on a hospitable exchange, but re-routing it through Irving's epigraph enacts the decisive removal of that potential from its original English setting.

On land, cross-cultural encounter is even more explicitly undone, and North America is Hemans's favored stage for this dynamic. "The Stranger in Louisiana," for example, begins with a stunning declaration that almost halts the poem in its opening foray: "We saw thee, O stranger, and wept!" (Rosetti l. 1). The speaker is a Native American whose tribe believes their dead have gone on a journey to "a distant shore," and each of the poem's three stanzas describes a loved one gone missing: a youth, a maiden, and an aged chief (l. 6). Hoping that the footfall they hear might be a lost one returning, the gathered people look up, only to be deeply disappointed by the stranger who steps into their firelight. At the beginning of each of the poem's stanzas, this same lamentation appears ("We saw thee, O stranger, and wept!"), a shortened line haunted in the gap created when the first anapest is dropped. The silent beats between the end of first stanza and the beginning of the second (and again at the following stanza break) recreate the moment when the stranger steps out of darkness, raising hopes and dashing them in almost the same breath, breath that is collectively drawn to cry out, "We saw thee, O stranger! and wept." Furthermore, each stanza ends sorrowfully, "but the step was thine!"—the proximity of "step" and "wept" phonically linking the moment of the

stranger's appearance with the renewal of collective loss, which is marked formally by the gap created with the headless line.

Cross-cultural encounter has proceeded much further in "The Indian with His Dead Child." Before the action of the poem begins, a Native American has ensconced himself in a white settlement in Maine, but when his child dies he acknowledges the failure of assimilation and rejoins his people in Canada:

I have left the spoiler's dwellings

For evermore behind:

Unmingled with their household sounds

For me shall sweep the wind. (Newman, Pace, Koenig-Woodyard ll. 29-32)

In other words, the poem undoes the welcome this man and the white colonists have apparently negotiated at an earlier time.⁷⁷ Only the adoption of Edith seems beneficial to all, in a poem by that title in Records of Woman. This English girl's integration in the Native American community results in the Christian conversion of the couple who raise her, but most often in Hemans's poems, the apparition of the stranger and the ensuing interactions are a profound disappointment. The home fire, it seems, is better off forsaken (as it is in an early poem by that name) than gathered round by strangers of any kind. In other words, the poems that treat cross-cultural encounter imaginatively entertain what hospitality might look like on "English" soil, but only in order to "unmingle" it. Staged in North America, these poems, admittedly few, depict the

⁷⁷ Similarly, in "The Adopted Child," a young orphan wants nothing more than to escape the home that wants to take him in: "Lady, kind lady! oh! Let me go" is the repeated entreaty, but there is nowhere for the child to turn, for as the lady responds, "Thy mother has gone from her cares to rest" (l. 25), and "thy brothers are wanderers now" (Feldman l. 37). While not strictly about cross-cultural exchange (class is the difference here), the poem nonetheless laments integration and assimilation. It was first published in America in 1826.

undoing of hospitality—sending the Indian back to his people, dramatizing the disappointment the stranger always embodies.

Of course, it is not just any kind of stranger that appears in the North American poems. Nancy Goslee has read in depth the fourteen texts in which Hemans treats Native American figures and wrestles with “how her generalization of a marked racial otherness should be read” (237-38). A number of these poems are “spoken from within the ‘Indian’ culture” (246) and so are not explicitly thematized around cross-cultural encounter, but even those that are sited at contact points between Europeans and Indians, Goslee suggests, avoid “contested territory” (239). “By universalizing common affective ground” (239), she says, Hemans’s “Red Indian” poems assert a common melancholy, a “universal similarity of gender difference [. . .] underlying cultural differences” (255). Examining these fourteen poems as a group, Goslee’s scope is different from my own focus on America as a stage for the displaced formation of English national identity. Nonetheless, her description of Hemans’s “synthetic, universal, and conveniently non-particular common ground” (255) does the work of negating the encounter with otherness. Difference is overwritten, she says, always pointing back to English “home-poems” (257), which I read as underscoring the use of America as a stage for the construction of Englishness.⁷⁸ Working with material from much later in the century, Kate Flint has made a related point, arguing that the Victorian fad for “dying Indian” poems allowed “Britons to sense without acknowledging that the failures of American colonialism are coextensive with their own” (McGill 6). Both of these scholars attest,

⁷⁸ Goslee’s particular concern is the “fixed melancholy” born of the irreconcilability of two desires, for “westerling” and for “easterling,” enacted on the North American continent, and she argues that this melancholy offers a gentle critique of white culture’s exploitative practices (256).

then, to the mutual processes of national identity formation between England and America.

Through such displacements, Hemans makes her own intervention in transatlantic discourse, re-energized by English emigration to the young republic in the years after the Napoleonic Wars.⁷⁹ William Cobbett believed that Englishmen went to America to encounter their past, in order to equip them to work for a reformed England; in contrast, as we have seen, Hemans disallows return, redemptive or otherwise. As I elaborated in my first chapter, Cobbett believed that England exported its liberty, along with its tradition of hospitality, to America hundreds of years earlier; however, when Cobbett sees Americans “living, with the houses full of good beds, ready for the guests as well as the family to sleep in,” and concludes that he is experiencing “that ‘English Hospitality,’ of which [he has] read so much” (*A Year’s Residence* 196-97), it is part of a polemic aimed at ending oppression in his homeland. In Hemans’s poetry, on the contrary, America enacts the undoing of English hospitableness, and reimagining the threshold encounter in North America offers no salutary vision for the reform of England. Displacing these poems historically, setting them across the Atlantic in colonial times, obscures somewhat the inhospitable nature of England as Hemans has constructed it, but this obscurity is one of the troubling dissonances that have been too easily resolved in the tale of her American success.

⁷⁹ “Song of Emigration” rehearses this debate, offering a cost-benefit analysis of resettlement along gender lines. Alternating stanzas present a man’s enthusiasm for opportunity in North America, which his spouse refutes by enumerating all that would be forsaken. So while he joyously anticipates shaping his “course by a brighter star” and settling green fields “whose wealth is all for the first brave guest” (Newman, Pace, Koenig-Woodyard ll. 14, 16), she agonizes over leaving “The homesteads, warm and low” (19), the church tower and garden bower (ll. 19, 37, 39). The poem doubts transplantation will be successful, for it ends on a question: “But who shall teach the flowers/Which our children loved, to dwell/In a soil that is not ours?” (ll. 47-49). The dangers she worries about are articulated again in “The Exile’s Dirge,” which raises the specter of burying a child among strangers; here a German immigrant in Pennsylvania mourns having to do just that (Rosetti).

Success it most assuredly was. Evidence abounds of the popularity Hemans enjoyed in America on the basis of her poems that memorialize events in the brief history of the young republic: she published several exclusively in American periodicals; many poems found their first audience in the United States; and Sigourney counted it as high praise to be extolled as the American Hemans. Scholarly attention to the transatlantic circulation of her poetry has emphasized Hemans's surprising role in bequeathing to America a sense of its own history. Lootens has been the most prolific in this regard, showing how poems such as "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England" helped to shape foundational myths of America's origin ("Heirs" 244).⁸⁰ As John Seelye has documented in his study of Plymouth Rock's prominence in the American imaginary, Hemans's setting of the scene was so influential that certain misconceptions she introduced, such as envisioning a "rock-bound" coast rather than a sandy one, persisted in many subsequent texts (96-97). In addition, this particular poem influenced future poets on both sides of the Atlantic in their own use of the landing scene. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," for example, builds on Hemans's precedent to expose the inhumanity of slavery (a topic Hemans herself avoids altogether), and Frances E. W. Harper's poetry "both claims and radically transforms the heritage of Felicia Hemans" (Lootens "State of Exile" and "American Heirs" 255).

At the same time, as I have been arguing, Hemans's texts that take up American subject matter contribute to a problematized shaping of English identity as well, through displacement and interruption. Therefore, to Lootens's fine reading of "The Landing" as

⁸⁰That text's popularity persists: for Thanksgiving 2009, the Rev. Peter Gomes, minister at the Memorial Church in Harvard Yard, recited the opening lines of "The Landing" in an interview with Robin Young on WBUR's Here and Now. Much more recently, the actor Benedict Cumberbatch tests surveillance equipment in Tomas Alfredson's 2012 film Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy by reciting several lines from "Casabianca."

a poem that “sutures British pride in a heroic, embattled Protestantism to an emergent American nationalism” (McGill 5-6), I would add that in seeking a new sanctuary in which to worship freely, the pilgrims can only exercise liberty, their special possession as English subjects, upon leaving. In New England, the “welcome home” (l. 24) that the eagle and pine trees offer this “band of exiles” (l. 7) accentuates the compromised nature of welcome throughout Hemans’s work. The “rock-bound coast” of the eastern seaboard (l. 2) recalls the threshold formed by the cliffs of Dover; here on the western side of the Atlantic, the pilgrims scale it, but a close reading of the poem underscores again how consistently welcome is denied—or redefined to the point of negation—in Hemans’s work.

From its opening lines, “The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England” makes a familiar move, evoking foreign figures only to bracket them off:

Not as the conqueror comes,
 They, the true-hearted came;
 Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
 And the trumpet that sings of fame:
 Not as the flying come,

In silence and in fear. (Wolfson ll. 9-14)

Thus the pilgrims set out for the New World. Through nine stanzas, the poem develops in the simple past. The pilgrims “moor’d their bark” (l. 7); they sang (l. 17); the “ocean-eagle soar’d” (l. 21); the pine trees “roar’d” (l. 23). This exposition concludes with the ninth stanza’s resounding line, “They sought a faith’s pure shrine!” (l. 36) The concluding, tenth stanza then follows, acting as a coda:

Call it holy ground,
 The soil where first they trod!
 They have left unstain'd what there they found--
 Freedom to worship God. (ll. 37-40)

This final stanza brings the poem into the present, first to exhort its readers to “call it holy ground” and then to conclude with a sentence that has an intriguingly mobile meaning. The penultimate line gets rewritten as it unfolds: it begins, “They have left unstain'd--”. Here, mid-line, the reader is momentarily confused; it seems the pilgrims have abruptly left after having only just arrived. As we read on, of course, we grasp the complete line’s meaning: it is not that the pilgrims have departed, but rather they have left something behind, and that thing (their freedom) is unblemished. So as the intransitive meaning of the phrase “have left” gives way to the transitive, multiple meanings coincide, and one effect is to question whether the pilgrims have ever fully arrived at all.

In a primary reading, of course, the pilgrims do indeed land; we are called upon to hallow the ground on which “they trod” (l. 38). This sturdy, monosyllabic verb out of Old English evokes a heavy footfall, and yet the actual landing is not recorded in the nine-stanza exposition of the poem. The pilgrim’s tread is displaced to a clause modifying “soil,” obscuring the event in such a way that the step onto terra firma seems to be undone. Furthermore, the clause “they have left unstain’d” figures the pilgrims themselves as somehow unsullied. Literally, it is their freedom to worship that remains unblemished, but one cannot read about treading and leaving without envisioning the dragging of skirts through the water, the caking of sand upon the pilgrims’ boots. How then could they step out on to land and yet be “unstain’d”? Only if the movement is

somehow arrested or retracted. Incidentally, in the poem's original appearance, the word was "undimm'd," but in every subsequent publication Hemans and her editors substituted "unstain'd," an emendation that emphasizes the multiple meanings at play as the final stanza unfolds.

The landing is, then, ambiguous. The deed is evoked but not represented, and the syntax by which we infer its having happened works against itself, leaving those pilgrims working against the tide. This limbo is familiar by now, recalling "The Cliffs of Dover," in which the returning sailor is left lingering along the coast, and "The Return of the Mariners," in which the ocean travelers are held off at the threshold of their homeland. In "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers," this retrograde motion compromises the moment around which national identity is presumed to cohere. As easily and frequently as subsequent generations of Americans have returned to that coastal scene to tell the famous story, Hemans's own rendition enacts this curious but characteristic dynamic of resistance, absence, and arrest. Interruption and retraction get told, too, in the telling of the national tale. In light of this, our regard for Hemans's nimble and erudite negotiations of geographic and temporal boundaries should take into consideration the resistance at work as imagined communities take form.

Beloved as a champion of America's mission as much as England's, Hemans displaces to that formerly English locale the potential for welcome, but even there, where liberty was thought newly to reside, English hospitality is undone and the threshold is recalcitrant. As popular and long-lived as "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England" proved to be in national identity formation of the United States, the poem figures, too, in the construction of England; the pilgrims were, after all, English believers.

Their arrested step is yet another instance of compromised arrival and consignment to a liminal condition at the threshold, another moment in which to be English is to be mobile, estranged, and stalled. As she constructs it, the idea of England has embedded within it a particular kind of frustration that reconfigures the tropes of national organicism. In the work of this poet whose mind, we recall, was considered national property, the English nation is defined by a complex dynamic of centrifugal motion that falls short of arrival and disallows return.

Thus, examining the thresholds in her work allows us to complicate accounts of the mutual if asymmetrical processes by which English and American national identities were constructed through cultural production. About the United States Lootens declares, “That an Englishwoman should have attained such cultural power, in a republic only a few decades away from colonial status, testifies to the resonance of Hemans’s Enlightenment internationalism” (“American Heirs” 245), but what she detects in the transatlantic register of Hemans’s work must be regarded alongside the poet’s construction of what I am calling an inhospitable England. Border-crossing is key to the Enlightenment legacy Lootens claims for Hemans, but as we have seen, her poetry calls attention to English domestic and political thresholds only in order to forestall and deny the hospitable moment. In this formerly English space, a handful of texts imagine what hospitable encounter on “English” soil might look like, but only in order to undo it. Thus Hemans’s post-Napoleonic poetry complicates current accounts of how national identity is constructed via trans- or international exchange, especially between England and America.⁸¹

⁸¹ Amanda Claybaugh, for example, argues that England and America constituted a single literary culture (The Novel of Purpose).

In addition, then, reading a broad range of Hemans's work through hospitable discourse allows us to "unmingle" the related notions of cosmopolitanism and internationalism as they operate in her texts. We must acknowledge, of course, that Hemans deftly expressed, for example, "the triangulated relations between Spain, South America, and English culture," (Sweet "Hitherto" 144), and that her poetry was inspiring to women writers in Germany, as Fraucke Lenckos argues. Likewise, we benefit from Sweet's study of the bourgeois culture Hemans's work participated in through the Italianate salon ("Lorenzo's"). It is no doubt true that late Romantics preferred the international to the insular ("Aesthetics" 170). Yet insularity is in fact bolstered in Hemans's work by the particular displacements she enacts. So while certain facets of her work (her erudition, her facility with language, her nimble deployment of transnational and transhistorical subject matter) support certain key propositions—that, for example, no matter what the culture, "masculine patriotism [. . .] fatally overwhelms [. . .] domestic affections" (Wolfson and Fay 11)—her almost dazzling use of figures from other times and climes, I contend, constitutes only a highly qualified and limited form of cosmopolitanism.

It certainly does not express Kantian cosmopolitanism. As I have discussed in the first chapter, Kant bequeathed to later Romantics the stipulation that every foreigner has the right "not to be treated with hostility when he arrives upon the soil of another" ("To Eternal Peace" 448). Late twentieth and twenty-first century philosophers have argued that this guarantee reveals the single greatest flaw in Kant's theorization, for it limits hospitality to the juridical realm; it does not go far enough to consider the case of the stranger without status. In Hemans's body of work, however, the Kantian construction

would seem to go too far: England rejects even the returning Englishman. No penitents, no prodigals, no soldiers or sailors cross the borders of England to access the hearth.

While Derrida concedes that hospitality must always stop short of true welcome (because conditional hospitality is inextricably bound to a structural disparity between host and guest), Hemans's poetry almost always precludes and prevents entering into the threshold moment.

Nor does her international scope align with the genealogy of the Romantic poetess as Patrick Vincent has so astutely offered it. He explains that, inspired by the towering figures of Germaine de Staël and her *Corinne*, the Romantic poetess spoke from an exiled position, seeking solidarity with other European women poets through salon culture to put their fame in the service of “an ethic of sympathy” (xix). This shared melancholy would exert political power via public utterance, resulting not so much in the autonomous modern liberal subject, as Gary Kelly has suggested, but rather a “politics of the feminine” (Vincent xx).⁸² Curran declares this potential fulfilled when he argues that Hemans exemplified—indeed, created—a “broadly cosmopolitan, democratic, and liberal consensus that held sway for decades” (“Women Readers” 194). Looking at the poet's participation in Liverpool salon culture, one easily sees the real benefits to her.⁸³ But when one looks closely at the poems themselves, when one examines the thresholds Hemans erects in her poetry, one sees that borders are not transcended in service of a liberal, de-centered, universal community. So while Madame de Staël declared that “[n]o

⁸² Vincent usefully distinguishes between these related arguments, the first articulated by Kelly in “Feminism and Romanticism,” and the second more recently by Nanora Sweet in “Lorenzo” (Vincent xx).

⁸³ Sweet makes the very good point that “[f]igures like Roscoe, Hemans, and Jewsbury [. . .] flourished precisely when they did not engage the establishment or metropole [by which she means London's publishing industry] and instead embraced the energies of disestablishment” (“Lorenzo's” 249).

nationality is a limit” (Vincent 72), Hemans’s work in certain key ways emphasizes and fortifies that very limit.⁸⁴ Her oeuvre as a whole manifests an international scope, but her texts themselves build impassable thresholds.

This, I risk repeating, is where Hemans presents a complicated case. More clearly than with Scott, Shelley, and Cooper, what happens at the threshold in Hemans’s poetry constructs the nation. And the England she imagines is one that entertains no confrontation with alterity, even of the home-grown variety. So although Hemans wrote in a letter to Mary Russell Mitford (again constructing the positive from the negative), “There is no enjoyment to compare with the happiness of gladdening hearth and home for others,” the poetry reveals quite different investments than in making space for visitors (Chorley I. 224). Insulating the hearth, shielding it from view, works in concert with her tendency to derive Englishness from foreign figures and to characterize Englishness as estrangement; her directing of outbound traffic both laments the global dispersal of the English home and denies welcome. While her displacement to North America allows her to imagine the threshold moment she strenuously prevents on the island of England, she then unravels its consequences.

This is different from nationalism serving international ends, as Lootens suggests in another context (“Internal” 239). Rather, it is a specific preoccupation that presents new tensions and instabilities in the work of a poet who has long elicited conflicting interpretations. Kelly has expressed the hope that scholarly focus on Hemans will help “to recover something of the revolutionary potential” of her work (Intro 85). With regard to gender and the conflict between domestic values and patriarchal structures, that recovery is underway. Susan Wolfson and Elizabeth Fay, for example, show how in The

⁸⁴ Vincent quotes de Stael’s Carnets de voyage en Italie.

Siege of Valencia Hemans uses her “imaginative power to push patriotic rallying to a radical but implicitly logical consequence—the martyrdom of children in filial obedience to fathers domestic, national, and religious—and to stage this consequence in ways that put pressure on the whole system” (Introduction 27). In this they detect Hemans’s “growing unease” about performances of honor (27). However, when we look not at the clash of the domestic and public spheres, but specifically at the construction of England, a new question arises: Do the frustrations and displacements enacted in her threshold scenes suggest that the nation is constituted by these inhospitalities?

The uninhabited or evacuated form in Hemans’s work—the darkened or deserted house; the song of old whose message remains unexpressed; the unlocatable grave; the shortened anapestic line such as operates in “The Stranger in Louisiana”—all of these elements encode that belief. The England of Hemans’s construction is conceptually a null set, not yet filled, for example, with the ancient Saxons that Carlyle will import in his contribution to a Burkean kind of continuous history for the nation. Nor is the insulation of the hearth against the provocations of welcome clearly an instance of “how the nation, in a crisis of potential breakdown, [. . .] actually intensifies its sense of identity in order to prevent fragmentation and disruption from within” (Ross “Romancing” 75). Such a reading might be applicable to Hemans if her poetry did not create the rather odd emptiness I have been describing. Nor does her particular deployment of hospitable discourse—her preoccupation with the threshold—gesture toward recuperating alienation. Across the range of her work, the organic whole is figured as emptiness; cultural patrimony gets blocked or interrupted in the transmission; domestic symbols of the nation are made wholly inaccessible. If her poems together tell a national tale, it is

one riven by contradictions. Not only does the domestic scene pay the price for imperial aspirations, but England as a whole becomes imagined via estrangement.

Looking back from the end of empire, Ian Baucom has explained that at its height, “the task of ‘locating’ English identity became ever more complex as England struggled to define the relationship between the national ‘here’ and the imperial ‘there’” (37). One of the motivations for his own work, which treats Ruskin but then reaches ahead to Forster, Naipaul, and Rushdie, is formulated through hindsight as a key question: “Was the empire the domain of England’s mastery of the globe or the territory of the loss of Englishness?” (6). In the poetry of Felicia Hemans, we hear the first intimations of this question forming. Perhaps, then, the disquieting elements of her construction of England—the insularity, the preoccupation with estrangement and arrest, the displacement and undoing of cross-cultural encounter—together express an anxiety the poet cannot make explicit, namely that in its imperial incarnation England will be so formed by the foreign that it will not be “English” anymore. Baucom says of the imagined community of the twentieth-century, “England has endured less the vanishing of Englishness than the dispersal of its locations of identity” (220). In Hemans’s work the mechanics of emptying out—the mechanics of the centrifuge—becomes the poetics of prophecy. Apprehended not through explicit statements, but through the thresholds erected in her work, this foreclosure of welcome renders the hearth—symbol of the home and nation—unreachable. The liminal spaces (the shoreline, the becalmed ship, the silence that anticipates the stranger’s step) hold out the possibility of a welcoming threshold, but rejection is naturalized. If in the discourse of hospitality the threshold is where alienation is called into being and then—perhaps, provisionally, vertiginously—

repaired, it is in Hemans's work the line in the sand, drawn at the base of the cliffs of Albion. Hemans stations herself there to prophesy an evacuated England.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Sailor's Welcome:

James Fenimore Cooper's The Pilot and Hospitality in the Coastal Zone

Surely the battle scene in Chapter 18 of The Pilot is as gripping as any James Fenimore Cooper ever wrote. The schooner Ariel, commanded by American patriot Richard Barnstable, encounters the English Alacrity off the coast of Northumberland, and after some initial parrying, Barnstable wishes to provoke the matter. “[S]peak to him, Tom,” he says to his coxswain, “and let us see if he will answer” (195). With the roar of the cannon, the battle is on, and when it is finally won—when that same coxswain has risen from the brine “like Neptune with his trident” and harpooned the English commander “to the mast of his own vessel” (200)—Barnstable takes possession of the enemy ship. Striding the deck of his English prize, he is contemplating his next move when unexpectedly two of his men drag forward Kit Dillon, a loyalist who has been quivering below decks. Although Barnstable finds Dillon loathsome, and not for his politics alone, the victorious American nonetheless assures him: “you shall have a sailor’s welcome to whatever we possess” (204).

Much later in the novel, Barnstable’s beloved Katherine claims just such a welcome for herself. There has been another skirmish, this time on land, after which she, her cousin Cecilia, and her guardian (the loyalist Colonel Howard) have been taken hostage by the American rebels. Katherine is far from disappointed, however, for her heart is set on Barnstable, and she is glad to leave the care of the older gentleman who

has repatriated to England. A willing captive (25), she is taken to the Alacrity, which is now over-crowded with sailors and marines. Somewhat restricted there, she looks forward to meeting up with the American frigate, where Katherine is confident ““a sailor’s hospitality”” will enhance her liberty (379).

She speaks of a welcome that is offered to friend or foe. It implies a certain meagerness because resources on board are few, but this meagerness bespeaks plenitude: offered a sailor’s welcome, one shares fully in whatever there is to partake of, and during a sea voyage, even “plain hospitality” seems abundant (382). In some ways, then, a sailor’s welcome is a classic instance of hospitality extended to any traveler; other features, however, make it a special case. Fewer settings are more isolated or cramped than a ship, especially when it is under weigh, so movement is both free and restricted at the same time. Moreover, having to accept a sailor’s welcome means one’s course has been altered, usually by some harrowing event, and the guest is likely to end up far from his or her original destination. So a sailor’s welcome both arrests displacement and redirects it. Finally, the ship as a space of welcome is mobile, moving in relation to that other threshold event, landfall. Sea travelers, both hosts and guests, always anticipate another arrival. In various ways, then, a sailor’s welcome dramatically compounds the sense of extremity, displacement, and abeyance that operates in any host-guest encounter.

These two brief instances of a “sailor’s welcome” from The Pilot (1824) draw our attention to hospitality in a new context, one in which the terms of the discourse I have been invoking in this study are recast. Hospitable interaction aboard ship and along the shore is a particular concern of this text, with which Cooper not only invented a new kind

of novel, but also shaped the literary landscape and seascape of the post-Napoleonic era.

As his biographer Wayne Franklin explains:

Almost single-handedly in the 1820s, Cooper invented the key forms of American fiction—the Western, the sea tale, the Revolutionary romance—forms that set a suggestive agenda for subsequent writers, even for Hollywood and television.

Furthermore, in producing and shrewdly marketing fully 10 percent of all American novels in the 1820s, most of them best sellers, Cooper made it possible for other aspiring writers to earn a living by their writings. [. . .] As much as the political “Founding Fathers,” Cooper left a documentary imprint on the national mind. (xi)

That last phrase, “the national mind,” shows just how recalcitrant certain Romantic myths of organic national identity can be, but as I hope to show, Cooper’s first sea novel contains within it elements that work against the very concept of a national mind, putting the emphasis instead on the constructedness of “nation” *per se*. The Pilot expresses this contingency, I will be arguing, through its deployment of hospitable discourse, in particular through the elaborate threshold space Cooper constructs along the coast of England. Declaring that the word “home” has “more powerful charm” for an English subject than for the citizen of any other country (The Pilot 360), Cooper tests the assertion by “carry[ing] the war into the ‘island home’” of the English, where for both repatriating loyalists and rebellious American patriots national belonging is a painfully contingent claim (4).

Although it may seem surprising to include an American author in a dissertation exploring the idea of England, Cooper’s presence allows me to address the mutually-

constitutive relationship between the two countries from a fresh vantage point, the shore. In moving from the poetry of Hemans to the prose of Cooper, I sharpen my focus on just one of the many threshold sites she addressed in her work. On the coast, Hemans often depicted returning sailors or travelers stranded (that is, left on the strand) unable to repatriate. Cooper sets an entire novel in such a liminal place to posit the instability of any claim to host or guest status. The return to England becomes a way for him to explore not just the formation of his own country, but the idea of England as well, and what I hope to show is that in The Pilot national belonging begins in alienation, displacement, and failure. Including Cooper in this study also gives me the opportunity to address the Atlantic in “transatlantic.” Engaging with the sea as a fluid medium for nation-building disrupts the tie between land and loyalty, a fissure that will only grow wider and deeper as England’s empire expands; indeed, in The Pilot, terra firma dissolves as the platform on which to build an imagined community. Finally, including Cooper’s invention of the sea novel allows me to consider genre as a fluid category as well.

Cooper explains in the opening paragraphs of The Pilot that he has chosen to depict an “era when reason and common sense began to take the place of custom and feudal practices in the management of the affairs of nations” (9). Although he does not announce it as such, hospitable encounter is one of those sets of practices that are evoked and adjusted in The Pilot, but Cooper’s use of hospitality is yet more ambitious, for the dynamic of transatlantic migration and repatriation during the War for Independence calls into question the logic by which the colonial paradigm has functioned. Set in 1780, Cooper composed The Pilot in 1823, at a time when the successes and growth of the fledgling American navy bolstered what Thomas Philbrick long ago called the “maritime

nationalism” of the young republic (2). Following the Peace of Ghent in 1814, it was generally held in the United States that its “future glories are to be derived at sea,” as one reviewer of the novel put it (New-York Mirror 74). Pushing westward into the wilds of the continent was complemented by an exuberant confidence that America would in fact rule the waves. Thus the waterways of the world became the site for working out both English and American identity, for England’s own maritime nationalism flourished undaunted by naval defeats during the War of 1812. (Those occurred in the larger context of the protracted war with France, in which most of England’s key victories were in fact naval.)

Cooper’s text puts these two national, maritime narratives into conversation. In reading The Pilot I will make my own transatlantic circuit by reversing the flow of those thousands of English who emigrated to America after Waterloo and traveling with Cooper back across the water to the shores of England. There, in a very peculiar threshold space, Cooper theorizes belonging and the nation. To understand how he does so, I will describe his presentation of that coastline, the breakdown of hospitable conventions there, and the deployment of sign systems that emphasize threshold encounter as a matter of language. I will then test my reading of Cooper by glancing ahead to his sea novel of 1838, Homeward Bound, to consider briefly how hospitable discourse is woven into a narrative set on quite a different shore. But before launching into my reading of The Pilot, I must clear the decks, as it were, for I will be working against an influential cluster of recent books that, however much they succeed in describing the broad category of “maritime writing,” misread, I believe, the novel that inaugurated the genre. Benefiting from this scholarship, especially that of Margaret

Cohen and Hester Blum, I nonetheless contend that in certain crucial aspects it mischaracterizes both The Pilot's representation of the process by which America came into its own and the role of the sea as a marker of genre. As Samuel Baker notes in Written on the Water: British Romanticism and the Maritime Empire of Culture, "In maritime novel studies, the emerging corpus of Margaret Cohen is defining the field" (255n.11). Intervening in this developing line of argument allows me to assert that in The Pilot Cooper—often taken to be one of the most formulaic writers of the early nineteenth century—argues against the coherence of categories that shape not just imagined communities, but genres as well.

Current Accounts of The Pilot

Recently great progress has been made in treating the advanced case of hydrophasia that Cohen has diagnosed in literary studies.⁸⁵ For decades, she explains, our gaze has been fixed on the land, "despite the preeminence of maritime transport in making the modern world" ("Literary Studies" 657). Now, however, in the wake of Paul Gilroy's influential assertion of the ship as the chronotope of modernity, Atlantic studies has by most accounts emerged as a formidable discipline of its own. Important recent volumes such as The Atlantic Enlightenment, edited by Susan Manning and Francis D. Cogliano; Bernard Bailyn's Soundings in Atlantic History; The British Atlantic World, edited by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick; Cesare Casarino's Modernity at Sea;

⁸⁵ In her introduction to The Novel and the Sea, Cohen observes that following Lukács, "critics across the twentieth century treated even those novels with oceangoing themes as allegories of processes back on land. [. . .] This disregard for global ocean travel, even when a novel portrays nautical subject matter, is so spectacular, it might be called hydrophasia" (14).

and Pascale Casanova's The World Republic of Letters apply various criteria to explore how mobility across our "terraqueous globe" has shaped both modernity and national identity.⁸⁶

Jonathan Raban has suggested, "The sea in literature is not a verifiable object, to be described, with varying degrees of success and shades of emphasis, by writers of different periods; it is, rather, the supremely liquid and volatile element, shaping itself newly for every writer and every generation" (qtd. in Klein 4). For scholars and historians of the past twenty years or so, emphasis has been less on the sea itself than on seafaring (Klein 5).⁸⁷ For example, Hester Blum's The View from the Masthead (2008) joins Cohen in viewing the ocean primarily as the site of labor. Immersing herself in American sea narratives (both fictional and non-fictional), Blum argues that high above the deck of the ship, perched aloft on the masthead, the American sailor gained a contemplative perspective, a sea eye, that allowed him to develop a unique and liberatory epistemology derived from "the material and experiential specificity of work" (15). Although her geographic scope is not as broad as Cohen's, both scholars suggest that sea fiction of the nineteenth century offers "a message of democratic empowerment, translatable to other fraternities" (Cohen The Novel and the Sea 144), and both scholars credit James Fenimore Cooper with the crucially important invention of the maritime novel. Beginning with his publication of The Pilot, Cooper, they maintain, set "the codes and terms of the sea fictions" that proved phenomenally popular in the nineteenth century

⁸⁶ Cohen is reanimating a term that has long been out of use: "But literary scholars are pioneering new paradigms and concepts of critical and cultural analysis scaled to what the early modern period called the terraqueous globe" ("Literary Studies" 658). Bernhard Klein traces the evolution of the sea from a space of monstrosity and horror to a site for pragmatic economic initiative, to a place of personal challenge and development: "The romantic sea adventure tale with its focus on the effects of the ocean on the individual or national psyche properly belongs to the century after the great naval battles of the Napoleonic Wars" (4).

⁸⁷ Marcus Rediker's work is particularly important in this regard.

(Blum 73). Although periodically obscured, his influence has never been at issue, as Melville and Conrad have attested; likewise, Cooper's sea tales won the admiration of authors who did not themselves write about the sea: Balzac, Brontë, and Sand, to name a few.⁸⁸

Cohen attributes Cooper's popularity to The Pilot's establishing an ethos of problem-solving (one that had been dormant since Robinson Crusoe), whereby the ocean-going heroes of the text display a particular set of characteristics, namely, "[c]ourage, composure, applied knowledge, adroitness, collective execution: the capacity, in short, called 'craft'" (The Novel and the Sea 139-40). Extrapolating, she goes on to make an even grander claim, suggesting that in The Pilot adventure, setting, and practical reason converge in such a powerful way that the history of the novel is changed forever. Valorizing not the interiority and psychological complexity of the bildungsroman (focused as it is on education, love, and communities of private sociability), sea fiction emphasizes instead performance, skill, and survival. Diverging from the novel of manners, it eschews character development for the glorification of work (The Novel and the Sea 11-12) and thus offers a distinctly modern form of embodied intelligence (2). Subsequently, she argues, all narratives of speculation (detective fiction, spy fiction, even science fiction) can trace their origins to the genre that had its debut in The Pilot (The Novel and the Sea 225).

⁸⁸Many reviews compare Cooper with Scott. Cohen says that "readers like George Sand and Charlotte Brontë admired Cooper's sea novels" (The Novel and the Sea 144), and "Sand gave her preference to Cooper over Scott, in ranking these 'two great poets of the middle class'" (qtd. in The Novel and the Sea 150). Balzac said Cooper is "in our epoch the only author worthy of being put beside Walter Scott" because of "two faculties: that of painting the sea and seamen; that of idealizing the magnificent landscapes of America" (Revue Parisienne of July 25 1840, qtd. in Dekker and McWilliams 196).

Moreover, by virtue of its being a “thoroughly secular romance of men at work” (The Novel and the Sea 4), Cohen asserts that Cooper’s invention is a quintessential “traveling genre,” that is, one that addresses “social and /or literary questions that are transportable, that can speak to divergent publics” (“Traveling Genres” 482) and “perform cultural work that is meaningful across diverse social contexts” (495). In particular, she cites the routinization of labor that was an international concern in the first half of the nineteenth century (The Novel and the Sea 144-46). So despite Cooper’s primary identification with the Leatherstocking Tales, it was not the poetics of that series that crossed the Atlantic, but rather the narrative features of the sea novel that traveled easily to Britain and France (where they were re-tooled by Marryat and Sue, respectively) before returning to America to be transformed at mid-century by Poe and Melville (The Novel and the Sea 134). Cohen concludes that in The Pilot Cooper’s combination of craft and an ideological investment in movement proved irresistible to readers and writers the world over because “the dramatic energy of [its] plot hangs on the action of sailing” (“Traveling Genres” 485). Spinning the yarn of two brave American naval officers on a mission with John Paul Jones, The Pilot is thus a nationalistic adventure story that transported an international audience to what Cohen calls “the supranational space of the open sea” (“Traveling Genres” 483).

Or did it? Benefiting from this recent scholarship, I must nonetheless roil the waters by suggesting that The Pilot is not in fact the paradigmatic example of the genre that followed from it. As compelling as Blum and Cohen’s accounts of sea writing more generally are, the novel that started it all does not in several key respects look like or behave like the genre it is presumed to have defined. In fact, as I hope to show, The Pilot

argues against the very taxonomic practices that go into genre-making. Unmoored from these recent literary historical narratives, The Pilot offers some quite puzzling challenges to the kinds of arguments Blum and Cohen and others are currently elaborating: arguments about the democratically-empowering view from the masthead and about the ocean's role in the construction of national identity. Such dissonances have important consequences not only for how we read Cooper, but also for how we understand the maritime dimension of Anglo-American relations. I thus attend to features of The Pilot that have recently been elided—or, if discussed, misread. First of all, for example, despite the mid-air reveries in works by writers from Irving to Melville, no character in The Pilot actually takes a view from the masthead.⁸⁹ No common sailors are separated out from the crowd of seamen on board the ships. During a particularly thrilling battle scene, for example, “fifty men [fly] out on the dizzy heights of the different spars” to release their canvas in one coordinated, balletic motion; they become individuals only when a barrage of artillery fire cuts their ropes (399). Then indeed “[a] few men [are seen . . .] clinging with wild frenzy to the cordage, dropping from rope to rope like wounded birds fluttering through a tree, until they [fall] heavily into the ocean, the sullen ship sweeping by them, in cold indifference” (399). In other words, the scene of individual epistemological development so crucial to Blum's account of sea fiction is not staged in Cooper's inaugural tale.

Likewise, life aboard ship in The Pilot hardly promotes democratic empowerment. The men work well together, to be sure. In the storm that eventually destroys the Ariel, for example, “unity of action” is the goal, for it “could alone afford them even a ray of hope” (276). Their fate is evidently sealed:

⁸⁹ Blum mentions Irving's Geoffrey Crayon and Melville's Ishmael (119-121).

The discipline of the crew, however, still continued perfect and unyielding. There had, it is true, been a slight movement made by one or two of the older seamen, which indicated an intention to drown the apprehensions of death in ebriety; but Barnstable had called for his pistols, [. . .] not another symptom of insubordination appeared among the devoted crew. (276)⁹⁰

Even in earlier, calmer moments of leisure, rank and hierarchy are rigidly maintained so that the chain of command will function instinctively in more exigent situations. For example, in the third chapter of the novel, shortly after the eponymous Mr. Gray has been collected, a tableau is staged for the return of Griffith and Barnstable to their frigate:

a profound silence reigned among the hundreds who inhabited the huge fabric [. . .]. Large groups of men were collected in the gangways, around the mainmast, and on the booms of the vessel, [. . .] the quarter deck was occupied only by the officers, who were disposed according to their several ranks, and were equally silent and attentive as the remainder of the crew. (32)

The passage goes on further in this vein, with groups clustered according to rank and function. Mention is made of an individual's features only to suggest that he is representative of a much larger coterie. Later, a similar theatrical impulse arranges the officers in Captain Munson's quarters:

In taking their stations [. . .] a quiet, but rigid observance was paid to the rights of seniority and rank. On the right of the captain was placed Griffith, as next in

⁹⁰ Similarly, in Chapter 21, Barnstable alludes to shipboard flogging, warning his crew that ““if there is a man among you who shuts more than one eye at a time, I'll make him, when I get back, open both wider than if [. . .] the Flying Dutchman, was booming down upon him”” (237). Cooper explains in the his second preface (1849) that flogging itself is not—contrary to reformist zeal at the time—a cruel punishment; reform the sailor, he says, and flogging will not be necessary (8).

authority; and opposite to him, was seated the commander of the schooner. The officer of marines [. . .] held the next situation in point of precedence, the same order being observed to the bottom of the table [. . .]. (70)

At the conclusion of the meeting, rum is meted out in reverse order, with the least senior, Mr. Boltrope the sailing-master, barely diluting his dram, and higher ranking officers barely wetting their lips (79). Rather than democratic empowerment, the point of these tableaux seems to be taxonomy, organizing space on the ship by placing clusters of men in relation to each other. Scott achieves a similar effect in the Highland feast, as we have seen, systematizing the clan visually; as Craig has put it, such pageantry stages the nation. In a somewhat similar way, these set pieces in The Pilot, rather than democratically empowering the silent, unnamed, and undifferentiated participants, instead fortify the status quo. As fluid as many concepts become in The Pilot, rank remains stable.

To be sure, Cohen accommodates hierarchy in her argument, noting that it need not be dehumanizing if it “is an expression of collective wisdom; if it serves a function; if workers are respected for their specific skills; and if they are bound together by common interest” (The Novel and the Sea 145). Yet The Pilot makes no effort to depict the relationship between the individual and the group so as to respect any specific skills (besides that of the pilot himself, and he is not a member of the crew), nor is any attention drawn to the growth of an individual sailor’s ability.⁹¹ On the contrary, the crew is only

⁹¹ Here, if it had served his purpose, Cooper might have drawn on his own experience. On his first morning of work at the rank of ordinary seaman aboard the merchant ship Stirling, seventeen-year-old Cooper and his friend Ned Myers were ordered “up the foremast to loosen the topsail. [. . .] Instead of freeing the sail so that it would drop open and catch the wind, the two novices had begun to undo the rigging that held it to the yard” (Franklin 81). As Ned remembered it years later, “the two were able to escape ‘much ridicule’ because the other crew members were so busy down below that nobody looked up” (Franklin 81).

ever a unit, functioning like a well-oiled machine rather than a model of the democratic state.⁹² Moreover, in arguing that the “emphasis on mariners as part of a profession helps justify [The Pilot’s] hierarchy as essential to efficient performance,” Cohen herself ignores the vast majority of sailors, describing “the dedication of everyone on board the Ariel across rank and job function—the captain and pilot, the lieutenants Barnstable and Griffith, the harpooner Long Tom Coffin, down to the midshipman Merry” (The Novel and the Sea 145). Reaching down to Merry is no reach at all, given that midshipmen are in training to become officers and he happens to be first cousin to both heroines; in other words, there are literally hundreds of sailors that go unacknowledged in her account—and in the novel as well.

As ordered as the sailors are aboard ship, on land the aggregate population of seamen become simply “living masses” (37). There they are a “confused mass” (345) “whose disposition to disorder and rude merriment [. . .] became more violent from their treading on solid ground” (345). Only in rare instances, either on sea or on land, are sailors singled out as individuals, and usually this is to be described as “surly” or in some other way “lowly” or rude (346). In other words, coordinated effort in the act of sailing does not empower or glorify the individual seaman. Only Long Tom Coffin rises above his station, and he is no common sailor. He is Barnstable’s surrogate father, and as Jason Berger has argued, he is sacrificed precisely because he is a man of lower rank whose importance threatens a stratified class system.⁹³

⁹² It is clear from his argumentatives on the subject that Cooper harbored a deep suspicion of what we call group think. Democratic empowerment seems to be something of an oxymoron for Cooper.

⁹³ Both Sarah F. Wood and Berger have argued persuasively that Cooper’s text contains and disavows the democratic energies it might appear to champion. Certainly Cooper’s essays make clear that “[d]emocracy [. . .] merely means that men shall have equal political rights. There can be no greater fallacy than to say, one man is as good as another, in all things” (Gleanings 239).

So while memoirs of actual nineteenth-century sailors depict a sea-going collective of individually-empowered sailors, as Blum ably demonstrates through a wealth of historical manuscripts, The Pilot seems not to be their source document—which is not surprising perhaps, given that his is a work of fiction, and most of the texts she reads are memoirs. Nonetheless Cooper’s novel remains a touchstone for her argument, as it is for Cohen, too, who simplifies the political complexities of oceangoing by asserting that “European powers agreed to treat the seas as a zone where all had the right to move freely, regardless of aim. [. . .] Liberal and democratic freedoms depend on citizenship in the nation, while freedom of movement on the oceans is available to anyone on the globe” (The Novel and the Sea 150). This crucial claim fails to take into account either the vociferous debate between mare liberum and mare clausum that intensified during the Napoleonic Wars or that much more pressing and pernicious business, the slave trade, which was altered but by no means eliminated by legislation passed on both sides of the Atlantic in 1807.⁹⁴

To be sure, Cooper champions the freedom of the seas in the opening lines of The Pilot:

A single glance at the map will make the reader acquainted with the position of the eastern coast of the island of Great Britain, as connected with the shores of the opposite continent. [. . .] Over this sea the islanders long asserted a jurisdiction, exceeding that which reason concedes to any power on the highway of nations, and which frequently led to conflicts that caused an expenditure of blood and

⁹⁴Baker explains that in 1609 the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius “outlined the view that the open sea belongs to all seafaring nations in common [. . . but John] Selden’s riposte, Mare Clausum [1635], quite literally and specifically extended to the sea the terrestrial logic of estate enclosure . [. . .] For practical purposes, this was a claim for British global maritime sovereignty” (52-53).

treasure, utterly disproportioned to the advantages that can ever arise from the maintenance of a useless and abstract right. (9)⁹⁵

Yet one can hardly imagine Cooper's believing that freedom of movement was, in fact, available to "anyone on the globe." The poignancy with which he witnessed two instances of impressment while crewing aboard the Stirling would suggest he was all too aware that freedom of the sea did not guarantee freedom on it. Here Cohen glosses over vital political distinctions in order to argue that as a genre, sea fiction is disinterested in issues of citizenship and celebrates a suspension of borders. So while one can appreciate her formulation of The Pilot's role as a traveling genre and her alternative genealogy in the history of the novel, her reading of The Pilot and its "ideological investment in movement" seems not to take into account several key features of Cooper's text, in which, for instance, there is very little movement at all. It may be the case that with regard to other nineteenth-century sea narratives "the nation [is] modeled on a shipboard fraternity soldered by craft" (The Novel and the Sea 153), but as I hope to show, soldering is precisely what does not happen to the nation in The Pilot.

One of my aims, then, is to restore to Cooper's novel some of the features that are lost when it is too quickly grouped with the tales it inspired. Chiefly, I contend that The Pilot should be considered separately from the genre that followed in its wake because despite its lumping of men into ranks aboard ship, it subtly works against the process of codifying that goes into genre-making; additionally, it does not in fact take place on the open sea. Many of Cooper's subsequent maritime novels criss-cross the watery deep (though Homeward Bound only does so in a limited way, as we will see), but The Pilot's itinerary is strictly limited to the coastal shoals of England. Never escaping the liminal

⁹⁵ Mr. Gray also sneers at the notion that the king could call the water his own (210).

waters off Northumberland, the novel's action is confined to a thin band of sand and tide along the eastern coast of the island. Furthermore, although Cooper's first "sea novel" is transatlantic by virtue of its subject matter, it is not oriented toward that vast expanse of water that links England to America. On the contrary, it faces Holland, as characters often remark, across what they call the German ocean and what today's cartographers refer to as a "marginal sea" (Wang 14).⁹⁶ Near the novel's close, for example, Griffith chides Katherine for finding the air as fresh "as if it were wafted from our own distant America!" (379). Grounding her flight of fancy, he points out: "this soft breeze blows in the direction of the fens of Holland, instead of the broad plains of America" (379). In other words, the text makes a point of emphasizing the action's distance from the "new world" and turns away from it even as the American rebels seek to fulfill the secret mission Congress has entrusted to them. Thus, although Cohen envisions the broad Atlantic between, say, Portsmouth and New York when she reads the novel's opening paragraph, Cooper is drawing a very different map for us when he describes "the small sea that has for ages been known to the world as the scene of maritime exploits" (9). Here he might be referring to the rivalry between England and the formidable Dutch empire, or perhaps to the Great Northern War, prosecuted as it was along the trading routes of the North Sea.⁹⁷ Cooper is not imagining "the unity of the Atlantic," as Cohen

⁹⁶ The narrative refers to "our German ocean" on several occasions (11, 90, 359), and an unsigned review in the *New-York Mirror* praises the description of "the sunrise in the German Ocean" (Dec. 1824; qtd. Dekker and McWilliams75),

⁹⁷ The Great Northern War (1700-1721) left the Russian kingdom the undisputed power of the continent. Interestingly enough, Cooper's novels were enormously popular in Russia, and it is in service to Catherine the Great that Jones ended his career.

claims, following Gilroy, so much as he is confining his text from its opening sentences to a marginal—a “retired”—kind of space (10).⁹⁸

The action of The Pilot, in other words, occurs on the sidelines of the exchange, traffic, and circulation of global commerce that we, with the burgeoning of transatlantic studies, have come to associate with the Atlantic. Indeed, one aging sailor regrets how separate they are from all of that bustle and stir: “I can’t see why it is that we keep dodging along shore here [. . .],” he complains, “when, by stretching into the broad Atlantic, we might fall in with a Jamaica-man every day or two” (347). On only one occasion does an embattled vessel briefly break free to access open water; otherwise, the action takes place in this coastal zone, and we are reminded in key battle scenes that the ships never lose sight of land. In fact, the American officers use landmarks to steer by, and they distinguish the turrets of the abbey even in heavy combat (400). During the age of sail, the vast majority of naval engagements did take place in coastal waters, so here Cooper is putting a tactical truth to good use, deploying it to emphasize the text’s confinement to the shoreline.⁹⁹

Neither does the action ever push any distance into the interior. The farthest inland we travel is the abbey of St. Ruth, which the loyalist Colonel Howard has taken as his home, and it is only two miles from the cliffs, which we are told trace “the margin of the ocean” (344). In fact, so confined is the action of the novel that the narrator allows himself a short-cut, admitting at one point, “The reader has too often accompanied us

⁹⁸ In “Traveling Genres,” Cohen argues, “When Cooper imagines the unity of the Atlantic as the interactions of competing imperial projects, he suggests it as precisely the kind of heterogeneous space that has recently led to its renewed prominence in cross-cultural studies, where the Atlantic is seen to constitute, in Paul Gilroy’s formulation, ‘one single, complex unit of analysis’ defining ‘the modern world’” (483). She is quoting Gilroy p. 15. I am arguing that Cooper is not accessing the Atlantic so much as he is working from an oblique angle to consider the entanglements of Anglo-American relations.

⁹⁹ I am grateful to Wayne Franklin for reminding me that the open sea was almost never the scene of war.

over the ground between the Abbey and the ocean, to require any description of the route” (349). Cooper opined in several venues that it was high time for America to declare its literary independence from England, saying, for example, that “until we do enjoy a manly, independent literature of our own, we shall labour under the imputation [. . .] of being but a second hand reflection of English opinions” (*Gleanings* 122).¹⁰⁰ But when he made his own declaration of literary independence—when he invented this new genre—he broke free from England by, paradoxically, setting his novel on its very shore.

What are the implications when we read *The Pilot* as being thus “embayed” (181)? What are we to make of the fact that Cooper set his first maritime romance in this coastal zone rather than laying claim to the “freedom of the seas” that has proven so important in our current construction of the ocean? Locating this American adventure on the threshold of England, I contend, puts displacement at the heart of both nation-building and generic innovation. So in addition to launching a new kind of novel, *The Pilot* also promoted a new understanding of the United States, as a naval power contending on the waves with Britannia. Beyond these commonly-held views, however, I will be arguing that Cooper’s creation of this particular setting evokes instabilities that work in the novel on many other levels as well. Theme, rhetoric, and diction explore the liminality established through setting, and I will explore each of these elements in turn. First, I will describe a pervasive alienation in the coastal zone, for in this narrative all claims to host (or even guest status) are provisional at best. Second, I will suggest that hospitable conventions are foregrounded in order to reveal the breakdown of conceptual categories, a contingency that is expressed through language as well. And third, I will

¹⁰⁰ “Our own weakness,” Cooper lamented, “is a natural consequence of a colonial origin, of reading English books, and of the exaggerations of distance and dependency” (*Gleanings* 244).

connect the narrative's formation of the threshold to current definitions of the sea novel. As nineteenth-century reviewers noted, The Pilot did much that was new, capturing the lingo and daily tasks of sailors, innovating new character types, and utilizing the ocean as more than a static backdrop for adventure.¹⁰¹ But it is also, I suggest, a novel in which contingency, failure and derailment shape the narrative of national belonging, and this is achieved through its engagement with hospitality.

Hospitality and Contingency at the Threshold of England

On one level, The Pilot is organized by clear oppositions: land vs. sea, and English vs. American, to name the most obvious contrasts. At the cliffs that form the boundary of England, insider and outsider, loyalist and rebel can be determined with precision; these designations are brought into sharp relief, for after all, the land along the shore is not neutral territory. It is clearly English, and for an American rebel to set foot on it is an incontrovertibly treasonous act.¹⁰² Similarly, the text urges us to agree that life on the water is vastly superior to life on land. Long Tom Coffin, for example, cannot navigate once he sets foot on the ground (17). Having been “born on the coast,” he feels “set afloat in a strange country” whenever he goes ashore (242), and anyway,

¹⁰¹ Says an unsigned review from New-York Mirror of Dec. 1824: “Cooper is, body and spirit, a sailor. The ocean is truly his element—the deck his home. He confers reality on all his description. We hear the roar of the waves—the splash of the oars—the hoarse language of the seamen. We see the waters—the ships—the manning of the yards—the heaving of the lead—the very cordage of the vessels. [. . .] we actually take part in the proceedings and conversations of the crew” (74-75). In a more general review from 1829, William Hazlitt says of The Pilot that although American writers write “[i]n the absence of subjects of real interest,” Cooper’s Pilot “is the best of his works; and truth to say, we think it a masterpiece of its kind. It has great unity of purpose and feeling” (159).

¹⁰² Though The Pilot followed The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground by only a few years, it is not, I contend, a reworking of that no-man’s-land. Hugh Egan has taken a different view, regarding the setting of The Pilot as a maritime manifestation of the neutral ground (70).

Tom ““never could see the use of more land than now and then a small island, to raise a few vegetables, and to dry your fish”” (19).¹⁰³ Likewise, sailors display a dazzling ability to innovate that their rather plodding foot-soldier counterparts comically lack. So sharp contrasts do operate in the novel, much as the cliffs themselves stand at the edge of the water to inscribe in the very landscape the differentiation between land and sea or between loyalist subject and rebellious patriot.

But alongside this tendency to organize experience around oppositions, another dynamic is importantly at work in the text. In this coastal zone, even as certain sharp contrasts abide, the text gestures beyond them to render the categories created by such crisp delineations ultimately provisional. The Colonel, for example, glad to be in the land of his ancestors, asserts his rights and privileges as patriarch of the abbey. His very name evokes not only the power of an ancient aristocratic family, but also the almost taxonomic structure of the English class system.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, the Colonel has to acknowledge that he has rented his home. He does not own it: ““here he lives a stranger,”” his niece Cecilia explains, ““and though he finds some consolation in dwelling in a building where his ancestors have dwelt before him, yet he walks as an alien through its gloomy passages”” (141).¹⁰⁵ Perhaps the elderly colonel finds comfort in declaring that the true host of any loyal residence, is, in the end, the King himself (328). We know from history, however, that even that final claim can be undone, for although the text

¹⁰³He explains to Kit Dillon just before their deaths that waves to him ““are what the land is to you”” (282). Later he confirms that ““what land there is, should always be a soft mud, or a sandy ooze, in order than an anchor might hold”” (27).

¹⁰⁴ Reviewing *The Redskins* in 1846, Thackeray criticizes Cooper at length for his apparently conflicted attitude toward aristocracy: ““Mr. Cooper may hold in supreme contempt the prescriptive honours of such English houses as Howard and Percy, but he must hold in proud distinction ‘the old house’ of Littlepage, which he tells us was founded in 1785”” (229-30).

¹⁰⁵ At the conclusion of the novel, as he makes ready to leave England, the Colonel attempts to tidy up his effects, noting that the house and most of the furniture are the property of his landlord (351).

does not draw the connection, the Howards notoriously attained their eminence by conspiring against an anointed monarch.¹⁰⁶ In other words, the text asserts land-based claims of privilege and belonging and then renders them contingent by running just this regression. Thus, although transatlantic scholars rightly caution us to resist privileging national borders, Cooper's text asserts them—and then exposes the contingency with which those designations are established in the first place.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, the Colonel has arrived in the region at a pivotal juncture for his clan. Although Cooper makes no mention of it, the Howard who will soon become the 11th Duke of Norfolk—the premier duke of the peerage—famously vowed that he would do whatever he could for anyone named Howard.¹⁰⁸ According to his obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine of 1816, “the most remote suspicion of alliance combined with the name, could always command his good offices” (66). Presumably a loyalist from the American colonies would expect to be the beneficiary of such largesse, but our Colonel Howard lands when the family has embarked on a decades-long building project at Castle Arundel toward the southern coast. So the Colonel's displacement from the family is compounded, which perhaps contributes to the feeling Cecilia describes, that ““this England [. . .] receives her children from the colonies with cold and haughty distrust, like

¹⁰⁶ John Howard was made Duke of Norfolk (the third creation) in 1483 as a reward for supporting Richard III in deposing Edward V.

¹⁰⁷ Amanda Claybaugh, for example, urges this caution in multiple recent publications.

¹⁰⁸ The Duke of Norfolk is still the hereditary Marshal of England. At the time of the novel's composition, Howards and their descendants had held the title for over five hundred years. The writer of his obituary suspects the Duke was perhaps too taken with “the phantom of the exclusive greatness of the Howards,” but the nobleman's devotion to anyone who shared the family connection extended in one famous case to an “unhappy madman, of whom the newspapers are so often full, and who so often beset his Grace's door in St. James-Square” (Urban, 1816, 66). Prodigious efforts on the part of the Duke to prove a connection were “in vain” (66).

a jealous stepmother, who is wary of the favours that she bestows on her fictitious offspring” (142).¹⁰⁹

Nor is it coincidental that the building the Colonel hires as his home, “part house, part abbey, part castle, and all prison” (66), is named for St. Ruth. This is Ruth of the Old Testament, an icon of the never fully assimilable. She is the one whose foreignness persists, even after her pledge of faithfulness to Naomi, that eloquent promise to take her mother-in-law’s home as her own. Hence, in displacing a heroic episode in the making of America to the distant edge of England and through staging the novel at an abbey that has been named for someone whose difference is never fully recuperated, the text offers displacement as the predominant subject position. Even Alice Dunscombe, a native who has never left the region, is as an unmarried woman destined forever to be somebody’s guest (119). Warmly assured by Cecilia that she should feel free to stay at the abbey after their departure, the more mature woman demurs, a hesitation Mr. Gray (that is, John Paul Jones) privately confirms; after all, he says to the only resident native in the novel, ““here you are only a guest”” (154). For his own part, Gray, originally a Scot, is always already foreign.

I want to suggest, then, that here at the threshold of England, where the determinants of subject status are on one level quite clear, the text reaches beneath them or before them to a fundamental alienation, one that renders oppositions, categories, rights, and privileges entirely contingent. No one grasps this better than the title character, who at the end of the novel literally sails off into the sunset, eschewing the

¹⁰⁹ In a death notice of July 1815, *Gentleman’s Magazine* noted “the antient baronial residence of the Howard family, Arundel Castle,” which was recently “the scene of some princely entertainments, in which the gorgeous exuberance of true old English hospitality was chastened and refined by the graces of modern elegance.”

very concept of nation. “I was born on this orb,” Gray urges Alice to understand, “and I claim to be a citizen of it. A man with a soul, not to be limited by the arbitrary boundaries of tyrants and hirelings” (148). Unwilling to admit, perhaps, that he is a hireling himself, Gray declares he is “a Quixote in the behalf of liberal principles,” a man who scoffs at the very idea of life-long allegiance (358). His will be a serial affiliation, then, for by the time he dies in Paris, Jones will have gone from Scotland to England to France to America to Russia. Lending his prowess first to one nation and then to another, he believes that he is fighting “in behalf of human nature” (211).

As Griffith expounds on the last page, however, “if he commenced his deeds in the cause of these free States, they terminated in the service of a despot!” (422). This mercenary tendency has created a conundrum for scholars. In John P. McWilliams’s words, “Whether Cooper’s portrait of Jones is an act of deliberate debunking or an uneasy praise is difficult to assess” (“Woman’s Enterprise” 67). On the one hand, there is no doubt that Cooper’s novel made Jones a hero. Prior to The Pilot, almost no attention had been paid the Scot in print (Franklin 401-03), but after the novel’s publication, Jones moved to the foreground of revolution-era histories, eventually being praised (and reinterred on American soil) as the Father of the American Navy.¹¹⁰ Given his prodigious skills as a pilot—his embodied intelligence—he is a fitting avatar of craft, as Cohen would have him (The Novel and the Sea 141). On the other hand, Jones’s reputation was, and remains, badly tarnished by raids he made on English and Scottish

¹¹⁰For details about battles and raids, Cooper relied on oral histories taken from one man in particular who served under Jones on the Bonhomme Richard. Commander Richard Dale ‘shared many anecdotes of the early navy with Cooper over the years’ (Franklin 403). Between the war and the publication of Cooper’s novel, those who knew much about Jones regarded him as a pirate for the raids he made on English and Scottish coastal villages, but he nonetheless won admiration for his skills as a pilot. Partly what drew people to Cooper’s rendition of his story was Jones’s art and strength—his embodied intelligence, as Cohen rightly describes it (The Novel and the Sea 141).

coastal villages all through the late 1770s. His brutality is such that Griffith does not seek to absolve him.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, Jones makes an important assertion in the novel, modeling a serial affiliation and recognizing that just as “home is an accident of birth” (360), the nation can only ever be provisionally tendered. We see, then, that if The Pilot is an adventure tale that helps to construct American identity (and it has long and rightly been regarded as such), alienation subtends the nation. Belonging begins in displacement. The categories through which this kind of affiliation is expressed are shown to be contingent.

In such a provisional context it is no surprise that hospitable conventions also falter. Here, the simplest rituals to determine insider and outsider fail to function properly. Even the back-and-forth of sentry duty, an oft-repeated hospitable exchange (“Who goes there, friend or foe?”) proves to have unintended consequences. Lieutenant Manual, an American who obsesses about sign and countersign, is shot dead by a soldier under his command when he forgets his own password (418). This is a man over-enthusiastic about setting the picquet, establishing the imaginary lines the enemy must not cross. But if he is ridiculed for constructing these ephemeral thresholds over and over again, Manual is simply acting out a preoccupation the text itself shares. Establishing boundaries is precisely the matter at hand when a colony seeks to disengage from the ruling empire. Although the Lieutenant may be excessive in training his soldiers on how to post the picquet, these movable lines highlight the provisionality of all such constructs.

¹¹¹As fitting as he might be as the avatar of craft, Jones is a much more questionable choice as standard-bearer for the message of sea fiction as Cohen has defined the genre, as a narrative that “idealizes a vision of the modern nation forged and maintained by the bonds of skilled work” (153). Jones takes it as a point of pride not to bond with anyone.

If the Lieutenant is obsessive, the Colonel is confused. Resorting to conventional codes of hospitality to shore up his authority, he cannot help but misapply them. For example, he repeatedly offers convivial generosity to men who are prisoners: “it will not do to permit even the constable of the Tower of London, to surpass the master of St. Ruth, in hospitality [. . .] to his prisoners” (257)). This irony is not lost on the savvy Captain Borroughcliffe, the British recruiting officer who habitually mocks the Colonel as “mine host” and with great flourish introduces a prisoner to the old loyalist, the man “to whose hospitality you will be indebted” (228). Regarding the young women under his care, the Colonel claims to be protecting family members when he confines them to their rooms (110). In fact, he and his niece Cecilia exchange words over her role as his deputy hostess: “is our retirement altogether voluntary?” she asks, to which he rejoins, “are you not mistress of this mansion!” (107). Shortly thereafter, Katherine challenges him on the same front: “let it be spoken in plain English, that you confine us here” (110).

As the predicament of Colonel Howard indicates, categories of host, guest, alien, enemy, and friend prove inadequate for organizing social interaction when a colonial relationship is in the process of being dismantled. His own repatriation and displacement also expose how closely hospitality flirts with invasion. “God forbid that I should forget what is due to my guests, gentlemen,” he cries in some frustration to Griffith, “but ye have entered my dwelling as foes to my prince” (298). He thinks his options are fairly straightforward: “as master of the mansion, I will inquire who it is that thus unseasonably disturbs these domains. If as friends, they shall have welcome, though their visit be unexpected; and if enemies, they shall also meet with such a reception as will

become an old soldier!” (322) But the Americans are, of course, both and neither: Griffith, the son of an old friend, is also ““that recreant youth [who] dared to pollute the threshold of St. Ruth”” (174) and ““invade this hallowed isle”” (175).

Repeated use of the word “invasion” in scenes of compromised hospitality exposes the fact that in a colonial paradigm, the two are perilously co-implicated. As Mireille Rosello has explained with regard to post-colonial immigration, if such scenes were to function more smoothly, it might simply hide other, “more serious violence” (173):

A completely harmonious and pacified level of interaction may not be the best test of successful hospitable gestures: a total absence of friction might signify that other inhospitalities (such as the usurpation of the land by colonizers, for example) have instituted a Pax Romana in which hosts are always hosts, where guests are always guests. (173).

In The Pilot, those designations are seriously at play. This mutual instability does not occur in the contact zone between Western and non-Western or between self and exotic other, nor does it occur at sea, where none but Long Tom Coffin might claim indigenous status (242). Rather, it happens on the threshold of England, where easily legible categories are both asserted and undone.

As these familial, national, and colonial relations are unsettled, the women of the novel pass judgment on the foundation of oppositional categories in the first place. For instance, the Colonel’s protective confinement of them enacts the patriarchal strictures that always undergird hospitality. Their home—“part house, part abbey, part castle”—could only be “all prison” (66), for as hospitality is conventionally understood, women

are never more than deputies. As was discussed with regard to Lodore, women can not customarily act as hostesses in their own right, but only as proxies for men (McNulty lii). Nevertheless, Katherine, Cecilia, and Alice do speak on the matter. During the pivotal abbey scene when Mr. Gray finally takes command, Captain Borroughcliffe acknowledges that the women “are the allies of both parties” and should then “retire [. . .] and await the result of the struggle which is at hand” (324). But they do not retreat, a chance Alice seizes to disdain the men’s violent posturing. “Call ye this war?” she shouts, physically inserting herself “between the points of the threatening weapons” (331). “Fall back, then, ye British soldiers! [. . .] and give passage to a woman” (331). Similarly, when Alice is confronted by Lieutenant Manual and asked whether she has the countersign, Gray interjects that “sex and weakness” are countersign enough (356). In other words, women embody the countersign; they are always allowed to pass. And Katherine will take up the matter of signs herself, in ways I explore below.

Sign Systems in the Coastal Zone

As conventional hospitable exchange falters, Colonel Howard literally becomes hostage to his own host status, to use Derrida’s phrase. In Chapter 29, when the abbey is taken by the rebels, the Colonel is seized to stand in for the unnamed aristocrats who were the Americans’ original targets. Prior to his capture, however, the repatriated loyalist is, one might say, the oxymoronic “guest host,” embodying a rhetorical figure used repeatedly in the text to emphasize the vexed nature of oppositional categories at the threshold. Cooper liberally scatters oxymora throughout the novel, beginning at the very opening of his preface. There he seeks to differentiate between history and romance by

conjoining the issues of genre and rights: “The privileges of the Historian and of the writer of Romances are very different,” he opines, “and it behooves them equally to respect each other’s rights” (3). Yet he goes on from this contrast, familiar from Godwin and more recently Scott, to hope his audience will delve into historical records to discover “poetical authority” for the events of his “veritable legend” (3). With these phrases, oxymoron announces itself, drawing our attention to the prevalence of the figure throughout the narrative. The British, for example, regard Griffith and Barnstable as “piratical countrymen” (97); Kit Dillon engages in honest tricks (256); Cecilia and Katherine will marry as “willing captives,” (25); Lt. Manual and his British counterpart lament the conclusion of their “amicable warfare” (417). Taken together, such instances figure the coastal zone as an oxymoronic place. Indeed, one could say that all thresholds are oxymoronic, joining and separating insider and outsider, inhabitant and traveler. Just as any threshold stages a confrontation of opposed terms, so, too, is the oxymoron an instance in which, as Sylvie Mathé has described the figure, “contraries converge without merging” (619). Most strikingly, we see the figure at work in Chapter 18, when English and American ships are lashed together in the heat of battle “by the joint efforts of both parties,” the better to destroy each other (198).¹¹² Concretizing the rhetorical figure, the ships join stem to stern, but this temporary union is created only in order to be undone, to give opposing sides the opportunity to board each other for hand-to-hand combat.

A century and a half after Cooper, Jacques Derrida has explained the negative relationship between hospitality and dialectics by saying that the latter sets two terms in opposition, the integration of which will create a third term, whereas hospitality undoes dialectics altogether. Absolute or unconditional hospitality extends a welcome to “an

¹¹² The same tactic is used in Chapter 33.

other who no longer is, who never was the ‘its other’ of dialectics” (“Hostipitality” Andijar 363). Welcoming the wholly unanticipated visitant goes beyond the opposition of self and other, he argues, overwhelming that differentiation. Cooper, in his own enactment of the threshold encounter, does not appear to consider the radical aspirations of unconditional welcome. After all, hospitality in The Pilot is rooted in convention; it is one of those feudal practices Cooper alludes to at the outset as being supplanted in a new age. He does, however, mobilize a figure that operates similarly, for oxymoron is not dialectical either; it is “the punctual convergence within one object of mutually exclusive elements as opposed to spatial or temporal succession, which would result in antithesis rather than oxymoron” (Mathé 619). Made suddenly other—designated suddenly “mutually exclusive” by the outbreak of war—the English and Americans come together in the threshold zone in order simultaneously to pull apart. The assertion and reassertion of oxymoron throughout The Pilot highlights the figure not as an integration of opposed entities that will produce a third term, but rather as a figure for making and unmaking in the same moment. A figure of tension, the oxymoron is never one of stasis, for its energy is always unstable.

One could say that all thresholds are oxymoronic, but punctuating the text with this figure heightens narrative tension and, more important, draws our attention to the mutually-constitutive relationship of entities that function as both opposition and union (Mathé 619). The oxymoron, then, is a figure of contingency particularly suited to the Anglo-American dynamic, for in a colonial paradigm, neither colonizer nor colonized is ever properly host or guest. We see then that in The Pilot dismantling that paradigm provokes disarticulation in both senses of the word: the rupture of a sustained

transatlantic relationship—the disarticulation of America from England—and also a provocation on the level of language.¹¹³

In other ways, too, sign systems express the instabilities of the threshold as Cooper has constructed it. Although it is not explicitly concerned with hospitality, the matter of diction forms a response to the breakdown of organizing systems in the narrative. We know that this was a particular preoccupation of Cooper, invested as he was in the standardization of American English. “Thanks to the efforts of two generations of linguistic pioneers,” David Simpson explains, “[. . .] and to the spectacular rise in national self-confidence, America had, by about 1850, a version of English that was recognizably its own” (3). While Cooper’s own commentary on the matter is most fully developed in texts after The Pilot, he long felt that American usage would help secure political and literary independence (Simpson 150), which we detect in his first sea tale.¹¹⁴ Katherine declares, for example, “‘It’s a fine thing to be able to invent names and make dictionaries’” (68), and we hear Barnstable jest that he and Griffith should not expect the English to know how to “read Yankee” (59). Furthermore, the crew of the schooner swear “by sundry strange oaths, that their captain ‘could talk, when there was need of such thing, like the best Dictionary that ever was launched’” (192). Yet the text’s attention to the niceties of diction sits in an even broader semiotic context, for in The Pilot non-linguistic sign systems proliferate. Onboard the American ships, musical

¹¹³ In his recent article-length overview of Cooper’s maritime oeuvre, Hugh Egan notes the puzzling treatment of opposites. Cooper, he says, “progressively blurs his oppositions, and in the end deliberately obscures the line between sea and land, male and female, America and England” (70). Not accounting for this perceived blurring, Egan remarks that it simply underscores Cooper’s complexity. Long ago James Beard voiced a similar bemusement, worrying that the resolution of cultural dilemmas was beyond Cooper, believing that the author’s “ambiguities” must have been “unintended” (McWilliams “Woman’s Enterprise” 89 n.13.).

¹¹⁴ Three key texts here are Notions of the Americans (1828), Gleanings from Europe: England (1837), and The American Democrat (1838). Simpson argues that through his Leatherstocking narrators, Cooper became “a publicizer of Americanisms” (170).

instruments convey commands that voices can't project; Long Tom Coffin can read "God's language in the clouds" (23); fate is read in the water (38); ships signal their strategy via their rigging, which is referred to as a conversation (88, 194, 394). In all these instances and more, alternative means of reading work beautifully and efficiently, establishing a kind of semiotic equilibrium that bespeaks an ordered, transactional relation between two counterparts.

But alongside this intersemiotic translation operates another dynamic in which such equilibrium is overcome.¹¹⁵ Cutting up silk squares of various solid colors, Katherine improvises on the practice of nautical signal flags to create a dictionary for clandestine communication. The idea is that she and Barnstable will each have a set of flags and a signal book so they might secretly plan an escape. When they first put Katherine's silk squares to use, they exchange rather straightforward messages. White over black, for instance, asks, "[H]as my messenger been seen?" (310) Yellow, green, and red identifies "my cousin Merry" (310). But then Katherine strings together some flags to convey a much more complex message, and here, discourse reaches a point of overflowing—reaches a kind of threshold point, one might say—for her communication with her lover becomes almost joyfully implausible. "When the Abbey clock strikes nine," she signals in her final message, "come with care to the wicket, which opens, at the east side of the Paddock, on the road: until then, keep secret" (311). Here something is suddenly out of scale. If it is true, as Katherine claims, that she has actually anticipated the need for this complicated instruction, her dictionary is improbably

¹¹⁵Roman Jakobson offers a definition: "Intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems" (182).

prescient, and in practice, one cannot quite imagine what combination of solid squares could convey such subtlety.

So the implausibility of the episode alerts us to something new happening on the level of language. Whether it is Barnstable and Griffith “disput[ing] about terms” (14) or a drum tattooing a strategic command (193), other sign systems in the novel seem to translate between equivalences. In Katherine’s system, however, her units of meaning (the solid squares of color) come to bear more than they would appear capable of. This new mode of translation, in which the gross renders the fine, resists the logic of how we understand these systems to work. There must then be a bit that escapes the smooth rendering, an excess of meaning built into the process of translation as Katherine has designed it. In this fashioning (and it is literally a fashioning, for at one point Katherine wears her sign system as a turban), she draws our attention to a new kind of articulation, one that goes beyond the closure of English vs. Yankee. In its extravagance, Katherine’s sign system tilts the scales to allow limits to be overcome. If, as Sylvie Mathé asserts, oxymoron gestures beyond language, “beyond the grasp of words” (625), so, too, does this lexical production gesture beyond economical systems of translation.

Scholars have long been frustrated by passages such as Katherine’s silk squares because they seem melodramatic or jarring. Donald Darnell, for example, has declared the novel flawed because of its farcical elements.¹¹⁶ Such extraneous concerns, so the argument goes, disrupt the “real” tale Cooper must have been trying to tell, namely, the covert operation run by Barnstable, Griffith, and Jones on behalf of the rebellious colonies. I would contend, however, that moments such as this, abrupt or out of scale,

¹¹⁶ His concern is the scene in which Long Tom Coffin and Captain Borroughcliffe engage in a slapstick routine, which ends with the recruiting officer tied to a bedpost (251).

are integral to the tale of the United States establishing itself as separate from England. They disturb the smooth surface of the narrative to suggest that nation-building—revolution—requires both a new relationship to language and also a new mode of expression. If Katherine is fashioning one particularly suited to the coastal zone, so, too, is Cooper himself. In The Pilot the schemes of the swashbuckling American patriots have required a new sign system, and for Cooper telling their tale has engendered a new form of novel, one that in multiple registers argues against taxonomic and lexical practices that define and delimit. The processes by which America will form itself as a nation—as its own host—seems to require these jarring moments that do not cohere.

It is also important to note briefly that in taking the patriots' secret mission as the “real” tale of the narrative, scholars have had to smooth over the paradoxically generative power of failure in the novel. As early as the ninth chapter (out of thirty-five), Jones and the naval officers have botched their mission, and rather ignominiously: they are simply arrested as they traipse along in the moonlight. So while Gray's piloting has been wondrously successful, as far as Congress is concerned, Barnstable and Griffith and the others fail to deliver.¹¹⁷ Nor, apparently, is Gray unfamiliar with this outcome. Late in the novel he “mutter[s] in a lower and more hurried voice, ‘this has been like Liverpool, and—Whitehaven—and Edinburgh, and fifty more!’” (414)

Failure, in fact, is thematized as this kind of derailment. In Chapter 17, for example, Barnstable and a small detachment are under orders to return to the Ariel, but they get distracted by the blow of a whale, which they kill to no purpose (except, perhaps, to flex their muscles in anticipation of battle). After their “sport,” they are very nearly too late in reaching their schooner (189). Meanwhile, Griffith and Manual are making a

¹¹⁷ Wood makes much of this in her reading of the novel as derived from the captivity narrative.

far more serious tactical blunder, hiding in the vault of the old ruin that lies between the abbey and the sea. While they joke about enjoying their host's wine, their troops are unceremoniously mown down like rabbits trapped in a burrow (221). So failure and error dog the mission, which in the end, of course, fails to secure the hostages Congress has asked for.

Neither does the epilogue, set twelve years later, recuperate this sense of disappointment. Although Colonel Howard has conceded during the main action of the novel that the Americans might just win their independence, and a double wedding ceremony has taken place aboard the Alacrity, Barnstable and Katherine have not had children, a plot point that differentiates this ending from the plenitude with which novels in this period conventionally close. In contrast, Griffith "withdrew entirely from the ocean" to fulfill "the conjoint duties of a husband and a good citizen" (420), but this has been a sacrifice for him, made apparently because Cecilia has suffered from depression. When she asks whether he is sighing because he wants to go to sea, Griffith vacantly replies, "I have ceased sighing and pining since you have begun to smile" (420).

Praised effusively as a tale of American idealism, The Pilot ends, then, without resolving in the conventional sense and without expressing the confidence that life in the independent United States is particularly satisfying or fruitful. Barnstable and Griffith emerge as ardent patriots whose sincerity is never up for debate, but their ardor is expressed in a text that characterizes the making of America as a process of unmaking. So in contrast to recent influential scholarship that reads The Pilot as a celebration of fraternity on a borderless ocean, I focus instead on the many processes of alienation, displacement, and failure that nonetheless produce the nation. Furthermore, contrary to

the enormously popular sea narratives that followed in its wake, The Pilot does not take place in a supranational space where the horizon is always receding. Here the horizon is fixed; the cliffs are sharply outlined against the sky; national borders are clearly defined. At the threshold of England, designations of insider and outsider, loyalist and rebel, land and sea are reified. That is what thresholds do, after all: they mark the line where alienation and difference are made real. But these designations are exposed as arbitrary and provisional. Moreover, the text resists the correlative logic, that impulse that classifies, smoothly translates, neatly orders and contains. Counterintuitive as it may seem, then, a novel whose action is quite restricted argues for resisting containment. So while The Pilot recognizes the power of the nation as a political institution, it also recognizes the arbitrariness of its conceptual infrastructure, the means by which people belong to it, and this key argument is seen most clearly in the liminal space of the coastal zone. In The Pilot the nation is not soldered on the high seas; it is, at most, provisionally gestured toward in a threshold space where failure and derailment are woven into the national tale—in short, where disarticulation becomes a means of articulation. Never explicitly, but only implicitly, The Pilot works through theme, setting, figuration, and diction to resist the trope of the nation as organic.

Moreover, while in these other arguments it is the attention to work that marks The Pilot as American, it might equally be the case that what is most revolutionary about it is its recognition of the contingency that energizes and characterizes our creation of forms—whether those forms be political or generic.¹¹⁸ These important disarticulations at work are what we risk losing sight of when we mistakenly transport Cooper's new

¹¹⁸ Robert Levine has insightfully examined the works of another set of American authors, including Chales Brockden Brown and Frederick Douglass, for the role played by contingency.

form to the broad Atlantic from the very peculiar threshold space in which it is actually set: the margin of a marginal sea.

In The Pilot America's extraction from the political and social relations of England involves admitting various crucially important "disorganizing systems"—that striking oxymoron used by Alice to describe Gray's rebellion (148). Hospitality has proven to be a powerful instance of this dynamic. I suggest then that The Pilot is more than a narrative about labor and the nation; more than the author's personal reckoning with his own fraught Anglophilia; more than a satisfying tale of revenge conceived shortly after the British fired the capital city. It is a text that recognizes its own contingency as well as that of the categories by which nations and colonies and empires are designated and pledged fealty to, and it makes this admission at the threshold, giving expression to liminality in multiple registers.

This elaboration of the threshold space is, I suggest, one of the significant, if unrecognized, innovations of this new form of the novel. In that zone, Cooper devises a context for expressing the instabilities and paradoxes of colonialism and civil war. Now briefly considering how these elements operate in a later sea novel, Homeward Bound, reveals that the threshold continued to be a provocative setting for working out issues of belonging and the nation. At the same time, however, Homeward Bound exposes serious limitations in the western paradigms of welcome. Marking those limits adjusts how we regard the instabilities of the discourse.

A Return Journey

Two years and two novels after the publication of The Pilot, Cooper went with his wife and five children to Europe, where he consciously sought to forge a transnational worldview. His seven-year stay convinced him more than ever that Americans must root out their colonial habits of thought; this is a “process of alienation,” he said, necessary to the United States’ final and full emancipation (Gleanings 286). As we have seen, this process is already at work in The Pilot, differentiating the United States from England and suggesting more profoundly that imagining a nation at all must begin in alienation. But it is also at work in Cooper himself. He strove quite sincerely to explain England and the United States to each other during the late 1820s and 1830s and foreswore fiction in order to grasp after subtleties in Anglo-American relations that only irritated his audience on both sides of the Atlantic. Eventually, though, in 1837, he returned to fiction, and when he did, he once again produced a sea novel. Homeward Bound and its sequel Home as Found were published the next year.

Of the first, Francis Bowen opined in the North American Review, “Nothing redeems it from utter and deplorable dullness” (183), while the sequel seemed to be, in another reader’s view, nothing more than an opportunity for Cooper to vent his “superabundant bile” (184), and I have to agree with the latter comment, for the sequel would seem better named Home as Found Wanting. Despite these challenges, Homeward Bound provides an important coda to my reading of The Pilot, for it connects hospitable conventions with political theory, and both fail miserably. The Pilot took the battle home to Britain, but Homeward Bound reverses the flow, transporting an American family back to New York state after twelve years in England and on the continent.

Edward Effingham, his daughter Eve, and his cousin Jack are returning to Templeton, near present-day Cooperstown. During the journey, however, they become entrapped in a nightmarish coastal setting. Shortly after departing from Portsmouth, their packet ship the Montauk must take evasive maneuvers to avoid the British man-of-war Foam, which is tracking them to apprehend a fugitive. The Montauk then goes even more drastically off-course in a storm, eventually finding itself on the coast of Africa, unable to extricate itself from the bays and rocks that form a barrier to the shore. Time after time the Montauk must kedge out of an inlet until at the end of the novel it finally catches the trade winds that will take it into the Atlantic proper. All but a few pages of the text, in other words, are set either in the docks of England or in the narrow shallows and bars of a “fearfully inhospitable” coast (185).¹¹⁹

There on the edge of present-day Morocco, the Effinghams and their party legitimately worry they will be kidnapped and sold into slavery by “Arabs” amassing on the shore. Trying to protect themselves, a landing party shares a meal with a “sheik” (285), which transpires in classic, formulaic pattern: “Mr. Monday and Mr. Dodge were invited by signs to be seated, and refreshments were offered. [. . .] Although Mussulmans, the hosts did not scruple about tasting the cup, and ten minutes of pantomime, potations, and grimaces brought about a species of intimacy between the parties” (283). These good graces notwithstanding, meaningful interchange is impossible, “the sheik and his guests communicating by signs, in such a way as completely to mystify each other” (285). Afterward, the Arabs resume their attempts on the Montauk’s passengers, and

¹¹⁹ In her article for a collection of essays edited by Franco Moretti, Margaret Cohen offers a taxonomy of chronotopes of the sea. None applies to the threshold zone Cooper designs in The Pilot. The coast of Africa in Homeward Bound does, however, align with her description of the Shore.

friends and family prayerfully plan suicide should they be faced with a fate worse than death.

Anxiety runs so high on the Montauk because its passengers can see what has happened to a Danish trader run aground in the same storm. When the American packet arrives on the scene, this other ship has only just been abandoned, the fresh corpse of a sailor cast upon the sands. Evidently the Arabs plan to plunder “the Dane” and have sold the rest of its crew into bondage. At first the party on the Montauk tries to cope with the danger by applying what they think they know about a universal love of justice (435), but Paul confesses he judges the Arabs’ “principle of plunder” to be no worse than the practices of many nations (436), which causes young Eve to cry out, “Do you count the rights of hospitality as nothing?” (436).

He respects them, he says, but nations often follow them hypocritically. France, for example, invites “strangers to repair to the country” (436) but then takes their property (436). Therefore he has to admit, “it does not appear that the advantage is much with Christians. But the fate of shipwrecked mariners all over the world is notorious” (437). Even Americans “on some of her coasts have been accused of resorting to the old English practice of showing false lights, with a view to mislead vessels, and of committing cruel depredations on the wrecked” (437).

Here, suddenly, old English hospitality is controverted, belied by the “old English practice” of shipwrecking. Slavery and plunder are murderous practices that hospitality, from time immemorial, has been intended to prevent. At this moment, though, traditions of welcome are nothing more than a series of futile gestures, and hospitable discourse is reduced from the venerable (albeit embattled) system of The Pilot to the verbal tics of

Captain Truck. This is a man characterized by three proclivities that both foreground hospitable convention and render it powerless. The first of the old man's tics is rather comical: he tends to strong-arm people into scenes of introduction (“Mr. Sharp, permit me to introduce you to Mr. Blunt” [26] and so on). More serious is his penchant for using the word “category” to signify any sort of situation one cannot escape. He declares, for example, “The ship is in a category, and he will be an impudent scoundrel who denies it” (183), and, much later, “We are in a d—le category, sir, if the truth must be known” (253). Categories, then, are quite serious predicaments and concepts that box one in.

The third verbal tic is of much more consequence. At the slightest provocation, the Captain invokes Emer de Vattel, author of The Law of Nations (1758). This eighteenth-century Swiss philosopher, who theorized rights at sea when a ship is under weigh, is invoked almost immediately in Homeward Bound when the commander of the British Foam demands to search the packet for a wanted man.¹²⁰ Truck refuses, temporizing until they are well beyond their port of departure, because according to Vattel, as soon as he is three leagues from the English docks, he will in effect be in America, by virtue of his flying the American flag (62). National affiliation is mobile and performative, enacted by symbols very similar to Katherine's silk squares. The problem here, however, is that Vattel, Truck's authority for his claim to national sovereignty, is clearer on “belligerent rights,” that is, rights during times of war, than he is on rights during times of “profound peace,” and so he does not always prove as useful

¹²⁰ Vattel's The Law of Nations was influential among America's “founding fathers.” Benjamin Franklin claimed that all members of Congress possessed a copy. In fact, Mount Vernon has recently returned George Washington's copy to the New York Society Library after being overdue for over two hundred years.

as Truck would wish (50-51). Hoping that someone on board can elucidate, the captain brings up the 1822 Negro Seaman Acts, which gave port cities in South Carolina the right to jail all black seamen from landfall to departure. Vattel apparently pertains to either side of the case. Although this is not the place to explore the issue at length, Truck rather confusedly invokes a point of deadly controversy between England and America during the interabolition period: because American vessels steadfastly refused the right of search by a foreign power, illegal trade flourished—especially in slaves, here coded, perhaps, as tobacco.¹²¹

All of these attempts by Truck to deploy hospitable conventions correctly—acting as master of ceremonies and puzzling out the applicability of international law—become a moot point, however, entrapped as he is on the coast of Africa. There, the specter of a profound inhospitality haunts any attempt to apply the right conventions (the right “categories”) to the situation at hand. If The Pilot asserts the contingency of systems set up to organize experience, Homeward Bound goes one step further. Hospitality—the dinner with the sheik or Eve’s naïve belief in international convention—has no role to play when slavery is the matter at hand. Host-guest paradigms can be mimicked, but they have no relevance.

The question, though, is the degree to which slavery is the matter at hand. There is no doubt that the Danes are sold; that much is explicit in the text. What is not explicit is the degree to which United States chattel slavery is encoded in that scenario—or in

¹²¹The 1819 Slave Trade Act dedicated new American warships to patrol the coast of Africa, but the United States’ refusal to grant the right of search impeded international cooperation on the matter. According to naval historian Calvin Lane, while the Royal Navy enforced its own prohibition against slave trade, the U.S. was much less successful. He writes, “From 1843 to 1857, the U.S. Navy took only 19 slavers, six of which were actually condemned, while the Royal Navy seized 600 vessels, 562 of which were condemned” (97). Between 1840 and 1860, American activity in the slave trade “reached an all-time high” (Brooke 37).

Truck's frequent reference to tobacco, laws against the smuggling of which were apparently routinely ignored. Homeward Bound, I suggest, leaves more on the African coast than a dismayed Dane. It displaces a subtext Cooper approaches only obliquely. So once again, as in The Pilot, the story of the nation is told through derailment and displacement.

Evidently Cooper originally intended his subtitle to be "The Things That Are," a shot across the bow, perhaps, to warn his readers that a bilious screed was forthcoming. He planned to use a fictional narrative to critique America's faults, but slavery was not among the topics envisioned. So the text cannot confront directly this crucially important "thing" about the United States; it is only evoked by having the Montauk rerouted through Africa. This redirecting was a compositional matter as well, for as Cooper explains his writing process in the preface to Homeward Bound:

By the original plan, the work was to open at the threshold of the country, or with the arrival of the travelers at Sandy Hook [New Jersey], from which point the tale was to have been carried regularly forward to its conclusion. But [. . .] the work has become 'all ship'; it actually closing at, nor near, the spot where it was originally intended it should commence. (5)

In other words, the whole of Homeward Bound forms a threshold to Home as Found, and the story proper (the Effinghams at Templeton) only commences after time spent on that other threshold. As Stephen Carl Arch astutely argues, "[d]ivergence is a central organizing impulse in Homeward Bound" (256), but what this scholar reads as a problem of design is familiar, I suggest, given The Pilot's earlier use of displacement, and it is in fact integral to producing the tale of the nation in 1837.

So once again Cooper uses a coastal zone, an expanded threshold space, here to suggest that approaching how things are in the U.S. has to be done via Africa. In this, both The Pilot and Homeward Bound resemble Shelley's use of America as a mediated discursive construct. Hospitable discourse is thematized, through plot points and dialogue, but it is also a principle of representation at work in the text, and in this, too, Homeward Bound reveals a strong debt to The Pilot. In one important and perhaps obvious way, however, Homeward Bound differs from the earlier text. Whereas the first sea novel recounts an episode in the struggle to separate the United States from England, Homeward Bound re-establishes their commonality. The harrowing events on the coast of Africa provoke a defensive response that strengthens the weave of England and America's shared cultural fabric. Although Home as Found, the sequel, repeatedly calls for America's rejuvenation through intellectual independence from England, in fact it consolidates the Effingham family as Anglo-American and in several ways blurs the distinction between the two cultures. Eve admits, for example, she feels unsure whether she is by temperament European or American (83-84), and until the very end of Home as Found no one seems to know whether Paul was born in England or America. It comes as no surprise to learn late in the novel that he is actually an Effingham, a revelation that draws the circle still tighter when he marries Eve.

Much more strikingly, Captain Truck domesticates the Atlantic itself: in conversation with an esteemed local fisherman, he explains that crisscrossing that sea is "little more than so much canalling along a tow-path" (299). He never quite believes he is "at sea at all on the Atlantic," he says; a real ocean would be the Pacific or the "Great South Sea" (299). In other words, the coastlines of England and America

conceptually draw near after the close encounters with slavery on the coast of Africa. And as this second novel ends, all of the main characters plan to make the transatlantic crossing, inviting along their almost fanatically Anglophilic friend Mr. Howel, who will finally be able to see with his eyes what he has only been able to imagine. So while various characters argue in Homeward Bound that Americans ought to stay put so that love for their locale might take root, the Effinghams themselves turn east again, effecting their own, privileged cure for the westering fever they have criticized throughout. Despite Jack's crowing that he and his family have gotten "beyond the reach of national foibles"—that is, have cultivated a worldly sophistication—the novels of 1838 contradict him (Homeward Bound 10). Anglophilia trumps what he calls cosmopolitanism, and a "retrograde" America looks back to England, even as it hints that slavery and plunder share, at root, the problem of Englishness.

Following the lead of historian Gordon S. Wood, Leonard Tennenhouse has argued in his book The Importance of Feeling English that at the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, the notion of being "American" didn't override British identity. Americans wanted to write as Englishmen (2). They "became if anything more intent on keeping the new homeland as much as possible like the old one in terms of its language, literature, and any number of cultural practices" (2). According to Wood, by the time the first shots were fired in the War for American Independence, "the Americans seemed more English than the English themselves" (2). Englishness, in other words, became a performance that helped to construct national identity in the United States (7).

Although I have difficulty with Tennenhouse's use of the word "diaspora" to refer to the dynamic he is describing, his work highlights the continued mutual regard of the

U.S. and England after the end of the War of 1812. And although Cooper himself expended tremendous energy in trying to distinguish the manners and morals of the two nations, he seems not to have been able to break his gaze for very long from the Atlantic horizon. Too, Tennenhouse's work attests to the understanding of a nation as an aesthetic and discursive construct. England and America continued to be imagined through each other. They are each other's "fictitious offspring," perhaps, as Cecilia describes Colonel Howard—or in parlance I have used throughout, they are each other's alienated familiars.

Although Cooper says early in The Pilot that in the Revolutionary era "reason and common sense began to take the place of custom and feudal practices in the management of the affairs of nations" (9), his sea novels deploy certain feudal practices to illuminate those matters. Hospitable conventions do falter in The Pilot, and they are shown to be seriously limited in Homeward Bound. One could even pursue the question of whether hospitable discourse is culpable for the legacy of slavery, for theorists such as Kathleen Arnold remind us that designations such as host and guest are fundamentally to blame for the evils of mistreatment suffered by those who lack status. Even if those structures (host and guest; alien and friend; rebel and loyalist) falter in The Pilot and get brushed aside in the later tale, hospitable discourse itself continues to organize the texts. Or perhaps I should say "disorganize," for as we recall, hospitality is that oxymoronic "disorganizing system" that expresses the first sea novel's self-consciousness, its awareness of its own contingency.

Contemporary readers of The Pilot did appreciate its ability to forge an American identity. As one reviewer remarked, the tale helps "to generate a binding national spirit in [U.S.] citizens" (74) by executing "a responsibility [. . .] as if the honour of an infant

republic [. . .] depended on the exertions of every individual” (75). But as I have been arguing, the undercurrent of the novel, elaborated through semiotics and diction and most especially through setting, disrupts the processes by which belonging is customarily understood. In The Pilot, disorganizing systems reveal the contingency of “nation”—and of “novel” as well.

As Wai Chee Dimock strenuously argues in her own, transhistorical scholarship, “loss of detail is almost always unwarranted” (90). The literary field, she says, requires “an archive that errs on the side of randomness rather than on the side of undue coherence” (90). Reading The Pilot as a discourse of hospitality paradoxically restores to it the incoherence that current readings of the text elide in order to appropriate The Pilot to narratives of ocean-going collectivity. By the time Cooper published Homeward Bound in 1838, he was already untrue to the course he charted with The Pilot, according to Hester Blum. Having invented a new kind of novel, he bequeathed to countless aspiring writers a fresh set of generic elements: the daily tasks of sailors, the importance of craft, fascinating but arcane vocabulary, an alluring setting for adventure. But as that literary historical narrative has been written, Cooper’s innovations have somehow become liabilities. Through the writing of ten sea novels after The Pilot, as well as the first history of the United States Navy (1839), Cooper was of course under no obligation to work in concert with those whom he inspired, and yet Blum, to name one scholar taking this tack, holds his oeuvre accountable to others’ work. The crux seems to be Cooper’s late second preface to The Pilot, in which he famously mentions Sir Walter Scott as his provocation for taking up a sea tale. According to his daughter Susan’s memoir, he was somewhat offended at a dinner party in 1822 when he heard Scott’s The

Pirate praised for its realism. It was clear to Cooper, evidently, that Scott had not sailed much, and Cooper felt he could do better (Franklin 401). By 1849, when Cooper gave this provenance for The Pilot, the genre had evolved, Blum argues, but Cooper neglected to take that evolution into account, either in his second preface to The Pilot or in his biography of his shipmate Ned Myers (1843). That latter narrative, says Blum, is “emblematic of his misappropriation of the later forms of the sea narrative genre” (74), for he dares to reaffirm “hierarchies that had become stale in 1840s nautical writing. In doing so, he displays a fundamental yet provocative misreading of the evolution of a genre that he had earlier engendered” (74). Having written The Pilot, Cooper should apparently have gotten on board, so to speak, and joined the fraternity of sea writers that might not have existed without him.

So we see again that Cooper’s new form of the novel remains particularly vulnerable to co-optation in genre-based arguments that smooth over its idiosyncrasies. But as I have argued, The Pilot contains within it elements that work against solidifying forms—whether those forms are political or generic. The disarticulations of The Pilot—crucial to the telling of the national tale—emerge in a threshold zone of Cooper’s design, one that establishes liminality as a key innovation. The threshold, that oxymoronic arena, brings to mind Dimock’s observation that genre always operates as

a self-obsolete system, a provisional set that will always be bent and pulled and stretched by its many subsets. Such bending and pulling and stretching are unavoidable, for what genre is dealing with is a volatile body of material, still developing, still in transit, and always on the verge of taking flight, in some unknown and unpredictable direction. (86)

Much more remains to be said about Cooper's sea novels and their relation to his other great corpus, the Leatherstocking Tales, and much more comparative work can be done among the sea novels themselves, putting the two I have considered, for example, in conversation with the work Luis Iglesias is currently doing on the Mexican-American War as a context for Cooper's maritime narratives. In the meantime, The Pilot itself insists on a sailor's welcome—mobile, contingent, and paradoxical as it is.

CONCLUSION

Paul Saint-Amour has said that a text is truly hospitable when it enjoys a “seemingly limitless capacity to be republished, adapted, updated, parodied, and even negated” (94). Frankenstein, then, certainly qualifies. Shelley’s masterpiece has been retold so many times that the name now conjures the creature rather than his maker. Though not as extensively, Hemans has also enjoyed transformations. If local commuters look down, they will see her “Casabianca” literally underfoot: Elizabeth Bishop’s homage is carved into the brick pathway of the Redline station in Davis Square, a testament to the ways transatlantic circuits continue to be inscribed in our culture. Especially “hospitable,” too, are Cooper’s Leatherstocking characters, for shades of Natty Bumppo live on in cinematic frontiersmen like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, and surely their partnerships with an Indian “side-kick” derive from those tales as well. All of these afterlives emanate from particularly “hospitable” texts that may not thematize hospitality at all.

Yet the central texts of my study have not proven to be hospitable in this sense of the word. Lodore has been the subject of some very insightful scholarship, but it remains part of the “other Mary Shelley,” “beyond Frankenstein.” Many of the poems that exemplify Hemans’s resistance to welcome continue to be unavailable through anthologies or, if anthologized, they have received little critical comment. And while The Pilot is emerging from its own obscurity, the fact that Cooper produced sea novels at all still comes as a surprise to many. So rather ironically, the texts I have been focusing on are not, for the most part, “hospitable” as Saint-Amour uses the term. They remain

marginal in the respective oeuvres of these authors, not solidly within the canon. This makes my grouping somewhat idiosyncratic. But perhaps idiosyncrasy is appropriate for thinking about the threshold, where the firmly established is invited to make room for the displaced. In other words, canonicity may be beside the point for considering the moment when belonging comes undone. And although the fortunes of many of these texts have fallen, they were acclaimed in their day.

Speaking to their contemporaries, Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper responded to the aesthetic challenge of representing the imagined community called “England,” and they did so by reclaiming its historical identification with hospitality. For William Cobbett, hospitality was a call to Englishness. For Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper, it offered both a way of organizing human interactions in their texts and a way of giving formal expression to a pervasive alienation that attended the notion of Englishness. If part of the cultural project of this period was to re-forge a national identity, hospitality was a means of disrupting tropes of organicism. In their stead, the tropes of hospitality (host, guest, alien, intimate, coast, door, circles, walls) comprised a versatile aesthetics through which these authors asked a series of questions about displacement and the nation: How does one claim to belong? What are the limits of welcome? Is the nation a mediated construct, an aesthetic endeavor? Will there always be an England?

Cosmopolitanism held out one alternative to nationalism, as Esther Wohlgenut, Stuart Curran, Michael Scrivener and others have argued. But cosmopolitans (like Mr. Gray, perhaps, or Jack Effingham) seek to transcend national boundaries so that they might be “at home” anywhere. Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper asked instead, “How is one at home at all?” For them, alienation and the nation were intimately bound up in each

other—not surprisingly, given the mobility and agitation that characterized the period. Emigration, imperial expansion, return from military service: these developments sundered the close association between location and identity. At the exhausted conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, affiliation was being reconceived, and these writers, following Scott’s lead, reanimated hospitable tradition to express a pervasive instability.

At root, hospitality is an ethics of vulnerability. We have seen this most poignantly, perhaps, in the alienation Ethel experiences in London and in numerous poems of Hemans that express reluctance to open up the threshold to welcome. This note of risk resonates with what Jacques Khalip and David Collings have recently described as the sense of disaster they understand to be “part and parcel of romanticism’s grappling with a negativity that haunts its corners.” In adopting “disaster,” they refer not to a “referential event,” but to “an undoing of certain apparently prior categories of dwelling [that] forces us to contemplate living otherwise.” Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper, I suggest, responded to an unsettling paradigm shift by meditating on the conventions and practices that connect individuals to each other and to a collective identity. Hospitable discourse is one way of organizing that response. Shelley seems to have been the most optimistic about harnessing the energy of the threshold moment to reconfigure belonging. Gesturing to the unknowable future, she equips both her female characters and the novel itself to take on the struggle. Hemans offers a troubling image of imperial England as vacant and foreclosed, while Cooper, for his part, focuses more on the political institution of the nation, which exerts its power even in the face of its contingent construction.

One might have expected old English hospitality, both as a set of practices and as a literary heritage, to lend cohesion to the imagined community of England, yet as we

have seen, it serves to open up places of alienation, resistance, and suspension. The nation does not, ultimately, cohere in the texts of my study. Or if it does, in poems by Hemans, for example, it is somehow a coherent void. These texts together, then, offer politically astute parables, suggesting that an ethics of vulnerability operates not only in more obviously marked spaces of empire, but also among estranged intimates residing in the metropole.

Over the past twenty-five years, as Amanda Claybaugh has explained, “the transatlantic has come to be a predominant paradigm” (Novel of Purpose 14).¹²² Concerned in early days with influence and contestation, the burgeoning field has more recently taken up issues of material culture such as print production, ownership of presses, and copyright. My own approach has been to treat the transatlantic as an “imaginary,” to borrow Paul Giles’s term, because in the texts I have studied Shelley, Cooper, and Hemans have themselves done so.¹²³ For these three authors, resorting to the other shore has provided a conceptual space in which to consider the nation as a discursive construct and to make welcome a particularly mobile concept. Thus my adoption of the transatlantic is closer to that of Kevin Hutchings and Julia M. Wright in their recent volume of collected essays, Transatlantic Literary Exchange. While their topics are different from mine, their polemic aligns with my own emphasis on transit and instability. “In this period, then,” they say, “the transatlantic offers the possibility of considering the subject in motion, evading and moving between national categories and models of national identity and citizenship at the dawn of modern nationalism in an

¹²² In other publications, Claybaugh has suggested that as an academic discipline, transatlantic studies remains too influenced by the paradigm of the nation. See “New Fields” and “Towards a New Transatlanticism.”

¹²³ Coining the term, Giles means “the interiorization of a literal or metaphorical Atlantic world in all of its expansive dimensions” (Virtual Americas 1).

already globalizing West in which territorial boundaries were highly contested” (10). They seek to reflect “the dynamism of transatlantic history” (7), which I have sought as well through engaging with the varying gestures of imaginative resort that Shelley, Hemans, and Cooper have made. For these writers, the other side of the Atlantic provides a kind of enlarged threshold space, where Lodore is suspended, where Hemans can explore the possibility of cross-cultural encounter disallowed on “English” soil, where organizing systems go awry for Cooper. It is a means of expressing the liminality that all of these writers treat as a pervasive condition and a principle of representation.

The historical period we associate with Romanticism was the time when the nation and national belonging were being refueled for a global imperialist gesture that continues to shape our world, so indeed it is enlightening—if not imperative—to understand the processes by which that discourse gained momentum. It is equally compelling to understand the intimate displacements that contended with that development. Reconfiguring the thresholds between host and guest, domestic and foreign, private and public, the late Romantic writers included here took up hospitality to disrupt the discourse of organicism. In the liminal spaces where belonging is suspended, their works, together, prophesy an alienated metropole.

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