

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA  
Jackson College of Graduate Studies  
Edmond, Oklahoma

*The Well of Loneliness:*  
The Influence of Place on Identity

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE COLLEGE  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

By  
Andrea Fay Leggett  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
2013

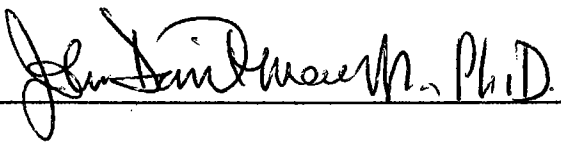
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**April 30, 2013**

**By**

  
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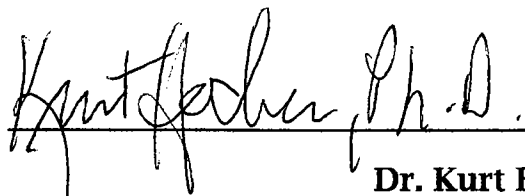
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**PAGES:** 108

Place affects identity and movement in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. Hall's main character, Stephen Gordon, is developed through her response to the Gordon family heritage of home, land, and community, which together make up her sense of home. Place theorists view sense of home as the basis for the development of an individual's personality. Throughout life, places experienced influence self identity. In turn, response to the surrounding environment affects movement and attachment to certain locales and people. Stephen Gordon is torn between two aspects of her identity which society will not accept simultaneously, preventing her from living in harmony with herself so she must choose to leave one part of herself behind. She cannot live a lesbian lifestyle and receive her birthright of being Lord of the Manor. Her coping skills fail her when she chooses to express her homosexuality, eventually leading to a nervous breakdown. Stephen learns her inherited role as Lord of the Manor is more essential to her self identity than is her sexuality, connecting her back through the ages to her ancestors before her. The realization of this returns Stephen to her home to take on her birthright.

This paper will use two identity theories used in environment-behavior studies, place-identity theory and identity process theory, to examine the impact place has on Stephen's identity and the changes she experiences due to her attachment to place.

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## Acknowledgements

My Dear, Dr. David Macey,

You have illuminated the path before me. I am in immeasurable debt for your patience, guidance, and mentorship. I will always hold onto the caring smile in your eyes which continues to encourage me to believe in my best. Also, thank you for the respect you show for your profession and students in your presentation and impeccable attire!

Smiling, Dr. Gladys Lewis,

Thank you for taking on this project while you were already so over committed. I cherish each word of encouragement you so graciously give. I look forward to polishing that “unique hook upon which hangs my literary hat!”

Challenging, Dr. Kurt Hochenauer,

Thank you for encouraging five full readings of my thesis selection! The insight gained was substantial. I already have an additional half dozen essays squarely in mind for *Well*.

My Sweet, Dr. Kari Boyce,

Thank you for endless hours of typing, feeding the cats, washing dishes, and maneuvering a police officer to drive across library lawns and walkways to give me a ride back to the car. I truly question whether I could have timely finished my thesis without your selfless acts.

Cheryl Lynn Smith, Faithful Friend,

Your belief in me and my education will be appreciated forever.

Alan Leggett, My Dear Big Brother,

Thank you for accepting all my excuses of “I can’t talk. I am working on my paper.” I promise I have time to talk now. Your presence at the defense of this thesis made for a special day I will never forget. Thanks for being my big brother, and for taking me to my first concert, spring of 1976 [?], R.E.O. Speedwagon at the Shriner’s Mosque in Springfield, MO. I think magically somehow that evening had something to do with the success of this paper.

Amy Susan Dressler, My Beloved Big Sister,

Thanks for all the breakfasts in the park and all the other little things that mean so much. I love you. I can go to the movies, now.

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## Introduction

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*It is indeed like certain lovely women who, now old, belong to a bygone generation—women who in youth were passionate but seemly; difficult to win but when won, all-fulfilling. They are passing away, but their homesteads remain, and such an homestead is Morton.*

(Hall 11)

Radclyffe Hall lists the places and people surrounding the birth of her protagonist, Stephan Gordon, on the first page of *The Well of Loneliness*. This placement emphasizes the influence of Stephen's surroundings and ancestors, especially of her parents:

The house itself is of Georgian red brick, with charming circular windows near the roof. It has dignity and pride without ostentation, self-assurance without arrogance, repose without inertia; and a gentle aloofness that, to those who know its spirit, but adds to its value as a home. (11)

Hall writes a detailed personification of the house that reflects the characteristics of the Gordons. Throughout *Well* place has an effect upon people. This paper will use two identity theories used in environment-behavior studies, place-identity theory and identity process theory, to examine the impact place has on Stephen's identity and the changes she experiences due to her attachment to place.

In Canter's theorization of the psychology of place, "place is seen as product of physical attributes, human conceptions, and

activities” (Hauge 3). The physical aspects of Morton, along with the omniscient narrator’s and Stephen’s personification of the manor, are reflected throughout the novel. Stephen runs to Morton’s welcoming arms for protection. The activities of the estate are highly masculine. Stephen is welcomed into the masculine spaces and pursuits such as her father’s study and fox hunting. Hall blends the attributes of Morton with the characteristics of its inhabitants in a way that confirms Canter’s theory.

Many scholars have written on the interaction between people and place. Bentley, Dewey, Pepper, Shumaker, and Stokols have focused on transactionalism in place theory. The theory of transactionalism builds upon Canter’s ideas about the interaction between people and places. Transactionalism states that people and places become so tied to one another through each other’s actions and states of being that they no longer are separate. Speller gives his transactional definition of place as, “a geographical space that has acquired meaning as a result of the person’s interaction with the space” (qtd. in Hauge 45).

For Stephen, no place but Morton can feel like home. Morton is where Stephen is strengthened by her surroundings, which she feels imbue her identity with the characteristics of her male heirs: “To these things [Morton] she belonged and would always belong



by right of those past generations of Gordons whose thoughts had fashioned the comeliness of Morton, whose bodies had gone to the making of Stephen” (108). Holmes states:

A focus on place recognizes that some parts of the world are more important to a individual’s identity than other parts, or at least contribute to identity in different ways than others do—and sees this not as a limitation but as a source of strength. (Holmes 30)

Morton is the most influential place in Stephen’s life. It is where she finds strength. It is where she feels she belongs: “It is the specificity of place that allows it to serve as a basis for or reflection of individual identity; or perhaps place and selfhood are mutually codefining [*sic*]” (Holmes 30). Gordon blood, her blood, is united with the soil. The health and welfare of one is reflected in the other.

In order for the nature, or the land, to be an important factor in defining Stephen’s identity, “the natural environment must influence the way people think about themselves” (Clayton 49). Nature is a great influence on the way Stephen sees herself. Repeatedly defining herself as one with nature, she spends her days walking or riding on the fields of Morton, enjoying its sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and touch. She believes in preserving nature for future generations, as is evidenced in her appreciation of what her forefathers have created in Morton:

By allowing people the time and the space to think about their own values, goals, and priorities, as well as, perhaps, providing relief from the usual concerns of self-preservation, the natural environment can play a vital role in the extent to which we define ourselves to ourselves. (Clayton 49)

Visualizing Stephen in the fields, and reading how she sees herself and Morton as one, it is easy to see that her self-knowledge, or self-identity, is firmly anchored to the environment.

Stephen is asked to leave Morton when her mother discovers she has been having a lesbian affair. Exiled from family and the family home, Stephen's identity is weakened: "Eviction from an important membership [her family] may be a potentially damning blow to identity" (Breakwell 49). This situation shows how identity process theory incorporates place into its theory. Eviction from a group indicates the person will likely experience dislocation, due to not being accepted by the group any longer.

Hall develops her main character through her move away from Morton. Stephen had been asked to leave Morton and, in exile, relocates to dreary London, but she can form no attachment to place there. Feeling 'out of place' and wishing to relocate somewhere "less constraining and more conducive to . . . a groups [person's] ideas and pattern of life. . . . Over time [after relocating] the group's [person's] identity may weaken" (Ashworth and Graham 151). Her subsequent move to Paris where she finds a home,

remodels it, and brings a wife home, are aspects of Stephen's attempt to find some of the peace she had at Morton.

Identity theorists interpret the relocations Hall assigns to Stephen, and the reasons behind them as a threat to her identity. Stephen's relocation from one place to another, due to exile and in order to join the war effort, defines and changes her identity. At a given moment in time, "identity may motivate action." In another moment, "action could generate identity changes. Action and identity, in time, are dialectically related" (Breakwell 43). Because of identity-driving action and identity-acquiring change through action, we can expect Hall's dramatic use of place movement to have important effects upon Stephen's character development.

Each of Stephen's moves is related to her having been exiled from Morton. Morton is her homeland and that will not change. In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Tuan looks at the history of attachment to homeland. He finds that literate and non-literate cultures, nomads, hunter-gatherers, migrant workers, hoboos, seafarers, agricultural peoples, and city dwellers all express attachment to homeland (153-160):

This profound attachment to the homeland appears to be a worldwide phenomenon. It is not limited to any particular culture and economy. . . . In antiquity land and religion were so closely associated that a family could not renounce one without yielding the other. Exile was the worst of fates. (154)

Attachment to homeland is common to most people, of all eras. The sense of loss from being unable to return to one's homeland has been expressed in the literature of all ages. In the *Book of Exeter*, the anonymously penned "The Wanderer," "The Seafarer," and "The Wife's Lament" are elegies of the lament of exile. While watching Euripides, the ancient Greeks would have been horrified as they witnessed Theseus banish his son as punishment, death would have been easier.

Breakwell explains 'threat to identity' as occurring when the "processes of identity assimilation-accommodation and evaluation are... unable to comply with the principles of continuity, distinctiveness and self-esteem" (46). To explain this, she gives the example of someone joining a group with similarities to the person joining, only to discover that this association lowers his or her social status. This is the case when Stephen Gordon joins Valerie Seymour's circle of friends. Because she continues to associate with Seymour's group, Stephen experiences a threat to her identity. The continuity of her self-perception is threatened by a change in her self-esteem. "Threats challenge self-esteem," writes Breakwell. "They query whether what you are is any good" (48). Hall provides evidence Stephen's sense of self is weakening throughout the book through her severe depression while living in London, after her

friend Jamie's suicide, and in her handling of Martin's advances to Mary.

Identity-process theory, according to Breakwell, can also reveal threats to identity through not being accepted into groups. By not allowing someone into a specific group, place comes into play when that person is not welcomed into the spaces the group occupies. While Stephen considers herself to be part of polite society, most members of that group would use prejudicial standards that must be met in order to be accepted by that group (Breakwell 48, 49). For instance, they would require heterosexuality as a requirement to be accepted into polite society. They also would expect members to not associate with homosexuals. Hall shows this when Mrs. Massey discovers Stephen and Mary are lesbian. Mrs. Massey rejects them for being unacceptable and to protect her daughter's reputation. The discovery prevents Stephen and Mary from spending Christmas in the Massey home, being entertained at Branscombe Court, and interacting with the people who comprise the society of the Massey's.

Coping is another facet of identity process theory. Through coping Stephen is eventually led back to Morton: "Any thought or action which succeeds in eliminating or ameliorating threat can be considered a coping strategy, whether it is consciously recognized as intentional or not" (Breakwell 79). This means that the actions

Stephen takes to return to upper-class society and to regain acceptance at Morton are part of her coping strategy, whether they are conscious or subconscious. Either way, the outcome is the same. Stephen removes herself from her lesbian relationship with Mary, cuts all ties to the homosexual community, and accepts that she has to choose between romantic love and going home to Morton and the society to which she grew up belonging. While thinking of Anna, Stephen reflects that, unlike her mother, she “must go unfulfilled all her days, or else live in abject dishonor” (Well 235). Stephen has been unable to cope with living the life of an invert and now wishes to return home. Coping strategies can take several forms, as Stephen’s experience demonstrates:

The removal of aspects of the social context, the movement of the individual into a new social position which is less threatening, the revision of identity structures, on the content or value dimensions, which enables the identity processes to operate again in accordance with the principles of continuity, distinctiveness and self-esteem. (Breakwell 79)

By leaving the homosexual community, Stephen is relocating herself to a position of respect in upper-society and reclaiming her privileged status as heir to Morton. This allows Stephen once again to see herself as a constant, unique person with a high self-esteem.

Along with the importance of place, another primary theme throughout *Well* is sexual identity. Sexual identity impacts place in Stephen’s life, and in turn, place affects her sexual identity. It is

responsible for her alienation from Morton and her return home. Hall introduces the reader to the importance of Stephen's sexual identity in the first paragraphs of *Well*, making it important to understand her references to inversion, third sex, and certain sexologists in context.

Stephen is seen as different from other females from the time of her birth. Hall refers to this difference as being "third sex" or an "invert," both common terms used by sexologists of the time. In contemporary debate, the exact meaning of these terms is often argued. Do they refer to all queer-identified persons, only to homosexuals, to masculine lesbians and effeminate gays, to transgendered people, cross-dressers, or to transsexuals? Though Ellis gives detailed explanation of the term invert (*Studies in the Psychology of Sex* 1), inversion is often used by laypeople to describe any or all of the above identities. I therefore choose not to differentiate and use these terms as an umbrella to include all of the above-mentioned categories of identity, as seems to have been the most common usage.

Hall asked Havelock Ellis to write a forward to *Well*, giving his approval to its "notable psychological and sociological significance" (Hall 6). Ellis challenges Hall's readers to consider the possibility that inverts could be honorable, intelligent, valuable members of society. He also invites the reader to reflect on the

difficulties that mainstream society's homophobia places upon inverts, who are worthy of respect. In an attempt to open the minds of mainstream readers to the dilemma faced by the third sex, Ellis writes:

The relation of certain people—who, while different from their fellow human beings, are sometimes of the highest character and the finest aptitudes—to the often hostile society in which they move, presents difficult and still unsolved problems. (6)

Ellis' reputation lends credibility to *Well* and calls upon readers to rethink their prejudice towards inverts.

Hall adds further authority to *Well* by introducing into the narrative the resources Sir Philip studies in order to better understand his daughter. These include works focused on sexual perversion by psychiatrists Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (Hall 26) and Krafft-Ebing (Hall 204), Hall's choice of authors is important. Each gives further insight into homosexuality. Ulrichs, known as the founder of the gay-rights movement, wrote:

Until my death I will count it to my glory that on 29 August 1867 I found the courage to encounter eye to eye a thousand-year-old, many-thousand-headed, raging Hydra, which has truly for all too long spit poison and venom on me and my comrades-in-nature, driven many to suicide, and poisoned the life's happiness of all. Yes, I am proud that I found the strength to thrust the first lance into the side of the Hydra of public condemnation. (Ulrichs 1)

If any of Hall's readers research the books Sir Philip reads, they will encounter this defense of homosexuality. While Hall writes



diplomatically to attract mainstream readers to her work, anyone who takes Sir Philip's lead to research the subject of inversion further might discover Ulrichs' writing, which is a straightforward celebration of being gay. He was not afraid to speak his position openly, bluntly, and proudly.

This open, celebratory way of life of which Ulrich wrote is how Stephen hopes to live. She thinks she can attain this freedom to rejoice about being lesbian, and still be surrounded by upper-class society, through authoring best-selling novels. She never attains a level of success that can support this theory. Belonging to the upper-class society she was born into eventually becomes more important than a lesbian relationship, moving her from the lesbian circle of expatriates in Paris back home to Morton.

Throughout Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* there are references that tie hysteria and paranoia of persecution to homosexuality (190, 218, 375, 376), which Stephen evidences in the end scene of *Well*. In his work as a sexologist, he uses direct language that is as provocative as Ulrichs'. Where Ulrich writes for the rights of homosexuals, Krafft-Ebing's work directly conflicts with Ulrichs'. Krafft-Ebing's stance on homosexuality is one of judgment and ridicule. It is interesting that Hall chose for both to be in Sir Philip's library since she knew this would lead some of her readers to investigate both writers. Hall states she is trying to

convince a heterosexual majority of the normality of homosexuality. The inclusion of Krafft-Ebing's work implies that Hall was interested in getting people thinking about which side of the argument they supported and about the ways their stance affected the third sex. It also shows that Stephen's father is interested in all he can find on the subject, as he reads the periods two most highly regarded sexologists, albeit of differing views.

Hall writes hysteria and paranoia of persecution into Stephen Gordon's character, recalling Krafft-Ebing's description of homosexuality. She shows signs of hysteria only at the end of each of her romantic relationships. She does not become hysterical when people or animals die; only ending romances can stir this in her. Stephen's false sense of persecution shows itself at the end of the novel and predates her return home to Morton. The persecution she has felt up to this point is real and is based on prejudicial treatment toward Stephen because she looks different and loves the same sex. Beginning with her mother, Stephen experiences judgementalism and shunning which eventually lead to her expulsion from Morton and relocation to a dismal flat in London. Stephen views this part of her martyrdom: "because in this world there is only toleration for the so-called normal" (301).

## CHAPTER 1: Morton and London

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Hall begins *Well* by describing the character of Morton and its owners, the Gordons, in the first five paragraphs. Morton serves as the foundation of Stephen's strength. Both the land and the manor signal the lineage that has been born and raised on this stretch of earth. Listing place prior to but alongside ancestry serves to show the reader whence our main character hails and establish priority. The influence of the place and people of which Stephan is born, has the immeasurable impact one would expect it to have on the Gordon heir.

The first line of the novel sets us amid the wealth of nature the Gordon family possesses:

Not very far from Upton-on Severn - between it, in fact, and the Malvern Hills - stands the country seat of the Gordon's of Bramley; well-timbered, well-cottaged, well-fenced and well-watered, having, in this latter respect, a stream that forks in exactly the right position to feed two large lakes in the grounds. (Well 11)

Reading this sentence in its entirety notifies the reader that the Gordon's have great wealth. The land is a place of great abundance, holding a wealth of resources within its acreage. Its provisions will last for many generations, just as it already has. The geographical location is exact. This brings to mind that the

definition of place, when considering place theory, is varied and determined by the individual describing their home place.

For the Gordons, the idea of place is vast, covering the area between two towns. Identification with the people, industries, farms, and hills, in addition to their own land shows the interaction that creates a sense of community between neighbors and the Gordons. Place theory states that one's house and land alone do not comprise one's home. The surrounding area, its people, buildings, land, and sense of community all add to this to create one's sense of home. Therefore, the Gordons are not isolated in the country, though surrounded by vast land holdings. Instead, interaction with their community creates a sense of "rootedness." Their "home" reaches beyond the gates of Morton.

This land, "the country seat of the Gordon's", is of great significance to the telling of this story because the Gordon home and its surroundings are fundamental to the family identity. Not only does the land provide bountiful resources, but it enfolds the Gordons in nature. As place reflects and impacts the people who interact with it, those people also mirror and help to create what the purposes of that place are and its qualities. A trust exists between the land and its possessors. The Gordons are a family who are one with nature. Nature is part of their identity. As ownership demands responsible stewardship of the land that is

owned, the reader can visualize the respect and appreciation that is expressed for the land by the quality of care it and its livestock receive, which is evidenced in the descriptions of the property and horses.

Morton is a reflection of all that generations of Gordons have put into it. Their personalities and character have built and nurtured Morton into what it is today. Their adherence to traditions such as caring for the land, being part of the community, bringing babies into the world through the actions of ardent romantic love, and of nurturing children has given Morton a atmosphere of peace, tranquility, steadfastness, and fidelity. Stephan sees herself like Morton, warm, constant, and faithful. Stephen's reflection of the manor and the land show that her roots spring from deep in the land: they are as shoots off deep tubers. She, like her ancestors, belongs to Morton.

Hall's second sentence introduces the house. It is of "Georgian red brick" (11). The house is then given human characteristics:

The house itself . . . has dignity and pride, without ostentation, self-assurance without arrogance, repose without inertia; and a gentle aloofness that, to those who know its spirit but add to the value of the home. (11)

"The influence place has on identity" is "a result of . . . reciprocal interaction between people and their physical environment" (Hauge

2). Since the house is woman's domain, through place theory we can then anticipate these traits will also apply to the lady of the house, to Stephen's female ancestors, and to their female descendents. Hall then personifies the house even further, comparing it to a woman.

It [the house] is indeed like certain lovely women who, now old, belong to a bygone generation – women who in youth were passionate but seemly; difficult to win but when won, all-fulfilling. They are passing away, but their homesteads remain, and such an homestead is Morton. (11)

This description ties heterosexual, physical desire to the woman of the house or perhaps this personification simply shows the accepted sexuality to which Stephen was to be born. Perhaps Hall intends that the reader should understand Stephen's inversion as being hereditary. Certainly, the Morton home may symbolize the ancestral women who have lived as Ladies of Morton. The description of Morton can be taken to illustrate the Gordon wives. These are the women whose lives have created the spirit of the house. These women held their virginity intact, awaiting their future husbands. These women desired and inspired heterosexual sex. These are the women whose footsteps Stephen is born to follow. They have followed the traditions of marriage and child-bearing and rearing. They have kept sacred the tradition of continuing the Gordon lineage. Is this a foretelling of heterosexual love dying away as “they [these women] are passing away . . . but

their homesteads remain,” (11)? Does it foresee the abandonment of the English country manor as a way of life? Or does it foretell of a childless Stephen who, being lesbian, might choose not to bear children and continue the Gordon name? This future lies within the words which describe Morton. (11)

Again the idea that place and its inhabitants reflect one another's character is shown as Lady Anna Gordon is introduced.

Hall's description of Anna mimics the description of the house:

Lady Anna Gordon . . . She was lovely as only an Irish woman can be, having that in her bearing that betokened quiet pride, having that in her eyes that betokened great longing, having that in her body that betokened happy promise—the archetype of the very perfect woman, whom creating God has found good. (11)

In contrasting Anna with the Morton manor we find that she is a lovely, red headed, Irish woman, as the Georgian red brick mansion with “charming circular windows”; her bearing reflects “quiet pride,” as the house has “dignity and pride without ostentation”; her eyes convey “great longing”, as Morton is like “certain lovely women... who in youth were passionate but seemly;” and, “her body” shows “happy promise” as the manor is like a “bygone” woman who was “difficult to win but when won, all-fulfilling” (11). Sir Philip has fallen in love with a woman who implements the image of the house. Given that the house has taken on its qualities over many generations, she fits an image that the previous

generations of Morton men have married. As Stephen matures she will choose women similar to her mother as lovers: beautiful, soft, uneducated, and unable to support themselves.

Tall, handsome Sir Philip is full of charm exuded from a masculine visage. He has a “noble”, “tolerant expression”, “sad yet gallant” eyes, a “slightly cleft” chin, an “intellectual” forehead, a “wide-nostrilled nose...indicative of temper,” and “sensitive”, “ardent” lips which “revealed him...a dreamer and a lover” (12). It is written that these physical facets of Sir Philip reveal the man’s character. One can see who he is by his countenance. Sir Philip is dignified, kind, non-judgmental, and romantic. He possesses a bit of a temper which is due to the high standards he sets for himself and others, but also due to his having a sense of entitlement. Philip is accustomed to having his own way because of his social position.

After a full page of these introductions we learn of Sir Philip’s and Anna’s love for one another and their conception of a child. Upon Philip’s insistence that the baby is a boy, Anna envisions a son. “And himself the lovely young man” she would say, thinking of the soft Irish speech of her peasants: ‘and himself with the light of stars in his eyes, and the courage of a lion in his heart!’” (12). Though Sir Philip’s auburn hair and hazel eyes could certainly be thought of as Irish, she does not dream of her baby



looking like her husband. Instead she pictures her son possessing the characteristics of her Irish heritage: handsome, soft voice, a courageous dreamer. It has been ten years since she left Ireland for England, and she remembers fondly the men of her homeland: “When the child stirred within her she would think it stirred strongly because of the gallant male creature she was hiding; then her spirit grew large with a mighty new courage, because a man-child would be born” (12, 13). She wants this son for both herself and her husband.

Anna limits herself to the house and the garden. The closest Anna comes to entering into the male sphere of their vast land holdings is when she is pregnant and sits in the shade of the garden thinking of the Malvern hills as voluptuous, pregnant women. She does fantasize about nature after Sir Philip convinces her that the unborn child will be a boy: “she saw herself playing with this little Stephen, in the nursery, in the garden, in the sweet-smelling meadows” (12). Though earth is thought of in many cultures as mother earth, wilderness, forests, and pastures cultivated by male hands are generally thought of as male territory. It is though Anna is afraid of crossing spheres. Without a male child to give her authority to enter the male sphere of the property as a caregiver, Anna is seen enjoying nature only once after the

child is born. She is surrounded by the beauty of nature but rarely physically touches the masculine domain of the land.

Philip never doubts Anna is giving him a son. He even names the unborn "Stephen," dubbing the child with the name of the martyr who was renowned for speaking against the Pharisees: "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" (The Open Bible, Acts 7.52). Even after the child arrives he continues to call her Stephen, christening her with that name. Her name becomes an influential aspect of her identity. A prophesy seems to come with the name, one which her father does not foresee but which will follow her into adulthood. Stephen grows up believing herself to be a martyr. She stands before society asking for their acceptance of inverts because they are natural beings created by God. As a prophet she encounters persecution from the society she holds dear. Stephen will be seen by society as Saint Stephen was seen by the Pharisees, as living a deviant lifestyle while asking to be accepted by society.

Anna Gordon is disappointed in her daughter from birth. "She grieved while it drank, because of her man who had longed so for a son" (13). The baby is "narrow-hipped" and "wide-shouldered" (13). Interestingly, both parents treat her as though she is a boy due to a combination of their hopes for a boy, having named the child in utero and projecting the idea that she is a boy

onto her, and seeing her new born body as having male characteristics even though girl babies are not born with the curves they will develop later in life. Gender identity is developed as a young child (Sadock 326). Stephen's parents interact with her as though she is a boy. Her mother actually keeps distant from her daughter because she is disgusted by her being handsome rather than beautiful. Stephen never has her feminine side acknowledged. Her masculinity is encouraged by her father. This creates a divided identity. She cannot see herself as a whole human being due to only having her masculine attributes accepted and nurtured.

Anna anticipated a boy child with "the courage of a lion in his heart" (12). Anna does not realize her child will have to possess this courage to endure being shunned by society and her own denial of maternal love. Anna sees Stephen as an unacceptable female, a perversion of her husband's identity. From birth Stephen's mother thinks her homely. A beautiful woman herself, Anna wants her daughter to share her characteristics. Stephen's hair grows out auburn, the same as her father, and her chin has a "tiny cleft" (13). Her hazel eyes show the same expression as her father's. But Anna "would be "filled with a sudden antagonism that came very near to anger," because of this resemblance (15). For it seems it her that Stephen is a "caricature of Sir Philip; a blemished, unworthy, maimed reproduction" (15).

As Stephen grows to a child of seven, Anna remains distant:

. . . her eyes would look cold, though her voice might be gentle, and her hand when it fondled would be tentative, unwilling. . . . Then looking up at the calm, lovely face, Stephen would be filled with a sudden deep sense of her own shortcomings; . . . (15)

A great disparity exists between her father's and her mother's love for her. As Stephen grows into a young adult, she understands that for the love of her father "she must also love the thing that he loves, her mother, though . . . it was not a part of her being" (86). Because Sir Philip and Anna's oneness is so complete Stephen cannot love one without the other. This same characteristic of complete devotion prevents Anna from absolutely withholding her love from Stephen. Philip's love protects the two women while he is alive.

Hall states Anna is "the archetype of the very perfect woman, whom creating God has found good." (11) Anna is natural, just like a bird that once flew to her bosom for protection from a storm. She is one with nature. But what about her response to her daughter? Anna refuses Stephen the security of motherly love and never forms a feminine bond between herself and her daughter. If Anna is indeed the "very perfect woman," then is her rejection of her daughter because Stephen does not possess feminine beauty, akin to Anna's image, also good?

What does seem natural at Morton is the love between Sir Philip and Anna Gordon: “Their faith in each other, . . . and their peace, which was part of the peace of Morton” (82). They love each other with a passion that flows around them and leaves its indelible mark on their home:

This love of theirs had been a great glory; . . . the serene and beautiful spirit of Morton clothed in flesh, yes, that had been its true meaning. . . . Yet that had only been a part of its meaning for her [Stephen], it had meant something greater than Morton, it [their love] had stood for the symbol of perfect fulfillment— . . . It had always been their love, the one for the other; . . . it had been her [Stephen’s] beacon. (83-84)

Once again the reciprocal identities of Morton and its inhabitants is discussed. The spirit of Morton is revealed in the love of Philip and Anna. Their peace is taken from Morton. For Stephen their love meant “greater than Morton.” She believes romantic love like theirs brings “perfect fulfillment.” The love of Stephen’s parents for each other surrounds her with the security of love. It is steadfast.

Though she is aware her mother does not have maternal love for her, she still feels embraced by the great love Philip and Anna share. It imparts a sense of serenity, beauty, and peace to all who dwell at Morton. Stephen believes that though she is unlovable to her mother as a daughter she can hope to be loved in a romantic relationship. She learns how to love protectively from her father and seeks out women who, like her mother, are feminine,

uneducated, and dependent. Stephen chooses women who are similar to her mother.

Stephen's identity begins with knowing she is: part of the great wealth of Morton; comforted by her parent's love for each other; unable to trust her mother's love; and completely able to trust in her father's love. Though she quickly notices Anna's efforts to hide the fact she is pulling back from her, it is not until she is grown that she understands the impact of this withdrawal. Because Stephen is never welcomed or accepted in feminine spheres, she never has the chance to decide if she is comfortable in it. For now her doting father offers her boundless love and protection. The peace that permeates Morton envelopes Stephen when she is mocked for not being like the other girls, and it allows her to stand against the ridicule she faces for refusing Martin's proposal. Being rooted in the security of Morton, her parents' love for each other, and her father's love enables her to grow into a woman as strong inside as she is on the outside. She believes in herself because Sir Philip believes in her, and because she has "absorbed something of the peace, stability, and contentedness of Morton itself". But she lacks the feminine identity that she should have developed in relationship with Anna. She only acknowledges her masculine traits.

As a pre-teen Stephen experiences one too many embarrassing moments with the neighbors, the Antrims. Stephen ponders why her intellect does not help her more with social situations. “Perhaps it was the clothes” (79) that her mother selected for her that makes her feel awkward at social events. No matter the cause of her feeling of inadequacy, “people thought her peculiar, and with them that was tantamount to disapproval” (79). For a time, this leads to her feeling that “for her there was no real abiding city beyond the strong, friendly old gates of Morton” (79). Stephen purposely chooses to shrink the area of her sense of home to within the walls and gates of Morton. This results in Stephen clinging “more and more to her home and to her father” (79). Nature becomes more valued to Stephen as she focuses on her horse, Raftery, and Martin Hallam, who values nature as much as she does.

The narrator identifies Morton’s landscape with masculine traits. Men introduce women to the land. Anna has dreams of frolicking in the meadows with her son (12) and seldom enters the fields with her daughter. As a child Stephen’s father frequently walks the fields with her. It is Sir Philip who introduces Stephen to the space outside the feminine sphere of the ornamental grounds surrounding the house. Soon she is allowed to explore the land by herself. At eighteen she feels at ease and confident showing

Martin Morton's acres as well as the surrounding county, and at twenty she escorts Angela Crosby throughout Morton.

Sir Philip never sways from his great love for Stephen as she repeatedly crosses gender lines. As a child of seven, she is indulged in tomboy fantasies while playing Nelson, a war hero, with the housemaid (20). Her father proudly rides beside her, at age seven, when gathering at the neighbors for a fox hunt. She scandalizes the neighbors by riding astride and jumping better than any boy (41). Sir Philip never attempts to channel her energy into more feminine realms; he never tries to change his daughter, because he loves her for who she is without regard for gender norms. Nor does he consider Anna's nay saying about Stephen's masculine features, mannerisms, or behaviors. He studies to learn what causes her masculinity, never expressing to her that she is different.

Sir Philip welcomes Stephen in his study. As the masculine room in the house, the library is where she has always found peace and safety. When Stephen is seventeen she and her father begin sharing their love of literature:

They could now discuss books and the making of books and the feel and the smell and the essence of books—a mighty bond this and one full of enchantment. They could talk of these things with mutual understanding; they did so for hours in the father's study. (79)



Sir Philip and Stephen read together for hours on end, growing closer and closer to one another. It is here that he learns she dreams of being a writer. Anna, though welcome, is not comfortable here: “Anna came less and less often to the study, and she would be sitting alone and idle. . . . with her white hands folded and idle” (79—80). Philip opens his study to both women, but only his daughter shares in his love of books and knowledge. Anna does not complain, but we watch as she sits idle during the long hours he spends with their daughter. Stephen is comfortable in the male domain of his study. Her love of learning and of books gives her entrance and acceptance into what was thought of at the time as a male sphere—not just the room, but the books as well. By welcoming her into this space, Stephen is allowed to become intellectually equal with men. He also welcomes her into the role of an author. When he discovers her love of writing, he encourages her to trust in her ability to write. Eventually Philip lets her know of his desire for her to attend Oxford, giving her the authority to enter another traditionally male sphere to her. Her mother, Anna, does not share any of these passions and therefore does not belong. Stephen moves in and out of spaces that Anna has neither ability nor desire to enter.

Anna grows jealous of Philip and Stephen’s relationship and of being left out of their discussions. She has no wish to improve

her education, but watching them together “a tormenting aching that she dare give no name to” would come upon her (80):

It nagged at her heart when she went to that study and saw Sir Philip together with their daughter, and knew that her presence contributed nothing to his happiness when he sat reading to Stephen. (80)

Anna’s jealousy becomes harder to hide. She feels unnecessary watching Philip in his complete content. She grows angry at the “invidious likeness of the child to the father” (80). To Anna, it is not fair for Stephen to resemble him so closely. Even their movements are alike. At times when she cannot contain it, Anna jeers at the child. Stephen laughs it off, but Sir Philip takes notice: “His eyes would seek Anna’s, questioning, amazed, incredulous, and angry” (80). Because she is unable to keep herself from making rude remarks to Stephen, and she does not want Philip’s disapproval, Anna stops going to the study almost entirely. Morton and the Gordons are said to create peace in each other. When Sir Philip and Anna begin having marital problems over Stephen, the house is said to mourn, having lost its peace.

Sir Philip shows his love to his daughter through mutual intimacy and protection. Following his untimely death, she remains strong, trusting herself as she was able to trust him. She has inherited his characteristics in that she is faithful, protective, caring, nonjudgmental, handsome, and a devoted lover to Angela Crosby and Mary Llewellyn, as he was to Anna. After Sir Philip’s

death, Stephen decides to remain at Morton instead of leaving to attend Oxford, as had been planned: "Morton needs me; Father would want me to stay, because he taught me to love it" (123). Stephen feels she is replacing Philip as man-of-the-house. There is a problem with this. Anna has inherited Morton and it will not pass into Stephen's control until her mother dies: "But Anna, whose word was now absolute law, had become one of those who have done with smiling; a quiet, enduring, grief-stricken woman" (123). Anna has lost all joy in life. Sir Philip had been her all and now that he is gone she is becoming an embittered woman. Her antagonism towards Stephen will no longer be softened by her love of Stephen's father. This is not a serious problem for Stephen, for awhile, not until she turns twenty-one and inherits her own money.

Once she becomes a legal adult, Stephen begins pushing boundaries farther, knowing she is making her mother even more uncomfortable around her. She spends her money having men's tailored suits fashioned for her. Her cross-over look is so complete that in London, on a trip with her mother, "people stared at her. And someone, a man, laughed and nudged his companion: 'Look at that! What is it?'" His companion replies, "My God! What indeed?" She [Stephen] heard them" (165). Stephen was shopping for a birthday present for her new lover, Angela Crossby. At one store she meets a jeweler who had done work for her father since Sir

Philip's college days and Anna's engagement ring. The jeweler recognizes Stephen's resemblance to her father and asks if she is Sir Philip's daughter. This pleases Stephen so much that when she reenters the street she no longer notices people staring at her. She feels proud to be recognized as her father's daughter. Stephen also feels a connection to him, as they both wished to buy the most beautiful jewels they could find for their loves.

Stephen knows Anna will never approve of her next love, the married Angela Crosby. Angela is wiser in life than Stephen. Stephen believes Angela is the right fit for her romantically; Angela sees Stephen as an interesting diversion from a dull marriage. Stephen "must realize . . . that love is only permissible to those who are cut in every respect to life's pattern" (188). Monumental change happens when she stands up for what she sees as true love but "she had not yet gained that steel-bright courage which can only be forged in the furnace of affliction, and which takes many years in the forging" (188). Angela grows more and more distant while becoming more involved with Stephen's childhood nemesis, Roger Atrim.

Stephen becomes obsessed with Angela. She is aware Angela and Roger have seen each other in London, but not yet aware of their ongoing affair. It all comes to a head one night when Stephen refuses to stay away from the Crosby home. Angela's husband

Ralph has been away from home for a fortnight. Angela has not allowed Stephen to stay overnight during this time. On the last night of Ralph's absence Angela makes an excuse of a headache to convince Stephen she must leave. Angela sends her home, asking her not to return unless called. Stephen claims she is worried about Angela's health. She sits by the phone all night worrying as Angela's protector. Stephen is behaving as the man she feels herself to be. In her passion for Angela she refuses to leave her alone. In the early mist of dawn, Stephen is comfortable once again driving in the dark in an hour when no ordinary woman would be out on the road alone, let alone driving the car herself, while other women are safe at home. Stephen arrives at the Crosby house and becomes Angela's stalker in her efforts to catch a glimpse of Angela. Stephen's obsession with Angela and her inability to respect Angela's request for her to stay away usurps Angela's power, making her a victim. Stephen enters the garden and sees Roger open the door to the garden with Angela in his arms. Stephen's growing instability comes to fruition as "she laughed and she laughed like a creature demented-laughed and laughed until she must gasp for breath and spit blood from her tongue...Her face was a mask, quite without expression" (195).

This behavior harkens back to the time when as a child Stephen witnesses the housemaid Collins, on whom she has a

crush, kissing a groomsman in the stables. This leads to such an uproar that Sir Philip fires Collins and immediately sends her away in order to calm an hysterical Stephen. The instability Stephen feels over the Collins' incident is magnified when Martin proposes to her. She instantly begins behaving manically and is uncontrollable for days. This emotional instability is not brought forth when Sir Philip dies. She leaves the library where he dies so that Anna can be alone with him. Later on in the story she shoots her horse to prevent it suffering and has no mental instability. Losing control of her emotions only happens to Stephen when romantic love ends.

When Angela wants to end her relationship with Stephen, she safely but deceptively uses her husband to bring to an end to the unhealthy, uncontrollable desire Stephen has let overtake her. Angela's husband writes Anna and shares an intense love letter from Stephen to Angela. This triggers Stephen and Anna's confrontation across the wide gulf that has separated them from the beginning and yet has never been brought into the open.

The revelation of the affair with Angela opens an avenue for Anna to place all uncomfortable feelings she has harbored toward Stephen directly on Stephen's shoulders. No longer does Anna feel unnatural for feeling repulsed by her own flesh and blood. Since birth Anna has not experienced a motherly bonding with her

daughter. Now that the lesbian affair has been brought to light, Anna feels vindicated about being repulsed. She claims Stephen is unnatural and that she now knows her instincts about her have been right: "It is you who are unnatural, not I. And this thing that you are is a sin against creation" (200). If Anna is correct, then Stephen has been guilty of being sexually "immoral" since she was born. The idea that someone can be born sexually sinful, without having even thought of the sin because they are simply too young to experience sexuality, alleviates Anna's guilt. Stephen argues that because she was born an invert, she is natural and therefore blameless before God.

In reading the three-page dialogue between Stephen and Anna, one would do well to remember Anna's background. Little is said of it except that she is Irish and uneducated (54). She is "very far from learned . . . What did she know or care of the Classics? . . . Her philosophy consisted of a home swept and garnished" (80). At this time poverty dominated in Ireland to the extent that an education was a privilege. Education for girls was still generally considered unnecessary, as it was their fathers, husbands, and brothers who were responsible for their livings unless they were poor. Anna also had a guardian who had to approve her marriage. Though a parent is certainly a guardian, it is unlikely Hall would have used the term if she intended for the reader to see this as her

father. Anna is an orphan from culturally and socially “backward” and “superstitious” Ireland and thus has archaic and uninformed notions of sexuality. Anna’s only qualifications given for becoming Lady of Morton was her virginal sex appeal. When Sir Philip speaks of preparing Stephen to enter Oxford, Anna asks of him, “Do you love me any less because I count on my fingers?” (54). Anna is unable to appreciate the qualities Stephen possesses, possibly because her daughter is so different from her, or perhaps Anna is afraid of Stephen’s strengths and jealous of Sir Philip’s love for her: “Sir Philip loved Stephen, he idolized her” (16).

Expelled from Morton, her birthright, Stephen Gordon is forced into exile. Anna banishes her for having an affair with Angela Crosby. Stephen believes her father would have intervened had he still been alive, but Anna is now in charge of the family home, and she places protection of the family name over any maternal responsibility to comfort her daughter. Anna claims that Stephen is unfit to reside at the family home and justifies this exile as protecting the late Sir Philip’s reputation. Stephen’s “sin” against her father, Anna claims, is even greater than that of sinning against God (200-202). No longer must she feign love for her daughter to please her husband. Even memory of Sir Philip does not protect Stephen from Anna’s disdain.



Stephen's response to Anna is to defend the purity of her love for Angela. Because she doesn't feel that she is a woman, she identifies with her father's love for her mother, not the other way around: "As a man loves a woman, that was how I loved-protectively, like my father" (201). The shock of having to defend herself against her mother's accusations comes just two days after her discovery that Angela is having an affair with Roger Atrim, the boy who never ceased to harass her as a child. A lover's betrayal is followed by maternal betrayal. Both Angela and Anna renounce their love and cease intimate relationship with Stephen. As a lover, Stephen claims to love as a man. As Anna's daughter there is no mention of love towards her mother. Anna's request for her to leave Morton causes Stephen to "quite suddenly found [find] her manhood . . ." (202), stop arguing, and leave as asked. It is finding her manhood, once again, that will propel Stephen's return.

Deep depression takes over Stephen's sense of being as, "an immense desolation swept down upon her" (203). Stephen reflects on what it will mean to leave Morton as she prepares to enter exile:

The grave, comely house would not know her any more, . . . The good, sweet-smelling meadows with their placid cattle, she was going to leave them; . . . and the lanes with their sleepy dog-roses at evening; and the little, old town of Upturn-on-the-Severn with its battle scarred church. (203)

Stephen relocates to London for the next three years. In solitude she writes a bestselling novel. It is followed by an inferior book

that is artistically less than inspiring, as her writing has grown stale. Her identity has always been based on the strength Morton gave her. Now that she is apart from it she begins growing weak. This gives her pause to look at her life and she realizes how depressed she has been since leaving Morton. London is a no-man's land to her. Stephen has placed herself in isolation since being exiled. "Isolation is an attempt to evade the social consequences of occupying a threatening position" (Breakwell 110). Stephen is attempting to avoid those who would ask after her mother, give condolences for losing her father, make comments on her failed novel. She is in self determined isolation in order to avoid conversations with others which would make her think on her circumstances, especially that of being exiled.

Her flat is reflective of the deep depression she was in when she furnished it. Its low ceilings press in like a heavy cloud over her space offering a perfect example of place and person reciprocating influence on each other. Stephen decorated the flat while greatly saddened and tormented by Angela's betrayal and Anna's ejection of her from Morton. Now the apartment and its view of the brown river are depressing her.

Stephen is without a sense of home or work, and has lost her connection to nature as she loses touch with the land of Morton. She has even had to put down her beloved horse, Raftery. Now,

“there [is] was nothing to hold her” (275). Her anchors have been disengaged and she is free, and “what a terrible thing could be freedom” (275). Stephen believes she is now released from all that bound her to Morton and England. Morton is her birthright and the basis of her personality but she remains in exile. She is not free from the ties that bind her to home. Stephen is free to travel, to seek inspiration, and establish a new home, but she must take her sense of loss along with her. She is ready to leave her depression behind. Stephen is motivated to move out of depression because of its negative impact on her last book. Stephen relocates to Paris.

Stephen purchases a home on the Rue de Jacob. Since she has just moved out of a depressing flat, her senses are aware of needing someplace to write that can help keep her mood healthy. She feels this house is right:

Because as she walked through the dim, grey archway that led from the street to the cobbled courtyard, and saw the deserted house standing before her, she knew at once that there she would live! This will happen sometimes, we instinctively feel in sympathy with certain dwellings. (249)

Stephen has instantly recognized her “sense of being home.” It felt right. With the nature of the courtyard to greet before entering the house, and the home’s need to be nurtured, “for the first time since leaving Morton, Stephen turned her mind to the making of a home” (249). Stephen wants to establish a new home:

She grew fond of the wide-eyed, fruitful French country, even as she had grown fond of Paris. She would never love it the way she loved the hills and the stretching valleys surrounding Morton, for that love was somehow part of her being, but she gave to this France, that would give her a good home, a quiet and very sincere affection. (250)

She realizes she can never replace her birthright, Morton, but she does want to do her best to create a home where she can feel she belongs. She begins by being willing to appreciate all that Paris and its countryside have to offer.

Hall purposely places Stephen's home on the Rue Jacob. The street was made synonymous with lesbian love in real life by Natalie Barney and her Sapphic homage salon. It was the center of creative, wealthy lesbians and open-minded others for sixty years, as well as the center of Barney's amorous ongoings. Natalie Barney, her friends, and her lovers rejected past conventions and lived as they pleased. Their behavior would not have been tolerated in Washington or London (Souhami 2). The myth surrounding Barney was the source of Radclyffe Hall's creation of Valerie Seymour, a friend Stephen meets in Paris who is an American expatriate (Chalon 143). Seymour plays an integral role in the novel by introducing Stephen to other inverts and to Parisian gay nightlife.

## Chapter 2: The War Years

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In considering why Hall placed *The Well of Loneliness* ending about five years earlier than its publication date, one recognizes that she needed to place Stephen in the Great War so that she could allow her character to evolve in the same manner as did the actual women of the war. During the First World War, Stephen is an ambulance driver stationed in England and then in northern France, on the frontlines. Hall intentionally places her main character in the midst of this historical scenario to create the opportunity for Stephen to experience self-actualization and to allow her to fall in love with a woman who has also found her mettle and awakened sexually.

Hall wrote *Well* during the years between the Wars. This timing allowed her to gain an understanding of what women experienced during World War I. Many women had kept detailed diaries of their experiences while in service to the military. An extensive republishing of these women's diaries and letters is found in Anne Powell's *Women in the War Zone: Hospital Service in the First World War*. Accounts are readily available as numerous diaries went to print as true retellings of their lives; other diaries became the bases for novels offering glimpses of the truth embellished or were exploited for entertainment purposes. Barbara

“Toupie” Lowther, a friend of Hall, spent the war serving in a woman’s ambulance corps in northern France (Baker 125,126). While filling men’s jobs back home, British women grew more self-reliant than they had ever before been. Though Hall chose not to join these ranks of women in service or at the home front, she had available to her evidence of how the war had enabled women. Hall found military service a useful mechanism through which to develop her main character.

On the home front, women filled positions men left behind as they entered military service. In France, British women filled positions that freed every man possible to join in the trench warfare, an intrinsic part of World War I. Men were needed on the front lines of battle. The British military needed women to fill non-combat positions, while the British government needed women to fill the workforce positions left empty by men. Suddenly, jobs were open to women that had never before been. Closeted desires of working in positions usually reserved for men became dreams realized. Hall explores the effects entering the masculine sphere could have on women. At the time *Well* was written it was common knowledge that World War I had enabled women to connect honestly with one another by placing them in situations that allowed them to define their identity on their own terms. Hall matches the realities of women in wartime service to the

experiences her heroine faces, using these occurrences to create the same changes in Stephen that were common among women who filled men's roles.

The reader of *Well's* pages about England prior to its engagement in World War I may wonder why Stephen was not involved in the suffrage movement. This absence is a very loud absence. Dating from eighteen sixty—five through nineteen twenty—eight, the British suffrage movement was far more violent than in the United States. Suffrage had also been a well-organized movement for a much longer period than the movement in the U.S. and involved a larger portion of society. Because the suffrage movement was led by the aristocracy and landed classes, it seems a perfect opportunity for Stephen, as a cause in which her talents would fit and be appreciated. The reason Hall does not involve Stephen, in thought or deed, in the British Women's Suffrage Movement is that activist upper-class women were divided between the fight for the vote and the fight to serve the military on the front lines. Women were forced to choose between aligning themselves with the struggle to serve on the front lines or the fight to vote (Lee 143). Men were afraid that by allowing women to perform military service where their lives were in jeopardy would remove one line of defense used against women's suffrage: "Women's military service disrupted the logic that only men were

sacrificed as combatants, therefore only men might qualify for political citizenship” (Lee 143). If women were sacrificed on the frontlines, they too might justly demand the right to vote.

During the turmoil of the women’s suffrage movement, Hall is preparing her main character for the war. Hall’s contemporary readers would well remember this political battle that took place only a little over a decade before the book’s publication. The suffrage movement reignited at the end of World War I, but never regained its force of sheer numbers (Kent 271) due to the passage of a law that gave voting rights to landed women over the age of thirty. Both battles threatened accepted feminine roles. Both were maligned with accusations of sexual immorality and inversion (Kent 266-269, Lee 145,146). Hall wanted Stephen on the men’s war front.

Voluntary women’s organizations such as the Women’s Volunteer Reserves (WVR), the Women’s Legion, the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), and the Volunteer Aid Detachments (VAD) “were keen to dissociate themselves from women’s social movements for political reform generally, and suffrage activities specifically” (Lee 143). Instead they aligned themselves with the political elite to ensure their credibility (143). Lee continues her description of this separation by noting that, “through representing themselves as nonthreatening women from the right social class



who could be trusted to serve and follow orders, the FANY attempted to present themselves as distinct from suffrage organizations” (144).

The battle Hall chose for Stephen was for elite women only, those who led privileged lives and were already trained as equestrians, motorists, archers, and fencers. They were fluent in French and knew how to mix socially with the upper-class men who served as officers, both British and French.

Only those of the landed and middle classes who had similar training were allowed to join the volunteer units (Lee 141-142). That Stephen offers an all-expense-paid ambulance unit plays on the fact that the real women in these corps paid their own way and quite often their operating expenses (Schenkar 88). Determination and financial resources are common with this group:

In 1917, Toupie Lowther and a Miss Desmond Hackett raised the money for an all-women ambulance unit of twenty-five drivers and twenty ambulances. . . . Finally allowed to accompany the French Army Ambulance Corp on the Compiègne battle front, where they motored thousands of casualties from the field back to the dressing stations. (Schenkar 88)

Stephen refers to working “side by side with more fortunate women” (271). This is historically accurate, along with the rest of Hall’s account of the war front.

Rumors of lesbianism could quickly get a woman in these units sent home. Mrs. Breakspeare begins to “fancy Mary Llewellyn

is on a verge of feeling for” Stephen (289). She takes measures to break them up before the unit starts rumors about them. If she hadn’t caught it that early and if she hadn’t “look[ed] upon you [Stephen] as my second in command,” (289) Stephen would likely have been sent home in disgrace from the real war (Lee 145).

Mary was accepted into the ambulance unit because of her experience “chauffeuring” her doctor cousin “over a widely spread practice”, being a “good mechanic” and because the local parson, who was “an old friend of its founder,” had written to recommend Mary (285). In most volunteer units it was necessary to be referred by someone already serving in that unit (Lee 141). Only special circumstances would allow a non-landed or middle class woman such as Mary to join the ranks.

High casualties meant twenty-four hour shifts for the corps (282):

Twenty-four- and thirty-six-hour shifts were the norm for these young women drivers, who were regularly fired upon, accidentally blown up, and who suffered most of the pains of combat as well as the responsibilities of caring for its casualties. (Schenkar 89)

Ambulance drivers drove furiously en route to the medical posts, lights off even on the darkest nights (Lee), and then more gently back to the hospital for the sake of the wounded: “Driving quickly because the lives of the wounded might depend on their speed,...

yet with every nerve taut to avoid, . . . the jarring of the hazardous roads full of ruts and shell-holes” (Well 282).

What Hall writes concerning the war front in World War I and the women who volunteered to serve there is historically accurate. Hall takes Stephen from the life of the landed classes living in their country manors to the realities of serving in the ambulance corps in England and the frontlines in the French countryside.

Upon hearing of the war, Stephen immediately returns to England. Once there she finds the most demanding job available, that of an ambulance driver for the returning wounded. This is not enough for Stephen. Nothing short of the frontlines will satisfy her need to serve her country and Morton. Hall makes it clear Stephen wants to show that she is capable of filling a man’s position, which others would not deem appropriate. She wants to give everything she has to offer. Most important, Stephen wants to hold true to “the traditions of England, the traditions of Morton” (267). Morton, with its traditions and values, is reflective of England, as England holds high its tradition of men protecting women from intruders as she calls her men to war. As she thinks on this she recognizes part of herself as male. “All that was male in her makeup grew aggressive” in her desire to fulfill the traditions of her male ancestors.

England was calling her men into battle, her women to the bedsides of the wounded and dying, . . . She stared

at her . . . hands . . . they had never been skilful [sic] when it came to illness; strong they might be, but rather inept; not hands wherewith to succor the wounded. . . . assuredly her job, . . . would not lie at the bedsides of the wounded. (267)

Hall shows the reader that Stephen's determination to serve on the frontlines reflects that which is deep inside. She is drawn from the marrow of her bones to serve and protect her homeland, just as many young women of her position are drawn. In real life, the women of these volunteer ambulance units who daily risked their lives felt similar feelings. Rich, privileged young women chose to enter the hell of war. Taking the cue from them, Hall uses the war to catalyze the changes in Stephen. Stephen's determination includes the fight to get to the front. It was difficult for a woman to get there.

When Stephen offers to provide an ambulance unit, all expenses paid and manned by her, England responds with the refusal because "England did not send women to the frontline trenches" (270). Just as those in real life were rejected, Stephen has to fight to offer her services, to offer that which was conscripted of men her age.

Officials were concerned with maintaining some degree of separation between male and female spheres and to remind the public that the men were fighting to protect women from the fate the Belgium women had suffered at the hands of the Germans

(Kent 273-275). Hall notes that the Belgians were the first to accept assistance from these women, who were pleading to help (Hall 270). Due to the casualties of war, the English, Belgian and French officials eventually loosened restrictions (Darrow 255-256).

After two grueling years of war it was decided to send every man possible into the trenches. Now Stephen gets her wish. Now Hall can demonstrate the strengths ascribed thus far in the novel to Stephen. No longer does her main character just think about what she is capable of; she can prove herself to be someone who belongs in the highest realms of the masculine sphere. The changes are dramatic, as Stephen finds out for herself that she really is as valuable as any man with similar attributes.

Hall's third-sex stance of inversion places lesbians in a separate category from heterosexual women and feminine lesbians. She limits this conflict to masculine lesbians:

. . . she [any given invert] was strong and efficient, she could fill a man's place, she could organize too, given scope for her talent. . . . And then too, their nerves were not at all weak, their pulses beat placidly through the worst air raids, for bombs do not trouble the nerves of the invert, . . . (271)

The war offered lesbians the ability to step out of the shadows, to take on the responsibilities society deemed masculine. Hall proclaims that lesbians are fit to perform themselves and to stand proudly before a country that recognizes their contributions.

Stephen's joining the war effort allows her to experience new freedom and respect. The ability to work for a traditionally male ambulance unit increases her self-respect. The fact that England is willing temporarily to acknowledge her strengths propels her to a new dignity. She shares this experience with multiple other lesbians who are "unmistakable to her" (271):

For as though gaining courage from the terror that is war, many a one who was even as Stephen, had crept out of her hole and come into the daylight, come into the daylight and faced her country: 'Well, here I am, will you take me or leave me? . . . England had said . . . "You're just what we happen to want... at the moment." (271)

The terror of war strengthens these lesbians' resolve to bravely come out of their hiding places and to stand openly in the sight of the society that has hitherto shunned and despised them.

England views Hall's lesbians (inverts), who are strong and sturdy, as greatly advantageous, strengthening the nation. But, as Hall anticipates, the country quickly forgets how these women took up ranks to defend their harsh, judgmental nation.

Many women were far from home for the first time. They left the homes they knew and went to new cities and a foreign land with no family ties nearby to offer support. There, the scrutiny of Mother England was not as intense as it had been at home. They were buffered from the demands of social constraints. They no longer had family nearby to ensure they didn't deviate from

community standards. The war effort had changed people's priorities. No longer did society exist as a constant reminder of what was and was not acceptable behavior for a daughter of England. The surreal reality they now occupied, especially at the front lines in France, tested these women's devotion to the rules that had been set down by others; its distortion challenged them to find their own truths, truths that they could hold onto and would not mutate within a constantly changing environment.

The opportunity the war offered women to experience the male sphere also allowed them to discover their sexuality. For most that meant acknowledging their need for physical relationships with men, although it had been the social custom for women to expect only frigidity from their sexuality, but for some women it also meant discovering they were not the only ones attracted to the same sex (Schenkar 89). This freedom enabled them to connect with other lesbians for the first time.

The close proximity of these brave women enabled many of them admit to and act on their sexuality. In England and behind the lines in France, they worked side by side and shared apartments and barracks. At the front lines, they spent their days paired up together, driving ambulances through war-torn countryside and performing life-saving jobs. Driving near the front lines while dodging mortars and bombs in their efforts to pick up

the bleeding wounded and dying created an immediate need for connection and comfort. They spent the remainder of their time in the homosocial settings of makeshift wartime barracks. The conflict revolving around this limited space is crucial to the development of Stephen's character.

This proximity, along with the lack of family and familiar surroundings, the pride and self-assurance gained from working outside prescribed feminine roles, the responsibility of safeguarding the lives of soldiers, and the experience of the terrors of war firsthand and everyday compel Stephen once again to confront her sexual identity. Under these conditions many real-life closeted women reached out to make significant connections to others who also secretly identified as lesbian.

At the beginning of Book Five, Hall advances the plot from England to the French warfront. France is a test tube for Stephen. Stephen is already settled in and adjusted to the strains of driving an ambulance under extreme conditions. Driving over bombed-out roads without headlights on so as not to become an enemy target is just the beginning of the adversities. She has risen to the challenge of service and is one of the best drivers in the unit. France has allowed her to show her best, and she has excelled. The isolation of France, the terrors of war, and the demands of her work,



combine to benefit her self-awareness. Developmentally, she is ready to face another aspect of herself that has been suppressed.

The attraction she feels toward the woman asleep at her feet challenges Stephen to understand her sexuality and her ability to cope with a hostile society throughout the remainder of the novel. Stephen's relationship to Mary strengthens her character while stationed in France. By the end of the war, she is ready to risk falling in love with a woman who can potentially return her feelings.

Proximity is an important element in Hall's development of Stephen and Mary's relationship. The setting awakens the potential of their relationship through the stress of the terrors of war, the demands of their jobs, the proximity in which they live, and their distance from home. The unit is "herded together" (278). They occupy a bombed out villa as their makeshift barracks. Within the villa, the women's space is limited to only the safest area possible, which relegates them to quite close quarters. Hall relies on this situation to throw Stephen and Mary into a physical closeness that encourages their physical attraction to one another. The propriety of dwelling in such limited space cannot be called into question due to its necessity: "Fate was throwing them continually together, in moments of rest as in moments of danger; they could not have

escaped this even had they wished to, and indeed they did not wish to escape it” (285).

They jostle about in the ambulance all day while endangering their own lives to take the wounded to safety. They spend their leisure time together. During the few short moments they are not together, Stephen “missed the girl” (285). Due to the necessities of war, they also sleep side by side.

The closeness of barrack’s life enables Stephen to lie next to Mary while contemplating her growing feelings for her. She dares to reach out to touch Mary’s hair: “Then the mist would lift: ‘Good God! What am I doing?’” (286). The mist is the fog of romance that is nurtured by being in France under the conditions of war. The fog is a recurrent healing balm: “That gentle mist, hiding both reef and headland; it would gather again blurring all perception, robbing the past of its crude, ugly outlines” (286). Emerging from the necessities of war, the fog aids Stephen by helping her to forget the pains of the past and the anticipation of pains in the future that result from being lesbian in a heterosexually dominant world. This allows her to let down her walls and gently to express her growing feelings of love and protection toward Mary: “Stretching out her hand she would stroke the girl’s shoulder where she lay, but carefully in case she should wake her” (286). In reality, the fog in this region of France hangs so heavy it enters the rooms of a

house, creating an ethereal, mystical aura. It would have filled the barracks through the bombed-out walls and ceilings.

The service Stephen renders earns her a *Croix de Guerre*, with three ribbons. Each ribbon stands for heroism during a specific dispatch. The scar on her face is symbolic of the permanent changes she has undergone during the war. Like her visage, Stephen's psyche bears the mark of battle. No longer can she disguise herself from society by hiding her sexuality; neither can she return to concealing herself behind apartment walls. Her face shows the mark of bravery under fire. For a short time, Stephen experiences the respect she desires. She is not aware of it yet, but she can no longer live with anything less than the respect due a male Gordon heir. The end of the war brings confessions of love between Stephen and Mary. On the battlefield, Mary has found that something she also waited to find. She admits that Stephen is that something. Stephen reciprocates her feelings and tremulously takes a chance on love. Her courage to love again comes from the courage she has rediscovered in war. Stephen closes her hand "over her *Croix de Guerre*, but the medal of valor felt cold to her fingers; dead and cold it felt at that moment, as the courage that had set it upon her breast. . . . trembling because of what she would answer" (294). Professing love to Mary is more frightening than what they have experienced as ambulance drivers.

While mainstream Britain wants to get back to separate female and male spheres, many women want to keep the independence they found during the Great War. Post war Britain asks of its women to return to their “place” and begin to repopulate those lost in the war:

An ideology of motherhood demanded that women leave their wartime jobs, give up their independence, and return to home and family, where their primary occupation—their obligation, in fact—would be bearing and raising of children. (Kent 295)

Rejecting this notion of being baby-makers for Mother England, and other less direct calls to return to feminine space, Hall chastises the nation’s desire for lesbians to return to their closets once the war ends, but she declares that now that the tide has turned, there is no return: “Not a women of them all but felt vaguely regretful in spite of the infinite blessing of peace, for none could know what the future might hold of trivial days filled with trivial actions” (295). *Well* anticipates England’s betrayal of her women who had answered the call in England’s time of need, once her need for them loses urgency.

*Well’s* narrator describes the strengthening of lesbian identity as permanent:

A battalion was formed in those terrible years that would never again be completely disbanded. War and death had given them a right to life, and life tasted sweet, very sweet to their palettes. Later on would come bitterness, disillusion, but never again would such women submit to being driven back to their holes

and corners. They had found themselves—thus the whirligig of war brings in its abrupt revenges. (320-1)

The disbanding of troops will never fully eradicate the ties that these lesbians formed during the war, nor will it ever deprive these women of the power to retain their self-respect. In the face of future discrimination and alienation, they will find that their wartime experiences have provided them with ability to resist pressures that will try to force them back into the submissive roles they had previously accepted. War has brought about its own bounty for these who served faithfully: those who helped liberate the people of France will find themselves already liberated.

For Stephen, being at the frontlines in France provides the opportunity to be respected in a male role. As she left Morton in exile, she found her manhood while standing up to her mother. While stationed in France she has donned a masculine uniform, done a man's job, served her country in war, and gained the respect of her country and of France by earning a three-ribboned *Croix de Guerre*.; In the process, she has allowed herself to be sexually and emotionally attracted to a woman who has responded in kind, and she has acted on this attraction. The frontlines have impacted Stephen greatly, moving her out of depression and into confidence.

## Chapter 3: Post World War I

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Following the war, Stephen first takes Mary to see the house on the Rue Jacob in Paris. The narrator tells us that Stephen is keeping distance between herself and Mary for now. Stephen's actions continue to encourage Mary's growing feeling. Instead of maintaining a reserve that will prevent Mary from developing a deeper attraction, she continues to tease the girl. Stephen gives a kiss on the cheek, for example, which when she prompts Mary to ask for a passionate kiss.

From Paris, the women independently spend brief tours at their family homes before heading for a shared vacation. At Morton the conversation is almost completely between Stephen and Puddle, the family's hired companion. Very little mention is made of Anna. Hall exposes Stephen's geocentric prejudice against the people of Spain when Stephen comments to her mother about the upcoming vacation destination. "Heaven knows what the house will be like," she says, referring to the villa she has let for the next six months, as "it belongs to a Spaniard" (302). Later the same will be said of the English by Spaniards. The narrator notes that Stephen is now thirty-two, Mary twenty-two. Orotava is the first stop of any length after our main character leaves the ambulance service post war, and there she takes a leap in growth. Clearly the

time Stephen and Mary spend in Orotava will be the most important of these stops.

Orotava is located at the far end of the island of Teneriffe, away from the island's main tourist area. Teneriffe is part of a chain of islands known as the Canary Islands off the coast of Spain (<http://www.turismodecanarias.com/canary-islands-spain/tourism-office/tenerife-island/>). In the 1920's many of the residents subsisted well below poverty lines, in homes with the paint worn away by the strong salt air winds and bright sun (Bianchi 87, 88). The residents of Orotava were predominantly Roman Catholic ([www.TenerifeTourist.com/history.php](http://www.TenerifeTourist.com/history.php)); their beliefs about those of the queer sex could be set aside since tourism meant income.

The island volcano and flora attracted scientists, writers and those seeking health restoration (Cruz 228—30). The Orotavians welcomed the inverts, becoming a vacation spot for those who had to hide their relationships in their everyday lives. Hall traveled there with her lover, Ladye, in 1909, on an extended vacation designed to rejuvenate Hall after a hunting accident and again in 1910: "Tenerife enchanted them. . . . The place they loved best was the old town of Orotava. . . . In Tenerife John [Hall] and Ladye could let drop the guard which they had to keep up in England" (Baker 37-38). Here women and men who loved the same sex could openly, if modestly, show their affection. It also became a favorite

vacation spot for Oscar Wilde and his niece following frequent visits with his uncle and father

(<http://travel.saga.co.uk/holidays/special-interest/gardens/wild-flora-and-gardens-of-tenerife/excursions.aspx>).

Orotava was a perfect location for Hall to develop Stephen's ability to express her sexuality. The warfront provided no appropriate time or place for romance. On Orotava, Stephen could grow as that third sex out in the open. The villa allowed openness between Stephen and Mary, as the servants were blasé about their relationship. There is no mention of others crossing their paths on their walking journeys. Under sun and trees, atop hills and at the coast, Stephen grows into a physically and emotionally expressive lover.

Surely hidden society would be more aware of places that would allow them to express their feelings openly, without regret, than would mainstream society. The contemporary reader might or might not have been aware of Orotava. Tenerife had begun to market "Old Orotava" as a tourist destination to the wealthy classes of Europe, but tourism was just beginning to grow. Wouldn't there also be whisperings about those places that greeted the sexual pervert? Hall is writing to the mainstream reader.

The idea that these locations were real would spark controversy. Hall wanted heterosexual people to begin talking



about the “third sex” and their real lives, and about the way they lived. Hall challenges readers to consider how suppression had changed the way inverts lived their lives, compared to the rest of society.

Hall spends a great deal of time describing the Villa del Ciprés’ location, furniture, surroundings, relationship to other buildings, and she draws attention to its history being a mystery. It is older than all else in Old Orotava, even the other villas. The lack of known history is important since Hall points it out in detail. This villa is the opposite of Morton in that it has been abandoned by the family who gave it importance. Hall writes that Morton is like a woman grown old, while Villa del Ciprés’ is compared to “a Spanish grandee who had seen better days” (304). Both are said to stand aloof. Now owned by an agent far away on the mainland, it solely exists to turn a profit.

Place is once again given importance. The villa substitutes for Morton. Rather than returning home to Morton for extended rest and healing, the Villa del Ciprés’ stands in, with its scant furnishings, absence of lady of the manor, and lack of known ancestry. Just as Morton now offers no welcoming mother, the villa has no mother figure either. This space is free of maternal and ancestral expectations. The blank aura of the villa is Stephen’s to fill.

The lengthy description of the villa and its surroundings leads to “one glory the old house did certainly possess; its garden, a veritable Eden of a garden, obsessed by a kind of primitive urge toward all manner of procreation” (305). Its garden has returned to a cross between a natural state and a cultivated one. The garden is sexualized. Instead of dampness the shade holds warmth – perhaps a personification of the warmth of romance in the private of darkness. Its primitiveness is reflected in the “virile growth of its flowers,” while its trees give off the “strangely disturbing fragrance” of sex (305).

The description of this garden recalls Anna sitting under the shade of a cedar tree in the garden at Morton, looking out over the hills, “their swelling slopes . . . were like pregnant women, full-bosomed, courageous, great green-girdled mothers of splendid sons!” (13). This shade came from the same cedar that fell on her lover-husband, Sir Philip, and took his life.

The depressing flat Stephen takes in London and the war barracks fail to provide garden space for Stephen. The first is a place for mourning her father’s death and her own exile from Morton. The second is a place of mourning the death of millions of young Britons. War represents an occlusion of nature, an unnatural time and place: bombed-out scenery; shelling overhead the elderly

peasants working in the fields; death in place of procreation; mourning instead of romance; solitude replacing love.

The Villa del Ciprés' garden brings rejuvenation, passion, and lovers' commitment. For Stephen, Mary blends with the garden from the first night standing under the stars. The scene is quite different from seeing Mary under the stars mixed with the mortars that lit the skies not long ago. The beauty of the sea adds to the beauty of the land and sky to wash the war years from them.

Nature is the core identity of the island. From the snowcapped volcano, Teide, down to the sea, Stephen is connected with nature. Stephen has always identified with nature, and here in lush, tropical Orotava she feels one with nature as she did at Morton, and one with Mary. They dine on freshly caught fish and succulent exotic fruit. Here Stephen watches as "days of splendid sunshine" give bodily health and strength to Mary (309).

Within this context Stephen continues to keep her distance from Mary. She believes she is being honorable: "Tormented in body and mind and spirit, she would push the girl away from her roughly" (311). Mary's misunderstanding and Stephen's lack of explanation divide the two. Stephen closes Mary off from her rather than having the conversation she dreads. Stephen waits "until she [Mary] was restored in body and mind, and was able to

form a considered judgment” (301): “Mary must not give [her love and her body] until she had counted the cost of that gift” (301).

Stephen’s decision to give Mary the opportunity to consider what comes with embracing an inverted relationship hails back to Stephen’s love for Angela Crossby, who betrayed Stephen to her husband and indirectly to Anna. The decision is not based on the betrayal but recalls the way she defended her love as being “like my father[’s]” love for Anna, an all protective, all giving love (201). Stephen weighs what her love will mean to Mary. Her conclusion reflects her memory of her father. She remembers an earlier time when Sir Philip spoke: “Stephen, come here. . . . What is honour, my daughter?” (300). This changes Stephen’s position from defense of her intentions to one of protection of Mary. This is where Hall states point blank that society will try to destroy their love out of prejudice: “Because in this world there is only toleration for the so-called normal” (301).

Time passes, leading to an explosion of passion and anger between the lovers that leads to the beginning of their sexual relationship. This moves Stephen to “feel she was all things to Mary; . . . and Mary was all things to her” (314). At this time the narrator uses the same remark written on page eleven about Anna to reflect upon Mary, “She was the perfect woman” (314). The two most important women in Stephen’s life are referred to as

“perfect,” when the first one so clearly isn’t perfect. Perhaps Hall intends us to see Stephen and Mary as perfect lovers. But why must they be “perfect”? Their homes, Morton and Villa del Ciprés’, are “aloof” like the women who reside in them: aloof, perfect women.

At this point in the novel, place is crucial to Stephen’s maturation. Hall places Stephen where she can openly love Mary. The inn workers respond to the realization Stephen and Mary are lovers with little concern:

Ramon had begun to speculate about them, these two Englishwomen who were so devoted. He would shrug his shoulders-Dios! What did it matter? (315)

Esmeralda’s afflicted eye was quite sharp, yet she said to Concha: “I see less than nothing.” (315)

And Concha answered: “I also see nothing; it is better to suppose that there is nothing to see. . . . They are certainly queer those two-however, I am blind, it is better so; and in any case they are only the English!” (315)

Here in Orotava no one cares that Stephen and Mary are same-sex lovers. The locals are Spaniards whose history is in the village. The English guests are foreigners who represent profit. Remember, tourism is still new for Orotava: ¡Viva el dinero!

As the days pass, the two become one as the vacation turns into their honeymoon. Expressing vows of forever, the couple experiences “those emotions of mind and body that have somehow awakened a response in the spirit” (316). This island of healing

and rejuvenation allows Stephen to stay true to her honor by allowing Mary to grow strong of mind, body, and spirit before deciding whether to accept Stephen's love. Stephen, however, never has the in-depth conversation with Mary that she had planned regarding the serious problems of entering a relationship together. All in this world has become perfect:

They no longer felt desolate, hungry outcasts, unloved and unwanted, despised of the world. . . . Love . . . had made them courageous, invincible, enduring. Nothing could be lacking to those who loved . . . And thus in a cloud of illusion and glory, sped the last enchanted days at Orotava. (317)

Hall foretells the reader of the fantasy Stephen has chosen to believe "in a cloud of illusion" (317). Stephen is denying the trouble that lies ahead.

Breakwell writes that denial can be simple and straightforward:

. . . the existence of the threat to identity is not acknowledged. . . . Denial of the fact that one is in a threatening position is inevitably disadvantageous in the long run because it isolates the person from a reality which is unlikely to go away and may get progressively worse if ignored. (Breakwell 81, 82)

In Orotava, Stephen experiences the freedom of the locals, including the house's servants, being disinterested in her masculinity or sexuality. Once she returns to Paris, society at large still will not care, but the upper-society she longs to belong to will mind. The narrator informs the reader that Stephen's denial will

resurface and become an even bigger problem. They now return to Paris, where Stephen will move from newlywed to husband to a disillusioned divorcee.

Chapter five begins with the couple's return to Stephen's home in Paris. Their sexual union in Orotava has brought their relationship into a marital state. They return to Paris with a honeymoon glow. It is springtime, the traditional time of new beginnings and of new love. Paris in springtime, the ultimate metaphor of romance, stimulates Stephen and Mary to fully express their mutual love. The couple is in their first-year honeymoon stage.

They are beginning their "married" life together here, in a place situated between the foreign and home. The "peaceful and happy completeness" (321) of having consummated their relationship makes "this second home-coming . . . wonderfully sweet" (321). Entering into a relationship akin to marriage envelopes them in a peace that changes the atmosphere of the house: "And now for the first time the old house was home" (321). Yet, soon their need for having a place on familiar soil will creep past the security established behind the walls of their home. The house on the Rue Jacob is home, but it is on foreign soil. The safety of their Parisian home cannot satisfy Stephen's need to be home at Morton. Mary will soon realize that she will never truly

know Stephen unless they are welcome on Morton soil. Establishing herself as mistress in their home, Mary offers Stephen her best skill, that of darning, however with seemingly endless finances, Stephen's wardrobe has no need of mending. Finding her skill unnecessary, Mary declares she will order Stephen's stockings. She takes on the role of wife to Stephen by assuming domestic responsibilities: "She was at the stage of being in love when she longed to do womanly tasks for Stephen" (323). Mary finds she can take on a feminine domestic role which she could not perform in the staid society of England without encountering shunning and other abuses society would inflict.

The conflict of establishing a home on soil that is neither's homeland combines with the conflict of desiring social acceptability within mainstream upper-class society and being barred from it, soon ending this honeymoon stage of Stephen and Mary's relationship. Neither woman can claim Paris as home, and yet it is vaguely home for twofold reasons. First, post-war Paris is tolerant of diverse lifestyles. Parisians did not pay attention to the expatriates and did not care whether they were living sexually unconventional lives: "It was not that Paris was culturally more liberated than England or America in its attitudes towards women, but simply that it left its foreigners alone" (Gertrude Stein qtd. in Weiss 25).



Second, there exists a particular expatriate community that consists of wealthy and creative English speaking lesbians, gays and transgendered persons—women who were like Stephen and Mary. Gertrude Stein wrote in 1939 that, “The only personality I would like to write about is Paris, France, that is where we all were, and it was natural for us to be there” (qtd. in Weiss 25). Hall bases the group surrounding Stephen on the individuals she knew in Paris: Natalie Barney, Romaine Brooks, Renee Vivien, and numerous others.

The expatriate community Hall bases on Barney’s circle is not the social group with whom Stephen and Mary initially want to connect. Hall reveals her main characters as desirous of social acceptability within the mainstream elite. This goal is elusive for the couple. The upper crust would never allow the participants in such a relationship into its presence.

Similarly, Stephen’s mother chooses to ignore her daughter’s commitment to Mary, never even daring to acknowledge their friendship: “Anna wrote asking Stephen to Morton but with never a mention of Mary Llewellyn. Not that she ever did mention their friendship in her letters, indeed she completely ignored it;” (333). By denying Mary’s existence, Anna indulges in a fantasy that prevents her acceptance of her daughter’s identity. She had been trying to deny Stephen’s identity, since Stephen’s earliest masculine

traits were evident to her. Now, Anna needs Stephen's assistance to maintain Morton but she will only accept it conditionally: "Morton, that was surely Stephen's real home, and in that real home there was no place for Mary" (336). Now not only is Stephen exiled from living at Morton, but Mary is exiled from visiting Morton.

Once Stephen returns to her work of writing, Mary grows restless. Her typing is too slow for Stephen's needs, so she has nothing to do all day. Stephen has her husbandly role of working, but Mary hasn't much of a role to play. The servants run the house efficiently, and there is no child for Mary to raise. Stephen thought that she could love Mary enough that she would not need a child (300). Though no wish for a child is mentioned, childcare would, in "normal" heterosexual relations, keep the wife busy.

Striking out on their next trip, Stephen is hopeful to see the return of innocence on Mary's face and of roses on her cheeks. Stephen and Mary's second vacation is quite different from their first vacation. Their first vacation was private; it was about spending time alone with each other. Their second vacation is social; it is about socializing with the upper crust of society.

Lake Como is widely divergent from the trip to Orotava. This vacation is a celebration. Stephen's latest book is a bestseller. Printed in England and the U.S., it is even translated into French.

Even more important than success and fame, the book brings respect. The respect which Puddle prophesized has arrived, or so Stephen thinks. Like a man, Stephen's work will bring the approval which should allow her to fulfill the promise she made to Mary in Orotava. Now proper society will accept their relationship. The respect Stephen has earned through her writing should be strong enough to protect her and in turn protect Mary. Now Mary should be safe from the scorn of the *right* people for loving Stephen. This vacation isn't in seclusion, as was the case on Orotava. This vacation is at fashionable Lake Como.

Heading to Lake Como, where the wealthy classes relax and staying in a hotel instead of a private villa, Stephen appears to be subconsciously exposing herself and Mary to the potential of rejection by people like those she grew up knowing at Morton, all for the sake of socializing with her kind. This vacation takes them to a hotel that fills with English guests who are of Gordon status. Stephen's notoriety revolving around her latest novel has won her place in society in a location where she suspects no one knows of the relationship she shares with Mary. They are considered two young friends traveling together. They are "passing", pretending to be heterosexual. According to identity-process theory:

Passing represents movement between groups not in fact but in fraud. . . . The person lives with the possibility of exposure and not simply the repercussions of the stigma itself but also the loss of

everything which has been built upon the lie.  
(Breakwell 118)

Once more, Stephen is in denial. This time she is denying that their passing will not be discovered.

Hotel Florence, in Bellagio, is situated on the very tip of the peninsula that jets out into the center of Lake Como ([www.hotelflorencebellagio.it/info\\_eng.html](http://www.hotelflorencebellagio.it/info_eng.html)). Fashionable then and fashionable now, the hotel has been owned by the same family for over the past one hundred years. They would have owned it at the time of *Well's* setting ([www.hotelflorencebellagio.it/home\\_eng.html](http://www.hotelflorencebellagio.it/home_eng.html)). Stephen feels all the more welcome when she arrives due to “the sight of her book left about in the lounge,” where she spies someone “reading my [her] book” (367).

Stephen finds acceptance for both herself and Mary among the local “country folk” with whom she feels “in sympathy” because of their mutual “love of the soil” (367). Stephen refuses to think about what their response would be if she were honest with these gentlepeople about her relationship with Mary (367).

Among the guests, they find Lady Massey and her daughter “the most cordial.” “It amused her [Lady Massey] to make friends with celebrated people. . . . for Stephen and Mary she appeared to evince a liking which was more than just on the surface.” (367). Her daughter, Agnes, and Mary take a quick liking to each other:

“As for Lady Massey she petted Mary . . . and soon she was mothering Stephen also” (368). This is what Stephen dreams of for Mary and herself, acceptance by *worthy* society, an acceptance denied her by Anna: “Stephen, who was in the mood to feel touched, grew quite attached to this ageing [sic] woman” (368).

As this friendship grows, without the truth of Stephen and Mary’s relationship being revealed, Lady Massey invites her “two new children” to spend Christmas with her in Cheshire (368). For a short time, Stephen turns from the security and elation she has felt since her novel brought her notoriety to feeling “envy” and “less assured” (368). She and Mary will never enjoy the commonplace lives of those on the society pages of England (368). Still, Stephen turns back to fantasizing “in a cloud of illusion and glory” (317). Mary’s fantasies of the life of Agnes Massey and other girls like her brought on “a little stab of pain” when she thought of Anna not wanting her at Morton (369). They are now “where they belonged, socially,” (368) but remain closeted. Stephen returns to the society into which she was born for the first time since leaving Morton, but does not risk coming out. The omission of the truth that she and Mary are lovers brings dishonor to her.

Stephen allows herself to continue to dream that all is all right. She indulges herself in their relationship with the Massey’s into autumn, as the Masseys stay at the Ritz in Paris until

November. They dine out in society and entertain at their home on Rue Jacob. Their small foray into society grows as Colonel Fitzgerald joins Agnes's husband in their small circle. Stephen continues to allow herself to believe that this relationship, though built on a falsehood of identity, will continue to grow.

Correspondence between her and Lady Massey is prolific after the Massey's return to England. As Christmas approaches and "the visit to Branscombe Court drew near it was seldom out of their thoughts for a moment—to Stephen it appeared like the fruits of toils; to Mary like the gateway into an existence that must be very safe and reassuring" (369). Both are living in the *cloud of illusion* the narrator prophesized in Orotava.

The cloud bursts in torrents around them the week before Christmas. Stephen's rouse is uncovered. Lady Massey cannot permit Agnes' reputation to be sullied through associating with inverts. The pain of difference is nothing to Stephen in comparison to the pain Mary feels. Mary "is bereft of all dignity and protection" (371). Stephen's pain leads her to take Mary violently that evening. Just short of rape, Stephen tries to "obliterate, not only herself, but the whole hostile world through some strange and agonizing merging with Mary. It was terrible indeed, very like unto death..." (371).

Stephen unwittingly has set up a scenario that can only lead to hurting Mary. She fulfills not Puddle's prophesy of overcoming social stigma through success and fame, but her own prophesy: "Men were selfish, arrogant, and possessive" (300). Stephen felt her "manhood" when she first left Morton (202). She has felt her masculine love of protection for Angela Crosby and Mary Llewellyn. She now sees herself as selfish, arrogant and possessive. In taking Mary as her lover she takes on what she deems to be men's negative qualities. She does not walk in honor as she promised her father (300). Stephen thought about it, but does not tell Mary "the cruel truth": "I cannot protect you, Mary, the world has deprived me of my right to protect" (301). Stephen still clings to Mary while believing that she is unable to protect her.

Stephen's vacation to Lake Como and the incident with Lady Massey reveals an intricate level of denial. Breakwell writes that in complex denial there can be numerous stages of coping: "First the facts are denied," as when Stephen hides the fact that she and Mary are lesbians. Then the relevance of the facts are denied. Stephen decides that it is not important to be honest as she watches Mary interact with the peasants and with Lady Massey. It is more important to be able to interact with these people. Urgency is the next step. The one in denial decides that there is no hurry to expose the facts. Steven and Mary look forward to Christmas at the

Massey's. Surely, if they ever reveal their sexuality, it can wait until after Christmas. Besides, their relationship with Lady Massey and her family will be deeper than and perhaps being lesbian will not matter as much. Her need to act being denied, Stephen need not ever come out to them. She can simply go on pretending to be heterosexual (Breakwell 83). Until it all falls apart.

Their foray into polite society at Lake Como cautions them to keep to their kind. The following summer Jamie and Barbara join them on vacation. They are company to keep them busy and friends who truly need the warmth of the salt air. Stephen relates to Jamie's inability to return home. They both long for whence they came. Stephen decides she must never return to Morton as long as Mary isn't welcome (395).

The women take a villa in Houlgate, a beachside resort town located in Normandy. Since the war it has been a quiet resort, as it never regained the acclaim it enjoyed for fifty years before the war. It is an endearing place with boardwalks along the sea, heated seawater bath houses that promise to revive one's body temperature to normal after playing in the frigid August waters in the channel, and a number of beautiful villas to rent. Mary hopes the baths will "do Barbara good; she was not at all well" (395).

Barbara and Jamie are experiencing many of the same feelings and thoughts as are Mary and Stephen: ". . . the sense of



being unwanted outcasts, the knowledge that the people to whom they belonged – good and honest people – both abhorred and despised them” (395). This is hard on them both as neither wanted to leave their little village anymore than Stephen wanted to leave Morton.

Jamie, like Stephen, is an artist. She composes operas. Stephen sees a kinship in Jamie and Barbara or a reflection of her own and Mary’s lives, with the exception of poverty. Jamie struggles with her composing, trying to protect Barbara from the harshness of a life without money. Very often they go hungry. Barbara is ill but cannot afford a doctor. She is truly frail.

Jamie unburdens herself to Stephen. Stephen is unable to console Jamie because she is unable to console herself. Jamie abruptly refuses all offers of financial help. Jamie and Stephen feel the weight of inversion. They keenly feel the pain of being exiled from home. The time spent together at the villa reinforces their friendship. This sets Stephen up for a fall.

Stephen thinks of Mary as too frail to earn her own living. This is odd since Mary proved her ability to take care of herself while driving for the war effort. Nevertheless, Stephen feminizes Mary, thinking her weaker than she is. This makes Stephen feel strong. She is Mary’s protector, just as Jamie is Barbara’s protector.

As the year passes, Mary continues to harden, as she has since the Massey incident. She is drinking and losing her innocent countenance. This sends Stephen into a sort of writer's block. She can't write because Mary's hardening face gets between her words and the page. Stephen doesn't want Mary going to the parties and bars without her, so she goes along, watching in her beloved's face the fact that she is growing more distant from the world in which Stephen so wants Mary to live. Mary creates a safe haven in Paris by surrounding herself with other lesbians and submerging herself into Parisian gay nightlife. Eventually Stephen begins taking Mary to Valerie Seymour's and out on the town with Valerie's circle of friends. The popular queer nightclub Alec's becomes a favored spot. The heavy drinking and exclusion from mainstream society take a toll on Mary. As her countenance continues to harden Stephen, feeling responsible, ignores her writing to spend more time with Mary.

Stephen is appalled by the patrons of Alec's. The pain of rejection and exile shows on them and in their behavior. Men who "despised of the world, must despise themselves" (387). This disgust is never said to include Mary. It was Mary's innocence however that attracted Stephen. It was the glow of innocence which beguiled her. But now, "Mary's finer perceptions began to coarsen...surely the mouth and eyes and begun to harden? . . . Mary

now drunk as did all the others” (397). How could this not affect Stephen? Just as her father loved his beautiful, perfect wife, Stephen originally saw Mary as perfect. Stephen wanted a woman who could set the world aside and not let it into their relationship: “The world would condemn them but they would rejoice; glorious outcasts, unashamed, triumphant!” (300). Stephen watches Mary as she changes, taking on the look of the inverted outcast.

Winter comes and along with it arrives death. Barbara succumbs to her illness. Jamie, unable to return home to mourn publicly, joins Barbara in death. Depression and a gun bring about Jamie’s end. Jamie “Bewailing the life of hardship and exile that had sapped Barbara’s strength and weakened her spirit; . . . I can’t go back home now and mourn her” (401). Their inverted love had driven them from their hometown. Now, when Jamie needs the love and protection of her own people, she cannot return. The importance of acceptance in one’s homeland is evident at this point for Jamie, with whom Stephen identifies. Stephen can sympathize with the pain of not being able to return home. After the war she didn’t have the opportunity to heal at home. Jamie’s angst amplifies Stephen’s impending heartbreak.

Stephen is unable to come to terms with the circumstances surrounding Jamie’s death or with the pain imposed by the unkind world. Judgment, not of God, but of people. She cannot accept

that inversion is anything but natural, as all are created by God. So why does God not protect those He purposely created? Jamie's death intensifies the contempt Stephen has borne since Lady Massey's letter, a sword of which Brockett had warned her. Each blow builds on the next.

Relief appears as Stephen reengages with an old, unforgotten friend, Martin Hallam. They had spent the better part of a year together at Morton, walking in the woods, riding horses throughout the countryside. They had seemed inseparable. Talking freely, they both overcame their childhood loneliness in finding each other. As a young man Martin proposed to Stephen and was hideously turned down. Six pages describe Stephen's frenzied response and the following days of hysteria. Hysteria is not a word often attached in literature to someone who identifies as male. At his proposal she had "fled from him wildly, fled back to the house . . . she gasped as she ran, 'It's Martin! It's Martin!'" (98). That was when Stephen was eighteen. Now Martin is in Paris.

Stephen had thought of him during the war: "Stephen as she drove through that devastated country would find herself thinking of Martin Hallam . . . she had never told Mary about Martin Hallam" (291-292). Now, as Stephen announces her old friend is coming for dinner, Mary is surprised:

'Stephen, you are strange. Why haven't you told me you once had a very great friend-a man? I've always

thought you didn't like men.' 'On the contrary, I like them very much. . . . I've hardly ever thought about him.' (412)

Stephen chose to keep thoughts of Martin to herself when she and Mary drove endless hours together to the battlefields. Now she is nonchalant about never mentioning him. She does not divulge much about their relationship and does not mention Martin proposed to her.

Reaching out to Martin now as he offers his friendship anew, Stephen finds him to be unchanged. He is still the easy-to-talk-to man she remembers. Immediately a bond forms between the three of them. Martin introduces the women to respectable Paris, taking them to fine restaurants, coffee houses, and dancing in proper night clubs. In these situations, Stephen cannot publicly dance with Mary, so Martin steps in. Soon, Mary "was torn by conflicting emotions; terrified and amazed at her realization that Martin meant more to her than a friend" (423). Martin, meanwhile, becomes "convinced in his heart that she [Mary] had grown to love him already" (423).

Keeping all this to themselves, the threesome travel to Switzerland for the summer. Against the backdrop of the virginal white Alps, Stephen realizes Martin has become her rival and begins the turn toward imbalance:

And she watched. To herself she seemed all eyes and ears; a monstrous thing, a complete degradation, yet

endowed with an almost unbearable skill, with a subtlety passing her own understanding. (422)

The narrator tells us that Mary's love for Stephen is a "barrier of fire" (423): "For as great as the mystery of virginity itself, is sometimes the power of the one who destroys it, and that power still remained in these days with Stephen" (423).

After the return to Paris, Martin opens up to Stephen and tells her he is leaving for British Columbia to keep from betraying their friendship. Stephen, who is struggling with being all to Mary, challenges Martin to stay and let things play out. They make a gentlemen's agreement not to discuss the courting duel with Mary. Stephen and Martin both witness that Mary is "growing gentle again" since entering polite society (420). This is a point of contention between Stephen and Martin.

Martin feels Mary's gentleness is proof she is not meant to live a deviant lifestyle and the life of an invert, with all its complications, is more than Mary can handle:

Can't you realize she needs the things it's not in your power to give her? Children, protection, friends whom she can respect and who'll respect her . . . She's not strong enough to fight the whole world, . . . It's spiritual murder for Mary. (425)

Martin believes if he doesn't win Mary, it will mean her current lifestyle will lead to her ultimate destruction. He implores Stephen "to set Mary free if you love her" (425).

Stephen focuses on Martin's audacity in thinking what he has to offer is better: "You think that I can't hold the woman I love against you, because you've got an advantage over me and over the whole of my kind" (425). She touts the recurrent statement, which started with Puddle, ". . . I have faith in my writing, . . . someday I shall climb to the top and that will compel the world to accept me for what I am. . . . I mean to succeed for Mary's sake" (425). Even after the Massey incident she clings to the idea that more success will force society to accept their inversion and then she and Mary will be welcome in polite society.

If Martin succeeds, Stephen will not only lose Mary, but Martin as well. She has deep feelings for Martin. Not only was he the first man beside her father with whom she could talk freely, but they share ideals of beauty and nature. That she didn't speak of him during one of those long ambulance rides when she was thinking of him indicates an intimate, private relationship. It is unusual to think of a friendship as private. Stephen wants to keep romantic feelings for him close to her heart, just as she did with her feelings for Angela Crossby. She never told Mary about that relationship, either. In both relationships she lost control of herself in grieving their end. The similarities are real. Stephen knows the protection Martin can offer. When they were young the neighbors suddenly began accepting her once she and Martin began

dating. She may have felt repulsed by the idea of having sex with him, but there is not mention of her shirking him once she realizes his amorous feelings for her.

Stephen clearly sees Martin's attraction to Mary; how could she miss it in the months after he begins feeling sexually attracted to Mary? "He, the lover, could not hide his betraying eyes from her [Stephen's] eyes could not stifle the tone that crept into his voice at times" (422). The intimacy of their young relationship would have added to her ability to sense Martin's passion for Mary. She may have identified as a male, but she certainly wants everything else Martin offers. Mary is in a position to take this away from Stephen, along with her own love. If Stephen should ever decide to stop fighting this world and live a "normal" existence, Martin will no longer be available. Stephen is even jealous of the attention David the dog gives Martin.

Martin is unaware "Mary was weakening her defenses" (429). Added to this, Stephen decides to give up the fight to keep Mary. Her decision comes down to her respect for her parents' deep romantic love for one another: "And now she must pay very dearly indeed for that inherent respect for the normal which nothing had ever been able to destroy, not even the long years of persecution" (430). All that Stephen had suffered at the hands of



so-called normal society is not enough to break the respect she feels for the stability of her ancestors' heterosexual lifestyles:

She must pay for the instinct which, in earliest childhood, had made her feel something akin to worship for the perfect thing which she had divined in the love that existed between her parents. (430)

Stephen found comfort in the warmth of her parent's love for each other. This was what made Morton seem safe. Their love made the house their home:

Never before had she seen so clearly all that was lacking to Mary Llewellyn, all that would pass from her faltering grasp, perhaps never to return, with the passing of Martin-children, a home that the world would respect, ties of affection that the world would hold sacred, the blessed security and peace of being released from the world's persecution. (430)

It is too late for Stephen to have all that Martin offered. Peace will remain elusive for her in the life she chose to live: Inversion. Is it worth the price she has paid? All that was home to her has gone from her. Even Mary is an impossible choice, now that Stephen has witnessed the way of the outcast sucking the life out of her. She did not fall in love with a beaten down woman. The implications of her choices are impossible to ignore as she watches the hardness in Mary's face melt away as soon as she is accepted into heterosexual life. Stephen resolves after her father's death to "never again inflict wanton destruction or pain upon any poor, hapless creature" after seeing the suffering of the fox during a hunt: ". . . Sir Philip would live on in the attribute of mercy that had come that day to his

child" (127). Stephen takes on another of her father's attributes at that moment, the deep felt mercy integral to his personality.

Above all else, she must relieve Mary's pain and suffering in a show of mercy. Stephen is now left with the conclusion that "Only one gift could she offer to...Mary, and that was the gift of Martin" (430). Only Martin can offer Mary the kind of relationship Sir Philip and Anna shared.

Stephen begins maneuvering to push Mary into Martin's arms. She stops having sex with her. She uses her friendship with Valerie Seymour to lead Mary to think she is having an affair with Valerie. And she begins circling down into the hysteria of imbalance which followed her other breakups. Mary has never been told of these breakups nor warned of the intense effects they have on Stephen.

Stephen visits church. Here the semblance to her previous breakups begins: "she was curiously empty of all sensation" (433). To Valerie she speaks "dully". Upon seeing her two days later, "something in her face made him [Martin] catch his breath" (434). Stephen enters the house and she feels that "a grimacing, vindictive silence" fills the place: "She brushed it aside with a sweep of her hand, as though it were some kind of physical presence." She isn't aware she is the one "who brushed it aside," for, "Stephen Gordon was dead; she had died last night." David

recognizes her and runs to greet her, “But Mary shrank back as though she had been struck.” Stephen utters the lie concerning herself and Valerie. Silently she pushes Mary away. A “thick black mist” lowers upon them (435). Stephen’s hysteria returns. This time the accusations of inverts dead and alive fill the room, visually coming to life (436).

Under stress from giving up her lover, seeing herself as a husband who can provide all that a man can offer Mary, and walking away from being a martyr for inversion, Stephen begins to hallucinate. Stephen has fantasized that she could provide enough love to Mary to make up for not being able to offer her children or protect her from mainstream society. She also fantasized that through success with her writing she would become accepted by mainstream society and that in doing so she would make life easier for the invert. Society would realize inverts could live respectable lives.

Breakwell lists hallucinations as the coping strategy of fantasy in which the individual has lost control (89). In other words, as Stephen’s fantasies grow out of control she is no longer able to direct their course. Sending Mary away is too much for Stephen with which to cope. She begins hallucinating in the midst of a nervous breakdown.

Psychiatric breakdowns occur . . . [when] threats to identity . . . overwhelm the available coping strategies.

The capacity of the individual to tolerate threat without psychiatric collapse depends on that person's coping powers. (Breakwell 107)

Stephen Gordon's coping skills reach a limit and she experiences a psychiatric breakdown. No longer will she struggle to live the life of an exile. Stephen is going home.

Stephen Gordon gives up the fight against society for validation of an unaccepted lifestyle. In her grief she takes on the grief of all inverts, past and present and descends into hell, but unlike Jesus, cannot set them free: "They were everywhere now, cutting off her retreat; neither bolts nor bars would avail to save her. The walls fell down and crumbled before them [the spirits]; at the sound of their suffering the walls fell crumbled" (437). She believes she is being possessed by legions of spirits. Only she can speak as they "enter" her voice to cry to God for mercy, a mercy she needs for herself. She has felt responsible to be the voice for others and now imagines all the voices join together as one in her throat, but she can no longer fight the fight, not for herself, not for them. She respects and holds dear the stability of heterosexual home life. She basked in the warmth of her parents' romantic love. She felt Morton basking in their love, giving peace to the home. Finding herself disgusted by the inverts she has met in Paris, and wishing not to become one of them, she vomits out all that she has said and believed in defense of the invert. Now Stephen is purged

of all that bound her to the life of the invert. She is cleansed of her anguish. Born, she believes, to have to choose between going “unfulfilled all her days, or else live in abject dishonor” (235). She has tried living as an invert, living in dishonor. Now Stephen has given Mary the respectable life she deserves with Martin, with all the things only a man can give her. This rights a wrong. Stephen is no longer dishonorable. Stephen once again finds her father’s respect and her own manhood. As the Gordon heir, Stephen is free to return to Morton and regain her position in society.

Hall has written *Well* in such a manner that identity-process theory applies to the movements and changes in Stephen Gordon. Examining Stephen through this psychological theory the reader can see how her responses to stress follow typical behavior patterns. “Where the threat [to identity] demands a change in the existing structure one way to minimize the negative effects . . . is to devalue the element of identity which is to be excised” (Breakwell 101). For Stephen this means she must devalue romantic love. Hall writes that Stephen has to choose between going romantically “unfulfilled all her days, or else live in abject dishonor” (Hall 235). Stephen tries living in dishonor and finds herself unable to be at peace. Her yearning for Morton and social acceptance overwhelm the happiness she is able to find as a lover.

In Stephen's decision to return to "respectable" society she will attach to the group more strongly than before because it has cost her dearly to associate with them. By choosing to return to Morton, Stephen may, based on her relationship with Martin, live a heterosexual life. If Stephen decides to live as a heterosexual, now that she is returning to Morton, she will have to position herself against the life she has been living in order to separate from it. In separating from inverts and choosing to pass as a heterosexual or even asexual:

Prejudices against the group from which one escapes are vehement. Vilification of previous friends and compatriots can be psychologically stressful, especially when this is done in the full knowledge that one is no different from them in reality. (Breakwell 117)

Stephen has to vilify inverts so that she may feel detached from them as a group. The stress of this adds to her inability to cope.

Where the threat challenges self esteem directly, pouring scorn upon some previously valued, existing identity characteristic, an alternative tactic is to simply refocus attention upon some other element of identity and inflate its value. (Breakwell 101)

The devalued characteristic:

. . . is no longer allowed to occupy the center of the identity stage. Another quality is brought to the fore instead, invested with greater value, and self-esteem is maintained through this circuitous route. (Breakwell 101)

Stephen substitutes lesbianism as the center of her identity with her position as heir to Morton and the possession of the qualities

required to be welcomed into polite society. She values these newly centered qualities more than ever. Her self-esteem is thereby regained. So, identity-process allows Stephen to reinvent herself through coping skills, placing her back at Morton. Stephen is choosing to accept the requirements for entry back into her home and social class.

## Conclusion

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In an adventure leading from the English countryside to London, Paris, and the battlefields of northern France, with side trips along the way, Stephen is moved from location to location on a discovery of her deepest values and priorities. Birthed into an heritage whose influence retains a position of highest concern throughout the journey, Hall writes a character, Stephen Gordon, who discovers she cannot separate from attachments formed early in life. An exiled Stephen Gordon returns to her home, Morton.

As a child born into the lineage of the Gordon family and who stands to be the next heir, Stephen has learned to become one with the land. The importance of homeland is taught her by seeing the effect of generations devoted to Morton. The house, land, and livestock are cherished as is seen in the preservation of the house, and the health of the forests, meadows, and animals. Stephen is devoted to Morton, as its heir:

There was little of the true pioneer about Stephen . . . She belonged to the soil and the fruitfulness of Morton, to its pastures and paddocks, to its farms and its cattle, to its quite and gentlemanly ordered traditions, to the dignity and pride of its old red brick house . . . To these things she belonged and would always belong by right of those past generations of Gordons whose thoughts had fashioned the comeliness of Morton, whose bodies had gone into the making of Stephen. (108)



Stephen had no desire to be away from Morton. Growing up, she had explored and learned every crevice and stream, not only of Morton, but of the entire county. Her identity of home, her sense of belonging, consists of Morton and its surrounding villages and farmland. There is a time when, as a young, awkward teenager, Stephen decides to shrink her idea of home to within the gates and fences of Morton. Stephen and Morton are one, just as her ancestors felt as one with the family home. Morton is her birthright.

Stephen clings to her heritage, even though she believes that her ancestors would most likely not approve of her. After turning down Martin Hallam's proposal at age eighteen, she is aware of the neighbors' talking about her as Anna's continued rejection of her grows worse:

Yes she was one of them, those bygone people; they might spurn her—those lusty breeders of sons that they had been—they might even look down from heaven with raised eyebrows, and say: 'We utterly refuse to acknowledge this curious creature named Stephen.' But for all that they could not drain her of blood, her blood was theirs also, so that do what they would they could never completely rid themselves of her nor she of them—they were one in their blood. (108).

Stephen is keenly aware that since she turned down Martin's proposal of marriage, she likely will never marry. She will not be a breeder of sons like her maternal ancestors. As prophesized in the second paragraph of the novel, she will not carry on the line of

Gordons who would inherit a love of Morton and carry on its legacy. In that paragraph, a description of the house speaks of the Ladies of Morton and other manors “who, reflected in their manors, are passing away, but their homesteads remain, and such an homestead is Morton” (11). She expects that, because of these things, the Gordons who came before her would absolutely not approve.

The frenzy Stephen is in at the end is a slow buildup which began the moment Anna threw her out of Morton. Once she felt her manhood upon deciding to respect Anna’s wishes for her to leave (202), she began a journey of self-identity that leads her back home. Ajzen and Fishbein’s explanation of the behavior that leads Stephen back to Morton is paraphrased in Breakwell’s work:

Recent studies have shown that sharp and apparently unanticipated changes in attitudes, which have previously been considered inexplicable conversions, do most frequently have a long history of minor, sequential and unacknowledged modifications in attitude preceding them. . . . the gradual recognition of . . . the remodeling of identity . . . can have this element of surprise. (42)

The foretelling of this is shown in her desire to ‘keep the traditions of Morton’ at the onset of war (267). Then it shows in her conversation with herself about men being selfish, arrogant, and possessive. She is describing herself in those lines, angry that her love cannot provide children or respectability. She then hears her father ask, “What is honour, my daughter?” and decides to wait

until Mary is strong of body and mind to have this talk with her (300), a talk they never have. Next Stephen wants to bring Mary home to live at Morton with Anna. She wanted this same thing with Angela Crosby and was even more adamant about it.

Stephen does not like Mary growing “rough around the edges.” She was originally attracted to Mary’s virginal appeal. Now Mary is taking on the look of the invert and Stephen is losing her attraction for her. She did not bargain for this. Stephen wants an untouchable, a woman who can stand up to societal pressure and not be muffed. Stephen wants a woman who looks like a heterosexual woman who can fit into polite society. Stephen watches as Mary grows ‘gentle’ again while under Martin’s protection from society’s gaze. Mary enjoys the respect Martin brings and going places where once she was shunned. Stephen watches as Mary and Martin fall in love and, instead of wanting the best for Mary, she becomes manic. She only makes love to her roughly after that. She doesn’t protect their relationship by stopping the ‘dating’ in which the three of them have been engaged. She does challenge Martin to take Mary away from her. Also, Mary is taking the only man who ever loved Stephen away from her. This is a double betrayal.

Stephen remembers what it is like to be accepted in mainstream, upper-class society by watching Mary. Martin’s aunt

saw through Stephen, who never returned to her home because she could feel Aunt Sarah looking through her. Stephen sits at the table on the nights Martin takes them dancing, watching Mary dance and smiling at him, aware of the stares of other patrons at her, the woman alone at a table dressed as a man. She watches as Martin falls in love with Mary, removing any chance of Stephen marrying someday. With what other man does she enjoy intimate time? Stephen grows jealous.

For what has she given up her position? Two years of bliss? Is it worth it? Her books, some were best sellers, are not bringing her social acceptance. Remember the fiasco that ensued after the Lake Como affair!

Peace has evaded her. Happiness is not for her. Not as an invert anyway. Perhaps it would be best for her to return home and make the other choice available to her. Martin is gone; she will have to do this on her own. Stephen must say goodbye to her fellow inverts, maimed and damaged that they are. Goodbye to martyrdom. Goodbye to Mary, the love of her life. Goodbye to Martin, the holder of her past chances. Hello, Morton.

Hall uses place as a means to develop her character Stephen Gordon. It is through the use of each location Stephen is placed that the reader sees a direct effect upon the growth of Stephen.

The author has moved her main character, Stephen Gordon, from the security of her birthplace and birthright to resolution that will allow her return to her ancestral home. Enroute, she has been; exiled and landed in London and Paris: engaged in military service, both in London and northern France: on life-course changing vacations to the Canary Islands, Italy, and Switzerland: in love with a housemaid, a man, a married woman, and a fellow ambulance driver: and, purged of her desire to martyr herself for love or for the community of inverts. Hall brings Stephen's journey around full-circle.

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