Introduction

1. In geography, the terms “space” and “place” have distinct histories. See their respective entries in *A Feminist Glossary of Human Geography* for a brief overview of the various ways in which these terms are used and debated in geographic literature. Unless otherwise noted, I use “place” and “space” relatively interchangeably, though “place” tends to refer to a more specific location; for example, gendered, raced, and classed space may be used to describe the home (“place”). As this and the next chapter outline in greater detail, my use of these terms is informed by feminist geography that understands place as relational and space as inextricable from time. See Doreen Massey’s *Space, Place, and Gender* for arguments against place’s bound nature and discussions of space’s relationship with time and gender.

2. For a reconsideration of Armstrong’s arguments, see Leila Silvana May, “The Strong-Arming of Desire: A Reconsideration of Nancy Armstrong’s *Desire and Domestic Fiction*."


4. I would like to thank an anonymous reader for helping me identify many of the counterhegemonic examples from the nineteenth century.

5. Rethinking nineteenth-century texts’ domestic politics constitutes a growing and exciting field of scholarship. For example, Elizabeth Moss’s *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (1992) discusses the “ideological warfare” produced by southern women writers in the nineteenth century. *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Writing* (2001), edited by Dale M. Bauer and Philip Gould, provides an overview of recent (re)appraisals of nineteenth-century American women’s writing. Recent scholarship by Claudia Tate, Lora Romero, and Amy Kaplan read alongside earlier work by Susan K. Harris, Nina Baym, and Judith Fetterley were most influential in my characterization and understanding of nineteenth-century domesticity.

6. Recent modernist studies of domesticity and domestic fiction include Guy Reynolds, “Re-making the Home, 1909–33” and “Modernist Geographies,” in *Twentieth-..."
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While not focused on the contemporary American domestic novel specifically, Sara Blair’s “Cultural Geography and the Place of the Literary” and Rosemary Marangoly George’s The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction, as well as her edited collection, Burning Down the House: Recycling Domesticity, influenced my research and approach to contemporary domestic fiction.

8. I first encountered the phrase “spatial narrative” in Mary Pat Brady’s analysis of Chicana literature, Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies.

9. For a more detailed introduction to reading space as a social process, see David Harvey, Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference, especially pages 316–24.

10. This idea—that a place can shape its inhabitants as much as inhabitants can shape a place—should be distinguished from nineteenth-century theories of architectural determinism, which emphasize a “top down” power hierarchy. Proponents of architectural determinism worried about the ways that places, especially urban places, could shape inhabitants. Architectural determinists did not explore the potential of the inhabitants to influence the spaces in which they lived and worked.

11. The post–September 11 “credit-card patriotism” has undergone some analysis (Solomon 43). Theda Skocpol, for instance, reminds us of the context and content of the Bush administration’s “managerial coordination” after September 11:

President Bush did not launch any big new civic effort [after 9/11], such as mandatory national service for young Americans. Instead, for weeks after 9/11, his most prominent appeals were commercial rather than civic. The Travel Industry Association of America estimated that two-thirds of Americans saw the President starring in a television advertisement calling for people to express “courage” by taking more trips. And the president repeatedly asked people to go shopping to stimulate the economy.
While distinct from the civic responsibilities demanded of, for example, the World War I and II eras, these domestic-commercial attitudes have a long history, at least as long and deep as nineteenth-century American domesticity. For instance, Ellen’s mother in *The Wide, Wide World* takes her daughter shopping to prepare her for their tragic separation. The exquisite details of the shopping trips with her mother allow the reader to enjoy vicariously the successful procurement of new goods. When Ellen shops by herself, as is the case when Ellen looks for muslin, the reader experiences the unease associated with a young girl shopping alone in the masculine public sphere (Warner 44–52). While Catharine E. Beecher promoted thrift, she also encourages her readers in *Treatise on Domestic Economy*, to purchase “superfluities” in order “to spend for the welfare of mankind” (Beecher 182). Furthermore, “The link between retail therapy and warfare is not as incongruous as it sounds. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, stores on Fifth Avenue sold atomic jewellery, the Atomic Undergarment Company took off, a cereal maker offered atomic trinkets in return for 15 cents and a breakfast flakes box top and Lowell Blanchard released his popular country single, ‘Jesus Hits Like an Atom Bomb’” (Riddell). See Simon J. Bronner’s edited collection, *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America 1880–1920* for an overview of the development of American consumer culture.


Chapter 1

1. Both Amy Kaplan and Rosemary Marangoly George point out the genre’s imperial origins and influence to reinforce imperialism. Carolyn Vellenga Berman explores the genre’s role in both abolishing slavery and establishing the nuclear family in her study *Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery*.

2. See Dianne Chisholm’s *Queer Constellations* for a more sustained definition and discussion of queer (urban) space.

3. Just as I am engaged in rethinking domesticity and domestic fiction, other scholars have asked us to reconsider our understanding of the sentimental and sentimental fiction. See, for example, June Howard’s “What Is Sentimentality?”

4. Dana Heller’s “Housebreaking History: Feminism’s Troubled Romance with the Domestic Sphere” discusses in greater detail, and in a literary context, post–World War II feminism’s reluctant relationship with the home. Her essay analyzes “a convergence of discursive trajectories driven by American feminism’s anxieties about its historical relationship to the ideology of separate social spheres, the family romance of classical psychoanalysis, and the semiotics of popular culture’s focus on the domestic” (219). For a more detailed exploration of the feminist movement’s reluctant embrace of home, see
Judith Newton’s “Feminist Family Values; or, Growing Old—and Growing Up—with the Women’s Movement” and Rachel Bowlby’s “Domestication.”

5. See Edward W. Soja’s Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Social Theory for a discussion of how time is being replaced by space.


9. President George W. Bush made these remarks in regard to gay marriage’s legality.

10. While the Breedlove apartment in Morrison’s The Bluest Eye (1970), like the Puente home in Dreaming in Cuban, recycles a commercial space for domestic use, it unsuccessfully crafts a neodernomestic home. The Breedlove’s “abandoned store” apartment is a serviceable structure in the sense that it provides shelter, but the apartment fails to provide a home because it lacks comfort: “Without it [comfort], our dwellings will indeed be machines instead of homes” (Rybczynski 232). As a recycled structure that has housed gypsies, a real-estate office, a Hungarian baker, and a pizza parlor, the apartment is a versatile “machine” but ill adapted for family home life. The apartment and rooms, for example, are not cozy. Described as an eyesore that is “both irritating and melancholy” (33), the “unimaginative” (34) living quarters consist of only two rooms (Bluest Eye 34–35). “Festering together in the debris of a realtor’s whim,” the Breedlove family decays rather than flourishes in this destructive environment (Bluest Eye 34). Unlike the Puente family’s warehouse home, the home in The Bluest Eye (re)produces a domestic trap rather than recycling a new route to home.

11. Sian Mile and Jean Wyatt have also argued that Housekeeping presents an ambivalent view of the characters’ potential liberation.

12. Cisneros discusses the inspiration for Mango Street in an interview with Feroza Jussawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrock (301–2).


14. During an interview on National Public Radio conducted by host John Ydstie for “All Things Considered,” Natalie Pace, a CoAbode client, gave the motto “until better times do us part,” referring to her arrangement provided through the nonprofit service (qtd. in Ydstie).

15. To flesh out this discussion more completely, I would need to look closely at the nineteenth century’s “Boston marriages,” which carved out a socially acceptable space for women to live together for mutual economic benefit. See Shannon Jackson’s Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, Hull-House Domesticity (2000), which provides a fuller discussion of queer domesticity in the nineteenth century.

16. While walled cities have been around since Roman times, “gated communities remained rarities until the advent of the master-planned retirement developments of the late 1960s and 1970s” (Blakely and Snyder 4). See Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States (Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder) and Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America (Setha Low).
Chapter 2

1. Sarah A. Leavitt also underscores conventional domesticity’s racial and class implications in her chapter “Americanization, Model Homes, and Lace Curtains.” Leavitt writes that at the turn of the century, immigrant women were the primary targets of much domestic advice (75). She also notes that “most domestic-advice texts left out black women. For domestic advisors, black women existed only as servants” (Leavitt 75).

2. J. K. Gibson-Graham deploys the term along these lines in The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy (see 139–45). For additional discussion of queer space, see Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner’s scholarship, especially “Sex in Public,” and Judith Halberstam’s In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives.

3. Little Women begins by revealing each of the March girl’s flaws, which they in turn plan—as in John Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress (1678)—to resolve. Little Women, in this sense, narrates the March girls’ journeys toward recognizing, accepting, and correcting their burdens and flaws. See chapters 1 and 2 in Little Women, “Playing Pilgrims” and “A Merry Christmas.”

4. Rachel Price and Amy March also resemble each other because both are guilty of misusing language; Rachel’s frequent malapropisms and Amy’s mispronunciations connect their characters.

5. Regarding Amy’s “disability,” Alcott writes, “If anybody had asked Amy what the greatest trial of her life was, she would have answered at once, ‘My nose.’ When she was a baby, Jo had accidentally dropped her into the coal-hod, and Amy insisted that the fall had ruined her nose forever” (42).

6. Domestic “faculty” is a nineteenth-century term that refers to the collection of skills that make “a housekeeper of exemplary competence” (Romines 4).

7. G. M. Goshgarian’s To Kiss the Chastening Rod: Domestic Fiction and Sexual Ideology in the American Renaissance examines domestic fiction’s “(im)piety,” complicating a straight reading of the domestic protagonists’ selflessness (xi).

8. Although beyond the scope of this chapter, The Poisonwood Bible also works a subtle critique of the African domestic sphere into the narrative. Ruth May, for example, describes a conversation she overhears about a “Circus mission,” and Leah notes how the women in Kilanga marry young (271; 107). Rachel and Orleanna record the toll the body, especially the female body, endures in part as a result of those early marriages (53–54; 126). The novel also balances this subtle critique with Mama Tataba, an icon of domestic prowess who “cursed our mortal souls as evenhandedly as she nourished our bodies” (94).

9. Kaplan’s term “manifest domesticity” plays on the term “manifest destiny” and its imperial connotations; it refers to the “pervasive imperial metaphor” in the nineteenth century, linking domesticity “to the contemporaneous geopolitical movement of imperial expansion” (Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity” 583).

10. Biddy Martin and Chandra Mohanty similarly outline “the consolidation of the white home in response to a threatening outside” as the rhetoric of home’s dark underbelly (303). The series of foreign and domestic policy initiatives undertaken after September 11 add even greater magnitude to Orleanna’s, Benhabib’s, and Martin and Mohanty’s remarks. America frequently uses violence to respond to the backlash against its privileged position within the global community.

11. Kaplan suggests in “Manifest Domesticity” that “the expansionist logic of domestic-
ity...turns an imperial nation into a home by producing and colonizing specters of the foreign that lurk inside and outside its ever shifting borders” (602).

12. I am indebted to Kaplan’s essay “Manifest Domesticity” for first connecting nineteenth-century American domesticity to Morrison’s notion of the “Africanist presence” (602).

13. My emphasis here on the “Africanist presence” should not discount Barbara Kingsolver’s political agenda to make her readers aware of American involvement in the Congo, especially in terms of America’s role in Patrice Lumumba’s assassination.

14. The Price’s luggage symbolizes the (un)packing of their imperial burdens, or the dual predicament and promise embedded in their revised domestic pilgrimages. Whereas the March girls in Little Women take up their burdens and learn to carry them in order to establish a “Celestial City,” the Price family’s burdens initially bury them in cultural baggage. As missionaries in the Belgian Congo during the latter half of the twentieth century, the Price family ostensibly continues a tradition of cultural imperialism, furthering the “civilizing” reach of the “White House.” However, The Poisonwood Bible’s historically conscious recycling tweaks the conventional narrative of Pilgrims’ Progress.

15. See George, ”The Authoritative Englishwoman” (50–56) in The Politics of Home, for a detailed discussion of the colonial home’s replication of empire.

16. To describe Rachel as both child-like and sexual may seem contradictory; however, I would argue that this paradox defines the “dumb blonde” personality.

17. My favorite malapropism spoken by Rachel is this: “He [Axelroot] has a hundred and one reasons not to marry the cow so he can buy the milk for free” (403). This section written from Johannesburg, South Africa, also notes Rachel’s fluency in three languages (402). While it is unclear what exactly constitutes “fluency,” she can at least recite John 3:16 in English, Afrikaans, and French. Clearly this novel engages language in ways that extend beyond the scope of this chapter. (Adah’s fascination with palindromes also comes to mind.) In Rachel’s case, at least, her ability to speak three languages highlights a kind of “boutique multiculturalism”—akin to bragging about how “one of my very close friends happens to be from Paris, France” (402). Thank you to Brandon Kempner and Deborah Clarke for pointing out the language connections to my overall project.

18. While beyond the scope of this chapter, a fuller reading of this passage would interrogate how African children of white and black parents fit into both African and American societies.

19. “Cultural impersonation” is Minnie Bruce Pratt’s term, as Martin and Mohanty note.

20. Baym in Woman’s Fiction does not argue that women’s fiction before the Civil War advanced the home as a separate sphere or facilitated its retreat from the world (48). But after the Civil War, Baym suggests, “the Gilded Age affirmed profit as the motive around which all of American life was to be organized. Home now became a retreat, a restraint and a constraint, as it had not appeared to be earlier” (50). My use of the term “retreat” more broadly encompasses the security sought by women’s narratives during both the antebellum and post–Civil War periods.

21. Rachel expresses a similar frustration with the Price home in “Bel and the Serpent”: “I think our house gave me the worst willies of all. That house was the whole problem, because it had our family in it. I was long past the point of feeling safe huddling under my parents’ wings” (358).

22. Orleanna expresses the most grief about the loss of Ruth May; she does not appear to suffer as much angst about her other daughters who remain in Africa. She refers to Ruth May as the baby that she can’t put down (382): “My little beast, my eyes, my favorite
stolen egg” (385). Ruth May’s eyes are the eyes of judgment: “If you are the eyes in the trees, watching us as we walk away from Kilanga, how will you make your judgment? Lord knows after thirty years I still crave your forgiveness, but who are you?” (385; emphasis in original). Orleanna conflates Ruth May with the jungle in this passage; more broadly, the “you” also refers to the Congo.

23. Although not to the same extent as Gardens in the Dunes, The Poisonwood Bible also uses bird, snake, and garden symbolism to convey its message about American domesticity’s links to colonialism.

Chapter 3

1. Domestic space in The Bluest Eye crafts a house-home dichotomy rather than deconstructing and recycling it. See chapter 1, footnote 10.


3. I was unable to locate housing figures for black households in 1940. The first housing census was taken in 1940, but the U.S. Census Bureau did not begin to collect race-specific data until 1950. According to the Bureau, 31 percent of houses in 1940 had no running water, 18 percent needed major repairs, and 44 percent lacked a built-in bathtub or shower for the exclusive use of its occupants (U.S. Census, “Tracking” 1). In Ohio—the setting of The Bluest Eye—black homeownership was at 36 percent in 1950, above the national average for blacks (34.5 percent), but still well below the total national average of 55 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, “Historical Census”).

4. Practical arguments for having an external kitchen included keeping smoke and food smells out of the main part of the home and keeping the house cooler during the summer by placing the cook stove outside the main house.

5. Strictly speaking, Morrison’s trilogy follows a chronology that places Jazz between Beloved and Paradise. Morrison clarifies the year, 1976, on page 49 in Paradise. Peter Widdowson’s “The American Dream Refashioned: History, Politics and Gender in Toni Morrison’s Paradise” describes in greater detail the various clues that place the novel’s start on July 4, 1976.

6. See Nell Irvin Painter’s Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction for additional information on the Exoduster movement.


8. See Rob Davidson’s “Racial Stock and 8-Rocks: Communal Historiography in Toni Morrison’s Paradise” and Philip Page’s “Furrowing All the Brows: Interpretation and the Transcendent in Toni Morrison’s Paradise.”

9. The novel’s most notoriously inscrutable detail appears on the first page: “They shot the white girl first.” The woman’s identity remains a mystery, despite various clues throughout the story as to the identities of the women residing at the Convent. In this vein, Philip Page suggests that Patricia Best Cato burns her papers and charts because
she finally discovers a similar false method of interpretation embedded in her genealogy.

Page suggests that in Morrison’s novel the “quest for facts, for closed answers” will always frustrate and thwart the reader and the characters (641).

10. See footnotes 7 and 8. The essays listed in these footnotes outline, to various degrees, the patriarchal nature of the 8-rock story. In addition to these essays, Michael K. Johnson interprets Paradise’s critique of patriarchy in light of the frontier myth in Black Masculinity and the Frontier Myth in American Literature (see especially pages 59–68).

11. The gardens do benefit the butterflies, who “journeyed miles to brood in Ruby” (90).

12. See, for example, Katrine Dalsgård’s “The One All-Black Town Worth the Pain: (African) American Exceptionalism, Historical Narration, and the Critique of Nationalhood in Toni Morrison’s Paradise.”

13. Peter Widdowson draws this connection in his essay “The American Dream Refashioned: History, Politics and Gender in Toni Morrison’s Paradise.”


15. Nell Irvin Painter writes that a significant portion of Exodusters traveling to Kansas hailed from Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Tennessee (“Acknowledgments”).

16. For historical information on prominent all-black Oklahoma towns, see George O. Carney’s “Oklahoma’s All-Black Towns” and William Loren Katz’s “Oklahoma: A Black Dream Crushed.”

17. According to Kenneth Marvin Hamilton, the column “Come Prepared or Not At All” appeared in the Herald throughout 1891 and 1892 (104). William Loren Katz explains that the Herald printed both “propaganda and caution” (260). As the Herald was first published on May 23, 1891, Morrison does not strictly follow the historical record in having her characters be aware of the Langston City newspaper and this column in particular. The 8-rock families travel and found Haven just as Langston City itself was being established in 1890.

18. Hamilton also notes, “When the acting governor proposed assistance to a colony of five hundred poor blacks settling in Oklahoma during November 1891, the Herald deplored his proposal, asserting that it was ‘a mistake for any but self-supporting people to come’ to Oklahoma” (104).

19. Peter Widdowson suggests that gender ultimately trumps race as “the key defining characteristic and the crucial potential source of destabilizing change” within the novel (329). Widdowson suggests that “what the Convent women partly represent is ‘Out There,’ or Misner’s ‘the whole world’ which the exclusive paradise of Ruby must perforce ‘live in.’ The Convent’s apparent separation from, but contiguity with, the town underpins this paradox” (329). I will examine momentarily the gendered geopolitics of this conflict more specifically in my discussion of the Convent and the interactions between the Convent and Ruby.

20. The Five Civilized Tribes were so named “because they possessed more European characteristics than any of the other North American tribes. Many of them could read and write English and had a basic understanding of U.S. Institutions” (Hamilton 133, n2).

21. Carney suggests several related reasons for why many real all-black towns in Oklahoma did not survive. (“By the post-World War II period,” Carney notes, “only nineteen of the original twenty-eight [all-black towns] remained” [152]). Carney suggests, for instance, that all-black towns “never totally escaped their dependence on an economic system essentially controlled by whites. Furthermore, they experienced many of the same problems faced by all small town rural market centers, black or white” (151). These
problems included being bypassed by highway networks, residents traveling farther distances for goods and services as a result of the increased mobility brought about by the automobile, younger generations moving away for better employment opportunities, and insufficient funding for schools and roads (Carney 151–52). Additionally, “Low cotton prices and the agricultural recession of the 1920s, followed by the Great Depression of the 1930s, severely affected farming communities” (Carney 152).

22. *Culture of Fear* (1999) is the title of Barry Glassner’s sociological critique of American culture. Documentary filmmaker Michael Moore draws from Glassner’s work in *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), which also argues what I am suggesting here: fear often drives American policy. As the short animated film within *Bowling for Columbine* suggests, a cursory overview of American history contextualizes this deep fear of the “foreign” and the escalating violence associated with it.

23. Gigi’s military-like attire is described on page 310.

Chapter 4

1. See Massey, 9–11, for a discussion of some common gendered understandings of place (for example, masculinity and the universal, femininity and the local).

2. Unlike Steven M. Gelber, I use the term “domestic masculinity” broadly—to refer to both conventionally feminine homemaking practices, which Gelber calls “masculine domesticity,” and to traditionally masculine domestic tasks, which Gelber defines as the practices and spaces in the suburban home “that had been the purview of professional (male) craftsmen” (73). While there is not an exact equivalent for femininity, Judith Halberstam’s *Female Masculinity* (1998) troubles femininity and masculinity just as “domestic masculinity” troubles these categories. My work examines how domesticity is not women’s exclusive domain; likewise, Halberstam questions “the privileged reservation of masculinity for men” and looks at various sites of “masculinity without men” (xii; 1).

3. Catherine Jurca notes the following authors as key to the development of suburban fiction: “Sinclair Lewis, James M. Cain, Sloan Wilson, Richard Yates, John Updike, Frederick Barthelme, and Richard Ford” (4). While Jurca does consider some women writers, her work focuses on texts in which male protagonists play a central role. The notable exception is Jurca’s chapter on James M. Cain’s *Mildred Pierce* (1941).

A list of contemporary female American authors significant to the study of suburban fiction might include Marge Piercy, Joyce Carol Oates, Anne Tyler, Jane Smiley, and Ann Beattie.

4. Gelber suggests, “One would have to go back to an even earlier time, before there were suburbs, when most people lived on farms, in order to find husbands” who had more than an economic relationship to the daily running and functioning of their households (67). I discuss in the final chapter how women are increasingly taking part in traditionally masculine do-it-yourself projects.

5. Martin and Mohanty make the opposite point about Minnie Bruce Pratt’s narrative in “Feminist Politics: What’s Home Got to Do With It?” They discuss a passage where Pratt realizes she cannot abnegate responsibility for her father’s history/privilege (Martin and Mohanty 301–2).

6. While I agree that twenty-first century suburban fiction that focuses on white men may continue to reflect and generate this attitude, the fact that new American immigrants increasingly make the suburb their first entry point suggests that the long view may

7. My thanks to Jamie Ebersole for pointing out these gendered histories.


9. Fetterley and Baym go further to suggest that mobility in such cases functions not only to define masculinity but also it defines a fundamental tenant of what it means to be “American.” Therefore, as Fetterley argues, women’s domestic fiction is “not in the least American.” See Fetterley and Baym's essays for fuller readings of the gendered logic of what gets labeled “American.” Amy Kaplan’s recent work uncovers the mobility and “foreign” spaces in much (white women’s) domestic fiction, problematizing the “limited scope” nineteenth-century domestic fiction by women presents for its audience.

10. Other novels in this diverse tradition include Gloria Naylor's *Linden Hills* (1985) and Stephen L. Carter's *The Emperor of Ocean Park* (2002), both set in affluent African American suburban neighborhoods. *Linden Hills* fictionalizes the emergence of an African American self-built neighborhood. Rather than celebrating black suburbia, Naylor’s harsh “appraisal of black mobility . . . portrays life in a black middle-class suburb as an allegory for Dante’s descent into Hell” (Wiese 287). Significant parts of Carter’s novel take place in the family’s summer home, the Vineyard House, located on Ocean Park in Oak Bluffs on Martha’s Vineyard. While Carter’s thriller does not have an intense focus on domestic masculinity, it does spend some time outlining the significance of the homes presented in the novel. The Vineyard House’s suburban history is explained in the opening prologue: “My parents like to tell how they bought the house for a song back in the sixties, when Martha’s Vineyard, and the black middle-class colony that summers there, were still smart and secret” (Carter 3). Sandra Tsing Loh’s humorous depictions of suburban life in *If You Lived Here, You’d Be Home By Now* (1997) and *A Year in Van Nuys* (2001) and Chang-rae Lee’s novels *A Gesture Life* and *Aloft* also expand suburban literature’s range beyond white suburbia.

11. Langston Hughes’s poem “Little Song on Housing” also addresses the barriers African Americans often face when buying a home. Racial and gender discrimination occurred in a range of practices involving suburban development. This history of exclusionary practices includes outright racial segregation and exclusion, redlined mortgages, unequal housing subsidies, and highway development that disproportionately destroyed low-income and minority neighborhoods. More recently, higher-priced and riskier mortgages have been connected to higher foreclosure rates among Hispanic and black homeowners (See Kochhar, Gonzalez-Barrera, and Dockterman). All of these practices continue to have long-term effects on female and minority homeownership. See Dolores Hayden’s *Building Suburbia* (68; 125; 135; 147; 166) and Wiese's *Places of Their Own*. See also Wiese's index, specifically the entry “housing discrimination,” for additional reading.

12. “Sweat equity” here includes the practice of self-building homes and suburbs as well as do-it-yourself home improvements. See Hayden’s *Building Suburbia* (111–114) and Andrew Wiese's *Places of Their Own*. See also Wiese’s index, specifically the entry “owner building,” for additional reading.

13. Joan Hoff-Wilson explains in *Law, Gender, and Injustice* that after the Civil War, laws were passed that helped equalize property law for wives. The laws “ranged from the simple ability of wives to write wills with or without their husbands’ consent, to granting
feme sole status to abandoned women, to allowing women some control over their own wages, to establishing separate estates for women, to protecting land inherited by widows from their husbands’ creditors, to allowing widows legal access to their husbands’ personal estates” (Hoff-Wilson 128). Morrison’s *A Mercy* explores the anxiety around the loss of a white male homeowner and the perilous position in which his death places his female and male dependents during the colonial period. See Spain’s “From Parlor to Great Room” (137–38) in *Gendered Spaces* for a succinct overview of property control in American law.

14. See chapter 3 in *The Wide, Wide World* for the description of Ellen and her mother’s shopping excursions.

15. Recent fiction that follows the haven model includes much of Jan Karon’s fiction, especially about the fictional town Mitford, and fiction by Thomas Kinkade and Katherine Spencer, especially the “Cape Light” novels. Mitford, for example, is described as a world “you won’t want to leave” because “It’s easy to feel at home in Mitford. In these high, green hills, the air is pure, the village is charming, and the people are generally lovable.” (These quotations come from the back cover of Karon’s *At Home in Mitford*, 1996 Penguin paperback edition.)

16. Foreign buyers have played a significant role in major urban areas in the United States since 2005 and perhaps earlier. See Ron Scherer’s article “House Not Home: Foreigners Buy Up American Real Estate.” The subprime mortgage crisis, falling housing prices, and a weak dollar have made American real estate even more attractive to foreign buyers.

17. Recall, as I noted in the introduction, that 25 percent of female-headed households could afford a modestly priced house in 2004 versus 36 percent of male-headed households (Savage 4). Seventy percent of married couples could afford the same moderately priced home (Savage 4).

18. While Mosley’s novel could not be considered a full-fledged version of domestic fiction, it does contain the crucial element of homeownership driving its narrative. The novel clearly and significantly integrates the mystery form with a fundamental element of domestic fiction. Mosley’s novel *The Man in My Basement* (2004) deepens this exploration—exploring the relationship between a black man in danger of losing his home and a white man who offers a lot of money to live in—actually, to be imprisoned in—the other man’s basement.

19. See Updike’s *Rabbit at Rest* (361–85) for the description of his final flight and road trip to Florida.

20. *White Noise* is not necessarily representative of DeLillo’s oeuvre. *Underworld* (1997), for example, does not share the same intense and sustained focus on family and homemaking.

21. As the home’s changes also seem to reflect the inhabitants’ psyches, *House of Leaves* also can be seen as an American literary successor to the British novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) by Oscar Wilde.

22. Space does not permit me to clarify the distinct ways in which Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (particularly in “What Is a Minor Literature?” and *A Thousand Plateaus*) and Jean Baudrillard (in *Simulacra and Simulation*) have influenced this novel. I gesture to them here to offer a sense of the novel’s overall flavor rather than to engage their theories in any detail.

Feminism generally requires some reworking of postmodern theory. See Doreen Massey’s “Flexible Sexism” for a representative feminist critique of postmodern theory as well as Rosi Braidotti’s *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contem-

23. See N. Katherine Hayles’s article “Saving the Subject: Remediation in House of Leaves” for a representative postmodern interpretation.

24. House of Leaves specifically discusses Heidegger’s definition of the uncanny, or unheimlich, in chapter 4 (Danielewski 24–28). A fictional Harold Bloom mentions it as well in his interpretation of the film (Danielewski 364). Also see footnote 330 in House of Leaves (Danielewski 359).

25. While I do not explore this connection, the tree can also be read as “arborescence,” given the novel’s nod to Deleuze and Guattari. See the introduction to A Thousand Plateaus for Deleuze and Guattari’s description of this concept.

26. The practice of ancestor worship appears in many African traditional religions and some form of these practices sometimes carries over into African American religious practices. See Toni Morrison’s “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation” and Trudier Harris’s entry “Ancestors” in The Oxford Companion to African American Literature.

Chapter 5

1. Publisher’s Weekly referred to the flap as “Oprahgate.”


5. Empire Falls did win the Pulitzer Prize in 2002—an award granted after the publication of Epstein’s article.

6. Not surprisingly, given the domestic novel’s use of plots involving journeys to or away from home, the prodigal son trope appears in several neodomestic novels, including, for example, Marilynne Robinson’s Home and Richard Russo’s Bridge of Sighs. The prodigal son (or daughter) trope also works well with the narrative of “beset manhood,” as it takes the wayward protagonist back home.

7. The chick lit community is very aware of its status and the Franzen Affair. (Thank you to April Kent at New Mexico Highlands University for making me aware of this fact.) For example, Candace Bushnell’s Trading Up (New York: Hyperion, 2003) lampoons Franzen’s snobbery through the character Craig Edgers, author of The Embarrassments (consult pages 187–88; 192; 202–4). Another popular chick lit author, Plum Sykes, takes a quick jab at Franzen in Bergdorf Blondes (New York: Hyperion, 2004) (consult page 208).


9. My remarks should not imply that Crichton’s novels are apolitical. His recent novel, State of Fear, for example, engages the debate about global warming.

10. R. Mark Hall, for example, suggests that Oprah’s Book Club “supports traditional female identities. In short, even as Winfrey frames reading in terms of female empower-
ment, ‘Oprah’s Book Club’ depends upon fundamentally conservative forces in the history of literacy sponsorship for women in this country” (Hall 661). Paul Street’s essay “The Full Blown ‘Oprah’ Effect: Reflections on Color, Class and New Age Racism” provides a representative analysis of Winfrey’s celebrity and what it represents to black and white American communities.

11. Producer Scott Rudin optioned The Corrections and David Hare is writing the screenplay. Hare also wrote The Hours’s screenplay for Rudin. See Karen Valby, “Correction Dept.”

12. For a fuller reading of Rag and Bone’s domestic politics, see Ralph Rodríguez’s “A Poverty of Relations: On Not ‘Making Familia from Scratch,’ But Scratching Familia.”


14. Doc Hata is Japanese by nationality and Korean by birth (ethnicity); his poor Korean parents give him away to a wealthy Japanese family. His parents entrust their son to this other family in order to improve their son’s station in life: “No one of my family’s circumstance could expect to change his station, at least without a lifetime of struggle” (Lee 72).

15. Although my reading here does not address this reference, one of the foundational suburban texts that A Gesture Life specifically recycles is John Cheever’s short story “The Swimmer.” A Gesture Life also continues a distinct Asian American literary tradition that addresses masculinity, immigration/assimilation, and home. Novels in this tradition include Louis Chu’s Eat a Bowl of Tea (1961), John Okada No-No Boy (1976), and Frank Chin’s Donald Duk (1991).


17. Young-Oak Lee also connects Franklin Hata to Benjamin Franklin in “Gender, Race, and Nation in A Gesture Life”: “Because ‘Franklin’ evokes Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States and also the creation for Americans of lives loaded with the myth of success, the irony of his adoptive name foreshadows his failure to become a new person” (153).

Chapter 6

1. Another means to address this question might trace more particularly the theoretical debates invested in the relationship between haunting, memory, space, and history. Such analysis might engage Walter Benjamin’s “Thesis on the Philosophy of History,” Martin Heidegger’s Being and Time, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’s invocation of a “specter haunting Europe” in The Communist Manifesto, and subsequent analyses, such as Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International and Dick Howard’s The Specter of Democracy. Further exploration of Michel de Certeau’s haunted geographies or an analysis of what Michel Foucault calls in Madness and Civilization the “geography of haunted places” would enrich this understanding of place, haunting, memory, and history.

2. While the terms are not usually connected, the “metrosexual” seems to be a younger and specifically male incarnation of what David Brooks defines as the “bourgeois bohemian.” This hybrid class identity mixes the “bourgeois world of capitalism and the bohemian counterculture” (Brooks 10).

4. *This Old House* recently broke this trend. To celebrate its thirtieth anniversary, *This Old House* partnered with the affordable housing nonprofit Nuestra Comunidad to renovate “a foreclosed 1870s Second Empire in Boston’s Roxbury neighborhood” (Pandolfi).


6. Metrosexuals tend to be young heterosexual men, such as soccer star David Beckham. Michael Flocker’s book *The Metrosexual Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man*, in fact, specifically defines the metrosexual as heterosexual. By and large, the term “metrosexual” provides heterosexual men with an acceptable justification for their interest in fashion and grooming. It also perpetuates a double standard: men are praised for being vain, but vain women are considered “narcissistic” or “high maintenance.”

7. See Judith Halberstam’s *In a Queer Time and Place*, Wayne D. Myslik’s essay “Re-negotiating the Social/Sexual Identities of Places: Gay Communities as Safe Havens or Sites of Resistance?” and J. W. Paris and R. E. Anderson’s article “Faith-Based Queer Space in Washington, DC: The Metropolitan Community Church–DC and Mount Vernon Square” for an introduction to the blossoming research on queer space.

8. A 2003 U.S. Census Bureau report based on data collected between 1994 and 2002 found that minority naturalized-citizen householders were more likely than native-citizen minorities to achieve homeownership (Callis 2). There was also a correlation between place of birth and the likelihood of homeownership for naturalized citizens: “In 2002, naturalized-citizen householders born in Europe reported higher homeownership rates (74.5 percent) than those born in Asia (69.9 percent) or Latin America (61.7 percent)” (Callis 3). The housing report did not speculate why these discrepancies existed.


11. Habitat for Humanity and the six-part Sundance series *Architecture School*, which “follows a group of students at Tulane University’s prestigious School of Architecture as they submit competing designs for an affordable home in Katrina-battered New Orleans,” offer compelling “old” and “new” solutions to America’s ongoing housing crisis (“About”). Habitat for Humanity was founded in 1976 and *Architecture School* first aired in August 2008.


13. There is also an established tradition within the visual and performance arts that reconceptualizes domestic culture. The early twentieth-century American tradition includes the impressionist painter Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), the surrealist painter Dorothea Tanning (1910–), and the landscape and portrait painter Alice Neel (1900–1984). Each of these artists’ work depicts the home in conventional and unconventional ways. In addition to Clarissa Sleigh’s work, other key pieces from the latter half of the twentieth century include Judy Chicago’s *Womanhouse* (1971–72). Martha Rosler’s video *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), and photographer Carrie Mae Weems’s *Kitchen Table Series* (1990).