

## ABSTRACT

KERRI MCMURRAY. Economics of Hybrid Spaces in Gaskell's *North and South*. (Under the direction of Professor Fyfe.)

*North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell challenges the Victorian notion of separate spheres ideology. Victorians were concerned with the separation of private and public space, but the onset of the industrial revolution troubled these ideological divides. Jenni Calder discusses the geographical separation of the home and workplace in her historical study *The Victorian Home*, along with the implications of these two spaces as sources of gender agency. Picker discusses the importance of having "an interior environment that enabled such things [as work] to be forgotten was a priority of the middle-class aspiration" (430). The advancement of technology birthed an invasion of the public space into the private home. Noise, air pollution, and discussions of labor became prevalent, combining the tranquility of the domestic space with the dirty, laborious, illness-riddled factories (Brimblecombe, Nead). The economic downfalls of industrial England drew novelists like Gaskell to reevaluate the function and productivity of such spaces.

Victorian concerns about the invasion of space stand in direct contradiction to contemporary ideas about spatial usage in the guise of ergonomics. Contemporary workspace design integrates the domestic space with the work environment. Modern professional spaces, create ways to bring in touches of home, and hiding places for them" (Shellenbarger). Using personal photographs, "kitchen table" like environments and a "Babies at work" philosophy, corporations have successfully merged public and private space in an effort to increase productivity (Shellenbarger, Arieff). Architect Iris Regn and artist Rebecca Niederlander have been working to bring "exploring the intersection

between creativity and family life in an ongoing collaborative effort they call Broodwork". My study will serve to prove how contemporary changes in Victorian workplace and domestic spaces reflect a similar disturbance in economic and gendered terms.

Gaskell's novel *North and South* explores this concept of interpenetration of separate spheres, representing the negative economic impacts of keeping such spaces distinct during the Victorian era. Writing against the prevailing wisdom of her time, Gaskell underscores how separate spheres paradoxically contributed to economic downfall. Seen in contrast, modern notions of a productive workspace willingly combine public and private spheres in order to boost individual production. I will look at the novel *North and South* as a representation of the violations of space in Victorian England and the negative economic impacts this breeds, while comparing it to productive methods of combining private and public space exhibited in modern corporations. I will propose the economic limitations of separate spheres ideology, as well as bring in Victorian studies of the novel and cultural spaces to bear upon contemporary concerns, with regards to economic growth and how the Victorians anxieties restricted their economic efficiency, including those related to gender. Ultimately, my "ergonomic" reading of *North and South* suggests how Gaskell anticipates contemporary attitudes about the mingling of spaces in her critique of separate spheres.