

# **Aesthetic Femininity and Domestic Modernity in Late Victorian Advice Literature**

**Shu-chuan Yan**

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## **The Cozy Corner**

Portable Privacy, Mobile Intimacy, and a  
New Sense of Domesticity

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## 5 The Cozy Corner

### Portable Privacy, Mobile Intimacy, and a New Sense of Domesticity

“Furnish the corners of your rooms, and your rooms will be furnished,” a short piece from the “Decorative Notions” column in *Home Chat* addresses its female audience thus. The central idea is that any clever woman, acting on her own fancy, can decorate the recess of a drawing-room and fill it with “that air of refined comfort and cozy utility.” Designing a special fitment for a special corner enables a woman to personalize her home and “give that cachet of individuality which is so desirable” (“Recesses and Corners” 51). What is more, the visual accompaniment to the piece is articulate and illuminating, revealing much about the functional role of fitting an upholstered seat, be it free-standing or built-in, into a room corner to form an integral part of the wall. The piece underscores the general belief in the material and spatial elements of corners, such as a cushioned seat as well as a shelf covered with draperies, books, china, pictures, and flowers, for displaying the core values of coziness and comfort in the aesthetic interior. “Cozy Corners and Cushions,” another piece for the “Decorative Notions” column, advocates a good choice of corner design. The French window is hung with curtains of darker green Roman satin, which is inseparable from the design of artistic fitments to form “a ‘cozy corner,’ and a window seat in one” (202). Cushions, made of inexpensive materials to “complete the luxury” of corners, are perfect for styling the corner of a room and “necessary to the well-being” or “the well-looking, of an artistic room” (203). Both corner furniture and knickknacks form the material base upon which a woman can spend her idle hours giving expression to the feeling of aesthetic modernity.

Utilizing the how-to advice columns in women’s magazines as the primary source of information, this chapter considers the characteristic feature of cozy corners as feminine spaces, an index to the private zone of the house. The spatial metaphor of the cozy corner, I contend, provides a means through which to explore how the interior layout reflects and reinforces the material dimension of female theatricality and aesthetic sensibility. How does the making of comfortable or picturesque cozy corners foster a new sense of domesticity in late Victorian interiors? How can portable cozy corners evoke the idea of modern mobility in the making of a feminine domain as a showcase for personality and individuality and, more, a sense of privacy? By taking up the issues surrounding the spatial dimension and material qualities of cozy corners, the chapter considers the verbal and nonverbal

representations of how a woman fashions her own subjectivity in the designated space of a cozy corner within the framework of mobile intimacy and portable privacy. More specifically, the cozy corner arrangement demonstrates a woman's sense of spatiality in terms of the allocation of popular ornaments and items of furniture. The spatial configuration of a cozy corner involves a significant element of possession and territorial control mingled with the privacy it affords. A woman's sense of ownership can be achieved through the physical and visual arrangement of corner furniture that makes up a comfort zone for her idleness, literally inaccessible to men. The cozy corner craze assumes an important place in the history of domestic modernity, which simultaneously inscribes the cultural value of women's home-making in both spatial and material terms. Through the medium of photographs and advertisements, a key aspect of the New Journalism, the chapter will bring the pervasive equation between spatial awareness and emotional/sensorial aspects of inhabitation into sharp focus.

### **The Cozy Corner Craze and the Rise of a New Sense of Domesticity**

Cozy corners were either home-made or store-bought in the wake of the expanding market for furniture and fittings in the late nineteenth century. This occurred when a more comfortable visual atmosphere in different areas of the house was made possible thanks to advances in lighting and the advent of upholstery. The use of cozy corners for the vacant corners of a house, a concept with Oriental origins, could be traced back to the ottoman, which was modified to look like a typical English invention during the late Victorian era. "Cozy corners," as was pointed by the *Illustrated London News*, "are decidedly English in their origin and conception, and their early prototypes may be seen in many an olden gabled and mullioned mansion" ("In Search of" 23). Also widely known as the Turkish Corner originally found in harems, the cozy corner reached the homes of art-loving, stylish middle-class individuals in the mid-1890s in both Europe and the USA (Sparke, "Paradise" 206). Helen C. Long categorized the popular corners into three types: the Turkish corner (corners decorated with draperies, tassels, and Turkish couches), the cozy corner, and the inglenook. The cozy corner, along with the inglenook, was commonly comprised of screens and arches (Long 170). It was a popular piece invested with elaborate upholstery and carved features for feelings of luxury and exoticism (Edwards, "Built-in Furniture" 197). The revival of the traditional built-in inglenooks of cottage homes and the taste for window seats simultaneously brought about a decorating fashion for cozy corners. The cozy corner decoration was intertwined with "the past and with the sensuous, the bodily, the feminine and the decorative," in opposition to the more rational "protomodern" design style typified by the work of the William Morris and the members of the Arts and Crafts Movement around the turn of the century (Sparke, "Paradise" 207). The craze for cozy corners extended wide, which subsequently became part of a wider fascination with East-inspired decorating practices and with a new sense of domesticity for the creative work of space making.

A new sense of domesticity woven around the interiority and materiality of a modern interior contributes crucially to the discourse of space in the home. Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* addresses how the inventory of things in space conveys a sense of materiality, both real and imagined. Lefebvre's notion of the threefold dialectics of space—"representations of space" (conceived space), materialized spatial practice (perceived space), and the construction of certain "representational space" (lived space)—facilitates thinking about how the practice of cozy corner decoration was closely related to the efficient use of domestic space, a pressing concern for householders of the late Victorian period. "In many houses," as *Le Follet* noticed in 1889, "space is wasted and people crowded together in the center of the room, while corners and recesses are left useless or encumbered by some pieces of furniture" ("Cozy Corner" 74). Clearly, the journal saw the necessity of space-saving corners in the private sphere. "Cozy corners, if well arranged," as reported by the *Queen*, "may be ranked among the most notable improvements in modern fitments" ("A Cozy Corner" 380). In consequence, ready-made or portable corners were capable of adding a modern feel to the interior.

The fitting of a cozy corner into the domestic interior offers itself as an example of how a separately designated area, coupled with the trend toward a sense of informality and exotic taste, struck the essence of modernity and embraced artistic values in the context of late nineteenth-century Aestheticism. The cozy corner was used for almost every room in the house, in the form of a seat or a miniature boudoir, to contain a whole family or just accommodate two individuals (Long 172). The quick and easy production of a cozy corner as a compact piece of furniture gained its popularity and became the most obvious benefit of home furnishings. So popular was the cozy corner that the author of "Home Upholstering" advised, it was delightful to "make our homes look comfortable, cozy, elegant, and artistic. With a little thought, a little money and labor, sweet cozy corners are easily and quickly made" (Notsote 46). By presenting this advice as a response to the increasing specialization of cozy corner design, the author emphasized the perceived desire of the female audience for a simple arrangement in the corner of a room. As well as the inglenook, the cozy corner directly engaged the notion of domestic comfort in the form of "'a snug retreat' or 'a sequestered nook'" (Long 171). The dark and unused corner of a room could be converted into an informal setting for private conversations or a private space for retreat. Among other things, the corner by the ingle-side was attached to an individual's emotional responses, as revealed, for example, in the poem titled "The Cozy Corner." The speaker of the poem narrates: "Give me the cozy corner / By the cheerful ingle-side. . . . How sweet is a cozy corner / Away from the toil and fret, / Where we can dream of heavenly joys / And worldly ills forget" (P. 168). With these lines in mind, we may begin to understand how the cozy corner craze involves a new sense of domesticity and privacy, an important interior design element for generating a spectrum of feelings for householders. The cozy corner craze reflects the ways in which interior spaces and material artifacts are mutually supportive within the ideology of domesticity.

The material dimension of the cozy corner, a perfect example of a combination of elegance and comfort, was frequently addressed in women's magazines so as to appeal to a specifically aspirational female audience. The *Ladies' Treasury* for 1891, for instance, illustrates how a cozy corner provides opportunity for "ingenuity in decorating a small space in a manner that does not crowd," encouraging women to furnish a corner with a seat fixed at right angles or with a seat in the recess next to a window. The corner seat boasts a solid elm wood frame and spiral springs, with the cushions at the back of squares of deal wood and mattress cushions nailed at the top and bottom to add a layer of support and comfort to one's seating ("Description of Supplement" 364). The underlying message is that the cozy corner is tied up with a warm invitation to settle in and relax. A woman's spatial organization and material production in the interior find a direct form of expression in the taste for home-made cozy corners, which lays the groundwork for both aestheticism and modernity in forging a new sense of domesticity.

### Home-Made Cozy Corners and the Spatial Aesthetics of Oriental Exoticism

Domestic art advice columns in the magazines for women, including the "Home Decoration" column in *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion* and "The House Beautiful" column in *Home Notes*, frequently offered guidance on how to create an artistic cozy corner in the home. "Some Ideas for Corners," a short piece appearing in *Myra's Journal* in 1899, specifically equated women's aesthetic missions with the cult of the House Beautiful. The piece implied that the increasing number of lady house decorators laid bare the truth that "home decoration is a task in which women can use their brains and taste to advantage. . . . If the domestic woman has artistic notions she can, at a very little outlay, render her home the abode of beauty" ("Some Ideas for Corners" 40). The cozy corner arrangement, on account of its exotic lure, attracted a woman's fancy at the turn of the century. Typical was the spatial dynamics of fitting that provided an impetus for a woman to convert a small part of a room into an Eastern oasis (Richter 151). In any case, the corner was a mini-environment representing "the idea, or ideal, of a liberal household, one in which artistic practices were embraced, beauty was prioritized and femininity was ever present" (Sparke, "Paradise" 206). By resorting to its "Home Decoration" columns, *Myra's Journal* informs the reader of using home-made cozy corners, an easy and chic home décor idea, to create a miniature of Oriental scenes at home.

"Of all fitments for home decoration," as a columnist for *Myra's Journal* makes clear, "there is none more popular than the cozy corner" ("Cozy Corners" 15). For its aesthetic benefits, a cozy corner by the fireplace can be supported by low rout seats with a piece of wood at the back and furnished with a white enameled fretwork screen, an archway in the center, and a narrow shelf for bric-a-brac and photographs (Figure 5.1a). To express further the Oriental theme for a very novel design, the columnist encourages women readers to style a cozy corner with zig-zag outline of bamboo and fluted Pongee silk beneath, and art cushions suitably

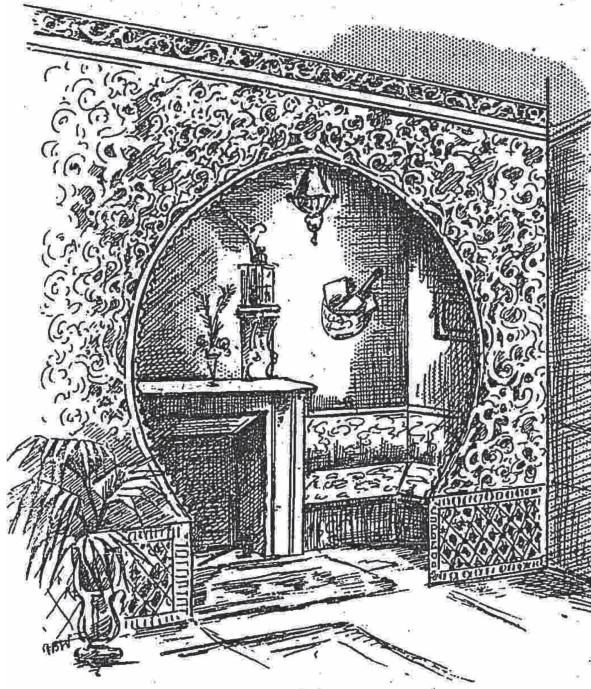


Figure 5.1a Cozy corner with screen. “Cozy Corners,” *Myra’s Journal of Dress and Fashion*, 1 Jan. 1897, p. 15. From the British Library Collection: MFM.M9134.

stuffed for ease and comfort (Figure 5.1b). It is advisable to incorporate the corner seat with Japanese matting or similar stuff procured from one of London’s Oriental warehouses, famous for the importations of Eastern art productions, antique and modern porcelains, as well as Japanese and other Eastern curios. Similarly, “A Mercenary Girl” offers some orientalist-inspired tips for creating a bamboo cozy corner in a room. It puts forth the notion that “[t]his is inexpensive, and very easy to carry out” (17). The corner is crafted from bamboo, consisting of a wooden shelf for ornaments at the top and a panel of embossed paper or leather picked out with gold underneath. Another welcoming idea is to place two cushions with frilly edges all around them upon the bamboo seat upholstered in cretonne, or any selected fabric. This remarkably evokes the popular association of cushions with corner seats to enhance the look and feel of luxuries at home.

The cozy corner, an epitome of bourgeois materiality, exists on account of its beauty or comfort. “Ideas for Cozy Corners” begins with the observation that the most uncomfortable spots in the sitting-room are attributed to “the spick-and-span so-called cozy corners” which are “stiff, hard, and over-high.” For the sense of comfort, the “Ideas” recommends the low, wide, and thickly padded seat as the main component of a home-made cozy corner. Beyond that, a possible way to make

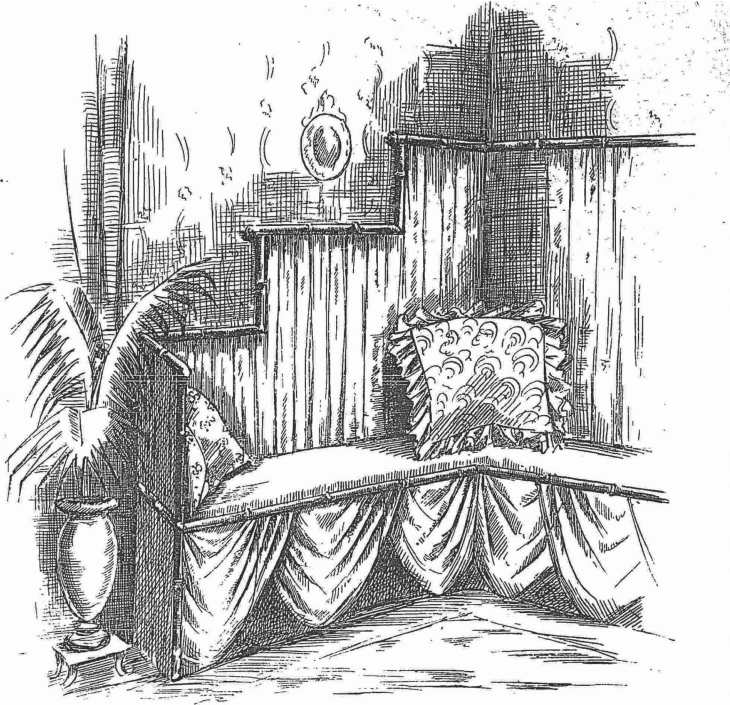


Figure 5.1b Cozy corner with the bamboo framework. “Cozy Corners,” *Myra’s Journal of Dress and Fashion*, 1 Jan. 1897, p. 15. From the British Library Collection: MFM.M9134.

a cozy corner look pretty is to hang a wrought iron lamp with a colored shade in the corner and “hang soft silk curtains against the wall at the back of the ‘nook,’ the middle portion being taken up by a mirror, and right along the top of the curtains and mirror run a ledge for small volumes” (40). Another way is to furnish the back of a cozy corner with large frilled cushions stuffed with blanché, decorate the wall with small pictures hung irregularly, and display small ornaments on a ledge. The “underneath” of the seat, rather than a dust heap, should be used for storing newspapers or music books. In this way, the removable mattress cozy corner reinforces part of the sanitation concerns about the necessities of beating and shaking the seat out-of-doors.

The primary concern with sanitation recalls the design idea of a recessed fireplace with window seats in Robert W. Edis’s *Healthy Furniture and Decoration* (1884). Edis was both an architect and a sanitation expert engaged in the Domestic Sanitation Movement. He extolled the importance of sanitary decoration and healthy treatment of the domestic interior. Echoing design reformer Charles Dresser’s association of room decoration with the treatment of disease in *Studies in Design* (1876), Edis had his own “architectural prescriptions” (Adams 103)



Figure 5.2 Recessed fireplace with window seats. Robert W. Edis. “Healthy Furniture and Decoration,” *International Health Exhibition*, 1884, unpaginated. Image Courtesy of Wellcome Collection.

about home and women’s health. One of his eye-catching decorative schemes (Figure 5.2) was the incorporation of two built-in window seats into the fireplace, which brought out a reading nook or relaxing corner for a woman reading in her armchair, a marker of healthiness of a modern house. In part, Edis’s fireside seat ideas are reminiscent of “Cozy Fireside Seats,” a *Myra’s Journal* article that inspires the reader to devise a comfortable fireside seat using up the boxes, with the top covered with tapestry and stuffed with horsehair. Significantly, the idea of ornamenting a little angle seat with bric-a-brac, paintings, or small engravings at one’s pleasure is doable and worth the effort. The luxury effects can be achieved by a short curtain of silk, and the fitting of a settee decorated with a Japanese screen at the back of it, or a high-backed seat of white wood concealed by a curtain underneath. All these add an oriental touch to a cozy fireside seat suitable for a book and afternoon tea.

“A Pretty Scheme for the Passage,” printed in the September 1900 issue of *Myra’s Journal*, advises on how to make quaint nooks and corners in an old-fashioned house “picturesque and habitable.” From a decorative point of view,

the piece outlines the principles of transforming a passage alongside the staircase, “usually regarded as ‘hopeless’ from a decorative point of view,” into “a cozy little ‘extra room’” (43). It shows the conviction that warm, natural textures and Oriental materials help to breathe new life into the passage. The piece extends its advice to recommend an attractive scheme for the beautifying of commonplace surroundings:

A white wood archway was stretched across the passage from the foot of the staircase to the wall opposite, this archway forming the entrance to the ‘extra room,’ and being perforated, fretwork fashion. Two little ledges, right and left of the archway, held a couple of pots with straggling ferns, spaces being left free in the woodwork above for the ferns to hold themselves to their full height without impediment. Then the fretwork was continued to the top of the archway. . . . Inside the archway the passage was carpeted with a large Oriental rug, and was fitted at the back and along one side with a padded seat. . . . The upholstery of the padded seat, the fringe below, and the cushion covers—for there were plenty of large soft cushions in this little nook—was in cretonne showing a mixture of pale green and white. The green of the ferns and the green of the cretonne made a delightful picture. The wall, too, was papered in green. . . . Two milking-stools, painted green, might be set at the lower corners of the archway, each stool supporting a pot of flowers or scented leaves.

(43)

The fretwork archway, together with the large Oriental rug and house plants, adds an opulent exotic feel to the cozy corner alongside the stair passage. Such a decorative scheme captures the public appetite for the refreshing and invigorating allure of vibrant green, a color that has the capacity to bring an earthy, calming vibe to corner decoration. A furnished corner like this is the perfect combination of Oriental exoticism and nature that takes women to the heart of the spatial aesthetics of modernity.

Equally, the serialization of “The House Beautiful” column in *Home Notes* postulates shared corner design ideas to spark the female audience’s imagination and also make their decorating decisions. The columnist Irene not only wrote but also illustrated her column to demonstrate and support the point that windows and corners are always at one to supplement interior settings. In “A Cozy Window,” Irene gives information about a very pretty and artistic window corner in a hall, primarily the installation of a broad window seat for the harmonious blend of comfort and effect. Irene addresses the reader that “a necessity in a really artistic house, for their long, elegant leaves have a peculiar grace not to be had in anything else; they are more suited to a hall than any other kind of pot-flower” (5). In keeping with fashion décor ideas, palms are integral to the nature-inspired design motive. Palms bring a touch of exoticism to the domestic sphere. They unite with nature to infuse energy and life for radiating a lively feeling as well.

In association with the prevailing ideas of “warmth, sensuousness and relaxation” (Sparke, “Paradise” 209), palms worked beautifully with other decorative items in any room of the house in the late nineteenth century. The notion of the potted palm as exotic “Other”—memories of empire and of an un-tamed world as well as the exoticism of the tropics—was frequently expressive of nineteenth-century interiors to fulfill the requirements of taste. By creating a fusion of “sculptural elegance and architectural structure” with oriental elements, potted palms could function, like screens, as a convenient framing device to soften the corner angle. Their presence functioned to create an equal balance between “clutter and stylistic mixing, enabling eclectic settings to appear unified” (Sparke, “Paradise” 210). Palms were seen as being particularly useful in orientalizing the interior owing to their “inherent visual elegance and abundant capacity to contribute to the picturesque nature of a work by providing height, a visual softness, which contrasted with architectural solidity and regularity” (Sparke, “Paradise” 209). This reminds one of Mrs. Haweis’s portrayal of Alma-Tadema’s little house in *Beautiful Houses* (1892), which illuminates partly the functional role of palms in Oriental aesthetics.

“Suggestions for a Corner and Window” is another focal point of Irene’s “House Beautiful” column. What is compelling is her own sketch of the corner of a room, which, as she expresses herself, is “most picturesque and pretty” (Irene 549). The sketch visually expresses her written guidance on how to undertake the interior scheme by very simple means:

The walls of the room are pale terra cotta, with a stenciled frieze in which a deeper shade of the same color, and a dull green, are used with excellent effect.

The window curtains are of green furniture velvet, which falls in beautiful, rich, heavy folds, in which lurk shadows deepening the color, and making those parts which catch the light stand out in a way which charms the artistic eye. The window sill and the couch are both covered with the same material, and on the former stands an art pot, containing a beautiful salmon-pink cineraria. The woodwork of the couch is probably rather beyond the powers of the majority of home decorators, but it would be made very inexpensively by any carpenter, who would also put up the arrangement of bamboos which forms the framework of the canopy. The drapery of this is of pale green silk, which contrasts prettily with the pink shade of the tall standard lamp, the metal plaque, and the dried palm leaves.

(Irene 549)

As Irene suggests, the corner of the room that “charms the artistic eye” is pleasant in its connection with the beautiful green color scheme. It is through this grounding in the creation of a home-made cozy corner that a female-oriented interior is brought into existence.

Window seats, ferns, and palms are principal elements of interior furnishings for Irene to formulate her cozy corner ideals to which homemakers aspire in her advice column. One example from March 1895 features a window seat encircled by two rows of bamboo frames. The window seat, foiled by wall paneling, window drapery, and potted plants, is infused with “the general air of cozy comfort,” making “a very pleasant corner for that delightful refection—afternoon tea” (Irene, “A Corner” 293). Elsewhere Irene offers several sketches of her friend’s drawing-room to affirm that “comfort and art should ever go hand-in-hand” in the arrangement of a house because they are “two necessities to the House Comfortable.” The ingle-nook in the drawing-room, for instance, constitutes a wide lounge in the corner where she and her friend used to have cozy afternoon teas “round the dainty tea-table, with the big pine logs in the grate sending up a cheerful blaze.” The same ingle-nook in summer was a cool retreat—“the wide open grate . . . filled with luxuriant, cool-looking ferns” and “those in front standing on a piece of mirror . . . gave the appearance of water, and greatly enhanced the effect” (Irene, “A Pretty Drawing Room” 335). Equally revealing is the window at the end of the drawing-room opening into the conservatory that directs attention to the making of a cozy and artistic corner in the Oriental style. “Here,” as Irene recounts,

among luxuriant growth of stately palms, graceful flowers, and ferns, the many-colored fairy lights and Japanese lanterns twinkle. The lamp, with its pretty shade of silk gauze, lights up the white Moorish arch above it, and throws a pretty light on the short yellow brocade curtains of the window.

(“A Pretty Drawing Room” 336)

“Cozy Corners and Recesses” exemplifies Irene’s further illustration of an economical and effective plan for fitting the fireside recesses up as cozy corners, using her friend’s house as an example. The principles of corner design include using a strong seat made of inch wood and stuffed with flock and horse-hair, hiding the space below the seat by draping some nice colored material, and harmonizing in size with the wall space using a hanging lamp suspending from the arch and pictures. Adding accessories—pieces of choice embroidery, fans, and hand-screens—to the corner can “give an air of finish and elegance” (Irene 254) in some way.

The drawing-room is the domestic setting for Irene to comment on the material grounding for the arrangement of a cozy corner. “A Pretty Room” contains two photographs of a drawing-room in a furnished flat which her female friend has taken for the winter months. The two photographs, captioned “Before” (Figure 5.3a) and “After” (Figure 5.3b) showcase the dramatic transformation of the same corner by the fire. “There is an enormous difference in the two pictures,” Irene suggests, “for one looks cold and bare, and rather prim too, and the other, though it is substantially the same, is luxuriously home-like and cozy.” The secret behind “a pleasing change” to her female friend’s cozy corner is that she, with “a woman’s eye for arrangement . . . saw that to transform the room into a delightful little haven of rest it was necessary to soften down things generally” (Irene 101). Irene goes on



*Figure 5.3a* Before. Irene. "A Pretty Room," *Home Notes*, 9 Feb. 1895, p. 101. Image Courtesy of HathiTrust.



*Figure 5.3b* After. Irene. "A Pretty Room," *Home Notes*, 9 Feb. 1895, p. 102. Image Courtesy of HathiTrust.

to describe how her friend has put a lot of effort into the before-and-after interior design project:

She began by putting a warm fur rug before the fire, and also a footstool covered to match it; then she got some cushions, and covered them with pretty soft silk daintily frilled. The finishing touch was the Japanese screen, which not only made a cozy corner by the fire, but also kept off the draught from the door, and cut off an angle of the room, thus furnishing it and giving an idea of additional space.

(Irene 101)

The photographic images, in effect, highlight the before-and-after transformation and give prominence to a combined use of Japanese paper and embroidered screens—“their utility and beauty should not be over-looked by lovers of cozy corners” (Irene 101) when decorating an aesthetically pleasing interior.

### The “Fair Sex” and the Corner of One’s Own

The periodical press abounded with corner arrangement ideas to boost interest and engagement in the feminine atmosphere of the enclosed area. The November 1893 issue of *Decorator and Furnisher* appealed to the mistress of the house for the cozy corner design to unveil her personality and style. This monthly magazine of decorative art, popular with a transatlantic readership, made the telling point that

[i]n every magazine and daily paper catering to the interests of womankind, we are confronted with schemes for the fitting up of cozy corners and odd nooks. It is a fad in furnishing that has certainly taken hold among the fair sex.  
(Thomson, “Cozy Corners” 53)

From this viewpoint, the arrangement of a cozy corner assures privacy over a private domain which indicates part of a woman’s spatial practice based on the allocation of popular ornaments and furniture items. The sense of spatiality provides a justification for three entangled concepts: “the spatial envelope, the contents of interior space, and users or inhabitants” (Winton, “Inhabited Space” 40). The arrangement of corners consequently helps to satisfy a woman’s demand for privacy and for retreat, which is characteristic of a dynamic and fluid construct made up of the body-interior network. Decorating a corner increases a woman’s awareness of how the private sphere is decorated, displayed, and experienced in a modern interior.

Given the intrinsically feminine domain in the interior, the aesthetic pursuits of fitting cozy corners within a delineated private space bear gendered overtones. Interestingly, “My Wife’s Cozy Corner” directs attention to a wife’s interior taste in a female-headed household. Inspired by “an odd number of some periodical which gave full directions for making a most artistic cozy corner at little expense,” Elise the wife plans to create an artistic cozy corner in the drawing-room all on her own.

Closely related to Elise's handiwork on the construction of a corner is the idea of DIY amateur crafts, which illustrates how an aspirational woman uses hands-on task to exercise power and control for the appropriation of domestic space. However, Elise's planning prompts her husband Jack to pour forth his concern over a male need of a corner by saying jokingly: "All *I* wanted was a cozy corner where I might be free from household worries and women's tongues." The husband's humorous tone implies the gendering of a corner as a man's comfort zone complete with "a fat dumpy, podgy stuffed seat, not half long enough for a fellow to stretch himself upon, and above it a curtain of some tawdry stuff hanging to a ledge, on which a few china ornaments were displayed" (121). Viewed from this perspective, "My Wife's Cozy Corner" may implicitly suggest the pervasive cultural and social anxieties about the domain of privacy and intimacy at home, in both its physical and ideological dimensions, echoing the contemporary demands for women's rights that lurked behind.

The popular use of the corner as an inexpensive substitute for a built-in inglenook in the late nineteenth century implies the adaptation of a divided-off space in a room to a seclusive area of comfort and ease for females. Given its comfort-giving qualities to form a resting place, an upholstered seat (or a high-backed settee fixed at right angles with shelves) is an indispensable article of corner furniture. Moreover, the use of the screen, a beautiful article of furnishing from the Orient, is a simple and popular way to soften the corner angle and add an air of luxury to the fireside corner, as suggested by Edward Dewson, the final editor of the *Decorator and Furnisher*. Shown in Figure 5.4 is Dewson's own sketch of a corner shielded with screens featured by the common patterns of birds, trees, and flowers. By virtues of the screens, the corner is "transformed into a cozy little 'Boudoir,' enclosing an arm chair, writing desk, work stand, and a small shelf to hold a few favorite books, where many quiet hours may be spent, or a favorite visitor entertained." Other decorative items like the little table and china on the mantelpiece also fit into the room plan of a "little 'Boudoir'" for female householders. The corner in the sacred precinct of the domestic hearth appears "very homelike and cheerful" (Dewson 15). More specifically, it gives some ideas of mental recreation mostly represented by the daughter's reading to her mother who is doing needlework while sitting in the armchair. The idea of a cozy corner as extra seating space provides an important medium through which mother and daughter forge intellectual bonds with each other and thereby express a sense of their domestic privacy.

"Cozy Corners and Windows" is a further advisory article for *Bow Bells*, a weekly magazine of general literature and art, which illustrates how interior taste is defined by the cozy corner in the private sphere of a young lady's boudoir. By offering corner decoration ideas, the article asserts that "simplicity and daintiness is the key-note. The little fancy touches, so pleasing to an aesthetic taste, depend much upon the lines and textures of the hangings and upon the personal belongings of the occupant" (115). For a young lady who seeks to arrange a corner for herself, a harmony of light tints is essential to the choice of draperies, carpet, and ceiling decorations that will bring about feelings of coziness. Pleasing adjuncts to the furnishings of a corner of a room comprise novelties like high-backed chairs



Figure 5.4 Edward Dewson. “Screens and Their Uses,” *Decorator and Furnisher*, Apr. 1883, p. 15. Image Courtesy of JSTOR.

and round empire tables, as well as a broad, low divan, quaintly shaped pillows, a writing desk, a tea table, a prettily paneled screen, and dainty lamps to make a cheerful rest fit for a quiet chat and a cup of solacing beverages.

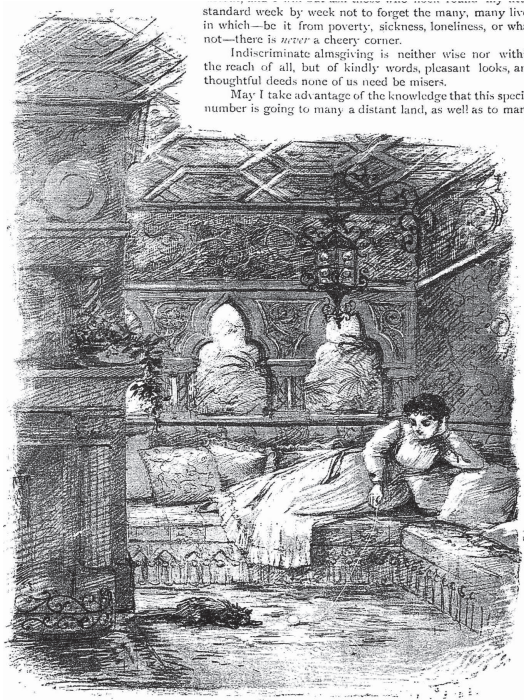
Late Victorian domestic art advisors, including Mrs. Pantton and Mrs. Coke, deem the feminine cozy corner suitable for a domestic setting.<sup>1</sup> As Mrs. Pantton personally advises in her advice column for the *Woman at Home*, a fitted seat placed straight across the window is a better design than a cheap and uncomfortable cozy corner in the shape of a seat in the recess (“Simple Homes” 488–93). To young married couples, Mrs. Pantton addresses that a charming window seat can be set up in a suburban bow-windowed villa to form a comfortable cozy corner, where a woman spends her morning sewing, reading, or writing her necessary letters at the desk prepared for her husband (*Kitchen*). Similarly, Mrs. Coke, another celebrated lady decorator on paper acclaimed as the inventor of the cozy corner (Cohen, *Household Gods* 110), gives directions on arranging and furnishing the corner to “brighten up and modernize a room at no great expense” (“A Pretty Corner” 559). Mrs. Coke asserts that corners play an important part, “mentally and materially, in one’s life from the cradle to the grave” (“Corners” 813). She refers to the corner in a morning room as “one of the ‘new faces’” of a country house in

Georgian style, complete with ivory and gold bookshelves, white-and-gold ceiling paper, and Oriental furnishings. In her description,

The screen placed . . . near the door is of *old* Cairene mushrabeyah work, with its memories of captives in some dull hareem, whose only excitement lay in peering thro' its lattice. The drapery thrown carelessly over the screen is a coppery phoolkari, with its border of glittering talc embroidered around in yellow silk—a treasure from the Punjab. . . . The large chair is covered with a bold patterned tapestry in blue and gold; the cushion is gold with old embroidery in Japanese coloring; the carpet is pile in dull Oriental coloring.  
 (“Old Friends” 14)

Notwithstanding “the freaks of fickle Dame Fashion” (Coke, “Old Friends 14), women readers are still able to infuse domestic space with a renewed sense of charm along the lines of Oriental furnishings.

To the readers of *Myra's Journal*, Mrs. Coke recommends a cozy velvet sofa, rather than the regular stereotyped ingle-nook cramped with two over-stuffed pear-shaped brocade seats, to fill the recess by the fire. She assumes that a cozy fireside arrangement would prevent a woman from damaging her complexion and scorching her gown. Her ideal ingle nook is the one decorated with greenish-blue wallpaper, a bold semi-Oriental arch, vivid red satin cushions in raised gold embroidery, an oak book-table, pots, and china—all for a display of individuality and taste (Coke, “A Restful Haven” 469). Mrs. Coke favors the bow window for creating a new style of cozy corner, principally through the use of a window seat as a sofa, which is both a saving of money and of space in a small room. The staples of making a cozy corner, “a source of beauty and means of comfort,” include a rich yellow ceiling paper, carpets in soft, carried coloring, muslin curtains, and a window seat “covered with a quaint gold colored Jelim, the coarse embroidery and ‘tufts’ of which give pleasing suggestions of pale blue, and of the red” (“A Window Seat” 276). Similar to this notion of beauty and comfort is Mrs. Coke’s advocacy of a cheery corner for women to “produce a pleasant chatty feeling . . . par excellence a comfortable lounge.” Prominently, the accompanying illustration of “A Cheery Corner” (Figure 5.5) provides a focal point for understanding the feminine domain of a cushioned and draped corner. Of particular note is the visual representation of a relaxed female subject lying on the low seat in a corner shape and playing with her pet, which shows how the body and the interior are dependent on each to evoke the image of “*mental* ‘cheery corners’” to “sweep away all the cobwebs of self-made miseries.” A combination of a corner seat inside and nature outside enables one to unwind completely. By furnishing the drawing-room opening into a conservatory with a corner seat and dainty little windows above, “one could not only get light but delightful glimpses of the tops of tall palms and the trailing festoons of verdant creepers” (Coke, “A Cheery Corner” 8). This sets the perfect scene for the domestic conservatories as highly exotic natural objects, to be increasingly aestheticized and integrated into the fashionable interiors of both affluent country houses and more modest middle-class dwellings (Sparke, “Paradise” 210). In this respect, the



standard week by week not to forget the many, many lives in which—be it from poverty, sickness, loneliness, or what not—there is *never* a cheery corner.

Indiscriminate almsgiving is neither wise nor within the reach of all, but of kindly words, pleasant looks, and thoughtful deeds none of us need be misers.

May I take advantage of the knowledge that this special number is going to many a distant land, as well as to many

Figure 5.5 Mrs. Talbot Coke. “A Cheery Corner,” *Hearth and Home*, 26 Nov. 1891, p. 8. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

healing power of a corner is aligned with a restful heaven, a cushioned recess by the bookshelf decorated with the leaves of the palm, and the low divan-like seat. The cushioned recess is a comfort zone that embraces simplicity, charm, and novelty (Coke, “A Restful Haven” 469).

The most vivid expressions of cozy corners as the embodiment of lived experience of the interior can be found in “Glimpses of a Thousand Homes,”<sup>22</sup> a series of columns aimed at promoting readers’ home decoration photography competitions in *Home Chat*. Through the medium of photojournalism, the weekly magazine broadened its critical engagement with interior design trends in an attempt to “give the observant woman many hints on decoration and furnishing.” Readers entered competitions by sending photographs of “pretty rooms, cozy corners, fireplace arrangements, bedrooms, devices for saving time and trouble—anything, in short, that would strike one on entering a room as being novel or pretty, or specially comfortable or useful” (“Photo Prize Competition” 248). *Home Chat*, with critical eyes, often drew comparisons between readers’ photographs by specifying the strengths and weaknesses of readers’ decorating practices at home. Figure 5.6 contains the photographic images of two different cozy corners printed in *Home Chat* in April 1898. The first corner is praised by its white wood fittings, together with



the armchair beneath the prettily-shaded gas-lamp affords another tempting seat free from draught. The over-mantel is worthy of special notice, the leaded glass in the door giving just the necessary touch of colour that is wanted to counteract the cold effects of the per-

The application of white wood fitments to a room affords ample opportunity for many a cosy nook and corner. In this room there is a delightful window-seat, and the sensible arrangement of

vading white. The mathematical arrangement of the four plates detract, rather from the appearance of what would otherwise be a most charming room.

Admirers of "Cosy Corner" fitments will see in this "glimpse" something entirely to their taste. The double-shelved mantel is a happy idea, but the effect would be considerably enhanced if the drapery was a little more full, and presented less of the "dragged" appearance. The plain wall surmounted by the floral festoon frieze is in admirable taste.

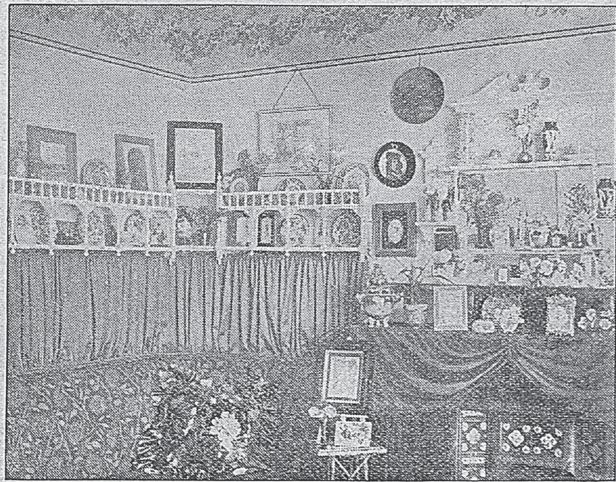


Figure 5.6 Two cozy corners. "Glimpses of a Thousand Homes," *Home Chat*, 2 Apr. 1898, p. 151. Image source: National Library of Scotland.

the over-mantel, delightful window seat, and "sensible arrangement of the armchair beneath the prettily-shaped gas-lamp [which] affords another tempting seat free from draught." More revealing is the effect of the cozy corner enhanced by a woman reading by the fireside. The second corner is in admiral taste, as exemplified in the plain wall surmounted by the floral festoon frieze. Disregarding the wall-hanging pictures and small ornaments, the critic-narrator presumes that the double-shelved mantel has room for improvement: "if the drapery was a little

more full, and presented less of the ‘dragged’ appearance” (“Glimpses” 151). The critic-narrator offers constructive criticism while judging the amateur audience’s ornamentation of a room.

Publication of cozy corner photographs in *Home Chat* motivates the female audience to construct a new mode of spatial practice and domestic materiality in the private sphere. It provides a useful framework for understanding the way in which the material dimension of a spatial realm is shaped and experienced in a house. Another 1898 “Glimpse” into two cozy corners photographed by a reader carries similar notices. The first photograph visually tells of the arrangement and ornamentation of a comfortable cozy corner running half-way down a long, low room. As the critic-narrator explicates, “[t]he narrow shelf above the upholstery is suitable for china, &c. The pictures above are water-colors, and please the eye, even in the black-and-white, by the irregular way in which they are hung.” The critic-narrator offers a further suggestion: “The portière is very necessary to prevent the occupants of the long seat being troubled with draughts. We may commend the reading-lamp in passing, as it is of the latest and best pattern.” The only drawback of the corner arrangement is that the frieze would look better without the tiny shields bearing coats-of-arms. The second corner, basically a seat and music-box in one, exemplifies “how to make the best of a small space; and the box-seat when raised discloses a valuable storing-place for music & magazines” (“Glimpses” 520). In comparison with the first corner, however, the second is very stiff. As the critic-narrator commentates, the use of visible fastenings like the picture-rail to suspend pictures is its chief shortcoming. Generally, the photographic images of various cozy corner styles give an impression of the latest fashion trends and allow readers to learn from critique for further improvements. More generally, they encapsulate the spatial aesthetics of modernity by providing scope for capturing the interest of aspirational readers who want to turn their decorating ideas into authentic pieces of art.

### **Advertising Cozy Corners: Portable Privacy and Mobile Intimacy**

The increasingly mass-produced cozy corners underlined the expansion of the market for furniture and fittings by the turn of the century. Removable corners, like the screen and arch, were all the rage in the 1890s. The practicality of portable and transportable folding cozy corners was essential to those in rented houses. Easily removable cozy corners were advertised for the convenience of being taken away with all other belongings at the end of a tenancy. “The English upholster,” as James Thomson noted, “now sells the ‘Cozy Corner’ as an article of furniture easily removable from one house to another” (“Cozy Corners” 53). Evidently, advertising in women’s periodicals, in the form of a visual language of advice that readers consulted, articulated the importance of movable forms of cozy corners. “Advising and advertising are related practices, with the latter having an educative as well as commercial function,” as Grace Lee-Maffei asserts (*Design at Home* 37). Magazines, along with their editorial and advertising, contain a mixture of instruction and entertainment (*Design at Home* 34) to appeal to a wider audience to embrace artistic values and portable domesticity at the same time.

Design of the patent cozy corners that were standardized and affordable registered a new engagement with an involving culture of portability in the late Victorian period. In view of marketing techniques, the use of advertising for product endorsements in the periodical press represented a public form of advice to help increase the sales of cozy corners. For furnishing and decorative purposes, advertising encouraged readers' imaginative engagement with possible ways of fitting cozy corners into their homes. At various points, late Victorian feminist magazines shared the penchant for spatial privacy afforded by the cozy corner fitment of unique design. The *Woman's Herald*, the first British feminist periodical, claimed in 1891: "The cozy corner is an invention of the age, and admirably fills up a recess or an awkward angle." It advocated the use of two delightful cozy corners advertised by Emerson & Co., art furnishers and decorators at 223 Regent Street, London: "one in stained green wood, with terra cotta curtains, was designed in execution of an order from Italy; another in white enameled wood, daintily cushioned with lovely figured brocade, had curtains in silk to match" ("Out and About" 189). The point is that Emerson's corner arrangement could fit the unique spaces of one's home at a moderate price and with much artistic taste. Likewise, Emerson's advertisement for the Chaucer cozy corner in the *Woman's Herald* in April 1891 brought the very idea of angled corner seat complete with high back and cushions to the fore. Emerson was a firm of women decorators and art furnishers founded by Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst who, as will be discussed, was both art decorator and women's rights activist. To satisfy the demands of their clients, Emerson offered free services like sketches, estimates, and post-free new illustrated catalogs of inexpensive art furniture. Similarly, an advertising illustration for the *Women's Penny Paper* captured the audience's interest in the trend toward the semi-private and semi-public mode of living.<sup>3</sup> As shown in Figure 5.7, a cozy corner fitment of unique design is designated as an enclosed feminine domain for a woman reading near the doorway. The corner fitment is equipped with Moorish arches, panels, and seats, and garnished with potted plants and a shelf for china. Together, both the female subject and the cozy corner evoke a striking picture of personal space in a domestic setting.

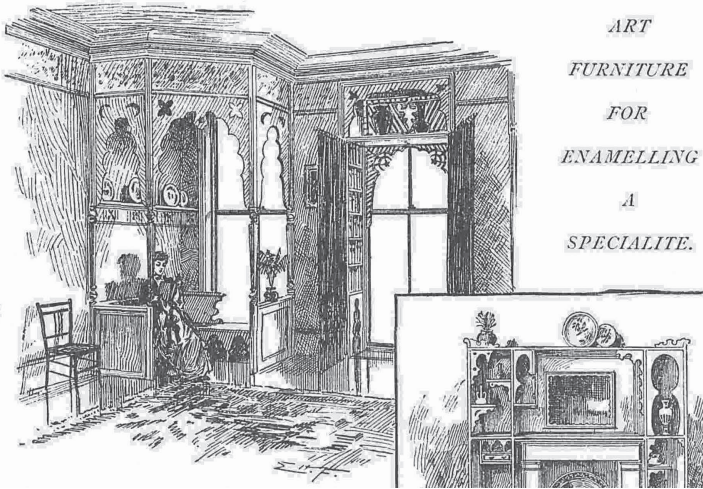
In "The 'Cozy Corner,'" an 1889 article for *Le Follet*, readers can also find a public declaration to endorse the well-named cozy corner invented and manufactured by Godfrey Giles & Co., the London-based firm of art decorators and house furnishers. To promote the purchase of cozy corners, the article insists that Godfrey Giles's product is the perfect exemplification of a combination of two most desirable qualities, elegance and comfort, in household furniture and arrangements. The cozy corner by Giles is characterized by a "delightfully comfortable seat and elegant decoration." In the matter of portable domesticity, it communicates the concept that the corner fitment, with a shelf above the seat, "can be easily taken to pieces, *folded up* in quite a small compass, and so carried from one house to another whenever required" (74). In one of its reader correspondence pages, *Le Follet* carries another statement of endorsement for Godfrey Giles, regarding the way to furnish a drawing-room with "a real 'cozy corner.'" The corner fitment is "made to move about and fold up with the greatest ease"—an inexpensive "one of wood decorated with Lincrusta, and covered with cretonne" ("Answers" 413).

# EMERSON & CO.

Fitments.  
Moorish Arches,  
Cozy Corners,  
Screens &c.,  
made to order.

Sketches  
and Estimates  
free.

New Illustrated  
Catalogues of  
Inexpensive Art  
Furniture sent  
post free.



ART  
FURNITURE  
FOR  
ENAMELLING  
A  
SPECIALITE.

Figure 5.7 Advertisement for Emerson & Co. *Women's Penny Paper*, 22 Mar. 1890, p. 263. From the British Library Collection: LOU.LON 417A.

Advertising for Godfrey Giles's artistic furniture appeared in the ladies' newspapers, such as the *Queen* and *The Gentlewoman*, on several occasions. The *Queen* for 1889, for instance, speaks in favor of the movable, novel, and ingenious cozy corner from Godfrey Giles. The furnishing firm's corner furniture makes

an excellent fitment for small rooms, to fill the recess on one or both sides of the fireplace, or for any available corner in a drawing or smoking room of larger size, in an entrance hall, or on a staircase landing.

Cozy corners are suitable for every room, and there are a variety of fabrics to choose from—"an inexpensive but artistic cretonne, chints, or dimity for bedrooms, with silk plush or silk tapestry for drawing rooms, with tapestry or an art serge for morning rooms, smoking rooms, or snuggeries" ("Artistic Furniture" 76). The *Queen* expresses its admiration for the spring stuffed seat connected with a shelf above to hold china, glass, or Godfrey Giles' celebrated Lincrusta panels to fill the compartments between back and shelf, typical of practical and artistic arrangements for furnishing and decorative purposes. The same advertisement reappears in the July 1889 issue of the *Queen* but with different written remarks. It emphasizes that the patent cozy corners from Godfrey Giles is "an elegant and comfortable addition to any room." The corner can be "made to fold up in a few minutes in a very small compass, requires no fixing, and suitable for any room with or without recesses, angles of staircase landings, &c." (xliv).

Godfrey Giles's corner fitments encompassed all the essentials one needed to add coziness and comfort to the home interior. In December 1889, for example, Godfrey Giles made efforts to promote two types of cozy corners, "The Angle" and "The Convertible," authorized by Her Majesty's Royal Letters Patent. At the heart of advertising for these two corner fitments was the recommendation of flexibility of spaces and latest novelties: "Left-hand side of this Sketch shows the Cozy Corner closed as when required for a single seat. Right-hand side shows seat open as when required for two people." Again, the emphasis on "cozy and comfortable additions to any room" resonates with the idea of chic corner decoration. To increase sales overseas, an advertisement from December 1892 appeals to the continental, American, and colonial customers by articulating a unique selling point (largely concerned with portability and mobility)—Godfrey Giles's "cozy corners can be made to fold-up, and pack in small compass for shipment" (unpaginated). Specifically, these words make certain assumptions about the intimate links between colonial commerce and portable/transportable objects. They encourage an understanding of the increasing role of cozy corners, products of the modern world of global exchange, in developing a material culture fraught with movement and boundary crossing.

The March 1892 issue of *The Queen* published an advertisement (Figure 5.8) for the latest novelties of Godfrey Giles pronounced as original makers of the



Figure 5.8 Advertisement for Godfrey Giles & Co. *The Queen*, 5 Mar. 1892, unpaginated. The British Library Board. All rights reserved.

patent. In order to encourage orders for related products, Godfrey Giles highlights the fitment of an easily fitted and easily removed cozy corner. The fitment comprises a high-backed settee upholstered in plush that is conjoined with padded side arms, covered with draperies underneath, and ornamented with a green palm tree. Remarkably, the geometric patterns of parquet flooring bring forth a foil for the elegant corner seat. Of particular interest is the presence of a lady and a gentleman hinting at the cozy corner as a secluded space for two individuals. The gentleman is standing with one hand in his pocket and the other resting on the side arm, whereas the woman, with her hand-held fan, is seated comfortably on the corner seat. Arguably, the fan-holding woman and the seat are conflated with each other—they are consumable objects for the audience to absorb at the same time. The fan, a feminine fashion accessory, was intertwined with bodily adornment and female ornament in the nineteenth century. Carrying a fan was conceived of as a signifier of modernity associated with female seduction. Men and women used fans for flirting and as a secret language known as “fanology” credited with the invention of Fanology, or Ladies’ Conversation Fan by print designer Charles Francis Badini in 1797. Furthermore, a closer look at the advertisement for Godfrey Giles sheds light on the seated lady who performs her bodily acts through the use of a hand fan. Her gesture may be considered a sign of flirtatious allure to invite masculine attention. Instrumentally, the advertisement introduces a feminine characteristic of domestic modernity into the design scheme of a cozy corner, which, in turn, relays a message of informality through the art of using the hand fan as a means of conversation.

Another advertisement for Godfrey Giles was placed in the May 1892 issue of the *Queen*, which showcased a fine model for fitting a cozy corner into the room plan. The same model also appeared in *The Gentlewoman* in 1896, but with different verbal representations. Both of the advertisements emphasize Godfrey Giles’s specialties and novelties in furniture and decoration and their role as original makers of the patent cozy corners. Godfrey Giles’s advertisement of May 1892 invites potential buyers to pay a visit to their showrooms before making their decorating decisions. To achieve this, it uses the statement from a fashion magazine as an endorsement of the patent cozy corner:

“*The Lady’s Pictorial*,” referring to our Cozy Corners, says:

Perhaps Godfrey Giles and Co., with their pretty fashion of Cozy Corners, have done more than most people in helping to make the best of the ordinary London house. It is they who, a few years ago, invented the immense improvement on the old-fashioned angle seat, and continually they add something fresh to the original idea.

(unpaginated)

Another advertisement, dated 1 August 1896, draws attention to Mr. Godfrey Giles’s years of study of Internal House Decoration by reiterating that his cozy corners are “a great addition to any room, easily fitted, easily removed, designed to suit all styles of decoration” (xi). Resorting to the concepts of ease and comfort, the aforementioned advertisements employ identical illustration to promote the same



Figure 5.9 Advertisement for Godfrey Giles & Co. *The Queen*, 7 May 1892, unpaginated. The British Library Board. All rights reserved.

model cozy corner by selling the notion of spatial privacy within an enclosed feminine domain. Tellingly, the visual image of two seated female figures (Figure 5.9) illuminates the idea of interiority and materiality, making the corner a showcase of individuality and femininity. Prominent features include the high-backed angle seat adorned with fringes, a cabinet, and a canopy top with curtains strung along the wooden superstructure that fit snugly into a corner. The corner is a self-contained space for a woman to play with her pet dog. Next to her is a woman reading in a tassel armchair easy chair. On the whole, the combination of words and hand-drawn images gives shape to the decorating tips for the creation of a quiet, comfortable, and informal atmosphere for a private domain of feminine interiority.

The advertisement printed in the *Queen* for 1893 regards the cozy corner from Godfrey Giles as “[e]legant and comfortable additions to any room, either with or without recesses, angles of staircases, landings, &c., can be made to fold into small compass.” What is also eye-catching are the two endorsers’ statements for product promotion. The statements position the product in relation to their personal experience: “I have received Cozy Corner, and am very pleased with it, thanking you for the prompt attention to my order” and “I am very much pleased with the cozy corner, and beg to inclose cheque” (unpaginated). The two endorsers give out their

positive experiences of purchasing the product, which help to build credibility with the target audience. Their shared feelings, as indicated by the words “very pleased” or “very much pleased,” elucidate their recommendation for Godfrey Giles’s cozy corner. The user experience here shows how consumers perceive and interact with Godfrey Giles’s product or service. The same can be said of the advertisement from *The Gentlewoman* for 1894 that attends to the worldwide reputation of cozy corners “for being well-made and thoroughly comfortable.” The cozy corner from Godfrey Giles is featured by “woodwork enameled white, with silk curtain, seat and back covered with artistic cretonne.” The advertisement carries a line of praise, claiming that the corner fitment “[r]equires no fixing. Easily moved. Easily packed to town, country or abroad” (xxvii).

In many cases, patent cozy corners from Godfrey Giles were endorsed and advertised by well-known domestic art advisors. In *Nooks and Corners*, Mrs. Panton recalls how she made use of a real summer corner in the morning room in her home, Gable-end, Shortlands to create a favorite spot for afternoon tea. The corner seat, adjacent to a curtained bow window, “is an adaptation or rather an enlargement of Giles’ ‘Cozy Corner.’” The seat, with its fringe, “is enameled Aspinall’s electric turquoise, and is upholstered in Colbourne’s yellow and white Louis XVI. damask” (52). The Giles’s cozy corner helps to form a cushioned corner below the lamp. Other common features include a wooden shelf for china, a long Japanese bamboo hung at the end of the seat, and a low, square, velvet-covered stool for a palm (54–56). Mrs. Panton in *Homes of Taste* (1890) likewise advises the newlyweds to fill a recess by the side of the fireplace with Godfrey Giles’s cozy corner in order to transform the recess into a charming corner, especially a warm nook for winter reading (74–75). A full-page advertisement appears in the book to promote the service and idea of the product—seeing Godfrey Giles as “sole makers, inventors, and patentees of the patent ‘Angle’ and ‘Convertible’ Cozy Corners. Suitable for any room. At all prices” (unpaginated). Furthermore, an advertisement printed in Mrs. Panton’s *Suburban Residences and How to Circumvent Them* (1896) uses an extract from *Lady’s Pictorial* to emphasize that Godfrey Giles “are the inventors and patentees of cozy corners now so deservedly popular” (vi). Surely, Mrs. Panton applauds Godfrey Giles’s specialties and novelties in furniture and design.

Like Mrs. Panton, Mrs. Coke offers a good example of voicing a celebrity’s support and opinion of furnishing businesses. In *Hearth and Home*, Mrs. Coke gives an endorsement to Holroyd Barker, an art furnisher in Oxford Street, London, by telling her reader Martinet about “a *really comfortable* and cheap cozy corner at Holroyd Barker’s, £4 15s., covered in a handsome serviceable cretonne” (“Home Advice” 245). Mrs. Coke also endorses a convertible cozy corner from an Inverness-based furnishing firm Fraser & Co. Fraser’s corner fitment, which, in her thinking, encompasses the idea of “sweetness and light,” rather than “‘stuffiness and darkness,’ two ever fatal obstacles to the home beautiful” (697).<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Coke explains further: “many women who find delight in altering their rooms at various seasons, and who therefore will hail with pleasure the clever idea of Messrs. Fraser of a ‘Convertible cozy corner,’ which shall nestle snugly by the fireside in winter” (“Sweetness and Light” 702).

Advertising in women's newspapers, a vital component of a developing consumer culture, offers a platform for discovering what corner furniture and knick-knacks form the material base upon which a woman can spend her idle hours. Predominantly, their advertising language is understandable and aspirational to female consumers. Targeting young housewives and home-loving girls, the *Queen* for 1894 promotes small pieces of furniture as fashionable presents. It praises Messr Oetzmann, Hampstead Road, for the values of their inexpensive and pretty bits of furniture. It details the attributes of Oetzmann's bamboo cozy corner thus:

It is made of tortoise-shell or natural bamboo, the panels are of Japanese lacquer, and there are shelves for china. At the end there is a curtain edged with ball fringe, and the seat and back are covered with a floral cretonne.

For the taste of oriental exoticism, the *Queen* introduces to the reader the design elements of a cozy corner in the Moorish style—one made of wood and enameled white, adorned with “two Moorish arches, under which stand china vases. On the top of the ‘corner’ plates and brass repoussé bowls can be arranged” (“Furniture for Presents” 1078). In simple terms, these product characteristics are relevant to current trends.

James Shoolbred & Co. is another furnishing house promoting sales of their products in the women's press. A point of interest is the advertisement for Shoolbred (Figure 5.10) printed in the June 1897 issue of *Hearth and Home*, which, in some way, verifies the intricate links between a woman and a cozy corner. The visual image of a female figure seated in a window seat on the side of a fireplace presents itself as a locus for bodily performance in the domestic realm. With her

## JAMES SHOOLBRED & CO.,

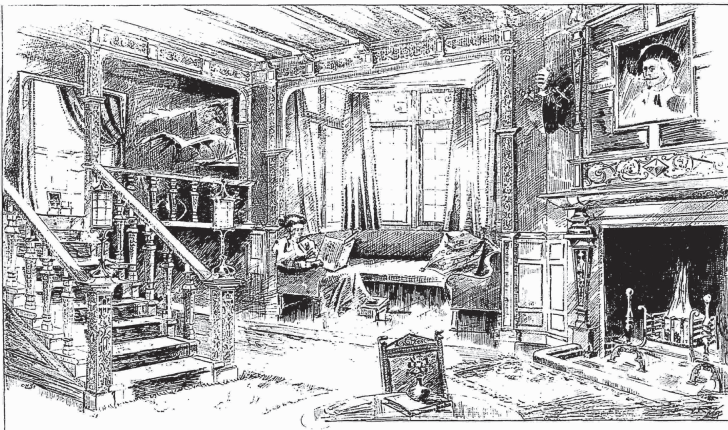


Figure 5.10 Advertisement for James Shoolbred & Co. *Hearth and Home*, 24 June 1897, p. 276. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

foot placed on a stool, the woman leans back in the seat and is immersed in her reading in a relaxing way. Such an image helps the consumer to envision a great way to utilize extra or unused space for a self-enclosed area of coziness.

As well as Shoolbred, a range of advertisements for furnishing business, such as Hewetson's, Maple & Co., and William Spriggs, & Co., enhance an understanding of the cultural significance of the expanding popularity of cozy corners in the periodical press. They share one thing in common: the decorative scheme of a cozy corner is largely woman-defined, and it offers a spatial equivalent for aesthetic femininity and recasts the values of domesticity to meet the demands of a modern society toward the end of the nineteenth century. Within the framework of cozy corners, periodical advertisements employ contemporary notions of inspiring rooms for the proper display of furniture and accessories to foster readers' consumption literacy, arouse their feelings, and stimulate their social aspirations. Crucially, the arrangement of a cozy corner provides a vehicle for a display of material comfort and domestic order, which also lends an evocative glimpse into the cultural meanings of removable and foldable cozy corners imbued with a new sense of portable domesticity.

## Notes

- 1 Lewis F. Day, however, criticized the female advisors on interior decoration for their recommendations of a ready-made cozy corner for the landing on the stairs, which was "neither functionable or space saving" (qtd. in Long 175).
- 2 The column was occasionally titled "Glimpses into a Thousand Homes."
- 3 The *Women's Penny Paper* (1888–1890) became the *Woman's Herald* (1891–1893), *Shafts* (1892–1900) and *Woman's Signal* (1894–1899). Under the editorship of Helena B Temple with her pen name Henrietta Müller, the *Woman's Penny Paper* was "conducted, written, printed and published by women" for an endorsement of new womanhood. Catering to readers from the working woman and the educated lady to the Englishwoman and foreigner, the London-based Paper aimed to advance the emancipation of women in every direction ("Our Policy" 1).
- 4 "Sweetness and light," which usually stands for beauty and intelligence, is a phrase popularized by Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* (1867–68).