UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

"The Evil is Come Home to Us": Domesticity and Imperialism in

The Last Man and *Jane Eyre*

by

Mical Moser

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

AUGUST 1999

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0-612-48362-2

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Abstract

Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* reflect the ideology of separate spheres so central to the nineteenth-century—and especially Victorian—view of the world. Women's sphere, the home, was supposed to be separate from the male sphere, of which imperialism was a part. Yet places outside England, even outside Western Civilization, are critical to the understanding of home, and domesticity is constructed, in part, through reference to imperial expansion and discourse. This same discourse is dependent on a dichotomy of self and Other. Through these novels, I show that while occupying the role as a signifier of home, women are also positioned as the Other in that home, and linked to colonial subjects. These paradoxical roles result in an uncanny positioning for women.

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The free. fair Homes of England!
    Long. long. in hut and hall,
May hearts of native proof be rear'd
    To guard each hallow'd wall!
And green for ever be the groves.
    And bright the flowery sod.
Where first the child's glad spirit loves
    Its country and its God!

Felicia Hemans. "The Homes of England" (1828)

The evil is come home to us. and we must not shrink from our fate.

Mary Shelley. *The Last Man* (1826)

...the breakfast. dining and drawing-rooms were become for me awful regions on which it dismayed me to intrude.

Charlotte Brontë. *Jane Eyre* (1847)

I. At Home With the World

"Home" brought together the meanings of house and of household. of dwelling and of refuge. of ownership and of affection. "Home" meant the house. but also everything that was in it and around it. as well as the people. and the sense of satisfaction and contentment that all these conveyed. You could walk out of the house, but you always returned home.

Witold Rybczynski. *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (62)

Domesticity has to do with family. intimacy. and a devotion to the home, as well as with a sense of the house as embodying—not only harboring—these sentiments.

Witold Rybczynski. *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (75)

A sense of national mission and the concept of a sacred domesticity were to become the paired consolidations of empire in the Victorian period, the moral superiority of English *domestic* life not only vindicating but warranting and even necessitating its *national* mission abroad.

Suvendrini Perera. *Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens* (46)

The word "Victorian" evokes the industrial revolution with its consequent poverty and wealth, as well as the systematic, hierarchical rationalism that produced theories of evolution alongside theories of phrenology. It is associated with prudery and stiff manners, hansom cabs, top hats and gin. But of the multitude of movements, sentiments, objects and conditions to which "Victorian" refers, above all it recalls a particular sort of middle-class world that revolves around the home. In novels, films and on TV, the chill from poor heating is intangible. Since the residue of lamp smoke on the wallpaper, and the oil stains on the antimacassars are never noted, since we do not smell the primitive sewage systems that ran from the houses, the Victorian bourgeois home remains an ideal.

Although I have always wanted this ideal home, along with the familial ideal that adheres to it, every time I have found myself in an approximation of such a space, I have felt confined, ill at ease, and clumsy. I have sensed something sinister there. So I began

to wonder whether those elements of the Victorian era that I consider destructive—imperialism in particular—are reflected in that space. With its China tea things, Turkish carpets, silk drapes (which someone else cleans), and orchids growing in the conservatory, the items filling the rooms suggest as much. The question that started this thesis was, in short, what are the political implications behind the aesthetic of the Victorian bourgeois home?

To answer that question, I wanted to look at the era before it was fully dry, so to speak, in the hopes of seeing some of the layers underneath. Thus, one of the books I have examined, Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, was written in 1826, eleven years before Victoria ascended the throne, and the other, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, was written ten years after Victoria's ascension, in 1847. This passage of time is reflected in some obvious differences in the texts, many to do with historical changes, for instance, in how the home is incorporated into the aesthetic form of the novel. Philippa Tristram notes that "[b]efore the publication of *Persuasion* in 1818, houses are conceived as walls defining space, and their contents are infrequently described; beyond the publication of *Sketches by Boz* in 1837, objects positively jostle for attention, while the walls that contain them become invisible" (229). Shelley and Brontë are undoubtedly both stylists of their respective eras. For Shelley a lamp is merely a lamp—without colour or material, if it is mentioned at all—whereas we sometimes have to consult a dictionary to get a complete picture of Brontë's interiors. Brontë also tells us how different members of the household use different rooms, where they are allowed or not permitted, while it is unclear from Shelley's novels even if people eat in the same room as they sleep in, or

whether children are given a separate space. What becomes apparent in these details is a shift in the ways that a home is conceptualized.

What imperialism means also shifts. For Shelley, economic expansion, important to Brontë and so crucial to our contemporary understanding of imperialism, is all but invisible. Rather, imperialism is the imposition of tyranny and anti-democratic rule upon cultures that resist that rule, and while its source is not exclusive to non-Europeans, they are the tyrants most feared. This is partly an anxiety that Europeans will somehow be sullied by the presence of those from off the continent, and there is a related desire to raise other cultures to the heights of English culture (called either "enlightenment" or "civilization"). Yet, in Shelley's novel, this desire does not morally justify doing so by force. The world is divided in half between West and East, Christian and non-Christian, Right and Wrong, though Shelley vacillates on this binary division of the world by recognizing in the end all humanity as one, and by treating other Europeans—even other Britons—as distasteful and potentially dangerous. The repercussions of contact with others are central to the novel, and speak to why, in Hemans' poem, home requires a "guard [for] each hallow'd wall" ("Homes" 6): if we seek out the rest of the world, it will come and invade—an "evil [that] is come home" (*The Last Man* 192)—in forms we cannot anticipate. Whether we are motivated by right or wrong, once we have sought out the world, how we deal with it once it arrives is a moral, and also a political, community decision.

By contrast, Brontë's representation of imperialism is less politically self-conscious. People from outside England are suspect, if sympathetic, and the farther from England that they come from, the more suspect they are. There are no armies in

Brontë's vision of imperialism, unless they are the army of Christian saviors. Indeed, morally motivated imperialism—that is, the spreading of Christianity—is treated distinctly, and the novel's stand on it is open to interpretation. Economically motivated imperialism is acknowledged and frowned upon; however, the houses and independence it buys are valued. In contrast to Shelley's view, the world outside England has already arrived and lives within the home, in the "regions" of "the breakfast, dining and drawing-rooms" (32). The drama of world conflict, with its moral implications, is acted out within a domestic space.

Yet, in spite of the twenty-one year gap between the two novels, there are a number of similarities. First, both are about orphans whose lives, in very different ways, become determined by their desire to find that ideal domestic space of a home, to recuperate Hemans' vision of the home "[w]here first the child's glad spirit loves / Its country and its God!" ("Homes" 39-40). Hemans' connection of home with "country" leads to a second similarity: though neither *The Last Man* or *Jane Eyre* is about imperialism *per se*, they are both very concerned with how to make sense of the rest of the world in relation to that home. In this concern, they reflect the ways that imperialist attitudes inform an understanding of the domestic.

A literary tradition and touchstones of English history are also shared by both. Shelley stages events in the Gothic scenery of castles and dungeons; Brontë's Gothic scenery is a large, eerie house. Both use the Gothic trope of near-escapes from terrible marriages. A familiarity with Byron is also evident in each novel. Mary Shelley, like every Romantic of her generation, was aware of his work, and was even more particularly so because of their personal association. His influence is found, for

instance, in the conclusion when Lionel, in Rome, makes manifest Byron's words about that city: "[t]he orphans of the heart must turn to thee, / Lone mother of dead empires!" (4.78). Moreover, Lionel is in many ways a Byronic hero, alone, intense, melancholy and wandering; and Byron himself makes a cameo appearance in the figure of Lord Raymond. The influence of Byron on Charlotte Brontë's juvenilia is most often noted (Barker 180, 191), but the Byronic hero also adheres to Jane Eyre herself, with her lone wandering, her intensity and melancholy, as well as to the very masculine Rochester, with his secretive past and travels.

The impact of the Napoleonic Wars (1801-02, 1807-14) also shows itself in both texts. For Shelley, who would have been well aware of them as they drew to a close, it is most obvious in her understanding of imperialism, in her anxieties about tyranny arising from within Europe in the form of monarchical expansion (here given an Austrian face reflecting the ongoing threat of the Habsburgs). For Brontë, these wars play a more explicit role, but they appear through the lens of attitudes culturally inherited, and markedly different from Shelley's. In *Jane Eyre*, the French, though not a colonized people, fit into Jane's imperialist discourse much as do those who are colonized. It was, after all, through the Napoleonic Wars that Britain gained the vast collection of islands, covering a geographical sweep from Central America to India, that would become necessary for the Victorian British empire. St. Lucia, The Maldives, Sri Lanka, Lakshadweep (off the southwest coast of India), most famously Malta, and, more significantly to *Jane Eyre*, Madeira all became British possessions during the land grab that brought this conflict to an end. Though Brontë was born a year after Waterloo, her emotional and literary involvement with key figures from the conflict (the Duke of

Wellington and Napoleon figured prominently in the Brontë children's juvenilia, alongside Byron) has been well-documented by biographers from Elizabeth Gaskell onward as an emotional involvement that proved a lifelong passion.[1] Moreover, while it is possible to dismiss Brontë's anti-French sentiments as traditional English fun, one need only recall the, albeit later, expression "the wogs begin at Calais"[2] to understand the conceptual distance represented by the English Channel, the degree of cultural difference embodied therein, and the basic fact that attitudes towards the French lastingly manifested themselves in imperialist discourse and attitudes.

The representation of imperialism in *The Last Man* has not been addressed extensively by critics, in part because although Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has by now entered the canon of English literature, the rest of her oeuvre is studied primarily by

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[1] See as one example of Brontë's childhood involvement Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, p. 94. Barker provides innumerable examples. In one, Brontë's close friend Ellen Nussey describes an incident in 1832 (Brontë would have been about sixteen) in which Brontë "launch[ed] out into praises of the Duke of Wellington, referring to his actions; which I could not contradict, as I knew nothing about him. She said she had taken interest in politics ever since she was five years old" (qtd. in Barker 177). Harriet Martineau provides an illustration of Brontë's continued engagement through adulthood. In December of 1850 she read aloud a piece she was writing on Wellington and the Peninsular War. After a few pages Brontë tearfully said. "'Oh I do thank you! Oh! I thank you for this justice to the man.'" Martineau "'saw at once there was a touch of idolatry in the case'" (qtd. in Barker 664).

[2] *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang* mentions the expression. citing it in a sentence from a 1958 *Times Literary Supplement* that suggests it had been in usage for some time: "[w]e have travelled some distance from the days when Wogs began at Calais." See also *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* and the *Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins* for possible etymological origins of the word "wog."

specialists. This lack of critical material is reflected in the paucity of critical articles discussed in Chapter II. There are two chapters on *Jane Eyre*, though, partly because that novel has been important to the history of postcolonial literary criticism. One of the most important critiques of *Jane Eyre* also opened new approaches to reading women's literature in general: Gayatri Spivak's 1985 article, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." In it, Spivak critiques Brontë's "cult text of feminism" (244), and "the high feminist norm" (243) of previous interpretations which celebrate Jane's successful individualism. Spivak's main textual concern is Bertha, the only major West Indian character in *Jane Eyre*, who is "sacrificed as an insane animal for her sister's consolidation" (251). In Spivak's interpretation, "the woman from the colonies" (251) must

> act out the transformation of her "self" in that fictive other, set fire to the
> house and kill herself, so that Jane Eyre can become the feminist
> individualist heroine of British fiction. I must read this as an allegory of
> the general epistemic violence of imperialism, the construction of a self-
> immolating colonial subject for the glorification of the social mission of
> the colonizer. (251)

In contrast, the typically "isolationist admiration for the literature of the female subject in Europe and Anglo-America" (243), which glorifies Jane, "reproduces the axioms of imperialism" (243) by overlooking implicitly imperialistic elements crucial to the structure of the narrative.

Spivak's critique was, in part, an attempt "to situate feminist individualism in its historical determination rather than simply to canonize it as feminism as such" (244),

and her article had the desired effect of initiating a body of criticism that viewed texts by English women not only as responses to oppression against women, but as texts that were produced by and enacted systemic attitudes about the self and cultural Others that engaged directly with world history. What I take from her work is, most importantly, her notion that how the individual reproduces and is produced by systemic imperialism is "a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English" (243) in texts that purport to have little or nothing to do with imperialism *per se*.

Indeed, the texts I will examine pre-date the term "imperialism" in the sense that it is now used. According to Raymond Williams, its current meaning "developed primarily in English, especially after 1870" (131), at which time it was also sometimes equated with civilization and "a 'civilizing mission'" (131). Edward Said similarly comments that "an active consciousness of imperialism, of an aggressive, self-aware imperial mission, does not become inescapable—often accepted, referred to, actively concurred in—for European writers until the second part of the nineteenth century" (*Culture* 106). To apply the term "imperialism" to *Jane Eyre* and *The Last Man* is, then, anachronistic in the same way as it is anachronistic to apply the term "feminist" to the same texts; in both cases the terms describe a way we have come to understand certain discourses, power relations, belief systems, and behaviours. I am using imperialism to mean economic, political and cultural hegemony, often though not necessarily motivated by a "civilizing mission." More precisely, I am using it to mean the production of culture that serves—though it need not be motivated by the interest in serving—a political and economic hegemony of England over peoples geographically distant.

Imperialism in this sense is a system of thought that follows the same structures as Orientalism. Not tied directly to economic interests, Orientalism is primarily a branch of study and, by definition, its objects of concern do not extend to such regions outside the broad geographical scope of the "Orient" as Madeira and the West Indies. What links it to imperialism, according to Edward Said, is "a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'Us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (Said, *Orientalism* 43). Said describes Orientalism more specifically as

> a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly,
>
> economic, sociological, historical and philological texts; it is an
>
> elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made
>
> up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series
>
> of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological
>
> reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological
>
> description, it not only creates but also maintains; . . . it is above all, a
>
> discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with
>
> political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven
>
> exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange
>
> with power political (as with colonial or imperial establishment), power
>
> intellectual . . ., power cultural . . ., power moral. . . . (12)

The agency of imperialism here extends beyond the colonizing administrator or missionary—the conscious, intentional imperialist—and the subject of imperialism in a

cultural sense is recognized to be whoever is affected by imperialism, whether part of the colonizing or the colonized population.

Said's critique is important to analyses of imperialism because in discussing what appears to be a simple binary (master/slave) power relationship *between* cultures, he shows the relevance to imperialism of complex cultural production *within* the imperializing culture. By extension, Said's analysis makes it impossible to view imperialism as separable from its aesthetic, psychological, and epistemological effects. Because of this, Orientalism—like "the cultural representation of England to the English" that Spivak points to (243)—"has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world" (Said 12). Working from this framework, I will demonstrate that imperialist discourse is crucial to the way Mary Shelley and Charlotte Brontë understand the domestic sphere in *The Last Man* and *Jane Eyre* respectively, and that further, imperialist discourse is central to establishing the boundaries of domestic space and to understanding the self within, or against, the domestic community.

Whereas it is anachronistic to apply the term "imperialism" to the first half of the nineteenth century, the concept of domesticity was very much a self-conscious part of the English world view. More than just a way of thinking about home, how a people lived their home-life, their domesticity, was a fundamental part of conceptualizing the world outside England for Victorians. Charles MacFarlane, an Englishman traveling in 1847-48, uses it in this manner, dividing the world into self and Others, civilized and uncivilized along a divide central to Shelley's novel: between Orientals and Greeks. The Greeks present a particular problem, being a geographically ambiguous people,

politically under the control of the Ottoman empire until 1832, but culturally considered the forebears of Western culture. They are, MacFarlane says,

> the only people in the East who at all treat women as they ought to be treated: and were there not other considerations, I should consider this sufficient to establish the fact that, of all the Sultan's subjects, the Greeks are the only ones that are really open and prepared for our European civilization. [By contrast, i]n his wooing and his marrying, in his indoor life, in his *domesticity* . . . the Armenian is thoroughly an Oriental and an anti-European. (MacFarlane's emphasis 322)

The conflation of the Orient and the mistreatment of women is a trope used to feminist ends in *Jane Eyre* where sultans are used as synecdoches for all men who take advantage of women's lower status. MacFarlane does not demonstrate any feminist impulses, but he uses the same trope to accomplish a number of other things. By excepting the Greeks from the mistreatment of women, he saves the Greeks for the West, and as we will see in *The Last Man*, saving the Greeks for the West is an attempt to save the West itself from the onslaught of foreign cultures. He draws a line in the sand indicating his own position in the geographical, political and moral world, and he also demonstrates his anxieties about the other half of the world. As well, MacFarlane establishes that "treat[ing] women as they ought to be treated"—which he equates with correct domesticity—is by itself a distinguishing mark of civilization; that is, of the West. His comment about domesticity thus brings into focus the moral imperative of England's cultural hegemony, justified through a "'civilizing mission'" (Williams 131).

Though contemporary with the first half of the nineteenth century, by the standards

of world history, the idea of domesticity was relatively new. For that matter,

domesticity did not exist as a concept until the Modern era. According to Witold

Rybczynski in *Home: A Short History of an Idea*—one of the best-known histories of

the development of that space—a typical, prosperous Medieval hall housed the nuclear

family, "employees, servants, apprentices, friends, and protégés—households of up to

twenty-five" (28), and in it everything, including work, was done. Even the meaning of

"family" reflected this. In *The Family, Sex. and Marriage in England 1500-1800*,

Lawrence Stone remarks on "the use of 'family' to mean the 'household'" in sixteenth-

and seventeenth-century England, that is, a "composite group" including "sojourners,

boarders or lodgers, . . . indentured apprentices and resident servants" (26-27).[3] Central

to the development of domesticity was a shift in men's work—its movement outside the

home. Rybczynski argues that "[b]efore the idea of the home as the seat of family life

could enter the human consciousness, it required the experience of both privacy and

intimacy" (48). It was not until the seventeenth century, primarily in the Netherlands,

that all these conditions were met.

> [T]he Dutch preferred, and were prosperous enough to afford the luxury
>
> of owning their own homes, however small. The house had ceased to be
>
> a place of [men's] work, and as many artisans became well-to-do
>
> merchants or *rentiers*, they built separate establishments for their
>
> businesses, and employees and apprentices had to provide their own
>
> lodgings. (59)

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[3] For a brief overview of the historical developments of the family in England, see Stone, 4-9.

With tax discouragements to hiring servants, "most homes in the Netherlands housed a single couple and their children" (59). The familial paradigm came to be modeled on the nuclear family, and home became the place where "we," that nuclear family, live; the sphere of the world begins to divide in two, and with men's work moving outside the home, the spheres quickly become gendered. "The house had become the place for another kind of work—specialized domestic work—women's work. This work itself was nothing new, but its isolation was" (70-71). The Dutch house had become "a feminine place, or at least a place under feminine control" (74).

Removal of male work, reduction in the hiring of servants, and "the feminization of the home" (72) are, then, the chief requirements for domesticity in Rybczynski's view. There is a hint of another ingredient, however, when he notes that "the Dutch preferred, and were prosperous enough to afford the luxury of owning their own homes" (59). The source of Dutch prosperity in the seventeenth century was evident throughout these same homes: they displayed Chinese porcelain in their cupboards, "[t]hey were the first Europeans to use Turkish carpets . . . . It was the Dutch, also, through their East India Company, who introduced Europe to japanned and lacquered finishing from the Orient, to the arts of inlaying and veneering furniture from Asia, and, not the least, to tea-drinking" (63). The Dutch Golden Age, which corresponded with these developments in the home, lasted from the first decade of the 1600s to shortly after mid-century, and was founded on Dutch shipbuilding and sea-faring, their merchant fleets and colonies (52). In short, the history of domesticity goes hand in hand with the history of imperialism. It should therefore be no surprise that in the following century, domesticity should take

hold in a country that was one of the Netherland's rivals in sea-faring and empire: England.

Although Stone's account of domesticity's development in England differs somewhat, the result amounts to much the same. Stone notes that "intensified affective bonding of the nuclear core . . . and a growing desire for physical privacy" was "well established by 1750" (8-9). It was only then followed by "the breakdown of the paternalistic practice of apprentices living in their masters' homes" (28), a movement which began in 1750 and continued through to the mid-nineteenth century (255). By 1800, then, domesticity was still a relatively new way of understanding home-life.

In *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall link domesticity's development in England to the Puritans, a group who were closely connected with the Dutch, and to the "Puritan belief in the spiritualization of the household" (108). Davidoff and Hall argue that this belief "survived as a central aspect of serious religion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" (109), working its way into English culture through the widespread Evangelical movements that followed the French Revolution and that grew continually in the first decades of the nineteenth century. They note:

> The idea of a privatized home, separated from the world, had a powerful moral force and if women, with their special aptitude for faith, could be contained within that home, then a space would be created for true family religion. Women were more open to religious influence than men because of their greater separation from the temptations of the world and

their "natural" characteristics of gentleness and passivity. Home must

therefore be the first and chief scene of their mission. (115)

The inference here is that the home had become a place where men generally did not

work, and this, compounded by the motivations of religious doctrine, enabled a concept

of separate spheres in which the symbolic representation of the home in the body of a

woman was strengthened. According to Davidoff and Hall, by the 1830s and 40s, the

language which linked womanhood to "women's place and women's mission" in the

home "was increasingly secular and the belief in the natural differences and

complementary roles of men and women which had originally been particularly linked

to Evangelicism, had become the common sense of the English middle-class" (149).

And so the idealization of domesticity became a central figure in the English

imagination. Central to it are associations of nuclear family, contentment, nurturing,

acceptance, intimacy, and virtually every other desirable attribute, including that of

being a stable base for those who travel elsewhere to support the domestic prosperity.

Critical to it above all is the synecdochal link between the home and women. As John

Angell James wrote in the 1850s,

> There are few terms in the language . . . around which cluster so many
>
> blissful associations as that delight of every English heart, the word
>
> HOME. The elysium of love—the nursery of virtue—the garden of
>
> enjoyment—the temple of concord—the circle of all tender
>
> relationships—the playground of childhood—the dwelling of manhood—
>
> the retreat of age; where health loves to enjoy its pleasures; wealth to
>
> revel in its luxuries; poverty to bear its rigours; sickness to endure its

pains; and dissolving nature to expire; which throws its spell over those who are within its charmed circle; and even sends its attractions across oceans and continents, drawing to itself the thoughts and wishes of the man that wanders from it at the antipodes:—this,—home—sweet home— is the sphere of wedded woman's mission. (qtd. in Davidoff and Hall 115)

Along with those elements of the society who travelled afar to the colonies and longed for home, we see that English society in general had become conceptually dependent on the figure of the woman in an idealized domestic sphere.

For the women themselves, the majority of whom were not out in the colonies, the way they defined home would nonetheless have to begin taking account of these other regions, regardless of how restricted they were to the home as "temple of concord." Such taking account participates in what Homi Bhabha calls "the intervention of the 'beyond' that establishes a boundary" (Bhabha 9). Generally, what we call home shifts for us depending on where we are: in a country foreign to us, home is the country where we live; yet, if our house burns down but the yard is fine, our home is still gone. But periodically there are moments when an awareness of these boundaries comes to the fore, moments which, according to Bhabha, are "a bridge, where 'presencing' begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world" (9). Bhabha calls such moments "unhomeliness": "that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (9).[4] When such moments occur, "the

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[4] Bhabha is playing upon Freud's notion of the *unheimlich* which is usually translated as 'the uncanny' but could also be translated as "the unhomely." See Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, especially 10.

recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In

that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and,

uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision

that is as divided as it is disorienting" (9). Since Bhabha's notion of the uncanny—the

unhomed, as he calls it—comes into play a number of times in this thesis, it is worth

grounding his otherwise theoretical concept in the two texts I will be examining.

In *The Last Man*, Lionel's "first real knowledge" of himself is "as an unprotected

orphan among the valleys and fells of Cumberland" (10). He recalls himself as a

"savage" (11) excluded from the home. When Lionel does enter the domestic sphere,

the contrast between home and not-home emerges, expressed through metaphors that

suggest the English imperialist vision of the world: he enters the "wicket" of the "trim

and paled [bordered] demesne of civilization" and immediately sets this in direct

contrast to the "wild jungles" (21) which previously made of him a "savage" (11).

Home and not-home are distinguished in part as interior versus exterior space, but just as

important are the references to a civilized England set against the empire-at-large in

need of England's civilizing mission. In other words, it is not simply that home exists

because there is something outside it that is not home, such as a garden; rather, domestic

space is solidified through reference to regions of imperialist interest, or in Bhabha's

terms there is an "intervention of the 'beyond' that establishes a boundary" (Bhabha 9)

which configures what being at home means (that is, not in the "wild jungles").

For Bhabha, such interventions create a "displacement, [in which] the borders

between home and world become confused" (9). Lionel indeed finds it difficult to move

psychologically into the house, preferring to spend "whole days under the leafy covert of

the forest with our books and music" (70), but a critical part of his experience of displacement is delayed until after the arrival of the Plague. The Plague is a product of the book's central episode, a confrontation between West and East (Europe and Asia, the Greeks and the Turks, the right and the wrong) configured as a struggle "between civilization and barbarism" (117). The outside/empire/Other, through the importation of the Eastern plague, invades the national home of England, and then destroys Lionel's domestic sphere. The second half of the novel recounts his attempts to evade the Plague by moving around England itself, then, in desperation, by leaving the island for continental Europe. The boundaries of home can shift radically, we are led to understand; so long as the Plague, this representative of the savage jungles, is not present, the place will be a home. With the failure of Lionel's endeavor, an exile of home and family, and returned to his previous state of savagery, he is left as the last person on the continent. At this point, a "vision" is forced upon Lionel "that is as divided as it is disorienting" (Bhabha 9): he must leave the boundaries of Europe to seek out *any* other human. The benefits of this unhoming are evident in Lionel's implicit acknowledgment that home can be redrawn in ways we never thought to imagine, which, I would argue, can be read as a note of optimism at the end of an otherwise extremely pessimistic novel.

In *Jane Eyre*, while the domestic space is also one of exclusion, the home is part of a more complex system of perception, admitting degrees to the binary of in versus out, and home versus not-home. At the beginning of the novel, as Spivak explains, Jane is in a physical space "off-center" (246): first, in the "small breakfast-room [which] adjoined the drawing-room" (Brontë 8), then, recessed upon a window seat that is further

removed from the house where Jane draws "the red moreen curtain nearly close" (8). This space is a kind of home amidst the not-home of her domestic sphere. Whereas Lionel recalls himself as a "savage" (Shelley 11), Jane, in her position of exclusion, sits "cross-legged, like a Turk" (Brontë 8). Physically positioned between the curtain and "the clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating [her] from the drear November day" (8), she then further removes herself from the life of the house with "Bewick's History of British Birds: the letter-press thereof I cared little for" (8). Jane tells the reader that she prefers the pictures, not of Britain as we might expect, but of "the bleak shores of Lapland, Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland, Greenland, with 'the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space'" (8). Jane, an orphan within another's home, locates her subjectivity in these spaces outside the native, domestic sphere. She acknowledges, "[o]f these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own" (8), and then further identifies figures of exterior isolation or abandonment such as "the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast" (9). The tenuous and crucial border of the window and the page draws out Jane's ambivalent position within the home. It also provokes the question of what being at home actually means.

On a basic level, the visible presence of either side of the window first establishes a distinction between what is home (interior space) and what is not home (exterior space), or again Bhabha's "intervention of the 'beyond' that establishes a boundary" (9). In this case, home means not outside in the "drear November day" (8). This notion of home as interior space is then metonymically extended to include exterior space as Jane views the book's images of regions outside England, always configured as spaces of exile and isolation. In other words, a metonymic slide is established in which the relation between

domestic interior space and exterior space comes to parallel the relation between England and not-England. What "home" means, then, is at once established through the presence of an excluded location and, at the same time, what "home" means is unsettled immediately for Jane; home becomes unhomed because "the borders between home and world become confused" (Bhabha 9) by the diaphanous border of the window through which the outside intervenes in the domestic sphere. Through this intervention of the outside, the border configuring home is established at the same moment as this intervention allows Jane to locate her subjectivity as one who is excluded from domesticity.

Through the visual confrontation between inside and outside—through the window and the book—Jane's position is underlined as nonetheless still within the domestic realm, still at home in England. That is, though she is an orphan and in domestic exile, we nonetheless locate her as still inside because of the presence of the outside, where she is not. For Bhabha, the interplay in the conceptualization of borders is directly linked to "the way in which cultures recognize themselves through their projections of 'otherness'" (12). In the same way but on a subjective level, Lionel's retrospective self-identification as a savage speaks to his self-understanding as a not-savage any longer. That he writes his autobiography from an end point at which he has been returned to that pre-civilized state is an irony that Lionel self-consciously draws out for his reader. Choosing Rome as the site of his return to pre-civilization, and living in the Colonna Palace (362), he describes his former self: "as uncouth a savage, as the wolf-bred founder of old Rome" (362). Even in this self-identification the reader cannot overlook

the fact that Lionel knows where he is and he knows, even in his so-called savagery, how to position himself within the enlightenment tradition.

Similarly, Jane's location of her subjectivity through figures of exile replicates her experience of domesticity. Mrs. Reed views Jane as "an interloper, not of her race" (17), and after Jane is sent to Lowood, and further exiled from her already outsided positioning with the Reeds, Mr. Brocklehurst positions Jane "not [as] a member of the true flock but evidently an interloper and an alien," and "worse than many a little heathen who says its prayers to Brahma" (69). Jane's subjective experience of exile from domesticity, then, is inevitably translated into figures and terms denoting cultural exclusion, and those Others who resist England's imperialism. But when Jane, sitting by the window, identifies with the exterior and the foreign, including her self-identification as a "Turk"—the border guard of the geographical East, outside the borders of Christendom, racially outside, the always already Other—this identification functions as a performative of her outside relation to the home, and at the same time her ensconcement in a corporeal sense on the interior side of the window functions as a performative of her inside relation to the outside. And in case we are tempted to forget this, we are soon reminded of it when Jane is unpleasantly called out of her hiding place and into the home proper by the master of the house, John Reed.

Susan Meyer argues that for Dickens and Trollope, "[t]he domestic space of home is at once an individual domicile and suggestive of the domestic space in a larger sense, the domestic space of England" (7). If the same can be said of Brontë and Shelley, then by extension, one could argue that the domestic sphere must be constructed through a confrontation with an Other in the same way that, in Judith Butler's formulation, the self

is configured through an awareness of an Other. According to Butler, "the subject, the

speaking 'I,'" is constituted through a process of identification with a hegemonic

imperative (in Butler's argument, heterosexuality) which also

> forecloses and/or disavows other identifications. This exclusionary
>
> matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous
>
> production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects,"
>
> but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. . . . In
>
> this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion
>
> and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject,
>
> an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own
>
> founding repudiation. (3)

Butler's narrative of the individual's developmental consciousness elucidates why

exclusion from a domestic haven produces metaphors of the empire's outsiders; and the

"outside, which is, after all, 'inside'" speaks to the border-shifting in *Jane Eyre*. Indeed,

central to Butler's narrative is that same understanding of the world as a binary of "us"

and "them" that emerges in the concept of domesticity, and that fuels imperialism.

The idea of the Other came into usage in postcolonial, queer, and feminist theories

through Simone de Beauvoir who, though best-known as a feminist, was also a Hegelian

scholar (a fact that comes through more clearly in the original French of *Le deuxième*

sexe [1949] than it does in the English translation).[5] Critical to her argument in that text

was a reformulation of Hegel's master/slave dichotomy to describe the oppression of

women. It was, in turn, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in his discussion of the

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[5] See. for instance, her initial discussion of women as Other and men as Subject in *Le deuxième sexe*.

emergence of consciousness (*Phenomenology of Spirit* [1807])[6] who introduced the

notion that individual consciousness arises from confrontation with an Other. In Hegel's

paradigm, there is a dialectic of interaction between a dominant and a subjugated

party—the bondsman, or the Other—in which the bondsman is likely to attempt to

remove himself from the master's control and the opposition he would therein face

would bring him into consciousness, probably in advance of the master. An

epistemology such as Hegel's that constructs self-consciousness through a confrontation

with an Other is in part contingent on spatial understanding, on notions of individualism

and privacy set in opposition to Others in the world at large (a notion well-understood

by theorists like Bhabha and Said). I would argue, then, that it is not a coincidence that

Hegel's theory of consciousness was written during a period of broad cultural changes

for the middle classes of Europe in their notions of the individual's place in the world,

and the world's place in relation to the individual. In John Lukacs's admittedly

nostalgic article, "The Bourgeois Interior," he states:

> The mathematicability of reality, the cult of reason, *free trade*, liberalism,
>
> the abolition of slavery, of censorship, the contractual ideal of the state,
>
> constitutionalism, *individualism*, socialism, *nationalism*,
>
> *internationalism*—these were not aristocratic ideas. For bourgeois means
>
> something more than a social class: it means certain rights and
>
> privileges, certain aspirations, *a certain way of thinking* . . . . (619, my
>
> emphasis)

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[6] See Hegel, "Self-Certainty and the Lordship and Bondage of Self-consciousness."

Along with "free trade" (the global extension of markets) and "individualism" (the notion of a distinct and independent self), Lukacs also argues that "domesticity, privacy, comfort, the concept of the home and of the family . . . are, literally, principal achievements of the Bourgeois Age" (624). For Lukacs, the multiplicity of investments which accrue around interior space to transform it into a home are directly linked to the eighteenth-century development of individual interiority, that "certain way of thinking" (619). Stone also argues that what he calls "Affective Individualism" was central to distinguishing developments that took place in society and in the family beginning in the late seventeenth century.[7] I am here suggesting that notions of individual subjectivity which configure the self through a confrontation with the Other, as in Bhabha's, Said's, and Butler's models, are implicitly bound to both imperialism and domesticity.

This division "between home and world" (Bhabha 9) became, during the Victorian era, solidified in a binary of gendered space which "held the house as haven, a private sphere opposed to the public, commercial sphere," in the words of Elizabeth Langland (8). Just as the opposition between home (private, emotional) and world (public, commercial) became organized around the oppositional construction of feminine/masculine, so the oppositional dichotomies of self/Other, psychological/political, experience/history became similarly organized—or reorganized—on a metonymic slide of binaries that reinforce oppositional gender differentiation. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong traces the role of

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[7] See, in particular, his chapter on "The Growth of Affective Individualism" (221-269) for a very thorough account of how these changes emerged.

writing in the development of this differentiation and its effects on conceptualizations of the world. She concludes that in the nineteenth century,

> following the example of fiction, new kinds of writing—sociological studies of the factory and city, as well as new theories of natural history and political economy—established modern domesticity as the only haven from the trials of a heartless economic world. By the 1840s . . . [t]he entire surface of social experience has come to mirror those kinds of writing . . . which represented the existing field of social information as contrasting masculine and feminine spheres. (8-9)

In other words, the way the material world is understood becomes a conceptual map of gender differentiation and interaction.

When Rybczynski argues that the introduction of domesticity made the home "a female place, or at least a place under feminine control" (74), what he neglects to mention is obvious to any reader of *Jane Eyre*: domesticity fed an ideology that confined women's movement to the home, and therefore restricted their entire lives. Through these restrictions, women are made into Others in our own societies, and in our own homes. The repercussions of these restrictions are beautifully exemplified in Mary Shelley's novel, and anger at these restrictions is at the very heart of Brontë's. But in both cases, idealization of domesticity—bound up though it may be with separate spheres—is also clear. Through its emblems and effects, the notion of separate spheres is powerfully seductive and, indeed, still maintains a tenacious hold on how we understand the world. So much so that, according to Armstrong, "[t]o consider the rise of the domestic woman as a major event in political history is not, as it may seem, to

present a contradiction in terms, but to identify the paradox that shapes modern culture" (3). She contends that we continue to be "taught to divide the political world in two . . . [and we] compulsively replicate the symbolic behaviour that constituted a private domain of the individual outside and apart from social history" (9-10). The replication in theoretical discourse of this division between the "private domain of the individual" and "social history" underlies Spivak's critique of previous feminist literary criticism for celebrating individualism at the cost of uncritically reproducing imperialist ideologies. And in this compulsive replication we overlook how world history enters our own lives, and how we enter it, as for instance in the seemingly innocuous artifacts with which we decorate our homes, such as the china tea things, Turkish carpets, and other objects we have learned to admire through an aesthetic inherited from the Victorians.

Using the theoretical methods I have here laid out as my groundwork, I will show that through the emerging cluster of metonymies (masculine/feminine, self/Other, in/out, home/empire), imperialist discourse becomes central to establishing the boundaries of domestic space. As well, I will explore the consequent formation of the female self within, or against, this domesticity and imperialism. Armstrong writes that she sees fiction "both as the document and as the agency of cultural history" (23), and in this spirit of viewing literature as cultural documents, I hope to address in small part the question of how women, positioned as a synecdoche for the home, yet linked oppositionally with Other and imperial outsiders, make sense of their place in the home, and in the world.

II. The "paled demesne of civilization": the Boundaries of Home in *The Last Man*

> Our home!—what images arc brought before us by that one word! The meeting of cordial smiles. and the gathering round the evening hearth, and the interchange of thoughts in kindly words, and the glance of eyes to which our hearts lie open as the day;—there is the true 'City of Refuge':—where are we to turn when it is shut from us or changed? Who ever thought his home could change? And yet those calm and deep, and still delights, over which the world seems to have no breath of power, they too are like the beautiful summer clouds. tranquil as if fixed to sleep for ever in the pure azure of the skies, yet all the while melting from us. though imperceptibly. 'passing away!'

> Felicia Hemans. *Journal* (1828)

At the end of *The Last Man*, Lionel Verney's home has "melt[ed]" from him, to use

Hemans' phrasing. He has moved from England eastward and then south, with each

move hoping to recapture an ever-evasive home. On the closing pages, he is about to

climb into a boat, and the future travels he lays out are a map describing the world

according to a nineteenth-century Englishman. He is to

> pass Naples, along Calabria, and . . . dare the twin perils of Scylla and
>
> Charybdis; then, with fearless aim . . . skim ocean's surface towards
>
> Malta and the further Cyclades. . . . I would [Lionel continues] coast
>
> Asia Minor, and Syria, and passing the seven-mouthed Nile, steer
>
> northward again, till losing sight of forgotten Carthage and deserted
>
> Lybia, I should reach the pillars of Hercules. (366)

If, having travelled the routes of classical literature, he has still not found a companion,

then he is willing to go even farther: "leaving behind the verdant land of native Europe,

adown the tawny shore of Africa, having weathered the fierce seas of the Cape, I may

moor my worn skiff in a creek, shaded by spicy groves of the odorous islands of the far

Indian ocean" (367). Though hugging Europe as long as he can, Lionel will travel, if it

is the only way to find a companion and thus establish a home, to what appears to be the

farthest point in his imagination—an almost inconceivable India.

The opening of Lionel's narrative, however, moves inward, in reverse of the narrative's close. "I am the native of a sea-surrounded nook," he tells us, "which, when the surface of the globe, with its shoreless ocean and trackless continents, presents itself to my mind, appears only as an inconsiderable speck in the immense whole" (7). Tellingly, the world is reduced to its conceptual model, "the globe," since the only part of that globe that at this point has a material reality for Lionel is England:

> when balanced in the scale of mental power, [England] far outweighed
>
> countries of larger extent and more numerous population. . . . In my
>
> boyish days she was the universe to me. When I stood on my native
>
> hills, and saw plain and mountain stretch out to the utmost limits of my
>
> vision . . ., the earth's very centre was fixed for me in that spot, and the
>
> rest of her orb was as a fable . . . .(7)

Dismissing most of the world "as a fable" cements the fixity of England, and in this manner, a border is erected around his "native hills" separating it from the places outside it. By the end of the novel, much of this "fable" is transformed into physical reality, an arguably hopeful vision, and though forced upon him by the death of everyone in Europe, the transformation into physical reality is also accomplished by Lionel's ability to imagine a home in these once outside regions.

Though the pain of Lionel's narrative arises from this mass death exiling him from home and family, that is, from domesticity, the theme of Lionel's domestic exile is established at the novel's start, before the Plague. He tell us: "[m]y first real knowledge of myself was as an unprotected orphan among the valleys and fells of Cumberland" (10). Because his parents die when he is young, he and his sister, Perdita, "hav[ing] no

one relation," are left "to the close-handed charity of the land" (10); rather than a home, he has only "native hills." He is a shepherd—not living a pleasantly bucolic life, however, because the abjection arising out of his exclusion from domesticity produces rebelliousness and ferocity; Lionel is a "savage" (11) and a robber. We are given to understand, then, that his initial consciousness of self is centred on his positioning outside domesticity. This exclusion is then linked to cultural abjection by means of the "savage" who is outside western civilization, and also by means of the criminal who lurks on its fringes.

The dichotomy of savage and civilization comes into explicit play in Lionel's description of where he and Perdita live as they enter adulthood. Perdita's dwelling, "a cottage whose trim grass-plat sloped down to the waters of the lake" (13), suggests a cultivation that is societal and agricultural, and that also evokes the garden of Eden, a natural, ordered place of origin. Moreover, according to Davidoff and Hall, the cottage—preferably white and "with thatched roof and porch embowered with honeysuckle and roses"—was "the quintessential image of early nineteenth-century desirable housing" (361). The cottage also embodied the idealization of domesticity. One young woman from Essex enthuses in c.1830: "'[t]he White Cottage'" is where "'the world's cares and sorrows might cease, for all [is] humility, comfort and peace'" (361-62). Perdita's cottage is paradigmatically a home. In contrast, Lionel "lived with a farmer whose house was built higher up among the hills: a dark crag rose behind it, and, exposed to the north, the snow lay in its crevices the summer through" (13). A prototypical Wuthering Heights, Lionel's dwelling conveys comfortless isolation. The bleak disorder of year-long winter shows a nature out of control (that is, savage, or

diseased) and in need of cultivation—in spite of its belonging to a farmer. Far from

Edenic, moreover, Lionel's house repels any association with a point of origin, or with a

place of rest. As if to confirm this, he comments that "in the evening my flock went to

its fold, and I to my sister" (13). That is, the human fold of domesticity requires a

feminine presence conspicuously absent from the farmer's house but available in the

form of Perdita. Situated in an environment in need of taming and devoid of women,

Lionel's dwelling is a not-home; though housed, he is outside domesticity. This contrast

between living-spaces clearly shows the dichotomy of savage and civilized, and

alongside it, one of the basic requirements is established for a dwelling to be

transformed into a home: evidence of cultivation.

For Lionel to pass into the realm of domesticity and gain the "'City of Refuge,'" as

Hemans calls it (*Journal*), he must meet—not a woman, interestingly enough, but—

Adrian, the model of cultivation.

> We sat in his library, and he spoke of the old Greek sages, and of the
>
> power which they had acquired over the minds of men, through the force
>
> of love and wisdom only. The room was decorated with the busts of
>
> many of them, and he described their characters to me . . . . The trim and
>
> paled demesne of civilization, which I had before regarded from my wild
>
> jungle as inaccessible, had its wicket opened by him; I stepped within,
>
> and felt, as I entered, that I trod my native soil. (20-21)

This library is one of the few interiors described in the novel, however cursorily, and

one of the few rooms mentioned as having a specific function. The extra detailing

emphasizes the significance of Adrian to Lionel's character development, and it also

emphasizes that Adrian and his library are a benchmark of all that is laudable. Clearly

both the room's decoration and its function are emblematic of its tenant. Adrian is the

ex-Prince of Wales who, in the novel's representation of the future when England is

transformed into a republic, not only gracefully acknowledges the loss of his title and his

future kingship, but actually embraces republicanism. The busts of "the old Greek

sages" represent the democratic spirit and intellectual cultivation that distinguish him, a

cultivation also signified by Lionel's equation of the library with the "trim and paled

demesne of civilization." The wording echoes Perdita's "trim grass-plat" and Lionel

similarly uses the phrase to constitute domesticity through and within the borders of an

ordered garden. This time, however, rather than regarding the space as "inaccessible

from [his] wild jungle"—save for nightly visits—Lionel "step[s] within" and treads his

"native soil." The development of metonymic associations here is notable: the home as

a whole is represented by the library, and the busts of ancient Greeks—considered to be

the cornerstone of Western culture—in turn act as synecdoches for all of Western

civilization (that is, for civilization). The home, then, signifies civilization.

This passage also draws attention to one of the distinguishing marks of this novel:

the ideal home includes a fairly sophisticated intellectual accomplishment. This mark,

however, is at some odds with the gendering of the separate spheres. Since there are no

female figures distinguished by their learning, Adrian, the catalyst behind Lionel's

intellectual renaissance, must be figured—not unlike Victor Frankenstein—as a mother.[8]

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[8] One explanation for this may be that Shelley. conscious of how her own education made her unusual—or

egregious by some standards—was not entirely comfortable representing a learned woman. Another

explanation may be that Shelley herself was motherless, and so her own father was the maternal

When Lionel recalls the impact of his first meeting with Adrian he describes himself as being like "a child lisping out devotions after its mother" (22), and the result of the contact is that Lionel, who "now began to be human" (22), is born again. Yet, the productive qualities of male-dominated humanism are, by the novel's end, contrasted with the reproductive abilities of nature. The empty museums of Rome emblematize the necropolis-like aspect of the Renaissance and Enlightenment legacy, and the barren love of the dead is acted out by Lionel who, in remembrance of those dead, embraces the "icy proportions" of statues he finds in those museums, kissing them in a necrophiliac attempt at companionship (363). Still, since Adrian's mentoring is constructed as mothering, the female presence is evidently necessary, if only on a figurative level; the mother/mentor figure of Adrian is the force behind Lionel's cultivation/acculturation, and the synecdochal link between the mother and civilization is established.

The problem for Lionel, however, is that by making Adrian his mother, by claiming the garden of Adrian's library as his "native soil," and by explicitly investing the library with the value of his place of beginning, Lionel places his actual origins under erasure. In the process, he splits himself away from the abjection and exclusion that was his "first real knowledge of [him]self" (10), positioned with the not yet "human" (22) "savage[s]" (11) who populate the "wild jungle" (21) that exists just outside civilization's garden gate. That Lionel's conceptualization of the library's interior so rapidly shifts to an exterior scene—a move typical of the novel—indicates that this erasure is not quite successful. Such a move occurs again, for instance, in

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representative. both figuratively and by extension of the extremely high respect in which he held Mary Wollstonecraft.

Lionel's description of his fully-gained domestic life, after he marries Idris (Adrian's

sister), and moves to Windsor.

> Adrian, Idris and I, were established in Windsor Castle; Lord Raymond
>
> [Perdita's new husband] and my sister, inhabited a house the former had
>
> built on the borders of the Great Park [in which Windsor Castle is
>
> situated]. . . . Sometimes we passed whole days under the leafy covert of
>
> the forest with our books and music. . . . When the frequent rains shut us
>
> within doors, evening recreation followed morning study, ushered in by
>
> music and song. (70)

Lionel's marriage to Idris solidifies his domestic position, and his continued

participation in civilization is emblematized by books; again, both domesticity and

civilization are unified in controlled nature—here the Great Park. That the "leafy covert

of the forest" is Lionel's chosen drawing room seems, on the surface, only an extension

of this imagery. What is remarkable, however, is his configuration of rainy days as an

expulsion from the garden. Rather than a place of security and contentment, the home is

where he is "shut . . . within doors." The transposition of the drawing room to the

outside thus parallels Lionel's expulsion inward. Such an apparent oxymoron highlights

that, whereas for Adrian the library is the most apposite interior, the one most apposite

to Lionel is the empty interior. His "trim and paled demesne of civilization"—the

idealized inside—is haunted by its apparent opposite, his original exclusion from

civilization/domesticity.

Lionel is, in Homi Bhabha's sense, unhomed, too conscious of the borders between

home and not home to be at rest within domesticity. To understand the haunting and

unhoming of Lionel, it is useful to look at the source of Bhabha's terminology, Freud's

"The 'Uncanny'" (1919). According to Freud, the uncanny revolves around the

paradoxical: though appearing to be a response to the new and unfamiliar, to the

strange, in fact "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is

known of old and long familiar" (220). In other words, Lionel's haunting is a return to

his original self. The psychoanalytic paradigm here is repression: that which is

repressed (and to the conscious mind seems unknown) must return, and that which is

repressed we are compelled to repeat (245). Freud roots his argument in the slippage of

the German *heimlich* (homey, familiar, native) to its apparent opposite, *unheimlich*

(uncanny, unfamiliar, or literally, and as Bhabha chooses to read it, unhomely). In

Freud's lexical narrative of how these seeming opposites come to double for each other,

heimlich begins as the feeling of being at home in a place, and the equivalent of the

English "domestic" (222-23). Through this it becomes the secrets, privacy and lack of

reserve of a privy council (225), a meaning which then expands to imply the secrets of

wrongful behaviour, "[c]oncealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know of

or about it" (223). Freud notes that *heimlich*, as knowledge, may also mean mystical,

obscure or inaccessible, and in this sense, it is imbued with the potentiality of danger

(226). And so, while *heimlich* is "used of a place free from ghostly influences . . .

familiar, friendly, unreserved" (qtd. in Freud 225), it can also mean its opposite: "'[a]t

times I feel like a man who walks in the night and believes in ghosts; every corner is

heimlich and full of terrors for him'" (qtd. in Freud 226). A quotation from Schelling

underscores how what is born as shared intimacy—in the form of mutual confidence—

can grow into the contrary: "'[u]nheimlich ' *is the name for everything that ought to*

have remained . . . secret and hidden but has come to light " (Freud's emphasis, qtd.

224). As Freud puts it, the word's meaning "develops in the direction of ambivalence,

until it finally coincides with its opposite *unheimlich*" (226), and the root of Bhabha's

"unhomed" can be seen here both in the sense of the ambivalence of the insider towards

the unknown, and, as with Lionel, in the ambivalence of the outsider towards (what the

insider categorizes as) the known.[9] Whether *heimlich* suggests the comforting or the

threatening, then, lies in whether one is excluded or included in the known, or

conversely, in the concealed. Lionel's configuration of going inside the home as an

expulsion inward thus betrays his uncanny positioning: he is apparently included within

domesticity, but at the same time, he still feels himself to be outside it.

For Freud, the critical mechanism of repression which produces the uncanny is a

splitting of the self when the ego projects "material outward as something foreign to

itself" (236), and thus creates a double, the second face of a metaphorical coin.[10] It is

this mechanism of splitting that allows individual repression (the known that reappears

as the unknown) to be refracted onto the environment and into language. Hence, the

doubled relationship between *heimlich* and *unheimlich* serves as a metonym for other,

contiguous doublings, and through the lens of psychology, the uncanny is understood

within the individual, in memory, and in narrative language in much the same way, as

"the doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And . . . the constant recurrence of

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[9] James Strachey. Freud's translator. notes that "ambiguity [also] attaches to the English 'canny', which can mean both 'cosy' and 'endowed with occult or magical powers' (225n).

[10] Cf. Azim's summary of the self/Other dichotomy: "The subject. then is divided within the self, though the struggles between those divisions are played out through outside embodiments of the self: the subject's "Other(s)" (108).

the same thing—the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations" (234). Through the double, which is the hallmark of the uncanny, presence looks like haunting, intimacy becomes threatening, the not-home takes on the appearance of home, the familiar is confused with the unfamiliar, and in Bhabha's theory, the included and excluded can blend.

Indeed, as people begin to die of the Plague, and then as Lionel's own family is killed one at a time by the disease,[11] the figure of the empty home privately haunting Lionel uncannily recurs manifested in a pandemic that empties each and every home. It begins with an "ox . . . in a narrow door-way" of a home (262), and the "shut up" (238) houses of London, and then all homes, in—to use Hemans' words—"'passing away'" (*Journal*) become emblems of the emptiness Lionel initially found indoors. He explains, "I detested to enter any dwelling, there to take up my nightly abode—I have sat, hour after hour, at the door of the cottage I had selected, unable to lift the latch, and meet face to face blank desertion within" (356). Without the civilizing force of home cultivating the garden of the world, nature emerges "savage, ungrateful" (356), and opposed to the "human" (22). It is akin to the "savage" Lionel (11) that he left out of doors when he came through the "wicket" of civilization (4), but crueler and with broader scope; in a sense, it is Lionel's double.

Perhaps it is partly the tragic qualities of this return that make it impossible to mistake Lionel, the lone man at the end of the novel, for a figure of individualism's

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[11] This particular effect of the Plague on the domestic world resembles the monster's actions against Victor's family in *Frankenstein*.

victory. While he retains a community of sorts through the books and monuments of the

past, Lionel clearly hears the pathos of individualism in the sounds of birds and crickets.

He asks, "[h]ave not they each their mate—their cherished young, their home . . .?"

(357) Though rich in the productive qualities of humanism, Lionel is impoverished of

the reproductive qualities of humanity—possible only through the presence of the

female mother freed from erasure. As an individual without a home, which means a

house where he lives with his family, a man is pitiable.[12]

Since the Plague is most destructive in emptying homes—the signifier of

civilization—it should come as no surprise that the geographical origin of this nature

turned "savage, ungrateful" (356) is just outside the boundaries of Western civilization,

in Constantinople. Emerging out of a conflict "between civilization and barbarism"

(117), that is, between the Greeks and the Turks (democracy and tyranny, in the familiar

terms of Shelley's day), the Plague is a figure of everything untamed that lies beyond the

pale of civilization. Unquestionably, for the heart of civilization—the home—to be

destroyed by this untamed outside betrays an anxiety over the consequences of contact

with non-European peoples. Anne McWhir writes that "Shelley participates in the

demonization of Islam by Christian Europeans that goes back to the Crusades" (xxviii)

by situating the source of plague in Constantinople. She adds, "[t]he movement of

plague is from east to west; [and] as Anne K. Mellor has emphasized, Lionel Verney

contracts the disease from a black man" (xxviii). The Plague, then, is a representative of

outsidership in general rather than an indictment of Islam in particular. It is, in Freud's

terms, "material [projected] outward as something foreign to itself" (236).

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[12] This, of course, can be read as a critique of Byron.

Though it is easy to see how anxieties over the foreign serve an idolatry of Western civilization, examining the insides of people's homes shows that these same anxieties also serve domesticity. So far, I have discussed domesticity as something that takes place primarily out of doors, with the exception of Adrian's library. For that matter, all of the homes I have described are configured exclusively or largely by their relation to an outside, either a garden or untamed nature. A very different picture of domesticity emerges from the insides of people's homes and from the interior scenes that accompany them. This is vividly exemplified by the place Lionel calls home for much of the narrative: Windsor Castle. The passage in question occurs before his move there, and revolves around Idris and her mother, the once Queen who is reduced, after England becomes a republic, to the Countess of Windsor. Of Austrian royal blood, she is an angry, imperious plotter with ambitions to having the British monarchy reinstated and, as a means to that end, wants Idris to marry Raymond. Realizing that Idris is in love with Lionel, the Countess gives her daughter a soporific drink so that she may be snatched off to Austria, where "'no choice [will be] left [her daughter] but between an honourable prison and a fitting marriage'" (69). These plans are foiled when Idris, "in contradiction to her usual frankness, [only] pretend[s] to swallow the medicine" (68) and then flees, "going down a flight of back-stairs, avoiding the vicinity of her mother's apartment, [and] contriv[es] to escape from the castle by a low window" (69). This scene, we gather, illustrates the underside to Lionel's idealization of the home.

Much of what is sinister here is marked by Gothic discourse. The entrapment of women, the labyrinthine architecture embedded within a highly elaborate narrative are only a few of its indications. Kate Ferguson Ellis, in *The Contested Castle: Gothic*

Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology, suggests other marks of the Gothic when she comments that "[t]he rebellion of Gothic children is confined to the matter of marriage choice" (4) and that the "presence of bad parents as Gothic villains gives authors ample opportunity to hold up for criticism overindulgent or negligent mothers and indifferent or authoritarian fathers" (82). Additionally, the scene of the castle contributes to the Gothic ambiance, following as it does the lead of Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe (*The Castle of Otranto* 1764, and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* 1794, respectively) as well as Shelley's own castle of *Valperga* (1823).

Ellis also comments that the Gothic "can be distinguished by the presence of houses in which people are locked in and locked out" (3) along the gendered lines of women being kept in and men being kept out. The other side of Lionel's psychological inability to get indoors then, is the threat of entrapment for Idris; and the scene of a woman entrapped is repeated in yet another interior reminiscent of the winding route Idris must take:

> We threaded with light steps many corridors, ascended several flights of stairs, and passed through long galleries; at the end of one she unlocked a low portal; a rush of wind extinguished our lamp; but in lieu of it, we had the blessed moon-beams and the open face of heaven. (307)

In the above passage, however, the escapee is Lionel. Repeatedly exiled from domestic interiors—or "locked out," in Ellis's words (3)—he is able to leave an actual "dungeon" (305) while the woman he is with, Juliet, remains trapped. She has been drawn into the snare by a false prophet offering salvation—a variation on the threat to Idris of an "honourable prison" which, we can surmise, is probably a convent. Juliet is killed there,

and what keeps her from leaving with Lionel is her child, held for ransom by the false-prophet.[13] The implication, that motherhood itself and its corollary domesticity are forms of entrapment, speaks to the alternative choice that Idris would be presented with, "'a fitting marriage'" (69). Indeed, the parallelism of "an honourable prison and a fitting marriage" (69) suggests that domesticity itself is a form of containment for women, a Gothic dungeon. It is the erasure of women from the public world. Though Idris, unlike Juliet, does escape from the castle—in order to enter into a marriage of her choice—the last image of her, buried in the Chapel of St. George, is nonetheless an image of entombment in this same castle that she calls home (280).[14]

The effect of Gothic discourse, then, is to undermine Lionel's idealization of domesticity by highlighting domesticity's tendency to entrap women. A similar critique, more obviously rooted in the imagery of middle-class English life, is also apparent if one again looks at the "low window" (Shelley 69) from which Idris escapes. Evoking, above all, a middle-class home, this window is a discordant detail if we remember the fortress-like aspect of the actual Windsor Castle, and paired with the "flight of back-stairs" (69), these architectural elements suggest both a labyrinthine, Gothic castle and its apparent opposite, a middle-class, servant-employing house. Thus, the home again becomes the focus of the uncanny and, in the process, Shelley uses the Gothic to present

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[13] See Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* for a later spinning out of the same theme: a woman is unable to escape a domestic situation because of her attachment to her child.

[14] It is worth noting that the feminist discourse of Mary Wollstonecraft also links marriage and entrapment, particularly through the figure of the seraglio. For Wollstonecraft, both institutions contain women and keep them from acting independently for their own good, a motif also discussed in much criticism of *Jane Eyre*.

a kind of anti-domesticity. The mother, rather than a benign civilizing force, is transformed into a bad parent who wants to take her daughter away from her home. Moreover, in the discourse of Gothic in which bad mothers are "overindulgent or negligent" and bad fathers are "indifferent or authoritarian" (Ellis 82), the mother here is actually gendered as male. Only Idris's unfilial suspicions—provoking her to feign drinking "the medicine" (Shelley 68)—save her from her bad fatherly mother. In this family—which is more of an anti-family—everyone acts in direct contradiction to her ideal role, and the effects of the uncanny further extend themselves when Idris must unhome herself to avoid entrapment and domestic expulsion, and to recover the possibility of establishing a home and family with the man she loves.

Evadne's "miserable garret" (86) shows another interior with a grim aspect. Like Lionel's and Perdita's dwellings, it is closely tied to its exterior, being on "one of the most penurious streets in the metropolis" (84), and it is notably not a house proper, but an apartment in a house characterized by "[p]overty, dirt, and squalid misery" (84). Leading to it is a "broken, wretched staircase," and "dark, creaking stairs" (84), and inside this dwelling "of want," "[t]he floor was sunk in many places; the walls ragged and bare—the ceiling weather-stained—a tattered bed stood in the corner; there were but two chairs in the room, and a rough broken table, on which was a light in a tin candlestick . . ." (85). Evadne's "'abode of misery'" (87) is the most detailed and extended description of any interior in the book. Though extended ideal domestic scenes take place outside, there are virtually no scenes depicting an ideal domesticity inside, thus suggesting that the paucity of happy interior scenes in this novel reflects a more general problem with what happens inside homes. The one exception, Adrian's

library, contains no women—only the figurative representation of one—and moves

almost immediately out of doors to juxtapose "[t]he trim and paled demesne of

civilization" with the "wild jungle" (21). While it makes sense within Shelley's

metonymic system that a home is represented against the untamed outside of Europe,

this elides how the domestic ideal can apparently be portrayed *only* by contrasting it

with what is exterior to Europe, that is, with non-civilization. Domesticity, in other

words, cannot exist without an anxiety-provoking outside.

As synecdoches of home and by extension of civilization, women, then, should

presumably be constructed in relation to home as well as to home's opposites, the

outsiders of civilization and the regions they inhabit. Both Perdita and Idris, however,

would seem to contradict this reasoning. Both are bland, submissively feminine, and

allowed only one act of independent self-will: Idris escapes from the maternal home in

order to marry the man she loves, and Perdita kills herself so that she will be interred in

the grave of the man she loves. As characters, they do not move much beyond a sketch

(or much beyond the boundaries of home), but neither are they constructed in direct

contrast to the outside. Unless that outside includes other women; specifically, unless

that outside includes Evadne and the Countess.

Evadne contrasts markedly with the feminine, domestic ideal of Perdita and Idris.

Even her apartment is an example of "[t]he inherent anti-urbanism of middle class

culture" in the early nineteenth century which made the cottage, by contrast, a domestic

ideal (Davidoff and Hall, 361); Perdita, who has no apparent means of support and

therefore ought to be in a state of poverty, notably has such a cottage. Evadne's

dwelling sets her apart. "[I]n the midst of such drear and heart sickening poverty, there

was an air of order and cleanliness" (85) and a "pair of small Turkish slippers" (84).

These few simple but telling details are all that precariously lend this garret the

semblance of a home, and inform us that, amidst the squalor, Evadne desires to be part

of the domestic world. But the "Turkish slippers" give us a hint. She is an outsider, and

domesticity will not be attainable for her: instead, as an outsider, as an alternative to the

feminine ideal, Evadne will be punished.

Exclusion from the domestic sphere has more serious repercussions for Evadne

than it has for Lionel not least because, without father or husband,[15] she must support

herself, and her recourse to the male, public sphere is limited. While her artistic abilities

provide a recourse, to use them for financial ends is to transgress the boundaries of

femininity, to step into the sphere of male prerogatives, and so she must use them under

cover. This self-support is presented as admirable, and yet, the development of

Evadne's character also suggests that once a woman has started taking the male

prerogative, she will not be able to stop, and the attempt will be her downfall. For

instance, through her efforts at supporting herself, the theatre is opened for clandestine

meetings with Raymond, and she thus moves from the male prerogative of self-support

to that of desire outside of marriage. In assuming this prerogative, Evadne becomes a

direct threat to Perdita in particular, and to domesticity in general: she is the

homebreaker—the antithesis of the domestic housewife. As her position as an outsider

is enhanced, the threat she represents is increased.

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[15] "A wealthy Greek merchant settled at Constantinople" whom her father insisted she marry, he escapes

with her on an English boat when tensions rise between the Greeks and Turks. Once in England,

overwhelmed by poverty and hopelessness, her husband commits suicide (86).

Of course, as a Greek, Evadne's position as an outsider is also linked to her literal exile from her national home as a result of the war between Greece and Turkey. The idea of nation as home, "[w]here first the child's glad spirit loves / Its country and its God" (Hemans, "Homes" 39-40), is one that Lionel touches on a number of times. In the opening of his narrative, he tells us of his "boyish days" when England was "the universe to me," and that standing on his "native hills," he felt that "the earth's very centre was fixed for [him] in that spot" (7). Nation, then, is home when no other home is possible. The metonymic linkage that Lionel finds in Adrian's library between home and emblems of ancient Greek culture first allows him entrance into domesticity, and so in the last pages of his narrative, though now able to conceptualize home outside of England, Lionel shows a reluctance to leave Europe. Indeed, establishing domesticity as a signifier for Western civilization is contingent upon the notion of Greece as a cultural home for Europe. Evadne's position, then, as a woman who is outside domesticity in England, coupled with her exile from the cultural home of Western civilization, puts her in a precarious position.

When Evadne is rediscovered later in the book, her transgression of femininity is virtually complete: she is dressing as a man, and in playing the part of the soldier, she has moved into the male theatre of war. The possibilities open to women in the novel are clear: take the role of the subservient feminine ideal, like Idris and Perdita, and attain domesticity with all of its corollary problems, or become excluded from domesticity, and be punished as you slip into masculinity.

McWhir notes that "[o]n the conscious, moralizing level, Shelley judges and defines Evadne conventionally" (xxv), and Evadne does allow Perdita and Idris to

appear as striking moral contrasts. This is particularly important since comparisons in other lights show Evadne more favourably: her character is more completely drawn than those of Idris and Perdita, her life is more interesting, even her decrepit dwelling is given extra colour. Evadne, in short, is one of the most interesting characters in the book. However, in contrast to Evadne, Perdita and Idris appear more virtuous, if less interesting as well, not least because showing the repercussions of behaving incorrectly, the character of Evadne rescues Idris and Perdita for the moral narrative when their characters would otherwise be reduced to largely irrelevant plot devices, useful primarily for the status shift their husbands acquire in marrying them; against Evadne, Perdita's insistence in being buried in Greece is more clearly the behaviour of a correct English wife determined to rest forever with her English husband, and Idris's rebellion against her mother is more clearly in the service of domesticity. Evadne is the outside that shows the value of being a synecdoche of home and by extension of civilization.

The Countess is the other female figure who serves this purpose. The conjunction of these two women is made explicit early in the book with the Countess's wish that Adrian marry Evadne, and the Countess, too, is punished for transgressing femininity when she realizes, only once Idris is dead, how unmotherly and cruel she has been:

> Now that the time was gone . . . she fell at once upon the thorny truth of things, and felt that neither smile nor caress could penetrate to the unconscious state, or influence the happiness of her who lay in the vault beneath. This conviction, together with the remembrances of soft replies to bitter speeches, of gentle looks repaying angry glances; the perception of the falsehood, paltryness and futility of her cherished dreams of birth

and power; the overpowering knowledge, that love and life were the true

emperors of our mortal state; all . . . filled her soul with stormy and

bewildering confusion. (283)

Transformed into a "melancholy repentant mother" (283), the Countess becomes the

good woman, uninterested in worldly power; she tells Lionel to "'take me, and govern

me as you will'" (283).

The Countess, then, reaffirms the value of being home's representative while

functioning, for the bulk of the narrative, as a foil to the proper female role. Not only

does she preside over a Gothic home in a pugnacious fatherly/motherly manner, she is

also of Austrian royal blood, accompanied by all the corollary parallels with the

Habsburgs, royal family of Austria from 1526-1918. Enormously effective as a

monarchical House, and politically very active, the Habsburgs were an extreme real-life

antithesis to the kind of domesticity that the character of Lionel lauds in the novel. The

source of political power, the family was very much the seat of worldly cares rather than

a place of rest from them. And while aggrandizement of empire rather than romantic

love was the inspiration for all royal matches, the Habsburgs were the very model of

excellence in marriages that increased the scope of their sovereignty or influence. Paula

Sutter Fichtner, for instance, cites the "well-known aphorism 'others wage war, you,

fortunate Austria, marry'" (v). [16] It is therefore appropriate that hostility toward—and

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[16] Particularly noteworthy are the Habsburg marriages that brought them large areas of what is today

Belgium and Holland: Spain; Bohemia and Hungary (Fichtner 5). More contemporaneous to Shelley's

time, the Archduchess Maria Louise was married to Napoleon I (27), a pairing which could have appeared

to Shelley as nothing less than a marriage of tyrannies.

nobility of—romantic love and domestic interest comes into clearest focus with the Countess's attempt to force Idris out of her romantic connection to Lionel, and that Shelley portrays the queen's interests unsympathetically—as unmotherly, authoritarian, and wrongheaded. The Countess's characterization draws together both the political reality of Austrian politics and the Gothic trope of the bad parent—masculinized, as I mentioned above—whose child is vindicated.

An equally important subtext to the Countess's ambitions for political rather than domestic ends is Austria's political position within Europe at the time Shelley was writing. One of the most important players in imperial acquisitions on the continent, and one of the most conservative forces, Austria either ruled or had extensive influence over Spain, Hungary, and parts of what are now Germany and Italy. For Shelley, living in Italy at a time when republican revolutionary movements were emerging, Austria's conservative power was of special concern. In a letter of December 3, 1820, she comments, "we take a great interest in the threatened war at Naples . . . the populace is enslaved. Who knows if the army will resist the Austrian troops. How many Italians long for liberty" (*Letters* 1: 765). Shelley was a step ahead of her contemporaries, but her position on Austria came to be shared by many when, in January of the following year, Austria's reputation as a conservative force crystallized with an armed intervention against the revolutionary movement in Naples and Piedmont. According to Robert A. Kann's *A History of the Hapsburg Empire 1526-1918*, "by openly aligning Austrian interests with the shameful despotism of the Italian Bourbons . . . Hapsburg power began to present itself to moderately enlightened and liberal Europe as the jailer of Italian national liberties" (244-45).

When Greece declared itself free from Turkey in 1821, Shelley's republican sympathies carried over, and in this war—which is transposed so prominently to *The Last Man*—Austria acted against republicanism as well. Shelley notes the Greek declaration with approval in her letters and shows a more than cursory knowledge of how the oncoming conflict is being utilized by European states (in particular Russia and England) to attain or counteract a power balance (April 2,5, and 17 of 1821; 1: 186-89). As with Italy, she supported the side of republicanism, while her reference to British neutrality and her comments about the conflict itself—she calls it "the war of the cross against the Crescent" (April 5, 1821; 1: 188)—leave no doubt that she shared her mother's anti-Turkish sentiment and sympathies for republicanism, along with Wollstonecraft's penchant for caustic sarcasm: "I send you the latest news from Greece—you see what a pretty part We English are acting—but we are so moral & religious that there can be no wonder that we help Turks and Tyrants against Xtians & the Would-be-free" (Shelley's emphasis April 17, 1821; 1: 189). Shelley's perception that the Austrians were on the side of "enslave[ment]" and against liberty could only have been confirmed in 1822 when Austria functionally sided with the Turks by refusing to support the Greeks at the Congress of Verona, a position the Austrians maintained well into 1827 when Britain, France and Russia agreed to act in concert against Turkey (Bennett I: 570, n.4).

Imperialism—that is, the spread of empire—is here associated with the imposition of tyranny, with militaristic and anti-democratic actions against peoples of republican spirit. Evidently, empire in *The Last Man* is more readily associated with Austria than with England, an association that, as we will see in *Jane Eyre*, has changed by 1847. The

Countess is a figure of imperialism not because she is the ex-Queen of England, but because she is Austrian. The other figure of imperialism, also a woman outside femininity, is Evadne, who as her dying gesture, unleashes the Plague. Explicitly, she does so in order to kill the lover who spurned her, Raymond, in a seeming attempt to regain domesticity through a figurative marriage in death: "'[b]y my death I purchase thee—lo! the instruments of war, fire, the plague are my servitors. . . . I have sold myself to death, with the sole condition that thou shouldst follow me—Fire, and war, and plague, unite for thy destruction'" (142). Yet, the plague, her servitor, does not stop once Raymond dies;[17] on the contrary, it has only started. By breaking through Constantinople's gates and thus crossing the threshold of the East, the Greek army, headed by Raymond, releases the Plague from its Eastern confines and begins its spread Westward. Evadne, in the form of the Plague, has apparently changed sides. Her domestic, innocuous "Turkish slippers" (84) now become an ominous figure of her part in world history. The Plague invades her homeland of Greece, then Europe and England, following the invasion pattern of the greatest empire in pre-Victorian history: Rome. Called "Queen of the World" (273), the Plague is Evadne's representative, and as her representative, as the fear of the foreign tangibly manifested, it is the ultimate imperialist destroying Western civilization. Whereas in *Jane Eyre* imperialism is a representative of the home, in *The Last Man* it is a representative of anti-civilization and anti-home. The Countess and Evadne, the two women who stand outside domestic femininity in the novel, are thus the novel's representatives of imperialism.

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[17] In fact, the Plague does not even kill Raymond, who "had been evidently thrown from his horse by some falling ruin, which had crushed his head, and defaced his whole person" (162).

We see, through Lionel's eyes, that the Plague, that representative of anti-home, exacts its heaviest vengeance on its opposite, home, marriage, and family. In the form of the Plague, in other words, Evadne takes the side of the Turks and the non-civilization they represent, to destroy the domesticity that exiled and abjected her. Evadne, as a female outsider, becomes the ultimate outside.

But what of that other exile of domesticity, Lionel? McWhir notes that Lionel "'is' Mary Shelley," and at the same time, Evadne "is Mary Shelley's alter ego, both other and self" (xv). In fact, the equation that remains—Lionel is in some way Evadne and vice versa—is supported by the text. Evadne's father "dissipated his fortune, and reputation . . . through a course of dissolute indulgence" (86), as did Lionel's father (8-9).[18] Like Lionel, Evadne is left in an "orphan state" (86)—a particularly notable characterization since far from being a child, she is orphaned at a marriageable age. The unhomed Evadne is a double for the unhomed Lionel.

When Lionel places under erasure his "first real knowledge of [him]self" (10) as coming from a metaphorical empty home, and this knowledge returns manifested in a pandemic that empties each and every home, these developments embody Freud's theory of the uncanny. Similarly, Evadne, who begins the story as a feminine enough young Greek woman, slips from the known to the unknown. In the process of this slippage, her exclusion and abjection increase until they exceed Lionel's: Evadne experiences a social isolation that anticipates Lionel's isolation at the end, but Evadne's is coupled with degrading poverty. Her exclusion and abjection are also less sympathetically drawn than Lionel's; as an adulterous woman, she participates in her

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[18] And as did Perdita's father, since she is Lionel's sister. But little is made of this.

own downfall. Regarding Evadne, the tenor of the novel is one of judgment. She

deserves what she gets. How fitting then, narratively as well as psychologically, that

Evadne calls down on the world the manifestation of Lionel's private psychology. To

put it differently, the initially "savage" protagonist is civilized, while a double—though

punished with death—is allowed to express anger against domesticity. While Mary

Shelley's biographers have shown that she took notions of domesticity to heart and did

her best to fulfill many conventional expectations of her as a woman,[19] we should not

forget that in *The Last Man*, she let Evadne win. As McWhir puts it, "*The Last Man*

enacts the revenge of female power against control" (xxv).

This last point speaks most concisely to the question of why Evadne kills home.

According to the privileged metonymic cluster of self/Other, out/in, male/female,

home/empire, Evadne, as a woman, should be a central signifier of home. We see her

desire for home (evidenced by her slippers and the cleanliness of her garret), but her

exclusion from correct domesticity nonetheless masculinizes her. However, in the

metonymic linking of females with the Other, with that which is outside civilization, we

see that in many ways Evadne is the ideal woman, ousted, outsided from the home, a

representative of the foreign culture. If Evadne stands in for Mary Shelley, then it is to

convey the uncanny experience of the English woman who feels like a foreigner in the

very place where her presence is absolutely essential. The revenge is to use the home—

where women are allowed—to invade the "paled demesne of civilization" (21), and to

inscribe upon it a reproductive nature with a force so strong that it will eventually erase

that barren and masculine civilization.

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[19] See. for instance. Anne K. Mellor's *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*.

Over the next two decades, as we shall see, notions of what constitutes domesticity will take on a very precise shape as the insides of home take form and reflect the relationships of those within it. How imperialism is understood will also shift radically; it will make itself comfortable inside the home. The empire remains outside, while the imperialist becomes part of the home. But the metonymic structure remains consistent, as does the unhoming of women.

III. "[H]ow could she really like an interloper, not of her race?": Trying to

Domesticate the World in *Jane Eyre*

> The said Eliza, John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their
>
> mama in the drawing-room: she lay reclined on a sofa by the fire-side,
>
> and with her darlings about her (for the time neither quarrelling nor
>
> crying) looked perfectly happy. Me, she had dispensed from joining the
>
> group . . . . (7)

Jane Eyre begins with this passage, which is in many ways a classic portrait of

domesticity. It recalls, for instance, Hemans' 1828 poem "The Homes of England" in

which each economic grouping is given a different, bucolic stanza (the urban garret is

not treated). The "merry homes of England," the second of five stanzas, portrays

families:

> Around their hearths by night,
>
> What gladsome looks of household love
>
> Meet in the ruddy light!
>
> There woman's voice flows forth in song,
>
> Or childhood's tale is told,
>
> Or lips move tunefully along
>
> Some glorious page of old. (9-16)

In *Jane Eyre*'s opening portrait, the "drawing-room" and sofa announce this as a

bourgeois home, spacious and comfortable, and the family members are enjoying a

leisure fitting that station. With the "fire-side" as its emblematic hearth, and the mother

in the middle of the family group, home is the centre of family, contentment, unity, and

physical comfort. Yet a number of details set the portrait apart from Hemans' poem. Jane's childhood "tale" (Hemans 13) is of being "dispensed from joining the group." Indeed, she has already characterized going home as "dreadful," "sadden[ing]" and "humbl[ing]" (Brontë 7). Jane's additional information shifts the focus from the ideal of the portrait to its frame of exclusion, and Jane's sarcastic intervention— "(for the time neither quarrelling nor crying)"—assures us that despite appearances, her exclusion is not the only deviation here from the domestic ideal. Purportedly drawing a portrait of idealized domesticity, then, Jane places it in context, and thus lacerates it.

A number of questions lie in the disjuncture between this opening portrait and its frame: what is domesticity in this house? What should it be? Who ought to be and who is included? Mrs. Reed contends Jane must become "'more natural as it were'" or else, in Jane's transcription of Mrs. Reed's words, the matron "'really must exclude *me* from privileges intended only for happy little children'" (7; my emphasis). By framing domesticity within nature, a trope present in *The Last Man*, Mrs. Reed attempts to control how the home is defined—and to define correct behaviour within its confines. Although in Shelley's novel abjection is aligned with the savage and wild, and here Mrs. Reed aligns Jane's abjection with the altogether unnatural, the effect is essentially the same: Jane's exclusion. Yet, quoting Mrs. Reed's pronouncement, Jane shows the matron's definitional terms to be illogical: if domesticity is natural, how can it also be a privilege? Her mode of a secondhand report ("'must exclude *me*'") underlines the contradiction, while emphasizing who controls this framework: through Jane's eyes, we see Mrs. Reed as unmotherly and hence as unnatural. In short, Jane makes clear that

whatever she wants from a classic portrait of domesticity, it cannot be found at Gateshead.

Jane's exclusion and its injustice should be clear from this opening. But the idealization of domesticity was evidently a powerful force; the first four chapters seem to be an argument against such an idealization, resplendent as they are with details of what the idealized portrait excludes, and how that exclusion manifests itself. "'You have no business to take our books,'" John Reed tells her, "'you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us'" (11). His insults make explicit what Mrs. Reed's "privileges" (7) only imply: the economics of "natural" domesticity. To be included in the domestic portrait, one must be bourgeois and, like Evadne in *The Last Man*, Jane is not rich. Bessie, the nursemaid, clarifies the repercussions. Jane ought to acknowledge that she is "'under obligations to Mrs. Reed,'" because the matron can send her to "'the poor-house'" (13), a place devoid of both privilege and domesticity. And regardless of her indignation, regardless of her efforts to dislodge the definitional link between privilege and domesticity, Jane apparently accepts the link as well. When she tell the apothecary that "'[i]t is not my house, Sir; and Abbot [Mrs. Reed's maid] says I have less right to be here than a servant'" (25), her sense of injustice is clear, but when he in turn asks if she would prefer to live with those to whom she is more closely related, though they are poor, she connects poverty with "fireless grates, rude manners and debasing vices" (25) and refuses the offer. The irony of course, is that both rude manners and, as we learn later (234), debasing vices are common amidst the wealth of Gateshead.

For Jane, like Lionel and Evadne in *The Last Man*, exclusion from domesticity translates into criminality. She describes herself as "always accused, for ever condemned" (15), and following her confinement in the red-room—which Jane likens to a "jail" (14)—she is shunned, anathema, allowed only "a small closet to sleep in" and confined to the nursery "while [her] cousins were constantly in the drawing-room" (27). The "debasing vices" (25) that Jane herself associates with the poor are thus linked to Jane herself and so, while she is allowed contact with servants (those other outsiders of domesticity who reside within the home), "a marked line of separation" (27) establishes a physical exclusion from the domestic circle that already "dispensed" (7) with her. With her comment that "Abbot I think gave me credit for being a sort of infantine Guy Fawkes" (26), this particular brand of incendiary and rebellious criminality then links her, her criminality and exclusion, to the only character in the novel who represents non-European culture: Bertha. Again, like Lionel, Jane slips from being a poor orphan into being a criminal, and then is associated with an outsider of European civilization.

A significant difference between Jane and Lionel, however, is that Jane's vocabulary shows a more detailed conceptualization of that outside of European civilization. She cries out in a "savage" voice (Brontë 39; cf. Shelley 11), but she also reacts like a "rebel slave" (12), and sits like a "Turk" (8)—a subject with whom Lionel never identifies himself directly. Notably, Jane's domestic relations are also more detailed than Lionel's. For him, the home *per se* represents domesticity—he is "savage" (11) (without a home) until he is civilized through it. Jane is a niece through marriage and a cousin, on the fringes of family, and though allowed in the home, she resides only

on its edges. In short, Jane's vocabulary for mapping her abjection reflects the complexity of her domestic reality.

Her account of the red-room incident and of her abjection there beautifully exemplifies how Jane uses the same map for both her internal world and the world outside.

> I was a trifle beside myself; or rather *out* of myself, as the French would say: I was conscious that a moment's mutiny had already rendered me liable to strange penalties, and like any other rebel slave, I felt resolved, in my desperation, to go all lengths.
>
> 'Hold her arms, Miss Abbot; she's like a mad cat.'
>
> 'For shame! for shame!' cried the lady's-maid. 'What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress's son! Your young master!'
>
> 'Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant?'
>
> 'No; you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep. There, sit down and think over your wickedness.' (12)

Jane first expresses her abjected exclusion by being not simply "beside [her]self" but "rather *out* of [her]self, as the French would say," with a linguistic move across the channel. The simile of a "rebel slave" after "mutiny" moves her to a still more distant geography. Because the adults introduce an English hermeneutics of outsidership— "'[s]he's like a mad cat'"—Jane does not irretrievably slip into the uncontrollable rebelliousness associated with enslaved blacks, but rather, skipping France altogether,

the geography of similes retracts to one with longer standing in English culture, and with no association of effective action—insanity. This retraction is furthered when Abbot positions Jane within the domestic sphere of Gateshead; Jane is an economic inferior, with a "benefactress" and "master." The recall is effective; Jane's expression of domestic abjection, mapped onto the geography of the world, retracts as well. Having likened herself to a slave, Jane now resists the extension of the simile and "Master" slips from the category of slavery to that of relative social and economic positioning within an English domestic environment: "'[h]ow is he my master? Am I a servant?'" As "Master" shifts categories, Jane does as well; not marked as black, she is white again, English, and weaker. While domestic exclusion equals being an orphan, a criminal, and a savage for both Lionel and Jane, Jane's slippage through this series of categories indicates a mapping of degrees: of domestic relations and metaphorically, of geographic proximity to England. Moreover, this geographical movement concisely demonstrates that both Jane's feelings and her place within the home are understood through a discourse taken from the pages of Victorian imperialism and its geographical expansion.

Indeed, the intricacies of her mapping, entirely absent in Lionel's discourse, also reflect broad cultural changes in the Victorian conceptualization of humanity in general, and of "race" specifically. According to the *OED*, in 1847, "race" still meant "a set of children or descendants" (1); "[a] limited group of persons descended from a common ancestor; a house, family, kindred" (2); "[a] tribe, nation, or people, regarded as of common stock" (2b); and "[a] set or class of persons" (8). By 1842, however, it meant something else as well: "[a] group of several tribes or peoples, forming a distinct ethnical stock" (2c). "Race" had come to mean groups of nationalities, "peoples,"

distinguished not by history, heredity, or association, but simply by physical attributes.

Nancy Stepan notes that though racial categorization first underwent "systematic

investigation" at the end of the 1700s, "[b]y the middle of the nineteenth century, a very

complex edifice of thought about human races had been developed in science,"

contending "that certain human groups were intrinsically inferior to others as measured

by some socially defined criterion such as . . . 'civilised' behaviour" (ix). The linkage of

inferiority with lack of civilization, present in *The Last Man*, by mid-century became an

inferiority "socially defined" but rooted in the body.[20] Phrenology, in particular,

proposed that propensities for individual behaviour were legible from the shape and size

of areas of the head and brain (called organs), and placed blacks, as a physical rather

than cultural group, on the bottom of an echelon and the European body at the top. Nor

did it stop there. The binary of "us" and "them" evident in *The Last Man* was becoming

a hierarchy, and the British—out of all Europeans—were ranked on the highest rung of

the physical ladder (17-19), a mapping of degrees of geographic proximity to England.

A convenient justification for various forms of English imperialism, phrenology

influenced popular thought and language. In 1838, Andrew Combe, one of its

popularizers, was appointed physician to Queen Victoria (Pears 50). Better known was

Combe's brother George, one of the founders and leading proponents of the movement,

and author of *The Constitution of Man*. Historian David de Guistino notes that this work

"sold 17,000 copies in little more than a year" (60) when Combe prepared it in a

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[20] One could argue that the representation of the sole black person in *The Last Man* as a dangerously

infected body speaks to a construction of physically based inferiority. On the other hand, the Plague itself,

with its ability to infect the white body, suggests otherwise.

"people's edition," a feat surpassing the previous year's success, selling "2000 copies in ten days" of the reissued, original text. In one form or another, the book "was soon found in respectable libraries and mechanics' institutes all over Britain" (de Guistino 3),[21] and the explicit appearance of phrenological discourse in Chapter 14 of *Jane Eyre* shows that Brontë was familiar with phrenology, and even kindly disposed to it. The spectrum of inferiorities hierarchized by phrenology, moreover is reflected in Jane's expressions of exclusion. As the lowest rung on the ladder—"less than a servant" (12)—as a racial outsider and non-European, and as the ultimate example of an individual pushed to the limit by economic disadvantage, the (black) rebel slave is the conceptual limit for Jane through self-ascriptions that travel increasingly away from the island of England, but assigning a French expression to one's subjectivity is evidently the slippery slope into these metaphorical regions of imperial subjection.

The above passage, however, also suggests that while one's body can be an irrevocable source of abjection, having the best body is not always enough to save one. There is still the danger of "going native," of not being able to cross back after having crossed "*out*." This danger is illustrated in *Bewick's History of British Birds* as a "broken boat stranded on a desolate coast" (Brontë 9), a description that, as we will see, also resembles Bertha's fate. Certainly, the isolation punishment that follows Jane's rebellion points to the immediate risk of desolation, and to how the danger of "going native" is applicable not only to those who travel abroad. Mrs. Reed's requirement for Jane's release—"'only on condition of perfect submission . . . shall [I] liberate you'" (18)—is cast in terms that denote an overlapping of incarceration, imperial stewardship

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[21] The Brontës were in fact members of one such mechanics' institute (Barker 177).

and slavery. Again, Jane's domestic exclusion is understood and expressed through the language of imperial stewardship. "[O]ppressed," she is positioned as a colonial native; her "wild, involuntary cry" (18), with its lack of civilization, positions her similarly. Such "wild[ness]" is an alignment with uncontrolled nature, and, as in *The Last Man*, uncontrolled nature (along with the altogether unnatural) is not admitted into the drawing room.

It is admitted into the house, however, unlike in *The Last Man*. Just as we saw an interlining between Jane's domestic reality and her vocabulary for mapping the outside world, in the red-room we see that Victorian imperialism and its geographical expansion are reflected in the physical home. Only one room—the red-room—is suitable for such "wild[ness]," and it is saturated in artifacts of homelessness, foreignness, oppression, and imperialist conquest. Recalling the tabernacle of Exodus, and the oppression and homelessness of the Israelites, the bed that "stood out like a tabernacle" also points to the tinge of immorality that adheres to Catholicism for Brontë, a sentiment which she associated with French-speaking people and which she expressed overtly in her later novel, *Villette*.[22] The bed's "pillars of mahogany" and the room's other furniture of this

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[22] One of *Villette*'s most shocking scenes is when the main character. Lucy Snowe, in the midst of a life-threatening depression, and isolated in the novel's fictional version of Brussels, is driven to visit, and confess to, a Catholic priest. Juliet Barker, in her biography *The Brontës*, points out that the incident was based on one of Brontë's most momentous experiences while in Brussels. She concludes that the event was "an indication of her desperate state of mind" (424). Having informed Emily of the incident, Brontë requested that it not be related to their father who "will not understand that it was only a freak" (cited 424). Presumably he was sympathetic to what Barker calls a "virulent antipathy to everything Catholic" (424) on the part of his eldest daughter.

same red wood (14) suggest the slavery of the West Indies, where the wood originates.

The drapery of "damask" (14)—so named for its origins in Damascus—is the least

exotic artifact in this room where non-English elements predominate. The red-room

replicates empire's relation to England in its furnishings, in its synecdochal exclusion

from ruling power—it is the antithesis of home rule—and in its "remote[ness]"(14) from

the home life centred in the drawing-room. Jane, who is so good at controlling the

frame of a scene, is framed by the saturating foreignness, and she is desperate to escape

it for the domestic circle, or to extend the metaphor, for the home of empire which

coexists—on unequal terms—just across the physical border of the door.

The drawing room, centre of domesticity, and the red-room, the holding place of

imported goods and abjected children, are extreme opposites. The border between home

and outside is no longer the garden gate, as in *The Last Man*. In Brontë's novel, the

outside world has moved into the home and the varying borders between out and in are

the thresholds of given rooms; Jane likens herself to a colonial subject not because she is

excluded from home, but because she is excluded from domesticity. Put differently, the

home contains both terms in the self/Other, in/out, home/empire dichotomies, and while

the opening portrait purports to show only the first set of terms, Jane is intent on

revealing the second set, on showing what idealization of bourgeois domesticity elides.

Nor are the drawing room and red-room the only examples of how the home is

hierarchized in its physical space. The nursery, where Jane lives almost exclusively

after the incident, is a particularly poignant example of how, in setting boundaries

around domesticity, the home lodges smaller homes within it; the nursery's use as a

reserve for long-term exclusion is possible, again, because of its remoteness from the

main life of the house: across its threshold, Jane can hear activities in the drawing room, but they are still hidden from her down a flight of stairs and behind doors (29). Certainly, the home's sectioning off is partly according to class and status, as with the "regions of the kitchen and housekeeper's room" (29) that are used by household members who serve domesticity but are not included in it. Yet the word "region" itself shows a conceptualization of the home that is influenced by England's geographic expansion. Thus when Jane comments that "the breakfast, dining and drawing-rooms were become for [her] awful regions on which it dismayed [her] to intrude" (32), it is an indication that imperialist discourse is at play. Having already made use of assumptions about domesticity and its link with contentment, unity and physical comfort in order to transform the drawing room into something not at all ideal, Jane here makes another fascinating reversal; from the civilizing force that home should represent, "region" suggests that with Jane's indignant (and here very English) exclusion, the drawing room has been transformed into its opposite—its horrible, foreign, savage opposite. Jane's argument against the idealization of domesticity is complete.

Unfortunately, like Lionel, once she thinks she has found domesticity, she puts under erasure everything she previously knew. Her first picture of Thornfield Hall is an unpretentious and whittled down version of the Reed family portrait: a "cozy and agreeable picture" of "[a] snug, small room; a round table by a cheerful fire; an armchair . . . wherein sat the neatest imaginable little elderly lady" with "a large cat [sitting] demurely at her feet" (100). The heart of domesticity is a home within the home where, again, a woman sits by a fireside with a companion. Jane's characterization of the scene as "the beau ideal of domestic comfort" (100) is not sarcastic, and need not be, but Jane

seems unaware that an ironizing frame has descended when she learns that this is merely the housekeeper's room. Thornfield's "eerie," "long, cold" "stairs and gallery, [which] suggest[ed] cheerless ideas of space and solitude" (102) also show that the hall is big enough to have homes within it, and Jane's tour of the hall confirms that, though domesticity is present, there are boundaries around it. Thornfield's most remote region, the third floor, is where the "'servants,'" according to Mrs. Fairfax, "'occupy a range of smaller apartments to the back'" (111). Though servants of sorts, both Jane and Mrs. Fairfax are assigned rooms below this storey, and the hierarchical intricacies of the hall, both in status and in physical space, start to emerge. More significantly, this floor is still further subdivided, and this subdivided area, most remote of all and close to the leads— the literal outside of the home—houses Bertha. Jane is of course kept from this knowledge of a haunting remnant from Rochester's imperializing past, first imported from the colonies to England, like the red-room's mahogany, and then required to live at the edges of the home, pushed, almost, to its literal outside.

However, downstairs, there is much that should alert her. The dining room is "large [and] stately," "with purple chairs and curtains, a Turkey carpet, . . . [and] one vast window rich in stained glass" (109). The connecting drawing room has "Tyrian-dyed" (109) curtains (also purple), "ottomans," and "Bohemian glass." In calling it "'a beautiful room'" (109), Jane again shows a blindness to the irony framing this home, since these rooms are reminiscent of the red-room. There, the drapery was of damask red (14); here the curtains are a degree away from red, a purple from Tyre (not far from Damascus). The stained glass windows evoke Catholicism. The "Turkey carpet," "ottomans," and "Bohemian glass," emblematic of the two largest empires directly pre-

dating the British empire (the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian), are a map of nineteenth-century British economic exchange. Whereas the red-room is filled with mahogany, however, here evidence of exchange with the West Indies is conspicuously absent. The third storey contains that artifact, in the form of Bertha. At Thornfield, the West Indies are the one region that cannot be domesticated.

With Thornfield housing both terms of the self/Other, in/out, home/empire dichotomies, imperialism has again moved into the home, and with this move, the boundaries of domesticity—which is present. but located in isolation of the foreign, in the "cozy and agreeable picture" (100) of a purely (and not particularly bourgeois) English room—again record a set of degrees, an expansionist structuring of the world. When, during the tour of Thornfield, Jane climbs onto the leads and "survey[s] the grounds laid out like a map" (111), she is turning on the landscape the cartographer's eye she has demonstrated in describing both her own interior and the interior of her current home. Jane's positioning at Gateshead, and her attempts there to find a subjective positioning by spanning the globe for a likeness should make her eye extremely astute at spying evidence of imperial exchange and foreignness, at registering its meaning, but Jane is apparently seduced by "the beau ideal of domestic comfort" (100). Nonetheless, the evidence of it that she records foreshadows both her inability to make that hall a home, and her desperate escape.

In contrast, "when I at last find a home," she tells us, that home "is a cottage" (377) with two rooms, and essentials of furniture. After her escape from Thornfield, Jane has learned the pleasures of modest living at Marsh End, and her cottage is probably even sparer than what Davidoff and Hall have in mind when they call that style of abode "the

quintessential image of early nineteenth-century desirable housing" (361). Jane's cottage could not house a bourgeois family comfortably—but nonetheless, like Perdita's cottage in *The Last Man*, it evokes the proper paradigm without, one should note, betraying any mark of privilege. Most noticeably, its only non-English artifact is a "set of tea-things in delf" (377), that is, an artifact from a longitude a number of degrees closer to England than the origins of a china tea set.

Foreignness is also virtually absent from Ferndean, Jane's final resting point. Situated in the "'desolate spot'" of a "thick and dark" (453) forest, the manor's "decaying walls" are "dank and green" (453). There is "a grass-grown track," "no flowers, no garden-beds; only a broad gravel-walk girdling a grass-plat and this set in the heavy frame of the forest" (453). These descriptions remind us of Lionel's diseased, overgrown England, and Ferndean does invite a connection between disease and nature gone out of control; earlier, indeed, Rochester "could find no tenant [for it] in consequence of its ineligible and insalubrious site" (453). Susan Meyer links its "dank" and "insalubrious" mist with "the unhealthy atmosphere of unjust hierarchy" and "the spectre of the racial 'other' [which] remains to haunt the ending of the novel" (93). Looking to *The Last Man*, however, we find another interpretation. The domestic sphere of Ferndean suggests a reproductive nature so strong that it erases all signs of that other sphere, of civilization and its apparent expansionist quest. Its "insalubrious site" (453) is precisely what excludes this last portrait of domesticity from the privilege of bourgeois economics, and by extension, allows nature free rein, thus becoming a home for Jane's "wild" (18) side, and becoming her own little plot of nature's revenge.

Moreover, in its saturating green and damp, Ferndean is paradigmatically English.

Its apparently unappealing damp is thus transformed into something that, in its very English appeal, forms an ironic frame around this last portrait of domesticity. The hearth, too, is not what we have been led to expect. Described as only a "neglected handful of fire burn[ing] low in the grate" (456), it recalls the "fireless grates [and] rude manners" (25) that, as a child, Jane associates with poverty. And here, with Jane's inheritance and the indecorous Rochester at her side, is the last ironic twist. Contrary to expectation, this is real domesticity. Alone in a two-room cottage will do quite well, but a damp, overgrown house with a "'poor blind man, whom [Jane] will have to lead about by the hand'" (469) is apparently ideal. It is not clear if Jane can see this ironic framing, but in its absence of privilege—found at Gateshead and Thornfield accompanied by emblems of empire—her comfort is understandable. Meanwhile, Brontë is showing that the inclusion of both terms in the self/Other, in/out, home/empire dichotomies inevitably entails a reserve for exclusion: class and imperialism are connected. The idealized bourgeois home is evidently antithetical to domesticity. Brontë remembers what Jane forgot: true domesticity is inward-looking and need not import wildness. Brontë is also kinder to her heroine than Shelley is to Lionel but, consequently, Jane never has to take that extra step towards embracing humanity as a whole.

Ferndean is the closure to the narrative of an in/out conflict. As an English child excluded from domesticity, Jane begins as a figure of abjection. She makes sense of and expresses this abjection by linking herself to other abjected figures excluded from the English domestic scene. On one level, when she says of Mrs. Reed, "how could she really like an interloper, not of her race?" (17), her subjective experience is traced onto the world, mapped by an imperialist discourse that equates the non-English with degrees

of abjection. Yet, on a literal level, "race" here refers to a relation of kinship, and when Jane ends her narrative by retreating to the insular Englishness of Ferndean, she is trading on these ambivalent meanings of race. Abandoning identification with abjected figures and replacing that identification with a domesticity that—with Rochester's help—is peopled with her own race, her concluding victory is in removing traces of the outside world. Yet the impact of imperial discourse, which makes that removal necessary, remains. Moreover, abandoning her identifications with colonial outsiders, finding a suitable and available mate, and purgation of her mate's connections with the colonial outside are all accomplished through the death of Bertha, "the woman from the colonies" as Spivak terms her (251). Nor can we forget that Jane can find her home only after acquiring, ironically, a suitable bourgeois income—the source of which is economic imperialism. The novel's closure to the in/out conflict, then, raises serious questions about whether Jane is in fact a figure of the excluded or of the complicit, that is, whether Jane is a representative of the inside, or of the outside, an ambivalence that mirrors the various meanings of "race."

In part because the interpretation of Jane's positioning depends on where in the narrative you look and how you read, it has been the biggest source of critical debate over the novel for well over a decade. What's more, since *Jane Eyre* has been a major locus of feminist criticism for the last twenty years, changes in that field are reflected in the critical positionings of Jane. For instance, feminist critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar began with an interest in articulating the oppression of women by men in their extremely influential book, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Following de Beauvoir's paradigm of the self/Other dichotomy (see Chapter I), they situate the female

figure—in this case Jane—as, by definition, the Other, in a self/Other dichotomy. In this

critical paradigm, *Jane Eyre* is precisely about overcoming the Othered positioning

(represented by Bertha) through achieving a unified self, a narrative "symptomatic of

difficulties Everywoman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome" (339). In

1993, Jenny Sharpe surmised that *Jane Eyre* appeals to feminist academics because it

shows the difficulties faced by a female subject in a male-dominated society, and in

response, "charts the development of female consciousness and presents an authoritative

narrating 'I' that exercises control over the life being read." This "poetics of women's

writing that centers on selfhood and self-consciousness," writes Sharpe, "is undeniably

informed by the consciousness raising so crucial to the women's movement of the

1970s" (30). Although referring to the novel's impact, her comments also help explain

the impact of Gilbert and Gubar's interpretation.

One important contribution made by Gilbert and Gubar that incidentally paved the

way for much of the postcolonialist criticism of their work was configuring Bertha as

Jane's double, and situating her as a central figure in the novel. Contending that a

double can represent "'the uninhibited, often criminal self'" (360), they argue that this is

Bertha's function: she "*does* . . . what Jane [really] wants to do" (359; authors'

emphasis).

Spivak, the first postcolonialist critic to discuss *Jane Eyre*, accepts this

interpretation, but criticizes the approval implicit in Gilbert and Gubar's analysis. Thus,

when Spivak concludes that Bertha's death is "an allegory of the general epistemic

violence of imperialism, the construction of a self-immolating colonial subject for the

glorification of the social mission of the colonizer" (251), it is a critique of Brontë, *via*

Gilbert and Gubar. By introducing imperialism into the dynamic, however, Spivak

made a number of things evident to future critics. For instance, the relationship between

Jane and Bertha is the most vivid link between patriarchal and imperial oppression—in

which "the metaphor of slavery is most vividly realized" (Meyer 77) in the figure of the

wife. The doubling of Jane and Bertha is also the most extended analogy between Jane

and a colonial Other in the novel, a kind of metaphorical climax in which the child

Jane's initial self-understanding is replicated amid the development of her self-

understanding as an adult woman. Meyer notes that when Bertha's

> 'black and scarlet' face emerg[es] from her prison, [it is] an event that
>
> makes clear that a wife of Rochester . . . is in the position of being his
>
> 'slave.' When Jane, who has just been pondering over assuming the
>
> name 'Mrs. Rochester,' looks in the mirror and sees a black face behind a
>
> wedding veil, we realize that becoming . . . a wife to a man like
>
> Rochester, with his history in the colonies and his dominating character,
>
> is dangerous. (77)

Most importantly to the development of feminist literary criticism, Spivak takes the

focus off male/female power dynamics and directs it at the female/female dynamics

between Jane and Bertha. Equating Jane with the self side of the terms of self and Other

forces an acknowledgement that women can also be figures of imperialist oppression.

Firdous Azim applies this formulation directly to a Hegelian model, arguing that "Bertha

Mason occupies the position of the obliterated and repressed Other, necessary for the

emergence of the central coherent and unified female subject and the narrative of her

development and growth" (175). Consequently, both Jane and the novel as a whole are

imperialist for Spivak and Azim, and Azim contends that "a central subject [that] seeks to establish itself through the eradication of Other subjects" is an "imperialist motif" (108). Nor would I contest this. But if one is focusing on male/female relationships, the fact remains that women, and Jane in particular, are positioned as abjected by male power.

Indeed, subsequent criticism has tended to integrate Spivak's concerns into a feminist framework. For example, Mary Ellis Gibson's 1987 article, "The Seraglio or Suttee: Brontë's *Jane Eyre*," configures Bertha as the Othered figure whose abjection enables Jane's success, but she reads this paradigm within a narrative structured around Jane's successful negotiation of struggles with male figures. In general, this theoretical strain places Jane on the outside with the oppressed, while implicating the novel as a whole in imperialism. Meyer was one of the first to argue this (1989), reworking her article in 1996 as "'Indian Ink': Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of *Jane Eyre*." She contends that Jane is racialized (her term for making a character implicitly rather than explicitly non-white by means of rhetorical strategies) by being likened to non-white figures of "unjust oppression" (64). Jane is thus outsided. However, because "the novel marks all aspects of oppression as 'other'—non-British, nonwhite, and the result of a besmirching contact with other peoples" (83), the author's position is the reverse. Brontë's "sympathy for the oppressed" coupled with her "hostile sense of racial supremacy" (63) results in "an implicit critique of British domination and an identification with the oppressed collaps[ing] into merely an *appropriation* of the imagery of slavery" (64; my emphasis).

Jenny Sharpe's formulation in "The Rise of Women in an Age of Progress: *Jane Eyre*," follows Meyer's in spirit, if not in detail. "Jane's struggle to overcome the class and gender restrictions placed on her is articulated through colonial tropes of bondage and liberation," she states (28). Acknowledging that metaphorical colonial subjects enable Brontë to "bring the force of political insurgency into the 'woman's sphere' of home" (43), her definitive conclusion is nonetheless that Jane's racialized figuration is constructed as something Jane must pass through and overcome—a juvenile stage, as it were—and race is reduced to "a transparent category of self-representation" (28). Again, Brontë's rhetorical strategy is expressive of—to use Meyer's phrasing—an appropriation of those within the imperial purview.

A similar line of argument—Jane is linked to abjected colonials but the novel is imperialist in tone—is presented by Elsie Michie and Joyce Zonana, both of whom are primarily concerned with the orientalism of the novel. Michie especially focuses on the passage in Chapter Nine when Rochester is figured as an oriental head of a seraglio that holds Jane. For Michie, the passage represents "Victorian women's fears that what lay beneath the civilized ritual of marriage was the buying and selling of wives" (137), and while "Jane positions herself . . . as dominated" (136), Michie is critical of the novel for using "racist stereotypes like that of the oriental despot" which function "as a screen" onto which Victorian women projected their "fantasies" of social change (140). Zonana contends that a "feminist orientalist discourse . . . permeates *Jane Eyre*" (593) which, as Meyer and Michie also argue, projects the master's deleterious power onto that which is outside the imperial homeland. All three comment on the how those with oppressive power are marked by the importation of non-white characteristics into features that are

otherwise white. Michie notes that swarthy Rochester is "repeatedly linked to exotic images of racial difference" (129); Zonana reads the correlation between Brocklehurst and the colour black as contributing to his figuration as a sultan, ruling over the community of females interred at Lowood (607); and Meyer adds imperious Mrs. Reed, John Reed who "reviles his mother for 'her dark skin'" though he resembles her, and the dark Blanche Ingram (79). For Meyer, the combination of hauteur and non-white visual markings is a sign that Brontë connects the character with problematic aspects of imperialism:

> By associating the qualities of darkness and imperiousness, Brontë suggests that imperialism brings out both these undesirable qualities in the imperialist, that British aristocracy in particular has been sullied, darkened, and made imperious or oppressive by the workings of empire. The arrogance arising from the wielding of despotic force, as well as a contaminating contact with the 'dark races,' has sullied the British and in particular made the aristocracy unpleasantly imperious. . . . (79)

For all three, then, Brontë's linking of Jane with non-white figures is overshadowed by the representation of oppression itself as rooted in non-white others.

Zonana also emphasizes that, historically, feminism has embraced Orientalism, and that the seraglio is a figure Mary Wollstonecraft "singles out as the grand type for all oppression of women" (600). Far from being an invention of Brontë's, by 1847 the seraglio was "ingrained in Western feminist discourse" (598). Since characterizing English masters as Oriental despots makes them distasteful and unjust *per se*, their oppression of Englishwomen is unjust by extension; the rightful place of (at least some)

Englishwomen, then, is with the masters. This strategy allows "Western feminist writers [to] rhetorically define their project as the removal of Eastern elements from Western life" (594). Again, the conclusion with regard to *Jane Eyre* is that Jane is outsided because of her oppression, but in identifying oppression itself as Other, the novel's—if not Jane's—positioning is reversed.

While the general consensus during the last ten years—Jane is out but the text is in—is a viable conclusion, there are a few things I find unsatisfying about it. For one, the implication is that Jane's growing complicity with imperialism allows patriarchal oppression to become tenable, and, moreover, that this is the overarching message of Brontë's novel. Simply put, if this is the case, it goes against the better part of the narrative, which demonstrates quite clearly that patriarchal oppression is never tenable. The *deus ex machina* this dominant interpretation suggests makes it particularly problematic to give the resolution so much weight that the entire narrative is read through the ending rather than the ending being read through the narrative. From another angle, the consensus is that while Jane starts out aligned with the second term of the self/Other, in/out, home/empire dichotomies, by the end of the book, she gets a home, attains a self, and so slips to the "in" side of the terms. But what happens if we concede this to be the case and extend the slide of dichotomies to include male/female? Does Jane become male? Male-identified?[23] Does Brontë? I think such an argument is difficult to support and, further, leads us away from a number of fundamental concerns

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[23]This is Sharpe's view, in particular concerning Indian women, through whom Jane asserts her "*racial superiority* [which]discursively resolves Jane's class and gender inferiority in relation to Rochester" (49; author's emphasis).

that Brontë—and Jane—express. And why, although imperial oppression is a useful metaphor for patriarchal oppression, are the two treated as essentially distinct categories, each with an *opposing*—albeit logical—answer to whether Jane is in or out, and whether Brontë is in or out? Brontë's metaphorical marriage of the two, her suggestion that patriarchal and imperial oppression are different sides of the same coin, should be a valuable line of approach for postcolonial critics who are also feminists (and my sense is that, self-described or not, that would include all of the above critics); it would also be in keeping with evidence from the text.

For another, when reading this criticism through such theorists as Butler and Bhabha, I become uncomfortable with fixing Jane's (and the text's) position as either out or in so as to either applaud or condemn Brontë. While I am not opposed to applauding or condemning writers for their political beliefs, it appears to me that some of this criticism uses Brontë to demonstrate the critics' lack of complicity with imperialism and racism. I acknowledge that because of when I write and whom I have read I can say that obviously Brontë and Jane participate in imperialist discourse, and most certainly, whether Brontë was conscious of this or not, it is bad; moreover, I do think that much of this work has real insight. Nevertheless, demonstrating that a nineteenth-century English writer is racist or complicit in imperialism is as easy as demonstrating that virtually any male writer of the past was sexist. To rediscover it over and over again is primarily an exercise in self-definition for the critic (if not self-congratulation: I'm not complicit in racism, imperialism, or sexism because I can spot it and criticize it in that writer's text). Once having established a writer's sexism, say, the next useful question must be what the author's construction of women says about his

construction of masculinity. Taking my approach from Bhabha and Butler, I have

already shown how the borders of home are established through imperialist discourse,

that is, how these two terms come to be defined through their dichotomous positioning.

In the next chapter I will examine the male/female extension of the above set of

dichotomies. I will show that Jane necessarily remains outsided. Just as importantly, I

will use the notion of the uncanny to explore the interlining of patriarchal and imperialist

oppression in *Jane Eyre*; and show how the female subject is formed through and

against these systems of oppression in the medium of domesticity.

IV. "'[I]t was her, and nobody but her, that set it going'": Imperialism Comes Home in *Jane Eyre*

"'You've hit it, ma'am," Jane is told when she guesses that the fire at Thornfield Hall involves Bertha. "[I]t's quite certain that it was her, and nobody but her, that set it going'" (450). Her informant then explains how Bertha left her temporarily unlocked room before setting the hall on fire. That is, she does not set fire to her home within the home; she burns that place of domesticity that excludes her. Bertha's locking in recalls Ellis's comment that the Gothic is distinguished by "houses in which people are locked in and locked out" (3), and true to Ellis's contention about the gendering of this containment, female characters are the only ones locked in—the red-room's door is also locked with Jane inside. But it could also be said that Bertha, who has been taken from her West Indian home and kept isolated at Thornfield, and Jane, who has difficulty finding a home, are locked out of domesticity. According to Ellis's paradigm, being locked out would indicate a male gendering, but this does not correspond with the text.

Something has shifted since the Romantic era and Shelley's novel. Indeed, we saw in the previous chapter that the insides of homes have changed in *Jane Eyre*, invaded as it were by the outside. If, as Armstrong argues, "the existing field of social information" by the 1840s was represented "as contrasting masculine and feminine spheres" (9), and the material world is thus understood as a map of gender differentiation, then how is the masculine constructed within the apparently opposite sphere? Certainly one shift from Shelley's to Brontë's novel is that men are generally less likeable: along with the outside moving in, the patriarchal structuration of the home has solidified.

Gilbert and Gubar point to a consistent male/female power dynamic in which male characters are always the masters of households and female characters find power only by functioning as patriarchal surrogates—Mrs. Fairfax for Rochester, "Miss Temple for absent Mr. Brocklehurst" (348); even the matriarch, Mrs. Reed, is a considerable distance from Shelley's Countess. Brontë's matriarch is merely a surrogate for the dead Mr. Reed "or immature John Reed" (348).[24] Zonana also identifies "a single master who rules in his absence as much as his presence" in every household, but she argues against women's complicity. Women are "dependent" and "subject to the whim" of their masters, each of whom "is characterized as a Mahometan despot" ruling over a household "constructed to resemble a harem" (605-06), an institution which, consistent with the Gothic, locks women inside the home. The identical male power structure, then, is interpreted as either patriarchal or imperialist. Another interpretation could be that the male domestic presence is defined within the home through a connection to the imperial outside. And this makes sense. If men are increasingly present in the home, to keep from being subsumed by feminine associations requires them to consistently demonstrate that they are representative of the opposite of home. Configuration as imperialists allows men more presence in women's sphere. Meyer argues that the dark features of imperious Blanche Ingram and Mrs. Reed indicate that "home has been contaminated by imperialism abroad" (78-79), and women may indeed participate in a domestic imperial presence, but Jane's configuration of these women as imperialists is most oblique, whereas she is considerably more direct with regard to male characters.

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[24] As Rochester's surrogate in relation to Bertha, one could add Grace Poole to the list.

Gibson details how every male is constructed as an imperialist in the novel: when Jane calls John Reed a "'slave driver . . . like the Roman emperors'" (Brontë 11), she draws the imperialist metaphor from the Roman empire (Gibson 4). Colonialist attitudes characterize Brocklehurst (Gibson 4), who terms Jane "worse than many a little heathen" (Brontë 69), and while Rochester is "Jane's legitimate master" through the economics of paid work, Gibson concludes that "the language of mastery and slavery" nevertheless predominates (2). St. John, in trying to manipulate Jane to marry him, extends this language by figuring himself as the representative of God, Jane's "great Master" (Gibson 4). Though the metaphor of imperial power distinguishes maleness, particularly patriarchal maleness, the presence of the outside in the home does not mean that the separate spheres have broken down, rather men control that outside within the home.

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Freud notes that "the constant recurrence of the same thing" is an aspect of the uncanny. If we recall his examples, "the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names" (234), then the distinct oppressive strategies shared among all the male characters—interpreted as either imperialist or patriarchal oppression—suggest a doubled relationship, and the text draws out this suggestion in a number of ways. St. John is likened to Reverend Brocklehurst (344), that other clergyman with enthusiastic affiliations, in behaviour and physique, as well as in career: the "hard" (363), "coolly" behaving (367) St. John is a "statue" (363),

with a forehead "colourless as ivory" (363), and he, to use Freud's words, shares "the same features" (234) as Brocklehurst, that "capital" crowned by a face "like a carved mask" (Brontë 32); Brocklehurst is a "rigid" (64), "black marble" (69), "stony" (33) "black pillar" (32). Jane, as well, identifies both as her "judge" (St. John, 365; Brocklehurst, 70 and 364). Similarly, John Reed, the figurative imperialist and template for male tyranny, is doubled with the more saintly version of a tyrant, St. John, the evangelical imperialist for the empire of God who cares more for marriage than he does for Jane. The recurring appellations of "Master" and "John" also signify the uncanny sharing of the "same name" (Freud 234), and a sharing of the same imperialist and patriarchal "crimes" (Freud 234), that is, a shared abuse of power. Just as Jane maps her abjection and the outside world according to degrees of proximity to England, so she details the degrees by which men represent this outside world, and delving into the construction of the male characters mounts an indictment of the patriarchy.

In a very different notion of imperialism from Shelley's anti-democratic tyrants, imperialism is here directed by Victorian England's geographic expansionism, a point best illustrated through the repetition of the name "John." John Reed stays at home enjoying the fruits of empire (a type also represented by Brocklehurst). St. John is colonialism's frontline soldier: willing to die for his cause, St. John is motivated by his "'vocation'" (394) in his Indian endeavors, what Jane calls "mission warfare" (387); and a third type of imperialism, economic, is best represented by the John so crucial to the turning of the plot, and yet virtually absent: John Eyre. St. John Eyre Rivers is John Eyre's nephew, a linking that places economic and cultural imperialism within the same

family, but the arguably ironic[25] "St." preceding the latter's name indicates a preference

for his imperialistic mode. The evangelical colonialist "'was a good man'" whom Jane

"'could not help liking'" (464), whereas John Eyre is distasteful, and his economic bent

makes him so. We know he had a hand in speculation that ruined the Rivers (377), and

that he divided his inheritance unjustly and vindictively (twenty thousand pounds to Jane

[402-03] and enough for Mary, Diana and St. John to buy mourning rings [377]).

The mapping of imperialism emerges from these details, and another detail, that

John Eyre died in Funchal, Madeira (308) while working as a correspondent for Richard

Mason, further suggests an important distinction between uncle and nephew, and how

the map of the world represents different brands of imperialism. Madeira, the source of

almost constant interest on the part of European trading nations (Spain, Portugal, France

and Britain) since the fifteenth century, is a series of islands on the sea route to India, the

location of St. John's interest. By 1658, the islands had a large British population and a

trading station with political powers centred in Funchal,[26] where Eyre dies, and the

islands as a whole were under a British military regime for two periods during the

Napoleonic Wars. In contrast, though India was without doubt an economic interest, the

character of St. John exemplifies how the popular imagination of the Victorian English

embraced, and supported, cultural conquest through the moral justification of spreading

Christianity, a mode of imperialism we now tend to tie to colonialism. There was no

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[25] See Meyer 87-90 for an overview of whether Brontë's portrayal of St. John is considered to be

sympathetic. Meyer points to "hints that St. John's fervent quest to convert the infidels is as misguided,

and as destructive, as Brocklehurst's charitable missions" (90).

[26] See Great Britain *Spain and Portugal*, government information authored by the Naval Intelligence

Division of the British Admiralty.

comparable cultural engagement with Madeira or its mode of economic imperialism, which now generally goes under the flag of free trade.

Taken together, these regions point to some of the interpretive problems critics have when tending to treat imperialism as a unified whole in *Jane Eyre*. Brontë (and Jane) clearly do not view it that way. The impact of both colonial and economic imperialism on women at home is deleterious, but the distinct moral connotations are important. In particular, economic imperialism is linked to slavery. Meyer states that the travelling itinerary of Mason, "a Jamaican wine manufacturer" and Eyre's employer, follows "the triangular route of the British slave traders, and suggests that John Eyre's wealth is implicated in the slave trade" (93). To date the novel's events, Meyer works backwards from 1846, when Brontë started *Jane Eyre*. At the end, Jane has been married for ten years, and a year previously, "Rochester tells Jane that he has kept Bertha locked for ten years in his third-story room," bringing us to 1825. Rochester's marriage to Bertha, occurring four years earlier, thus took place in 1821 (70). Meyer presumably supposes Eyre's participation in an illicit slave trade since in 1808 the trade had been abolished in British territories. Nonetheless, Brontë's mention of Madeira in her 1847 novel shows a development in the Victorian conceptualization of imperialism. A Christian-cloaked expansionism is here viewed as morally justifiable at the cost of a defunct, overtly economic, slave-based expansionism. Certainly, John Eyre's wealth is tainted: in passing to Jane, it must be sanctified by its equitable distribution among the cousins before it can "please and benefit" rather than "torment and oppress" her (407).

The novel's greatest hostility toward economic imperialism is reserved for Rochester. With interest neither in converting nor enlightening, his motives are economic pure and simple, and though portrayed as an almost reluctant imperialist—tricked, is the implication, by a plotting brother and father (322) into mastery over a West Indies plantation—he must pay for and sanctify his enrichment through a miserable marriage, the loss of Thornfield, and of a hand and an eye. Like John Eyre's, Rochester's economic imperialism puts his morality in question, with the subtext being that he acquired his wealth through a plantation run on slave-labour. Meyer's date of 1821 for Rochester's marriage to Bertha leaves little doubt that Rochester was a slave-holder since, though "declared in 1834," emancipation was not even fully complete in the West Indies until 1838 (70). The foreign artifacts that fill Thornfield (including Bertha) indicate his saturation in the outside, his masculinity, as it were, and for the ending to accommodate his marriage to Jane, these artifacts first must be destroyed, along with Rochester's overt male power, by fire and physical maiming, and second, Rochester's redemption must be of a specifically moral nature (472).

Nor does the variety of oppressions shown in the novel, in itself, indicate any pro-colonial sentiments. St. John's fervour is appalling, nor is he is spared the punishments meted out to each of the male characters: Brocklehurst suffers a "mortifying" enquiry into the deaths at Lowood, effectively, if not officially, concluding his reign (87); John Eyre dies; John Reed ruins "'himself and half ruin[s] his family, and is supposed to have committed suicide'" (234); and on the last page of the novel we learn that St. John's colonialism brings death upon himself (477). Indeed, through the repetition of "John," Brontë kills a member of each imperialist type. Imperialism, like race, is treated as a

spectrum, with each type ranked on a hierarchy of bad to worse. Almost a phrenology to

measure imperialists, this ranked variation recalls Jane's mapping of abjection by

degrees of proximity to England and to domesticity. Rather, imperialism is primarily a

form of male power and behaviour. Male characters are variations on a theme of

oppressiveness, and the overarching commonality—their maleness—shows imperialism

to be a face of patriarchy, with the types of imperialisms described forming a

topography of masculinity.

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John Reed and Brocklehurst most strikingly show that if there is no foreign field for this

imperialist behaviour, it will emerge in the home, and femininity is thus defined, in

contradistinction, as a powerless figuration as the colonized Other. Because the

heterosexual pair, therefore, necessarily introduces imperialism into the home, women's

position is conflicted. They are both the prime signifiers of the home, and the Others,

who are always already outside, and Jane's map of abjection is extended to all main

female characters who, doubling for her, represent various types of imperial subjection.

Moreover, as with St. John and Brocklehurst, the text draws out the linkage. Both Jane

and Helen Burns, for example, are orphans,[27] and the transience central to their lives is

reflected in their names: "eyre" is an itineration, a circuit of a court, or the record of that

court (OED), and Helen, if traced to *The Iliad*, signifies an expulsion from home and consequent wandering. In reaction to this transience, they both long for a permanent home, and hearing that Helen will "'not be here long'" (83), Jane assumes that her friend will return to "her own home" in Northumberland (83), a misinterpretation that, while partly childish naivete, indicates the trajectory with which Jane constructs narratives: there must be a home at the end of the story. Upon realizing that Helen is going to "the region of spirits" (83), Jane still holds tenaciously to the narrative resolution for which she herself longs, and asks, "'[a]re you going home?'" Helen's response shows that she too interprets home as the necessary endpoint to domestic exclusion: "'[y]es; to my long home—my last home'" (85). Previously, Bessie sings that "Heaven is a home" for "the poor orphan child" (23), and Helen extends Bessie's analogy by endowing death with signifiers of family: "'God is my father,'" she says, and then, less typically, she comments that she is going to her gender-inclusive "'universal Parent'" (85). Death, the inevitable end of Helen's story, is constructed as a portrait of a domestic nuclear family.

The slippage from domestic exclusion to colonial outsider occurs when Brocklehurst calls Jane "'not a member of the true flock,'" and "'worse than many a little heathen who says its prayers to Brahma and kneels before Juggernaut'" (69). He is obviously positioning Jane as an Indian colonial subject, and after placing her on a stool to be ostracized—at which point Jane refers to herself as "a slave or victim" who is "exposed to general view on a pedestal of infamy" (70) that recalls the cross—Helen

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[27] Helen is functionally rather than strictly speaking an orphan. She tells Jane of her father, but "'he is lately married, and will not miss me much'" (85). The likelihood of her claim is supported by her explanation of why the girls are sent to Lowood: "'all the girls here have lost either one or both parents,'" she says to Jane, "and this is called an institution for educating orphans'" (52).

passes near to show her support. Jane likens her to "a martyr, a hero" (70), a description

suiting the Christianity which permeates Helen's character, but by placing Jane on a

figurative cross and martyring Helen, Brontë transforms them into paradigmatic

Christians—not oppressing others (like St. John), but rather—abjected in their

oppression by an empire; Brocklehurst, in turn, is transformed from a Christian to, like

John Reed, a figurative tyrant from the Roman empire that executed Jesus and the early

martyrs. Both girls are figured as abjected subjects of empire, albeit very different

colonial subjects from Jane's earlier "rebel slave" (12).

Adèle, "'a French dancer's bastard'" (318), is also Jane's double. Hearing that

Adèle is "'parentless—forsaken by her mother and disowned by [Rochester] . . . a lonely

little orphan,'" Jane "'cling[s] closer to her'" (152), but this orphanhood—and her

subjection to Rochester's hostility—is notably the only aspect of Adèle's abjection to

which Jane clings. The English history of very real imperialist interests in France that I

discussed in Chapter I manifests itself explicitly. Discounting illegitimacy with the

argument that Adèle is "not answerable for . . . her mother's faults" (152), Jane remains

anxious that Adèle will inherit vices through her French body. "'[C]oquetry runs in her

blood, blends with her brains, and seasons the marrow of her bones'" is how Rochester

puts it (146), and Jane's view, though less abusive, amounts to much the same judgment:

Adèle has a "superficiality of character, inherited probably from her mother, hardly

congenial to an English mind" (152). The source of this inheritance, Céline Verens—

the "dancer" (318), or "opera-girl" (152)—stands in for one of many types of

womanhood that Rochester, and of course Brontë, unflatteringly describe (Blanche

Ingram and Bertha are others). Certainly, the long bourgeois tradition of looking down

on actors is at play here, but the vices represented by the French body betray a phrenological ranking in which the British body is at the top of the echelon. In the red-room, Jane connects herself to the French in her movement toward absolute abjection, and here again, that is how a French body is configured. Adèle also represents a complexity to the doubling relationship. Jane's comment—indicating the French body's incorrigible flaws—that as Adèle "grew up, a sound, English education corrected *in a great measure* her French defects" (474; my emphasis) recalls St. John's mission in India of hegemonic education, and the parallels of empire and abjection become clear. This time, however, while Jane's double is again abjected by empire, the empire in question is British.

That critics do not seem to be bothered by the derogatory treatment of the French in *Jane Eyre* raises another point. Here, Jane actively participates in the abjection of another; that is, her implication in the dynamic is uncontestable. Based on the model of a binary choice between an in/out configuration, Jane must be in, Adèle must be out. But if Brontë is using Jane and Adèle's relation to illustrate a type of abjection—and perhaps to confront some of her own anti-French sentiments—then Brontë is critiquing Jane's complicity within an abjecting system. The critical consensus—Jane is out, Brontë is in—would have to be reversed. Of course, while all of this is dependent on whether Brontë knew what she was doing, and this is impossible to demonstrate, the circulation of knowledge, with its uncanny secrets, blind spots and ironies, does suggest that Brontë knew more than she is generally given credit for.

The figurative significance of doubles is first hinted at right before Jane loses consciousness in the red-room, when she sees in the mirror something that is not exactly

herself: "[a]ll looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow . . . and the strange little

figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering

eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit" (15). This is

only one example of how, when Jane describes her reflection, it is consistently in terms

denoting something other than herself: "*it* was no longer plain: there was hope in *its*

aspect, and life in *its* colour" (269-70; my emphasis); "I saw a robed and veiled figure,

so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger" (300). Jane seems

quite ready to distance herself from whomever resembles her, whether it be Adèle, or

her own literal reflection. Before Jane loses consciousness "for the second time in my

life—only the second time" (298), a "[f]earful" (297) face again appears in the mirror.

The eyes, "glittering" when she first lost consciousness, are now "fiery" (297), and

rather than white, this face is "darker": "'[i]t was a discoloured face—it was a savage

face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of

the lineaments! . . . [It was] purple: the lips were swelled and dark . . . the black eye-

brows wildly raised over the bloodshot eyes'" (297). This time, of course, the "it" is

Bertha.

Gilbert and Gubar's discussion of *Jane Eyre* uses these mirror images (359) to

suggest a doubled relation between Jane and Bertha, and indeed, they must be credited

with first introducing the notion of doubles to interpretations of the novel. They show

that the two characters act alike, pacing "'backwards and forwards'"; both are seen to

behave as "'bad animal[s]'"; both are described as "fiends[s]" (362) and in otherworldly

terms: "half dream, half reality" versus "'malicious elf,' 'sprite,' 'changeling,'" (391).

Again, the text draws out the suggestion of doubling. Bertha also represents—in the

most literal terms, and in the most extended analogy—a colonial subject. It must be noted here that there is much debate around Bertha's position as a colonial subject, specifically concerning whether or not she is black. Gilbert and Gubar repeatedly link her hideousness to the darkness of her skin, lips, and hair, suggesting that they view her as such.[28] Sharpe, by contrast, maintains that Bertha is white, "a female version of the 'immoral West Indian Planter,' a literary stereotype that, following the abolition of the African slave trade, was commonly invoked as 'a useful shorthand for depravity'" (45). Sharpe's argument highlights that since Rochester's plantation came to him through marriage, Bertha must be from the slave-owning class, and these roots could well explain Brontë's figuration of her as an appropriate scapegoat. However, Meyer's argument presents a counterpoint. She comments that while "[t]he word 'creole' was used in the nineteenth century to refer to both blacks and whites born in the West Indies" (68), the text nonetheless racializes Bertha until "her blackness is made explicit" (68). While I think Bertha is racialized in Meyer's sense, whether black or white, what is most important to my argument that Bertha is a colonial subject, and she is also an extreme example of abjection. However, the text's inscription of ambiguity around her race bears a striking resemblance to Jane's own slippage from the black "rebel slave" (12) back to the white English child, and the overlays of signification around the word "race" while Jane is at Gateshead; it indicates, that is, a typology of abjection modeled on a phrenological hierarchy. Bertha's abjection resembles Jane's abjection as a child so much, that it is best described in Jane's words. Bertha may not be a "rebel slave" (12), but as the recalcitrant property of her husband, she is treated as one; and home's

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[28] Their derogation also now appears to participate in the novel's racist and hegemonic discourse.

civilizing force is again transformed into its savage—and foreign—opposite for Bertha, as it was for Jane when she commented that "the breakfast, dining and drawing-rooms were become for [her] awful regions on which it dismayed [her] to intrude" (32). Bertha, then, represents the terrible underside of idealized domesticity that Jane has apparently forgotten about since her arrival at Thornfield, but which Brontë evidently remembers.

For Gilbert and Gubar, the significance of Jane and Bertha's doubling is that Bertha is Jane's "agent" (360), and the implication here (which Spivak makes explicit) is that Jane and Bertha have a master/slave relationship. If this is the case, however, it is the only incidence of a master/slave dynamic in a doubled relationship. No such dynamic is evident among the male characters, nor is it present in any of Jane's relations with her other doubles. Helen may show mastery, and Jane calls herself a "slave" (70), but Brocklehurst represents the first term in the master/slave dichotomy; with Adèle, Jane shows mastery, but Adèle is not configured as a slave in contradistinction. Indeed, Rochester is a master to both. Helen and Adèle are Jane's doubles largely because they share the same positioning, just as the male doubles share the same positioning of Master. The function of doubling in *Jane Eyre* is to indicate a common position, but by introducing degrees of oppression and subjection to the concept of separate male and female spheres, Brontë is overlaying onto it a phrenological model of difference. For Gilbert and Gubar, since Bertha is Jane's "agent" (360), she enables us to read Jane's anger at the patriarchal system. Bertha tears Jane's wedding veil because Jane secretly wishes it torn; Bertha's crazy laughter expresses Jane's rage, as does Bertha's attempt to burn Rochester in his bed; when Bertha sets fire to Thornfield and kills herself, she is

acting "as if she were an agent of Jane's desire as well as her own" (360). However the novel is silent as to Bertha's motivations for doing anything.

An alternate reading that allows Bertha a will of her own (not to mention some virtue) would suggest that Bertha tears Jane's wedding veil to warn Jane that as a wife— as with the objects of imperialist exchange that fill the rooms of Thornfield—one can slip from the human to the category of property. Bertha may be warning her to indeed take seriously Rochester's announcement to Jane that "once I have fairly seized you, to have and to hold, I'll just—figuratively speaking—attach you to a chain like this" (283-84). Rather than Bertha's laughter expressing Jane's rage, in this reading, Bertha is laughing at the irony that has descended on Jane unbeknownst to her. Bertha seems to know that Jane is also susceptible to being reduced to helplessness and madness,[29] to know that, as in the red-room, having a body that is not racialized will not save Jane from having the body of a woman. When Bertha sets fire to Thornfield Hall and kills herself, she could be cognizant that this is the only way to end her misery, and her dramatic demise could foreshadow the end Jane would have met had she proceeded with her initial wedding. Perhaps Bertha is Jane's knowing double, the uncanny manifestation of Jane's repressed knowledge.

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[29] In *Uneven Developments*, Mary Poovey argues that as a governess, Jane is already culturally linked to "such aberrant women as [the] lunatic, [and the] prostitute" (143).

We have already seen that while Jane's knowingness about the implications of domestic idealization are central at Gateshead, this knowledge is in abeyance at Thornfield; moreover, it remains so until the revelation that Bertha is Rochester's wife. This revelation returns Jane to her initial self-understanding. She tells us—in the third person, evoking the descriptions of her reflection in the mirror—"Jane Eyre . . .was a cold solitary girl again" (309). She describes the world around her as "waste, wild, and white as pine-forests in wintry Norway" (310), recalling the pictures in *Bewick's History of British Birds*. She even compares herself to "the first-born in the land of Egypt" (310), and in returning to the book of Exodus, she returns to the site of her original trauma, the red-room with its bed "like a tabernacle" (14) where the underside of domestic idealization made its fiercest show. Jane's initial position, trapped in a home with those who are foreign to her—and in the red-room, trapped within her abjection signified by the foreignness around her—also precisely describes Bertha's position. Thus, the most ironic portrait of a domestic situation in the book is the one Jane herself is least conscious of—the likeness of herself and Bertha.

In Freud's words, Bertha is that "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud 220), but seems new and foreign. She is the uncanny, the secret knowledge from which Jane is excluded, and transformed into a secret, she is the crucial element that turns what would be a familiar domestic situation into a haunting. Rochester denies any knowledge of her, and as the object of denial, she repeatedly returns—the repressed forcibly reasserting its presence—escaping from the third storey of which, Mrs. Fairfax declares, "if there were a ghost at Thornfield Hall, this would be its haunt" (111). The most spectacular assertion of Bertha's presence

comes with the conflagration of light that brings her to the eyes of the neighbourhood—the woman imported from the West Indies is literally unhomed—and then destroys the site of home/unhome, Thornfield Hall. Bhabha's "intervention of the 'beyond' that establishes a boundary" (Bhabha 9) comes into play when, in the interchange of the familiar and unfamiliar, a woman has been made an outsider within the domestic sphere. Beyond again intervenes, this time devolving onto Jane by making the domestic home elusive to the governess, and propelling her out of the home then onto the moors, homeless, with the discovery of Bertha's marriage to Rochester.

The knowledge that Bertha represents, moreover, is not only Jane's forgotten knowledge of past abjection; Jane's sympathy for Bertha, as an object of Rochester's hatred, draws out her suspicions regarding the future. "'If you were mad, do you think I should hate you?'" Rochester asks. "'I do indeed, sir,'" she says (317). Her reluctance to marry Rochester at this point emerges from her own position as unhomed: she is too conscious of the borders between home and not home to be at rest within domesticity. As much as the desire that Gilbert and Gubar see Bertha representing, she can also be said to represent Jane's subjection and abjection, to represents Jane's fear that she is eerily unable to know enough of the world around her, to contain it within a frame, ironic or otherwise, in spite of the attempts that her narrative bespeaks.

At last, we can see a clear split between the narrator, Jane, and the author, Brontë. The author knows what the narrator cannot see—Jane's ironic seduction by Thornfield Hall's promise of domesticity—and the author can also see the underside to that idealization. Jane may close her narrative contentedly, but the novel betrays a terrible anxiety about the role of women in the home, about how domesticity fails women. The

portrait that opens *Jane Eyre* is a miniature of the novel as a whole, and the Victorian ideal, with its (present even when absent) paterfamilias and angelic mother is shown to double for its savage opposite as imperialism, with its excluding structures, is imposed onto the home front of domesticity.

In a paradoxical positioning we have already seen in *The Last Man*, women are central signifiers of home and, at the same time, they are outside it as signifiers for foreign cultures to be conquered. Women's position is the *unheimlich*—or as Bhabha translates it, the unhomed. Jane may not always wish to see the parallels between herself and other women, but Brontë nonetheless shows that the condition of the English woman is the uncanny experience of those who are positioned as foreigners in the place they are also asked to represent. When Bertha burns down Thornfield Hall, it may or may not be, as Gilbert and Gubar argue about her other actions, "what Jane wants to do" (359), but it is Brontë's doing, and the picture of the abjected wife burning down the home is the most spectacular laceration of domesticity in the book.

V. "[T]he portal yawned void" and "blank desertion within": Conclusion

Alas! for love! if *thou* wert all
And nought beyond. Oh earth!

Felicia Hemans, "The Graves of a Household" (1826)

The legacy of empire that is most directly connected to this thesis is the study of English
literature, which is a mainstay not only in departments of English, but also in the more
broadly-defined departments of "Literature" throughout North America, with Victorian
literature functioning as a centrepiece. And while there is an aesthetic to Victorian
English literature that I love, I am drawn at least as much by the aesthetic of studying it.
I have only sporadically found validation for myself as a woman when reading the
reclaimed works of English women writers such as Shelley and Brontë, since virtually
all of the female characters are entirely strangers to me, from the pre-Victorians in
Shelley's novels to the post-Victorians in Woolf's. Rather, coming from a background
of East-European Jewish immigrants (women who would have been tossed out of the
homes in these novels for their behaviour as much as for their background), I have found
reading English literature to be an act of authorizing myself. By gaining a fluency in
this much-lauded imperial cultural product, I am enabled to speak about power from a
position other than abjection, and I can speak about it with a vocabulary—and
sometimes with a tone—that befits that power.

Having now so much as admitted that I have always viewed English literature,
regardless of whether it is authored by women or by men, as power, I should also say
that those moments of validation I have felt along the way have largely come from the
anger that is present in so many texts by women authors, in the frustration that
accompanies the sense that things should not be the way they are. I started this thesis

with the intention of using literature as a cultural product, hoping that in it I could locate

ways in which women, at home, were complicit in an imperialist project that was largely

conducted afar. The implicit racism, the imperial structuration of the home, however,

began to seem like only part of the story. What I continually returned to was Shelley's

and Brontë's response to the imperial invasion of the home, their very personal-seeming

anger at how the imperial project had an impact on women's lives, and their anger at

how the concretization of the separate spheres and the corollary development of

domesticity—which Rybczynski calls "the feminization of the home" (72)—seemed, on

the evidence of these novels, to be unsettling women's position in the home.

In this sense, the most striking similarity between *The Last Man* and *Jane Eyre*

is the image of the empty home in both, and its clear representation of anger at how

women's lives are controlled by domesticity. However, the tone this image carries in

these two texts is remarkably different. For Lionel, who sits "hour after hour, at the

door . . . unable to lift the latch, and meet face to face blank desertion within" (356), the

empty home is a profoundly sorrowful image. For Jane, it is almost cheerful. Seeing

that Thornfield's "portal yawned void . . . [and] all had crashed in," she comments, "[n]o

need to cower behind a gate-post, indeed!—to peep up at chamber lattices, fearing life

was astir behind them!" (447). Releasing Jane from "cower[ing]" and "fearing life," the

empty home is a liberatory image.

Though not less angry in its cheer, Brontë's novel is less threatening. *The Last*

Man implicitly declares that making women strangers in their homes will bring on the

death of domesticity, and then the death of all humanity. The stakes are high. The anger

in Brontë's novel is directed more explicitly at men, and their manner of controlling

women through the home. The burning of Thornfield—a very dramatic emptying— arises from a passionate resentment at domestic mistreatment. This anger does not withdraw women's presence, as in Shelley's novel; it destroys Rochester's power. The individual woman—even Bertha, the most helpless individual woman—is significantly more able to do real (rather than Evadne's representative) harm in *Jane Eyre*. And whereas all the women die in Shelley's novel, Jane walks away from burned-out Thornfield unscathed, even the better for it. Shelley apparently cannot imagine a world without domesticity of any sort, or a utopian domesticity; her project is to highlight the dangers should things continue as they are. In contrast, the solidification of patriarchal power, and the divisibility of home and domesticity, in *Jane Eyre*, seems to have focused the problem. Brontë simply transplants Jane to another locale in which men have less power and women have more, a vision likely connected to the degrees of difference that Jane introduces to the separate sphere binary.

The manner in which Shelley and Brontë conceptualize the world is relevant here. Shelley's binary of "Turks and Tyrants against Xtians & the Would-be-free" (April 17, 1821; 1: 189) is a world in which the alternatives are us, with our flawed civilization (including domesticity), or them, with no civilization (or domesticity) at all. Brontë, however, is writing at a time when Britain was increasing its already substantial imperial power. England—as Ferndean suggests—may be the best of all possible worlds, but the overlay of phrenological hierarchies onto the world at large, and Jane's searching identifications with other nationalities to express her unmet needs, show that Brontë has indeed found a place for the world in England, a place of the imagination.

Though Shelley herself may have loved to travel, from the perspective of the one who stays home, in *The Last Man*, the regions outside England represent an opportunity for men to leave women behind. The "blank desertion" (356) of home that Lionel finds is also what characterizes Perdita's home when Raymond goes to Greece. As her name suggests, Perdita is abandoned. Jane is abandoned too, but she shows no fear of being left. Rather, as she demonstrates at Thornfield, Jane is the one who does the leaving. In both, however, there is a fear of what men will bring back should they return. For Shelley, this is represented by the Plague, the "evil [that] is come home to us" (192), invading the home and destroying the family. For Brontë, what men bring home from abroad is more overtly connected to various forms of imperialism, but it also invades and destroys (a trope that, incidentally, is also perfectly exemplified in *Wuthering Heights* when the father brings the destructive Heathcliff home).

In spite of these differences, however, women's position does not change dramatically. To the contrary, the linchpin between the two texts is women's position within the domestic system, paradoxically representing the home while being linked oppositionally with the Other and imperial outsiders. In short, both of these texts demonstrate that women's position is necessarily uncanny. The homes empty of women signify the experience of being unhomed, outsided by domesticity; they show a desire to refuse participation in a domestic world that plays so great a part in their authors' imaginations; they represent a violent anger at women's positioning. Interestingly, both novels end with books: Brontë's ends with Revelation, perhaps tying in with Jane's own revelation about the real nature of Thornfield Hall, and in Shelley's "the principal are Homer and Shakespeare" (120), classics of Western civilization that nonetheless show,

in Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth for instance, particularly angry women. For both

Shelley and Brontë, the self-referential inclusion of a reading and writing community—

both novels are also constructed as autobiographies—suggests that for English women

who feel unhomed from domesticity, literature can take the place of home, a safe place,

a place to express anger. "These are wild dreams," Lionel says, ending his narrative.

"[T]hey have ruled my imagination" (367).

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