

A postcolonial, feminist reading of the representation of 'home' in

Jane Eyre and *Villette*

by Charlotte Brontë.

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It has not been submitted before for any degree at any other university. Where use has been made of the scholarship of other authors, they have been duly acknowledged in the text.

Camille Tabosa-Vaz

As the candidate's supervisor I hereby approve the submission of the thesis for examination.

Professor Margaret Daymond

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation comprises an exploration of the concept of home and its link to propriety as it was imposed on women, focussing specifically on *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* by Charlotte Brontë. These novels share a preoccupation with notions of ‘home’ and what this means to the female protagonists. The process of writing on the part of the author, Charlotte Brontë, and the act of first-person narration on the part of the two female protagonists, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, is significant in that the “muted culture” of women (Showalter 1999: xx) of the nineteenth century was given authorial and authoritative power in their stories. Questions of identity and location developed from Jane Eyre’s and Lucy Snowe’s being orphans, penniless and without homes. Subsequently issues of ownership and self-sufficiency emerged in their stories, all of which found particular focus in the home. This “muted culture”, examined through the theories of marxism and new historicism, is also illuminated by a feminist analysis of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* which reveals that the marginal female figures are entitled to, or deserving of, the privileges of home and selfhood only once they have made some sacrifice for this “unthinkable goal of mature freedom” (Gilbert & Gubar 2000:339). The exploration of ‘home’ finds resonance in a post-colonial context, as Brontë encompassed marginal figures in her society who remained homeless, bereft of their stories due to the effect of drastically “interrupted experiences” (Ndebele 1996: 28) in the process of identity formation. The situated analysis of the concept of home operates in two contexts in this thesis, that of nineteenth-century Britain and twentieth-century South Africa. Njabulo Ndebele states that South Africans have been marked by the experience of homelessness, “The loss of homes! It is one of the greatest of South African stories yet to be told” (1996: 28-9). By drawing on Brontë to illuminate the concept of home, a South African reader is able to further an understanding of the multi-faceted nature of this concept and to see that the new possibilities claimed for marginal figures at the periphery may have their origins in the representation of an earlier woman writer’s “double-edged” (Eagleton 1988: 73) representation of ‘home’.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the space where a defined group of human beings exists, in the indefinite general area where personal material possessions are located, 'home', in a broad sense, defines that space, transforming a formless area into *place*: space is defined by its use or character. Thus when *space* serves to house a group of inhabitants such as a family, it becomes *place*, giving identity to both the space it occupies and the inhabitants of that space. Therefore, 'home' makes space into place. The home is not merely a physical structure that provides shelter from the elements. It is the place where life begins, where character and identity are developed, where the human soul is nurtured and where fond memories are created. Such places become symbolic, when a sentimental attachment to the home and what it signifies is formed, and feelings of loyalty are cultivated. These comprise some of the assumptions associated with the home, the sentimental attachments to a place often associated with childhood. 'Home' becomes more than a physical space, as ordinary as bread and children, but of vital importance to growth. Individual identity is derived from the sense of 'home'. The material objects serve to represent the house, representing family name and standing in society, and is symbolic of belonging in society and social aspirations. Belonging implies not only integrating into the space of home but into the space of society. The trope of the house reflects the significance of individual human life in relation to the social structure. Therefore, if you belong in the home, it may be inferred that 'home' makes a further 'place' for you in society, facilitating belonging in an intimate private space and in the public arena.

The principal concern of this thesis is the concept of 'home' in two contexts, that of nineteenth-century Britain and twentieth-century South Africa. The former point of interest has initiated an examination of the representation of home in two novels by a Victorian writer of fiction, Charlotte Brontë. I will

establish how these seemingly disparate entities can be related and made to work together to facilitate a distinctive postcolonial, feminist reading of the representation of 'home'.

As a South African reader in the 21st century, my interest in interpreting the concept of 'home' has directed me to the work of Charlotte Brontë, who depicts women writing 'home', and the divided position of the woman as author of her story and as inhabitant within the home. She is thus faced with the anxiety of authorship and the principles of domesticity that are at once upheld and subverted through the process of writing. Brontë writes about the home, reflecting the universal, inherent need to establish a suitable 'home', while questioning the fundamental ideals upon which the concept of 'home' is founded. This ambivalent attitude to home, expressed by female first-person narrators who grapple with the task of telling their own story in a society of self-less women, is further complicated by their orphaned condition:

Writing the first person narrative becomes for these female protagonists, a means of questioning the order of their lives and then a way of reordering it....Often it becomes an act of recuperation and reconciliation... (George 1996: 134)

The stories told by Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, the orphaned female protagonists in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* respectively, have significant bearing on the lives of South African readers today. The condition of the orphan is a position which emphasises the marginality of an individual without connections and without an authentic sense of 'home' or identity as defined by domicile and relations. Every place in which an orphaned individual attempts to locate him/herself therefore serves as a surrogate home and the temporary and impermanent nature of these homes lends the individual's sense of self-worth and self a precarious and unstable quality. The rereading of classics, specifically the work of Brontë, reveals notions of home and, simultaneously, feelings of

homelessness which resonate in South African society where, according to Njabulo Ndebele, most South Africans share the experience of homelessness: “The loss of homes! It is one of the greatest of South African stories yet to be told” (1996: 28-9). Ndebele is referring to the change in the political and geographical landscape of South Africa, where inhabitants in African rural and urban areas were denied homes, evicted and forced to live elsewhere as buildings were demolished. These homeless South Africans were made marginal figures. Now, enfranchised South Africans are attempting to resettle in areas of their birthright or establish homes in new areas of settlement. Ndebele’s concern is that South Africans damaged by previous dislocation and alienation cannot successfully settle and carry out the work of establishing the relationships that properly belong in a new home. Thus a stable society is not being productively created. Those who comprised the margin of society now have voice, but as the boundaries shift it has become difficult to establish who we are in relation to where we live as the ‘surrogate’ impermanent nature of ‘homes’ in the new South Africa affects the process of identity construction.

The South African story - the loss of homes - continues to evolve, and Dennis Moss, a South African urban designer, advises: “We must consider the act of dwelling”, because “[y]ou can’t divorce human life from place...” (2006: 18-19). Max Ntanyana and Fonky Goboza, activists in the Mandela Park anti-eviction campaign, discuss the recent government evictions of squatters in Mandela Park, highlighting the idea that individual and community identity is defined by the home, and the intertwining relationship of human life and place:

Apartheid was undone bit by bit by endlessly multiple acts of resistance and lines of flight. By the early 1980s people were moving from the rural Transkei, where apartheid sought to keep them, and on to Cape Town in such numbers that the state lost the capacity to regulate the borders between its two opposed zones. Around the country *people who were taking control of new spaces gave those spaces names*. And the people

who moved to the edge of Khayelitsha defiantly called their space Mandela Park in honour of their hope...(2003, emphasis added)

Ntanyana and Goboza then point to a bitterly ironic repetition of evictions and attempts at forced removals:

In September 1999 the sheriffs came to Mandela Park with dogs and teargas and guns. On the first day they came to confiscate our goods. On the second day they came back to evict us from our homes....The whole area came out, as well as neighbouring areas, to try and prevent the evictions. *We stood up to them.* No one told us to resist – it was spontaneous....The police were only able to evict 13 families on that first day. *And the community put many of the people who were evicted back in their houses.* (2003, emphasis added)

The practice of conferring an identity on space and making it *place* is outlined by Bachelard, who states that “[s]pace that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space” (1969: xxxi). Moss concurs, stating that, “The house is where personal values are kept. It’s a refuge; that’s where you are safe” (2006:19). Brontë anticipated this notion through the female protagonists in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, who imaginatively transform the space of the various locations they inhabit, and complicated the customary function of the home providing ‘refuge’, further anticipating the South African condition through her portrayal of marginal characters. Brontë’s development of the marginal outsider (an orphan) and imprisoned insider (a woman) informs an understanding of the position of the subaltern today, a position still defined by gender, class and, furthermore, by race. The home plays a significant role with regard to the marginalised individual as the homeplace functions as the site for identity-formation. As the home initiates and nurtures identity, the condition of being *homeless* impedes growth as the development of identity is halted. This is no doubt a factor which motivated the forced removal and destruction of homes by the system of apartheid; by destroying homes, the growth of individual and

community identity was detrimentally affected. Therefore issues of 'home' are still prevalent today and require the illumination that arises from situated re-readings of notions of 'home' from the new centre, South Africa to the old metropolis. Thus Charlotte Brontë, through her nineteenth-century fiction, can be seen to have explored key concepts which affect and shape our understanding of 'home' today. Marginality, the subsequently problematic process of identity formation as it relates to the home, and the struggle to establish selfhood without the protection of home, are current and pertinent concerns.

This notion of home is complicated through Brontë's fiction which reflects it as a complex and contradictory concept and it is one which is still extensively questioned by feminist and post-colonial critics. Juhani Pallasmaa, a Finnish architect, states: "It is evident that home is not an object, a building, but a diffuse and complex condition that integrates memories and images, desires and fears, the past and the present" (1994). Orphan figures illustrate the complex condition of home as they have *no* primary home and no sense of attachment. The sentiments of loyalty and nostalgia are not emotions experienced by those who suffer dislocation, and through necessary or enforced migration, a loss of home and sense of belonging. The question arises of how the orphaned condition of such individuals affects the construction of identity and sense of belonging in society. This is, in turn, linked to the collective identity of members of society so that the process of identity-formation in orphaned marginal figures can signify an alternative to a socially constructed and controlled 'reality'. These figures prove problematic as one explores how such individuals fit into the conventions and rules of society.

Women may be perceived as 'marginal' figures in society, specifically in relation to the home. Because they are prescribed a specific place in the home as carer and nurturer, the space of 'home', which is sometimes seen as a creative area, is not always a nurturing place for women. For some, the 'home' has the potential to offer the freedom and security to explore the artistic imagination. For

women, however, the often enclosed and imprisoning space of 'home' finds them confined to the 'homeplace' and not permitted to pursue any aspirations which would take them outside the perquisite roles accepted and imposed by society. Women are marginal figures who are in fact, *insiders*, imprisoned *within* the home. With regard to nineteenth-century life, womanliness and accepted standards of behaviour and decorum were notions entrenched by both women and men. Women were not encouraged to explore a creative space in society which might jeopardise their place in the home, or take up any career (such as that of writer) which might affect the execution of their prescribed duties and transform the self-effacing, submissive 'angel' of the house into the ambitious, assertive 'monster'. Confined to the home, women did not often *own* the space of home and so were relegated to position of housekeeper as opposed to householder, a position occupied largely by men (Heyns 1999: 21). The fact that homeowners are predominantly male prompts the questions of who *belongs* to the home and who is entitled to the creative space of the home and, furthermore, at what price such aspirations are purchased. Thus women were allowed to develop as individuals only within certain confines and to exist according to certain prescribed regulations. Attempts to create a viable sense of self, constructing identity through, for instance, the process of writing had to be achieved under extreme duress.

The home as nurturing space is a notion that is taken for granted and such conventional, accepted notions of the home do not take into account the marginal figures which exist on the periphery, such as orphans, who function as deprived and excluded *outsiders* in society. These figures are *without*, literally and symbolically, as they are unable to locate themselves physically in any given site where they may begin to feel at home. These figures are significant to an understanding of the construction of a society, as the figures left on the outside and on the periphery serve to define those at the centre. The periphery comprises part of a whole and therefore marginal figures, while problematic, are necessary to existence.

The position of writer with regard to the home is an interesting one, as this individual resides in the home but must be detached in order to comment on the home. The writer is therefore divided into two positions and this dichotomous condition may be further complicated when the writer is female, or even more, an orphaned female. Charlotte Brontë writes about women who narrate their own lives, orphaned female protagonists whose relationship with 'home' is problematic. This may account for the 'unreliable' narration of Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe (Jacobus 1979: 55). Jane provides accounts of her personal history to other characters which obscure details and emotions in much the same way as her narration has done for the reader, and Lucy's description of her own background remains ambiguous, as she prefers to observe others. Tension is thus created by the retreating figure of the unreliable narrator and complicated by a retrospective narrative. Winter (referring to the work of Adrienne Rich (1976)) explores the tendency to create the female orphaned narrator:

...women writers often represent themselves and/or their heroines as genealogical isolates on a symbolic level....protagonists in Romance are often solitary orphansWomen writers – particularly female Gothic novelists – usually attach a special significance to the heroine's isolation and depict the absence of mothers as particularly devastating, perhaps because they fear that daughters, like mothers, are destined to be "utterly annihilated". (Winter 1992: 11)

Thus, the relationship with the home is complicated by *women* writing home, as the space itself is ambivalent and the divided existence of women writers such as Charlotte Brontë, who are at variance with the general feeling regarding this place, affects any interpretation of 'home'.

A current interpretation of 'home' must incorporate theoretical perspectives such as post-colonialism and feminism, as 'home' is a pervasive force affecting the construction of identity as it relates to gender, class and race.

Recently, Rosemary Marangoly George recognised the need to reassess the notion of home, observing that: “Over the course of the last hundred or so years, the concept of home...has been re-rooted and re-routed in fiction written in English by colonizers, the colonized, newly independent peoples and immigrants” (1996:1). The traditional associations of the home are no longer sufficient to represent multi-layered societies, which has prompted a vigorous interrogation of this concept in recent work. The dynamic and complex nature of ‘home’ is a reflection of an heterogeneous society where individuals interpret ‘home’ in different ways.

George describes the word ‘home’ as immediately connoting “the private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy, gendered self-identity, shelter, comfort, nurture and protection” (1996:1). ‘Home’ raises post-colonial and feminist concerns and promotes a re-examination of the home, as the fundamental requirements implicit in the connotation of ‘home’ as described by George (of “shelter”, “comfort”, “nurture” and “protection”) are not accessible to marginalised figures. Authors such as Charlotte Brontë created characters and works which function as precursors to what has become a largely post-colonial concern, complicating the idea of home through the use of the marginal figure, a condition that dominates many and continues to exist in societies today. Theories such as feminism and post-colonialism facilitate an understanding of the position of the marginal figure and inform an interrogation of traditional assumptions and associations of home which are no longer adequate or exhaustive. Marxist theory frames the position of marginal figures in society through a class perspective, as class-conscious societies establish boundaries which force these figures to the periphery as outsiders or enclose and imprison them in the home as insiders. Charlotte Brontë’s renegotiation and reassessment of the home, though not motivated by post-colonial aims, enlightens post-colonial and feminist debate. I will establish how Brontë’s analysis of ‘home’ in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* becomes a crucial point of contact between contemporary post-colonial and feminist criticism and nineteenth-century writing.

The concept of ‘home’ is interrogated by the post-colonial critics, Barnes and Wiley, who contend that “home is a form of coalition” (1996: xv). Their term coalition, serves to signify a concept of ‘home’ formed by the alliance of originally distinct elements, for instance “belonging and exile”:

Home is not always a comfortable place to be... home is always a form of coalition: between the individual and the family or community, between belonging and exile; between home as a utopian longing and home as memory; home as safe haven or imprisonment or site of violence, and finally, between home as place and home as metaphor (Barnes & Wiley 1996: xv)

The concept of home, much like the concept of identity, is a fluid concept which constantly requires renegotiation and reassessment.

Writing and story telling reflect the ambivalent and dynamic nature of ‘home’, facilitating a process where this fluid concept may be renegotiated and reassessed. The act of narration is significant; we must all write and tell our stories from *somewhere*, and ‘home’ does remain an important point in which to locate oneself, symbolically and literally. Barnes and Wiley state that:

Writing is a form of self-discovery, in which the writer can (con)textualise herself, write herself into being, and locate herself on the page. Writing is a physical embodiment of our interventions in society; writing can ground us, and chart a way home that we might not otherwise be aware of. (Barnes & Wiley 1996: xxii)

The concept of writing as an act that “grounds” us may also be extended to the idea of fictional narration, specifically the first-person narration evident in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. The narrative form of all Brontë’s novels, with the exception of *Shirley*, is first-person, character-narrator. ‘Home’ plays a significant role in the

process of telling one's story, and Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe endeavour to "locate" themselves symbolically and literally as their attempts to create both a viable sense of self and an authentic place to call home are inexorably tied together. Barnes and Wiley state that, "The relationship between self and place is an interactive and changing one; the politics of where we locate ourselves is an integral factor in the construction of female identity and subjectivity" (1996: xvii). The writer requires a place in which to define the self and construct identity and, according to Bachelard, the home as a 'felicitous space' may facilitate this process:

...the space we love....this is eulogized space. Attached to its protective value, which can be a positive one, are also the imagined values, which soon become dominant. Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to measures and estimates of the surveyor....there is ground for taking the house as a *tool for analysis* of the human soul. (1969: xxxi; xxxii; xxxiii original emphasis)

While Bachelard views the intimate space of home as relatively *positive* space, this view of 'home' is complicated when one reads *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* from a feminist, post-colonial perspective in which home is a coalition, and in which, as an ambivalent space, it has the potential to provide safety and shelter *and* to represent danger. For instance, in *Jane Eyre*, Jane's traumatic childhood experience in the 'red room' in Gateshead causes her to imaginatively transform the indifferent space of the room into a threatening and dangerous place in the house. If we follow Bachelard's proposition that the house is a tool for analysis of the human soul, then we may infer that the imaginative transformation of the 'red-room' into a treacherous place reflects Jane Eyre's own feelings of insecurity and dislocation.

Thus this transformation of space into place is achieved through the projection of imaginative values which imbue the space with protective and

perilous qualities. Despite the potential for danger, Barnes and Wiley state that ‘home’ may serve to provide women with an arena in which to “define and empower themselves in writing”, at the same time providing a “literary space in which the community of their readers can similarly make themselves at home”(1996: xxii). However, the appealing, creative space of home is difficult to attain. The ambivalence of home is once again foregrounded as the affirming qualities of home, often taken for granted, are not available to all and as women themselves occupy an ambivalent position within the home. From a post-colonial standpoint, Barnes and Wiley observe that “...in a world where new nations arise from the collapse of old political structures, the idea of home as a starting point and a returning haven becomes ever more attractive and yet paradoxically difficult to attain” (1996: xv).

With regard to South Africa, which may be considered a “new nation” of this kind, arising from the collapse of the old political structure of Apartheid, it is particularly important to consider notions of ‘home’. The post-colonial re-reading of classics, and the subsequent questioning of notions of ‘home’ from a new centre (South Africa) that are operative in the fictions of the old metropolis are required, a reading across boundaries which changes the configurations of empire.

Njabulo Ndebele questions the position of home in actual life in South Africa and his views bear pertinently on a rereading of Brontë’s work, as concerns that Brontë raises may be seen to anticipate those of Ndebele:

Where so many homes have been demolished, people moved to strange places, home temporarily becomes the shared experience of homelessness... It is the loneliness of millions of South Africans who lost their homes. The loss of homes! It is one of the greatest of South African stories yet to be told. The demise of intimacy in our history of sensibility. (1996: 28-9)

There is a close personal connection with the homespace, the sense of community implied by 'home' and the experience of homelessness. The 'sacred' memories of home, desecrated through historical processes such as Apartheid in South Africa, have been replaced; in place of the intimacy associated with 'home' is the experience of loneliness. A new story of homelessness comprises the history of South Africans. bell hooks explains the political significance of the home and the possibility of resistance inherent in the homeplace:

It is no accident that the South African apartheid regime systematically attack[ed] and destroy[ed] black efforts to construct homeplace, however tenuous, that small private reality where black women and men [could] renew their spirits and recover themselves. It is no accident that this homeplace, as fragile and transitional as it may be, a makeshift shed, a small bit of earth where one rests, is always subject to violation and destruction... (1990: 46-47)

Martin and Mohanty explain their view of the current division: 'Being home' refers "...to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; while 'not being home' is a matter of realising that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance" (1986: 197). This declaration is relevant to a South African context, and may be turned back to fiction of the past. Ndebele states:

There must be relatively few South Africans who can still point to a home that they associate with rootedness. At some point in their lives the roots of the social memory are cut, and traumatic fresh beginnings had to be made and endured. Individual and social growth became a series of interrupted experiences. (1996: 28)

When Ndebele writes of "interrupted experiences", he is understanding that the construction of identity is based on the expectations and aspirations normally taught within the home. Ndebele raises questions about "[h]ow...the growth of

the imagination or the nurturing of human sensibility [is] affected by the dramatic oscillation of individuals and communities between comfort and discomfort, between home and homelessness...” (1996: 29). Ndebele’s thoughts on interrupted experiences may be used to illuminate the displacement felt by the respective female protagonists in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* as they shift from each surrogate home, forced through their circumstances to ‘relocate’, thus disrupting the experience of home and suspending attempts to establish some sense of belonging.

The phrase “homesick with nowhere to go”, used by Minnie Bruce Pratt (1984) in her autobiographical narrative and subsequently interrogated by Martin & Mohanty (1986: 206), may serve to describe the situation of the two orphaned female protagonists in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. The significance of the representation of ‘home’ in Charlotte Brontë’s fiction, in light of recent post-colonial and feminist debate about the ‘continuum’ of home and exile, leads to questions of the principles of exclusion and inclusion implicit in the process of creating and defining the space of ‘home’. Moss describes how, in “...traditional settlements [in South Africa], the point of entry, that threshold, was celebrated. Going from the outside to the inside was a celebration. It’s a pre-sensing of the qualit[ies] expected inside” (Moss 2006: 19). This view of the process of inclusion and exclusion is a favourable one, as the affirming qualities of home are celebrated, however the home is a only welcoming place for those who belong on the *inside*.

For those who do not, the proverbial *outsiders*, the process of exclusion results in the existence of a periphery, occupied by those marginal figures. Chandra Mohanty explains this process of creating boundaries in order to define both the sense of place and sense of self: “It is the exercise of violence in creating a legitimate inside and an illegitimate outside in the name of identity...” (1992: 85). Moss furthers an understanding of the cultural motivation for creating an inside and outside when he states:

If people do not have boundaries, if they can't recognise a place in terms of its geography and in terms of its place qualities...then you're a little bit lost because you can't, as a human, identify in a meaningful way with things around of value and worth if [they are] not connected to place. (2006: 19)

Thus, the basic organising principle around which the notion of the home is built “is a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions. Home is a way of establishing difference” (George 1996: 2), and with regard to the orphaned status of the two protagonists in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, the value of ‘home’ and the implicit understanding that its powers are not equally available to all becomes apparent. This may be understood in post-colonial terms: “Home is a place to escape to and a place to escape from...Home is a place that is fought for and established as the exclusive domain of a few” (George 1996: 9). Brontë complicates this further by creating *female* orphaned protagonists, who remain excluded within the confines of the home. The benefits of the home are not easily accessible to Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe. Jane Eyre is made to feel unwelcome in her lavish childhood home of Gateshead, and the home comes to signify a dangerous and threatening place to her. Lucy Snowe too, feels uneasy in the various locations which define her character's development, and the transient nature of her lifestyle as she shifts from one surrogate home to the next does little to foster a sense of belonging. However, the conclusions of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* affirm George's notion that the home is a place that is “fought for”, as each female protagonist seeks to establish a home for herself. The idea that home is the “exclusive domain of a few” informs recent post-colonial and feminist debates as it mirrors, for instance, the status of the marginalised immigrant in the post-colonial context, who struggles to establish a home in a foreign environment. The process of searching for a suitable ‘home’ is thus integral to the creation of identity, specifically in the case of the immigrant, where the establishment of a sense of self in new and unfamiliar surroundings is imperative to this marginal figure that is “homesick with nowhere to go”. The marginalised female in feminist discussion struggles to

escape the enclosed space of the home, thus having ‘nowhere to go’ in a different sense, and the process of establishing an appropriate homeplace is affected by the fact that women frequently occupy the position of housekeeper as opposed to homeowner.

As first person narrators of their own life stories, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe strive to appropriate and transform the homeplace through the literary practice of storytelling. They are required to negotiate the tension between two specific modalities: being home and not being home. In discussing *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* I will show that, through the portrayal of the situations of ‘home’ presented in the narrative of each female protagonist, these two modalities are explored. Only toward the close of their respective novels are Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe able to create some semblance of ‘home’. In fact, throughout the course of each novel, the female protagonist struggles for a sense of belonging in the surrogate homes in which she is located.

The professional position occupied by the two characters serves to illustrate the social concerns of women in the nineteenth century forced to find work as governesses and teachers and further foregrounds the idea of ‘belonging’. According to Peterson, who is quoting from an advertisement of the day, the central prerequisites of women seeking this kind of employment

...were not the occupational dimensions of the work sought - qualifications, pay and the like - but the personal position involved. In the words of one advertisement, it was a “*comfortable home*, [that was] the first consideration” (1 January, 1847). The loss of a governess’s home, where she should have had not only maintenance, but protection, led her to seek a *surrogate* home in her employer’s house. (1980: 14, emphasis added)

This substitute for an authentic home calls into question the idea of a “felicitous” space proposed in the earlier quotation from Bachelard. Firstly, throughout their

development, the two female protagonists find themselves in locations in which they are unable to feel at 'home' or achieve any true sense of belonging. This, in turn, affects the connected construction of identity inherent in the establishment of a place and space to call 'home'. Martin and Mohanty state that there is an

...irreconcilable tension between the search for a secure place from which to speak, within which to act, and the awareness of the price at which secure places are bought, the awareness of the exclusions, the denials, the blindness on which they are predicated... (1986: 206)

The exclusion which Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe experience is poignantly portrayed in the scenes where there is a literal and figurative separation of the female protagonist from the space of 'home'. Both Jane and Lucy find themselves literally and proverbially looking in from the outside, through the windows of homes that are lit up from the inside, the light in the windows beckoning them in to *others'* safety and sanctuary. Jane sees the light shining through a window at Marsh End after she has wandered, destitute and starving, for days. The light serves as a beacon of sorts, as the house assumes the qualities of a beacon. Similarly, the light outside the Pensionnat in Villette is a guiding light for Lucy, as she wanders lost and alone in the streets of an unknown country with no money and no possessions. The effect of the lamp may also function as a 'remembered' light when one is absent from home, evoking feelings of nostalgia, or, in the case of Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, the light from the lamps may suggest a sense of what home should be, a welcoming, protective shelter. Juhani Palasmaa states that "The experience of home is never stronger than when seeing the windows of the house lit in the dark..." (1994) and Bachelard suggests:

...The single angle of the lamp that glows in the window. This image would have to be placed under one of the greatest of all theorems of the imagination of the world of light.... The lamp in the window is the house's eye and, in the kingdom of the imagination, it is never lighted out-of-doors, but it is enclosed light, which can only filter to the

outside....The lamp is a symbol of prolonged waiting. By means of the light in that far-off house, the house sees, keeps vigil, vigilantly waits.
(1969: 33-34)

bell hooks reaffirms the sentiment attached to the space of 'home', "that feeling of arrival, of homecoming, this sweetness after and the bitterness of that journey..." (1990: 41). Jane and Lucy are thus drawn to their respective surrogate homes, seeking protection and safety, fulfilling the notion of home as a coalition, at once safe and secure, whilst possibly dangerous at the core. Danger arises as the experience of home is affected by the surrogate condition of these locations, which implies a substitute for a real 'home' and indicates a sense of impermanence. There is some relief in seeing the light of a "waiting" house after the arduous journeys which the two female protagonists are forced to undertake; while Bachelard however sees nothing ominous in the vigil kept by the "waiting" house, in Brontë's fiction these surrogate homes signal the end of one journey and the beginning of a new stage of development in the characters' lives and this new stage is inevitably fraught with difficulty and danger, arising from two protagonists' unstable situations and presented by the inmates at their respective locations.

Jane and Lucy arrive at their respective destinations of Marsh End and Villette penniless and without any possessions. The precarious nature of their positions as penniless, female orphans and their subsequent vulnerability in unfamiliar and foreign locations is foregrounded. George suggests that a representation of the experience of post-colonial homelessness is marked by "...an excessive use of the metaphor of luggage, both spiritual and material". This raises the question of whether possessions (material, such as mementoes or spiritual, such as memories) "impede or facilitate belonging" (1996: 171). In *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, the female protagonists struggle to belong in the various 'homes' which locate their characters and the lack of connections allow Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe to, in essence, create new, unfettered lives. However, they are

unable to draw support from connections which privilege other members of society and are forced at various intervals to accept assistance. In this way, the assistance facilitates a degree of assimilation into the mainstream of society as Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe fulfil their inherent need for ‘home’, as desire to belong and create a comfortable space that prevails throughout their respective stories. Martin and Mohanty emphasise the sacrifice implicit in attempting to establish a home, as one learns at what price “...privilege, comfort, home, and secure notions of self are purchased” (1986: 203). Therefore, this assimilation into the mainstream, into conventional society is, in Martin and Mohanty’s words, “purchased” at a price by Jane and Lucy.

Economic relations and the interests of the various classes which comprise the “mainstream” are some of the concerns of Eagleton, who introduces a class perspective and brings a marxist interpretation to his rereading of the works of Charlotte Brontë. Marxism informs his discussion of the material function and basis of power, of economic relations in the ‘home’, with a focus too on the class position of orphaned protagonists.

Eagleton observes that the Brontës’ lifetime “...coincided with some of the fiercest class-struggles in English society” (1988: 3). Their primary readership comprised a class that upheld certain notions of propriety, which implied certain accepted principles of behaviour. This meant that women writers might face antagonism from both male and female audiences. Women themselves were policing gender and class structures in society, helping to perpetuate the antipathy towards women writing outside the prescribed stereotype of the ‘angel’ in the house. A polarised opposition existed between womanliness and authorship. The assertiveness of the female protagonist of *Jane Eyre* is attacked by reviewer Elizabeth Rigby:

Jane Eyre is proud, and therefore she is ungrateful too. It pleased God to make her an orphan, friendless and penniless – yet she thanks

nobody, and least of all Him...It is by her own talents, virtues and courage that she is made to attain the summit of human happiness, and as far as Jane Eyre's own statement is concerned, no one would think that she owed anything to either to God above or to man below. (1987: 442)

Reviewer Anne Mozley, a contemporary of Charlotte Brontë, responded to *Villette* with the following statement: "We want a woman at our hearth... [Brontë's] impersonations are without the feminine element" (Miller 2002: 52). Charlotte Brontë faced the inevitable struggles of a woman writer in Victorian England, her work reflecting the "inner tension between two sides of Charlotte's personality, the respectable clergyman's daughter and the unconventional author" (Miller 2002: 75). The idea of the double self embodies the divided roles of the woman in the home and the female writer. Elizabeth Gaskell describes the separate duties belonging to Currer Bell the author and Charlotte Brontë the woman as "...not opposing each other; not impossible, but difficult to be reconciled" (1924: 315), and this struggle to resolve this dichotomy is depicted in Brontë's fiction.

Rereading the novels of Charlotte Brontë serves to uncover the influence of her nineteenth-century milieu and the link between the condition of women in society and her fiction:

...literature plays a key role in the self-fashioning cultural system of the time, functioning in three interlocking ways: as a manifestation of the concrete behaviour of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behaviour is shaped, and as a reflection upon those codes. (Gertz 2005: 4)

The principles of domesticity, "codes" which shape propriety of behaviour, are explored by Eagleton, who focuses on the way in which Brontë's fiction is rooted in specific social conditions, identifying a "categorical structure" in her various

works which illustrates the relation between the literary form and actual history (Eagleton 1988: 4). There is, according to Eagleton, a “constant struggle” between divided sets of values and, on a larger scale, between conflicting ideologies. Eagleton highlights the division between rational individualism and submissive conservatism, and locates it in a class context:

It is possible to decipher in the conflicts and compromises between them a fictionally transformed version of the tensions and alliances between the two social classes which dominated the Brontës’ world: the industrial bourgeoisie, and the landed gentry or aristocracy. (1988: 4)

Utilising, in conjunction with a marxist reading, some of the practices of new historicism, it may be possible to connect the “conflicts” represented in Brontë’s fiction to Brontë’s own life. In a literal sense, Brontë’s novel *Shirley*, published one year after the defeat of Chartism, is much pre-occupied with class-conflict:

...backdated to the Luddite events of 1812....negotiating its feelings in relation to an earlier phase of the Yorkshire class struggle....there can be no doubt that Chartism is the unspoken subject of *Shirley*... (Eagleton 1988: 45)

The theories of new historicism illuminate the way in which Brontë’s novels are linked to a network of institutions, practices and beliefs that constitute ‘home’ culture. Greenblatt believes that reconstructions of the past, which take place in fiction, for instance:

...on the one hand define the range of aesthetic possibilities within a given representational mode and, on the other, link that mode to the complex network of institutions, practices and beliefs that constitute the culture as a whole. (2005: 2)

Bearing these views in mind, the rank occupied by the Brontë family may be seen to have some bearing on the fiction produced by the sisters, specifically Charlotte. Eagleton believes that the pervasive social conflicts in their fiction were "...peculiarly intensified by the sisters' personal situation". As daughters of a "perpetual curate" struggling to maintain genteel standards, the Brontë sisters were, moreover, "...socially insecure *women* - members of a cruelly oppressed group whose victimised condition reflected a more widespread exploitation" (Eagleton 1988: 8, original emphasis). The sisters, forced to seek employment, occupied the positions of governesses, which proved detrimental to their social standing. A recent study of the Victorian governess reveals that "...if a woman of birth and education found herself in financial distress...she was justified in seeking the only employment that would not cause her to lose her status. She could find work as a governess" (Peterson 1980: 6). Peterson further points out that if, "...a lady has to work for her livelihood, it is universally considered a misfortune...her employment became a prostitution of her education, of the values underlying it..." (1980:10-11). Eagleton highlights the fact that the sisters were "...*educated* women, trapped in an almost intolerable deadlock between culture and economics - between imaginative aspiration and the cold truth of a society which could use them merely as 'higher' servants" (1988: 8).

It is no coincidence then, bearing marxist and new historicist views of identity and class in mind, that the principal female protagonists in two of Charlotte Brontë's major works, *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, are a governess and a teacher respectively, forced to seek employment due to their orphaned condition. As Eagleton mentioned in the earlier quotation, Brontë's portrayal is symptomatic of a "more widespread exploitation" of her sex, and the limited and often debilitating options available to women in the nineteenth century. Issues of entitlement, property rights, inheritance and class are related to the orphan status of the two women and the fact that they are forced to seek employment in the homes of others gives rise to their sense of not belonging. Eagleton describes the Brontës'

...traumatic transition from the protected enclave of the parsonage...to the hard exigencies of a working world, [as having] a representative rather than a purely personal significance. In that particular movement can be traced the shape of a more general historical phenomenon: that of the Romantic imagination being beaten down by society... (1988: 11)

The struggle between the romantic imagination and conservative society comprises the fundamental structure of Charlotte's novels, which, according to Eagleton, is a triadic one:

...it is determined by a complex play of power-relations between a protagonist, a 'Romantic-radical' and an autocratic conservative. In *Jane Eyre* the roles are fulfilled respectively by Jane, Rochester and St John Rivers; in *The Professor* by William Crimsworth, Yorke Hunsden and Edward Crimsworth; in *Shirley* by Caroline Helstone, Shirley Keeldar and Robert Moore; and in *Villette* by Lucy Snowe, Paul Emmanuel and Madame Beck. (1988: 74)

Both *Jane Eyre* and *Lucy Snowe* are at once impetuous and refined in their behaviour, and have intricate relationships with society based on their conditions as orphaned, middle class women. The boundary between romantic and conservative concepts is thus not easily delineated, and is couched in the concept of home as it appears in the structure of Brontë's novels, as described by Eagleton:

Each novel is more or less trichotomised into a preliminary phase of domestic settlement, a break to isolation and independence, and a final integration....Very generally, the preliminary settlement corresponds to the function of conservative authority, the transitional period of independence belongs to the protagonist, and the concluding integration is with the 'Romantic-radical' figure. (1988: 94)

Q.D. Leavis also proposes a reading of *Jane Eyre* based on the character-defining elements of various locations. This reading may be applied further to *Villette*. According to Leavis, the development of the character of Jane Eyre (and by association Lucy Snowe) may be defined through the various ‘homes’ where she locates herself:

Jane Eyre moves from stage to stage of Jane’s development, divided into four sharply distinct phases with their suggestive names: childhood at Gateshead; girlhood, which is schooling in both senses, at Lowood; adolescence at Thornfield; maturity at Marsh End [Moor House], winding up with fulfilment in marriage at Ferndean. (1966: 13)

This is a useful insight to use when rereading Brontë, as Leavis implies that Jane Eyre’s experiences in and responses to each location bring about her growth. The construction of identity is connected to home and is influenced by the intimate relationship that exists between inhabitants of the ‘home’ and the place itself. This idea is explored by Bachelard, who observes that:

Our soul is an abode. And by remembering ‘houses’ and ‘rooms’, we learn to ‘abide’ within ourselves. Now everything becomes clear, *the house images move in both directions: they are in us as much as we are in them...* (1969: xxxiii, emphasis added)

Bachelard’s sense of how identity is constructed implies that as inhabitants, we define the indifferent space of the house through our imaginative values, and in turn, the place of home defines the identity of the inhabitants, ‘housing’ the formative experiences that mould human character. The intimate link between the home and the human psyche is a common theme in the popular genre of Gothic fiction in nineteenth-century literature. The Gothic genre was a narrative form that Charlotte Brontë utilised in an attempt to “reconcile” the divided position of the woman writer in the home. Feminist critics such as Sandra

M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar take up the links between genre and gender as they examine the role of women in literature of the nineteenth century and the anxiety of authorship.

Symbolically, women were locked into male texts, "...texts from which they could only escape through ingenuity and indirection" (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 83). Writing could serve as a vehicle for self-expression and the gothic tradition encompassed the fictional needs of nineteenth-century women, who found in it viable ways of circumventing the anxiety of authorship and notions of female propriety. Diane Hoeveler describes the "...need that women writers had to expose and at the same time conceal the uneasy slippages that existed between apparently opposed concepts of women during that period" (1998: 4). The woman writer was seen as a "freakish outsider" and the authority accorded to a writer was seen as inappropriate to her sex (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 48, 51). Women were unable to find viable precursors in literature, where they struggled to recognise and define themselves through the inadequate and stereotypical feminine portrayals issued by male authors. Novel writing was seen as less intellectually and spiritually valuable than verse and, as the lesser literary genre, was a more suitably feminine occupation (2000: 545-546). Thus, despite the debilitating anxieties suffered by women writers in the nineteenth century, they made increasing use of the novel form in order to construct a sense of self and of the gothic novel to examine taboo subjects by creating submerged or hidden meanings. Gilbert and Gubar explain the palimpsestic nature of Gothic fiction:

In effect such women have created submerged meanings, meanings hidden within or behind the more accessible, 'public' content of their works, so that their literature could be read and appreciated even when its vital concern with female dispossession and disease was ignored. (2000: 72)

MacAndrew affirms the attempt to explore the hidden recesses of the human and female condition: "Gothic novels explore the dark aspects of the mind and

through their characters, they locate that world within everyday experience” (1979: 38). Treatment of the taboo issues such as sex, birth and death was disguised by the traditional literary devices of Gothic fiction, and the power relations that existed between men and women were also articulated through this literary form:

The mysteries [of the gothic] are the issues of sex and birth and death and, too, the necessity of knowledge and concealment in a tension between known truths and feelings within and conventions and lies required from without. (Holland & Sherman: 1986: 231)

A re-reading of Charlotte Brontë today reveals Brontë’s reasons for unsettling the assumptions and experience of ‘home’ through the literary mode of the gothic. Silver describes the context in which Brontë wrote and the effect on women writers:

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the legal status and economic roles of women in Britain were in a state of flux...the oppression of ...women had become in many ways disguised and subterranean. Female Gothic writers developed a genre that was particularly well suited to the historical situation; the main task of the Gothic heroine is to uncover and name the horrors that fill her world. (Winter 1992: 12)

This literary form foregrounds the issues of home and identity, and in its earlier versions it associated the male psyche with the home: “...the most famous of all Gothic devices: the identity of the castle or house with its owner...” (MacAndrew 1979: 13). Carl Jung developed a thesis that “explicitly reads an individual’s home as the ‘universal archetype symbol of the self’”, and in light of this, identity is inexorably tied to ‘home’ (George 1996: 19). The Gothic formula reiterates this idea of ‘home’, but when employed by female writers, it reflects the *female* psyche, with a link between gothic ‘place’ and aspects of female identity.

Significantly, while female identity is “inexorably tied” to home, the relationship that exists between women and the home differs from that of men. While the identity of the castle or house is associated with that of its *owner*, it is naturally assumed that the owner is male. Gilbert and Gubar assert that “...almost all nineteenth century women were in some sense imprisoned in men’s houses” (2000: 83). Women residing in the home have historically been accorded at most, the title of housekeeper, “We know that in Dickens every virtuous woman aspires to the condition of housekeeper (and every virtuous male becomes a *householder*)”. This was the only authority granted to the women in the home, and as for the governess, she “...keeps nothing at all unless she can marry the owner of the house...” (Heyns 1999: 21). Gothic fiction provided an avenue in which women writers explored female preoccupation with, for instance, independence and the literal and metaphorical tie to the home, which functions at once as a place of enclosure and release. Ellen Moers confirms that the Gothic mode was utilised in order to “create a heroic structure for the female voice in literature” (1986:123). Both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* draw on the formula for the modern gothic in varying degrees, which comprised: “A story told by the heroine, often working as a governess companion...the image of woman-plus-habitation and the plot of mysterious sexual and supernatural threats in an atmosphere of dynastic mysteries” (Holland & Sherman: 1986: 215).

The authors of Gothic fiction, in writing their symbolic fantasies, necessarily chose a deliberately artificial form, for which they took their materials from earlier [predominantly male] literature.... [Gothic fiction] was doing something different with the materials of its predecessors. (MacAndrew 1979: 9)

Women writers gradually modified and reinvented the Gothic form to suit their own narrative purposes in order to more accurately reflect the experiences and identity of their sex. Brontë, specifically, utilised this deliberately “artificial form”, exploiting its various literary and narrative devices while changing the

settings from medieval castles to contemporary versions of home: "...a man's house turned out still to be his Gothic castle and his soul, already reflected in paintings and statues, began to look back at him from mirrors and worse still, from his *double*, a living, breathing copy of himself... (MacAndrew 1979: 7). Both Brontë's female protagonists encounter doubles in their surrogate homes, manifestations of their fears, figures which symbolise inner dangers. Their doubles, which take the form of Bertha Rochester and the spectral nun respectively, are in effect living, breathing copies, and not figments of the Jane and Lucy's imagination, which emphasises the very real nature of the anxieties by Victorian women in society. The idea of the 'double' contributes to the dichotomous nature of gothic texts written by women, serving to reflect the ambivalent and often divided position of women, between propriety and the need for self-expression and the establishment of selfhood.

The features of the gothic, adopted by Charlotte Brontë, were used and adapted in order to expose and explore the "horrors" that filled the world of a nineteenth-century woman. Brontë modified the gothic genre by introducing elements of comedy and symbolism, making the "...patently Gothic more than a stereotype" (Heilman 1987: 459-460). Brontë employed the Gothic, which "undermines and subverts the eighteenth-and-nineteenth century idealization of the home as women's place and man's haven..." (Winter 1992: 22), complicating the concept of home. While Gothic novels written by men served to "...claim male supremacy as a natural right and celebrate the ways in which the powerful impose their will over others", female Gothic novels, such as those written by Charlotte Brontë, functioned to "...express the pain and anger of permanently alienated daughters" (Winter 1992: 30).

A traditional gothic device is the portrayal of the female protagonists as orphans, a device utilised in *Jane Eyre* and in *Villette*. The fact that both female protagonists, Jane and Lucy, are forced to seek out professions as governess and teacher respectively, (common typecasts for women in Gothic fiction) also serves

to highlight the notion of home by exploring the limited options available to women with no familial ties in a patriarchal society. Brontë introduces the orphan figure in order to explore the social implications of this condition and the attitudes of society. She explores the idea of the orphaned protagonist in her first novel, *The Professor*, where both the male and female protagonists are “penniless and parentless” (1991: 156). These marginal figures are doubly marginalised in that both William Crimsworth and Frances Henri are strangers in a foreign country, Belgium. They also have to survive on the benevolence of others and it is not only the woman who requires assistance. William Crimsworth survives through letters of recommendation from established male figures in society. The function of ‘assistance’ was identified by Vladimir Propp, who included it as one of his 31 narratemes, or functions, in his analysis of Russian Folktales. Comprising two of these functions are the ‘magical helper’, and the ‘magical agent’ which are generated to provide assistance to the questing hero (www.mediaknowall.com). In *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, each female protagonist is ‘assisted’ at various stages of the narrative. The forces of nature, fairies and celestial influence, coupled with the male heroes in the story, provide aid in Jane and Lucy’s quests. This confirms Gilbert and Gubar’s assertion that “when a heroine rises she does so through the offices of a hero” (2000: 67). The hero may be seen to function as the ‘magical helper’, giving financial and moral guidance and support. The ‘magical agent’ of Propp’s analyses may be interpreted in Brontë’s novels as predominantly financial in form: in *Jane Eyre*’s case, her inheritance from her uncle, and in *Lucy Snowe*’s case, the acquisition of the school and home at Faubourg Clotilde through the assistance of M. Paul.

To some extent, Jane and Lucy remain marginal figures in that their success and happiness are tempered with tragedy, thus making them unable to achieve the full measure of happiness available to members of mainstream society. Jane is fulfilled in marriage in Ferndean, the last of the locations and final phase in her character’s development in the novel. But it is both “her good fortune and Rochester’s catastrophe [that] lessen his social and economic advantage over

her” (Pearson & Pope 1981: 167). Eagleton reiterates this idea, stating that the “...the ‘lower’ character [Jane] is able to exercise power because of a weakness in the ‘higher’ character: Rochester is crippled...” (1988: 59). Thus, having lessened Rochester’s social and physical advantages over Jane, “Brontë provides both with the happy ending of an egalitarian relationship” (Pearson & Pope 1981: 248). One may infer that, due to the curtailing of Rochester’s potential, Jane is able to progress and succeed in attaining some happiness. Lucy too, manages to achieve a similar sense of fulfilment when she obtains her own school and home at the last location of her story, Faubourg Clotilde. However, M. Paul Emmanuel dies in a shipwreck while returning to Lucy. Gilbert and Gubar state that M. Paul must die in order for Lucy Snowe to exist, as “only in his absence ...can she exert herself fully to exercise her powers” (2000: 438). In a sense, *Villette* may be seen as a reworking of *Jane Eyre* as the socially acceptable sense of fulfilment Jane Eyre achieves at the conclusion of the novel, self-sufficient *but* married, is not what the experiences of Lucy Snowe lead her to realise. She progresses one step further, the reader assumes, and achieves fulfilment despite her final solitude. Brontë introduces the ideas of self-sufficiency and independence with the “proud” Jane Eyre, but truly develops the concept of the new woman in the “unfeminine” Lucy Snowe, whose assimilation into society is achieved on her own terms. Lucy Snowe is thus the prototype of the independent and self-sufficient ‘new woman’, an idea that the novel *Jane Eyre* briefly introduces but does not bring to fruition. Thus, it may be inferred that, though Lucy Snowe “succeeds”, it is only at profound cost. The conjecture made here may be both post-colonial and feminist in its inference that marginal female figures are entitled to or deserving of the “privileges” of comfort and home and the associated establishment of an authentic identity only once they have made some sacrifice for their aspirations of self-sufficiency and ambitions for an assured sense of self.

CHAPTER TWO

Jane Eyre

The importance of the place of ‘home’ and how it is represented in *Jane Eyre* may be read through the various locations and homes in which the female protagonist, Jane Eyre, finds herself. The surrogate quality of her various homes, and the connotations of ‘home’ and what it signifies to different members of society, raise issues of belonging and homelessness, specifically with regard to a marginalised orphan figure. By moving through the various stages of Jane Eyre’s development in each setting, the idea of ‘home’ can be interrogated with special attention to the circumstances of the female protagonist - that of poverty and her orphan status. *Jane Eyre* is described by Gilbert and Gubar, following the argument of Kate Millett, as a story of enclosure and escape:

[It is]...a distinctly female Bildungsroman in which the problems encountered by the protagonist as she struggles from the imprisonment of her childhood toward an almost unthinkable goal of mature freedom are symptomatic of difficulties Everywoman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome: oppression (at Gateshead), starvation (at Lowood), madness (at Thornfield), and coldness (at Marsh End). (2000: 339)

Thus the stages of Jane Eyre’s life are marked by changes of abode and encounters with the inmates that reside in each new home, particularly those who serve as female role models which she chooses to either assimilate or reject in her personal process of self-definition.

Charlotte Brontë is described by Eagleton as having a “double-edged attitude to the question of secure settlement” (1988: 73). This shows that the accepted connotations of security and protection provided by the sanctuary of home, for instance, are not rights and not even available to all. These associations

with the idea of ‘home’ are not applicable to marginal figures in society such as orphans. In addition, the rights of the householder, who was predominantly male in the nineteenth century, were not extended to women. Confined to the home, women did not often *own* the space of home, but were relegated to the position of housekeeper as opposed to householder (Heyns 1999: 21). As Barnes and Wiley argue, the concept of ‘home’ as a coalition (1996: xv) comes to signify both safety and security while implying threat at the core. The danger at the centre of a ‘home’ may comprise dominant forces within the home which threaten the stability, security and comfort of the inhabitants and may also manifest the various fears and misgivings induced in residents of the home by society’s expectations.

This concept of coalition may be applied to *Jane Eyre*, as through the female protagonist, Jane Eyre, the ambivalent nature of ‘home’ is explored. Due to her orphaned condition, every place in which Jane locates herself serves as a surrogate home and the temporary and impermanent nature of these ‘homes’ lends Jane’s sense of selfhood and self-worth a precarious and unstable quality. Each ‘home’, to confirm its surrogate quality, has an inherent danger at its centre, until Jane Eyre finds asylum at Ferndean. Gateshead serves as a site of imprisonment and enclosure for Jane and she is made to feel unwelcome at every turn. Lowood holds a physical threat to Jane’s health as she suffers severe deprivation, and physiological threat through the rigid enforcement of stereotypes, which leaves the orphaned female pupils at the school with only the debilitating options available to those of ‘lower’ standing in society. At Thornfield, these physical threats develop into psychological and spiritual threats. This home holds the threat of Bertha Rochester, at once Jane’s spectral vision and real fate, and the threat of Rochester, who attempts to persuade Jane to compromise her integrity and morals. At Moor House (also known as Marsh End in the novel), she faces the danger of St. John Rivers’s intentions, as he threatens to “kill” her into a subservient helpmate (Brontë 1998: 434), a self-*less* angel. Finally at Ferndean, Jane is secure in her own sense of self-worth, empowered by inheritance and

newly-acquired family connections to be able to create the 'place' of home in the 'space' of Ferndean. Although this 'home' belongs to Rochester, by the conclusion of the novel Brontë has rendered these two characters equal in social standing and power.

It is important to examine the other female characters that are situated in every phase of Jane's development. Each female character, from Eliza and Georgiana Reed, Helen Burns and Diana and Mary Rivers, to Lady Ingram and Blanche Ingram and Bertha Rochester, serves as a 'role model', allowing Jane to measure and establish her own sense of self and reject unsuitable models of femaleness in order to create the viable self that has been denied her by the loss of family and home. This process of self-definition is fraught with difficulty as Jane's confidence is often undermined. However, Q.D. Leavis explains that Brontë's object "...was to show how the embittered little charity-child finds a way to come to terms with life and society", doing so through the creation of "...positives - the demonstration of the conditions for Jane's growth into full life and possession of lasting happiness" (1966: 12-13). Therefore, by looking at the dynamic nature of home, comprised of a coalition of safety, security and danger at the core, and the roles that the inmates of each home play in the development of character, the following chapter enlarges and develops Q.D. Leavis proposed a reading of *Jane Eyre* based on the character-defining elements of various locations, which was explored in the Introduction. Leavis link *space* to stages in Jane Eyre's development. This chapter moves further to introduce and question 'home', and how the space of these locations becomes *place*. 'Home' defines space by giving it purpose or character. Thus, the space of 'home' acquires an identity of its own whilst defining those of its inhabitants.

The idea of a "secure settlement" is examined during the first phase of Jane Eyre's development, at Gateshead, the home, where she lives as a dependent of the Reed family. The pervading images of storms, shipwreck and disaster are "images which seem to express [Jane's] own bewildered sense of what life is like, since

they correspond with her condition in the home of the Reeds” (Leavis 1966: 14). The water imagery is significant in *Villette* too. Here it lends a sense of impermanence to Jane’s impression of this home, as well as expressing her feelings of anguish, arising from the fact that Jane is stranded in society as an orphan. Thus the reader receives the impression that there is an instability associated with Gateshead as a home for Jane, a sense of impermanence arising from her orphan position and lack of familial ties. The novel opens with Jane reading, observing a cold and stormy day through the window:

At intervals, while turning over the leaves of my book, I studied the aspect of that winter afternoon. Afar, it offered a pale blank of mist and cloud; near, a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long and lamentable blast. (1998: 8)

Her orphan status renders Gateshead a surrogate home, as she has no direct family connections: “I was a discord in Gateshead Hall: I was like nobody there...” (1998:16). Jane’s cousin, John Reed, emphasises this state of dependence and lack of belonging when he states:

You are a dependent, mamma says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not live here with gentlemen’s children like us, and eat the same meals as we do, and wear clothes at our mamma’s expense...all the house belongs to me. (1998: 11)

Gilbert and Gubar point out that the major preoccupation in the process of self-definition for all Brontë’s heroines is the “[struggle] for a comfortable space” (2000: 437). In this connection, the significance of the name of this home lies in the word ‘gate’, which implies any passageway into and out of an enclosure, specifically one closed by a moveable barrier. The reader may infer that, while Jane feels imprisoned and enclosed at Gateshead, this obstacle to her future is surmountable. Jane makes efforts to ‘colonise’ a space for herself, as the building itself does not necessarily provide the needed location of selfhood. Her efforts to

clear literal and figurative space for herself in a home which is not her own and in which she does not feel she belongs, emphasise aspects of her lonely orphan status and also how the temporary security and safety provided by a home may be quickly usurped:

I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement ... 'It is well I drew the curtain,' thought I; and I wished fervently [Cousin John Reed] might not discover my hiding place... (1998: 8-9)

Throughout the novel, Jane Eyre struggles to assert her own sense of self-worth, and Brontë grants her female protagonist some measure of power through her role as first-person narrator, storyteller and author of her own life. However, from the earliest phase at Gateshead, the process of self-definition and authority implicit in telling her own story is undermined, which may perhaps be a reflection of the anxiety of authorship which existed for women writers of the nineteenth century. Pearson and Pope state that from the very beginning of the novel Jane Eyre “strikes out at her captors – asserting her own worth” (1981: 165). An early example of this occurs when Jane is discovered behind the curtain in her window-seat hiding place, unsettling any temporary security and safety she had established for herself. Cousin John proceeds to attack Jane physically and she, as the marginal outsider, is finally forced to retaliate: “...I received him in frantic sort. I don't very well know what I did with my hands, but he called me 'Rat! Rat!' and bellowed out aloud” (1998: 12). Despite the fact that Jane acts in self-defence, she is severely punished, and the admonishment made by one of the maids, Abbot, serves to entrench the feeling of loneliness and marginality that Jane suffers:

‘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...’
(1998: 12)

Her status in the home is reduced to that below servant: she is truly a dependent in every sense of the word and increasingly made to feel unwelcome and undeserving. Once again, Jane’s sense of self-worth is severely undermined, as she is further berated by Abbot:

‘And you ought not to think yourself on an equality with the Misses Reed and Master Reed....They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none: it is your place to be humble, and to try and make yourself agreeable to them.’ (1998: 13)

Jane is locked in the ‘red-room’ as punishment for her retaliation and the element of the gothic is introduced, as the room assumes perilous and threatening qualities:

Mr Reed had been dead nine years: it was in this chamber that he breathed his last; here he lay in state; hence his coffin was borne by the undertaker’s men; and since that day a sense of dreary consecration had guarded it from frequent intrusion no jail was ever more secure.... I lifted my head and tried to look boldly round the dark room: at this moment a light gleamed on the wall....I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings: something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down – I uttered a wild, involuntary cry...
(1998: 14, 17-18)

This scene provides a further example of how the structure of Gateshead, which may serve as the nurturing place of ‘home’ to the Reeds, does not hold similar connotations for Jane. According to Leavis, the ordeal that Jane suffers facilitates her progress, as “each experience initiates a new phase of being for her,

because she has learnt something new about the possibilities of living and so can make a further demand on life” (Leavis 1966: 14). The possibilities available to women are represented in the female role models throughout the novel, and are made available to Jane in each new location/phase of her life. Jane overhears a conversation between the two maids, Bessie and Abbot, which highlights the importance of femininity and entrenches society’s preconceptions about the value of the Victorian woman, and her own position in the social structure:

‘Poor Miss Jane is to be pitied, too, Abbot.’

‘Yes,’ responded Abbot, ‘if she was a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that.’

‘Not a great deal, to be sure,’ agreed Bessie: ‘at any rate a beauty like Miss Georgiana would be more moving in the same condition.’ (1998: 27)

Not only is Jane given an idea of the social value of beauty, represented by her cousin Georgiana, but again her sense of worth is undermined. This may have something to do with the fact that, as an outsider and marginal figure, she feels she is not worthy of consideration, and this opinion is often confirmed by others and not perpetuated only by Jane herself. These female role models are eventually rejected by Brontë as inadequate examples of femaleness. Mrs. Reed is a poor nurturer, unsuccessful in raising Cousin John, who dies in disrepute, and failing in turn with her two daughters, Eliza and Georgiana Reed, who reflect the inadequacy of the dualism of spirituality and passion. Eliza grows to become a harsh, stern woman, described as having a “sallow face and severe mien...[with a] nun-like ornament of a string of ebony beads and a crucifix... (1998: 239). She is unable to function or relate to the outside world, humourless and lacking in all human attributes of passion and emotion, and choosing instead to, “...seek retirement where punctual habits would be permanently secured from disturbance, and place safe barriers between herself and a frivolous world” (1998: 246). Georgiana functions as the extreme inverse of Eliza. She is described by Jane as a

“...full-blown, very plump damsel, fair as a wax-work” (1998: 246) and scathingly portrayed by Eliza:

‘Georgiana, a more vain and absurd animal than you, was certainly never allowed to cumber the earth....you seek only to fasten your feebleness on some other person’s strength: if no one can be found willing to burden her or himself with such a fat, weak, puffy, useless thing, you cry out that you are ill-treated, neglected, miserable.’ (1998: 247)

Jane recognises that these female role models are ill-suited to her own identity in the initial phases of the novel, and chooses to reject, as opposed to assimilate, the values and qualities of these three women in her life at Gateshead. Eagleton observes that, living in someone else’s household and receiving none of the nurturing care and love of a normal child, Jane is an “exile”, who is increasingly prompted to rebel (1988: 72). Despite the constant demoralisation she suffers at the hands of the inmates at Gateshead, Jane is able to assert her own sense of self-worth by rebelling against Mrs. Reed, telling her: ““They [Jane’s cousins] are not fit to associate with me”” (1998: 28). Brontë deals subtly with Jane’s rebellion, ensuring that Jane is quick to point out to the reader that her outburst is not consciously calculated, ““What would Uncle Reed say to you if he were alive?’ *was my scarcely voluntary demand*” (1998: 28, emphasis added). Brontë tempers Jane’s assertiveness, which may be viewed as manipulative and egotistical, by explaining her outburst as involuntary. This qualification affects the veracity of Jane’s retrospective narration and here it appears to resemble that of Lucy Snowe’s first-person narration in *Villette* where, as I show later, her account may not be entirely accurate or complete. This uncertainty in the narration reflects the interior conflict of the Victorian woman, divided between principles of domesticity and propriety, which require a self-less angel in the house, and ambitious desires for independence and self-sufficiency. Eagleton describes the interior conflict of Brontë’s female protagonist as causing her to be “both enterprising individualist and hapless victim” (1988: 64). As first-person

narrator, Jane continues to attribute acts of assertiveness on her part to outside forces such as fate; she claims that “fairies” and the voices of nature and heaven guide her actions. In this way Jane is able to best Mrs. Reed in a verbal attack, “*Speak* I must: I had been trodden on severely and must turn...” (1998: 37), which would be seemingly unfitting for a young girl:

‘My uncle Reed is in heaven and can see all you do and think; and so can papa and mama: they know how you shut me up all day long, and how you wish me dead....I am glad you are no relation of mine...and if any one asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty.’ (1998: 28, 38)

Jane acquires a sense of liberation from speaking her mind: “Ere I had finished this reply, my soul began to expand, to exult, with the strangest sense of freedom...” (1998: 38). There is a thrill of authority inherent in Jane’s ability to express herself as she is finally able to establish some viable sense of self in relation to the subjugation she has suffered at the hands of the inmates of Gateshead. There is, as a result, no sentimental attachment to Gateshead as a home for Jane, and when questioned by Mr Lloyd, the doctor, Jane clearly illustrates her marginal position of exile within this home:

‘ Don’t you think Gateshead a very beautiful house? Asked he, ‘Are you not very thankful to have such a fine place to live at?’”

‘It is not my house, sir; and Abbot says I have less right to be here than a servant.’ (1998: 25)

Mrs Reed decides to send Jane away to Lowood Institution in order to cut any further ties with her. Once again, there is an impermanence associated with this home, as Lowood is a boarding school, and the inmates frequently come and go so that, as a home, it is not Jane’s. The name ‘Lowood’ may have various associations besides its unhealthy atmosphere. The focus on the word “low” may

indicate the humble or lowly birth of the “low-born” orphaned pupils, who also occupy a ‘lower’ position in society as the ‘second sex’. Jane’s description of the school evokes the religious imagery of a convent. These orphaned girls would no doubt struggle to find a suitable match given their lack of family connections, therefore the nun’s fate was a very real fate for the “redundant” (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 407) single Victorian woman:

I looked round the convent-like garden, and then up at the house; a large building, half of which seemed gray and old, and the other half quite new. The new part, containing the schoolroom and dormitory, was lit by mullioned and latticed windows, which gave it a church-like aspect...
(1998: 51)

Jane’s describes the “convent-like” quality of the garden where the girls remain enclosed after lunch, and the “church-like” aspect of the schoolroom and dormitory, where the girls live and are educated, leading a life which resembles the existence of nuns at a convent.

The school is described by Helen Burns, one of Jane’s schoolmates: “[it] is partly a charity-school: you and I, and all the rest of us are charity-children ...this is called an institution for educating orphans” (1998: 52). Jane spends all holidays at the school and does not return to Gateshead until much later in life, and then on her own terms. Thus, for the present, Jane is once again set adrift in society, and the image of the storm that heralds her arrival at Lowood, reiterates this idea: “Thus was I severed from Bessie and Gateshead: thus whirled away to unknown, and, as I then deemed, remote and mysterious regions....Rain, wind, and darkness filled the air” (1998: 43-44). Jane’s marginality is strongly represented at the school, as despite the fact that she is surrounded by girls of similar social position (orphans), the sense that she in particular does not belong still exists:

...I wandered as usual among the forms and tables and laughing groups without a companion, yet not feeling lonely...I now and then lifted a blind and looked out; it snowed fast....I could distinguish...the disconsolate moan of the wind outside...Probably, if I had lately left a good home and kind parents, this would have been the hour when I should most keenly have regretted the separation. (1998: 57)

Despite the solitude she experiences, Jane is adamant in her belief that her new, albeit temporary, home is an improvement on the last: “I would not now have exchanged Lowood with all its privations, for Gateshead and its daily luxuries” (1998: 78). Jane finally finds a companion in Helen Burns, who is also an ostracised outsider. Helen serves as an interesting role model for Jane in that she embodies the principles of self-abnegation and temperance that were so valued in Victorian society. These are principles which Lowood is clearly trying to instil in its pupils, perpetuating the stereotypes upheld by the society of that time:

Ranged on benches down the sides of the room, the eighty girls sat motionless and erect: a quaint assemblage they appeared, all with plain locks combed from their faces, not a curl visible; in brown dresses, made high and surrounded by a narrow tucker around the throat...Above twenty of those clad in this costume were full-grown girls; or rather young women: it suited them ill, and gave an air of oddity even to the prettiest. (1998: 48)

This stereotype serves to represent not only gender but also class and religion. Principles of sacrifice and selflessness are embodied in the teachings of Christianity and in the roles prescribed to women in Victorian society. Class is perpetuated through the collective segregation of orphans, where they are educated, or acclimatised to deprivation almost as if to prepare them for their future lot in life. Helen Burns embodies all these qualities, and is described by Pearson and Pope as the “virginal ideal of spiritual goodness, selflessness, and

martyrdom” (1981: 165). Jane describes Helen in ethereal, almost angelic terms: “She looks as if she were thinking of something beyond her punishment - beyond her situation: of something not round her nor before her” (1998: 54). Jane recognises that this type of selfless martyrdom is not useful to her, and she is frustrated by Helen’s attitude towards her subjugators, as is seen in the following discussion with Helen concerning her punishment at the hands of a teacher:

‘And if I were in your place I should dislike [Miss Scatcherd]: I should resist her; if she struck me with that rod, I should get it from her hand; I should break it under her nose’

‘Yet it would be your duty to bear it, if you could not avoid it: it is weak and silly to say you *cannot bear* what it is your fate to be required to bear.’ (1998: 58)

Jane’s own reasoning in response to the situation differs greatly from Helen’s. The reader understands that Jane and Brontë have decided that Helen’s example of femaleness is inadequate. Jane reasons: “If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way...When we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard” (1998: 60). The self-denial on Helen’s part appears to reduce her character into lifelessness and eventually literal death. Eagleton states that Helen sees her “...resigned endurance of life as a burden from which, in the end, will come release” (1988: 15). This is insufficient for Jane, who uses her experiences at the various locations which make up the phases of her development as means by which to progress and define herself.

This process of self-definition is, as mentioned earlier, tempered by Brontë. Eagleton describes the two facets of Jane: “...the meek, unworldly victim unable to act purposively and the enterprising activist with an efficient knowledge of the measures essential for social advancement” (1988: 62). When Jane takes the initiative to leave Lowood after eight years (having also served as a teacher in

the establishment once she graduated) and finds a position of employment as a governess, she attributes her resourcefulness to external forces:

A kind fairy, in my absence, had surely dropped the required suggestion on my pillow; for as I lay down it came quietly and naturally to my mind: - 'those who want situations advertise: you must advertise in the - shire Herald.' (1998: 90)

The effect, then, states Eagleton, "...is to show Jane moving eagerly forward without the objectionable implication that she is egoistically drafting her future" (1988: 62). Brontë was writing for her time, and recognised that it was necessary to "...negotiate passionate self-fulfilment on terms which preserve the social and moral conventions..." (Eagleton 1988:16). The 'social advancement' of an orphan figure such as Jane Eyre was hindered by lack of family connections in Victorian society, and employment as a governess was one of the few alternatives available to a middle class woman, who faced the further limited reality of any form of 'advancement' for the 'second sex'. These concerns are personified in Jane Eyre, who recognises the restrictions of her position; desiring change from the monotony of Lowood, she realises that she is constrained in her choices:

I desired liberty....I abandoned it, and framed a humbler supplication for change; for change, stimulus: that petition, too, seemed swept off into a vague space; 'Then,' I cried, half desperate, 'Grant me at least a new servitude!'(1998: 89)

Jane's marginal position as orphan serves to increase her economically and socially uncertain condition and, by extension, the uncertain social and economic state of all middle class women unprotected by family. Her homelessness seals her fate as one destined for a life of servitude as housekeeper in a home where the most fundamental privileges granted to women are not accessible to her. A study of the Victorian governess has revealed that:

...if a woman of birth and education found herself in financial distress, and had no relatives who could support her or give her a home, she was justified in seeking the only employment that would not cause her to lose her status. She could find work as a governess. (Peterson 1980: 6)

Brontë is fully engaged by the limited and often debilitating life choices available to an orphaned, penniless woman. Jacobus reviews Jane Eyre's position and the position of women in nineteenth century society:

As a middle-class woman, [Jane] can only be employed within the home or its educational colony, the school; but that 'home', since she is employee not 'mistress', must remain alien... the only role open to her is that of bringing up children while marriage and motherhood themselves are paradoxically tabooed to her ... (Jacobus 1979: 46-7)

When Edward Rochester and Jane meet at her new place of employment and residence, Thornfield, Brontë further emphasises Jane's solitary status when Rochester poses the question: "And your home?", to which Jane responds, "I have none" (1998: 128). Rochester is intrigued by Jane's position and her lack of connections, and attracted to a condition where the romantic 'self' is free of the trappings of a class-conscious society concerned with principles of propriety of behaviour. These concerns are reflected in *Shirley*, where Brontë observes the censure of imagination and originality in the female sex:

The [Simpson] daughters were an example to their sex....More exactly regulated lives, feelings, manners, habits, it would have been difficult to find anywhere....The Abomination of Desolation was no mystery to them: they discovered that unutterable Thing in the characteristic others called Originality. Quick they were to recognise the signs of this evil....What was this strange thing? Being unintelligible it must be bad. Let it be denounced and chained up. (1949: 436-7)

Jane Eyre displays just such imaginative creativity through her art, further emphasising how ‘unconnected’ and ‘unaffected’ she is. While viewing her portfolio, Rochester is further informed of the hardships endured by Jane and her own difficult and unstable position in a society which marginalises and dismisses those with no connections or status. One of Jane’s water colours features the predominant image of storms and shipwrecks:

The first represented clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea: all the distance was in eclipse...there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant....its beak held a gold bracelet...Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corse glanced through the green water; a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn.(1998: 131)

Rochester astutely surmises: “...Your pleasures, by your own account, have been few...” (1998: 132). Juhani Pallasmaa states that “Homes delineate the realms of intimacy and public life. It is frustrating to be forced to live in space that we cannot recognize or mark as our personal territory” (1994: www2.uiah.fi), and the frustration associated with the impermanence and transience of any home that Jane occupies is reflected in her art. This form of self-representation is a further way in which Jane recounts the story of her life, but again the reader is, like Rochester, forced to read between the lines as Jane presents her suffering through abstract and metaphorical portrayal. Her frustrations also lead her to continue her efforts to find a “comfortable space”, and the necessity of this space-clearing gesture is embodied in Jane’s observation:

I could not help it, the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes. Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story, backwards and forwards, safe in the silence and solitude of the spot, and allow my mind’s eye to dwell on whatever bright visions rose before it. (1998: 114)

This sense of 'restlessness' is not confined to Jane alone, as she reflects that "millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot", and goes on to criticise the general perception perpetuated by Victorian society that:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: women feel just as men feel...it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings...(1998: 115)

Jane (and Brontë) are thus pointing out that the "millions" that are in "silent revolt" are in fact women, and that Jane herself occupies the doubly marginalised position of being both female and an orphan.

Jane finds temporary relief from confinement and restlessness by walking and states, "I did not like re-entering Thornfield. To pass its threshold was to return to stagnation: to cross the silent hall, to ascend the darksome staircase, to seek my own lonely little room...was to quell wholly the faint excitement wakened by my walk..." (1998: 121-2). The significance of the name 'Thornfield' may inform the events that are narrated in this location, as the word 'thorn' connotes something that wounds and causes discomfort and worry. A 'thorn field' may imply a proverbial 'field' of problems or difficulties, and the name is perhaps portentous. From one point of view, the image of the thorny crown of Christ may also be inferred as Jane is forced to suffer for her 'faith' in and devotion to Rochester, and her momentary temptation by passion is punished through martyrdom and sacrifice.

Brontë recognises the need for articulation of unexpressed emotion and creates a female protagonist who works literally and figuratively within the confines of the Victorian period, endeavouring to find outlets for expression, and some provisional "comfortable space". The garden, too, serves as a "space" for

Jane's need for solitude when she finds a space which stands outside the structural confines of Thornfield. Similarly to Gateshead, the building itself does not necessarily provide the needed location of selfhood, and this provokes the space-clearing gestures on the part of Jane. Thornfield is not 'home' and Jane does not feel that she belongs, and therefore she attempts to 'colonise' a space of her own:

I walked awhile on the pavement; but a subtle, well-known scent - that of a cigar - stole from some window; I saw the library casement open a handbreadth; I knew I might be watched thence; so I went apart into the orchard. No nook in the grounds more sheltered and more Eden-like; it was full of trees, it bloomed with flowers: a very high wall shut it out from the court, on one side; on the other, a beech avenue screened it from the lawn...Here one could wander unseen...I felt I could haunt such shade for ever... (1998: 260)

'Home' (however temporary) becomes a state of mind as well as an actual place. Bachelard, in his meditation on the 'felicitous space' needed in the home, observes that the imagination has the ability to transform space (1969: xxxiii). The "Eden-like" space of the garden, in *The Professor*, *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, provides a haven and sanctuary for the chief protagonists in their respective novels. This 'colonised' space provides some form of ownership and possession for the characters, specifically female, who are, as mere housekeepers, prohibited from owning homes. However, their attempts to turn space into place are frustrated by the temporary, surrogate nature of these locations. The fact that these homes are owned by others is manifested in the literal invasions of the makeshift sanctuaries of characters such as Lucy Snowe in *Villette*. Dr Bretton tramples and invades the private space of Lucy's garden and because the garden is not in fact private, Lucy has no rights of ownership, and is therefore subject to intrusion. Similarly, Rochester spies on Jane from the window of his home as she walks in the garden, and then proceeds to follow her out:

...this new scent is neither of shrub nor flower; it is – I know it well – it is Mr. Rochester’s cigar....I must flee. I make for the wicket leading to the shrubbery, and I see Mr. Rochester entering... (1998: 260)

These spaces are not sacred, and this applies to the temporary ‘sanctuary’ provided by the schoolroom, where Jane tutors Rochester’s ward Adèle. It too may serve temporarily as a private space: “...I should not be called upon to quit my sanctum of the school-room: for a sanctum it was now become to me, - ‘a very pleasant refuge in time of trouble’” (1998: 174). The schoolroom is, in time, invaded, and thus the temporary nature of these places is a danger in itself, as the protagonists often face the threat of invasion.

It is the private, temporary ‘sanctuary’ of places such as the “darksome staircase” which also creates the setting for the gothic drama to unfold, where further perils serve to reflect the inner dangers that await the heroine in her own consciousness. The subversive potential of the gothic formula comprised typical features and Brontë creates a distinctly gothic atmosphere in the early stages of Jane’s residence at Thornfield by making use of these. Jane herself introduces this dimension when she questions Mrs Fairfax, the housekeeper,

‘So I think: you have no ghost then?’

‘None that I ever heard of’, returned Mrs. Fairfax, smiling. (1998: 111)

When Jane decides to walk to post a letter she finds that, “The ground was hard, the air was still, my road was lonely...” (1998: 116). She cuts a solitary, lonely figure, and her vague dread is heightened when she hears an oncoming horse. The sounds she hears, “A rude noise...a metallic clatter....The din was on the causeway...” (1998:117), leads her to recall the legendary beast of childhood stories. The gothic fairytales that Jane evokes from her childhood are legends that carry the gothic into the reader’s framework of knowledge and understanding, legitimising Jane’s narrative and foregrounding the uncanny:

...I remembered certain of Bessie's tales wherein figured a North-of-England spirit, called a 'Gytrash;' which in the form of horse, mule, or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came on belated travellers, as this horse was now coming upon me....I heard a rush under the hedge, and close down by the hazel stems glided a great dog...It was exactly one mask of Bessie's Gytrash...it passed me, however, quietly enough; not staying to look up, with huge pretercanine eyes, in my face...The horse followed – a tall steed, and on its back a rider. The man, the human being, broke the spell at once. Nobody ever rode with the Gytrash: it was always alone...No Gytrash was this, - only a traveller taking the short cut to Millcote. (1998: 117-8)

Brontë creates the feeling of the uncanny, building up the expectations of the romantic reader before bringing reality back into the text. Jacobus affirms that Freud's essay on the uncanny offers a classic formulation of Gothic strategy. Pointing to the opposition "heimlich/unheimlich", she suggests that, "the writer creates a kind of uncertainty in us...by not letting us know, no doubt purposely, whether he is taking us into the real world or into a purely fantastic one of his own creation" (1979: 48). The figure of the Gytrash reveals itself to be a mounted Mr Rochester, a real human being. The folk tale is perhaps a presage, as Jane's future relationship with Rochester will prove dangerous, evoking in Jane a passionate attraction that she has to struggle to control as it compromises her moral standards.

For an instant, the reader is uncertain about the supernatural element of Jane's vision. A further spectral vision occurs during one of Jane's most significant encounters, that of her meeting with Bertha Rochester. Gilbert and Gubar observe that this confrontation prompts a "...dialogue of self and soul on whose outcome, as we shall see, the novel's plot, Rochester's fate, and Jane's coming-of-age all depend" (2000: 339). Bertha Mason, Rochester's lunatic wife

who is hidden in the attic, functions as both phantom and psychic reality, as Jane initially believes that the figure she sees is some sort of demonic ghost:

It seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large...I know not what dress she had on: it was white and straight; but whether a gown, sheet or shroud, I cannot tell...it was a savage face....Shall I tell you of what it reminded me?...Of the foul German spectre - the Vampyre. (1998: 297)

Jane Eyre loses consciousness after the sighting and when she recounts the event to Rochester, he convinces Jane that the vision was “the creature of an over-stimulated brain...nerves like yours are not made for rough handling” (1998: 298). Gilbert and Gubar explain that there was a male tendency to attribute a nervous disposition to all women who displayed overt signs of creativity or intellect during the Victorian era. Therefore the spectral vision that Jane encounters, when it is viewed as the product of an active imagination, is at once belittled and reduced to the level of hallucination and hysteria. This charge of ‘hysteria’ was often used to control women and repress imagination and creativity. Jane, however, is steadfast in her belief that the ‘dream’ holds some meaning: “Presentiments are strange things!” (1998: 300). Rochester suspects that the ‘dream’ is in fact reality and is finally forced to admit the existence of “the creature” on their wedding day. Jacobus states that in this way, “natural and supernatural are brought ambiguously into play” (1979: 50). The apparition of Bertha Rochester is the strongest indication so far that Thornfield fulfils the notion of home as a coalition, at once safe and secure, whilst dangerous at the core.

The dangers are both real and imagined as Bertha Rochester represents the fears of Jane Eyre in a similar manner to that of the nun in *Villette*, who is a manifest representation of Lucy Snowe’s dread. Inner dangers are represented through spectral visions and the natural and supernatural are brought into play, as both visions - that of Bertha Rochester and the spectral nun - are in fact proven

real. This may be Brontë's comment on the very real nature of the fears of the Victorian woman such as filling the prescribed role of the self-less "angel in the house", a role which would leave little room for the overwhelming passionate emotion experienced by Jane Eyre. Such comment applies also to the fate of the redundant single woman which threatens Lucy Snowe's ambitious desires for self-sufficiency. The aspirations of these protagonists may be seen to be inappropriate with regards to nineteenth-century principles of domesticity. To seek one's own destiny, to love passionately and to pursue personal quests for happiness are desires that, for orphaned, penniless women in Victorian society, were not deemed suitable or proper. The issue of entitlement is pertinent here, as neither female protagonist is deemed by other characters to be worthy of the privileges accorded to women. The space they attempt to make into a home becomes a punishment and not a sanctuary. They find not safety and security, but danger at the centre, and it would have been thought that the safety of 'home' was jeopardised by their selfish aspirations and ambitions. These are the reasons for what Eagleton has termed Brontë's "double-edged attitude to the question of secure settlement" (1988: 73).

Besides the uncanny incidents, the question of secure settlement is informed by the female characters at Thornfield and their role in Jane's development. Jane is quickly dissatisfied with the company of Mrs Fairfax and Adèle, "...I believed in the existence of other and more vivid kinds of goodness, and what I believed in I wished to behold" (1998: 114). Jacobus states that the female characters in Brontë's novels serve as "images of women through whom Lucy both defines and fails to recognise herself" (1979: 44). In Adèle, Rochester sees "a miniature of Celine Varens, [Rochester's mistress, a French opera dancer] as she used to appear on the boards..." (1998: 146) but despite the fact that Jane has a regard for the child, she does not find that she has much talent for anything except frivolity. Jane's encounter with Blanche Ingram, who is ostensibly Rochester's intended, serves to undermine her confidence most significantly, and although she finds Blanche cruel and ignorant, she realises how powerful the

value of beauty is in society. Jane begins to feel herself 'unworthy' of Rochester's attention and berates herself for her presumptions:

'You,' I said, 'a favourite with Mr Rochester? You gifted with the power of pleasing him? You of importance to him in any way? Go! Your folly sickens me'....'Listen, then, Jane Eyre, to your sentence: to-morrow, place the glass before you, and draw in chalk your own picture...write under it, "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain"....Delineate carefully the loveliest face you can imagine....call it "Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank."' (1998: 169-170)

It is not simply Jane who undermines her own self-confidence, however, as she encounters cruelty and condescension from Lady Ingram herself:

One of the gentleman, Mr. Eshton, observing me, seemed to propose that I should be asked to join them; but Lady Ingram instantly negated the notion. 'No,' I heard her say; 'she looks too stupid for any game of the sort.' (1998: 192)

Bertha Mason, too, serves as an interesting female role model for Jane, Pearson and Pope saying that she "...represents society's worst fears about female sexuality. We learn that Bertha's passion and self-indulgence have resulted in her insanity" (1981: 165). Thus, just as Jane has rejected the model of virginal lifelessness represented by characters such as Eliza Reed and Helen Burns, so too is the example of Bertha Mason rejected. This is implied in the fact that Brontë orchestrates the deaths of Helen Burns, who dies a martyred saint, and Bertha Mason, who dies a monstrous devil, in order to dismiss these examples of femaleness. Jane embodies a balance between the ideals of religious faith and passion. She likens her all-consuming love for Rochester to insanity, realising that she risks jeopardising her self-worth by remaining in a bigamous relationship as his mistress. Her religious faith is tied to independence and self-regard, "I care for

myself...I will hold to principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad – as I am now” (1998: 334).

Jane’s concept of home and of Thornfield as her home alters as the novel progresses. When she is forced to leave for a brief time in order to honour the dying wishes of Mrs. Reed, her temporary exile allows her to see Thornfield, and one particular inmate, in a different light:

How people feel when they are returning home from an absence, long or short, I did not know: I had never experienced the sensation. I had known what it was to come back to Gateshead, when a child, after a long walk - to be scolded for looking cold or gloomy...to come back from church to Lowood - to long for a plenteous meal and a good fire, and to be unable to get either....[But now] I felt glad as the road shortened before me: so glad that I stopped once to ask myself what that joy meant; and to remind reason that it was not to my home I was going, or to a permanent resting-place, or to a place where fond friends looked out for me and waited my arrival. (1998: 254-5)

The dynamic and fluid concept of ‘home’ becomes apparent through Jane’s observations. ‘Home’ is not simply an actual location, but often metaphorically transcends such physical confines to carry various ideas and associations. This is the case with Jane and her growing associations with Thornfield, as is evident in her words when she encounters Rochester on her return from Gateshead:

‘Thank you, Mr Rochester, for your great kindness. I am strangely glad to get back again to you; and wherever you are is my home, - my only home.’ (1998: 258)

However, the idea of the coalition of ‘home’ as both safe and dangerous also informs an understanding of Rochester, whom Jane now views as her ‘home’. He too, while offering safety and security through marriage and thus connection and

status, is dangerous at the core, hiding the fact the he is already married to the lunatic spectre hidden in the attic of Thornfield. When she is discovered, the offer he makes essentially demotes Jane to the position of mistress. In response Jane recalls what Rochester had said about the social position of the mistress:

It was a grovelling fashion of existence: I should never wish to return to it. Hiring a mistress is the next worst thing to buying a slave: both are often by nature, and always by position, inferior; and to live familiarly with inferiors is degrading. I now hate the recollection of the time I passed with Céline, Giacinta, and Clara. (1998: 329)

These words help Jane to recognise that she would be doing herself an injustice by acquiescing to this offer. Eagleton explains her response by suggesting that “for someone as isolated as Jane, the self is all one has; and it is not to be recklessly invested in dubious enterprises...it is a sense of the self which springs in part from the condition of orphanage” (1988: 24). Jane’s decision exhibits a strong desire for self-preservation:

I felt the truth of [Rochester’s] words; and I drew from them a certain inference, that if I were so far to forget myself and all the teaching that had ever been instilled into me, as - under any pretext - with any justification - through any temptation - to be the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory. (1998: 329)

Jane struggles with her attraction to Rochester, but finally curbs her passion in order to preserve her integrity. She explains why she has to leave Thornfield; Rochester, misinterpreting her motivations, pleads: “...It would not be wicked to love me.” Jane responds “It would to obey you.” (1998: 333), and Rochester realises he cannot restrain Jane: “Conqueror I might be of this house; but the inmate would escape to heaven before I could call myself possessor of its clay dwelling-place” (1998: 335). Rochester has the insight to realise he has placed

Jane in an impossible moral position, and allows her to leave him, a kindness that St John Rivers will not reserve for Jane when she reaches Moor House, the next phase in her character's development.

Thus, following Jane's departure from Thornfield, she finds herself again alone, without connection: "I thought of drear flight and homeless wandering – and oh! With agony I thought of what I had left!" (1998: 338). This feeling of solitude and loss is further compounded by the fact that, like Lucy in *Villette*, Jane arrives at her next destination penniless and without any possessions:

...the coachman has set me down at a place called Whitcross: he could take me no farther for the sum I had given, and I was not possessed of another shilling in the world....At this moment I discover that I forgot to take my parcel out of the pocket of the coach, where I had placed it for safety: there it remains...and now I am absolutely destitute. (1998: 340)

Jane wanders alone, bombarded by the elements and starving until, "...In the last stage of despair...she glimpses through a tiny window another world - the deep peace of warmth, study, and security, the image of family affection in a cultivated home that has been her unconscious goal" (Leavis 1966: 22). The aspirations of a "settled life" are made evident as Jane sees a window lit up in the dark, "...at one dim point, far in among the marshes and the ridges, a light sprung up....there shot out the friendly gleam again, from the lozenged panes of a very small latticed window..." (1998: 348-349). Thus Jane Eyre is drawn by its light to this new surrogate home, seeking protection and safety, little thinking that what seems at once safe and secure, is also possibly dangerous at the core. Jane Eyre is the figure on the periphery; she is literally on the outside looking in, a marginal figure in several senses of the word. Thus, despite the fact that she finds shelter, the surrogate nature of this home remains and the potential for danger lies with the character of St John.

The precarious nature of Jane's position, her vulnerability in a strange, unknown place, is emphasised. George questions whether lack of possessions impede or facilitate belonging (1996: 173), and Brontë's examination of this question is ambivalent, as it will be in *Villette*. Jane is questioned by St John and refuses to divulge any details which may potentially cast aspersions on her character:

'What account can you give of yourself?'

'Sir, I can give you no details tonight' (1998: 355).

'Do you mean to say,' he asked, 'that you are completely isolated from every connection?'

'I do. Not a tie links me to any living thing: not a claim do I possess to admittance under any roof in England.'" (1998: 364)

'Where did you last reside?'

'The name of the place where, and of the person with whom I lived, is my secret,' I replied, concisely. (1998: 365)

The presence of possessions, in a figurative sense, represent memories and mementoes from the past, but due to the fact that Jane is an orphan with no connections, these symbols from the past do not exist. Literally, baggage may be seen to imply good social standing, therefore without any earthly possessions, Jane's claim on the recognition of others may be diminished. However, the lack of baggage, seen in a positive light, implies Jane may make a fresh start, with a new home representing new possibilities, a location where Jane need not face the preconceptions of the community.

By not answering any direct inquiries, Jane prevents any surmises, and despite her unwillingness to disclose any personal information, the members of the Rivers family choose not to judge Jane unfairly. This is more than can be said for the maid, Hannah, who Jane observes as having, "...just now made it a species of reproach that I had no 'brass' and no house." (1998: 361). Extraordinary trust is placed in Jane by the inhabitants of Moor House, partly as a result of their

romantic Christian notions of being the Good Samaritans. Jane also gradually offers definitions of herself that enable her to gain their acceptance, allowing herself to be perceived as the “poor child! - poor girl!” (1998: 362). She also divulges enough information to grant her an element of respectability, “I am an orphan; the daughter of a clergyman” (1998: 366). The reader may identify with the Rivers family at this point, as Jane’s account of her personal history obscures details and emotions in much the same way as Jane’s narration does for the reader. However, Jane is now considerably more confident in her own selfhood, as these definitions she provides to the Rivers family were ideas of selfhood she had not previously attained for herself. Her response to Hannah’s initial prejudice exemplifies this: “Some of the best people that ever lived have been destitute as I am; and if you are Christian, you ought not to consider poverty a crime” (1998: 361).

Jane develops a strong bond with the three Rivers siblings, Diana, Mary and St John: “They loved their sequestered home. I, too, in the gray, small antique structure...found a charm, both potent and permanent” (1998: 368). Diana and Mary Rivers in particular, represent a familiar element in Victorian society. Also left orphans, their prospects are as limited as Jane’s:

Diana and Mary were soon to leave Moor House, and return to a far different life and scene which awaited them, as governesses in a large, fashionable, south-of-England city; where each held a situation in families, by whose wealthy and haughty members they were regarded only as humble dependents... (1998: 371)

Jane considers herself fortunate when St John secures her a position as a teacher in a school for girls that he has opened, yet she is aware of the fact that this is one of the limited possibilities open to her. However, the role of teacher is an improved position compared to that of being a governess, as the degree of servitude is lessened. Brontë is always critical of employment as governess,

emphasising, in *Shirley*, the prejudice and hardships endured through the words of Mrs. Pryor, a former governess:

‘It was in no sort concealed from me that I was held a “burden and a restraint in society”. The gentlemen, I found, regarded me as a “tabooed woman”, to whom “they were interdicted from granting the usual privileges of the sex” and yet who “annoyed them by frequently crossing their path”....[I felt the] dreadful crushing of the animal spirits, the ever prevailing sense of friendlessness and homelessness consequent on this state of things... (1949: 366)

The fact is that, without connection and status, the role of teacher/governess is virtually the only respectable employment available to Jane and she must work in order to survive:

My home, then - when I at last find a home, - is a cottage...I am sitting alone on the hearth...Whether it is better, I ask, to be a slave in fool’s paradise at Marseilles - fevered with delusive bliss one hour - suffocating with the bitterest tears of remorse and shame the next - or to be a village-schoolmistress, free and honest, in a breezy mountain nook in the healthy heart of England? (1998: 379)

Brontë sees teaching as somewhat preferable to governessing and Jacobus’ view of the space of schoolroom as an “educational colony” (1979: 46-7) confirms this, as the middle-class Victorian woman moves beyond the confines of home, to occupy a wider sphere of influence.

While Jane retains a clear conscience regarding her decision not to be Rochester’s mistress, feeling “free” and “honest”, there is a certain desire which remains regarding the love she and Rochester shared. St John Rivers stands in relief to Rochester and the passion and emotion he embodies. St John states that he searches for a “...sufferer, a labourer, a female apostle...” (1998: 394), and

slowly begins to influence Jane's existence at Moor House in a detrimental manner: "I fell under a freezing spell. When he said 'go,' I went; 'come,' I came...But I did not love my servitude..." (1998: 419). There is an unnerving lifelessness in St John, whereas Rochester, with all his faults, serves to represent all that is vital and passionate. St John's proposition that Jane accompany him to India as his "help-meet and fellow-labourer" (1998: 423), while offering her a virtuous life is still, to Jane, almost as offensive as Rochester's proposition that she become his mistress. Jane rejects the cold virtue that St John offers as he further emphasises the importance he places on self-abnegation and self-denial when he states:

'God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must - shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you - not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service.'
(1998: 424)

It is significant that St John attempts to "claim" Jane and possess her, whereas Rochester, even in his passionate and 'sinful' state, still recognises that Jane has a spirit and identity of her own, admitting that he would never be her "possessor". Jane senses the danger inherent in St John's offer and his fanatical disposition: "...if I go to India, I go to premature death....If I were to marry you, you would kill me..." (1998: 426; 434). India is presented as amorphous by Jane, who offers no specifics concerning the country and makes no attempts to understand India by identifying or naming any part of it in order to understand it. Jane recognises that India, as the location of her servitude, provides no opportunity for the development of selfhood. Similar concerns arise for her in Moor House itself and the name is significant with regards Jane's development at this location. The word 'moor' or 'marsh' may refer to a tract of wasteland, and Jane does in fact experience true freedom of movement in the open spaces surrounding Moor House. 'Moor' may also refer to the process of anchoring a boat, and this has positive connotations as Jane finally finds some security after

wandering aimlessly and alone. However, the idea of fixing a boat firmly by cables or anchors suggests confinement, which is exactly what St John attempts to do in his efforts to restrain Jane. Again, Jane places significant value in her own self-worth, realising she deserves love and all the comfort, protection and shelter associated with a “settled life”, despite the fact that St John attempts to convince her that she is “not formed” for love. Her rejection of him is an important phase in the process of Jane’s character development, as she does so in order to affirm her own self-worth.

This, coupled with the financial windfall Jane receives - “Your uncle, Mr. Eyre of Madeira, is dead; that he has left you all his property, and that you are now rich...” (1998: 402) - allows her to possess all she was without: “...status, a fortune, an enviable family of intellectual cousins, an ancestral home...” (Leavis 1966: 22). This opportune windfall echoes the folktale element of *assistance*, identified by Vladimir Propp. It comprises the ‘magical helper’, and the ‘magical agent’ which are generated to provide assistance in quests. Jane is ‘assisted’ by the forces of nature, fairies and celestial influences, coupled with the aid of male heroes in the story. She describes her good fortune as a “Glorious discovery to a lonely wretch!” (1998: 407). But there is an area of her life she has yet to fulfil, she has yet to feel truly at home. Brontë therefore introduces more of the influence of ‘external forces’ to enable Jane to realise her greatest wish, and defy those of St John. Just as St John is about to convince Jane to join him in India, a stillness comes over her and the entire house as she hears Rochester’s voice:

I saw nothing: but I heard a voice somewhere cry -

‘Jane! Jane! Jane!’ Nothing more....

‘Down superstition!’ I commented, as that spectre rose up black by the black yew at the gate. ‘This is not thy deception, nor thy witchcraft: it is the work of nature. She was roused, and did – no miracle – but her best.’
(1998: 442)

Hearing Rochester's voice calling to her out of the darkness, Jane is spurred to action. As mentioned earlier, Eagleton explains how Brontë needs to show Jane moving eagerly forward without the "objectionable implication that she is egoistically drafting her future" (1988: 62) or appearing improperly assertive. Thus, Jane returns to Thornfield: "Once more on the road to Thornfield, I felt like a messenger-pigeon flying home" (1998: 445). Thornfield has come to signify 'home' to Jane, as it holds the promise of a settled life with Rochester. However, it appears that the "presentiment" Jane had felt earlier in her dreams is realised as she discovers Thornfield in ruins: "I looked with timorous joy towards a stately house: I saw a blackened ruin." (1998: 447). Jane discovers that Thornfield was destroyed by a fire started by Bertha Rochester, and beside, "...an immense quantity of valuable property destroyed" (1998: 449). Bertha is dead and Rochester, maimed and blinded. Rochester has retreated to Ferndean, a manor-house on a farm he owns. It is described as "...quite a desolate spot" (1998: 452), which seems fitting to his condition. Thornfield was earlier described as a "stately home", which suited the "vibrant" and "spirited" owner (1998: 451), however a "desolate" spot, hidden in dark woods seems an appropriate home for the blind and crippled Rochester. Brontë convinces the reader that Jane has resolved her concerns about returning to Rochester, firstly and ironically through the aid of the magical helper, by whom Rochester is appropriately punished for his 'crimes', and then through the inheritance which Jane receives, which raises her social standing. Also, despite his failings, Rochester is more capable of fulfilling Jane (and the reader's) romantic notions of love and fulfilment, and a 'settled' life, whereas St John Rivers offers her a virtuous path that is devoid of any love. Pearson and Pope feel that:

Bertha's death and Rochester's wound symbolize the resolution of Jane's ambivalence about sexual passion...Brontë find[ing] a way for Jane to experience the warmth and joy of romantic passion without losing her autonomy or her spiritual salvation. She does so by literally and symbolically lessening Rochester's power over Jane and by making possible a Christian marriage between them.... Rochester loses an eye and a hand in fire, the biblical punishment for lechery. (Pearson & Pope 1981: 167)

Rochester is essentially 'cleared' of his crime, and Bertha suitably disposed of.¹ Pearson and Pope also draw attention to the way that this happy ending is facilitated by a fortuitous event, the fact that Jane inherits money. "Her good fortune and Rochester's catastrophe lessen his social and economic advantage over her" (1981: 167). Eagleton reiterates this idea, stating that "...the 'lower' character [Jane] is able to exercise power because of a weakness in the 'higher' character: Rochester is crippled..." (Eagleton 1988: 59). Thus, having lessened Rochester's social advantages over Jane, "Brontë provides both with the happy ending of an egalitarian relationship" (Pearson & Pope 1981: 248). The name 'Ferndean' implies that Jane has finally found the sanctuary, leafy and green, that she continuously sought throughout her narrative. Ferndean serves as the 'Eden-like' place in which Jane may begin again and create a new story for herself and Rochester. Brontë also provides the romantic reader with a fulfilled heroine who succeeds within the appropriate confines of social and moral conventions, "Reader, I married him" (1998: 473). Her direct address to the reader and assurance anticipates the expectations of society. Thus, while Jane is "...an independent woman now" (1998: 458), she is content to marry her hero and attain that much sought-after settled life.

Brontë introduces the ideas of self-sufficiency and independence with the character of Jane Eyre, who achieves fulfilment in a socially acceptable sense - self-sufficient but under the auspices of marriage. Her independence is qualified due to the influence of social propriety and, perhaps, the marginal position of an orphaned Jane Eyre. She is only entitled to assimilate into the mainstream and purchase the privileges of comfort and home and the associated establishment of an authentic identity once some sacrifice for her ambitious aspirations of self-sufficiency is made.

¹ Although I am rereading Brontë's representation of 'home' with a post-colonial lens, my analysis remains within Jane Eyre's perceptions and account of her experience. This focus puts a critique of Brontë's treatment of Bertha Mason beyond the scope of my argument.

CHAPTER THREE

Villette

As in *Jane Eyre*, the representation of 'home' in *Villette* is spread across the various locations and the corresponding homes in which the female protagonist, Lucy Snowe, finds herself. Again, the quality of the various homes and the connotations of 'home' raise issues of belonging and homelessness associated with a marginalised orphan figure. This time, however, Lucy's various homes, largely surrogate in nature until the final location at Faubourg Clotilde, are female-owned and operated dwellings and the inmates provide Lucy with varying examples of the roles of women in the home. As first-person narrator, it is significant that Lucy appears to focus on the stories of other characters and not her own. She does not initially participate in the events of the narrative, preferring to observe and report on the actions of others. It is this 'voyeurism' which defines her and, as she tells the stories of other women, so she expresses her own tale through a combination of revelation and evasion. Gilbert and Gubar state that Lucy's hidden conflicts are in fact represented through the activity of other people (2000: 416). Moving through the various stages of Lucy's development and their setting and location, the idea of 'home' is interrogated through the defining factors of the female protagonist - that of poverty and her orphan status. The stages of Lucy's life are marked by changes of abode, and the inmates that reside in each new 'home' serve as female role models which she chooses to either assimilate or reject in her personal process of self-definition.

Charlotte Brontë is described by Eagleton as having a "double-edged attitude to the question of secure settlement" (1988: 73). The orphan figure of Lucy Snowe allows Brontë to explore the social implications of this condition and the attitudes of society, and furthermore, the idea of secure settlement in every location and how this is complicated by Lucy's situation. Life experience which informs identity is tied closely with a sense of home and Brontë shows that the traditional associations with this place and the corresponding emotions of

nostalgia and loyalty are not appropriate to the experiences of a marginalised orphan. Lucy Snowe's experience at the first location described in her narrative, that of Bretton, reveals the interactions of location and identity and how the process of identity construction is affected by her sense of discordance arising from the surrogate quality of a home that is not her own.

The idea of a 'settled life' is complicated by the unstable and unsettled life of Lucy in the Bretton household. The reader, through Lucy's narration, is permitted only a brief glimpse of this stage of Lucy's surrogate family life. She is considered a guest in the house of her godmother where, ironically, she feels most at home. Lucy's detached narration is devoid of nostalgia or loyalty, sentiments associated with 'home'. Lucy appears to have no location that she exclusively identifies as home, and the fact that she feels most at home at Bretton, where she is a guest, is indicative of the lack of belonging felt by this marginalised figure. Brontë explores Lucy's marginality through the partial disclosures of her narrative. Her family ties are vague and ambiguous, lending her existence an impermanence and instability. The fact that she is reluctant to call any specific location 'home' reinforces her marginality even before she suffers the unexplained tragedy that leaves her an orphan.

Lucy Snowe describes her godmother, who serves as her nearest relation, and her home in Bretton, in the detached but watchful manner that infuses much of her narration. The novel opens in her voice, but it is interesting to note that the information offered by Lucy is not personal; instead indifferent details are indifferently presented about her godmother and the dynasty of the Bretton name and home:

My godmother lived in a handsome house in the clean and ancient town of Bretton. Her husband's family had been there for generations, and bore, indeed, the name of their birthplace – Bretton of Bretton: whether by coincidence, or because some remote ancestor had been a personage

of sufficient importance to leave his name to his neighbourhood, I know not... (Brontë 1949: 9)

Despite being Lucy's nearest relation, the details of Mrs Bretton's life are unclear, as she emphasises when she states 'I know not'. Tension is thus created by the retreating figure of the narrator and this method of story-telling indicates the circumstances of Lucy Snowe. The opening of the novel foregrounds her marginality, despite the fact that she 'controls' the narrative as first-person narrator. Lucy's description of her own background remains ambiguous, yet the reader is aware that she places great importance on the association of home as a sanctuary:

The house and its inmates specially suited me. The large peaceful rooms, the well-arranged furniture, the clear wide windows. The balcony outside...these things pleased me well....Time always flowed smoothly for me at my godmother's side...blandly, like the gliding of a full river through a plain.... The charm of variety there was not, not the excitement of incident; but I liked peace so well, and sought stimulus so little, that when the latter came I almost felt it a disturbance... (1949: 9-10)

The description of the home is admiring but not familiar, and the attachments with the 'inmates' are equally indifferent. This is a surrogate home for Lucy and there is a pervading sense of impermanence in her life, emphasised by use of water imagery (which infuses much of her narrative) and by her deliberately evasive story-telling technique: "My godmother having come in person to claim me of the kinsfolk with whom was at that time fixed my permanent residence" (1949: 10). Lucy does not elaborate on the nature or familial ties of these unidentified "kinsfolk" with whom "*at that time*" was fixed her permanent residence. There is no sense of real attachment to a place, no sense of a stable home or home life and the significant factor of her solitude is thus foregrounded. The transient and ephemeral nature of the flowing water emphasises this sense of impermanence, implying that the brief security and sanctuary offered by Bretton is not

guaranteed. Lucy Snowe appears dislocated, as Silver states: “Lucy has already acquired a sense of herself as an outsider, an observer rather than an actor” (1983:95). Lucy is not described in sentimental or familiar terms by the other inhabitants of the house, but is referred to as a “guest” and a “visitor” (1949: 10). Such terms indicate that she is socially her godmother’s equal, but also emphasise her marginal status within this home, and the sense of dislocation Lucy feels in this location.

The second ‘guest’ in the house is Paulina (Polly) Home, the daughter of a distant relation of the late Dr Bretton. Through Lucy’s descriptions of the young girl, the reader is aware of the marginalised role Lucy plays, occupying the spaces on the borders of people’s lives, observing as opposed to taking an active role. Polly, although only a child, astutely observes Lucy Snowe’s condition of homelessness, her sense of not belonging, when she says “...for *your* home is not here” (1949: 41). The unasked question is thus, where *is* Lucy’s home? Lucy’s personal details are never fully divulged, and Gilbert and Gubar attribute her narrative reticence and evasions to the difficulties faced by women writers in the nineteenth-century, and to the fact that, with no viable precursors, authors like Brontë needed to subvert existing male narratives. Throughout the novel, they suggest, Lucy struggles to find new ways to tell her story:

Lucy’s life and sense of herself does not conform to the literary or social stereotypes provided by her culture to define and circumscribe female life. Lucy cannot employ the narrative structures available to her, yet there are no existing alternatives. So she finds herself ... presenting and undercutting [the]...images and stories of male devising... (2000: 419)

The want of a home affects the construction of identity, and Lucy’s attempts to tell her own story and thus create a viable sense of self are threatened by her marginal position in society, and by the fact that she has been deprived of the foundations of established family life and a place to call ‘home’. She observes from the sidelines as the proverbial outsider in society and, occupying the

secondary position in society prescribed to women, is forced to work within male narratives and stereotypes. Therefore, the anxiety of authorship creates what Jacobus terms an unreliable narrator (1979: 55). Lucy's narrative evasions function on two levels as she both lies to the reader and outwits the male model. Jacobus attributes devious and duplicitous qualities to Lucy Snowe, who, she states, "lies to us" (1979: 43) but Lucy's narrative may also be described as duplicitous in the sense that male narratives *are* undermined and subverted in it. "In her presentation of herself to others," states Silver, "Lucy is trebly constrained: as woman, as heroine, as storyteller" (1983: 93). As a woman narrating her own life, the patriarchal authority implicit in the role of author is difficult to secure and integrate. The 'I am' becomes discordant when it has to be uttered from the sideline. Nevertheless, feelings of self-worth play an important role in Lucy's ability to narrate her life and conflict with her perception that, as an outsider and marginal figure, she is not worthy of much consideration from others. Thus the authority inherent in first-person narration is undermined by her position in society as orphan and woman. Silver states:

Nowhere, perhaps, are the effects of Lucy's solitude more evident than in the loss of social status that accompanies her loss of family, a clear indication of the interconnected role of class and gender in determining a person's development – and worth. (1983: 96)

Thus feelings of worthlessness are generated not only in Lucy's mind but perpetuated by the actions and perceptions of others. Lucy strives for self-confidence but often this ingredient of self-definition is undermined by others, such as Dr. Bretton and Ginevra Fanshawe. Graham Bretton, for instance, states in the initial stages of the narrative that little Polly Home, "...amuses me a great deal more than...Lucy Snowe" (1949: 34). As the outsider looking in, Lucy forms no close relationships, as she exists on the outskirts of other characters lives:

...I went to look after her, I found Graham and her breakfasting tête-à-tête...this league of acquaintanceship thus struck up was not hastily

dissolved....To stand by his knee, and monopolize his talk and notice, was the reward she wanted – not a share of the cake. (1949: 29, 31)

Lucy muses, following the news of Polly's departure, "I was not long allowed the amusement of this study of character" (1949:36), which further emphasises her role as observant spectator in the lives of the inmates at Bretton. A further reason for Lucy's discordant and unstable narration and why she is unable to confidently execute the role of the heroine, is that the "The ideal woman that male authors dream of generating is always an angel..." (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 20). The male narrative model holds no place for an assertive heroine or authoritative storyteller. At many points in the narrative, Lucy seems to be telling any story but her own and Gilbert and Gubar observe that, "Lucy's conflicts are hidden, because as we have seen, she represents them through the activity of other people" (2000: 416). The proverbial angel in the house, a stereotypical recurring image in male narratives, has no story of her own. Gilbert and Gubar also point out that the prescribed role of women as angels is couched in the work of Goethe, who states that a woman, "...leads a life of almost pure contemplation....a life without external events – a life whose story cannot be told as there is no story....She is an ideal, a model of selflessness and purity of heart" (1976:616-617).

Polly Home is presented as the embodiment of this angel in the house. Through her observation of this character, Lucy thinks through possibilities of independence and self-sufficiency. In this way, Polly and other female figures, such as Mrs. Bretton, who is not a figure of self-denial in the novel, indicate options for Lucy and provide a broad spectrum of the principles of femininity to which women in society conformed and the roles prescribed to them by a patriarchal society. Brontë's ambivalence regarding the options available for women, and specifically single women, is reflected in her presentation of these female role models as possibilities which Lucy evaluates and ultimately rejects. This rejection is, however, not unconditional and the reader discovers toward the

conclusion of Lucy's narrative that she has come to endorse some of the principles of femininity she had previously presented so disparagingly in her narrative.

The presentation of Polly Home illustrates the way in which Lucy's narration criticises and undercuts stereotypically male perceptions of women. The literal and figurative interpretation of the name Polly *Home* is significant, as the character embodies all the notions of female propriety, maintaining nineteenth-century principles of domesticity and femininity from a young age. Polly insists on serving her father, fulfilling the domestic role of the 'little woman' in the home, exhibiting signs of socialisation when she insists, "Put papa's chair here, and mine near it...I must hand his tea", and pleading with her father to, "Be near me, as if we were at home, papa" (1949: 20). There is a desperate element to the character of Polly Home which is reflected in Lucy's narration, and an overwhelming urge to please and serve, specifically the male figures in her life. This confirms Patmore's assertion that, "Man must be pleased; but him to please / Is woman's pleasure" (1885: 17). When Polly is left indefinitely at Bretton by her father she is prompted to seek a surrogate male father-figure in the young Graham Bretton. Polly's subservient, feminine nature is epitomised in Lucy's description of this relationship, as she transfers all the ministrations she had lavished on her father to Graham. Then Polly, upon discovering that she is to return to her father, struggles to reconcile his place in her life: "I was just beginning to be happy, and not to think about him [Papa] so much; and there it will be to do all over again!" (1949: 38). By contrast, Graham, who plays such an important role in young Polly's life, does not spare a thought for what will become of her except for how her departure affects him as the loss of an amusing diversion:

'Polly going? What a pity! Dear little Mousie, I shall be sorry to lose her: she must come to us again Mamma.' And hastily swallowing his tea, he took a candle and a small table to himself and his books, and was soon busied in the study. (1949: 38)

Graham dwells on Polly's departure "but momentarily" (1949: 38), indicating that the close bond that Polly feels with him is not reciprocated by Graham. Polly, on the other hand, lies prostrate at Graham's feet, in a last effort to be close to him. She goes unnoticed but for Lucy's observation:

'Little Mousie' crept to his side, and lay down on the carpet at his feet, her face to the floor; mute and motionless...Once I saw Graham - wholly unconscious of her proximity - push her with his restless foot. She receded an inch or two. A minute after one little hand stole out...and softly caressed the heedless foot... (1949: 38-9)

This unsettling image of angelic subservience and worship, perpetuated from a young age, reflects how the home provides a framework for the development of such stereotypes. Polly's fate once she leaves Bretton seems to be of no consequence to Graham; her story does not interest him. This agrees with Goethe's assertion that women have no story of their own, and are thus *self-less*. Brontë is observing the male narratives by perpetuating their stereotypes but she also unsettles these male-devised images with disturbing descriptions of such 'self-less' angels. These images are discordant to Lucy, prompting her to eventually reject such female role models as inadequate.

Critics such as Jacobus (1979) have pointed to ambivalence in Brontë's fiction and re-read that ambivalence in the light of recent post-colonial (as well as feminist) challenges to established notions of 'home'. This ambivalence may be seen in the character of Paulina Home, whose intention of making a 'home' may be considered ironic due to the fact that she resides in a rented house, Hôtel Crécý. The connotations of such an establishment are impermanence and transience. Home is thus not always a location, but a notion perpetuated and animated by female characters such as Paulina Home. She does not inhabit a space which serves the traditional requirements of a home, and thus the want of a 'real' home, coupled with the absence of a maternal figure is, perhaps, motivation

to attempt to construct and perpetuate the principles of domesticity in every location she inhabits. Brontë thus complicates the idea of “secure settlement” further through character of Polly Home. The character’s name is ironic, as she is left by her father, in the early stages of the narrative, with virtual strangers at Bretton and later lives in a hotel. Her existence in both cases evokes only the appearance of home, as she lacks a nurturing mother figure and is almost, in a sense, made an orphan when her father ‘abandons’ her for an indefinite period of time. Thus Polly is prompted to search for a substitute space to call home and a father-figure to fulfil the accepted notions of the ‘home’. Polly attempts to sustain these domestic principles in a strange environment by looking to serve the ‘little man’ of the house, and undertaking feminine activities to maintain a semblance of home and occupy one of the limited roles available to her, that of the ‘angel’ in the house.

The idea of secure settlement is presented, through Lucy’s narration, as an ambiguous notion where the accepted principles of domesticity are questioned and undermined through the portrayal of characters such as Polly Home. Lucy highlights the problematic nature of secure settlement and the accepted notions of home and domesticity when she describes her own return ‘home’ after leaving Bretton: “It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well, the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted” (1949: 42). By presenting these accepted principles of domesticity and the expectations and aspirations associated with the home as “amiable conjecture”, Brontë undermines the general confidence about the idea of a homecoming.

In fact, soon after Lucy’s return, tragedy befalls her. Lucy intimates, through images of a shipwreck, that some disaster has occurred: “I must somehow have fallen overboard, or...there must have been a wreck at last” (1949: 42). Lucy is literally left stranded with no status or connection to anchor her in society. Gilbert and Gubar state that instead of describing actual events, “...Lucy

frequently use[s] water imagery to express feelings of anguish at these moments of suffering...” (2000: 416). The various phases of Lucy’s development are characterised by the metaphor of the shipwreck, so that when she is forced to emigrate to Belgium it is continued ‘through water imagery. William Crimsworth’s similar situation in *The Professor*, when he finds himself estranged from any family and connection is also associated with a shipwreck: “As it is you’ve no power; you can do nothing; you’re wrecked and stranded...” (1991: 32), and in *Shirley*, Caroline Helstone’s recites a favourite poem, “The Castaway”, whose contents may serve to reflect the anguish she suffers as an orphan with no fortune who lives on the charity of an uncle who feels nothing but duty toward her. The poet of “The Castaway” is described by Caroline as having “...traced a semblance to his own God-abandoned misery in the fate of that man-forsaken sailor, and cried from the depths where he struggled”. She proceeds to recite the poem: “...But I – beneath a rougher sea / And whelm’d in deeper gulfs than he...” (1949: 221), so that the idea of being shipwrecked may be seen as a metaphor for her own ambiguous position in society. In *Villette*, this idea may be applied to the situation of Lucy Snowe, who feels similarly ‘stranded’ with no identity, home, or family connections. After leaving Bretton, Lucy learns that her godmother has suffered a loss of her own, the “handsome property of which she was left guardian for her son...had melted...to a fraction of its original amount” (1949: 43), and this prompts the Brettons to move and causes Lucy to lose contact with them.

The unstable nature of ‘home’, which may at once signify danger and security is reiterated as the Brettons discover that, due to their property being greatly devalued, they have to move. Thus, mother and son are forced to abandon the ‘home’ which had once provided safety and protection. This, it may be assumed, prompts Graham to adopt a profession and mother and son to move to London. Lucy reviews her own situation, stating: “Thus, there remained no possibility of dependence on others; to myself alone could I look. I knew not that

I was of a self-reliant or active nature; but self-reliance and exertion were forced upon me by circumstances, as they are upon thousands besides” (1949: 43).

In much the same way as Frances Henri, in *The Professor*, has “only her own unaided exertions to rely on” (1991: 159), so too may Lucy Snowe move forward only by her own efforts. She is forced to seek employment, and because of the loss of her home where, she “should have had not only maintenance, but protection, she has to seek a surrogate home in her employer’s house” (Pearson & Pope 1980: 14). She is hired as a companion to Miss Marchmont, and thus Brontë highlights the limited and often debilitating life-choices available to an orphaned, penniless woman. Jacobus reviews Lucy Snowe’s position and the position of women in nineteenth century society thus:

As a middle-class woman, Lucy can only be employed within the home or its educational colony, the school; but that ‘home’, since she is employee not ‘mistress’, must remain alien... the only role open to her is that of bringing up children while marriage and motherhood themselves are paradoxically tabooed to her ...(Jacobus 1979: 46-7)

In *Shirley*, Caroline Helstone feels she needs to improve her position, realising that, penniless and orphaned, she is in a particularly perilous position for a single woman in Victorian society. Brontë develops the examination of the position of nineteenth-century women and their restricted environment in *Villette*, and specifically through her female protagonist, Lucy Snowe. Gilbert and Gubar feel that Lucy represents:

...all women who must struggle toward an integrated, mature and independent identity and come to terms with their need for love, and the dread of being single ... Lucy will confront the necessity of breaking through the debilitating roles available to the single women the Victorians termed ‘redundant.’(2000 406-7)

This plight of the single “redundant” woman, forced to seek a profession which prohibits her from acquiring any of the privileges available to her sex, means that she can only partially and inadequately fulfil one of the limited roles allowed to women, that of housekeeper.

The ambivalent space of ‘home’, and particularly this new home in which Lucy finds herself, provides safety and protection, while simultaneously serving as a site of imprisonment. Lucy feels the protection and order that a home can provide, seeing Miss Marchmont “...like an irascible mother [be]rating her daughter” (1949: 45). However, Miss Marchmont illustrates the other side of ‘home’ when she states: “you will be much confined” (1949: 44), and Lucy’s description of Miss Marchmont’s home reiterates this idea:

Two hot, close rooms thus became my world; and a crippled old woman, my mistress, my friend, my all...I forgot that there were fields, woods, rivers, seas, an ever-changing sky outside the steam-dimmed lattice of this sick chamber...All within me became narrowed to my lot. (1949: 45)

It is comfortable to remain in this limbo, where there is little “stimulus” or “disturbance”, a condition that Lucy had valued in her existence at Bretton. Again she plays the role of marginal figure and observer, although a stronger ambivalence and tension is evident in Lucy’s portrayal of her life at Miss Marchmont’s home: “...she gave me the originality of her character to study...For these things I would have *crawled on* with her for twenty years...But another decree was written” (1949: 45, emphasis added). When it comes, Lucy feels ambivalence regarding her freedom, she attributes changes in her life to Fate, although her narration reveals that her position with Miss Marchmont would have constituted a step backwards in Lucy’s self-development, as her progress is *crippled* by her surroundings, however comfortable.

Maria Marchmont has lived as a virtual recluse following the death of her lover Frank, “I took my dying Frank to myself...And that...happened thirty years ago. I have suffered since” (1949: 49). Literally and symbolically crippled by her fate, “Miss Marchmont lives in confinement, a perpetual virgin dedicated to the memory of the lover she lost on Christmas Eve. She is in effect a nun, but a nun who receives no religious consolation...” (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 406). While Miss Marchmont resigns herself to a life of solitude, Lucy is forced through circumstances to make changes in her life, and appears to escape the fate that has befallen Miss Marchmont and what she offers as a role model. However, as the novel progresses, Lucy does share a similar experience to that of Miss Marchmont. Lucy’s lover dies while returning to her in the conclusion of the novel. Miss Marchmont is a rheumatic cripple, though she is a “woman of fortune, and lived in a handsome residence” (1949: 43), and Lucy may be seen as *socially* crippled. Brontë makes it quite clear that Lucy has little to offer in the bargain of marriage besides intellectual acquirements, as she is forced to seek employment, having no fortune and no connections. Brontë’s ambivalence is thus once again evident, as she reflects the limited possibilities available to women in the nineteenth century, particularly women without connections or status. Therefore, despite the fact that Lucy acquires a ‘room of her own’ through the aid of M. Paul, it is unlikely she will share it with anyone. However, despite being socially crippled, Lucy is able to set her own agenda, establishing a sense of self-worth and finding happiness, significantly, in her own solitude.

The process toward achieving self-sufficiency is, however, for Lucy Snowe fraught with difficulty because, as Peterson says: “work for pay brought down the judgement of society and testified to the inferior position of...the wage-earner...If a lady has to work for her livelihood, it is universally considered to be a misfortune...” (1980: 10). Brontë explores this attitude in *Shirley*, specifically through the response of Caroline Helstone’s uncle to the idea of her taking a position as a governess: “I will not have it said that my niece is a governess” (1949: 191). Such a refusal is perhaps why Lucy Snowe, in *Villette*, chooses the

alternative of emigration as an attempt to escape the type-casting that existed with regard to an orphaned, female wage-earner. When she does go, the metaphor of the shipwreck is extended to describe her arrival in Belgium: "...[it was] in the wide and weltering deep where I found myself..." (1949: 70). George argues that "the contemporary literary writing in which politics and the experience of location (or rather of dislocation) are the central narratives should be called the 'Immigrant Genre'" (1996: 171). Reading back to classics such as *Villette*, it is evident that here too is an example of the 'Immigrant Genre', as Lucy finds herself an immigrant in *Villette*, further marginalised and isolated by the fact that she is an orphan and female.

George states that the Immigrant Genre is marked by a "curiously detached reading of the experience of 'homelessness' which is compensated for by an excessive use of the metaphor of luggage, both spiritual and material" (1996: 171). Upon her arrival in *Villette* by carriage, Lucy discovers that the driver has neglected to put her luggage on board, "And my portmanteau, with my few clothes and little pocket-book enclasping the remnant of my fifteen pounds, where were they?" (1949: 171). Like *Jane Eyre's* arrival at Moor House, Lucy is the ambiguous figure of a woman without possessions or encumbrances. She is, however, also literally and symbolically a foreigner, homeless with no country as well as no community (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 405). The precarious nature of her position is illustrated, as her vulnerability in a foreign country is emphasised: "...Lucy is stripped of even the few objects and attributes she possesses. Her keys, her trunk, her money, her language are equally useless..." (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 407). George questions whether such possessions impede or facilitate belonging (1996: 173), and Brontë's treatment of this question is ambivalent. Starting afresh in a new country, without the preconceptions of the society of your 'home' country may be the possible reason for emigration. In Lucy's case the figurative "baggage" would have been fact that she is an orphan. This and working as a governess would have limited the possibilities for her development in England. Thus, a new country may imply new possibilities, but Lucy now

occupies the marginal site of the immigrant, exacerbated by the fact that she is female. Her lack of baggage may thus reinforce her lack of connections; there are no memories of immediate family or mementoes, and this reflects her orphan status and may be seen to impede her sense of belonging, as she cannot define herself at home let alone in a foreign country. However, travelling without baggage may also be seen to foster adaptation, as the immigrant is forced to acclimatise to the foreign environment with fewer impediments than are held by those intent on recreating the familiar situation of ‘home’ in a new and unfamiliar space.

As mentioned earlier, Lucy is prompted to seek a “surrogate home”, and the portrayal of her wandering the streets of Villette, lost and alone, pursued by menacing men, does much to increase a reader’s sense of her vulnerability:

Just as I passed a portico, two moustachioed men came suddenly from behind the pillars...they spoke with insolence and, as fast as I walked, they kept pace...At last I met a sort of patrol, and my dreaded hunters were turned from the pursuit; but they had driven me beyond my reckoning...I no longer knew where I was...I saw a light burning over the door of a rather large house...Providence said, ‘Stop here; this is *your* inn.’ (1949: 74-75)

The image of the light burning over the door of the Pensionnat is significant with regard to Brontë’s treatment of the ‘home’. “The experience of home is never stronger than when seeing the windows of the house lit in the dark...” states Juhani Palasmaa (1994), which explains why Lucy is drawn to this new “surrogate home” to seek protection and safety. Her actions fulfil the notion of home as a coalition, at once safe and secure, whilst possibly dangerous at the core. In the Pensionnat, this danger takes various literal forms, such as that of Madame Beck and her prying, and the spectral nun and the cretin. But it is also represented physically by the fact that the school was originally a convent: “...a series of the queerest little dormitories – which, I heard afterwards, had once been

nuns' cells: for the premises were in part of an ancient date..." (1949:79), which is portentous. The transient nature of a boarding school that can never adequately be a true home for Lucy is also a factor. Like Jane at Moor House, Lucy, when she sees the light is on the periphery, she is literally on the outside looking in, a marginal figure in several senses of the word. Thus, despite the fact that she finds shelter in Madame Beck's Pensionnat, the surrogate quality of this home and the impermanence associated with the fact that the inmates frequently come and go, emphasises the ambivalent and fluid quality of the concept of 'home'.

Lucy proceeds to pursue one of the limited avenues open to her, that of working first as a governess and then as teacher. She echoes the frustration of living in a space that is not her own (the Pensionnat), when she comments that she was, "...inured now for so long a time to rooms with bare boards, black benches, desks and stoves..." (1949: 311). The concern arises from her economically and socially uncertain condition and, by extension, it applies to the state of all women unprotected by family. The attitude of Ginevra Fanshawe, an English boarder at the school, toward Lucy Snowe represents the perception of English society in general with regard to the position of employed women. Ginevra's observation of Lucy's character undermines her sense of self-worth in manner similar to that of Dr Bretton in the early stages of the narrative:

There is *me* – happy ME; now for *you*, poor soul! I suppose you are nobody's daughter, since you took care of little children when you first came to Villette; you have no relations; you can't call yourself young at twenty-three; you have no attractive accomplishments – no beauty.... Nobody in the world but you cares for cleverness. (1949: 167)

Surprised by Lucy's newly acquired connections with the reappearance of Mrs Bretton, Ginevra muses that, "It seems so odd...that you and I should now be so much on a level, visiting in the same sphere; having the same connections", further stating "If you really are the nobody I once thought you, you must be a cool hand" (1949: 348-349). Lucy explains Ginevra's conventional mind-set,

describing it as the “incapacity to conceive how any person not bolstered up by birth or wealth, not supported by some consciousness of name or connection, could maintain an attitude of reasonable integrity” (1949: 350). It is this incongruent position in society, which Ginevra and others perpetuate, which often forced women to emigrate, the alternative that Lucy Snowe has chosen.

Lucy’s narration as outside observer focuses on the lives of others as opposed to her own. This allows for outspoken characters such as Ginevra Fanshawe to voice the general opinion of a society governed by male views. Lucy’s own inner life and struggles, which represent the greater struggles of Victorian women, are portrayed through a coded system. As exposure of emotions was considered improper, Lucy has to conceal and obscure her feelings. Brontë utilised the gothic form to depict, through a coded narrative system, the inner life and struggles of women, Hoeveler reiterates this point when she observes:

These works can more accurately be read as elided representations of the political, socioeconomic, and historical complexities of women’s lives...the female gothic novelistic tradition became a coded system whereby women authors covertly communicated...(1998: 5)

Jacobus concurs, stating that the modern gothic served as the “...system of signification which can more properly articulate the self” (1979:51). Thus, through the gothic mode, women writers were able to explore real issues, challenging the claims of the realist novel on reality by exposing concealed meaning through the gothic machinery of such spectral figures as the Nun. The nun, in *Villette*, illustrates the perilous quality of the coalition that is ‘home’. What the Gothic genre also supports is first-person narration. The coded system of this type of fiction attributes a voice to women that otherwise would not be heard. Lucy herself confronts the difficulty of speaking out when she is forced by M. Paul to perform in the Vaudeville de Pensionnat at the school fête: “That first speech was the difficulty; it revealed to me this fact, that it was not the crowd I

feared so much as *my own voice*” (1949: 160, emphasis added). The nun figure surpasses the traditional machinery of the gothic mode, and comes to symbolise the fears and dread of the ‘redundant’ single Victorian woman who fears the sound of her own voice and her fate in society. Lucy has to contend with such feelings of worthlessness, observing that, “The hopes which are dear to youth, which bear it up and lead it on, I knew not and dared not know. If they knocked at my heart sometimes, an inhospitable bar to admission must be inwardly drawn...” (1949: 179). This and the fear of the frigid self, and her imprisonment in her surrogate homes, is manifested in the form of the nun. Lucy must struggle, as a single woman, to reconcile herself to the nun’s fate of characters such as Miss Marchmont and to suppress her own sexual longing in the face of her need for self-preservation.

Driven by solitude and inner conflict Lucy Snowe is haunted by the figure of the nun and its associations as she confesses to the priest. This happens when she feels particularly isolated and lonely during a long vacation at the Pensionnat, having been left alone except for the company of one servant and a deformed and mentally retarded pupil who has been abandoned by her family. Her feelings of anguish are once again represented through water imagery, specifically that of a storm:

I do not know why that change in the atmosphere made a cruel impression on me, why the raging storm and beating rain crushed me with a deadlier paralysis than I had experienced while the air had remained serene; but so it was; and my nervous system could hardly support what it had for many days and nights to undergo in that huge empty house. (1949: 180)

Lucy is drawn to confess to a Catholic priest despite the fact that she is a Protestant. This form of communication and the story Lucy has to tell is unusual, and the priest is unsure of how to deal with Lucy’s revelations. This may be seen to reflect how Lucy is manipulating a predominantly male form of narrative and

undermining the patriarchal ritual of confession by telling her own distinctly female story in an religious environment controlled by men:

I hesitated; of the *formula* of confession I was ignorant....[therefore] as well as I could, I showed him the mere outline of my experience...

He looked thoughtful, surprised, puzzled. 'You take me unawares,' said he. 'I have not had such as case as yours before: ordinarily *we know our routine*, and are prepared; but this makes a *great break in the common course* of confession. I am hardly furnished with counsel fitting the circumstances'.

Of course, I had not expected he would be; but the mere relief of communication in an ear which was human and sentient...the mere pouring out of some portion of long accumulating, long pent-up pain into a vessel whence it could not be again diffused – had done me good. I was already solaced. (1949: 185, emphasis added)

The priest, recognising that Lucy is unwell, advises her to meet him at his house. By neglecting to visit the priest, Lucy, as she records her story, feels that she averted the fate of many single Victorian women: "I might just now, instead of writing this heretic narrative, be counting my beads in the cell of a certain Carmelite convent on the Boulevard of Crécy, in Villette" (1949: 187). The 'home' of the convent cell is an ambiguous space: offering protection against the censure of society, it may simultaneously be construed as a prison cell. Seen to be one of the few options available to single women, retreat is one that Brontë rejects and this is why, in the narrative, Lucy discards this option by not visiting the priest at his home. At the same time her assertiveness and decision-making skills are tempered by Brontë, who attributes the decision to the fact that she by chance did not visit the priest as opposed to averting her fate by making any conscious decision to reject the role prescribed to her.

At this moment, however, chance intervenes to reunite Lucy Snowe with the Brettons at their new home, La Terrasse. Lucy loses her way in a storm during her return from her encounter with the priest:

...it brought rain like spray....I bent my head to meet it, but it beat me back....I only wished I had wings and could ascend the gale, spread and repose my pinions on its strength, career in its course, sweep where it swept....I seemed to pitch headlong down an abyss. I remember no more.
(1949: 187-188)

As mentioned earlier, water imagery is repeatedly used to express feelings of anguish felt by Lucy at these moments of suffering, and signals Lucy's progress from stage to stage of the narrative. When she gains consciousness, she is struck by the room in which she finds herself, as some objects of furniture seem uncannily familiar:

...all my eye rested on struck it as spectral. But the faculties soon settled each in his place....In this mirror I saw myself laid...I looked spectral...as I gazed at the blue armchair, it appeared to grow familiar...Strange to say, old acquaintance were all about me...(1949: 189-190)

The use of water imagery is again pertinent in this uncertain period in Lucy's life, however it seems to signify security and protection rather than anguish and suffering: "A tide of quiet thought now came gently caressing my brain; softer and softer rose the flow, with tepid undulations smoother than balm..." (1949: 192). This "tide" however, is brought about by sedatives, and when she awakes, she once again feels unsettled by the uncanny similarity of this location to the Bretton home of her childhood: "Bretton! Bretton...And why did Bretton and my fourteenth year haunt me thus?" (1949: 193). Lucy questions the unrecognised woman who is nursing her, and is assured that she is, "In a safe asylum; well protected *for the present*" (1949: 195, emphasis added). Whether consciously

given or otherwise, these assurances once again reiterate the danger that lies at the core of a home, specifically one of a surrogate nature such as La Terrasse. Lucy discovers that her 'nurse' is in fact her godmother, and is reunited with both Mrs Bretton and her son, Graham. However, the comforting aspect of the imagery of water that Lucy uses in relation to this 'home' fades, and the transient quality of water comes to symbolise the impermanence of this temporary shelter. Mrs. Bretton's re-assurance is portentous as the house is not Lucy's own, the Brettons are not her family, and her secret love for Graham Bretton is never to be fulfilled. The Brettons remain "connections", and it is in fact not through the aid of these acceptable connections but through the aid of M. Paul, the anti-hero, and through her own agency that Lucy achieves self-sufficiency by the conclusion the novel. Charlotte Brontë seeks ways in which Lucy may find her own comfortable place as opposed to surrogate homes which make it difficult to define herself and fulfil the need for belonging.

The uncanny feeling that Lucy experiences at La Terrasse may attributed to the gothic strategy which Jacobus details in her analysis of Freud's essay on the uncanny, ("heimlich/unheimlich"). Jacobus feels that this notion offers a classic formulation of Gothic strategy: "the writer creates a kind of uncertainty in us...by not letting us know, no doubt purposely, whether he is taking us into the real world or into a purely fantastic one of his own creation" (1979: 48). The idea of the uncanny is evidenced in the familiarity of La Terrasse This idea of the uncanny may also be applied to the figure of the nun that appears in the Pensionnat in *Villette*, as she functions as both phantom and psychic reality. The reader discovers this with the revelation that Ginevra's lover, de Hamal, has been secretly visiting disguised in nun's clothing. Lucy, following her initial encounters with the nun at the school, fears that "...unless someone else sees it too...I shall be discredited and accused of dreaming..." (1949: 282). Dr Bretton's treatment of Lucy in this regard is of particular significance, as his thoughts reflect commonly held male beliefs and anxieties of the period: "This is all a matter of *nerves*, I see...I think it is a case of spectral illusion: I fear, following on

from long-continued mental conflict” (1949: 283-4, emphasis added). The spectral vision that Lucy encounters is, when it is viewed as the product of an over-active imagination, at once belittled and reduced to the level of hallucination and hysteria. Lucy herself is aware of this rather derogatory attitude, as she muses later, “...but I dared not contradict: doctors are so self-opinionated, so immovable in their dry materialist views” (1949: 291). Hers is a statement which may be extended to include male “views” in general.

The fact that the nun appears while Lucy is reading Graham Bretton’s letter in the garret of the school is significant. Lucy is forced to read her letters in the privacy of the garret because of Madame Beck’s spying, and realises during these private moments that the love she feels for Graham is unrequited: “The poor English teacher in the frosty garret, reading by a dim candle guttering in the wintry air, a letter simply good-natured – *nothing more...*” (1949: 277, emphasis added). Lucy’s distrust of her own romantic yearning has provoked a retreat into frigidity, emphasised by her description of her bleak, frosty surroundings, and may be seen to finally manifest itself in the shape of the nun, a guilty reminder of what she should be like: “...a figure all black and white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white...” (1949: 278). The nun serves, as mentioned earlier, to represent the fate of single women. In *Shirley*, Caroline Helstone considers the life of Miss Ainley, an old maid in Briarfield, in relation to the life of a nun:

She allowed there was little enjoyment in this world for her, and she looks, I suppose, to the bliss of the world to come. So do nuns - with their close cell...their robe straight as a shroud, their bed narrow as a coffin...(1949: 380)

The fact that de Hamal has donned the nun’s guise proves that, at least in some measure, Lucy’s dreaded visions were founded in the external world. Perhaps Brontë attempts to insinuate the very real fate faced by women in the nineteenth

century through Lucy's imaginings and observations of the various female models in her life. Miss Marchmont introduced the idea of the nun through her devoted existence, but significantly she is also crippled. Echoing her plight, Lucy is later left alone at the Pensionnat with a mentally retarded pupil: "The house was left quite empty, but for me, a servant, and a poor deformed and imbecile pupil, a sort of cretin, whom her stepmother in a distant province would not allow to return home" (1949: 179). Lucy is similarly without family, and the various characters may, besides being possible female role models, also be manifestations of Lucy's very real fears of feeling socially crippled; perhaps she feels as unwanted in society as the deformed pupil who is abandoned by her own family. If, as in gothic fiction, the house as a reflection of the psyche begins to reflect 'doubles' - copies of its inhabitants - then perhaps these figures all serve to represent various aspects of the roles prescribed for women in society and the fears associated with the position of "redundant" female. Furthermore, perhaps these female role models do, in part, reflect aspects of Lucy's own predicament as author of her story, crippled by the patriarchal narrative that has determined its form and the debilitating options it offers. The idea of the 'double' increases the dichotomous nature of gothic texts written by women, serving to reflect the ambivalent and often divided position of women in the home, divided between propriety and the need for self-expression and identity construction.

The palimpsestic aspects of Brontë's work can thus be attributed, in part, to the opportunities provided by the modern gothic. The idea of the double self does not entirely hinge on 'repression', as Freud expounded it, so much as indicating concealment and obscurity. The problematic first-person narration in *Villette* (not the frigid self) supports the idea of concealment from others, as Lucy proves to be an unreliable narrator, often obscuring detail and withholding information. Lucy admits to her own deception when she answers letters sent by Graham Bretton: "To speak truth I compromised matters; I served two masters: I bowed at the house of Rimmon, and lifted the heart at another shrine. I wrote to these letters two answers - one for my own relief, the other for Graham's perusal" (1949: 287).

Lucy addresses two letters to Graham, filling the first with “warmer feelings” toward Graham and allowing the second, *sent* letter to be guided by reason, “...a terse, curt missive of a page” (1949: 288). Lucy obscures her true feelings, allowing reason to guide her actions. Pearson and Pope, quoting from the novel say that:

Lucy Snowe is expected, as a governess, to serve others under the most desolate conditions with little reward. In order to fulfil the needs of her true self, she must maintain ‘two lives - the life of thought, and that of reality.’ (1981: 49)

These actions are not merely the result of repression, as this would imply a tactic of avoidance. Lucy does in fact confront her feelings for Graham Bretton and expresses these emotions through letter-writing, admitting her feelings of unrequited love to herself even though she eventually destroys the first letter and composes a reasonably acceptable second draft. Jacobus describes this form of narration and the narrated event of the Nun, for instance, as the “imagination usurp[ing] on the real to create its own fictions” (1979: 53). A further example of reluctant confrontation occurs later in the novel when Lucy sees M. Paul and his ward, Justine Marie, together and assumes that they are lovers. Lucy imagines an explanation for what she sees and, although it is not accurate, it serves as an attempt to control her own desires by creating a fiction which allows her to take control of her story as author of her life.

Lucy, as narrator, reveals very little and conceals a great deal of her own character. Specifically in the company of others and after an encounter with Graham Bretton, Lucy tries to screen her emotions:

It was so seldom I could properly act out my own resolution to be reserved and cool where I had been grieved or hurt, that I felt almost proud of this one successful effort....I again surpassed my usual self and achieved a neat, frosty selfhood. (1949: 362-3)

Lucy chooses to reflect the stories of others, perhaps in an attempt to define herself through the female characters she offers in the narrative as alternative role models. Jacobus describes how, “Lucy’s invisibility is a calculated deception – a blank screen on which others project their view of her”, further stating that these female characters serve as “images of women through whom Lucy both defines and fails to recognise herself” (1979: 44). This simultaneous acceptance and rejection of the various aspects of the female role models she presents is significant, as she recognises their inadequacy and the limited options they represent, while she also recognises features of her own personality, her personal fears and perhaps, still assimilates certain principles of domesticity and femininity that she may outwardly reject or undermine in her narration. There are further defining factors that affect this construction of selfhood, such as the anxiety of authorship experienced by women locked in predominantly male prescriptions, both in literature and in life, and the marginalised position of an orphan, which affects the sense of self-worth.

Gilbert and Gubar point out that the major preoccupation in this process of self-definition for all Brontë’s heroines is the “[struggle] for a comfortable space” (2000: 437), which is prompted by the lack of belonging and the absence of an authentic home. Lucy Snowe’s attempts to discover a ‘comfortable space’ take place at the school, where her space-clearing gestures take on literal proportions when she encounters the “...deep and leafy seclusion” of a neglected garden on the school property (1949: 121). Lucy states, “I made myself a gardener...I cleared away the relics of past autumns...” (1949: 124). This fundamental process of clearing a comfortable or “felicitous” space is developed by Bachelard, who observes that “...Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to measures and estimates of the surveyor...” (1969: xxxiii). Thus Lucy attempts to personalise the “indifferent” space of the garden in order to create a place where she may begin to cultivate the traditional sentiments of loyalty and nostalgia, feelings usually attached to the home. She

chooses the garden as this cultivation may not be achieved inside the surrogate home of the Pensionnat.

However, Lucy's sanctuary is violated by male intrusion and proves that the temporary refuge provided by the garden proves to be fleeting:

My alley, and, indeed all the walks and shrubs in the garden had acquired a new, but not a pleasant interest; their seclusion was now become precarious; their calm insecure...Some plants that were, indeed, trodden down by Dr John...some footmarks too, he had left on the beds. (1949:133)

Brontë creates a female protagonist who works literally and figuratively within the confines of the Victorian period, endeavouring to find outlets for expression, finding some provisional "comfortable space", whether it is the garden or the momentary privacy of the garret in which to read her letters. However, these efforts to clear a comfortable space are scuppered by the intrusion of others, from Graham Bretton and inquisitive students, to the conduct of Madame Beck, whose spying proves to be the most insidious: "I felt it hard that Madame Beck should dog me thus; following and watching me close; my neck and shoulder shrunk in fever under her breath; I became terribly goaded" (1949: 501). Lucy ascertains early in the narrative that Madame Beck is an unsuitable role model, and a deceptive epitome of self-abnegation: "Madame...neither smiled nor scowled; no impress of anger, disgust or surprise, ruffled the equality of her grave aspect..." (1949: 79). She preserves outward calm to the point where she suppresses female tendencies completely:

At that instant she did not wear a woman's aspect, but rather a man's. Power of a particular kind limned itself in all her traits, and that power was not *my* kind of power: neither sympathy, not congeniality, not submission, were the emotions it awakened. (1949: 90, original emphasis)

Madame Beck's need to control the conditions of her home serves to confine Lucy's sense of freedom and culminates in a physical attempt to restrain Lucy in her struggle to achieve happiness with M. Paul. In Lucy's strongest moment of agency she breaks free and ultimately rejects Madame Beck as a viable role model: "'Keep your hand off me, and my life and my troubles'....She was *my* rival, heart and soul" (1949: 504), and openly declares her love for M. Paul.

Finally, by the conclusion of the novel, Lucy acquires the proverbial 'room of one's own', when M. Paul furnishes her with a home and school in Faubourg Clotilde. Gilbert and Gubar assert that the home and school represent Lucy's independence (2000: 438), yet Brontë tempers her presentation of Lucy's self-assurance. Lucy admits, "The secret of my success did not lie so much in myself...as in a new state of circumstances..." (1949: 555). These circumstances are brought about largely by the aid of male characters in the novel, a fact which is recognised by Gilbert and Gubar who claim that in general, "when a heroine rises she does so through the offices of a hero" (2000: 67). M. Paul obtains the home for Lucy, and she describes him in glowing terms: "He was my king; royal for me had been that hand's bounty; to offer homage was both a joy and a duty" (1949: 549). The tenement belongs to M Miret the bookseller, "a friend of yours, Miss Lucy, a person who has a most respectful regard for you" (1949: 551), who offers a reasonable rental price. Then a further "unexpected chance threw into [Lucy's] hands an additional hundred pounds...it came from Mr Marchmont, the cousin and heir of my dear and dead mistress" (1949: 555). The reader understands that this money (and possibly more) is actually rightfully due to Lucy through the will of Miss Marchmont, yet as male executor, Mr Marchmont had neglected to inform Lucy of her financial windfall until he realises he has "sinned against his conscience" (1949: 555).

It is through others' benevolence that the journey of self-realisation is facilitated. Gilbert and Gubar highlight the fact that "despite her hope that women

can obtain a full, integrated sense of themselves and economic independence and male affection, Brontë also recognizes that such a wish must not be presented falsely as an accomplished fact” (2000: 438). Therefore, although Lucy often displays assertive qualities (and it is the agency she displays toward Madame Beck that prompts M. Paul to help her), she is unable to make a complete claim for herself. Gilbert and Gubar infer that M. Paul must die in order for Lucy Snowe to exist, as “only in his absence ...can she exert herself fully to exercise her powers” (2000: 438). These powers take a creative, authorial form and through the process of recounting her story, she becomes the author of her own past life story and future life. M. Paul’s return would limit her independence: “M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader they were the three happiest years of my life... My school flourishes, my house is ready...” (1949: 555, 557). It may be inferred that Lucy is, in fact, able to survive without M. Paul and the “offices” of any male hero. The uncertain ending reflects the ambivalence of both the protagonist and the author, as Brontë underlines the delights of domestic settlement while simultaneously protesting against the bland unreality of such an ending. Lucy’s sentiments during the first meal she and M. Paul share in her new home emphasise the importance placed on domestic, feminine ideals: “Our meal was simple...and I took a delight inexpressible in tending M. Paul” (1949: 550), which may be seen to echo the ‘angelic’ tendencies of Polly Home. This serves to reflect sentiments that, despite the rejection of the various female role models in the novel, Lucy does in fact assimilate some of the ideals she has appeared to undermine and subvert through her narrative. Towards the conclusion of the novel, Lucy as author again recognises the significance of these conventions. When M. Paul does not return from his voyage, she states: “Let *them* picture union and a happy succeeding life” (1949: 558, emphasis added), anticipating the romantic expectations of the reader. Thus, despite the fact that Lucy “flourishes” without M. Paul, her grief “reflects the yearning for the conventional female life that she has been taught to want” (Pearson & Pope 1981: 87).

The proper ending available to a character like Lucy Snowe is delineated by society and the principles of the nineteenth century. This may be why such significant emphasis is placed on the idea of 'fate' in the novel, and why the ambivalence regarding freedom exists. Lucy Snowe's fate in *Villette* may serve to reflect the fate of women in nineteenth-century society, with the limited possibilities available. Lucy's autonomy comes at some expense; this new development is again characterised by the metaphor of the shipwreck, which takes on literal as well as figurative significance:

The skies hang full and dark...I know some signs of the sky; I have noted them ever since childhood...That storm roared frenzied, for seven days. It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks... (1949: 557)

Jacobus advises that we see in the novel's "ruptured and ambiguous discourse the source of its uncanny power..." stating that the double ending, "in reversing the truth/fiction hierarchy...suggests that there can be no firm ground; only a perpetual de-centring activity" (1979: 54).

Specifically with regard to its conclusion, *Villette* may be seen as a rethinking of *Jane Eyre*. The socially acceptable sense of fulfilment Jane Eyre achieves at the conclusion of her novel leaves her character self-sufficient to a degree *but* married, maintaining the nineteenth-century expectations of a "union *and* a happy succeeding life". This is the "firm ground" of a satisfactory ending which Lucy Snowe recognises that her reader (and society) expect from the conclusion of her narrative. Lucy Snowe is, however, fulfilled *despite* her final 'alone-ness' at the conclusion of *Villette*. Brontë introduces the ideas of self-sufficiency and independence in *Jane Eyre*, but more fully develops the concept of the new woman with Lucy Snowe, whose assimilation into society is achieved on her own terms. This success is however, tempered by profound cost, and Lucy is unable to fulfil her own destiny without struggle and tragic loss. *Villette* becomes a story of survival rather than fulfilment, reflecting the perpetual

negotiation of public expectations and private desires of women. Aspirations for self-sufficiency and ambitions for an assured sense of self, and the “privileges” of comfort and home which facilitate the establishment of an authentic identity, are fulfilled only at great sacrifice to marginal female figures. Brontë facilitates a greater understanding of the lives of women in the nineteenth century: “She is a powerful precursor for all the women who have been strengthened by the haunted and haunting honesty of her art” (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 440). This suggests that there is “no firm ground” as the stories of women’s lives are continuously being written and re-written during the process of self-definition located in the home.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

This discussion, comprising a postcolonial, feminist reading of the representation of 'home' in two of Charlotte Brontë's novels, has revealed the dynamic and unstable qualities of a concept that requires constant reassessment and renegotiation. 'Home' also has a strongly subjective nature which is due, in part, to the fact that the home is where personal values are lodged, and that this initially indifferent space is imaginatively transformed by its inhabitants. Space only becomes the place of home when inhabited by people, who confer identity on it by giving it function and meaning, and who in turn, through formative experiences within the home, establish their own sense of self and ways of relating to others.

These questions of identity and location arise in Charlotte Brontë's novels through the development of her female protagonists in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, who are orphans, penniless and without a home. The concept of home and its link to the propriety expected of nineteenth-century women has been explored through a focus on these novels. The process of writing on the part of the author, Charlotte Brontë, and the act of first-person narration on the part of the two female protagonists, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, is significant in that the "muted culture" (Showalter 1999: xx) of women of the nineteenth century was given authorial and authoritative power in their stories. This "muted culture", explored through the principal theories of new historicism and marxism and represented by Jane and Lucy, finds resonance in a post-colonial context. A post-colonial interrogation looks to expose the marginal figures in society who remain homeless, bereft of their histories because the process of identity formation has been radically disrupted, sometimes over several generations. By presenting her two heroines as orphans, Brontë complicated the concept of 'home' and interrogated myths associated with this concept. Loyalty to the physical and symbolic location of 'home' and nostalgia associated with that place are sentiments which are

destabilised by the protagonists' orphaned status and the fact that both Jane and Lucy are "homesick with nowhere to go" (Martin & Mohanty 1986: 206).

The "interrupted experiences" which so affect the development of Jane and Lucy are also of concern to Ndebele, in a post-colonial, South African context. He asks

[h]ow...the growth of the imagination or the nurturing of human sensibility [is] affected by the dramatic oscillation of individuals and communities between comfort and discomfort, between home and homelessness... (1996: 29)

Ndebele feels that individuals need to restore the intimacy of home by establishing the place of home and restoring the relationship of people within the home. In this way, individuals are able to form a society that coheres. When examining the home, one simply cannot ignore the relationship of people to the home, as it is impossible to divorce human life from place. However, this fundamental relationship is complicated in a post-colonial context (as in Charlotte Brontë's fiction) by the presence of marginal figures, insiders and outsiders who maintain an ambivalent relationship with 'home'. Brontë writes from the point of view of such characters and their identity is inexorably linked to 'home'. George confirms this connection between identity and home:

If the home stands not just for one's representations of oneself but for what others see of one, then it is doubly important to pay attention to the status of those *without* homes... (1996: 24, emphasis added)

The condition of homelessness is one which may be observed in a South African context, and is similarly linked to the problematic process of identity formation as commented on by Ndebele, who affirms that the state of

homelessness and the loss of homes is "...one of the greatest of South African stories yet to be told" (1996: 28-9). Thus, for all the differences of time and culture, the prevailing interest in home in Brontë's work has particular South African relevance, specifically with regard to the *loss* of homes and the condition of homelessness. The story of the loss of homes, through colonial invasion, migratory labour policies, evictions in line with Apartheid policies, all of which has resulted in the destruction of intimacy in family life, has become a South African narrative. This story is retold in, for instance, the events of the Mandela Park anti-eviction campaign, which reveals how the politics of alienation continues up to the present.

The concern with 'home', relevant today, was anticipated by Brontë, who took up the idea of a marginal figure, and developed the fictional orphan figure that is both an insider and outsider to the home. Charlotte Brontë wrote about the home from a divided position, exploring the possible life choices available for women during her time. Through her fictional representation of women and 'home' and her oppositional position, she simultaneously maintained and challenged accepted principles of femininity. This dissertation has explored the way in which Charlotte Brontë's fictional representation of women and 'home' can be illuminated by current post-colonial and feminist debate concerning the construction of identity as it is served by attributes of 'home' such as stability, affection, privacy and exclusion. This validates a rereading of classics and the findings revealed are imperative to an understanding of the current post-colonial issues raised by 'home'. Supporting these questions, a feminist analysis of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* reveals that marginal female figures are only entitled to, or deserving of, the privileges (not rights) of comfort, home and identity only once they have made some sacrifice for this "unthinkable goal of mature freedom" (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 339).

Brontë presents a comprehensive portrayal of the marginal figure, yet inevitably, given her time, desires assimilation for her orphaned female

protagonists, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe. As a Victorian writer, Brontë evidently felt that she could challenge but not cross the accepted boundaries of her time, and thus she represented, to the best of her capabilities within her cultural constraints, fulfilling destinies for her characters which would not be deemed “improper”. The conclusions of her novels are testament to her conscious decision to comply with convention: in *Shirley* the narrator observes of recounted traditional, happy endings, “...There! I think the varnish has been put on nicely” (1949: 611). In both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Jane and Lucy’s direct address to the reader is further example of the anticipation of reader expectations: Jane assures her audience, “Reader, I married him” (1998: 473), and Lucy lessens the blow of tragedy for her readers when she states: “Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life” (1949: 558).

In a contemporary context, however, there are further possibilities for such marginal figures. Currently a feminist and post-colonial understanding of the periphery sees it becoming a creative space in which people can begin to establish a productive ‘homeplace’. Current commentators do not face the same restrictions of long-established settled customs as Brontë did, and bell hooks, for instance, seems to envisage a more permissive selfhood, where assimilation into mainstream society is not deemed a prerequisite to a happy and fulfilled life. hooks still recognises the value of and inherent need for the place of home, “I had to leave that space I called home to move beyond the boundaries, yet I also needed to return there” (1990: 148), yet views the margins as a potentially creative location: “There may be some value in the idea that the space at the margins of society may be perceived to be a radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity...” (hooks 1990: 153). hooks suggests that the periphery has the potential to serve as a productive space, which is a step beyond Bachelard’s earlier views regarding the transformation of indifferent space through the imagination. In her view, the often demoralising space of the periphery and margins may be adapted to serve as a positive, reaffirming place where the freedom of marginality may be celebrated.

The peripheral space occupied by marginal figures is viewed by hooks as a space of possibility, emphasising the agency of marginal figures and their potential to transform space: “I make a definite distinction between the marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one *chooses* as a site of resistance – as location of radical openness and possibility” (1990: 153, emphasis added). With regard to Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, their marginality is a result of the oppressive patriarchal structures which existed in the nineteenth century; however it is important to note that these women are able to reorganise and reorder these potentially oppressive sites through space-clearing gestures in their respective novels. Jane at Thornfield and Lucy at the Pensionnat make concerted efforts to literally and figuratively make a comfortable space for themselves, namely in the gardens of their respective locations. Thus, the idea that hooks proposes, of the periphery serving as a radically open, creative space may be seen to have its origins in an understanding of the search for a comfortable space in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, which Gilbert and Gubar believe is the primary concern of Brontë’s female heroines. These space-clearing gestures on the part of Jane and Lucy are testament to this search for a creative comfortable space, and an attempt as marginal figures to create their own ‘felicitous space’, however provisional. By modifying the environment, people create a viable place in which to begin to [re]create feelings of belonging.

The situation of ‘homelessness’ is, according to hooks, not necessarily destructive. hooks proposes that the ‘homeless’ need to establish a new ‘homeplace’, advising that these figures in society renew their concern with the homeplace in order to make home, “...that space where we return for renewal and self-recovery, where we can heal our wounds and become whole” (1990: 49). The ‘homeplace’ becomes imperative, according to hooks:

We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make a radical creative space which affirms and sustains our

subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world. (1990: 153)

George discusses the “strange empowering knowledge” that Bhabha attributes to the immigrant (or marginal) figure and feels that “...those at the margins may read their marginality as a positive, even superior stance from which to experience the modern nation” (George 1996: 189). This is pertinent in relation to the stories of Jane and Lucy, who may be seen to learn from their “interrupted” experiences. Q.D. Leavis states (with regard to *Jane Eyre*), that “...each experience initiates a new phase of being for [Jane], because she has learnt something new about the possibilities of living and so can make a further demand on life” (1966: 14). The difference is, however, that Brontë thought of her protagonists’ re-entry into mainstream society.

By drawing on Brontë to illuminate the concept of home, I have been able to understand the multi-faceted nature of this concept and the new possibilities inherent for marginal figures at what was once seen as the periphery. The rereading of classics such as *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* provides a comprehensive understanding of home and the role of the marginalised figure in relation to this dynamic concept. Brontë explored and developed the marginal figure, and her characterisation of this circumstance has enabled me, via post-colonial and feminist criticism, to make further claims about the potential of ‘home’. Ndebele does not see the positive possibilities of the periphery as hooks does, but also, does not seek reconciliation with the dominant views and practices of home as Charlotte Brontë did. However, other current notions of home, liberty and creativity are evolving where new possibilities become available to previously dispossessed members in society and assimilation into the mainstream no longer becomes a necessity. Despite the fact that the concept of home will continue to confound expectations and assumptions and evade conclusive definition, the appeal of the elusive home remains the same. George suggests that, “...perhaps the stance to take, while writing and reading fiction as much as in living, is to

acknowledge the seductive pleasure of belonging in homes...”(George 1996: 200). In South Africa, Ndebele suggests, ‘home’ is (still) a practical and psychic necessity rather than a lingering and seductive idea. The appeal of ‘home’ surpasses seduction to fulfil an intrinsic, perennial human need.

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