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**A Long Way from Home:
De-constructing the Domestic and Re-constructing Empire
in Brontë's *Villette* and Eliot's *Mill on the Floss***

By [Anna Marutollo](#), McGill University

<1> In *Villette* and *Mill on the Floss*, Brontë and Eliot write female characters who simultaneously inhabit both the center and the margins of their texts. Although each author begins by rooting her heroine to a sense of place, neither Lucy Snowe nor Maggie Tulliver fit neatly into their respective “homes” of Bretton and St. Ogg’s. Within the domestic realm, Lucy’s manic self-effacement and Maggie’s passionate aggression render them ambiguous and problematic figures, and while Lucy seems to distance herself from the childhood hearth, Maggie desperately tries to cling to a home that systematically rejects her. Tenuously positioned between domesticity and alterity, Lucy and Maggie are thus reduced to inhabiting liminal spaces and faced with the dangers of fragmentation. Both characters must therefore carve out their own spaces in order to materialize and prevent themselves from melting away into consummate homelessness. Whereas Lucy’s detachment from the early home-space frees her from what Bachelard calls, “the house of memories” (14), the deep imprint of home engraved in Maggie’s psyche serves to restrict her motility. Consequently, when Maggie is forced to leave the Mill, shadows of her first house (13) inhibit her from creating and colonizing a subsequent home elsewhere. Unfettered by the fibers that tether one to a sense of place, Lucy, however, not only successfully establishes, but also relocates, her “Home” to *Villette*. Thus, while Maggie not only finds herself labeled as the Other, but also increasingly entrapped by a domestic space that no longer carries any meaning, Lucy is able to advance even beyond the confines of the private sphere and colonize the public spaces of leisure and entertainment. When both characters are finally confronted with the ultimate storms of their lives, Maggie fatally seeks the comfort of her ancestral

home for refuge, while Lucy anchors herself safely within a new space and a new world.

<2> While postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha “have focused on the way in which white, middle-class women consolidated their sense of self against an excluded racialized, native other” (Anderson 49), Simon Gikandi posits that, in fact, “students of colonial discourse and postcolonial theory do not know what to do with the women of empire—whether these women are European or native” (121). Sharing the native’s oppressed status and linked to the fetishized object of male desire, the temptation arises of reading women as synonymous with colonial alterity, depriving them of their cultural agency and subjectivity. Furthermore, “because of their liminality within the culture of empire” (121), the role of British women was difficult to classify, as they were neither colonizer nor colonized. Although empire is synonymous with domination and suppression, as disenfranchised figures themselves, British women did not possess the imperial authority of the colonizer, and feminist work on gender and colonialism have “often assumed that colonizing [. . .] women were confined to the private domestic sphere” (Mills 32). As a result, these women established a moral and social hierarchy within the home that echoed the larger imperial discourse. While British men acted as colonizers of the public realm, Victorian, middle-class women became mediums for imperial power rather than agents in their own right, and Gikandi reminds us that women who did enter “the field of empire were traveling in a forbidden space” (122).

<3> The rise of empire, however, did provide Victorian, middle-class women with small breaks and openings for increased subjectivity and advancement outside the domestic realm, and these women “saw empire as an opportunity for freedom and advancement” (123). Because, as Iris Marion Young writes, women view their bodies self-consciously and “move in a way which is significantly more restricted than men” (qtd. in Mills 697), Victorian women like Lucy and Maggie were often restricted to the safe spaces signified in family and home. Consequently, while nineteenth-century colonization opened new frontiers for the empire, it also opened new doors and windows for British women. They “viewed imperialism as the only real alternative to domestic imprisonment” (Gikandi 123), and just as the male colonizer dominated a vast and unfamiliar landscape, so too does the female colonizer appropriate empire to construct new spaces beyond the domestic sphere. Sara Mills adds, “It’s not coincidental that during this time the seclusion of women started being relaxed, and the interior decoration of the Victorian British home began to change so that the stark division between inside and outside was modified” (“Gender and Colonial Space” 129). Consequently, I argue that the characters of Maggie and Lucy must choose between domination or subordination; in other words, they must either control their own space or risk surrendering their

autonomy within it. While accepting colonialism means complying with a hostile ideology, the alternative would render them disenfranchised and dispossessed—aliens upon their native soil. Lucy, “intent on extending [her] knowledge and gaining [her] bread” (Brontë 126), succeeds in authorizing her space but only at the expense of isolation and detachment. Maggie, however, cannot even *appropriate* her own space, much less colonize it, and remains the subjugated Other, identified only as “crazy Kate” (Eliot 399) and “the dark-eyed girl there, in the corner” (416).

<4> Although Maggie cherishes the spaces of early childhood, she refuses to adhere to their domestic constraints, and as a result, finds herself not only identified as a difficult and devilish “straight black-eyed wench” (15) but also swept to the side of her family home. “[S]eated close by the fire” (18), Maggie is initially welcomed into the hearth; however, she quickly oversteps the bounds of propriety by sharing her insight on “The History of the Devil” (21). Because this text is “not quite the right book for a little girl” (21), Maggie challenges social convention by openly discussing it, and she is consequently exiled out of the parlor and directed to “[g]o—go and see after [her] mother” (22). Eventually relegated to “a dark corner behind her father’s chair” (22), when Maggie rises to speak again, Mrs. Tulliver stifles both her spatial and vocal privileges, telling her to “[h]ush [. . .] and sit down on [her] little stool” (27). Just as Maggie’s parents lament over her “brown skin” (15) and sharp tongue, so too does her brother Tom continually reject Maggie’s pleas for intimacy. Not only does he prevent her from going fishing with him, when Maggie causes Tom to spill his glass of cowslip wine, he punishes her by inviting only Lucy “to the area where the toads were, as if there were no Maggie in existence” (106). Despite Maggie’s desperate attempts to nestle into the center of her home, she finds herself repeatedly marginalized and displaced by the very people she loves most.

<5> If a domestic space is defined by a sense of protocol and, according to Anne McClintock, “increasingly disciplined by obsessive tidying and ordering of ornaments and furniture” (654), then Maggie as its antithesis, has no place in this realm. Constantly subverting the codes of female decorousness, Maggie first complains, “I don’t *want* to do my patchwork” (Eliot 16) and later not only “shrinks away from the prickliest of tuckers” (92) but ruins her best frock “by basting it together with the roast beef” (65). Furthermore, whereas both Tom and Lucy “could build perfect pyramids of houses” (92), Maggie, perhaps in a symbolic act of resistance to her domestic constraints, not only upsets her own house of cards but also topples “Tom’s wonderful pagoda” (93). The text already singles out Maggie for her “reluctant black crop” (31) and her dark skin. According to Susan L. Meyer, Maggie’s “apparent blackness suggest her social disenfranchisement due to her gender, age, and social class” (249), and, in effect, labels

her as the exoticized Other even within the seemingly protected shelter of home. Doubly marginalized, Maggie becomes both a dangerous and sexually-charged figure of domestic rebellion. Indeed, just as witches were removed and ultimately executed for their moral deviancy, so too is Maggie excluded from her family space for refusing to accept normative codes of feminine behavior. It is therefore no surprise that Maggie “suddenly rushed from under her [mother’s] hands and dipped her head in the basin of water standing near” (Eliot 31) in an attempt to sabotage Mrs. Tulliver’s plans to tame both her daughter’s willfulness and her hair.

<6> Despite her own alterity, Maggie struggles for a place within the domestic sphere, while Lucy Snowe, at first blush, seems quite content to disengage herself from her associations at Bretton. Adhering to what Bakhtin calls the chronotope of the road, Lucy “merely observes [everyday] life, meddles in it now and then as an alien force; [. . .] occasionally even dons a common and everyday mask—but in essence [. . .] does not participate in this life” (120-121). Lucy demurs from being anchored to sense of place or space, referring to Bretton only as her “permanent residence” (Brontë 62) and comparing her early visits there “to the gliding of a full river through a plain” (62). Furthermore, while describing her first impressions of Bretton, Lucy’s perspective moves from interior to exterior, as her eye travels from “the well-arranged furniture, [to] the clear wide windows, [and eventually] the balcony outside” (61). Though seemingly immured by a sense of interiority, she expands this outward gaze as her narrative progresses. Finally, like the hero of an ancient adventure novel, Lucy further identifies herself with the metaphorical pilgrims of “Christian and Hopeful” (62) about to embark on a transcendent journey where the promises of the destination overshadow its origins.

<7> Though Lucy admits that she “was a good deal taken notice of by Mrs. Bretton” (62), the decentralization of her character is immediately achieved by the arrival of little Paulina Mary, who seems to overtake not only the home-space but also Lucy’s infant narrative. Obligated to share her most intimate spaces with Polly, Lucy remarks that “[i]n addition to my own French bed in its shady recess, appeared [. . .] a small crib” (62). While Lucy has already relegated herself to the corner of her bedroom, the arrival of Polly further restricts her freedom of movement, and Lucy eventually chooses to feign sleep to observe—rather than to be observed. Addressed merely as “*the girl*” (67), Lucy’s ambiguous position is further complicated when she is called upon to wash and dress Paulina Mary (67). Just as Lucy seems to surrender her space to this “second guest” (62), so too does Polly wish to marry her space to John Graham Bretton. Not only does Graham playfully profess, “I am going to be a favourite: preferred before papa, soon” (75), Polly herself promises to become not only “his housekeeper” and perhaps “his

cook” (81) but also confesses a disturbing desire to “go down into the grave to [his] mourning” (87). Interestingly, while Lucy alludes to spiritual union as her final resting space, Polly longs for a corporeal union of ashes and dust with Graham.

<8> On the surface, Lucy seems to have buried herself in the margins of her early narrative; however, upon further inspection, one can argue that Lucy has considerably more sinister motives. Sharing both close quarters and formative years together, Lucy and Polly seem to be on the most intimate terms, and, indeed, Polly would unreservedly “arrange a locket-ribbon around [Lucy’s] neck” (89), as if they were the same person. Before Polly leaves Bretton, however, Lucy “took her in” to bed and “warmed her in [her] arms” (92). By offering this womb-like space, Lucy not only allies herself to Polly but also ultimately identifies herself with the little girl. In doing so, one can consequently read Polly’s childhood as united with Lucy’s, and her desires as Lucy’s desires. Thus, Polly is not the only little girl enamored by Graham, and Lucy, rather than relinquish her space, is actually colonizing it and pushing poor Polly out. It is Lucy who first tells Polly that her father has returned, and seeing her pouring over a book “about distant countries” (88), Lucy encourages her to go and travel with papa. Furthermore, when Polly expresses sorrow and regret upon leaving Graham, it is Lucy who again admonishes, “Graham does not care for you so much as you care for him” and later reminds her not to “expect too much of him, or else he will feel you troublesome” (91). Though she seems to affectionately guide little Polly, Lucy belies her purpose when she too seems to bemoan Fate upon her own dismissal from Bretton (94).

<9> Whereas Lucy colonizes her early childhood space, Maggie vehemently defends her home against any potential interlopers, and while Maggie’s intense attachment may offer her what Bachelard calls “a sort of earthly paradise of matter” (7), it also functions as an insurmountable impediment, preventing her from chiseling out a sense of future space and place. Furthermore, because she has already been rejected from the domestic sphere of her beloved home, Maggie risks being relegated from a Utopia to No-Where. When the aunts and uncles visit, they bring with them their own set of discriminating proprieties and confined social codes, inspecting both the furniture as well as the children. Criticized for being too brown and too clever, Maggie attempts not just to maintain, but rather to reclaim, her native space by running to her “mother’s room” and “seizing her front locks and cutting it across the middle of her forehead” (Eliot 69). In doing so, not only is Maggie appropriating the apotheosis of domestic space, Mrs. Tulliver’s private bedroom, she is marking it as her own territory with her little “black locks” scattered about like “slaughtered sheep” (71). However, not only does Maggie protect the “home-scene” (45), she wishes to remain in it forever. Often found “dreaming over her book” (18), Maggie indulges in her imaginative world and utilizes the

house for the shelter, protection, and peaceful pleasure of daydreaming.⁽¹⁾ Indeed, though Maggie “was fond of fancying a world where the people never got any larger than children her own age” (66), Bachelard warns that this “Motionless Childhood” (5) exists only within the frontiers of memory and imagination. Thus, in vanquishing an ultimately intangible realm, Maggie prevents herself from building a home in reality and consequently crowns herself the “queen” (Eliot 66) of make-believe.

<10> If, as Sara Mills notes, the domestic “is seen as primarily a woman’s space, and her access to the public sphere is sometimes seen as marked or exceptional” (“Gender and Colonial Space” 696), both Maggie and Lucy’s journeys transgress spatial boundaries and take them into forbidden spaces beyond normative gendered limits. As a marginal figure, Maggie “was like a gypsy and ‘half wild’” (Eliot 112), and when she embarks on her pilgrimage to the “little brown tent on the commons” (112), she chooses to travel through the anonymous fields rather than take to the lane. “Bounded by a fear of physical attack” (Mills 690), the fields veil Maggie from “formidable strangers [such as] the two shabby-looking men with flushed faces” (Eliot 113), and the pasture and meadows therefore become a refuge for her as much as the promise of the gypsy camp. However, in disappearing into this vague and undefined space, Maggie is, in a sense, accepting her own liminality rather than colonizing new ground. Indeed, though Maggie meant to become both teacher and queen of the gypsies, she cannot release herself completely from her domestic imprint, and not only does she prepare to “secretly send [her father] a letter by a small gypsy” (112), Maggie yearns for her “bread and butter and tea” (118). Unable to dominate or even assimilate, Maggie dematerializes into a peripheral figure for the gypsies just as she has already become to her family. She soon feels self-consciously out of place, as the gypsies “didn’t seem to mind her at all, and she felt quite weak among them” (118). Rejected by both her real and imaginary homes, Maggie begins to fragment and, consequently, can only inhabit the transient space signified in the road. It is on the road that Maggie reunites with her father; however, rather than return with him to a “lamp *waiting* in the window” (Bachelard 34), on this road, the houses “had no windows, to speak of, and [all] the doors were closed” (Eliot 122).

<11> Whereas Maggie ends her odyssey filled with self-doubt and crying out for father, Lucy questions her identity at the onset of her journey and ultimately discovers within it the opportunity for self-manifestation and freedom from the strictures of patriarchal society. Only within the bleak anonymity and false intimacy of the hotel bedroom does Lucy start to doubt herself, lamenting, “Whence did I come? Whither should I go? What should I do?” (Brontë 107). As if to transcend these plaguing thoughts, Lucy “rose and opened her curtain,” settling her gaze on “THE DOME” (108), and in further venturing

out into the streets of London, Lucy subverts the notions of woman's proper place and space. Moreover, in mounting the dome of St. Paul's, Lucy not only conquers an institution of religious and patriarchal hegemony, she also dares to claim it as her own. As Bachelard notes, "the tower sounds a note of immense dreams" (25). Therefore, when Lucy's gaze travels from "London, with its river, and its bridges" to the "glad blue sky of early spring above" (109), the dome becomes a platform upon which Lucy can expand her own literal and figurative horizons. Thus, whereas Maggie travels towards liminality, Lucy embeds herself within the center of the City. Interestingly, at the day's end, Lucy does not allow herself to return to the private cell of her hotel room, but rather appropriates the public space of the dining room for her personal use, where she "lay down on three chairs for an hour" (110).

<12> Just as Maggie feels frightened amongst the gypsies, however, so too does Lucy "tremble" (121) at the thought of colonizing a space dominated by men. When Lucy enters the "coffee-room" (121) of her Belgian inn, she shares Maggie's embarrassment and distress of being an anomalous figure in an improper sphere, confessing, "I should have felt rather more happy if [. . .] I could have seen any women; however there was not one—all present were men" (121). As a foreigner and a woman, Lucy is doubly marginalized in this space, but rather than return to England, she quickly resolves to depend on her instincts, remarking, "to myself alone could I look" (95). Thus, though Lucy risks fragmenting her "homeless, anchorless, [. . .] mind" (122) by traveling through a series of obscure inns to the unknown, unnamed town of Vilette, she also journeys to the center of her psyche and learns the value of own her self-worth in the process.

<13> At the turning point of their lives, Lucy and Maggie are confronted with empty spaces; and, in a sense, both are given a new start in life and a blank canvas upon which to impress their distinctive marks. Like an absolute colonizer, Lucy not only dominates the empty space of her schoolroom, she colonizes it at the expense of suppressing the "swinish multitude" (143). Indeed, in this scene, Lucy disturbingly adheres to the racist ideologies of domination and enslavement, remarking on her students' "unusually large ears" (147) and admitting that a certain girl, "Catalonian by race, was the sort of character at once dreaded and hated by all her associates" (144). When Lucy first enters the schoolroom, she does not betray her timidity, but rather proceeds to the front and center, "mount[s] the estrade" (142) like a judge, and looks down upon her students. Unable to see them as individuals, Lucy denies them their humanity by not only referring to the girls as a band of "mutineers" (146), but also fragmenting them into stormy "eyes and brows" (142). In order to get this "stiff-neck tribe under permanent influence" (146), Lucy must simultaneously act as professor and subjugator, and she does not hesitate to turn the key on her unruly student and

enslave her in the closet (144). Because Lucy has played the part of a successful colonist, she reaps the fruit of her actions, declaring, “[f]rom that day I ceased to be nursery- governess, and became English teacher. Madame raised my salary” (144). Interestingly, her students also seem to accept their role as the vanquished colonized,(2) not only bowing to Lucy’s authority but also laying “bouquets on [her] desk in the morning; by way of acknowledgement for this little foreign attention” (147).

<14> In contrast, once all the articles of furniture are sold from the Mill, Maggie dwells on the emptiness of space within, and rather than bring into it new life, she allows both the parlour and the relics of the past to haunt her. The “sense of the altered room came upon Maggie with [such] a force” (Eliot 251) that one can argue the room itself dominates Maggie, and she therefore feels oppressed by its barrenness, throwing herself “into a chair with big tears ready to roll down her cheeks” (252). Like a ghost, the “unfaded space on the wall” (251) outlines where the bookcases once were, while the sunshine shows “the empty places and the marks where well-known objects once had been” (267). Surrounded by intangibility and nothingness, Maggie no longer seems to be living in a material world. As a result, not only has Maggie herself become fragmented (like the Belgian girls), but so has the exterior space around her. Retreating further into the elusive space of imagination and memory, Maggie laments over losing “[o]ur dear old Pilgrim’s Progress that [Tom] colored with [his] little paints” (252) not because of its content, but rather for the memory it represents. As Bachelard explains in his essay “House and Universe:”

How suddenly our memories assume a living possibility of being! We consider the past, and a sort of remorse of not having lived profoundly enough in the old house fills our hearts, comes up from the past, and overwhelms us. (56)

What little articles of furniture left are burdened with meaning and anchor Maggie to this space; however, in choosing to live in a domestic sphere that is now stripped, divided, and essentially erased, Maggie chooses to live a life in the past.

<15> When Maggie enters the Red Deeps, she attempts to move beyond the cheerless atmosphere of the Mill, and in disappearing into this private space, Maggie decentralizes herself from the world of St. Ogg’s and tries to cultivate her own secret garden. Ironically, Maggie has, in fact, moved back into the very spaces of early childhood that she means to escape. Embraced inside a “bank crowned with trees” (Eliot 309), she has indeed become the queen of her own imaginary world. Moreover, in lengthening her “daily walk which was her one indulgence” and in choosing a sanctuary that lies “along

the side of the road” (309), Maggie is, in essence, inhabiting the road. Unable to return to her childhood home and unwilling to abandon it, Maggie is at an impasse in her life—the middle of the road, as it were. Much like her fragmented self, the spaces of the Red Deeps are incomplete and crumbling, and the ground “was broken into very capricious hollows and mounds” (309). Though in a previous life it was once a “stone-quarry” (309), for Maggie, it becomes a graveyard of memories. Indeed, Maggie identifies herself with this land and feels a “kinship with the grand Scotch firs” (310); however, as a liminal figure, Maggie cannot even appropriate this most intimate of spaces.

<16> When Philip Waken penetrates the Red Deeps, rather than feel violated, Maggie welcomes him and leads him deep into its cavernous “amphitheatre of the pale pink dogroses” (313). However, in his presence, Maggie surrenders full sovereignty over her space, her body, and her *self*, and not only does she allow Philip to look upon her for his “second portrait” (339), she indulges in his gaze. When he directs her to “turn [her] head this way” (339), she passively submits to his command. In later comparing Maggie to “a tall Hamadryad” (339), Philip is, in effect, dematerializing her, erasing her substance and rendering her an object and a ghost. Because Maggie can no longer defend herself against intruders, Philip’s influence over her grows, and her solitary paradise soon becomes a space of resignation. Sitting with him “at the roots of the slanting ash” (339), Maggie entwines herself with Philip and, like a slave or a prisoner, is ultimately unable to escape the power of his memory or his gaze.

<17> Though Lucy attempts to colonize the religious space signified in the “allée défendue,” in choosing to appropriate a liminal space, she is, in a sense, also rooting herself in the road. Although Lucy has effectively conquered several spaces on her journey, as a colonial spinster who does not fit neatly into the system of marriage or motherhood, Lucy still occupies some other place in Victorian society. Rita S. Krands calls this space “Elsewhere” and goes on to say that imperial women who transgress “the gender ideology of domesticity” risked “expulsion into a No-Place” (11). Thus, according to Catherine Hall, in her essay, “White, Male, and Middle Class”:

[W]omen [. . .] came to read colonialism as both a threat and a possibility: it was a threat because it was a patriarchal affair in which women were excluded in the name of a stifling domestic ideology; it was an opportunity because it destabilized the very categories in which this ideology was formulated. (qtd. in Gikandi 121)

Although Lucy uses the culture of empire to colonize her own spaces, she cannot fully

escape its domestic codes; however, unlike Maggie who publicly rebels against domesticity, Lucy surreptitiously hides her own inexorable passions within a hidden space. Thus, in burying her forbidden feelings within this forbidden alley, Lucy ironically reappropriates this space, and it is no longer forbidden to her but rather to [O]thers who dare to cross its threshold. Indeed, the allée défendue functions as a “refuge” (Brontë 198) for Lucy, much as the Red Deeps once were for Maggie. Not only is it a place for confinement and contemplation, however, the alley also accesses an enchanted realm for Lucy, and she hints that within it, there “was the portal of a vault, imprisoning deep beneath that ground, on whose surface grass grew and flowers bloomed” (172). Although on the surface, Lucy rejects this notion, she seems to guard this sanctuary beneath a façade of domesticity, making herself “gardener of some tinted flowers” and cleaning “a rustic seat at the far end” (174). When Dr. John “penetrated at last the ‘forbidden walk’” (180), Lucy laments, “some plant there were, indeed, trodden down [. . .] which I wished to prop up, water, and revive” (183). Not only does Lucy want intruders out of her territory, when they impose, she is quick to “efface” (183) their signs. In cultivating this seemingly trivial and forgotten pathway, Lucy is, in fact, inhabiting two worlds and living two lives—one of interior tumult and another of exterior calm. Furthermore, unlike Maggie who travels from the Mill to “Elsewhere,” Lucy, with her little marks of domesticity, transforms this “No-Place” into a home.

<18> Functioning as the place where both characters face their “*raison d’être*” (Bachelard 18), the attic is perhaps the most revealing space for Lucy and Maggie. While Bachelard discusses the attic as the place where one can think most clearly and where “fears are easily ‘rationalized’” (19), it also provides a threshold through which Maggie and Lucy view their potential as colonizer or colonized. Interestingly, while the attic serves as a space of growth for Lucy, freeing her from the shackles of self-immolation, the attic space (or something rather like it) reveals an increasingly restrictive and deadening future for Maggie, one signified in a series of locked drawers, preserved articles, and small boxes. Though in Maggie’s childhood, the attic was once her asylum and a safe place where she could freely indulge in her primitive feelings, one can also read the attic as a symbol of her future self-imposed and social imprisonment. As a child Maggie used the attic to hide her most intense passions, where she participated in voodoo rituals and “kept a Fetish which she punished for all her misfortunes” (Eliot 31). She could groan, cry, and howl like an animal, finding “wretched pleasure in the hollow resonance that came through [its] long empty space[s]” (40). However, when Maggie ascends into Aunt Pullet’s “darkened room” (96) to see a new bonnet, she travels from a cathartic space into a carefully coded one. Just as the “half-opened shutter” adds a “funereal solemnity to the scene,” so too do the “corpses of furniture in white shrouds” (96) represent a kind of preserved and static social order. This space is the epitome of

female decorousness and objectification, and, indeed even Mrs. Tulliver is rendered inanimate, turning “slowly round, like a draper’s lay figure” (96). Interestingly, in modeling the bonnet, Mrs. Tulliver “crown(s)” (95) herself the queen of domestic space.

<19> In sitting upon a “species of extempore throne” (Brontë 204), Lucy also reigns over her attic space; in contrast to Maggie, however, Lucy finds that the attic allows her to overcome her inhibitions and share the most private parts of herself within the public sphere. Completely losing all self-consciousness, Lucy feels safe from human judgment and “acted [her] part before the garret-vermin” (204). When she reenacts her scene in the garden, she consequently admits “ere long, warming, becoming interested, taking courage, I acted to please myself” (211). In taking center stage, not only does Lucy dominate the space, she dares to “recklessly alter the spirit of the *rôle*” (210). Interestingly, unlike Maggie, Lucy does not want to be locked in the attic, confessing that it “was no pleasant place” (203). Becoming “hot as Africa” and “cold as Greenland” (204), it is not a sphere that Lucy wants to colonize. Additionally, whereas Mrs. Pullet’s space was a kind of embalmed tomb, Lucy’s attic, filled with “old dresses” and “a somber band of winter cloaks” (204), is a place of forgotten things. Lucy, too, risks being forgotten, and she confesses “it began to appear somewhat hard that I should pass my holiday, fasting in prison” (205). Unlike Maggie who seeks solitude in the attic, Lucy begins to realize a desire for kinship with the Labasse-coureans, lamenting “all was gay and glad below” (205). As a result, she happily returns to the domestic sphere with its “*petit pâté à la crème*” (206) waiting for her in the kitchen. Just as M. Paul frees her from the attic, and consequently from a sense of her own self-doubt, so too does he “offer his hand” (206), leading her through the garden and into the fête. In coming down from her “watch-tower” (138) and taking M. Paul’s hand, Lucy is, in a way, surrendering some of her hard-won, colonial authority; and in passing through the garden gate, she begins to weave herself into the fibers of her community.(3)

<20> Indeed, the garden becomes the space where Lucy achieves full communion not only with M. Paul but with all the members of the pensionnat. Having journeyed as a solitary traveler, she had resigned herself to a life where “there remained no possibility of dependence on others” (95). For Lucy, colonization was synonymous with separation: from a family, a community, and ultimately a home. Consequently, although I argue that Lucy is a successful colonizer, she is simultaneously still the Other. Because she cannot easily be classified within the domestic sphere of family and home, she is more freely able to challenge and transgress its boundaries. However, one can also argue that Lucy welcomes the protection and shelter of the domestic world, yearning for a sense of belonging. When Lucy traverses out to the meadow with the boarders, she finally finds this fellowship. No longer does she see M. Paul as a “savage-looking”

(469) dictator, Lucy herself has joined the “mutinous mass” (143). Identifying herself with the Labasse-coureans, her “articles of dress were just like what [her] companions wore” (471), and not only does she link arms with her rival Ginerva Fanshawe, she “gather[s] in a knot” with the all the young women, both literally and figuratively tying herself to these people. Furthermore, in her small way, Lucy accepts M. Paul’s seemingly idolatrous faith when she again joins hands with him, agreeing that they “worship the same God in the same spirit, though by different rites” (474). Indeed, like Christian and Hopeful, Lucy, too, has found her Paradise within this new garden. Sitting herself under “the tree-root” (474), Lucy therefore plants herself in Labassecour and acknowledges Villette as “home” (465).

<21> Whereas Lucy has found deliverance in the domestic, Maggie Tulliver experiences a different sort of garden at the end of her journey. Although Lucy Deane playfully compares herself and Stephen to “Adam and Eve unfallen—in paradise” (Eliot 382), when he passes “into the conservatory” (459) with Maggie, he is leading her into a den of temptation. Unlike the Garden of Eden, however, not only is this space a restrictive one, it is also an unnatural one, both artificially hot with its exotic plants and flowers and artificially cold with its large panes of glass windows. Maggie remarks, “[h]ow strange and unreal the trees and flowers look,” and it is in this space that Stephen unwittingly objectifies her like a precious “jewel” (459). Admitting she is “quite wicked with roses,” Maggie herself becomes like the flowers, as she gently opens herself to Stephen’s “long gaze” like the “large half-opened rose” (460). However, just as Stephen is tempted by Maggie, so too is she tempted by the possibilities of life’s “vibrating consciousness poised above the pleasure or pain” (459). When Maggie tries to taste the sweetness of the roses, she loses whatever paradise she has left, as Stephen, mad with passion, insults Maggie “and shower[s] kisses” (460) on her arm. Therefore, like Eve, not only has Maggie transformed into a classic figure of subordination, she also becomes a dangerous symbol of transgression. However, unlike her archetypal foremother, Maggie later professes, “I would rather die than fall into that temptation” (467).

<22> “Things out o’ nature niver thrive” (35), Luke reminds little Maggie, and like the flowers in the conservatory, she herself cannot survive in a space outside the universe of home. When the final flood arrives at St. Ogg’s, it is the Mill that Maggie looks to for shelter, and it is at the Mill where she manifests her true identity, declaring to Tom, “It is I [. . .]—Maggie” (541). However, just as the Mill has splintered in the storm, so too must Maggie now dissolve into memory. In so doing, she, in a sense, redeems herself from alterity and is no longer the fallen Eve, but rather the “Blessed Virgin” (125) saving the people of St. Ogg’s. However, whereas Maggie seems to dematerialize at the end of

her journey, Lucy anchors herself safely against the final storm. At the end of her narrative, Paul Emmanuel takes the role of the colonizer, while Lucy remains in Villette, “commenc[ing] with [her] school” (Brontë 593) and prospering. Interestingly, though she has spent the bulk of her journey trying to colonize and dominate space, she ends her narrative with the language of benevolence and gift-giving. In the end, Miss Marchmont has given Lucy a legacy, and Lucy herself prepares a library of books and a garden of “the plants he preferred” (595) for M. Paul. It is Paul Emmanuel, however, who not only offers Lucy letters throughout his voyage, but also offers her perhaps the greatest gifts of all—the space of remembrance, daydreams, and home. In the end, while Maggie sheds her protective light over St. Ogg’s “as of the moon in its brightness” (125), Paul Emmanuel “seemed to have spread over [Lucy] like a banner” (592), and she ends her journey sheltered safely under his “shadow” (107).

Endnotes

- (1) See Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. (▲)
- (2) See Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders.”(▲)
- (3) It is interesting to note that, in the subsequent sections of *Villette*, Lucy reunites with Mrs. Bretton and later, Mr. Home.(▲)

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