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# Haunted by Passion: Supernaturalism and Feminism in Jane Eyre and Vilette

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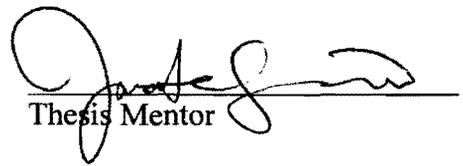
Haunted by Passion: Supernaturalism and Feminism in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*

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## Abstract

In *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë builds suspense and creates an eerie atmosphere by hinting that bizarre occurrences are caused by supernatural entities such as ghosts or demons. Ultimately, the strange events are given rational explanations. The monster in *Jane Eyre* is revealed to be Rochester's wife Bertha Mason and the ghostly nun in *Villette* turns out to be Ginevra Fanshaw's lover in disguise. Both Bertha and the nun are robbed of their threatening supernatural quality. Like these figures, the female protagonists of Brontë's fiction are repressed and subdued. Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe hide the passionate side of their personalities from the outside world. This repression manifests itself in the form of mysterious figures that haunt both novels. The aggressive and animalistic Bertha Mason represents Jane's buried passion. Similarly, the mysterious nun represents Lucy's repressed sexuality and serves as a reminder of her loneliness. Jane and Lucy conceal their passion in order to get by in male dominated society. In Brontë's time, outspoken and aggressive women were generally considered to be unacceptable and unladylike. The ideal woman was calm, quiet, and submissive. Powerful women were often viewed as threatening. The supernatural figures associated with the female protagonists in both novels are robbed of their mysterious allure. Like Jane and Lucy, they are stripped of their power. Jane and Lucy are conflicted characters who struggle with their longing for marriage and their desire to be independent. They both fall in love and hope to establish a relationship of equality with the men in their lives. Although Jane and Lucy have similar objectives, they do not achieve their goals with the same degree of success. Unlike Jane, Lucy achieves independence and largely overcomes the repression that has been with her throughout most of her life. *Villette* succeeds as a feminist novel while *Jane Eyre* is rather problematic. The conclusion of Lucy's story conveys an empowering feminist message in all the ways Jane's story does not.

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Haunted by Passion: Supernaturalism and Feminism in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*

In both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë builds suspense and creates an eerie atmosphere by hinting that bizarre occurrences are caused by non-human entities such as ghosts and demons. Ultimately, the strange events are given mundane, rational explanations. The monster in Thornfield and the ghostly nun that haunts Lucy are revealed to be human beings. As a result, they are robbed of their threatening supernatural quality. Like these figures, the female protagonists of Brontë's fiction are repressed and subdued. Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe conceal their impassioned interiority from the outside world. This repression manifests itself in the form of mysterious figures that haunt both novels. In *Repression in Victorian Fiction: Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens*, John Kucich describes passion in Brontë's novels as "a kind of caged animal" (Kucich 37). It desperately wants to break free from confinement. The aggressive Bertha Mason and the mysterious nun are figures associated with the doubling that results from repression. Jane and Lucy struggle with the conflict between their longing for marriage and their desire to be independent women. Both characters fall in love and hope to establish a relationship of equality with the men in their lives. The conclusions of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* are deceptive: Jane appears to live a happier life than Lucy, but this may not necessarily be the case. Although Jane and Lucy have similar objectives, they do not achieve these goals with the same degree of success. The extent to which each novel succeeds as a feminist story depends largely on how much progress the protagonists make in their attempts to overcome the repression that has been with them since their early years of development.

Early in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë portrays her heroine as a passionate child prone to fits of anger. When John Reed bullies Jane, she loses her temper and yells at him. She even fights with him physically. She refers to him as a “tyrant,” a Roman emperor, and a “slave-driver” (Brontë 8-9). Jane views John Reed as an oppressor, and he is the first of several domineering males she encounters. During the fight, Jane appears to be so enraged that she is not fully aware of what she is doing. She states that she does not “very well know what [she] did with [her] hands” (Brontë 9). She becomes lost in the heat of her anger. It is almost as if she cannot control herself or her body moments.

Mrs. Reed sees Jane’s passion as a personality flaw that must be corrected. She believes that it is inappropriate for a young girl to behave as Jane does. Jane is locked in the red-room as punishment for her outburst. In this scene Brontë introduces supernaturalism into the novel. Mr. Reed died in the red-room and Jane fears the possibility of being visited by his ghost: “I thought Mr. Reed’s spirit, harassed by wrongs of his sister’s child, might quit his abode—whether in the church vault, or in the unknown world of the departed—and rise before me in this chamber” (Brontë 13). The description of Jane’s thoughts about her deceased uncle creates an eerie atmosphere, but the mood is broken when it becomes clear that the specter exists only in the little girl’s mind. The anxiety caused by being locked in isolation leads Jane to imagine that something as mundane as lantern light is a sign of a supernatural presence. In reality, there is nothing otherworldly about the events that take place in the red-room. Jane’s fear makes the situation seem more frightening than it actually is.

Despite Mrs. Reed’s attempts to quell Jane’s passionate nature, she continues to exhibit rebellious behavior at Lowood. Jane and her fellow students are ruled by Mr. Brocklehurst, the second domineering male figure who enters her life. Religion is the tool Brocklehurst uses to

control the girls at Lowood. He claims to be a good and pious man, but he is a hypocrite. He excuses his cruel practices by insisting that his strict discipline will teach the students modesty, humility, and proper behavior. The rules and routines at Lowood reinforce the idea in Jane's mind that women are expected to be quite and submissive.

At Lowood, Jane develops a close friendship with Helen Burns. Unlike Jane, Helen is very passive and non-combative. She does not express any anger or resentment when she is unjustly punished. Instead, she calmly accepts whatever happens to her. Jane finds it difficult to comprehend how or why Helen keeps her emotions under control. Helen criticizes Jane for holding a grudge against Mrs. Reed: "What a singularly deep impression her injustice seems to have made on your heart! No ill-usage so brands its record on my feelings. Would you not be happier if you tried to forget her severity, together with the passionate emotions it excited?" (Brontë 49). Helen believes that people should not waste their time holding on to anger. To do so would hinder one's ability to achieve peace and salvation. Helen is deeply religious and has faith that she will move on to a better place in the afterlife. This makes the challenges of daily life easier for her to bear.

In *The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction*, Donald D. Stone asserts that at "every state of [Jane's] pilgrimage, she incurs temptations and witnesses warning examples of good and bad behavior" (Stone 114). While this is true to a certain extent, some of the behaviors considered to be "bad" are in other registers the virtues that distinguish Jane. A prime example of this is the idea that good and proper women are quite and submissive. Mary Poovey examines this belief and the limitations that were placed on women in Brontë's time. In *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, Poovey states that the idea that women must be inferior to men was promoted by those who felt threatened by the

possibility that women might conquer the work force: “—the increasing number of women entering the labor force and the threat they potentially posed to male employment was most often submerged in arguments about social stability, a natural division of labor, and the welfare of marriage as an institution” (Poovey 153). The goal was to keep women dependent on men in order to protect men’s jobs.

A woman who earned money was considered to be unacceptable. It was also a commonly held belief that “economic independence will automatically lead to sexual independence; if women are ‘self-supporters,’ they will not marry; if they do not marry, sexuality will no longer be controlled” (Poovey 153). Helen adheres to the belief that passivity is a quality that women must possess and for this reason she may not be the best role model for Jane, but in other ways, Jane does benefit from following Helen’s example. Helen teaches Jane about “fortitude in the face of misfortunes, an attitude very different from her own rebelliousness” (Stone 115). Helen’s inner strength inspires Jane and helps her endure hardships later in life.

In *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar examine Jane’s character and the extent to which her journey represents Victorian women’s struggle against repressive society. They discuss Jane’s time at Lowood and point out that Helen Burns is not the only female who influences Jane. Miss Temple, a kind and caring school teacher, also serves as a role model for Jane: “Angelic Miss Temple, for instance, with her marble pallor, is a shrine of ladylike virtues: magnanimity, cultivation, courtesy—and repression” (Gilbert and Gubar 344). Jane develops a friendship with Miss Temple and grows to adopt some of the qualities she possesses.

Despite Miss temple’s placid demeanor, she has a rebellious side. She clearly dislikes Mr. Brocklehurst’s strict rules and the cruelty he inflicts on the students, but she never openly

criticizes him. Despite her silence, she does exhibit signs of a quiet rebellion. She experiences what Gilbert and Gubar describe as “sympathetic anger” (Gilbert and Gubar 345). Miss Temple’s willingness to provide extra meals to her students when their regular food is inedible is a prime example of her tendency to quietly oppose Brocklehurst. This kind of behavior demonstrates that Miss Temple has at once a passionate interiority and a calm and obedient exterior. The adult Jane possesses a similar kind of duality.

When Jane gets older, she seems to follow Helen’s advice and philosophy. She learns how to control and suppress her emotions: “I had given in allegiance to duty and order; I was quiet; I believed I was content: to the eyes of others, usually even to my own, I appeared a disciplined and subdued character” (Brontë 71). Jane begins to act the way she has been taught to behave since she was a child, but there are signs that the passionate and rebellious side of her personality did not completely disappear. Jane’s thoughts reveal that she has a secret longing to travel and leave the limited confines of Lowood. She feels suffocated and imprisoned: “I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer” (Brontë 72). Jane’s desire for freedom intimates that she is still the passionate and independent minded person she always was, but she has learned to hide this interiority behind a calm and quiet façade.

Lucy Snowe, the central character in *Villette*, is similar to Jane in many ways. Like Jane, she is an orphan who experiences hardships growing up. Loss and abandonment have played a major role in Lucy’s life. Forced to survive on her own, she struggles to find companionship and job security. Early in the novel, Lucy finds work as an assistant to a sick, elderly woman named Miss Marchmont. Miss Marchmont’s death puts an end to any stability Lucy may have had: “My mistress being dead, and I once more alone, I had to look out for a new place” (Brontë 43). Lucy’s words are very revealing. She describes herself as “once more alone” which demonstrates

that she recognizes loss and isolation in her life. She finds it necessary to once again search for a job.

Despite the misfortunes Lucy experiences, she perseveres and remains remarkably strong. She is independent and determined to support herself. She proves to be a dedicated and hard worker when she gets a job as a teacher in Madame Beck's school. Although her circumstances improve, she continues to be plagued by the pain of loneliness. In "Villette," Steven Millhauser's examination of Brontë's novel, he calls the book a "story of a soul in anguish, tormented by a deep desolation of loneliness, and bitterly divided against itself as it struggles to crush down its always rising cry" (Millhauser 176). The anguish Millhauser describes is clearly present in many scenes.

One of the best examples of the extreme isolation Lucy experiences can be found in the chapter entitled "The Long Vacation." Lucy is left alone for an extended period of time when the teachers and students at Madame Beck's school go on vacation. During this time, her only companionship consists of a servant and an "imbecile pupil" (Brontë 156). The lack of human contact takes a toll on Lucy both mentally and physically. She describes her surroundings as lifeless and gloomy. She feels the need to escape the oppressive and suffocating walls of the building: "I dressed myself, weak and shaking. The solitude and the stillness of the long dormitory could not be borne any longer" (Brontë 160). Like Jane, Lucy feels the need to break free from her surroundings and she decides to wander the streets. The chapter ends with her sudden collapse. Her emotional pain leads to a decline in her physical health. Lucy reaches a breaking point. The sadness and isolation become intolerable to the point where her body simply cannot take any more.

Like Lucy, Jane has difficulty dealing with the sense of confinement she feels. The move from Lowood to Thornfield does not ease her restlessness. Although she obtains a new job as a governess, she still feels discontent. Poovey describes the governess as a figure that is closely associated with repression. The governess was expected to exercise self-control: “—she was meant to police the emergence of undue assertiveness or sexuality in her maturing charges” and she “was expected not to display willfulness or desires herself” (Poovey 128). Jane must live with this kind of restraint every day and it has a detrimental impact on her mental state. It significantly contributes to the discontent she experiences. Her only form of relief is walking back and forth on the third floor of Thornfield Hall. During these moments, she lets her imagination roam free.

She seems to desire a more exciting and adventurous life. She also expresses her views about women and how they are misunderstood by men: “—women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do...It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex” (Brontë 93). Jane essentially points out that women are equal to men. They want to do more than nurse and knit stockings. They have a desire to cultivate their intellect and achieve lofty goals just as men do. Women are expected to behave calmly, but inside they experience the same emotions as men. They share the same desire for freedom and independence. These feelings may not be openly displayed, but that does not change the truth of their existence. It would not be appropriate for Jane to voice these opinions in public. The private moments she has on the third floor of Thornfield give her a chance to sort through these thoughts in her mind.

Jane quickly learns that there is more to Thornfield than meets the eye. One of the earliest hints that there is a dark secret being kept at Thornfield Hall comes when she hears a strange laugh. Although Mrs. Fairfax claims that Grace Poole is the source of the peculiar sound, Jane begins to doubt the truth of this explanation. She suspects that the laugh may be supernatural in origin: “This was a demoniac laugh—low, suppressed, and deep...I thought at first the goblin-laughter stood at my bedside—or rather, crouched by my pillow” (Brontë 126). Jane once again lets superstition take hold of her. The language used to describe the laugh is designed to lead readers to believe that it could come from a non-human entity such as a ghost or goblin. This belief is further reinforced when a series of bizarre unexplained incidents occur at Thornfield. Eventually, the perpetrator is revealed to be Rochester’s mad wife, Bertha Mason. Despite all the hints to the contrary, Bertha is not a ghost or supernatural monster. She is a human being. The unusual events at Thornfield are reminiscent of Jane’s experience in the red room. In both cases, strange and frightening events are given mundane, rational explanations.

Brontë’s penchant for rationally explaining bizarre and mysterious occurrences is evident in *Villette* as well. When Lucy goes up to the garret to read Graham’s letter, she is interrupted by a frightening sight. She sees what appears to be a nun: “I saw in the middle of that ghostly chamber a figure all black or white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white” (Brontë 245). Lucy believes that the mysterious figure may be the ghost of a girl who was buried under a nearby pear tree. Lucy succumbs to superstition because she knows of a legend about an incident that took place when Madame Beck’s house was a convent. According to the legend, a nun was buried under the pear tree as punishment for sinning against her vow. Lucy seems to wonder if the strange figure she encounters is the ghost of that same nun.

Brontë appears to promote the possibility that the nun could be supernatural in origin by invoking a generic gothic setting shortly before the nun's first appearance. A great deal of emphasis is placed on Lucy's isolation in the garret: "...I mounted three staircases in succession, reached a dark, narrow, silent landing, opened a worm-eaten door, and dived into the deep, black, cold garret" (Brontë 243). The unsettling imagery Brontë uses builds suspense and curiosity about the mystery surrounding the nun, but like Bertha Mason, the ghostly figure is revealed to have a very earthly explanation. The nun is eventually revealed to be nothing more than Ginevra Fanshawe's lover in disguise.

The supernaturalism in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* seems to be linked to the interiority of the female protagonists who focalize the novels. Many of the strange incidents involving Bertha Mason appear to be connected to Jane's repressed fears and anxieties. Bertha represents Jane's passion. She embodies all the emotions that Jane keeps bottled inside. Like Jane, Bertha has a strong desire for freedom. She is forced to spend every day locked in the attic of Thornfield Hall. She frequently attempts to escape her imprisonment by sneaking out of her room in the middle of the night. When Jane is introduced to Bertha, Rochester's wife is described as animal-like: "What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal" (Brontë 250). The language used to describe Bertha is strikingly similar to the words John Reed uses to describe Jane. In Chapter I of the novel, John refers to Jane as a "bad animal" (Brontë 7). That both Jane and Bertha are perceived as animalistic suggests that they are alike. There is a wild and passionate side to Jane's personality. This quality makes other characters believe that she has an animalistic nature. Although Jane represses her passionate side as an adult, it is still very much a

part of her. The unbridled wildness of Bertha Mason makes her someone who outwardly displays characteristics Jane has been attempting to conceal throughout most of her life.

The parallels between Jane and Bertha can be seen even in their physical movements. During Jane's solitary moments of contemplation on the third floor, she paces back and forth: "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" (Brontë 93). When Jane engages in this repetitive motion, like a lion in a cage, she appears to do so out of frustration and a sense of confinement. She feels dissatisfied with her current situation. She wants to see the world, broaden her horizons, and experience more of what life has to offer. Bertha also moves backwards and forwards in the windowless room that functions as her prison cell. Like Jane's movements, Bertha's behavior is linked to feelings of confinement. They long for freedom, but cannot attain it. They are unable to escape. All they can do for relief is move back and forth behind closed walls. The restlessness that results from Jane's confinement represses, but it also makes Jane a more complex character. Kucich argues that the repression enriches the interiority of Brontë's characters: "Patterns of confinement and escape stress the authenticity of strategically concealed desires" (Kucich 37). Repression heightens the longing experienced by the characters. It also increases their psychological complexity.

Jane's dreams reveal a great deal about her state of mind and the conflict that rages inside her. She describes a dream in which she is burdened with carrying a small child that cries loudly in her ear. Gilbert and Gubar argue that the orphaned child represents Jane's younger self: "—she is doomed to carry her orphaned alter ego everywhere. The burden of the past cannot be sloughed off so easily" (Gilbert and Gubar 358). No matter how hard Jane tries to leave the child

behind, she finds it impossible to do so. She states that she is unable to get rid of it and the weight of carrying it hinders her movement. The child's loud wailing is reminiscent of young Jane's temper tantrums. The emotions displayed by the child represent the passionate feelings that still exist within the adult Jane. No matter how hard Jane tries to escape her past, it continues to haunt her.

Bertha acts as another reminder of who Jane was as a child and who she still is deep inside. Bertha is an "avatar of Jane" (Gilbert and Gubar 359). She acts for Jane and does what Jane wants to do. When Jane has doubts about her impending marriage to Rochester, Bertha tears the wedding veil. Jane has a desire to be Rochester's "equal in size and strength, so that she can battle him in the contest of their marriage" (Gilbert and Gubar 359). Bertha is described as a large woman who is almost as tall as her husband. She acts out Jane's desire by physically attacking Rochester: "—the lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled...more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was" (Brontë 250). Bertha rivals Rochester not only in size and stature, but also in physical strength.

The attack on Rochester is Bertha's way of acting out Jane's repressed desire to confront Rochester and stand up to him. Bertha is Jane's "truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress ever since her days at Gateshead" (Gilbert and Gubar 360). Fittingly, Bertha spends almost all her time locked in the attic while Jane has figuratively locked herself in an attic. She keeps her passion locked inside. Her public persona is one that is calm, passive, and socially acceptable. Her interiority is in many ways, the polar opposite of her outward image.

In "I Heard Her Murmurs': Decoding Narratives of Female Desire in *Jane Eyre* and *Secresy*," Nicole Plyler Fisk examines the relationship between Jane and Bertha. Fisk states that

Rochester's wife is portrayed as a highly sexual woman who suffers at the hands of her domineering husband. When Rochester first meets Bertha, he finds her physically attractive. Although Rochester initially seems to be drawn to Bertha's passion and sexuality, he eventually becomes repulsed by these qualities. He appears to feel that Bertha's passion is excessive and inappropriate. He grows to view her as unladylike and unfit to be a wife. He states that she lacks modesty and possesses an "unreasonable temper" (Bronte 261). Rochester cites these characteristics as examples of her so-called insanity, but the qualities he sees as signs of madness can also be viewed as normal behavior.

Rochester objects to Bertha's strong will, assertiveness, and passionate nature. These aspects of her personality can be regarded as positive traits, but Rochester sees them as dangerous and concludes that Bertha is mentally ill. It is possible that Bertha is a normal woman with urges, needs, and desires that any human being would have. Rochester wants Bertha to be a calm and passive wife. Her unwillingness or inability to conform to this ideal leads him to punish and imprison her. He "transports his wife from the hot, tropical climate of the West Indies to the frigidity of England, deprives her of society...and, thus, forces her into 'chastity'; her response is to express her sexual nature symbolically using fire and her own physicality" (Fisk 220). Rochester attempts to repress Bertha's passionate nature, but he is only partially successful. Despite being locked in the attic of Thornfield, Bertha still manages to act out violently and escape her prison for brief periods of time. Rochester tries to keep Bertha's aggressiveness under control in much the same way adults, and even Helen Burns to an extent, attempted to control Jane's temper as a child.

As in the case of *Jane Eyre*, the supernatural elements in *Villette* appear to be linked to the interiority of the female protagonist. Lucy struggles with loneliness throughout the novel.

She frequently seems preoccupied with the fear that she will die an old maid and she projects this fear onto the figure of the nun. The first appearance of the nun occurs when Lucy reads the first letter she receives from Graham. She fills herself with false hope that Graham might love her. When she reads the letter, she appears to be overcome with happiness; “The poor English teacher in the frosty garret, reading...a letter simply good-natured—nothing more: though that good-nature then seemed to me god-like—was happier than most queen in palaces” (Brontë 244). Although there is nothing special about the letter, Lucy places a great deal of value on it. She finds more meaning in Graham’s words than he intended to convey.

In *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick discusses the relationship between Lucy and Graham. She points out that the friendship is more important to Lucy than it is to Graham. When Lucy returns to the pensionnat, “Graham makes a casual promise to write to her...it becomes clear that her investment in the correspondence is very different from that of Graham”(Sedgwick 135). Graham appears to view his letters to Lucy as little more than casual communication. The sudden appearance of the nun during the reading of the letter shocks Lucy back into reality. The letter fills Lucy with a sense of hope that Graham may have feelings for her. It brings light to her bleak existence and for this reason she cherishes the letter beyond reason. The nun reminds Lucy of the likely possibility of a loveless future. This is why she is so unsettled by what she sees. The nun also causes her to lose the letter and prevents her from rereading it and indulging in her romantic fantasy again.

Lucy frequently attempts to conceal her intense desire for love and companionship. A prime example of this is her attitude towards Ginevra. Lucy does not have a high opinion of Ginevra. She sees her as a vain, spoiled girl who has never known and does not have the capacity to deal with adversity. In her mind, she immediately tries to set herself apart from Ginevra. Lucy

is also very critical of the way Ginevra acts around men. Ginevra is very flirtatious and has a tendency to toy with men's affections, especially in the case of Graham Bretton. She does not love Graham, but she is well aware of his strong feelings for her. She gives him the nickname "Isadore" and regards him as a kind of plaything.

While Lucy is an intelligent and qualified teacher, Ginevra is a vapid girl who shows no interest in academics. Ginevra admits to this and is even proud of her lack of knowledge. In "Pink Silk and Purple Gray: Charlotte Brontë's Wish-Fulfillment in *Villette*," Joan Quarm examines some of the differences between Lucy and Ginevra. She discusses how the options for a woman like Lucy in Brontë's time were limited. Women in Lucy's position could find jobs as governesses, servants, or teachers. The alternative to a career was marriage. It was common for women to marry for convenience and security instead of love. This is precisely what Ginevra wants to do: "Here is an unusually pretty young girl who has every opportunity to learn enough to become independent, yet prefers to anticipate marriage to some 'rather elderly gentleman with cash'" (Quarm 3). Ginevra does not think intelligence is an important quality for a woman to have. Her primary goal is to marry a wealthy man who will take care of her. She believes it is better to get married than to earn a living.

Unlike Ginevra, Lucy has no desire to enter into a marriage without love. She is determined to support herself as an independent woman. Despite Lucy's self-reliance and attempts to distance herself from Ginevra, there is strong evidence that she has a desire to get married and play the role of a wife. In this way, Lucy is not so different from Ginevra and there may even be a part of Lucy that envies her. When a romance begins to develop between Graham and Paulina, Lucy fears that Graham will forget about her and she buries the old letters he wrote to her: "This done, I rested, leaning against the tree; lingering, like any other mourner, beside a

newly-sodden grave” (Brontë 296). The description of the burial is filled with a deep sense of sadness. The pain Lucy feels as she disposes of the letters is palpable. Lucy mourns the loss of being potentially desired by Graham. Her fear of being alone manifests itself in the form of the nun who appears shortly after she finishes burying Graham’s letters.

Sedgwick describes the nun as a “double of Lucy, as being both generated by her repressions” and “symbolic of her repressions” (Sedgwick 139). Lucy does tend to repress a lot of her emotions. She is usually very calm and quiet, but she is also capable of letting her emotions explode to the surface. A prime example of this is when she criticizes Graham for his relationship with Ginevra: “I declare, where Miss Fanshawe is concerned, you merit no respect; nor have you mine” (Brontë 189). Beneath her quiet exterior, Lucy is a passionate woman. That she speaks so bluntly to a man like Graham exemplifies how she sometimes breaks the boundaries of gender roles. Lucy’s assertive behavior in the presence of a man who is considered to be her social superior would have been regarded as inappropriate at the time *Villette* was written.

The outspoken behavior Lucy occasionally displays would have been classified as a masculine quality in Brontë’s time. In “Gothic Desire in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*,” Toni Wein discusses the distinction between masculine and feminine qualities: “Only women who mask their masculine intelligence with feminine modesty receive approbation” (Wein 739). The rules and norms of the time prevented women like Lucy from arguing with or criticizing men. That Lucy sometimes breaks the rules causes her to be regarded as lacking femininity. In contrast, Ginevra is considered to be attractive for her femininity. Her sweet and gentle public image makes her appealing in the eyes of men like Graham. Lucy’s intelligence, coldness, and lack of beauty cause her to be misunderstood. At first, “Lucy seems curiously devoid of passion or

need...But, of course, the novel reveals that calm to be fictive” (Wein 740). Even the readers may initially assume that Lucy is what she appears to be on the surface. It is only after her character is fleshed out over the course of the novel that readers come to truly understand Lucy’s inner self.

Although Lucy has a cold exterior, she is a passionate woman on the inside. She has strong feelings, hopes, and desires. She has an inner longing for love, companionship and marriage. The ghostly nun represents Lucy’s “buried sexuality,” her “repressed libidinal urges” (Sedgwick 139, 140). It is the physical manifestation of the sexuality Lucy cannot outwardly express. The nun also symbolizes Lucy’s fear of being alone. Lucy often seems to worry that her desire for love will never be fulfilled. She is greatly troubled by the possibility that she will live out her existence as a loveless and lonely woman. Lucy never voices these concerns or shares her fears with anyone. Instead, she constantly attempts to push these unpleasant thoughts into the back of her mind.

The final appearance of the nun occurs when Lucy returns from walking in the park on the night she was drugged. She finds the nun in her bed shortly after she witnesses M. Paul socializing and looking content. The sight of a seemingly happy M. Paul devastates Lucy. She worries that he has no problem leaving without seeing her one last time. Once again, Lucy’s fear of being alone coincides with the appearance of the nun. In “Empty Letters and the Ghost of Desire in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*,” Rachel Jackson argues that the nun in bed represents the absent lover in Lucy’s life: “The ghost has slipped into the space of the lover, a space which to Lucy has long been haunted and fleshed only by the spectral...Indeed her bedfellow has long since been the diaphanous ghost of the absent lover” (Jackson 104). At this point in time, Lucy

believes that she has lost M. Paul. The ghost nun occupies a space that is normally filled by a lover. It taunts Lucy and reminds her of her loneliness.

The pain that results from Lucy's belief that she has suffered yet another disappointment in her search for companionship causes her to have an emotional breakdown. The final appearance of the nun provokes a violent reaction: "I tore her up—the incubus! I held her on high—the goblin! I shook her loose—the mystery! And down she fell—down all around me—down in shred and fragments—I trod upon her" (Brontë 470). The sight of the nun and the pain of the lovelessness she represents trigger Lucy's rage. She appears to reach a kind of breaking point. Her quiet composure shatters and the emotions she normally keeps bottled inside explode to the surface.

Sedgwick discusses the concept of "live burial." She states that live burial is common in Gothic literature and it occurs when a character's "inside life and outside life have to continue separately becoming counterparts rather than partners, the relationship between them one of parallels and correspondences rather than communication" (Sedgwick 13). The self is essentially divided in half. One side of a character's personality is blocked and unable to access the other side. The self is literally "buried alive" (Sedgwick 13). This is precisely what happens to Jane and Lucy. Both women bury a side of their personalities and conceal certain aspects of themselves from the public. They appear one way on the surface, but their inner selves are very different from their outer selves. This separation between inside life and outside life creates "a doubleness where singleness should be" (Sedgwick 13). Brontë's novels imply that this division is unhealthy and unnatural in the sense that the two halves are supposed to be one.

The supernatural elements in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* are repressed in much the same way the female protagonist are. Jane and Lucy are not allowed to be vibrant and passionate. They feel

that it is necessary to bury their emotions. As a result of this repression, they outwardly come across as somewhat dull and drab. The energy and fire have been removed from their outer selves. In essence, Jane and Lucy are rendered innocuous, and the same is true for the supernatural elements in both novels. Jane starts out passionate and aggressive, but she eventually becomes calm and quiet. The supernaturalism in *Jane Eyre* undergoes a similar transformation. Bertha Mason is introduced as a frightening and monstrous figure, but she is eventually revealed to be a human being. A mundane explanation is also given for the mysterious nun in *Villette*. In both novels, the supernatural figures are repressed, subdued, and transformed into characters that are either harmless or not as threatening as they had previously been perceived to be. Similarly, Jane and Lucy are forced to repress personality traits that are viewed as threatening by patriarchal society.

Given this theme of repression, it is appropriate that Lucy realizes the nun is not real after she attacks it in her bed. The assault on the nun is arguably in the strongest display of raw and unbridled emotion Lucy ever expresses. After she rips the mysterious figure to shreds, she realizes that it is just a pile of empty garments. The note that is attached to the clothes informs Lucy that Ginevra has been playing a cruel prank on her. The once eerie and frightening ghostly nun is instantly transformed into something that is harmless and mundane. The realization that the nun is not supernatural in origin calms Lucy down and enables her to regain her composure. The neutralization of the nun occurs when Lucy is in the midst of a violent display of emotion and results in the neutralization of Lucy as well. This connection conveys the message that Lucy's passionate outburst is unacceptable. Her emotions must be controlled. Her passion must be subdued like the nun.

In *Ghosts of the Gothic: Austin, Eliot, & Lawrence*, Judith Wilt describes Brontë's characters as people who "wrestle between the *two passions*, reason (or control or duty) and imagination (or passion)" (Wilt 116). Both Jane and Lucy experience this conflict. The struggle between duty and passion plays a major role in Jane's attempt to decide whether or not she should stay with Rochester. Jane appears to have reservations about marrying him, but she tries to ignore these doubts and pushes them to the back of her mind. She is plagued by nightmares that seem to act as warnings, and she is also haunted by Bertha Mason.

Bertha's appearances in *Jane Eyre* coincide with moments when Jane is contemplating an important issue or decision. At times, it appears as though Bertha is attempting to aid Jane in her decision making. When she sneaks into Jane's room shortly before her wedding day, Bertha grabs Jane's wedding veil, rips it in half, and tramples on the torn fabric. This disturbing incident takes place at a point in time when Jane seems uncertain about whether or not marrying Rochester is the right decision to make. The destruction of the veil can be seen as Bertha's way of warning Jane not to go through with the marriage.

Besides the fact that Rochester is already married, there are many other reasons why it would not be wise for Jane to marry him. Rochester is portrayed as a domineering and controlling man. He expects Jane to do as he commands and she finds it difficult to resist him: "I did as I was bid...Mr. Rochester had such a direct way of giving orders, it seemed a matter of course to obey him promptly" (Brontë 111). Jane falls under Rochester's spell in the sense that she has a tendency to obey his orders and she has difficulty standing her ground when she disagrees with him. Rochester does not show a great deal of respect for Jane's feelings and opinions. A prime example of this is when he expresses a desire to shower Jane with jewels. Jane clearly states that she does not wish of wear jewelry, but he refuses to listen to her protests.

Rochester treats Jane like a kept woman and regards her as his possession. He wants to adorn her with jewels and buy her expensive dresses: "I will myself put a diamond chain around your neck...and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings" (Brontë 220). The language Rochester uses evokes images of imprisonment and slavery. The bracelets he intends to put around Jane's wrists can be thought of as chains. His words convey the message that he is very possessive of Jane. He wants to control her and keep her with him. Jane does not like being treated in this manner: "I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester, or sitting like a second Danae with the golden shower falling daily round me" (Brontë 229). Jane does not want to live as Rochester's kept woman. She does not like that she is so dependent on him.

Jane longs to be seen as Rochester's equal. In Chapter XXIII of the novel, she delivers a passionate speech in which she lets all of her pent up emotions rise to the surface. She speaks openly and honestly: "I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom...it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,—as we are!" (Brontë 216). This speech conveys a strong feminist message. It is Jane's attempt to push Rochester to put aside traditional rules and customs that govern men and women. She places a great deal of emphasis on her spirit, her essence. She attempts to make Rochester look beyond her façade and see the core of her identity. She wants him to understand that they are equals in essence even if the rules of the outside world dictate that men are superior to women. Jane puts her inner feelings on full display. She does not hold back. Jane desperately wants Rochester to recognize that she is not just a woman, but also a human being with real feelings and emotions. She does not want him to view their conversations as an exchange

between a superior man and an inferior woman. She attempts to make him realize that they are the same.

When Jane learns of Bertha's existence, she realizes that inequality is not the only problem in her relationship with Rochester. Although Rochester begs her to stay with him, Jane refuses to be his mistress. Jane appears to know that it is wrong to stay with Rochester, but she still has difficulty taking the necessary steps to break free. She has an unusual dream that steers her away from Rochester: "She broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud...a white human form shone in the azure...It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart—'My daughter, flee temptation!'" (Brontë 272). The moon goddess in Jane's dream advises her to resist temptation and leave Thornfield. This matriarchal figure attempts to protect Jane from the danger of becoming trapped in a controlling and unhealthy relationship. The dream demonstrates that Jane is torn between her love for Rochester and her desire to be independent, but she is at least subconsciously aware that fleeing from Thornfield is the best decision at this point in time.

Like Jane, Lucy also falls in love with a domineering man, Monsieur Paul Emanuel. M. Paul is portrayed as a fiery individual who has a tendency to lose his temper. He has a desire to emphasize his superiority over Lucy and he appears to enjoy giving her orders. He pushes Lucy to take part in the vaudeville when one of the actresses falls ill. M. Paul does not give Lucy much of a choice in the matter. He practically forces her to participate and leads her to believe that a refusal would cause him to lower his estimation of her. Lucy experiences difficulty resisting M. Paul in much the same way Jane has trouble standing her ground against Rochester: "A thousand objections rushed into my mind...but looking up at M. Paul, and seeing in his vexed, fiery, and searching eye, a sort of appeal behind all its menace—my lips dropped the word 'oui'" (Brontë

134). Lucy succumbs to the pressure to please M. Paul and follows his commands. M. Paul uses intimidation as a tool to help him control Lucy and get her to do what he wants. He can be very strict and harsh in his interactions with her. He locks Lucy in the attic when she agrees to participate in the vaudeville. He is convinced that the isolation will help Lucy learn her lines, but does not stop to consider the traumatic impact the confinement may have on her.

Despite M. Paul's tyrannical behavior, he has a sensitive side and possesses many admirable qualities. On the surface, he is an unattractive, hot tempered and irritable little man, but underneath it all he is a generous and kind person. This doubleness is the opposite of the duality displayed by Lucy and Jane. Unlike women, men in Brontë's time were expected to be strong and aggressive. M. Paul represses his kindness and the softer side of his personality in much the same way Lucy represses her passionate side. Outwardly, M. Paul presents himself as a tough and fiery individual, but on the inside he is surprisingly sensitive. As M. Paul's character is fleshed out over the course of the novel, it becomes clear that he and Lucy share a lot in common. They are both individuals who have experienced very little personal joy or excitement. Lucy's life had been filled with hardship and misery and she eventually learns that M. Paul's life has been difficult as well. For a large portion of the novel, Lucy's relationship with M. Paul is volatile. In "Perception and Suppression of Identity in *Villette*," Elizabeth K. Haller examines Lucy's feelings for M. Paul. Haller points out that the dynamic in the relationship changes when the truth about M. Paul is discovered and he is revealed to be "a benevolent and constant man... Lucy's view of him changes from tyrant to knight; her actions towards him change as well" (Haller 158). The knowledge that M. Paul is a self-sacrificing man who supports the family of his lost love Justine Marie, has a significant impact on Lucy. She gains a newfound respect for M. Paul and grows closer to him.

M. Paul's sensitive side is exposed at several points in the novel. He has a tendency to get upset when he thinks that Lucy treats him poorly or does not care about him. A prime example of this is when Lucy does not put flowers on his desk on the day of the fete. M. Paul takes great offence to this and jumps to the conclusion that Lucy does not like him. He is eventually pleasantly surprised when Lucy gives him the watch guard. At first, he expresses disbelief and finds it hard to accept that she made the watch guard specifically for him. The behavior M. Paul exhibits illustrates that he is an insecure person who does not believe that a woman would ever care for him. In this way, he is very much like Lucy. She has difficulty believing that she will ever inspire a man to love her.

Although M. Paul has a tendency to be controlling, he appears to be more respectful of Lucy than Rochester is toward Jane. This respect is clearly present when he gives Lucy a tour of a schoolhouse and informs her that he wants her to be the directress. This generous act demonstrates that M. Paul has a desire to help Lucy establish a career and a certain degree of independence. In contrast, Rochester behaves as though he wants Jane to be nothing more than a passive wife. He does not seem to want her to have any job aside from her role as a wife. He exhibits signs of possessiveness when he renames Jane by referring to her as "Jane Rochester" (Brontë 220). He describes Jane as "young Mrs. Rochester—Fairfax Rochester's girl-bride" (Brontë 220). Rochester's words indicate that he views Jane as his possession. He does not appear to see or appreciate Jane as an individual. M. Paul, on the other hand, seems to have a greater degree of respect for the woman he loves. He goes out his way to help Lucy develop a career. In doing so, he demonstrates that he is not as possessive of her as Rochester is with Jane. M. Paul wants Lucy to prosper and have an identity that goes beyond simply playing the role of his wife.

Although Jane recognizes the problem in her relationship with Rochester and eventually leaves Thornfield, it is not long before yet another domineering man enters her life. St. John Rivers is portrayed as a controlling and cold character: "St. John was a good man; but...he was hard and cold...I comprehended all at once that he would hardly make a good husband: that it would be a trying thing to be his wife" (Brontë 334). Jane's description of St. John reveals that she is well aware of the flaws in his personality. St. John unexpectedly asks Jane to marry him and accompany him to India to assist him with his missionary work. He does not have any romantic feelings for Jane. His proposal is presented as a kind of business arrangement. The marriage he offers her is a loveless one and it is rejected by Jane.

After Jane turns down St. John's proposal, she notices a change in his behavior. Although he claims that he is not angry with her, he treats her very coldly. At one point, Jane becomes upset when he kisses all of his sisters, but neglects to even shake hands with her. He eventually does shake her hand at her request, but it is an empty and emotionless gesture: "What a cold, loose touch he impressed on my fingers! He was deeply displeased by what had occurred that day: cordiality could not warm, nor tears move him" (Brontë 349). St. John inflicts a quiet, polite kind of cruelty on Jane. He withholds affection from her as a means of punishing her for rejecting his proposal. He may also believe that this treatment will persuade Jane to change her mind.

St. John's punishment for Jane can be seen as a form of controlling behavior. He seems to believe that these tactics will cause Jane to feel guilty about the rejection and reconsider his proposal. Jane finds the cold treatment unbearable: "—you almost hate me. If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now" (Brontë 351). Jane tells St. John that his behavior deeply hurts her but he does not seem to care much about her feelings. Instead of

apologizing to her, he reprimands her: “Your words are such as ought not to be used: violent, unfeminine, and untrue. They betray an unfortunate state of mind: they merit severe reproof” (Brontë 351). St. John criticizes Jane for speaking to him in a manner that he considers to be inappropriate and unladylike. He expects Jane to be passive and submissive to him. He does not think there is anything wrong with his harsh treatment of Jane and he becomes greatly offended when she objects to his behavior.

St. John clearly views himself as superior to Jane. It is likely that he would be just as controlling or even more controlling if Jane agreed to be his wife. A marriage between Jane and St. John would be a union of inequality not unlike a marriage between Jane and Rochester. In “Jane Eyre’s Imagination,” Jennifer Gribble compares St. John’s proposal to that of Rochester: “St. John’s subsequent offer of a ‘missionary marriage,’ embodying just that adherence to right principle that Jane found lacking in Rochester’s proposal, is too schematic, too much the passionless opposite of Rochester’s” (Gribble 287). Gribble points out that Jane objected to the illegality of Rochester’s proposal and the lack of concern he showed for the principles of right and wrong. St. John is a more proper and moral individual, but his proposal is just as unacceptable as Rochester’s proposal. He treats marriage as a kind of business arrangement. He does not love Jane and his proposal comes across as cold and passionless.

Despite Jane’s refusal, St. John is persistent in his attempts to persuade her to change her mind. He almost achieves his goal, but a supernatural interruption prevents him from being successful. Jane seems to be on the verge of accepting St. John’s proposal when she suddenly hears Rochester’s voice: “—it did not seem in the room—nor in the house...it was the voice of a human being...that of Edward Fairfax Rochester; and it spoke in pain and woe wildly, eerily, urgently” (Brontë 357). The sound of Rochester’s voice calling to Jane, prompts her to leave St.

John and return to Thornfield. This eerie form of long distance communication is presented as a supernatural intervention that happens just in time and saves Jane from entering into an unhappy marriage with St. John.

The mysterious incident involving Rochester's disembodied voice is somewhat of an anomaly in *Jane Eyre* because it appears to be genuinely supernatural. In contrast to the other eerie events, it is never rationally explained away. When Jane reunites with Rochester towards the end of the novel, he tells her that he did in fact call out her name. He called to her when he was in the throes of loneliness and misery. He also reveals that he heard her voice respond. This information appears to confirm that a supernatural event did occur. Jane heard Rochester's voice at the exact moment Rochester said her name aloud and Rochester was able to hear Jane's long distance response as well. Jane states that the "coincidence struck [her] as too awful and inexplicable to be communicated or discussed" (Brontë 381). She appears to be shocked and somewhat frightened by the unusual and bizarre event.

The authenticity of the communication between Jane and Rochester seems to be linked to the issue of gender. Supernatural occurrences associated with women are consistently explained through reason. This particular event is presented as genuinely supernatural because it is associated with a male character. Rochester triggers the event. In his lonely state of mind, he calls out to Jane and beckons her to return to him. He succeeds in luring her back to him and away from St. John. Rochester's male power is presented as something extraordinary and otherworldly. The long distance communication is depicted as a true supernatural event because it represents male dominance and authority. Female power is subdued and repressed in the novel. The strange occurrences involving Bertha Mason are given mundane explanations. In contrast, Rochester's supernatural power is more or less confirmed. There is no attempt to explain it away.

Male power in the novel does not have to be repressed. Rochester demonstrates that he is able to dominate and control Jane even across a great distance. She obediently answers his call and returns to him.

The communication between Jane and Rochester is treated differently in contrast to all the other strange occurrences in *Jane Eyre* that are either rationally explained away or left somewhat ambiguous. Brontë appears to go out of her way to convince the reader that the communication is supernatural but nevertheless real. This is done at least in part, to convey the message that Jane and Rochester share a strong connection. This bond may be romantic, but it is also one of the reasons why *Jane Eyre* fails as a feminist novel. Rochester is given a supernatural power that Jane and women in general are not allowed to have.

The authenticity of the long distance communication conveys the message that men like Rochester are supposed to be mysterious and supernatural. This type of mystique is a desirable quality in men, but not in women. Throughout the course of the novel, Rochester is portrayed as secretive and mysterious. These qualities make him seductive and attractive even though he is not described as classically handsome. Jane recognizes Rochester's eccentricity and seems intrigued by it. She frequently attempts to understand his behavior, decisions, and habits. Early in the novel, Mrs. Fairfax describes him as peculiar: "—when he speaks to you: you cannot always be sure whether he is in jest or earnest, whether he is pleased or the contrary; you don't thoroughly understand him" (Brontë 89). This description of Rochester demonstrates that he is elusive and inscrutable. It is difficult for Jane and other characters to get a strong grasp on who he is.

Rochester's mysterious aura is precisely what makes him fascinating. He is allowed to possess this quality because he is a man. Men are expected to have a kind of supernatural power

and allure while women like Jane are repressed and subdued; their experience with the supernatural is to be subject to it, subject to fancies and romantic fantasies derived from their reading or subject to visions and ghosts actuated by men. The novel conveys the message that women are not supposed to be mysterious and elusive. They are supposed to be mundane and non-threatening. Therefore, any supernatural power they may have is rationally explained away while Rochester's male mystique remains firmly intact.

In the last chapter of the novel, Jane reveals that she married Rochester. The ending is presented as a happy, fairy tale conclusion to a novel with many fairy tale allusions, but it is more than a little problematic. Earlier in the novel, Jane refuses to live with Rochester as his dependent mistress. After receiving her inheritance, Jane has the capacity to live as an independent woman, but she chooses to marry Rochester after she learns about Bertha's death. She seems to believe that her newfound financial security will enable her to enter into a marriage of equality with Rochester.

Although Jane and Rochester's relationship improves in some respects, there are still problems that demonstrate that it is not an equal partnership. Rochester's behavior toward Jane improves in the sense that he is not as domineering as he was before, but his mellow demeanor is largely due to the fact that he is weak and sickly. Instead of entering into a marriage with the strong and healthy Rochester, Jane marries a man who is a mere shadow of his former self. True equality is not established between these two characters.

Jane initially objects to the idea of being Rochester's mistress, but her position at the end of the novel is also far from ideal. She behaves more like Rochester's nurse than his lover. Their roles are somewhat reversed in the sense that he is now dependent on her. At every stage of the relationship, there is an imbalance. Even when Rochester is in a weakened state, he still exercises

a certain degree of control over Jane. When she acts as his nurse, he tells her how to serve him and what he wants her to do for him. Jane “describes herself metaphorically as more subservient to Rochester” (Kucich 99). She calls herself a vine that will lean towards him because his strength gives her security and acts as a safe prop. Jane does not object to Rochester’s control over her: “Never did I weary of reading to him: never did I weary of conducting him where he wished to go: of doing for him what he wished to be done” (Brontë 384). Jane continues to play a submissive role in her relationship with Rochester. It is doubtful that a true marriage of equality would have ever been possible with Rochester because of the type of man that he is. He is someone who is used to getting what he wants. He is controlling by nature and he is attracted to the quiet, passive side of Jane’s character. The happy ending in *Jane Eyre* is to a certain extent, an illusion because genuine equality is never established in Jane and Rochester’s relationship.

The conclusion of *Villette* has a stronger feminist message than the ending of *Jane Eyre*. Unlike Jane, Lucy does not get married. The reader is never told whether or not M. Paul ever returned from his trip. Although it is strongly hinted that he did not survive, there is no definitive answer: “Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror...Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life” (Brontë 496). After Lucy comes so close to marriage, readers are left with the possibility that she was never reunited with the man she loves. While there is somewhat of a lack of closure to Lucy’s story, the reader is given updates on other characters. It is stated that Madame Beck “prospered all the days of her life” (Brontë 496). Pere Silas and Madame Walravens also lived long and happy lives. The sudden shift from Lucy’s story to the conclusion involving Madame Beck, Pere Silas, and Madame Walravens is a bit jarring. It leads the reader to wonder why Brontë chose to conclude the novel with a paragraph devoted to secondary characters. The inclusion of this information at the very end of the novel

can be seen as a means of emphasizing the tragedy of Lucy's fate. For this reason, many readers may interpret the ending as dark and bleak.

Although it may appear that Lucy is doomed to live an unhappy and lonely life, this may not necessarily be the case. Lucy admits that the three years she spent waiting for M. Paul were the happiest years of her life. This happiness seems to have a lot to do with the fact that her school became a huge success. Lucy seems to have gained a new level of confidence. In "The Two Faces of Lucy Snowe: A Study in Deviant Behavior," Beverly Forsyth argues that Lucy benefits a great deal for her relationship with M. Paul: "Because M. Paul loves and accepts the woman Lucy, Lucy learns to accept herself" (Forsyth 23). The brief time she spends with M. Paul changes her for the better and improves her self-esteem. Lucy becomes a stronger and more independent woman than she was at the beginning of the novel. She recognizes her own self-worth and develops a sense of optimism about her life.

M. Paul seems to see Lucy's inner self, the part she keeps hidden from the outside world. He is the only man in the novel who expresses a romantic interest in her. The unattractive and loveless Lucy is desired by M. Paul. He constantly watches her and even looks through her desk. Forsyth states that the chemistry that is present in Lucy and M. Paul's relationship comes from the fact that Lucy is aware that she is being watched. The knowledge that she is being observed makes her feel that she is attractive and desirable. While other men like Graham have little or no sexual interest in her, "M. Paul sees a sensual, coquettish woman in a scarlet dress" (Forsyth 22). He is able to see the Ginevra Fanshaw in Lucy Snowe. He seems to desire her in much the same way other men desire Ginevra. There is an erotic element to their relationship. Forsyth states that M. Paul's habit of looking through Lucy's desk is a sexual and sensual act. The desk can be seen as an extension of Lucy. M. Paul touches and caresses the desk and

rearranges the items inside of it. When Lucy discovers what M. Paul has been doing, she does not get very angry. She accepts the invasion of privacy and on a certain level, she even seems to like it.

The conclusion of *Villette* demonstrates that Lucy is able to find a sufficient amount of contentment without a husband. M. Paul helps her in a way no one else does. He recognizes her for the woman she is and leaves her with the important tools she needs to succeed and move up in the world. She flourishes in her career as a teacher of her very own school. The ending may not be a stereotypical happy ending, but it is a happy ending nonetheless. Like Jane, Lucy is a character who comes across as melancholy and discontent with her life. She maintains this gloomy state of mind throughout most of the novel, but in the last chapter she displays a noticeably different attitude: "Few things shook me now; few things had importance to vex, intimidate, or depress me: most things pleased—mere trifles had a charm" (Brontë 494). The success Lucy experiences as an independent woman fills her with a newfound sense of hope and positivity.

It appears that Lucy is able to, at least to a certain extent, access the part of herself that had been buried for so many years. For most of her life, Lucy repressed the passionate side of her personality. Despite her feminist leanings, she felt the pressure to get married and play the role of a traditional wife, but her story does not end in marriage. Instead, it ends in a kind of awakening. The contentment Lucy expresses in the last chapter demonstrates that she has found joy in living. She seems to be filled with a vibrant energy that she did not possess in the beginning of the novel. She achieves a strong sense of fulfillment and her buried passion is free to show itself. The separation between the two halves of her personality is largely weakened.

Unlike Lucy, Jane is not very successful at unearthing the buried side of her personality. Over the course of the novel, Jane expresses many of the same longings and aspirations as Lucy, but she does not act on these desires. The inheritance she receives opens a lot of doors for her and gives her the chance to live as an independent woman. Early in the novel, she expresses a desire to travel and interact with a wide variety of people. The inheritance provides her with a level of freedom she never had. It gives her the opportunity to gain the worldly knowledge and experience she craves. She also has the option of pursuing a successful career. All of these alternatives to marriage would give her a more exciting and fulfilling life, but she ultimately chooses to be the wife and caretaker for Rochester. For the most part, Jane's inner passion and ambition remain buried. She does not integrate these aspects of her personality into her daily life as successfully as Lucy does. She does not overcome her years of repression as well as Lucy does.

The treatment of supernaturalism in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* reveals a great deal about expectations for women in Brontë's time. In order to get by in male dominated society, Jane and Lucy have had to repress the passionate side of their personalities. They are stripped of their power in much the same way the supernatural figures are robbed of their mysterious allure. The degree to which each novel succeeds as a feminist story depends largely on how well the female protagonists are able to overcome the repression that has been with them throughout most of their lives. *Jane Eyre* presents readers with the illusion of a feminist conclusion, but it is flawed and problematic. *Villette* succeeds where *Jane Eyre* fails. Lucy achieves a level of independence and fulfillment that Jane does not. M. Paul's death prevents her from entering into a marriage, but even if he had returned, there is chance that an equal partnership could have been established. M. Paul demonstrates a greater respect for Lucy than Rochester does for Jane. This difference in

characterization leaves open the possibility that *Villette* can work as a feminist novel both with and without a marriage. Brontë takes a daring approach with Lucy that she does not take with Jane. As a result, Lucy attains a feminist heroine status that her predecessor could have had, but falls short of achieving.

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