

### 35.Female reaction against patriarchal oppression: Burial, resistance, and emancipation in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*

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#### Abstract

The narrator protagonist Lucy Snowe in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Villette* is an unconventional figure distinct from the Victorian perception of the ideal woman who is assumed to be physically attractive, affectionate, and submissive. Patriarchal monitoring in the novel is observed through Michel Foucault's interpretation of Panopticon mechanism to control the society, which is based on spying and surveillance. The novel presents Monsieur Paul as a patriarchal figure monitoring the students and the teachers from his room overlooking M. Beck's school, which recalls Foucault's symbolic control tower. As a primary observed figure, Lucy is exposed to religious and sexual oppression by the male characters Monsieur Paul, Père Silas, and Dr. John. She is also restrained physically by the male authority keeping her in the attic and at the corner of the museum. M. Paul's anger against Lucy's crossing the conventional boundaries of the feminine intellect drives Lucy to be more eager to learn because his unjust attitude makes her more ambitious to crave for knowledge. Lucy's first reaction against patriarchal oppression is to repress her desires and she prefers to avoid revealing her feelings. She eventually achieves to gain her independence as a triumphant and confident woman governing her own school in the end. The feminist analyses on the text reveal that Brontë intentionally ends the novel before the arrival of any male figure in Lucy's life to sustain her liberation and to emphasize once more the rejection of the culturally constructed female qualities. This paper concludes that Brontë portrays the powerful female figure in the end through the initially charmless protagonist Lucy who buries her feelings at first by resisting the patriarchal oppression through her intellect and reconstructs her female identity by the destruction of the suppressive male authority.

**Keywords:** *Villette*, patriarchal oppression, female reaction, resistance, independence

### Ataerkil baskıya karřı kadın reaksiyonu: Charlotte Brontë'nin *Villette*'inde defin, direniř ve özgürleřme

#### Öz

Charlotte Brontë'nin *Villette* adlı romanındaki anlatıcı kahramanı Lucy Snowe, fiziksel olarak çekici, sevecen ve itaatkar olduđu varsayılan ideal kadının Viktorya dönemi algısından farklı, sıra dıřı bir figürdür. Romanda ataerkil gözetim, Michel Foucault'nun toplumu kontrol etmeye yönelik casusluk ve gözetlemeye dayalı Panopticon mekanizmasını yorumlamasıyla gözlemlenir. Roman, Mösyö Paul'u, Foucault'nun sembolik kontrol kulesini hatırlatan M. Beck'in okuluna bakan odasından öğrencileri ve öğretmenleri izleyen ataerkil bir figür olarak sunar. Birincil gözlemlenen figür olarak Lucy, erkek karakterler Mösyö Paul, Père Silas ve Dr. John tarafından dini ve cinsel baskıya maruz kalır. Ayrıca, onu tavan arasında ve müzenin köşesinde tutan erkek otorite tarafından fiziksel olarak

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kısıtlanır. M. Paul'un Lucy'nin kadınsı intellektin geleneksel sınırlarını aşmasına karşı öfkesi, Lucy'yi öğrenmeye daha hevesli olmaya iter çünkü onun haksız tutumu onu bilgiyi elde etmek için daha hırslı hale getirir. Lucy'nin ataerkil baskıya karşı ilk tepkisi arzularını bastırmak olur ve duygularını açığa vurmaktan kaçınmayı tercih eder. Sonunda kendi okulunu yöneten muzaffer ve kendine güvenen bir kadın olarak bağımsızlığını kazanmayı başarır. Metin üzerindeki feminist analizler, Brontë'nin, özgürleşmesini sürdürmek ve kültürel olarak inşa edilmiş kadın niteliklerinin reddini bir kez daha vurgulamak için Lucy'nin yaşamına herhangi bir erkek figür gelmeden önce romanı kasıtlı olarak sonlandırdığını ortaya koyuyor. Bu makale, Brontë'nin, ilk olarak ataerkil baskıya zekasıyla direnerek duygularını gömen ve baskıcı erkek otoritenin yıkılmasıyla kadın kimliğini yeniden inşa eden, başlangıçta tılsımlı olmayan kahramanı Lucy aracılığıyla, sonunda güçlü kadın figürünü portre ettiği sonucuna varmaktadır.

**Keywords:** *Villette*, ataerkil baskı, kadın reaksiyonu, direniş, bağımsızlık

The Victorian ideals confine women into a limited life in domestic sphere controlled by the patriarchal norms. Accordingly, the society has certain definitions for women in terms of conventionally assigned roles within the household, the restricted status in public sphere and restrained intellectual activity. The social classification even goes further for physical expectations for women appearance to be charming and attractive. The visible male oriented social structure designed to dominate female body and mind is narrated by Charlotte Brontë in her novel *Villette* written in 1853. The protagonist of the novel, Lucy Snowe, crosses the patriarchal social borders with her nonconformist demeanours and atypical outward aspects. Her prospects in life are crippled from the start as Miss Ginevra Fanshawe characterizes her lack of beauty in the novel: "I suppose you are nobody's daughter, since you took care of little children when you first came to Villette: you have no relations; you can't call yourself young at twenty-three; you have no attractive accomplishments—no beauty" (Brontë, 2007, p. 151). Lucy's life is shadowed by her unusual presence among the ladies of her time: "Brontë's Lucy – because she lives unknown, among untrodden ways – is condemned to a wind-beaten expulsion into nowhere or a suffocating burial in her own non-existence" (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 416). Her uniqueness emerges to be more palpable by the appearance of a desirable young lady, Polly. She is depicted to be just the opposite of her: "Polly acts out all those impulses already repressed by Lucy so that the two girls represent the two sides of Lucy's divided self, and they are the first of a series of such representative antagonists" (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 404). Polly is young, seventeen years old, and depicted to be so pure that she is more like an obedient child than a woman. His father calls her "little treasure" or "little Polly" who needs protection, therefore, he thanks Graham for his care of her: "May God deal with you as you deal with her!" (Brontë, 2007, p. 454). Polly fits Freudian characterisation of the submissive, love-giving, dependent and docile little girl, who seems to have greater need for affection. On the other hand, Lucy is not an attractive lady and is even portrayed to be cold as obviously inferred from her metaphoric surname Snowe. She is depicted as a mature woman in her mid-twenties rather than an appealing young lady. Through the charmless protagonist Lucy, Brontë reflects the various ways of female reactions against the patriarchal authority such as repression her feelings, resistance to oppression and eventual emancipation as an independent individual.

The English reformist and philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who is known to be the founder of pragmatism, came up with the architectural project of panopticon prison to control the prisoners from a watchtower. The French philosopher Michel Foucault interprets this idea as a pervasive way used to discipline and punish people in social life. In the novel, patriarchal monitoring of Foucault's Panopticon notion is

evident: the control mechanism of the society is based on spying and surveillance. Foucault's (1977) discipline and punishment paradigm follows:

The Panopticon, subtly arranged so that an observer may observe, at a glance, so many different individuals [...] The seeing machine was once a sort of dark room into which individuals spied; it has become a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole. (p. 201)

Through perpetual “supervision of control, punishment, compensation, and correction”, the prevailing regime aims at managing the bodies placed within a visible setting (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). The symbolic control tower projected by Foucault, in which observers watch the actions of the people but observed ones are not aware of this. Monsieur Paul's room is watching Madame Beck's Pensionnat de Demoiselles in which Lucy resides and works as a governess. As a patriarchal figure, M. Paul monitors the actions of the students and teachers from his window in the attic overlooking the garden. Lucy finds out her imprisoned life in which she has been turned into the subject of the monitoring authority, as Foucault (1977) puts it, who “held captive by the ideal of a larger but unseen police become our own best jailers” (p. 21). In addition to the physical structure of controlling tower, there are many instances where patriarchal authority symbols try to control woman, Fikret Güven (2021) elucidates it: “Lucy is indeed living in a panoptic – society where effectiveness of surveillance of the patriarchy has exercise through the power of the assumed gaze” (p. 40). Lucy's actions are monitored within the school, and she also is exposed to religious suppression by M. Paul and Père Silas. Lucy is criticized for being a Protestant and they compel her to convert into Catholic belief. M. Paul leaves a pamphlet about Catholicism on her desk and tries to convince her to change her faith. He warns her to be careful with her fidelity: “It is your religion—your strange, self-reliant, invulnerable creed, whose influence seems to clothe you in, I know not what, unblest panoply. You are good—Père Silas calls you good, and loves you—but your terrible, proud, earnest Protestantism, there is the danger” (Brontë, 2007, p. 435). He seems to leave the judgement to Lucy as a free adult to follow her own religion, but he explicitly dares to declare the wrong in her belief system. Furthermore, Lucy is exposed to sexual oppression by the two male figures; one of them is Dr. John, whose profession is inescapable example for male authority, and the other one is M. Paul as a teacher of moral values for females besides the fundamental school subjects:

In fact, both Dr. John and M. Paul observe Lucy's sexual desire, and yet there is a difference between them: Dr. John practices the surveillance through a medical gaze, whereas M. Paul spies in order to comprehend and share the female nature of sexual desire. That is to say that whereas Dr. John is an agent to deliver the female sexual oppression by practicing it as a disease, M. Paul endows Lucy to reveal and acknowledge her repressed sexual desire in patriarchal ideology. (Lee, 2011, p. 206)

The two distinct ways of surveillance, medical gaze and curious male spying try to acknowledge and to rotate Lucy's sexual inclinations. Dr. John treats Lucy in an affectionate way though she has been an acquaintance for several years. He states that his kindness is “to keep away the nun”, that is her healing from psychological illness. Lucy summarizes his scientific approach to her: “In short, he regarded me scientifically in the light of a patient, and at once exercised his professional skill, and gratified his natural benevolence, by a course of cordial and attentive treatment” (Brontë, 2007, p. 264). According to Lee (2011), the nun image also represents the confinement of Lucy's sexual desires:

The ghost nun represents another self, Lucy's sexually repressed self-based on the legend of the nun's sexual transgressions. The nun breaks her pledge and violates the rule of the school, and so she has been buried alive in the school's garden “for some sin against her vow” (p. 208).

The legendary nun appears at times when Lucy reveals her repressed feelings. In one of the scenes when Lucy is subjected to patriarchal surveillance, M. Paul commands Lucy what to do without leaving her a

choice and he locks her in the attic to complete his wish. Just before the ceremony, one of the students is ill and is not capable of performing her role in the play. In a hurry, M. Paul dictates Lucy to act her role instead: “play you can; play you must... There is no time to be lost... You must take a part” (Brontë, 2007, p. 137). He urges Lucy to practice her speech and takes her to the attic claiming that she needs silence and to stay alone to concentrate on her rehearsal: “to the solitary and lofty attic was I borne, put in and locked in, the key being, in the door, and that key he took with him and vanished” (p. 138). She is confined in this horribly hot room to study with rats and black beetles. Even though she is compelled to perform by M. Paul, she does not accept to get dressed completely as a man, but she chooses certain clothes and creates her own role. This detail symbolizes the in-between and freedom seeking role of woman. Lucy is strictly bounded by patriarchal rules and acts as a man in a way on the stage; nevertheless, she declares her freedom by modifying the costumes as she pleases. Insubordinate nature of woman strikes in her own fragile way to prevail male domination.

Another moment of men's desire to control women is observed in an artistic atmosphere when Dr. John takes Lucy to the museum. On spotting Lucy alone looking at an audacious Cleopatra painting, M. Paul questions her by criticizing her action. Lucy does not understand M. Paul's aggression at that moment, she is puzzled by his meaningless inquiry: ““What is the matter, Monsieur?” (Brontë, 2007, p. 210). M. Paul's astonishment and anger are doubled by this question: “Matter! How dare you, a young person, sit coolly down, with the self-possession of a garçon, and look at that picture?” (p. 210). According to the Victorian social ideals, it is not appropriate for a young lady to wander around without a male's company; and even though it is a museum, the type of art women should and should not look is determined by a man. He leads Lucy to the painting of four women, girl, wife, mother, widow, the only appropriate definitions for women to possess in contrast to rebellious Cleopatra image. Lucy does not find them realistic representations and she is not interested in neither these women nor Cleopatra: “All these four 'Angels' were grim and grey as burglars, and cold and vapid as ghosts. What women to live with! Insincere, ill-humored, bloodless, brainless nonentities! As bad in their way as the indolent gipsy-giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers” (p. 210). Lucy imagines these women are as cold as “ghosts”, but they suit the proper lifestyles of women for M. Paul further forces Lucy to stay at the corner of the room in the museum and he forbids to look at the painting of Cleopatra, but he urges her to examine these women: “Turn to the wall and study your four pictures of a woman's life” (p. 213). M. Paul's desire to confine Lucy under his authority is evident firstly in the attic and secondly at the corner of the museum.

Another sample of female custody by patriarchy in art is the performance of Vashti in the theatre which keeps a significant role in the sexual representations of male-governed mindsets. The novel provides the background information for the artistic figure, Vashti, who is criticized and damned by the society due to her improper attitudes and Lucy describes her as a fallen Devil from the heaven and a damned exile (p. 267). Lucy observes her as a woman, but she later notices that Vashti is neither man nor woman. She recognizes the evil forces hidden inside her and sees “HELL” written on her eyebrows. After realizing the demoniac mask on her, Lucy watches the incarnation of “Hate, Murder and Madness” in her body (Brontë, 2007, p. 267). Vashti is rejected by society to be inappropriate because of her passionate deputy. Lucy curiously investigates what Dr. John thinks about Vashti. Much to her dismay, Dr. John “judged her as a woman, not an artist: it was a branding judgment” (p. 270). The crucial point here is that Vashti creates an evil woman image even in Lucy's eyes influenced by the patriarchal conditioning for female stereotypes.

The patriarchal oppression is obvious in the entire realms of Lucy's life, as Lee (2011) observes: “Lucy is exposed to patriarchal ideology which oppresses both her gender and sexual desire, and this ideology is

represented by the school, religion and culture of the arts” (p. 199). The aforementioned examples in Lucy's world are the confirmation of diversified ways of abuse. An additional surveillance mechanism of patriarchal despotism, the issue of “madness” or psychological disease is inspected in the novel as well. Brontë reads the definition of madness as a rejection of stereotypes attributed to women and female struggle for getting out of the defined rules. Shoshana Felman (1997) delves into it:

The social role assigned to the woman is that of serving an image, authoritative and central, of man: a woman is first and foremost a daughter/a mother/a wife. “What we consider ‘madness’, whether it appears in women or in men, is either the acting out of the devalued female role or the total or partial rejection of one’s sex-role stereotype”. (p. 7)

Lucy's madness originates both from her rejection of stereotypical female role in the society and from her concealed objection to patriarchal authority. The typical madwoman in the attic scene is emphasized many times through the neurotic problems of Lucy and the symbol of the attic where the image of nun also appears. Lucy sees the nun almost five times right after an important occasion of dense feelings, which is a different sign of patriarchal oppression each time. Dr. John diagnoses that this ghost comes out of her diseased mind, and he states that Lucy's “nervous system bore a good share of the suffering” (Brontë, 2007, p. 190). Lucy cannot completely agree with him: “I am not sure about my nervous system is”, but she partly accepts that she is “dreadfully low-spirited” (p. 190). Her needing some spiritual help rather than medical incapacitates Dr. John in his profession, because he states that “medicine can give nobody good spirits” (p. 191). He can only suggest her having company all the time, doing some exercise, and travelling to other places. Her reaction to Dr. John is a kind of rebellion to man's desire to control her body in his diagnosis as John Hodge (2005) argues, “Lucy cannot completely disagree with him; however, she seems committed to contesting John's attempts to gain authority over her case history” (p. 901). In Lucy's opinion, doctors as men of profession are egotistical male authorities imposing their power on female bodies: “Not one bit did I believe him; but I dared not contradict: doctors are so self-opinionated, so immovable in their dry, materialist views” (Brontë, 2007, p. 266).

Correspondingly, M. Paul claims that Lucy's sickness is caused by her lack of courage and power: “You have, then, a weak heart! You lack courage; and, perhaps, charity... Then limited are your powers, for in tending one idiot you fell sick” (Brontë, 2007, p. 212). Lucy reacts at this this attack on her personality: “Not with that, Monsieur; I had a nervous fever: my mind was ill” (p. 212). M. Paul's arrogant attitude towards Lucy, especially considering the matter of madness, derives from the idea that female weakness and illness are to be handled and to be cured by men: “help-needing and help-seeking behavior is itself part of the female conditioning, ideologically inherent in the behavioral pattern and in the independent and helpless role assigned to the woman as such” (Felman, 1997, p. 7). However, M. Paul fails in his evaluation of Lucy as a helpless female. Lucy challenges him by exemplifying Dr. John's diagnosis that she did not agree when Dr. John states her earlier. Lucy's exclusive concern is to reject male supremacy over her body through their despotic diagnosis, as Hodge (2005) analyses: “One way she achieves resistance is by denying her male interlocutor his language. When John speaks in the language of nerves, Lucy speaks of emotion; when Paul speaks in the language of courage, Lucy speaks of nerves” (p. 901). Lucy's rebellious nature rejecting patriarchal tyranny makes her a revolutionary woman attempting to destroy the stereotypical perceptions on female body and intellect. Lucy's wise speeches embodying sophisticated vocabulary and her usage of neurotic terms reveal that she is capable of diagnosing her illness on her own. At the beginning of the novel, for example, she diagnoses little Polly to be “monomaniac” because Polly insists on being neat in an excessive way even though she is just at the age of six. Polly asks Harriet: “Tie my sash straight; make my hair smooth, please”, and she replies: “Your sash is straight enough. What a particular little body you are!” (Brontë, 2007, p. 9). Still, Polly is not

satisfied with it: "It must be tied again. Please to tie it" (p. 9). Lucy acknowledges without a doubt that Polly's obsession is caused by her being abandoned first by her mother and then by her father. Lucy concludes on her condition that "the child was run out mad and ought instantly to be pursued" (p. 11).

In her inner voyage, Lucy has some fears like the ones Polly experienced when she was a child. Firstly, in the summer holiday in M. Beck's school when nobody is with her except a disabled girl, she declares: "My heart almost died within me; miserable longings strained its chords [...] Looking forward at the commencement of those eight weeks, I hardly knew how I was to live to the end. My spirits had long been gradually sinking" (Brontë, 2007, p. 162). Her neurotic trauma creates a gothic atmosphere around her: "How silent, how lifeless! How vast and void seemed the desolate premises! How gloomy the forsaken garden— grey now with the dust of a town summer departed" (p. 162) This leads her to walk long distances and she eventually faints in front of her Godmother's house. Hodge (2005) asserts: "Such suicidal depression results from Lucy's nagging idea of being forgotten by those she loves" (p. 906). The reason for this is Lucy's haunting sentiments: "Amidst the horrors of that dream I think the worst lay here. Me thought the well-loved dead, who had loved me well in life, met me elsewhere, alienated: galled was my inmost spirit with an unutterable sense of despair about the future" (Brontë, 2007, p. 166). Therefore, Lucy cannot find a reason to stay alive in her lonely world: "Motive there was none why I should try to recover or wish to live; and yet quite unendurable was the pitiless and haughty voice in which Death challenged me to engage his unknown terrors" (p. 166). Her fear of abandonment, nightmares and the ghost of the nun distresses her to be lost in thoughts about death. She starts to feel better with the hope of love promise for Dr. John as his letters delivers immense relief. In one of her emotional moments while reading Dr. John's letter, she visualizes the nun again, but nobody believes her.

Lucy's second fear of abandonment begins when little Polly penetrates Dr. John's life by pushing Lucy away. Lucy confesses her isolation from Dr. John and desperate acceptance of their separation. She is convinced that she has received the last letter from him and there will be no more: "Oh! —to speak truth, and drop that tone of a false calm which long to sustain, outwears nature's endurance—I underwent in those seven weeks bitter fears and pains, strange inward trials, miserable defections of hope, intolerable encroachments of despair" (Brontë, 2007, p. 278). Hodge (2005) elucidates Lucy's fear: "In a scenario of abandonment, the person deserted may feel forgotten, but most likely the person who leaves does not literally forget the person left. Yet, this improbability is precisely what Lucy fears" (p. 907). Her obsession is reflected on her writing, which is called melancholia "a lowness of spirits from a single phantasy" (qtd. in Hodge, 2005, p. 907). Hodge (2005) interprets Lucy's melancholic writing and actions, excessive obsession, and unclear ending of M. Paul as a sign of her sadistic desires:

Lucy's fits of melancholic obsession result from a sense of neglect and produce a sadistically ambivalent treatment of both John (befriending him while also chastising him for loving Ginevra) and Paul. The ambivalent ending to her autobiography, which refuses to offer Paul a final narrative resting place (leaving the reader to wonder whether or not he survived a maritime tempest), may be one way of fulfilling her sadistic wish "for ever [to crush] the mocking spirit out of Paul Carl David Emanuel!". (p. 908)

Hodge (2005) further investigates Lucy's obsessiveness through Freud's psychoanalysis in which he claims that melancholic people have the most possible cure to overcome their obsessions: "melancholics...remain on the whole unaffected and proof against psychoanalytic therapy" (qtd. in p. 908). Contrary to Lucy's claim that no doctor could cure her, Hodge (2005) argues that the solution lies in education based on Freud's ideas (p. 908). Polly could only succeed to get rid of her obsession through learning how to get dressed properly before the day Harriet leaves her. Similarly, Lucy needs education

and Dr. John confesses: “Happiness is the cure—a cheerful mind the preventive: cultivate both” (Brontë, 2007, p. 260). She reacts to his suggestion of cultivating happiness: “No mockery in this world ever sounds to me so hollow as that of being told to cultivate happiness. What does such advice mean? Happiness is not a potato, to be planted in mould, and tilled with manure. Happiness is a glory shining far down upon us out of Heaven” (p. 260). Nonetheless, Lucy tries to achieve this glory through the education she receives by the help of M. Paul, and she is ambitious enough to be hungry for knowledge though he discourages her at first: “when M. Paul sneered at me, I wanted to possess them more fully” (p. 367).

Throughout Lucy's learning sessions, when M. Paul becomes her tutor, he desires to suppress free thinking or to restrict her intellect as a female. Lucy envisages that M. Paul resembles to the great emperor Napoleon thanks to his power-seeking nature: “To pursue a somewhat audacious parallel, in a love of power, in an eager grasp after supremacy, M. Emanuel was like Bonaparte” (Brontë, 2007, p. 365). M. Paul's transition from a dark man into a more noble personality is apprehensible for Lucy, however, she is still puzzled by his reactions against her struggle for learning. It seems bizarre to her that the harder she works the less he seems to be satisfied. She interprets this through his strict ideas on gender roles in terms of unique intellects: “I was vaguely threatened with I know not what doom, if I ever trespassed the limits proper to my sex, and conceived a contraband appetite for unfeminine knowledge” (p. 367). M. Paul's frustration for Lucy's trespassing the boundaries of the feminine intellect drives Lucy to be more eager to learning because his unfair attitude encourages her to be more ambitious. She craves for knowledge and her sneering is a kind of powerful stimulus to her confrontational nature. Regardless of M. Paul's vision, she feels proud of the gift attributed by God: “Whatever my powers—feminine or the contrary—God had given them, and I felt resolute to be ashamed of no faculty of his bestowal” (p. 367). Lucy feels irritated by M. Paul's insistence on controlling her body and intellect; she explicitly disagrees with his primitive methods and ideas apart from his teaching.

As a powerful female figure, Lucy takes pleasure in M. Paul's suspicion of her knowing Greek and Latin although she repents about her past that she could not make this suspicion true. The more he gets irritated on her excessive knowledge and ability beyond her patriarchally defined gender roles, the more competence she desires to possess. Lucy reads M. Paul's ideas on “women of intellect” as a “luckless accident” and not desirable as a wife or employee. Accordingly, women should be beautiful primarily and should retain all delicate features comforting her male company: “He believed in his soul that lovely, placid, and passive feminine mediocrity was the only pillow on which manly thought and sense could find rest for its aching temples; and as to work, male mind alone could work to any good practical result” (Brontë, 2007, p. 370). M. Paul prefers women to be obedient creatures whose sole purpose in life should be to please men. Lucy's reaction to this idea is “hein?”, which reveals the question of her objection to this notion. Lucy achieves a considerable success in writing, and M. Paul is proud of her eventually despite his strict patriarchal limitations on women. Hodge (2005) illustrates her voyage in education:

Having left England “intend on extending [her] knowledge” (p. 80), Lucy learns far more than the math, German, and composition she studies at the Pensionnat; more importantly, she learns that melancholic obsession can be productive both as a source of creative and critical writing and as a treatment against itself. (p. 915)

Likewise, Sandro Jung (2010) notes that Lucy's craving for knowledge derives from her search of female selfhood as an emotionally motivated detective (p. 160). Her curiosity for learning more makes her identity distinct from the conventional women in the society she lives in. Noticeably, her emotional and intellectual curiosity distinguishes her from M. Beck whose curiosity is based on material benefit that

she aims to get through her spies, which is like M. Paul's method of monitoring the school. Jung (2010) describes her detective nature as a part of her job: "She terms surveillance her 'duty' (p. 132) and hopes that the supposedly universal benefit of surveillance will be a well-regulated society of spies and those who are manipulated" (p. 165). Counter to M. Beck's sneaking intentions, Lucy both succeeds in acquiring new knowledge and in concealing some truths to other characters and to the reader. Through this, Lucy declares her power of holding the knowledge in her hands by sharing or hiding as she wishes:

Throughout the narrative, Lucy is intent on disrupting the knowledge economy through which others gain information on her. She succeeds in controlling other characters' perception of herself and — even as narrator — frequently delays or with- holds information, only to introduce it later to stress her authority as voice inscribing the actions of both herself and others through her agency. (Jung, 2010, p. 167)

Lucy reveals the information when she visions that it is necessary. For instance, at different moments in the novel, the reader learns that Graham Bretton has four identities: Graham, Isidore, Dr. John, and the stranger who helps Lucy when she first arrives at Villette. While these four distinct identities are introduced to the reader, Lucy does not tell that they are the same person despite her being aware of the truth. Lucy's possession of knowledge and hiding it makes her a "distrustful narrator" who distorts the reality, nevertheless, she uses her knowledge for facilitating her students' understanding their characteristics in a better way and she does not grow egotistical interests like M. Beck (Jung, 2010, p. 167). She expresses her awareness of the necessity to hide her feelings from other people, after which point she decides to suppress them:

This was a strange house, where no corner was sacred from intrusion, where not a tear could be shed, nor a thought pondered, but a spy was at hand to note and to divine. And this new, this out-door, this male spy, what business had brought him to the premises at this un- wanted hour? What possible right had he to intrude on me thus? (Brontë, 2007, p. 240)

Lucy conceals her true identity and suppresses her feelings consciously according to the circumstances she is surrounded. Elisabeth K. Haller (2010) claims that this makes her seem to live two lives "the life of thought, and that of reality" — that which one perceives or chooses to see and that which exists — has a double intent" (p. 149). The reason for Lucy's suppressing her personal feelings comes from her life struggle to support herself: "[Lucy] is tormented by the realization that she has bought survival at the price of never fully existing, escaped pain by retreating behind a dull, grave camouflage" (qtd. in Haller, 2010, p. 153). She finds the cure in solitude at a very early point in the novel, "I had a staid manner of my own which ere now had been as good to me as cloak and hood of hodden grey, since under its favour I had been enabled to achieve with impunity" (Brontë, 2007, p. 43). At the moments of hiding her identity and feelings, she is sure that it is better for herself, as Haller (2010) clarifies, "She gains more through suppressing her identity than she does through revealing it" (p. 155). She also allows the reader to observe the actions independently from any prejudgements.

Lucy's suppression of her identity and feelings is described as burial in various instances. Brontë names the chapter "a burial" in which the reader witnesses both physical and spiritual burial. Lucy buries Dr. John's letters in the garden for the fear of Madame Beck's or her spies' discovery of them. At the same time she buries her feeling towards him together with the letters. She confesses herself that the letters she is holding are the last ones from Dr. John because she witnesses his fondness on Polly. She admits honestly that her love is flowing away from her hands like a river changing its course: "That goodly river on whose banks I had sojourned, of whose waves a few reviving drops had trickled to my lips, was bending to another course: it was leaving my little hut and field forlorn and sand-dry, pouring its wealth of waters far away" (Brontë, 2007, p. 306). She thinks that this change is natural and far, thus she lets

him go to his own way though she loves him. She first annihilates her emotions after her logical decision: “In the end I closed the eyes of my dead, covered its face, and composed its limbs with great calm” (p. 306). Then she notices that she should also get rid of the physical proof of the dead, the letters: “The letters, however, must be put away, out of sight: people who have undergone bereavement always jealously gather together and lock away mementos: it is not supportable to be stabbed to the heart each moment by sharp revival of regret” (p. 306). While hiding the letters in a hole she digs in the garden, Lucy embraces her two-sided burial: “But I was not only going to hide a treasure—I meant also to bury a grief. That grief over which I had lately been weeping, as I wrapped it in its winding-sheet, must be interred” (Brontë, 2007, p. 309). As usual, she chooses to repress her feelings rather than revealing them to other people. She escapes from sharing her emotions with other people, for instance, she prefers to hide that she has visioned the nun again. Even though Dr. John and M. Paul questions her, she denies that she has just seen the image because she does not want them to know as they do not understand her, but they only try to cure her according to their own diagnosis. Her burial of feelings and ideas is a kind of inner resistance to male authority.

Through the end of Brontë's narrative, Lucy gains self-confidence and stops hiding her identity after “she discovers the reality of M. Paul — a benevolent and constant man — that Lucy's view of him changes from tyrant to knight; her actions towards him change as well” (Haller, 2010, p. 158), because instead of his oppressive approach, his real companionship hinders her suppression of identity. In the end, even in the absence of M. Paul, Lucy has a happy and independent life, as she does not pretend to be someone else but herself:

Lucy ultimately comes into being and turns what is perhaps the final new page in her life. As a direct result of M. Paul's attention towards her along with the realization of false perceptions — both her own and those pertaining to her — Lucy is no longer trapped in a representation based on expectation but is free to pursue her genuine identity. (Haller, 2010, p. 158)

Onur Ekler (2015) reads Lucy's attempts for constructing her female identity as a pre-Oedipal desire by providing the mythical story of Isis, in which Isis, after the death of her husband, discovers in her ancestral voyage that “she had once a penis long before the male authority”, however, she chooses to stay in the established patriarchal order and chains herself to a rock “waiting for the vulgar to rip the penis off which she once had in the pre-Oedipal period” (p. 78). Brontë's female figure Lucy is much more courageous and has awareness of her power. By adapting this metaphoric story with the addition of female consciousness and rebellion against the patriarchal hegemony, Ekler (2015) claims that the narrative follows the path of killing the male body to construct a powerful position for women: “Charlotte Brontë and Lucy Snowe are no more naive enough to place penis to male body but to themselves to create pre-Oedipal female identity in the world by breaking off the chains of Isis and making her unbound” (pp. 78-9). By being a Victorian angel obedient to the patriarchal norms, Lucy is submissive and imprisoned like the chained Isis. However, Lucy turns out to be unbound Isis thanks to “her quest of identity deconstructs and reconstructs the masculine perceptions of woman's body” (p. 81). She turns the panopticon surveillance upside down by turning the observer into the observed. She constructs her own liberated identity over the destruction of male authority.

The novel concludes that Lucy gains her independence through the school she owns by the financial help of M. Paul. Kevser Ateş (2015) interprets this a result of Lucy's quest towards her self-discovery through “the interactions of her ‘inner world’ where she feels lonely and unsteady but is fond of independence and ‘outer world’ where she meticulously observes and analyses people with whom she lives together” (p. 60). She has acquired the awareness of how to be an autonomous woman in her voyage because “her

external exploration helps her acquisition of self-knowledge, self-understanding and self-discovery” (Ateş, 2015, p. 60). Through her hard struggle, Lucy stands successfully by rejecting all the patriarchal definitions on her body and her triumphant ending can be interpreted as a post structural approach that rejects all female qualities and claims that these are only cultural constructed ideas: “For the post-structuralist, race, class, and gender are constructs and, therefore, incapable of decisively validating conceptions of justice and truth because underneath there lies no natural core to build on or liberate or maximize” (Alcoff, 1997, p. 341). Her school she governs represent her victory after struggling alone as a young woman having no fortune. Even though she achieves it via M. Paul’s economic and moral support, Lucy feels herself powerful when he is away from her. The ambiguity ending of M. Paul and Lucy’s self-confidence and happiness in the absence of him support this idea: “M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life. Do you scout the paradox? Listen. I commenced my school; I worked—I worked hard” (Brontë, 2007, p. 514). However, we do not know for sure that what happens to M. Paul as it is uncertain if he comes out alive after the terrible storm: “It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks: it did not lull till the deeps had gorged their full of sustenance. Not till the destroying angel of tempest had achieved his perfect work, would he fold the wings whose waft was thunder—the tremor of whose plumes was storm” (p. 516). Brontë expects the readers to imagine a happy ending by emphasizing this storm and chaos to be “enough”:

Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life. (Brontë, 2007, p. 516)

Brontë ends her novel by giving a space for hope and happiness for woman who has suffered enough under patriarchal suppression. As a symbol of sexual confinement, the nun image is dead and the revelation of its actually being a male character in the novel also supports the view that this fear is another influence of patriarchal repression which disappears in the end. Dr. John rotates into a different life with his wife and Lucy is a free woman managing her own business. The ending symbolizes the success of female independence without any patriarchal authority. Brontë consciously does not end the novel with M. Paul’s arrival and their marriage, because this will bring female oppression with the presence of a male figure again. Therefore, M. Paul does not finish his sentence while leaving: “You shall live here and have a school; you shall employ yourself while I am away; you shall think of me sometimes; you shall mind your health and happiness for my sake, and when I come back—” (Brontë, 2007, p. 508). The reader does not know what happens when he comes back, or whether he comes back in reality as there is an implied possibility of his death, but it is certain that there is a contented and liberated female figure, Lucy, in the end. The Victorian stereotypes of desirable woman defined by the male authority are ultimately destroyed. Lucy stands as a powerful, hardworking, and satisfied woman in her world away from the patriarchal suppression and restrictions.

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