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# Charlotte Brontë's Vilette and Sigmund Freud's Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria: Lucy Snowe's Narrative Ambiguity as Dora's Self-Analysis

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Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* and Sigmund  
Freud's *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of  
Hysteria*:  
Lucy Snowe's Narrative Ambiguity  
as Dora's Self-Analysis

Honors Thesis in English

The University of Connecticut

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Upon reading Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, the reader is immediately disoriented by protagonist Lucy Snowe's unreliable and unclear first-person narration. Even Brontë herself acknowledged Lucy's unreliability, something Jessica Brent notes: "Charlotte Brontë objected to [her publisher's] suggested revisions for *Villette* on the following grounds: 'You say that [Lucy Snowe] may be thought morbid and weak unless the history of her life be more fully given [...] it would be too much like drawing a picture and then writing underneath the name of the object to be represented'"(Brent 89-90). Brent concludes that "Brontë's resistance to her critic may thus be understood to be the novel's as well [...] it is a text that stubbornly holds us captive to a picture, never allowing us to [...] resolve the mystery [...]"(Brent 90). Charlotte Brontë and Lucy deliberately withhold information from the reader, provoking him or her to seek meaning for this omission.

Many critics have noted the mysterious and ambiguous nature of Lucy's narration, and several have also made the association between Freud's subject, Dora, and *Villette*'s Lucy Snowe.<sup>1</sup> Some of those who have not made the association between these two specific heroines have noted Freud's presence in Charlotte Brontë's writing.<sup>2</sup> In particular, consider Joseph Allan Boone's words on the subject in *Libidinal Currents*:

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<sup>1</sup> Hodge, O'Dea, and Showalter are the most prominent examples I have consulted, although there are certainly others.

<sup>2</sup> Bernheimer, Maynard, Shuttleworth, et al.

The various strategies Brontë employs to create a narrative in which Lucy's mental life takes precedence over external reality contribute to a radical reenvisioning of subjectivity that [...] is as radically decentered, as unmoored from [...] a stable or coherent identity, as is the narrative form itself. The text's elliptical movement, gap-filled trajectory, indefinite beginnings and inconclusive endings, dreamlike sequences, disorienting spatial and temporal schemes [...] create a novel that is [...] masqueraded [...] as a realistic fictional autobiography. (Boone 37)

Boone is one among many critics who draw on psychoanalysis to explain Brontë's "elliptical" novel. In this essay, I will look to Sigmund Freud's *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, using the similarities between Dora and Lucy Snowe to draw conclusions about these two works' similar heroines. First and foremost, both Lucy and Dora show evidence of having experienced a trauma through their disrupted and mysterious narrations, in which they deliberately and unconsciously withhold information. I propose that these heroines cure themselves of their trauma. Each has the assistance of a strong-minded male character, who provokes her to self-analyze and, finally, to self-cure. Lucy, in particular, implements a variety of strategies in the pursuit of a cure for her childhood trauma. The most striking of these strategies is her description of the characters she encounters: she projects aspects of her own personality onto other female characters in the attempt to reconcile their presence within herself. She also encounters various uncanny iterations of her main love interest in order to emotionally move away from those unacceptable and unrequited feelings. However, the reader realizes that Lucy is not

cured by any of these iterations of herself or of the young Graham Bretton. Lucy is finally cured when she becomes acquainted with a person who teaches her how to analyze her own behavior: Monsieur Paul. Although other characters attempt to repress Lucy's self-actualization, she is able to cure herself by embracing the analytical and observant (in effect, the Freud-like) characteristics of her personality. Her observation of her own behavior and that of other characters is what eventually allows her to move on from her experiences. Reading *Villette* in the context of *Dora* reveals Lucy Snowe's duality of nature; her narration has both qualities of Dora's traumatized yet deliberately mysterious discourse and, gradually increasing as time progresses, qualities of Sigmund Freud's analytical narrative. This transition from traumatized narrative to analytical narrative allows Lucy to cure herself, as she learns to observe others without projecting her own experience or personality onto them. Lucy Snowe's progression of narrative, which leads to her ability to cure herself, in turn, also appears in Dora's case: it is by the same transition from being the subject of analysis to actively taking part in her own interpretation that Dora is able to cure herself.

It would be an incomplete analysis if the reader only looks upon Lucy as a Dora-like character because he or she would be missing a very important aspect of Lucy's personality. Lucy is unable to cure herself as a Dora-like figure. Her encounters with Monsieur Paul force her to examine not only his behavior, but also her own. When her intense observation takes on a deeper quality of analysis, she is able to separate her own consciousness from that of the characters she has been projecting upon for most of the novel. It is this separation that cures Lucy Snowe.

She is able to physically and mentally separate herself from the doubles she has created for herself and her unacceptable love interest.

It is illuminating to map the people from the case study of *Dora* onto different characters in *Villette*, and this allows us to not only draw conclusions about characters in *Villette*, but also to draw new conclusions about the subjects' behavior in the case study from what we know about their respective characters. If Lucy represents Dora, we immediately encounter the issue of Lucy's lack of father figure in the novel. Details regarding Lucy's family are extremely limited, so one may be tempted to assign the role of Dora's father to Monsieur Paul, seeing as ultimately Lucy does look on him as a sort of combined provider, lover, and protector.

However, since a perfect mapping would require Lucy to suppress her emotions towards the character in favor of pursuing more acceptable desires, a more fitting character for the role of Dora's father is Dr. John "Graham" Bretton, because Lucy does actually end up suppressing her unrequited feelings towards him in favor of a better outlet for those desires--meaning that Monsieur Paul must be equivalent to Herr K. Since Monsieur Paul is not married, the most reasonable person to play Frau K is Madame Beck, because the two are naturally paired. The suggestion that Lucy may be repressing sexual feelings towards Madame Beck is entirely plausible, because the interaction between these two women is certainly tinged with erotic tension, as will be discussed later.

However, one character that we have avoided thus far is Freud himself. He is a character within his own narrative, since his recounting of Dora's condition and their discussions is more story-like than scientific. One may be right in mapping

Freud onto the character of Monsieur Paul, since he does show many signs of examining Lucy Snowe by rifling through her desk, watching her from afar, and putting her through all sorts of tests to further her character. Upon their first real conversation, he gruffly orders, "Play you must. I will not have you shrink, or frown, or make the prude. I read your skull that night you came; I see your moyens: play you can; play you must"(Brontë 147). Lucy, most taken aback by this odd request, closely examines his persuasive manner: "A thousand objections rushed into my mind. The foreign language, the limited time, the public display . . . Inclination recoiled, Ability faltered, Self-respect (that 'vile quality') trembled. 'Non, non, non!' said all these; 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 148). It can be argued that Freud himself has a similar effect on Dora-- he seems to be able to convince Dora to reveal her story to him to some degree and provides analysis on what he discovers. Monsieur Paul makes decided attempts to understand Lucy's behavior, even to the point of invading her privacy.

However, the same argument could be made to justify mapping Freud onto Madame Beck, whose observation of Lucy Snowe borders on the erotic, as I will discuss later. The idea of observing other characters cannot be our method for determining the most Freud-like character in the novel. Lucy Snowe herself exhibits more characteristics of Freud than any other character in *Villette* does. She is an extraordinarily observant narrator, her descriptions of most characters she meets spanning several paragraphs of intense study. She speaks retrospectively about her own thoughts and desires, emphasizing the split between the protagonist

Lucy and the narrator, an older Dora-like figure who is reflecting on these past events. Freud and this narrator Lucy have much in common. They both narrate the story from beyond the timeframe of the action, giving their conclusions a different weight of knowledge than they would have if they were narrating in the moment of action. Dora, Freud, and Lucy all only tell their audiences what they wish for them to know, deliberately withholding information as they see fit. Dora often refuses to tell Freud her full story, instead releasing shocking information bit by bit. Freud responds in kind by refusing to tell his readers of any misgivings he may be having about his case, or that, because he is writing this in hindsight, he now knows that Dora will abruptly end her own treatment. As is typical of a case study, Freud also refuses any detail on his personal feelings, although he does at some points hypothesize his subject's possible romantic inclinations towards himself. Like Freud, Lucy is extraordinarily adept at misleading and mystifying her reader: she refuses to give any details of her life before living with the Brettons, makes little to no mention of her family life, and rarely even confides her deep emotions in the reader, though she is sharing her thoughts and observations with him or her. We will discover later that this omission of important details and biographical information is evidence supporting the claim that her story is at least a partial fabrication, if not a complete one.

This interpretive strategy of mapping both Dora and Freud onto Lucy Snowe, also allows the reader in turn to draw new conclusions about Dora and Freud's shared characteristics. Dora's surprising termination of her sessions with Freud comes as a complete shock to Freud and to the reader. With this character mapping,

we can actually solve one of the case's most pressing problems: that is, of course, Dora's unexpected termination of her treatment with Freud. Dora's sudden decision to abort therapy before Freud was able to cure her is probably the most surprising turn of events in Freud's record of her case. When she nonchalantly discloses this information, he discovers a character in the story that he had not previously been aware of, with which he is able to draw more conclusions about Dora's change in behavior. This outcome bears an eerie similarity to Lucy's situation: she decides that she cannot love Dr. John any longer, and "cures" herself, so to speak, by choosing to marry Monsieur Paul. When we observe the "Dora" case study with this new information, we can conclude that perhaps Dora had cured herself by ending treatment, cutting off the therapy that her father decided she needed and proceeding to a new stage in her life. Dora's symbolic shedding of her father's (and Freud's) influence is mirrored by Lucy's treatment of her thoughts of Dr. John.

It is, then, necessary to construct a two-pronged analysis in order to fully understand the character of Lucy Snowe: examining her first through her Dora-like characteristics, and then examining her Freud-like ones. Lucy's willingness to provoke analysis, her mysterious nature and tendencies toward omission of important or desired information are also hallmarks of Dora's personality. Dora is in more control of Freud's research and his eventual conclusions than he is willing to admit. He only knows what Dora is willing to tell him, and is sometimes forced to change his conclusions based on new information as she casually reveals it. She ends the treatment on her own terms. The reader also experiences most aspects of this relationship between analyst and analyzed with Lucy Snowe. Lucy entralls

the reader with hints to her dark past, but deliberately avoids answering the questions that she knows the reader must be developing throughout the novel. She answers questions as she pleases, and is not above suppressing her retroactive knowledge in order to garner more intrigue, mainly when she repeatedly refuses to recognize characters introduced at earlier points in the novel. She leaves out important details and explanations, creating plot holes and implausibilities that she only occasionally bridges. Even when she does fill in gaps, it is with tenuous excuses or lapses in consciousness. Although this is frustrating for the reader, it reveals the mutual characteristics linking Dora and Lucy, as well as allowing the reader to answer questions about each by examining the behavior and reasoning of the other.

### **Lucy and Dora: Tracing Traumas**

When the reader examines Lucy Snowe in the light of Dora, he or she adopts the role of Freud, seeking answers to the many questions Lucy raises. When Lucy Snowe leaves the Brettons, she cryptically mentions that she does not do so without good reason: going so far as to say "Of Mrs. Bretton I had long lost sight. Impediments, raised by others, had, years ago, come in the way of our intercourse, and cut it off"(Brontë 38). The reader is perplexed by her swift change in subject to avoid necessary explanation, forcing the reader to draw his or her own conclusion. Just before this puzzling clue to her departure, she also makes the following analogy: Lucy instructs the reader to "picture [her], for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather [...]"(Brontë 37). However, Lucy seems to

be implying that a comparison between this and the following period in her life should be made, and that there was a time between her bleak past and the period directly before she talks with Miss Marchmont which functioned as the relative calm between two storms. She indicates this in the following paragraph:

Picture me then idle, basking, plump and happy, stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed with constant sunshine, rocked by breezes indolently soft. However, it cannot be concealed that, in that case, I must have somehow fallen overboard, or that there must have been wreck at last. I too well remember a time—a long time—of cold, of danger, of contention. To this hour, when I have the nightmare, it repeats the rush and saltiness of briny waves in my throat, and their icy pressure on my lungs. I even know there was a storm [...] For many days and nights neither sun nor stars appeared; we cast with our own hands the tackling out of the ship; a heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished. (Brontë 37)

Lucy makes a startling leap from peace to terrible stress in this paragraph. Her metaphor seems to be a confession of abuse or other such trauma. Her extended metaphor, using the ocean and shipwreck as its main mode of description, is especially appropriate given Monsieur Paul's indefinite fate at the end of the novel. Although this may or may not allude to Monsieur Paul's fate, the negativity of the imagery cannot be denied. Lucy's description of a nightmare that regularly afflicts her only furthers the indication of past and present trauma in her life. However, it could simply mean that the experiences of Lucy's childhood still haunt her today, in

old age, as she tells the stories of her youth. Her use of the first-person plural indicates that she did not suffer, but her avoidance to mention her lack of family members or other such relatives in other parts of the novel implies that she was either abandoned or was the sole survivor. However often Lucy refers to the existence of her troubling and painful past, she never relieves the reader of his or her persistent question: What has happened to Lucy Snowe?

Although Lucy never divulges the source of her trauma, her admission of its existence allows readers to dispute the veracity of her narrative. There is much evidence to support the conclusion that Lucy Snowe's entire narrative may be either a complete or partial fabrication in order to reconcile with a previous trauma.

Although there is no way to know exactly what Dora's or Lucy's specific traumatic experiences were because they have clearly suppressed all knowledge of it themselves, we can certainly find evidence in each narrative that these traumas exist. With Lucy, we can find evidence of this as early as the first chapter, when Mrs. Bretton receives a letter that, although she does not know who the letter is from or have any reason to believe the letter is about her, causes Lucy some emotional turmoil. Lucy describes the events in this way: "One day a letter was received of which the contents evidently caused Mrs. Bretton surprise and some concern. I thought at first it was from home, and trembled, expecting I knew not what disastrous communication: to me, however, no reference was made, and the cloud seemed to pass" (Brontë 4). To the reader, this tantalizing reference to an event that Lucy never seems to mention again raises a number of questions: What happened to Lucy? Why would she be worried about a letter, from an unknown

person? What is she afraid of divulging to Mrs. Bretton? With such tactics, Lucy forces the reader to draw his or her own conclusions about her past. Lucy could be the victim of a number of scandals. Why is she living at her godmother's house?

She gives no reason for not living with her own family. Perhaps her moving in with the Brettons interrupted an illicit sexual relationship within her family; perhaps her parents or other family members abused or neglected her; in any case, she takes great care to avoid mentioning her family at all costs. At one point, she even goes so far to avoid saying the word "family," instead referring to the home she lived in before moving to the Brettons as "the kinsfolk with whom was at the time fixed my permanent residence"(Brontë 4). The reasons for this displacement, according to Lucy, are evident to Mrs. Bretton: "I believe she then plainly saw events coming, whose very shadow I scarce guessed; yet of which the faint suspicion sufficed to impart unsettled sadness, and made me glad to change scene and society."

However, Lucy, true to her mysterious nature, conveniently refuses to give any evidence as to what these "events" actually are.

There are other reasons why Lucy's story, or at least some of the characters in that story, is likely to be of Lucy's own creation as part of working through her trauma. Lucy's changes in location are often left unexplained or attributed to supernatural causes. When she leaves the Brettons in favor of working at Miss Marchmont's, Lucy does not reveal any sort of reason as to why Miss Marchmont has sent for her personally. Miss Marchmont's convenient death at the end of the chapter, which further provokes the possibility that she may never have been alive or existent at all, allows Lucy a way to leave the old house in favor of another fate.

Lucy is left completely alone when she, in pursuit of her new career, describes a sort of hallucination that she experiences:

I should have quailed still more in the unwonted presence of that which tonight shone in the north, a moving mystery The Aurora Borealis. But this solemn stranger influences me otherwise [...] some new power it seemed to bring [...] I drew in energy with the keen, low breeze [...] a bold thought was sent to my mind; my mind was made strong enough to receive it. "Leave this wilderness," it was said to me, "and go out hence." [...] I mentally saw within reach what I had never yet beheld with my bodily eyes: I saw London.

(Brontë 47)

The whole experience Lucy relays to the reader is supernatural and unearthly, much like the Aurora Borealis that seems to inspire this flight of fancy. Lucy seems to respect this advice as many of her generation would respond to an act of God, although no such deity is mentioned. This inner voice speaks once again when Lucy decides to go from London to Villette. This is, however, a much simpler and less dramatic affair: "Breakfast over, I must again move- in what direction? 'Go to Villette,' said an inward voice [...]. Who Madame Beck was, where she lived, I knew not [...] I presumed Villette to be her residence-to Villette I would go"(Brontë 65). She justifies this displacement more completely than the last one: "Before you pronounce on the rashness of the proceeding, reader [...] consider the desert I had left [...] mine was the game where the player cannot lose and may win" (Brontë 66). However, the supernatural motivations return when Lucy finally arrives at Madame Beck's: "Providence said, 'Stop here; this is *your* inn.' Fate took me in her strong

hand; mastered my will; directed my actions: I rang the door-bell"(Brontë 70). Lucy's confidence in a disembodied voice that is only heard by her is suspect, especially since the reader has already been given such tenuous reasons for her earlier displacements.

One method of overcoming repressed trauma proposed by Cathy Caruth's article, "Unclaimed Experience," is the concept of leaving and returning. The article states, "the trauma of the accident, its very unconsciousness, is borne by the act of departure"(Caruth 190); something the reader easily recognizes in Lucy's many changes of residence in *Villette*. Each change of location seems to be fueled by a negatively charged event, such as Miss Marchmont's death, which sparks Lucy's travels to London, or Lucy's nervous collapse after caring for the cretin child, which lands her yet again on the Brettons' doorstep. Frequently, both Dora and Lucy leave environments that are hostile to their development. Dora not only leaves treatment when Freud seems to make her uncomfortable with his discussion, but also leaves her father's house to care for the children of Herr and Frau K.

Caruth's article highlights the tendency of traumatic experiences to be forced to the unconscious:

The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known; but in an inherent latency within the experience itself. The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all. (Caruth 187)

Dora and Lucy both experience such instances of recurring aspects of their own childhood; which the reader can view as aspects of their traumatized past. Dora's role as governess for Herr and Frau K's children is an intriguing one, because she has had significant history with governesses in her own childhood. Freud describes Dora's last governess, who sounds similar to Lucy herself: "an unmarried woman, no longer young, who was well-read and of advanced views"(Brontë 29). This governess, to whom Dora "suddenly [...] became hostile [...] and insisted upon her dismissal"(Brontë 29), drew attention to the unacceptable nature of the relationship between Dora's father and Frau K, which Dora refused to accept. However, Dora, as Freud explains, "might be blind in one direction, but she was sharp-sighted enough in the other. She saw that the governess was in love with her father"(Brontë 29).

Freud described how when Dora's father was not around, the governess's behavior would change significantly: "she did not become angry until she observed that she herself was a subject of complete indifference to the governess. While her father was away [...] the governess had no time to spare for her [...]"(Brontë 30). This, in addition to the fact that "no sooner had her father returned [...] than [the governess] was once more ready with every sort of service and assistance"(Brontë 30) Dora's decision to work as a governess for the Ks, even after this experience in her own childhood, may be indicative of her motive. Freud concludes that Dora "offered a complete substitute for the slight interest which their mother showed in them"(Brontë 30). Freud also notes that Dora only reluctantly makes any admission of her love for Herr K. She makes great use of projection. By projecting her unacceptable desires for her own father and the father of the children she supervises

onto another woman, Dora unconsciously reveals her own motives. Although Dora may leave her family to escape the trauma she has already experienced, she is not able to escape it. The repetition of her traumatic attraction to her father in her experiences with Herr K is an example of uncanny repetition. Freud describes the phenomenon of uncanny repetition in the form of doubles, which will be examined later. This kind of repetition in leaving and returning that appears in Dora's case study can also lead to a different reading of the strange encounters Lucy has with figures from her past in *Villette*.

Another method of attempting to cure the effects of trauma is the recounting of the traumatic event. If we examine Van der Kolk and Van der Hart's article on "The Intrusive Past," we encounter Irene, plagued with the traumatic memory of her mother's death while she sacrificed the whole of her time and energy in the attempt to keep her alive. They report Pierre Janet's conclusion that in order for Irene to be cured of her traumatic repetition of the night her mother died, it was necessary for her to transform the memory from a traumatic memory into a narrative memory.

The traumatic memory is described like this:

Whenever Irene looked from a certain direction to an empty bed, she took on a bizarre posture. She stared at the bed, without moving her eyes, did not hear anybody anymore, did not have contact with anybody, and she began to engage in stereotyped activities. She brought a glass to the lips of an imaginary person, she cleaned her mouth, she talked with this person: "But open your mouth, drink something, answer me." She climbed on the bed in order to arrange the body, then she cried, "The corpse has fallen on the

ground and my father who is drunk, who vomits on the bed, cannot even help me." She became busy in putting the corpse on the bed. This reproduction of the tragic scene lasted three to four hours [...] (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 162)

The traumatic memory is clearly not practical or normal. It is necessary to transfer memories to narrative memory, a state in which one is able to relay the story without participation like Irene's. Once Irene was able to make the memory of her mother's death into a narrative memory, she was able to stop the repetitive re-living of it. She was able to relay her story in a brief retelling, rather than a four-hour ordeal.

In a similar way, Lucy's telling of the story may be her way of moving past traumatic experiences, of which there are many suggested in *Villette*. Van der Kolk and Van der Hart conclude that "this is how ordinary memory should function; it should be an aspect of life and be integrated with other experiences"(163). Perhaps this storytelling ability is indicative of Lucy Snowe's ability to cure herself, allowing her not only to narrate what happened but also to move past it in order to proceed with her life, released from the people and experiences that have caused her pain and trauma. Dora and Lucy Snowe both exhibit evidence of their own escape from the memories and people that plague them. Freud muses, "Years had gone by since her visit. In the meantime the girl had married [...] the young man who came into her associations at the beginning of the analysis of the second dream [...] she was about to tear herself free from her father and had been reclaimed once more by the

realities of life”(Freud, *Dora*, 112). In a similar declaration of freedom, Lucy willfully suppresses her feelings for Doctor John in favor of another love interest.

### **Lucy as Dora: Self-Displacement and a String of Doubles**

The question remains: how was Lucy able to overcome this trauma with only her own words and a passive readership? In spite of Lucy’s several displacements to different towns and countries, she is unable to escape her trauma. Leaving one area and arriving in another only seems to worsen the iterations of her trauma that she encounters later on. Yet another recognized method of curing traumatic thoughts is the idea of visualizing an alternate ending to the traumatic memory. In “Trauma: Explorations in Memory”, Van der Kolk and Van Der Hart discuss this example: a patient “who was traumatized at age seventeen by the sight of horrendous nude corpses of victims of a cholera epidemic” was advised “to visualize these corpses. He even suggested that one, dressed in the uniform of a Chinese general, got up and walked away” (178). They argue “once flexibility is introduced, the traumatic memory starts losing its power over current experience [...] soften[ing] the intrusive power of the original, unmitigated horror” (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 178).

Perhaps Lucy Snowe is using her narrative *Villette* to provide an alternate ending to her traumatic life story. She implements the strategy of visualization touched on in “Trauma: Explorations in Memory” in a unique way: her method of changing the story lies in the creation of several characters who are various iterations of her own personality traits and those of other characters. Lucy creates these strings of doubles without any explanation or acknowledgement of their parallel natures,

leading to a confusing yet provocative narrative. It is up to the reader to discover these similarities, much as it is Freud's duty to uncover similar aspects of Dora's narrative.

For example, Dora exhibits projection in her description of other female participants in her own story: namely, her description of her own governess, which we have already discussed, and the maid who worked at the K's household. On the last day of Dora's treatment, Dora casually mentions a character in her story that she has never mentioned before. She explains upon request:

There was a governess who gave warning with the K.'s, when I was on my visit to them [...] who [...] behaved in the most extraordinary way to Herr K.

She [...] treated him like thin air [...] she then told me that Herr K. had made advances to her [...] made violent love to her and had implored her to yield to his entreaties, saying he got nothing from his wife. (Freud, *Dora*, 97)

Freud quickly makes the connection that those were "the very same words when he made his proposal to you and you gave him the slap in his face" (97). Only then is Freud able to explain the reasons behind actions that Dora refused to explain before. He reflects that Dora has "identified with her both in [her] dream and in [her] conduct"(98). The reader can use the same strategy of analysis that Freud applies in order to glean information pertaining to Lucy's personality and to the reasoning behind certain stories she tells the reader.

According to the regularly occurring concept of delayed recognition of identity, Lucy misidentifies characters she has met before, providing intrigue to the storyline. Although this could be construed as Lucy's attempt to add suspense to the

plot she weaves, it is more likely that, given the other unrealistic and traumatic aspects of the novel, she is merely fitting the characters she meets into the mold of characters she previously knew. This is a mechanism for Lucy to recover from her childhood experience with her family or other characters by gaining another chance to reconcile with that character.

We can conclude that Lucy Snowe is one of only a few characters the reader can trust as “real” character; that is, most of the characters are either imaginative versions of the real characters or complete constructs of the imagination. For example, Lucy frequently faces her trauma in the form of women who possess crucial aspects of her own personality or past. Examination of these encounters will lead the reader to conclude that Lucy has constructed a series of doubles in order to indirectly reveal aspects of her own personality. The idea of a character creating doubles that represent specific iterations of her life, experience, and personality is not uncommon. Freud, in “The Uncanny,” explains, “The idea of the double [...] can receive fresh meanings from the later stages of the ego’s development. A special agency is slowly formed there, which [...] has the function of observing and criticizing the self and of exercising a censorship within the mind [...] which we become aware of as our conscience”(Freud, *The Uncanny*, 235). This is exactly what Lucy is doing: by placing her own traits onto characters outside the realm of her person, she is able to observe them and criticize them anew. Lucy’s many “coincidences” are, in fact, not coincidences at all. She is deliberately projecting the aspects of her trauma and of her personality that she most desires to examine and reflect upon onto other people.

Paulina de Bassompierre, also known as Polly, is one such alter ego of Lucy. From her arrival in the Bretton household at the beginning of the novel, she personifies Lucy's infatuation with Graham and is also the object of Graham's affections. It can be difficult for the reader to determine why Lucy's love for Graham is so unacceptable. However, Lucy's situation with the Brettons is an ambiguous one—she is established as a resident of the Bretton household and Mrs. Bretton's goddaughter. However, the manner in which Lucy leaves the Brettons and the events leading to her reunion with them implies that perhaps there is something that Lucy is suppressing that makes a possible relationship with Graham more taboo. Lucy begins her story without any real mention of herself; deliberately misleading the reader into thinking Polly is the protagonist. Her arrival at the Brettons' house marks the first rising action in the novel, and Lucy narrates her actions as if Polly is meant to be the protagonist. However, the depressing tale of Graham's abandoning Polly most likely had another connotation. It is likely that Lucy is utilizing the small ward's troubles to describe events, either with Graham himself or with another unknown male figure, of her own traumatic past. It is also possible to conclude that the young Polly is not a real character, but mainly a mechanism by which Lucy can rationalize her difficulties. Her appearance later in the novel is consequently symbolic of the uncanny trauma that forces repetition throughout Lucy's life.

It is common for trauma victims to use such a mechanism in order to first give words to their trauma, as Van der Kolk and Van der Hart discuss:

Many trauma survivors report that they automatically are removed from the scene; they look at it from a distance or disappear altogether, leaving other parts of their personality to suffer and store the overwhelming experience. "I moved up to the ceiling from where I saw this little girl being molested and I felt very sorry for her" is a common description by incest survivors. (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 168)

Polly's plight in the beginning of the novel is something that Lucy intensely observes. Note that first, Lucy highlights her peculiar personality. Polly's fanatical obsession with her appearance is one of the first things that Lucy notices. Polly pleads for Harriet: "I have dressed myself, but I do not feel neat. Make me neat!" (Brontë 8). Lucy, of whose unattractiveness we are constantly reminded by herself and other characters, could be projecting her own self-consciousness onto Polly, or is possibly being haunted by this iteration of herself. Polly's relationship with her father is certainly suspect as a possible version of Lucy's own. Lucy's words are fraught with double meaning: she observes and analyzes Polly as well as empathizing with her experience, although she vehemently denies it. She describes Polly, who feels abandoned by her father, thus: "She seemed growing old and unearthly. I, Lucy Snowe, plead guiltless of that curse, an overheated and discursive imagination; but whenever [...] I found her seated in a corner alone, her head in her pigmy hand, that room seemed to me not inhabited, but haunted"(Brontë 11). The reader will later know better than to believe Lucy Snowe's denial of a wild imagination: her readiness to believe that the ghost of her lost childhood (and later, the ghost of a nun) is haunting her is indicative of that. Lucy's uncommon empathy

with the child, who does not confide in her until later, may suggest that she has a tighter bond than that of a bystander or even of a confidante.

When Lucy leaves the Brettons, she next comes into contact with Miss Marchmont, who gives us some of the first evidence pertaining to Lucy's mysterious past. Miss Marchmont qualifies the difficulty of Lucy's prospective occupation by noting, "perhaps, contrasted with the existence you have lately led, it may appear tolerable." What does Miss Marchmont know that we do not? Miss Marchmont, as a "lady of [Lucy's] neighborhood"(Brontë 38), knows more of Lucy's past than the reader ever will. Lucy reflects on her youth, saying, "all that was gone had passed, to say the least, not blissfully"(Brontë 39). Lucy's interactions with Miss Marchmont are certainly unconventional: even Miss Marchmont admits before hiring Lucy that she will be quite strict and difficult, yet Lucy refers to her as "a character I could respect"(Brontë 39). Lucy describes her scoldings as rather like "an irascible mother rating her daughter, than a harsh mistress lecturing a dependant [...] she was logical even when fierce"(Brontë 40). Her somewhat hasty willingness to accept Miss Marchmont as a motherly figure suggests some lack of such a person in her own life, and may enlighten us to the type of trauma Lucy may have undergone. Perhaps Lucy's mother has left her; perhaps she is illegitimate and has been shunned by her mother; perhaps her mother has died at a young age; or even perhaps Lucy has been responsible for her mother's demise. More possible traumatic experiences will be examined later. However, it is most important to note that Miss Marchmont cannot offer Lucy companionship for very long; by the end of the chapter, she has given Lucy her own life story and died directly after.

The episodic encounter is somewhat dream-like. On the night of Miss Marchmont's death, the old woman is uncommonly happy as she recounts the story of her love. Lucy listens to the story, stopping only to clarify that the lover in question is dead and that Miss Marchmont herself is a good and moral person. This could all very well be read as a dream, as a momentary lapse in sanity; this interaction is not characteristic of what the reader has seen so far of Miss Marchmont. Perhaps we must see Miss Marchmont as an iteration of Lucy's future consciousness: Lucy, as the narrator, has taken this opportunity to reconcile with her past (the protagonist Lucy's future). She has already foreshadowed Monsieur Paul's death at sea, so the possibility of the narrator Lucy's foreknowledge of later events is likely, although the protagonist Lucy does not know their significance yet. Miss Marchmont is, indeed the mother Lucy never seemed to have and seems to possess the memories that the narrator Lucy wished that she had. It is not a coincidence that Miss Marchmont's beloved Frank also suffers death from the elements, but is able to have the last deathbed conversation with Miss Marchmont that Lucy never gets the opportunity to have with her Monsieur Paul. This is one of many traumatic experiences that Lucy, as narrator, is attempting to resolve.

Ginevra Fanshawe, who although at first glance seems completely different from Lucy, is another personification of Lucy who represents the fulfillment of Lucy's deepest desires. Although her first encounter with Ginevra is brief, it is effective in establishing the beginnings of Lucy's relationship with her. Lucy describes Ginevra as someone who "tormented me with an unsparing selfishness during the whole time of our mutual distress. Nothing could exceed her impatience

and fretfulness" (Brontë 61). Lucy is not blind to Ginevra's beauty or her charm, however, making note of her "light, careless temper"(Brontë 61) and "fair, fragile sort of beauty"(Brontë 61) in light of the loss of these qualities when Miss Fanshawe is subject to seasickness and close quarters. When Lucy firmly scolds Ginevra, she takes care to note that Ginevra takes the criticism with grace and poise. Nothing later is mentioned of Ginevra Fanshawe until Lucy encounters her at the school.

There, Lucy is shows evidence of her conflicted opinion of Ginevra. She notes that Ginevra is a student of Madame Beck's, and makes the following observations about her personality:

She must have had good blood in her veins, for never was any duchess more perfectly, radically, unaffectedly nonchalante than she; a weak, transient amaze was all she knew of the sensation of wonder. Most of her other faculties seemed to be in the same flimsy condition: her liking and disliking, her love and hate, were mere cobweb and gossamer; but she had one thing about her that seemed strong and durable enough, and that was — her selfishness. (Brontë 93-94)

However, the reader cannot help but realize that Lucy herself has exhibited the same behavior of which she accuses Ginevra; Lucy, while re-introducing Ginevra into the action of the novel, has adopted the same blasé tone. She does not seem particularly surprised that this coincidence has occurred. Her lack of surprise could be for a number of reasons. If the reader is making the conclusion that Lucy is fabricating this story in order to reconcile with a past trauma, Lucy's dreamlike blind acceptance of most of the bizarre happenings in her narrative is no cause for

concern. Also, Lucy could be merely using the character of Ginevra to express unsaid aspects of her own character. Lucy's choice to describe Ginevra's arrival, which may come as a great surprise to the reader, as something which Lucy merely accepts as a fact with little or no surprise could be evidence of the existence of this nonchalance in her own character. Her refusal to become emotionally open with the reader, both in her stoic observation of each character and in her systematic suppression of her own emotions, is notable because she accuses Ginevra of doing exactly the same thing. Ginevra also provides a medium for wish fulfillment: Lucy, who has always seen herself and has always been seen as a plain young woman, should feel nothing but jealousy for a young lady as attractive as Ginevra. However, in spite of all critical thoughts and acknowledgements of Ginevra's shortcomings, Lucy can only observe, "How pretty she was! How charming she looked [...] ardent admiration- perhaps genuine love- was at her command"(Brontë 94). Ginevra has everything that Lucy has been deprived of, and is able to command the affection that Lucy did not receive as a child. However, the character of Ginevra seems to perform an escape from being Lucy's double; the idea of expressing such trivial emotional displays is unfathomable to the deeply repressed yet intensely emotional Lucy. When Ginevra flippantly describes her feelings for Isidore ("Je suis sa reine, mais il n'est pas mon roi" (Brontë 100) Lucy almost seems to pleadingly maintain, "You love M. Isidore far more than you think, or will avow" (Brontë 100). Most of Lucy's identification with Ginevra is halted with this conversation. She refuses to humor her with quite the same patience, and when it is revealed later that Ginevra and her new lover are the cause of the ruse of the nun that nearly traumatizes Lucy

anew, it is no surprise. The two characters cannot exist in harmony; they are at the same time too similar and too different. Lucy's interaction with Ginevra surely does not cure her of her trauma, necessitating yet another double.

Madame Beck, characterized by her tendency to sneak around and spy on her teachers, is really not so different from Lucy herself, whose main method of self-characterization is derived from her intense observation of whoever she is describing. One of the best examples of this is her description of Madame Beck, who is observant to a fault. Lucy's first night at the pensionnat is described thus: "[...] she sat a quarter of an hour on the edge of my bed, gazing at my face. She then drew nearer [...] slightly raised my cap, and turned back the border to expose my hair, she looked at my hand lying on the bedclothes"(Brontë 75). The erotic tension between the apparently sleeping Lucy and a curious Madame Beck gives us the evidence of possible feelings between the two that Dora never concretely reveals in relation to Frau K. However, it is also possible that Madame Beck, rather than an object of sexual desire, is a manifestation of Lucy's erotic fixation on watching and being watched. Lucy is most descriptive of characters that share her observant tendencies, sometimes devoting whole chapters to their every move. Madame Beck is not the only case of Lucy's possible projection of her own traits and experiences onto other characters.

Madame Beck is also most likely the counterpart for Frau K for several reasons. Not only is she naturally paired with the Herr K figure, Monsieur Paul Emmanuel, she is also the most aggressive female, both sexually and socially, present in Lucy's life. Lucy goes to work for her, which mirrors Dora's decision to

go to Herr and Frau K. Lucy frequently asserts Madame Beck's aggressive manner concerning the opposite sex and her frequent invasions of privacy concerning members of her own gender. However, Lucy does not fail to recognize Madame Beck's softer emotional side; in the chapter named after this particular character, Lucy provides a startling amount of insight. She notes that "She was a charitable woman, and did a great deal of good. There never was a mistress who was milder"(Brontë 79), though also taking into account that "It is true that Madame had her own system for managing and regulating this mass of machinery; and a very pretty system it was [...] 'surveillance,' 'espionage,'—these were her watchwords"(Brontë 79). Lucy clearly has respect for this intense observation where other characters may have been offended; it is her empathy with Madame Beck that allows such an understanding of her thought process. By revealing Madame Beck's personality, however, Lucy indirectly provides the reader with a view of an aspect of her own nature that she indirectly reveals through her narration. Other such personality traits, as well as hints pertaining to Lucy's past, can be gleaned from examining her descriptions of other female characters.

Lucy's experiences with the "ghost" of the nun is exceptionally revealing for readers searching for clues of Lucy's suppressed trauma and romantic feelings. Her first encounter with the ghost directly follows her musings about Dr. John. This is another example of uncanny repetition. Lucy's unrequited feelings seem to be manifesting themselves in the appearance of this nun, supposedly killed for breaking her vow of chastity. Although the reader later discovers that the appearances of the nun are a farce, it is unclear if all of these apparitions are really the result of

Ginevra's lover's trickery. The first apparition comes directly after Lucy finally reads Dr. John's letter, which she reads with ecstasy. She says, "A passing seraph seemed to have rested beside me, leaned towards my heart, and reposed on its throb a softening, cooling, healing, hallowing wing. Dr. John, you pained me afterwards: forgiven be every ill—freely forgiven—for the sake of that one dear remembered good!" (Brontë 276). This bliss is interrupted by the vision: "I saw in the middle of that ghostly chamber a figure all black and white [...] the head bandaged, veiled [...] say what you will, reader—tell me I was nervous or mad, affirm that I was unsettled by the excitement of that letter; declare that I dreamed; this I vow—I saw there [...] an image like—a NUN" (Brontë 276). In the chaos of this startling discovery, Lucy loses the letter that was so dear to her. The trauma of this loss is disturbing: Lucy reverts to the third person, in an out-of-body experience of shock and horror. She refers to herself as a "groveling, groping, monomaniac"(Brontë 277). This is clearly a bizarre overreaction to losing a letter from a person she sees fairly regularly.

Perhaps this emotional breakdown is further evidence of Lucy's still-not-resolved trauma; however, it is also important to note that Lucy immediately seeks help from Dr. John, although to no avail. He plays a cruel trick on her, quickly hiding the letter that he found on the ground. Lucy reflects that this is a

Curious, characteristic maneuver! His quick eye had seen the letter on the floor where I sought it; his hand, as quick, had snatched it up. He had hidden it in his waistcoat pocket. If my trouble had wrought with a whit less stress and reality, I doubt whether he would ever have acknowledged or restored it.

Tears of temperature one degree cooler than those I shed would only have amused Doctor John. (Brontë 279)

The reader sees Doctor John for the first time as a character that may not have the most pure of intention when it comes to his interactions with Lucy. Yet, Lucy calls this action at the same time “curious” and “characteristic.” Though this may have been a slip of the pen for Lucy, the examining reader realizes that Lucy is implying Graham has performed the same sort of acts of manipulation that the reader sees here before. She is unintentionally giving the reader some insight into her past relationship with Graham—one, it seems, that was characterized by cruel manipulation. It is appropriate that the appearance of the ghost, representative of Lucy Snowe’s suppressed emotion, coincides with this admission from Lucy. When she encounters the ghost again, she does not run to Doctor John; this apparition is for her alone. However, she is able to address the ghost directly, a vast improvement over the last time that she encountered the nun. She says, “If you have any errand to me, come back and deliver it”(Brontë 336). This is symbolic of Lucy’s budding ability to address her trauma directly, rather than relying exclusively on projection in order to encounter the suppressed aspects of her personality. The only other person who has seen this nun is, quite predictably, Monsieur Paul. He understands her better than any other character, because he can see Lucy’s repressed personality traits manifesting themselves when no one else in the novel can. When they see the nun together, they share a mysterious bond of kindred nature. It is Monsieur Paul’s similarity with Lucy Snowe that allows him to understand her, and his understanding that allows him to push her towards self-

recovery. Monsieur Paul is one of the only characters that is not a double of any traumatic figure in Lucy's early life. Because of this, he is able to assist Lucy in the self-discovery and self-analysis by which she will eventually cure herself

Another example of Lucy Snowe's Dora-like confession, where she describes her own psychological distress, is her experience over the long holiday, where she is left alone, with no one but "a servant, and a poor deformed and imbecile pupil, a sort of ¶cretin, whom her stepmother [...] would not allow to return home"(Brontë 174). At the beginning of these eight weeks, the reader may not be able to see that the invalid for whom Lucy is forced into caring will have a peculiar effect on her.

As we saw before with Irene, the traumatized caretaker, Lucy will descend into a state bordering on madness. The impetus seems to be the weather, for "three weeks of that vacation were hot, fair, and dry, but the fourth and fifth were tempestuously wet. I do not know why that change in the atmosphere made a cruel impression on me, why the raging storm and beating rain crushed me with a deadlier paralysis than I had experienced while the air had remained serene"(Brontë 175). Lucy admits that the weather is not acting alone: using "deadlier" rather than "deadly" implies that she has undergone some sort of adverse reaction to the fair weather as well.

Perhaps this is Lucy's insinuation that her brief madness is, indeed, not caused by the weather, but by her imbecile companion. However, only Lucy ever asserts the creature's presence: we have no proof other than Lucy's word that the child even exists. The child is conveniently taken away at one point: "An aunt of the ¶cretin, a kind old woman came [...] and took away my strange, deformed companion"(Brontë 175), and we can also gather that the child's infirmity very conveniently made it so

“I could not take her out beyond the garden, and I could not leave her a minute alone”(Brontë 175). It does seem likely that if this invalid was a product of Lucy’s mind, which is warped by the weather and loneliness, then her mind would also make the provisions that keep this delusion from being revealed as such by Lucy coming into contact with anyone outside the pensionnat. The poor creature has a strange and exhausting effect on Lucy’s state of mind: Lucy tells the reader that “it was more like being imprisoned with a strange tameless animal, than associating with a human being [...] my resolution was so tried, it sometimes fell dead-sick”(Brontë 175) Lucy is completely alone at this point- the servant has disappeared, and she reflects that “my mental pain was far more wasting and wearing. Attendance on the ¶cretin deprived me often of the power and inclination to swallow a meal [...] but this duty never wrung my heart, or brimmed my eyes, or scalded my cheek with tears as hot as molten metal”(Brontë 175-176). However, in this weakened mental state, how is the reader to believe her? Why would she use such jolting imagery as “tears as hot as molten metal” if she had not experienced them herself? Perhaps the answer is that she is denying them; however it is possible that Lucy is reliving a traumatic childhood experience. Either she has cared for someone in her past that died as the result of or despite her care, or she was the subject of such care and nearly died herself.

This fit following the departure of the imbecile child, described in as much free detail as Lucy is willing to supply, reveals some crucial things about Lucy, namely, that she is terrified of being alone. Currently, her only companions are the ghosts of her past:

Methought 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. 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. (Brontë 178)

She makes the possible confession to the presence of trauma in her life: "From my youth up Thy terrors I have suffered with a troubled mind"(Brontë 178). But, whom is she addressing? Is it Death, who she may be praying to in her confusion? Or, is it God, thus giving us her impetus for confessing to a priest and finding refuge in church to which she does not belong. After her discussion with the priest, where she quite sanely realizes that the priest was attempting to convert her, the reader is deceived into believing that Lucy's troubles are temporarily over. But the storm, which was temporarily lulled in Lucy's successful repression as she left the church, comes back in full force: Lucy says in reaction to this sudden change, "I suddenly felt colder where before I was cold, and more powerless where before I was weak. I tried to reach the porch of a great building near, but the mass of frontage and the giant spire turned black and vanished from my eyes. Instead of sinking on the steps as I intended, I seemed to pitch headlong down an abyss. I remember no more"(Brontë 182). Her final surrender to the darkness leaves her unconscious outside a building in a place where she knows barely anyone. As I will now discuss, the strange coincidences that ensue have a variety of different implications: the main one being the possibility that, either from this point or from the very

beginning, this story is merely a fiction designed to help narrator Lucy come to terms with her deep-seated trauma. The most significant coincidence that immediately follows this fainting fit is the reappearance of the Brettons, in what can be construed as the creation and resurgence of another set of traumatic doubles from Lucy's early life.

The significance of the reappearance of the ghostly nun lies not in its unreality, which is discovered near the end of the novel, but rather in Lucy's reaction to it. She identifies with the nun as a fragment of her suppressed personality. When she is finally able to destroy the habit of the nun left in her bed as a cruel joke, she is expressing once and for all her conquest of the tendency to suppress. Her description seems peculiarly victorious in tone:

I could afford neither consternation, scream, nor swoon [...] I was not overcome. Tempered by late incidents, my nerves disdained hysteria [...] I defied spectra [...] In a moment, without exclamation, I had rushed on the haunted couch; nothing leaped out, or sprung, or stirred; all movement was mine, so was all the life, the reality, the substance, the force; as my instinct felt. I tore her up [...] I held her on high [...] I shook her loose [...] and down she fell- down all around me- down in shreds and fragments- and I trod upon her." (Brontë 533)

Lucy no longer sees the ghost as an aspect of herself, allowing her to destroy the habit. However, this victory is somewhat short-lived. It is at this point that she discovers that the ghost is a farce. Although this may be construed as distressing to many readers, perhaps it is most symbolic of Lucy's realization of her trauma's

effect on her own personality. She is able to destroy this item symbolic of her traumatic repression, and move forth, cured.

### **Dr. John: a Real Character, but a False Cure**

One of the few characters that is not part of Lucy's series of doubles is Dr. John, although his many personas make him just as provocative for analysis. Lucy has created, in effect, Graham's own string of doubles, which is evidence of his impact on her childhood. Graham/Dr. John/Isidore is not a healthy love interest for Lucy. It is only when she finally stops projecting her unrequited feelings onto double after double of Graham that she is able to develop feelings towards Monsieur Paul, consequently bringing about her self-cure.

Lucy's interaction with Dr. John, otherwise known as Graham Bretton or Isidore, is significant even though it does not help her cure herself. All three characters are unattainable romantic heroes, whom Lucy is unable to come to terms with. Lucy only discusses Graham out loud when she first lives with the Brettons once, directly before she leaves. Evidence of any interaction between the two is rare. It should be noted that, although she implies that interaction has taken place between them (when Graham says things to Polly such as, "You told Lucy Snowe you longed to have a ride" (Brontë 28)) no real conversation occurs. Lucy, the ever-observant, also notes that "Graham [...] observed to his mother, "-Mamma, I believe that creature [...] is a perfect cabinet of oddities; but I should be dull without her: she amuses me a great deal more than you or Lucy Snowe"(Brontë 28) There are many things to note in this snippet of conversation. First, Graham calls Lucy, who

has presumably been living with the Brettons for quite some time now, by her full name, possibly implying that the relationship between the two is not close and certainly not intimate, unless Graham is overcompensating to dispel unacceptable feelings towards his mother's godchild (which is a possibility, especially when the reader considers the unknown reason why Lucy Snowe seems compelled to leave the Brettons). Also, he admits out loud that he much prefers Polly and her idiosyncrasies to Lucy, which Lucy could see as an overt rejection. The reader feels inclined to not believe Lucy when she says to an inquiring Polly that she does like Graham a little, and rebuffs any further questioning from her, saying, "Where is the use of caring for him so very much? He is full of faults"(35). When she encounters Graham again, in the form of a mysterious English-speaking man in a chaotic swirl of French as she arrives in Villette, she does not recognize him, although the reader is strongly inclined to believe it is Graham without Lucy providing any specific proof confirming or denying his identity. It is only noted that the man is a "true young English gentleman" (Brontë 69). The reader tentatively assumes that Lucy would not introduce a character so mysterious had she not intended the reader to meet him again in the future.

Dr. John is perhaps the most complicated iteration of this character's nature. He reveals a great deal about Lucy and the inner workings of her mind; she is closest to losing control of the repression of her deep thoughts when she is around him. When Graham re-appears as Dr. John, he is described yet again as "the young Englishman"(Brontë 107). Even though the reader may not consciously remember this specific detail of the Englishman that Lucy encountered upon arriving at

Villette, he or she is certainly sensitive to the fact that Lucy describes him as someone with whom she is already familiar. Lucy refuses to give the reader any evidence that Dr. John recognizes her at all, whether just as the young Englishwoman he assisted or as his god-sister. This is not the only lie that Dr. John would have been caught aiding. Consider the case of Désirée, the child who “came to the conclusion that an illness would perfectly accommodate her tastes [...] she acted well” (Brontë 107). Dr. John joins in with the lie that Désirée and Madame Beck are acting; as Lucy puts it, “Dr. John consented tacitly to adopt Madame’s tactics, and to fall in with her maneuvers”(Brontë 107). Lucy watches the bizarre interaction between Madame Beck and Doctor John, implying her intense interest in the workings of this “new” character.

There is no evidence that Lucy and Dr. John have even exchanged so much as a few words at the pensionnat, and yet she watches him with a nearly erotic intensity. The reader sees a striking similarity between Lucy’s observations of Dr. John and Madame Beck’s intense surveillance of Lucy herself. Lucy, in a rare moment of openness with the reader, confesses:

It was not perhaps my business to observe the mystery of his bearing, or search out its origin or aim; but, placed as I was, I could hardly help it. He laid himself open to my observation, according to my presence in the room just that degree of notice and consequence a person of my exterior habitually expects: [...] what is given to unobtrusive articles of furniture [...] and carpets of no striking pattern [...] He would [...] smile [...] like a man who thinks himself alone. I, meantime, was free to puzzle over his countenance and

movements, and wonder what could be the meaning [...] he, I believe, never remembered that I had eyes in my head, much less a brain behind them.

(Brontë 108)

Lucy's declaration of her believed invisibility is yet another sign of the lack of logic prevalent in *Villette*. It would be foolish to believe that Dr. John is not conscious of Lucy's presence, unless, of course, Lucy is fabricating his ignorance as an excuse in order to explain how he has not recognized her yet. If Dr. John is indeed only a creation designed to fulfill Lucy's suppressed and unfinished business from her childhood encounter with Graham, then his recognizing her would derail the recovery process. However, he eventually does recognize her, and Lucy forces herself to come to terms with her unrequited love. She explains to the reader that Dr. John's kindness to her was not the love that she craved: "I learned in time that this benignity, this cordiality, this music, belonged in no shape to me [...] Goodnight, Dr. John: you are beautiful; but you are not mine"(Brontë 411). This, in effect begins Lucy Snowe's true cure. It is no accident that the catalyst for this cure immediately interrupts this confession: Monsieur Paul suddenly enters the scene, though it is assumed that he has been there for quite some time, listening to Lucy's musings. Monsieur Paul admits to Lucy, "you need watching, and watching over [...] and it is well for you I see this, and do my best to discharge both duties. I watch you and others pretty closely [...] nearer and oftener than you or they think"(Brontë 412). Although this is his first true admission of what he has been doing, his provocation of Lucy can be noted from their first extended encounter. This

interaction will lead to Lucy finally being able to cure herself, and pursue her own life, away from the manifestations of her personality and of Dr. John/Graham's.

### **Lucy as Freud: Self-Cure through Monsieur Paul's Provoked Analysis**

The impetus behind Lucy Snowe's gradual shift from traumatized storyteller to self-analytical narrator, who is able to examine her own emotions without projection, is her growing interaction with Monsieur Paul. His first prolonged conversation is comparable to Freud's dialogues with Dora: he unceremoniously pushes her beyond her comfort level in order to provoke her into a new mental state. In the school play, he forces her to take on the role of a man in order to fulfill a last-minute vacancy, using only the following to justify his quick action:

Play you must. I will not have you shrink, or frown, or make the prude. I read your skull that night you came; I see your moyns: play you can; play you must [...] There is no time to be lost, [...] let us thrust to the wall all reluctance, all excuses, all minauderies. You must take a part. (Brontë 147)

Monsieur Paul uses peculiarly invasive diction to convince Lucy to play the role. He goes so far as to say he has read her skull, rather than simply making a judgment of her character. He continues this brash implied invasion of Lucy's mind and private thoughts when he claims that he has breached her deepest physical barriers.

Although this seems to make Lucy uncomfortable ("The foreign language, the limited time, the public display... Inclination recoiled"), she submits to Monsieur Paul's demands.

The result is certainly shocking: during the play, she throws herself into the performance, projecting her feelings for Dr. John onto Ginevra, who plays Lucy's character's love interest. This is possibly the first instance of Lucy expressing real emotion. She admits to the reader:

I put my idea into the part I performed; I threw it into my wooing of Ginevra. In the 'Ours', or sincere lover, I saw Dr. John. Did I pity him, as erst? No, I hardened my heart, rivalled and outrivalled him. I knew myself but a fop, but where *he* was outcast *I* could please. Now I know I acted as if wishful and resolute to win and conquer. (Brontë 156)

Such a bold admission of the reasoning and feelings behind her actions is uncharacteristic of Lucy. Although Lucy gets an enormous amount of satisfaction from being able to give voice and free emotion to her passion for acting that has been ignited by Monsieur Paul, the true satisfaction for the reader comes with the admission of her strong feelings, from which she has barred the reader for most of the novel. She later says that:

Without heart, without interest, I could not play it at all [...so] I played it with relish. What I felt that night [...] I no more expected to feel and do, than to be lifted [...] to the seventh heaven. Cold, reluctant, apprehensive, I had accepted a part to please another: ere long [...] becoming interested, taking courage, I acted to please myself. Yet the next day, [...] I quite disapproved of these amateur performances; and though glad that I had obliged M. Paul [...], I took a firm resolution never to be drawn into a similar affair. (Brontë 156)

This moment is decidedly not a turning point for Lucy. She has not yet learned to observe her own behavior, and she uses projection as a way to release her pent-up feelings of attraction in what she believes to be the most socially acceptable way.

Her true turning point, when she is finally able to observe Monsieur Paul and analyze his behavior, follows Monsieur Paul's outburst at Lucy's refusal to give him a gift along with the rest of the pensionnat. Lucy's decision is enormously entertaining to the reader, as she admits, "The reader not having hitherto had any cause to ascribe to Miss Snowe's character the most distant pretensions to perfection, will be scarcely surprised to learn that she felt too perverse to defend herself from any imputation"(Brontë 385). Lucy has, for the first significant time in the novel, resorted to the use of the third person in order to analyze her admittedly perverse nature. She is aware not only of her own behavior, but also that of her peers. She knows that she is provoking M. Paul deliberately by withholding his present. Lucy knows full well that "the comic side of Monsieur's behavior had tempted me to delay, and now, Mademoiselle St. Pierre's affected interference provoked contumacity"(Brontë 385). Of course, M. Paul's outburst leads to Lucy's having one of her own: "Vive L'Angleterre, l'Histoire est les Héros! A bas la France, la Fiction et les Faquins!" (Brontë 387). She admits to her emotions, confessing, "I don't know whether *he* felt hot and angry, but I am free to confess that *I* did" (Brontë 387). She also regretfully remembers that she has not yet given him the little box that she has for him, instead choosing to place it inside her desk. Although one may see this as evidence that Lucy Snowe is not cured, because she is literally repressing a sign of her affection for M. Paul within her desk, we must take into

account that she only does so knowing “that the hand of M. Emmanuel was on the most intimate terms with my desk; that it [...] ransacked and arranged the contents, almost as familiarly as my own” (Brontë 388-389). Moreover, Lucy explains that this routine invasion “was not dubious, nor did he wish it to be so: he left signs of each visit palpable and unmistakable” (Brontë 389).

This moment is a crucial one in Lucy’s awakening from subject to analyst. Joseph Boone comments on this specific moment, noting that this event “has another side: Paul invades Lucy’s desk to leave her the books and pamphlets that [...] validate her intellectual ambition. And it is this intellectual reciprocity that [...] transforms Lucy into the force who penetrates M. Paul’s private sanctums”(Brontë 51). It is Monsieur Paul, whom we originally mapped onto Freud in *Dora*, who leads Lucy to be able to analyze the behavior of those around her and, most importantly her own behavior and emotions. It is this transformation that helps her cure herself. We see her reveling in this new transformation through Boone’s analysis: “It is now Paul who is “open” to Lucy’s entrance, he who serves as static threshold or portal through which her active quest for knowledge begins” (Brontë 51). However, Lucy’s encounters with Monsieur Paul are merely the catalyst for her true cure. Through M. Paul’s encouragement of her intellectual pursuits and his willingness to be observed and analyzed by her, Lucy is able to analyze herself, and leaves behind her string of doubles to pursue a new future.

Lucy’s transformation into the Freud-like character does not necessitate M. Paul’s removal from such a role; however, his convenient removal from the story soon after their mutual love has been declared is indicative of the independence of

Lucy's cure. M. Paul did not cure Lucy, however, he was the reason that she was able to cure herself. By the same logic, we cannot say that it was truly Freud who cured Dora; although his provocative discussions and observation certainly helped Dora draw the conclusions necessary to find herself cured and break off the analysis.

### **Lucy and Dora: Self-Analytical, Self-Curing Heroines**

When the reader reaches the end of the novel, narrator Lucy shows that she can be cured by returning to the metaphor of shipwreck she used in the beginning of the novel: "Peace, be still! Oh! A thousand weepers, praying in agony on waiting shores, listened for that voice, but it was not uttered- not uttered till; when the hush came, some could not feel it: till, when the sun returned, his light was night to some!"(Brontë 559). Although she may not be fully cured of the trauma of her youth at this point, she is able to acknowledge the light of the sun and the peaceful silence signaling the end of the storm. The storm, which has been plaguing Lucy throughout the novel, is finally over; hopefully, now that Lucy has told the story that she needed to tell, she can proceed with her life, cured of past trauma. The second-to-last paragraph certainly indicates that:

Here: 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 559)

In leaving open the possibility of Monsieur Paul's survival, Lucy Snowe also is declaring herself cured, through "joy born again fresh out of terror"(Brontë 559). The freedom of her words reminds us once again of Dora's willful self-emancipation from Freud's psychoanalysis. Lucy willfully leaves the reader, implying that it is not the reader's prerogative to divine the true cause of her trauma; rather, it is a call for the reader to rejoice with her in the freedom from the bindings of her past. By devoting the last few lines to brief description of the fates of some of the other characters in the novel, Lucy Snowe is, in a very Dora-like way, giving the news of other members of the story before declaring the reader's duty finished, whether he or she likes it or not.

Similarly, when Dora leaves the study, she takes effective control of her treatment. Freud describes it thus:

She opened the third sitting with these words: "Do you know that I am here for the last time to-day? —"How can I know, as you have said nothing to me about it?"—"Yes. I made up my mind to put up with it till the New Year. But I shall wait no longer than that to be cured." (Freud, *Dora*, 96)

In this statement, Dora is forcibly taking control of her own destiny, setting a deadline for her cure as if she has had control of it the entire time. She gives Freud even less notice than Lucy provides her reader. Lucy at least is able to give the reader satisfaction in seeing that Monsieur Paul loves her and will not attempt to change her. Although she still leaves the idea of his possible death open to the reader's interpretation, her contentment with her current life is clear. She adopts an optimistic tone, saying, "my school flourishes, my house is ready [...] I thought I

loved him when he went away; I love him now in another degree: he is more my own"(Brontë 558). Lucy remains vague until the very end, however the reader is convinced of her happiness. Since the readers have served their function as the audience for Lucy's therapeutic story, Lucy is able to leave them, cured from the trauma inflicted upon her in childhood.

The provocative style of narration that both Dora and Lucy implement begs interpretation. Many literary critics have mapped this particular case study onto *Villette* but few have concluded that Lucy suffers any sort of trauma. However, mapping the case study of *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* onto the novel of *Villette* unlocks the meaning of both female protagonists' decisions throughout their narratives. Examining the two characters systematically leads the reader to conclude that Dora and Lucy are sufferers of past trauma. They both exhibit signs of having undergone traumatic experiences. However, they also both demonstrate signs of recovering from this trauma throughout the timeframe of their respective stories. It is the reader's reaction that allows us to chart this transformation.

Through the first part of Lucy's story, the reader is drawn to Lucy's elusive Dora-like narrative style. The reader scours her words for meaning, just as Freud does with Dora, picking out slips of the tongue and revealing instances in the pursuit of understanding. However, as the novel progresses, Lucy's narrative style becomes more like Freud's: she is analytical of her own behavior and of other characters. The reader of *Villette* realizes that Lucy has cured herself of the trauma she has suffered from by Monsieur Paul's provoking her to become self-analytical. The reader who then proceeds to examine Dora after drawing this conclusion about Lucy

is able to answer the question that Freud had ended his study truly unable to answer: that Dora has, in effect, cured herself, and that he has actually just acted as the catalyst for her self-analysis.

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