5-14-2022

The Catholic paradox of Villette

Kevin R. Bie
James Madison University

The Catholic Paradox of *Villette*

An Honors College Project Presented to

the Faculty of the Undergraduate

College of Arts and Letters

James Madison University

by Kevin R. Bie

April 2022

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of English, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors College.

FACULTY COMMITTEE:

Project Advisor: Annette R. Federico, Ph.D.,
Interim Department Head, Professor, Department of English

Reader: Heidi L. Pennington, Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor, Department of English

HONORS COLLEGE APPROVAL:

Fletcher Linder, Ph.D.,
Dean, Honors College

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

This work is accepted for presentation, in part or in full, at the Honors Symposium on April 22nd, 2022.

Tables of Contents

Acknowledgements

To Mr. Jared Diener, thank you for your continual support throughout my entire academic career. You gave me the confidence to begin and to finish this project.

To Dr. Annette Federico, thank you for your patience and encouragement as this project shifted from far different initial and final forms. You gave me the nuanced lenses to discover my paradoxical claim.

To Dr. Heidi Pennington, thank you for inspiring me to pursue this topic. You gave me the zeal for Victorian literature and narrative theory, especially as they take shape in *Villette*.

To my family and friends, thank you for celebrating the small victories along this journey. You made this process a meaningful one.

To Mom and Dad, you continually give me so much support in all my academic endeavors. Thank you for always prioritizing my education and believing in me.

Abstract

Villette, published in 1853, was Charlotte Brontë's last novel. Brontë explores both narrative and religious complexities through her narrator, Lucy Snowe. Orphaned Lucy Snowe embarks on a new life in a predominantly Catholic country where her Protestant identity is challenged. Catholicism is presented as a temptation for Lucy. Brontë reveals Lucy's story through her notable fictional autobiography structure, but Lucy Snowe complicates the relationship between narrator and reader. Lucy explicitly capitalizes on the structure of fictional autobiography, critiquing her narration and fostering a personal relationship with the reader.

This thesis analyzes the Catholic paradox in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* by simultaneously exploring its religious and its narrative complexities. Lucy Snowe is tempted by Catholicism but remains true to her Protestant identity. Yet, her fictional autobiography aligns with the Catholic sacrament of Confession. Lucy Snowe acts as the confessant, imposing the role of the confessor upon the reader.

Introduction

My interest in Charlotte Brontë's 1853 novel *Villette* began during my semester abroad at Oxford. I spent the Trinity term studying Victorian literature, reading works by Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, Alfred Lord Tennyson, George Eliot, and every Brontë sister. Arriving in the middle of a national lockdown, I spent my quarantine period getting acquainted with *Villette's* Lucy Snowe, along with my roommates, of course. *Villette* was further down my reading list, but I knew it was one of Dr. Pennington's favorite novels. So, I spent my first Oxford morning in my new "flat" with a cup of English Breakfast and a paperback copy of *Villette.*

Villette is the fictional autobiography of Lucy Snowe. Orphaned Lucy Snowe ventures from England to the city of Villette where her Protestant identity is challenged. She is self-reliant, introspective, and hyper aware of her reader. Lucy invites the reader into her journey of self-discovery, as she crafts her identity through her narrative. In her narration, Lucy holds two identities: narrator-Lucy and character-Lucy. Narrator-Lucy retrospectively reveals the events of her past, whereas character-Lucy engages with the plotline as it is revealed to the reader. These identities frequently overlap, making narrator-Lucy and character-Lucy difficult to distinguish. Similarly, Lucy acknowledges a multifaceted reader. Garrett Stewart describes this split reader in Victorian fictional autobiography in two identities. First, there is the actual reader who flips through the pages of Brontë's novel. Stewart regards this reader as the "traditional captive audience" (Stewart 4). Yet, there is also the textualized reader whose specific identity is crafted by Lucy and holds responsibility in responding to Lucy. Lucy engages with her reader on fifty-

four occasions through a series of hypothesized responses and questions. The narrator-reader relationship is at the forefront of *Villette.*

Villette has puzzled readers since its 1853 publication. Scholars, Anna Gibson, and Kristen Pond, acknowledge popular notions of limiting Lucy to the title of the "unreliable narrator" (Pond 771 Gibson 204). Anna Gibson notes *Villette's* frequent comparisons to Charlotte Brontë's 1847 fictional autobiography *Jane Eyre.* Unlike Jane, Lucy's seemingly manipulative narrative authority may inspire readings of what Susan Gilbert terms "trickery." Others find Lucy's "splitting of self" as a tool to represent self-discovery or repression of desire (Gibson 204). Anna Gibson argues that *Villette* offers an "openness" not found in *Jane Eyre.* Brontë moves toward a narration that provides less closure throughout, as Lucy withholds information from the reader. Kristen Pond also discusses the lack of closure in *Villette,* esteeming Lucy's silence to open the reader's interpretation of the text. Pond claims "Brontë encourages the reader to resist the impulse to seize control of Lucy's story and instead to extend sympathy despite the unresolved ending" (Pond 791). From its initial reception, scholars such as Gibson and Pond reopen the conversation to justify Brontë's strategic use of narrative complexities.

Anti-Catholic critiques of *Villette* also remain a point of contention among literary scholars. Diana Peschier claims that readings of *Villette* "as being essentially anti-Catholic has become almost routine among her critics" (Peschier 91). Lucy explicitly critiques the Catholic church as she states, "God is not with Rome" (Brontë 393) and her utter preference for Protestantism is clear throughout. Michael M. Clarke examines Lucy's critiques of Catholicism, but questions "why did Bronte devise a narrative in which the differences between Catholic and Protestant play so pivotal a role, and in which the romantic plotline is dependent on the union of

two characters who represent clashing faith traditions?" (Clarke 968). Sympathetic portrayals of Catholic characters, specifically M. Paul Emmanuel, complicate the traditional anti-Catholic perception of *Villette.*

I opened *Villette* with an initial focus on its narrative complexities. However, it is the religious aspects of this text that immediately intrigued me. From my prior research, I knew many scholars deemed this text explicitly anti-Catholic. Lucy certainly states her critiques of Catholic doctrine, but I prepared myself for worse. As a practicing Catholic, I was surprised to find sympathetic portrayals of Catholic characters and Lucy's continuous exploration of Catholicism. Particularly, Lucy is drawn to the confessional in her lowest moment, and Lucy leads an interfaith conversation with Père Silas. After reading the novel, I could not help but wonder why I was not offended by such a notoriously "anti-Catholic" novel. My lack of offense inspired my investigation. The anti-Catholic claims of *Villette* are valid, but I felt as though there were far more layers to explore in Charlotte Brontë's portrayal of Catholicism.

In this thesis I examine these layers, by exploring what I call the "Catholic paradox" of *Villette*. This paradox refers to Lucy Snowe's concurrent detestation and fascination with Catholicism. I isolate passages from the text that exemplify this paradox and analyze them through both narrative and theological lenses.

Each chapter cumulatively builds this paradox, by arguing that Lucy's narrative models the Catholic sacrament of confession. In chapter one, I examine the presentation of Catholicism as a form of temptation for Lucy, especially her experience in confession. Lucy perceives her attraction toward Catholicism as sin. Chapter two builds upon Lucy's guilt established in chapter one, aligning her with the Catholic confessant. Chapter three completes the Catholic confession format, by analyzing the role of the confessor that Lucy imposes upon both the textualized and

the actual reader. In doing so, Lucy ironically becomes the Catholic that she adamantly critiques.

Throughout this paper, I reference a few principal scholars that largely inform my argument. My first principal scholar I reference is Amy Cote. In her essay "A Handful of Loose Beads," Cote examines the overlapping roles of religion and narrative ethics in *Villette.* Her concluding Catholic metaphor for the narrative structure of Villette is the Catholic rosary. Her argument is largely inspired by the following *Villette* quote:

> "a handful of loose beads: but threaded through by that quick-shot and crafty glance of a Jesuit-eye, they dropped pendent in a long string, like that rosary on the prie-dieu. Where lay the link of junction, where the little clasp of this monastic necklace? I saw or felt union, but could not yet find the spot, or detect the means of connection" (Brontë 368).

Cote examines this quotation to analyze Lucy's struggle to comprehend how parts of Catholicism synthesize into wholes. Similarly, the narrative is crafted to synthesize many fragments of autobiography into a story (Cote 473-474). Cote acknowledges the possibility of the novel following the format of Catholic Confession. She critiques this possibility due to the absence of "another human" in the conversation with Lucy (Cote 478). Confession requires both the confessant and the confessor. Cote's argument thus lays the foundation for part of my exploration of the connection between Catholicism and narrative form in *Villette*; at the same time, my main claim diverges from Cote's to highlight the role of the reader as the confessor.

I also examine the analysis of Gregory O'Dea. In his essay "Narrator and Reader in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*," O'Dea examines Lucy's complex relationship with the reader. He compares the narrative structure of *Villette* to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre,* analyzing the different narrator-reader relationships that define each novel. He states, "Whereas Jane Eyre's

narrative is one of self-presentation, Lucy Snowe's is one of self-examination" (O'Dea 45). O'Dea largely informs my understanding of narrative ethics, allowing me to connect Lucy's Snowe's narrative complexities to that of the Catholic confessant. O'Dea also inspires my understanding of Lucy's expectations for the reader in the identity that she crafts for the reader.

Lastly, I incorporate segments from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In this paper, I wanted to incorporate theological elements to understand Lucy's critiques of Catholicism and the implications of Catholic confession. I turned to the Catechism for the "whats" and "whys" of Catholic doctrine, establishing a more concrete understanding of confession. I learned both the practical and spiritual purposes of the sacrament, beyond my own experience. In doing so, I present the roles of the confessant and the confessor not from my own experience, but from Catholic doctrine.

Chapter One: Catholicism as Temptation

In Charlotte Brontë's *Villette,* Lucy Snowe frequently perceives Catholicism as a form of temptation, leading her away from her Protestant practices. Lucy Snowe is a Protestant Englishwoman living in a predominantly Catholic city: Villette.[1] She struggles to navigate both her national and religious identity in Villette, searching for her own identity as "I, Lucy Snowe" (Brontë 8). Much of Lucy's identity is rooted in her self-reliant resistance to Catholicism. Her resistance to Catholicism is scattered in several passages throughout the novel and it is highlighted in her confession with Père Silas. Lucy adamantly refuses the possibility of conversion in each passage, but she imagines alternative narratives as a nun and with Catholic M. Paul Emmanuel. This paradoxical element marks the peak of my interest for this essay: Lucy's temptation through Catholic doctrine.

First and foremost, Lucy Snowe is a "Protestant in a Catholic land" (Clarke 2). Her Protestant identity establishes an initial barrier from the Catholic characters and Catholic setting. Lucy establishes this barrier from the start as she paints Rue Fossette for the reader. As she walks home at night, she observes, "a light in the oratory window that the Catholic household were then gathered to evening prayer—a rite, from attendance on which, I now and then, as a Protestant, exempted myself" (Brontë 97). As Lucy walks alone in the evening, the warmly "Catholic household" appears quite tempting. While Lucy is cold, the Catholics are warm. While Lucy walks in the dark, the Catholics sit in the light. While Lucy is alone, the Catholics gather as a family. In this scene, the Catholic household seems to have everything that Lucy does not. Yet, Lucy "exempt[s]" herself because of her Protestant identity. It is important to note the structure of this quotation which sends the verb "exempted" all the way to the end of the sentence. Three

[1] "Villette" is French for "small town" and signifies a fictional version of Brussels.

parentheticals occur before Lucy informs the reader that she does not participate in the evening prayer. By doing so, Brontë displays Lucy's temptation to participate because it takes her so long syntactically to deny herself participation. Lucy suppresses her desire as "solitude and the summer moon [whisper] 'stay with us'" (Brontë 97). Lucy refrains from her Protestant perceived sin.

It is worth noting that Lucy finds communion in the personified "summer moon" (Brontë 97). While the Catholics are warmed by the light of the oratory, Lucy is warmed by the light of the moon. These images conflict with one another, instilling an active tension in this scene. The moon is a classic Brontë symbol prominent in both *Villette* and *Jane Eyre*. In this passage, Lucy's use of atmospheric conditions as guiding elements in her experience evoke notions of pagan practice. Lucy critiques M. Paul Emmanuel's faith as "touched with superstition" (Brontë 370). She similarly critiques Père Silas' "popish superstition" (Brontë 149). Superstition is one of Lucy's tactics for critiquing Catholicism. Yet is not her moon-led discernment already superstitious? Lucy hypocritically participates in her own pagan/ superstitious practices. Her reliance on atmospheric conditions developed throughout, but Lucy particularly outlines some of her atmospheric beliefs in chapter four. Lucy perceives "the long-lamenting east wind" as indicative of epidemic diseases (Brontë 32). She even aligns this belief with "the legend of the Banshee" (Brontë 32), in which a spirit howls in the windows of a home when one of the residents is going to die. Lucy presents her knowledge and her belief of Scottish and Irish folklore. Through both atmospheric conditions and folklore, Lucy's own superstitions undermine her critiques of Catholic superstition.

Similarly, Lucy is tempted by M. Paul: Lucy's Catholic love interest throughout the latter half of the novel. It is important to note that Lucy is not initially attracted to M. Paul. She

initially characterizes him as a "small, dark and spare man" (Brontë 58). In his initial characterization, he is not a clear love interest. Rather, he "underwent a metamorphosis" in chapter seventeen when Lucy characterizes him as "vivacious, kind, and social" (Brontë 129) at the end of the play. It is not until chapter nineteen that Lucy, "beginning now to perceive his drift, I had a certain pleasure in keeping cool, and working him up" (Brontë 188). Lucy begins to understand M. Paul and finds pleasure in "working him up." It is only then that M. Paul begins to seem like a strong match for Lucy. She flirts with him and by the end of the novel she describes their unconventional courtship of different faiths. Her growing attraction to M. Paul parallels her growing temptation for Catholicism.

Lucy is particularly drawn to the way that M. Paul embodies Catholicism. Unlike Père Silas who condemns Lucy for her Protestantism, M. Paul accepts Lucy's Protestantism. Lucy hears M. Paul utter "Marie, Reine du Ciel," as he prays to Mary for Lucy's salvation. Lucy admires M. Paul's focus on mercy rather than condemnation. "I thought Romanism wrong, a great mixed image of gold and clay; but it seemed to me that *this* Romanist held the purer elements of his creed with an innocency of heart which God must love" (Brontë 392). Although M. Paul is notably Catholic, Lucy uses the term "Romanism" while discussing his faith. Merriam Webster notes the historical use of this word in the United Kingdom and United States, as an "often offensive" term for Catholics (Merriam Webster 1). This derogatory term focuses on Catholics as "superstitious" (OED 1). Calling Catholicism a "great mixed image of gold and clay" (Brontë 392), Lucy reveals prior notions of gold/ faith, sullied by clay/ earthly forms. Lucy's critique of earthly forms is prominent throughout the text, but historically, it may refer to the Protestant critique of Jesuit casuistry. Casuistry involves a written Catholic theology for confessors to properly assess the gravity of sins and provide the appropriate penance, minimizing

a more “case-by-case” approach (Keenan 627). Père Silas is a Jesuit priest as Lucy tells us “They say he is a Jesuit” (Brontë 172). Père Silas also meets Lucy in a confessional, associating him with casuistry. Lucy critiques Père Silas’ embodiment of Catholicism. Lucy prefers M. Paul who offers a purer faith. M. Paul challenges Lucy’s preconceived notions of Catholicism because she is attracted to him. Despite his ardent Catholicism, Lucy is attracted to M. Paul and his values. Although finds Catholic rites attractive in prior passages, M. Paul provides Lucy’s fanaticized picture of Catholicism: warm and familial. In their unconventional courtship, M. Paul presents orphaned Lucy Snowe the potential for family. Echoing my earlier discussion of the “Catholic household,” Catholicism tempts Lucy with its communal aspects. Lucy seeks communion with M. Paul.

As Lucy seeks communion with M. Paul, she presents him through Christ-like allusions. Tonya Edgren-Bindas notes Lucy’s perception of M. Paul as a Christlike figure. Edgren-Bindas notes Lucy’s various names for M. Paul such as “being ‘oracular,’ her ‘diviner,’ and, finally, the ‘vague arbiter of my destiny’” (Edgrean-Bindas 256). In this way she perceives M. Paul as a savior. Above all these given attributes, Lucy shifts from calling him M. Paul to Emmanuel. While Emmanuel constitutes part of M. Paul Emmanuel’s full name, it is important to note this shift because Emmanuel is the Hebrew name for Christ (Edgrean-Bindas 256). Lucy also presents savior allusions of M. Paul in the final pages of the novel. She awaits his arrival and repeats the phrase “he is coming” on multiple occasions, alluding to Jesus’ resurrection (Brontë 462). M. Paul goes away, and Lucy actively prepares for his “fixed return” after “three years are past” (Brontë 462). M. Paul’s return parallels Jesus’ resurrection as told in 1 Corinthians 15:4 which states, “He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:4 New American Standard Bible). Both M. Paul and Jesus return after three units of time: three

years for M. Paul and three days for Jesus. M. Paul's "fixed return" parallels "according to the scriptures" in which Jesus' return was also fixed. Presenting M. Paul as her messiah, he becomes the ultimate Catholic temptation.

Lucy detests Catholicism, calling it "Romanism," yet she establishes M. Paul as her own personal Christ. As a love-interest, Marie Hause speculates Lucy is consumed by her lust for M. Paul, one of the seven deadly sins (Hause 84). Lucy is sexually tempted by M. Paul. She eroticizes him on multiple occasions including chapter thirty-six as she watches him instruct pupils at the school. Lucy takes a seat at one of the desks, alongside the circle of other schoolgirls, while M. Paul speaks in the center. Lucy describes "His dark paletôt, his jetty hair, were tinged with many a reflex of crimson; his Spanish face, when he turned it momentarily, answered the sun's animated kiss with an animated smile" (Brontë 384). Although Lucy reveals that M. Paul is speaking, she only offers a visual recollection to the reader. Lucy captures M Paul as a spectacle from the perspective of a schoolgirl, captivated by his physical features. Additionally, the language of this quotation is lined with erotic words like "crimson" and "kiss." Lucy's perception of M. Paul as Christ may also inspire readings of heretical idolatry. In all branches of Christianity, practicing Christians abide by the Ten Commandments: a series of ten commandments given to Moses by God to live a virtuous life. The first of these commandments is told in Exodus 20:3 "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3 New American Standard Bible). By revering M. Paul as Christ-like, she constructs her own "false god," violating the first commandment. In both cases, M. Paul is another facet of the novel's Catholicism that tempts Lucy to entertain her perceived sin.

Lucy's temptation may also connect to the plot thread of the "ghostly nun" (Brontë 123). Madame Beck's school was formerly a convent and Lucy resides in one of the nun's former

"cells" (Brontë 60). The school's convent past is troubled by the story of a nun who was buried alive. On at least three occasions, Lucy believes she sees this nun haunting the halls of the Rue Fossette. Lucy first spots the nun in chapter twenty-two dressed in black and white garments, making its way for the door (Brontë 229). Lucy spots the nun again in chapter thirty-two and then for the final time in chapter thirty-nine "stretched out on [her] bed the old phantom—the NUN" (Brontë 439). Although the figure is merely Ginevra Fanshawe's disguised lover, Lucy's projections onto the legend of the nun are indicative of her inner psyche. Many scholars agree that the nun serves as a double for Lucy Snowe. Christina Crosby notes the image of the nun as one of repression, burying alive Lucy's sexual desires (Crosby 704). Tonya Edgren-Bindas aligns with this perspective, arguing much of Lucy's connection to the nun involves how she is tempted by M. Paul. While I concur with the "ghostly nun" as a symbol of the repression of emotions, I believe Lucy's connection to the buried alive nun, as articulated by Marie Hause, involves Lucy's fear of breaking a vow and being punished for it (Hause 84). Brontë writes that the nun is "buried alive for some sin against her vow" (Brontë 96). So, the important question is: what is Lucy's vow that she is fearful of sinning against? It is Lucy's Protestant identity. As Lucy witness the "pomp" of Catholic ceremonies, she expresses her vow to her Protestant identity as she writes, "I had a mind to keep to my reformed creed; the more I saw of Popery the closer I clung to Protestantism; doubtless there were errors in every church, but I now perceived by contrast how severely pure was my own" (Brontë 394). Lucy intertwines Protestant beliefs with her identity through her use of "my" in "my reformed creed" and "my own [church]." She takes ownership of her Protestant faith. Lucy, much like a nun, exempts herself from any possibility of sin in order to maintain her vow. As Lucy is tempted by Catholicism, she fears breaking her vow to Protestantism, inspiring her figurative self-burial.

Lucy's temptation for Catholicism is fueled by Protestantism's inability to meet her needs. Unlike her earlier romanticized solitude while Lucy observes the Catholic household, Lucy also experiences intense loneliness. She states, "The solitude and the stillness of the long dormitory could not be borne any longer" (Brontë 146) which marks a turning point for Lucy. Prior to the confession scene, Lucy Snowe reveals the only words she could pray were "From my youth up Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind" (Brontë 146). Praying for solace, Lucy seeks to rectify her condition with prayer. Lucy seeks solace in Protestant methodology that fails to work for her. Unlike Catholicism, which offers tangible "forms" of attaining relationship, forgiveness, and evaluating one's mental state, Lucy depends solely on Protestant methodology. Protestantism, foundationally, upholds sacred scripture above the authority of the church and the clergy and the priesthood of all believers (Melton xi). In other words, Protestantism rejects the need for a priest/mediator, believing that one can access God through Christ in the form of sacred scripture and private prayer. Lucy's private prayer closely weaves together with her suspected depression. She denies external help from doctors/mediators, believing that they cannot cure her. Scholars such as Susan Anne Carlson believe that Lucy's narration of this scene depicts Lucy's experience with depression for her intense loneliness is succeeded by physical illness (Carlson 13). Lucy hallucinates skulls on bedposts amidst ongoing insomnia. Susan Anne Carlson argues that Charlotte Brontë constructed Lucy Snowe's experience with depression upon her own, as seen in Brontë's letters. Suzanne Reynolds, among others, agrees that Charlotte Brontë suffered from clinical depression from a young age (Reynolds 1). This echoes Lucy Snowe's desperate prayer "From my youth… I suffered with a troubled mind" (Brontë 146). Carlson aligns the 1853 publication of *Villette* with the 1848 and 1849 deaths of Charlotte's sisters Emily and Anne, respectively. These events exacerbated

Brontë's depression in the years she wrote *Villette* (Carlson 15). In Charlotte Brontë's life, there was no viable treatment of depression. A contemporary reading lends one to view Lucy's interaction with the priest as therapeutic. Lucy seeks solace in what she and Brontë know: religion. Lucy Snowe enters the Catholic confessional seeking a cure to a clinical condition, imposes the role of therapist upon the priest. When Protestant methodology of individual prayer fails to work for her, Lucy seeks solace in the Catholic external forms that she critiques. Her Protestant identity is questioned when her needs go unmet thereby, increasing her Catholic temptation.

In her lowest moment, Lucy seeks solace in confession and the Catholic sacrament becomes her temptation. It is this point of the novel where Lucy's fragile mental state leads to the greatest possibility of her conversion, nearly breaking her Protestant vow.
Brontë evokes Psalm 88:15 "From my youth… I suffered with a troubled mind" in Lucy's prayer to show that Lucy is in despair (Brontë 146). This Psalm also attributes Lucy's hardship to her "troubled mind," furthering the prior discussion of depression. Lucy echoes this Psalm in her confession as she discusses "a pressure of affliction on my mind" as the primary cause for her distress (Brontë 148). In the moment, confession is what saves her from her "troubled mind" in a therapeutic way (Brontë 146). Yet, she recalls the experience through a multitude of ironic comments to diminish her "close call" with Catholicism. Confession becomes her sinful salvation. I will lead with close readings of Lucy's confession with Père Silas to examine how Brontë portrays Lucy's perception of Catholicism to be one of temptation. This passage comprises chapter fifteen, "The Long Vacation," which concludes Volume I of the novel. Confession is Lucy's ultimate "vice", so it is crucial to the argument that she perceives Catholicism as temptation.

Lucy's implicit desire to justify her temptation to engage in a Catholic rite guides this passage. She first attributes her urge to the forceful pull of the bells that "arrested" her**.** Lucy informs her reader, "The bells of a church arrested me" (Brontë 147). Lucy immediately narrates the forceful pull of bells that "arrested" her. This verb simultaneously enforces Lucy's desire to go to the church and presents the church negatively as the forceful arrester. Earlier in the novel, Lucy informs the reader how she intentionally strolls through the alleys on her way home to hear the bells of St. Jean Baptiste which she describes as "sweet, soft, exalted" (Brontë 97). Her chosen adjectives in this earlier passage paint the church in a pleasant manner. So, why do the same "sweet, soft, exalted" bells later "arrest" Lucy? Perhaps Lucy justifies the uncontrollable temptation to follow the church bells in this way, as it eliminates her agency and therefore her guilt from the situation. She similarly undermines her agency as she describes how she went "mechanically obedient" to the confessional. In doing so, Lucy presents this scene in a way that diminishes her free will. Her insistence that she had no agency in her approach to the confessional suggests that she feels this act is sinful. Lucy's language shows that she is trying to deny responsibility for the act, thus rendering herself guiltless in the committal of it. Lucy aims to explore these parts of Catholicism but portrays herself begrudgingly doing so. This becomes her self-defense.

Disguise is also a facet of Lucy's self-defense. Brontë portrays Lucy Snowe "covered with a cloak" in this scene (Brontë 147). It is important to note that Lucy has prior employed "a cloak and hood of hodden grey" as a metaphor to "achieve with impunity, and even approbation" (Brontë 37). This metaphor is found in chapter four as Lucy esteems the "grave" and "judicious" Mrs. Barrett alongside her own "staid manner" (Brontë 37). Maintaining this metaphorical cloak allows Lucy to explore in a way that women would never be permitted to do. Thus, when Lucy

wears a cloak on her way to confession, she wants to explore Catholicism without retribution. In the scope of the novel, Lucy may wish to control who sees her as she ventures to the Catholic church. Similarly, Lucy can control how readers perceive her desire through the metaphorical "cloak" of her narration. I will examine Lucy as a narrator in the following chapter, but the concept of controlling the perceptions of others is crucial in *Villette*, especially to Lucy Snowe.

Lucy approaches the confessional through a risk analysis method as another form of self-defense. Character-Lucy states, "To take this step could not make me more wretched than I was; it might soothe me" (Brontë 147). The dominant present tense of this quotation signifies character-Lucy is the one who thinks this but is narrator-Lucy who speaks this. Narrator-Lucy's voice is prominent in the past tense of "was" which would instead be "am," if spoken by character-Lucy. Both character-Lucy and narrator-Lucy partake in this risk-analysis method. In this way, character-Lucy once again opens herself to the opportunity of exploring Catholicism but presents confession not as a meaningful sacrament. Instead, she presents confession as something "that could not make me more wretched than I was" (Brontë 147). In this tactic, narrator-Lucy undermines herself to minimize risk. She presents herself as "wretched" for two reasons. First, character-Lucy is in an intense state of depression and believes that she is indeed wretched. Secondly, perceiving herself as wretched allows any form of solace to help. Thus, Lucy maximizes benefit. This perception distorts the traditional practice of confession, which is directly a means of bettering oneself, by freeing oneself from past sins. She aims not to better herself, but focuses on "soothing" herself, a verb more so associated with pleasure and temptation. She approaches confession as an experiment with few negative outcomes, as a means of lessening the religious implications of the act she is about to commit. In doing so, she aims to deny the appeal of the Catholic practice.

Lucy, unable to receive sacramental solace through confession, finds self-consolation in confession as she states *"*the mere relief of communication in an ear which was human and sentient, yet consecrated—the mere pouring out of some portion of long accumulating, long pent-up pain into a vessel whence it could not be again diffused—had done me good. I was already solaced" (Brontë 148). Although Lucy is unable to receive the sacramental reconciliation due to her Protestant identity, she still feels "solaced," before leaving the confessional. This echoes the aforementioned paragraph when Lucy claims "it might soothe me" (Brontë 147), as she confirms her expectation of feeling eased. She desired community and warmth, and she found it within "the mere relief of communication in an ear which was human and sentient yet consecrated" (Brontë 147). In this quotation, Lucy encapsulates the sanctity of confession, developing a complex Roman Catholic belief: "in persona Christi" (*Confession Step by Step* 2017), a Latin phrase meaning "in the person of Christ" (*Confession Step by Step* 2017). Although Peré Silas remains human, he is "in persona Christi," sacramentally bringing God closer to the penitent. Yet, Lucy reduces Peré Silas to "an ear." She finds solace in having a listener, a role she imposes upon the actual reader as well. Lucy reduces the sacrament in this way, as she also refers to the priest as a "vessel." Confessants come to receive absolution for their sins, but Lucy is more focused on someone else receiving her sins. She inverts the sacrament in a way that grants her authority, capitalizing on the structure of "an ear which was… consecrated." Not only does Lucy perceive Peré Silas as a receiver, but she also perceives the beauty of a "consecrated ear." It is likely that Lucy is referring to the sacramental seal of confession in which the priest must not reveal the content of the confession to another. In selective aspects of the confession, Lucy finds solace.

Lucy embraces the comfort of confession until Peré Silas offers the idea of her conversion as he states, “Protestantism is altogether too dry, too cold, prosaic for you” (Brontë 149). As Catholicism begins to meet Lucy’s needs for community and warmth, Peré Silas offers a critique of Protestantism. In doing so, he provides her with a call to action, a way to perceivably better herself upon her experience that night. However, although Lucy seems priorly engaged with ideas of Catholicism she immediately shuts down the idea of her conversion. This would break her Protestant vow. Lucy claims her preference for the “Babylonish furnace” rather than “venturing again within that worthy priest’s reach” (Brontë 149). As Lucy seeks the warmth of Catholicism, the evolution of warmth to uncontrollable heat, evokes danger, eliminating any existing comfort. The “Babylonish furnace” is too hot for Lucy Snowe. Lucy’s biblical allusion also intensely compares Catholicism to heretical idolatry, alluding to the “Babylonish furnace” (Brontë 149). Daniel 3:6 details King Nebuchadnezzar’s desire to be worshiped as an idol and states his threat: “whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into the middle of a furnace of blazing fire” (Daniel 3:6 New American Standard Bible). Tempted by Père Silas’ warm kindness and fearful of his influence on her conversion, she asserts a firm preference for martyrdom. This allusion also echoes a common Protestant critique of Catholicism: having too many forms between the individual and God. Forms refer to the people and things that “obstruct” one’s relationship with God (Clarke 980), much like a priest “in persona Christi” that captivated Lucy earlier in confession. Lucy commends Père Silas’ ability to gently influence but fears herself “not wholly impervious” to the appeal of Catholicism (Brontë 149). In doing so, she recognizes the appeal of Catholicism in its more personal and relational “forms,” but remains adamantly against Catholicism.

Catholicism is now established as a baseline of temptation for Lucy. Protestantism is her vow. Breaking this vow, she fears that she will end up like the “ghostly nun” who is buried alive. Lucy later states “I might just now, instead of writing this heretic narrative, be counting my beads in the cell of a certain Carmelite convent” (Brontë 149). Retrospectively, Narrator-Lucy recognizes her ability to craft a “heretic narrative” because she is more defined in her Protestant identity, but Character-Lucy is far more pliable. Character-Lucy is tempted to convert to Catholicism, but narrator-Lucy aims to minimize this feeling. Narrator-Lucy forecasts a hypothetical avenue for Character-Lucy: a Carmelite convent. This is much more than Lucy’s usual anti-Catholic sentiment. Yet, Narrator-Lucy intertwines this idea with negative undertones. Narrator-Lucy diminishes the prayerful intentions of rosary beads as she refers to the act of “counting my beads" (Brontë 149), portraying the prayerful act as more mindless and meaningless. While Lucy's tone is caustic, she nonetheless fully imagines this alternative life for herself, and structurally aligns her Protestant (fictional) autobiography with a nun's confessions and prayer practices. This echoes Lucy’s later reference to the rosary as “a handful of loose beads: but threaded through by that quick-shot and crafty glance of a Jesuit-eye” as Père Silas stitches together pieces M. Paul’s story into a metaphorical rosary (Brontë 368). Lucy further reduces the sanctity of Catholic practices and offers a connection between her narrative and Catholic practice, developed by Amy Cote. Lucy is skeptical of the “Catholic methods of manipulating independent incidents into convenient wholes” (Cote 474). “Independent incidents” signify the beads of a rosary, whereas “convenient wholes” signify the rosary. Lucy cannot find the means of connection but offers a reality where she is “counting [her] beads;” perhaps she finds the connection. Lucy’s alternative Catholic life is one that connects the many moving parts

of her (fictional) autobiography. Next examining Lucy as the confessant, I examine this alternative Catholic life where there is a connection in Lucy's narrative: Catholic confession.

Brontë builds a paradox in which Lucy is tempted by Catholicism but structures her narrative much like a Catholic confession. In one of the above passages, Lucy acknowledges the appeal of a priest as an "ear," in which she can pour out her troubles. In the next two chapters I will explore how Lucy establishes the confessional "ear" relationship with the actual reader and the dialogue of the textualized reader. Next, I will examine Lucy as the confessant in the relationship. Then, I will examine the role of the multivalent reader as the confessor. In doing so, the paradox will be complete.

Chapter Two: Lucy as the Confessant

Lucy Snowe's narration embodies that of the confessant in Catholic confession. She critically examines her conscience, she begrudgingly shares her stories with the actual reader, and she withholds information from the actual reader. Note the distinction between the actual reader who actively receives Lucy's confession and the textualized reader who offers a response to Lucy. Both readers comprise Lucy's confessor. Lucy Snowe is a guilty narrator. Despite holding fast to her Protestant identity, Lucy Snowe ironically embodies Catholic guilt and her confession to the actual reader reveals her guilt throughout. In the previous chapter, I examine the portrayal of Catholicism as temptation. Presenting Lucy Snowe as the guilty confessant further builds the Catholic paradox in *Villette:* Lucy detests Catholicism, but she adopts the role of confessant in her narration. This chapter will examine Lucy's embodiment of the confessant role.

Some scholars have already connected the narrative structure of *Villette* to confession. Rosemary Clark-Beattie acknowledges the narrative acts as a "subverted confession" (Clark-Beattie 824). Clark-Beattie argues that the narrative form of speaking without needing a reply, matches that of confession. Clark-Beattie refers to the general act of confession as a monologue with a listener. The Catholic sacrament of confession instead holds spiritual implications designating the roles of the confessant and the confessor and offering spiritual absolution. Amy Cote argues that the narrative structure more so aligns with that of the Catholic rosary, but she acknowledges the connection between *Villette* and confession. She states "This account book in some ways resembles the confessional, where a penitent can list her sins and receive in recompense both shrift and absolution. But, when removed from conversation with another

human, Lucy becomes both debtor and accountant" (Cote 486). My next chapter will debate Cote's claim, as "another human" in the conversation is the reader that Lucy creates. In this chapter, I will focus on the roles that Cote grants Lucy: "debtor and accountant" (Cote 486). As both "debtor and accountant," Lucy owes the cause of her guilt to the reader, but she is also the one who closely examines her guilt throughout. In other words, the structure of fictional autobiography operates under the impression that Lucy owes her story to the reader, but she also examines her story throughout. Is this not characteristic of a confessant during the examination of conscience? Cote argues Lucy's embodiment of the scrupulous "accountant" hinders the confession argument, as the role of "accountant" should be held by "another human." However, the "accountant" is a key facet of the confessant's role. Lucy as the confessant is scrupulous, highly aware of her narrative construction.

Lucy Snowe naturally takes the position of confessant from the intimate structure of the fictional autobiography. Rachel Ablow notes that the intimacy of the autobiographical voice can be "a way to enlist our sympathies before we have a fair chance to evaluate its object" (Cote 478). Although confession is a nonfiction genre, regarding real people, real sins, and real souls, beyond the language functions that animate them to the confessor, there is a connection between the confessant and the narrator of fictional autobiography. The presentation medium of a book presents a physical barrier between Lucy and the reader. Similarly, a confessional presents a physical barrier between the confessant and the priest. The screen of the confessional preserves anonymity much like Lucy's desire for "cloak[ed]" disguise, as discussed in chapter one. It temporarily forms the anonymous confessant's experience into a discursive structure that parallels the discourse structure of a written narrative (Brontë 37,147). The identity of the confessant, in the eyes of the confessor, is merely the words that they present. Is this not the

structure of books? In this way, novels present a formal barrier between the confessant and the receiver of the confession, narratively. Fictional autobiography is more so aligned with sacramental confession because the protagonist is the storyteller. As our only window into the world of *Villette,* the reader must listen to Lucy Snowe for the novel to function. Lucy Snowe monopolizes the structure of this narrator-reader relationship and builds it into her personal ongoing confession. In her ongoing confession, the actual reader occupies the "traditional captive audience" (Stewart 4). Much like a priest must listen to the confessant, we as readers must also listen to Lucy. This frames the general connection of confession to fictional autobiographies, but I will connect *Villette* more directly to sacramental confession, beyond the mere format of fictional autobiography.

Before I proceed any further, I want to first acknowledge the general structure and purpose of sacramental Confession. The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament notes "Confession brings reconciliation between God and the penitent, between the penitent and others, and to the individual penitent" ("Confession Step by Step" 1). The confessant, also known as the penitent, is the title given to the person who confesses. As Blessed Sacrament states, the confessant seeks reconciliation with God, others, and self. The confessant enters the confessional abiding by the "formula of confession" (Brontë 147-148) which Lucy herself critiques. Prior to confession, the confessant participates in an examination of conscience "reflecting prayerfully on one's thoughts, words, and deeds in order to identify any sins" ("Examinations of Conscience" 1). I mentioned earlier that this is where Lucy holds Cote's position of "accountant" (Cote 486). It is through the examination of conscience that the confessant scrupulously reflects on their past actions. To begin the confession, the confessant makes the sign of the cross and begins with "Forgive me father for I have sinned. My last confession was…" ("Confession Step by Step" 1). Next, the

confessant confesses their sins to the priest. This is followed by an Act of Contrition: a formal prayer of sorrow. The confessor, the priest, speaks "in persona Christi" or "in the person of Christ" to absolve the confessant of their sins ("Confession Step by Step" 1). Once absolved, the confessor gives the confessant a penance. Père Silas defines penance as "self-denial, and difficult good works" (Brontë 148). The Catholic Catechism defines penance as "something more [to do] to make amends for the sin" (Catholic Church 1459). Generally, the process may be summarized as follows: examine, confess, sorrow, forgive, and penance.

The spiritual purpose of confession is to receive God's mercy. From the Catechism, "man looks squarely at the sins he is guilty of, takes responsibility for them, and thereby opens himself again to God and to the communion of the Church in order to make a new future possible" (Catholic Church 1455). Confession grants hope from one's current state. Despite the multitude of sins prior, the confessant is reminded of God's love and mercy in which they are always promised redemption. Yet, in order to move forward, the confessant must acknowledge and take responsibility for their sins. Lucy Snowe intentionally seeks religious absolution to ensure a better future for herself in a moment of crisis. Leading up to her confession, she states, "Even to look forward was not to hope: the dumb future spoke no comfort" (Brontë 143). Lucy is hopeless, even suicidal, as she questions "why [she] should try to recover or wish to live" (Brontë 146). When she cannot offer herself mercy, Lucy seeks mercy in confession. In a secular sense, Catholicism provides a "rationalistic moral code" that allows individuals to account for their actions rationally (Arruñada 445). Confession allows for faith to take an external "form" and Lucy is critical of the "forms between us and God" (Brontë 394). Catholicism is known for its external "forms" that, according to one's perspective, either draw its followers closer to God

or interfere with the relationship between its followers and God. Confession is a tangible way of comprehending and growing from one's shortcomings which appeals to Lucy.

So how is Lucy like the confessant? First and foremost, she participates in an ongoing examination of conscience. Gregory S. O'Dea acknowledges the importance of self-examination in *Villette* as he says, "Whereas Jane Eyre's narrative is one of self-presentation, Lucy Snowe's is one of self-examination" (O'Dea 45). For an example of Lucy's consistent self-examination, we turn to her arrival in Villette. Narrator-Lucy retrospectively critiques the actions of Character-Lucy, who lives present in the story of the text. Lucy acknowledges this narrative structure as she states, "I give the feeling as at the time I felt it; I describe the view of character as it appeared when discovered" (Brontë 178). However, Lucy is not entirely consistent in this statement. The reader knows that Lucy changes her mind. For example, as Lucy first travels to Villette, she reveals many frustrations with Miss Ginevra Fanshawe and their proximity in travel, but she tells a different reality than what actually occurred. We see this as she states, "Friends came on board to welcome the Watsons; a whole family of friends surrounded and bore away Miss Fanshawe; I—but I dared not for one moment dwell on a comparison of positions" (Brontë 50). Notice the dash following "I". The dash does not function as an ellipsis in that it contains information, but it does provoke the reader to want to fill in this gap. Lucy may momentarily compare her position to Ginevra's, but she stops herself. Why she stops herself is not stated, but rather left to the interpretation of the actual reader. Perhaps she stops herself because it is too painful. In this way, the dash permits the reader to imagine character-Lucy's painful shying away from some past experience. As a confessant examines their sins, Lucy examines her narrative.

Moreover, Lucy will more explicitly examine her conscience, and narrative, by condemning segments of what she has already written. As Lucy embarks on the ship to Villette,

she describes a romanticized picture of the view. Yet, she immediately critiques herself following this description.

> "...For background, spread a sky, solemn and dark blue, and—grand with imperial promise, soft with tints of enchantment—strode from north to south a God-bent bow, an arch of hope.
>
> Cancel the whole of that, if you please, reader—or rather let it stand, and draw thence a moral—an alliterative, text-hand copy—
>
> Day-dreams are delusions of the demon" (Brontë 49).

Heidi Pennington examines the above quotation as Lucy's invitation to the reader as her "co-author" (Pennington 146). Unlike the previous quotation in which Lucy forces the reader to fill in the blanks, here she provides the reader with the choice to acknowledge or ignore Character-Lucy's raw emotions. She provides the reader with two readings of her narrative in a "choose your adventure" format." Although she reveals her preference for one reading, she still includes the possibility of the other reading. Lucy inserts her "authority even as it directly contributes to how 'Lucy' takes shape in the audience's construction of her" (Pennington 147). She once again examines her narrative in careful construction. In doing so, she simultaneously examines herself and her presentation of self to the reader. Lucy critiques herself for daydreaming and attributes day-dreams to "the demon." Even a miniscule paragraph which enchants the reader with scenery is attributed to sin. This also holds true when Lucy spends a night at an inn in Villette. As she wanders into the coffee-room, she "wished to Heaven [she] knew whether [she] was doing right or wrong; felt convinced that it was the last but could not help [her]self" (Brontë 52). Once

again, she directly associates a small occurrence with intense religious perceptions of right and wrong. In small moments, Lucy Snowe's examination of conscience is ongoing.

Lucy also projects onto the textualized reader her examination of conscience as she assigns the following questions to the textualized reader: "Why were you so glad to be friends with M. Paul?" asks the reader. "Had he not long been a friend to you? Had he not given proof on proof of a certain partiality in his feelings?" (Brontë 383). From this quotation, Lucy's examination of conscience extends to analyzing relationships. She projects the question of "why" onto the reader, allowing her to examine her motives in her relationship with M. Paul. In doing so, she examines her feelings toward him, his role as "friend," and M. Paul's feelings toward her. Lucy takes all these components into consideration before concluding her fond relationship with M. Paul is of "little danger," as his vow to celibacy reduces the possibility for sin. Through this examination, Lucy employs a Socratic question and answer format. Each question points to a direct answer that either inspires or prevents sin. She uses the reader as a tool for self-examination. From her intense and frequent examinations of conscience, Lucy embodies the common trait of all Catholic confessants: guilt.

Lucy Snowe has survivor's guilt from the very beginning. In the first pages of the novel, Lucy reveals her sudden "permanent residence" with her godmother Mrs. Bretton who claims her as her "kinsfolk" (Brontë 1-2). Upon this description, one may infer her orphaned state and one may speculate a potential disaster which led to her orphaned state. Specifically, as Mrs. Bretton receives a letter Lucy states, "I thought at first it was from home, and trembled, expecting I know not what disastrous communication: to me, however, no reference was made, and the cloud seemed to pass" (Brontë 2). Lucy experiences survivor's guilt. She exhibits fear as she "trembled" and she assumes "disastrous communication" to her. Without receiving direct

answers, Lucy is consumed by guilt. Lucy's nightmare before confession also highlights her survivor's guilt. Lucy narrates, "Amidst the horrors of that dream I think the worst lay here. 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" (Brontë 146). In her nightmare, Lucy imagines herself damned to an eternal separation from "the-well-loved dead," namely her loved ones. In a broader sense, Lucy imagines her eternal separation from love. Lucy refers to this dream as "a visitation from eternity" (Brontë 146). After being separated from her family, her dream forecasts Lucy's Hell-like condemnation in the form of eternal solitude. Fearful of separation from the "well-loved," Lucy's guilt is driven by her desire to be loved.

Guilt is a primary facet of Catholicism, as scrupulosity is a primary facet of Lucy Snowe. She is quick to condemn herself for small actions. I discuss earlier in her examination of conscience how Lucy "wished to Heaven [she] knew whether [she] was doing right or wrong; felt convinced that it was the last but could not help [her]self" (Brontë 52). Out of context, one would be surprised to discover that this quote is about Lucy searching for a cup of coffee. In Catholic mass, the priest opens with the Penitential Act "Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries" ("Order of Mass" 1). Catholics are called to acknowledge their sins and remember them each time they attend mass. Additionally, there is a certain guilt inherent in the prayer that Catholics pray as part of the Penitential Act." Below is an excerpt from that prayer:

> "I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have

> failed to do, And, *striking their breast*, they say: through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault…" ("Order of Mass" 1).

Catholics admit to their sins at each mass they attend. In doing so, they identify themselves as sinners. Moreover, "striking their breast," there is a physical action to symbolize a form of punishment for sinning. There is also stereotypical "Catholic guilt" which refers to feelings of "shame, remorse, self-doubt… rooted in a particular Catholic spirituality that is used to emphasize obedience, sin, damnation, confession, and penance" (Vaisey 415). Lucy frequently acknowledges her areas of sin, and she punishes herself, by assuming condemnation. Recall the earlier passage in which she simultaneously condemns her character and her narrative in "Day-dreams are delusions of the demon" (Brontë 49). Despite her Protestant identity, Lucy embodies this instilled "Catholic guilt" which is characteristic of confessants.

Lucy's guilt is prevalent in her narration as she withholds information from the reader. During the confession scene, discussed in chapter one, Lucy informs the reader with many details regarding her experience in the confessional. However, she withholds certain pieces of information that she shares with Père Silas from the reader. We know this because Lucy states, "I showed him the mere outline of my experience" (Brontë 148). She informs the reader that the information is there, but she refrains from sharing it with the reader. Additionally, she only shares with Père Silas a "mere outline," implying further absence of information. In this case, Lucy may respect the sacred seal of confession and wish to leave her conversation in the confessional. Even though the reader is deprived of information at that moment, the reader is granted a larger confession through the scope of the novel. Her confession to the reader is larger than her confession to the priest. Between her preservation of the sacred seal of confession and

her tendency to intentionally withhold information, Lucy fits the model of the Catholic confessant.

Yet, Lucy withholds information from the reader on other occasions as well. Specifically, Lucy forces the reader to permit a “secret consultation" with Madame Beck (Brontë 117) where she acknowledges withheld information from the reader. Francisco Cortes Vieco claims Brontë’s “authorial guerrilla of ellipsis aims to conceal Lucy’s true self from the public” (Vieco 32). In other words, Brontë leaves gaps as a radical narrative tool. Vieco acknowledges Lucy’s narrative tendency to withhold information from the reader through the grammatical tool of ellipsis which grammatically signifies sentence gaps. Gaps leave room for interpretation because her “unutterable trauma” is left in these gaps (Vieco 32). Lucy is so critical of how the reader perceives her that she is very intentional about what to include in her narrative. In this way, Lucy’s narration seems to signal a fear of vulnerability. Readers may interpret her withholding of information as a safeguard. Although withholding information seems contradictory to the act of confessing, it is not mutually exclusive from the sacrament of confession. Similar to Lucy’s control of her narrative, the confessant controls which sins to share with the priest and for which sins they leave unmentioned, as they may state “I am sorry for these and all my sins” (“Examinations of Conscience” 1). While this diminishes the spiritual effect of the sacrament, it is often done by confessants who seek forgiveness without vulnerability. Fear obstructs their perception of forgiveness. The reader may perceive that Lucy’s desire for forgiveness is also obstructed by fear.

Lucy as the confessant is one major aspect of the Catholic paradox of Villette. Although she adamantly critiques confession as a form of temptation, as she rose “mechanically obedient” to the confessional and was “arrested” by the church bells, she ironically embodies the role of

confessant throughout the novel (Brontë 148). Lucy confesses to the reader through her narration. Furthermore, she embodies sacramental elements of specifically Catholic Confession, as she leads the reader through her ongoing examination of conscience and her innate Catholic guilt. Brontë builds Lucy's Catholic guilt, through narrative complexities including selective omission and her intentionally crafted narrative. In these ways, the "Lucy" who takes shape in the novel becomes synonymous with the Catholic confessant.

Now that Lucy is the confessant, who is the confessor? The next chapter will examine how Lucy imposes the role of confessor on the reader. She grants this identity to the reader and provides them with an implicit responsibility: to forgive her. This begs the question of why does Lucy desire forgiveness? What does she need to be forgiven of? Why the reader? The discussion of the confessor as Lucy's ultimate confessor will complete the dialogue of confession and hence complete the Catholic paradox of *Villette*.

Chapter Three: The Reader as the Confessor

The final component of this argument is the role of the reader as the confessor. Chapter one examines Catholicism as a form of temptation for Lucy. Chapter two analyzes Lucy's embodiment of the confessant. Both chapters build the Catholic paradox of *Villette*. Lucy detests Catholicism, but she is ironically tempted by Catholicism, framing her narrative in a confession format. Lucy becomes the Catholic that she adamantly critiques. In order to complete this confession format, we must designate the role of the confessor to the reader. The actual reader offers Lucy an ongoing receiver of her confession and the textualized reader offers her hypothesized responses. In this section, I will examine parts of the text where Lucy Snowe directly addresses the reader; throughout the novel, Lucy Snowe directly addresses the reader on fifty-four occasions. The narrator-reader relationship is critical for Lucy Snowe's construction of her own confession dialogue, so she fosters this relationship on many occasions. In her confession, Lucy recognizes that she could be tempted by Père Silas to convert to Catholicism, so she immediately reveals the temptation to the reader as a form of accountability. The reader then serves as the recipient of Lucy's discussion of temptation, much like the confessor receives a confession. As the confessor, the reader is responsible to listen, to respond, to understand, and to forgive Lucy. This argument hence shows that Lucy Snowe seeks forgiveness.

Amy Cote argues that the primary fault of the novel-as-confession argument rests in the fact that "it does not acknowledge the importance of an interlocutor to affect any meaningful mediation" (Cote 487). By interlocutor, Cote refers to another participant in the conversation. For the sake of this argument, I am arguing against Cote's claim, as the interlocutor of the novel is the two-sided reader as the confessor. The actual reader naturally receives Lucy's ongoing

confession; although Lucy Snowe cannot hear the actual reader's response, she generates hypothetical responses from the textualized reader that inspire "meaningful mediation" (Cote 487). Lucy textualizes her reader responses, limiting them to her own construction. Yet, much like a Catholic confession, the response of the priest/confessor can be anticipated, giving Lucy the ability to do so. In confession, the priest always offers the confessant Penance and Absolution ("Confession Step by Step" 1). Penance refers to the priest's discussion of the confessant's sins and the priest's invitation for the confessant to improve through prayer and good deeds. Similarly, the priest always concludes the confession with the Absolution of the confessant's sins ("Confession Step by Step" 1). Prominent Jesuit practices of casuistry during this time inspire even more predictability of response as the written Catholic theology outlined how to properly assess the gravity of one's sins and offer the proper penance (Keenan 627). In a less formalized, non-Catholic, confession, responses are not predetermined so Lucy establishes a formulaic response that aligns with the sacrament. Perceiving the reader as the confessor, it is plausible for Lucy to anticipate hypothetical responses for the reader. Confession grants a structured conversation so the reader's, namely the confessor's, response can be anticipated.

Lucy Snowe directly makes the connection between the reader and a moral figure. The below quotation is excerpted from when Lucy experiences a "hopeless desert" of depression (Brontë 143), leading up to her confession with Père Silas:

> "Religious reader, you will preach to me a long sermon about what I have just written, and so will you, moralist: and you, stern sage: you, stoic, will frown; you, cynic, sneer; you, epicure, laugh. Well, each and all, take it your own way. I accept the sermon, frown, sneer, and laugh; perhaps you are all right: and perhaps,

> circumstanced like me, you would have been, like me, wrong. The first month was, indeed, a long, black, heavy month to me" (Brontë 143).

Lucy Snowe, unlike other narrators, crafts specific identities for her reader in a sarcastic manner, hypothesizing their different responses. She first grants her reader the identity of the "Religious reader" to a religious leader as she predicts the reader will "preach to me a long sermon about what I have just written" (Brontë 143). From Merriam Webster, a sermon is defined as "a religious discourse delivered in public usually by a member of the clergy as a part of a worship service" ("Sermon" 1). Lucy expects a response from the "Religious reader" (Brontë 143) in the form of a sermon, equating the reader to "a member of the clergy" and granting the response a moral implication ("Sermon" 1). This definition also recognizes the place of a sermon within a space of worship. This excerpt occurs prior to the confession, but it is ironic in the sense that it foreshadows the confession scene with Père Silas that occurs later in the chapter. Lucy anticipates the reader to "preach to me a long sermon" ("Sermon" 1), as Père Silas preaches Lucy a sermon about how "You were made for our faith" (Brontë 148). After reading the confession scene, one may make this connection between the role of Père Silas and the role of the reader. Through this connection, Lucy occupies the same role: the confessant. Moreover, Lucy's confession to Père Silas is equated to "what I [she] have just written" (Brontë 143). Through this quotation Lucy acknowledges the connection between her confession and the overall narration of the novel. Constructing the potential response of the reader as a sermon, Lucy perceives a certain sanctity in the narrator-reader relationship.

Lucy anticipates multiple identities of the textualized reader as a form of self-defense. Prior to this quotation, she informs the reader "mortally did I fear the sin and weakness of presumption" (Brontë 143). Lucy refers to "presumption" as a "sin" and she fears the reader may

form incorrect conclusions about her identity. As a defense, she textualizes various perspectival identities for her readers solely for refutation purposes. She recognizes that different philosophical positions may inspire different readers to have different interpretations of her. It is important to note that Lucy Snowe also grants her reader various non-religious identities that all hold moral implications. By "moralist" Lucy refers to someone who teaches or promotes morality. By "stern sage," Lucy refers to someone who is acclaimed for their wisdom and sound judgment. By "stoic" Lucy refers to someone who is led by rational thought, not governed by their emotions. By "cynic" Lucy refers to someone who perceives people are solely motivated by their selfish interests. By "epicure", Lucy refers to someone who holds refined tastes for pleasure. The textualized reader is established as someone with various moral perspectives. She crafts her reader through these multiple identities to respond to each critic. Yet, all the identities receive the same response: "perhaps, circumstanced like me, you would have been, like me, wrong" (Brontë 143). Lucy's casuistic assertion grants herself moral authority, but she still seeks understanding in her refutation.

The above quotation also provides insight into Lucy's desire to be forgiven. Lucy crafts her defense upon what parts of herself she feels are necessary to defend. Lucy's narrative, thus, an apologia in both classic and religious senses, like Cardinal Henry Newman's 1864 *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* which was published eleven years after *Villette* (Newman 1). She defends the parts of herself that she recognizes as weak, as an apologia refutes popular critiques. Lucy refutes potential critiques of her, allowing the reader insight into her hypothesized sins. She begins with "religious reader" because her Protestant identity in a very Catholic setting is threatened. Lucy anticipates a negative response from the "moralist," because her morals are weak at that moment. It is in this section that Lucy contemplates suicide as she states, "Motive there was none why I

should try to recover the wish to live" (Brontë 146). She fears the response of the "stoic" because she is someone who values her "staid manner," aspiring to be like the "judicious" and "grave" Mrs. Barrett in chapter five (Brontë 37). The "cynic" will "sneer" because Lucy is in fact motivated by her own selfish interests. In chapter thirty-eight, Lucy openly claims her "weakness and deficiency" is her "total default of self-assertion (Brontë 416). Lastly, Lucy anticipates a scornful response from the "epicure" because she does not find pleasure during her vacation time. Lucy reveals her inability to find pleasure during her vacation as she states, "When I had full leisure to look on life as life must be looked on by such as me, I found it but a hopeless desert" (Brontë 143). In selecting the identities of her reader, Lucy reveals her perceivable weaknesses, sins, to the reader.

Despite permitting hypothetical critiques from the reader, Lucy "accept[s] the sermon, frown, sneer, and laugh; perhaps you are all right: and perhaps, circumstanced like me, you would have been, like me, wrong" (Brontë 143). She not only acknowledges, but also accepts each of the responses from each of the readers. Through a shielding of parentheticals and "perhaps," Lucy deems the readers "right" and herself "wrong." This intensely critical tone exacerbates her self-defense, sardonically mocking each potential critique of her and reminding the reader not to cast judgement. It also serves as a prickly plea for understanding in her refutations. While Lucy does not grant the reader moral authority in their perception of her "wrong[s]," she still seeks their understanding. In a forceful way, Lucy constructs her confessor. She critiques potential judgements to remind the reader that the mission of the confessor is to listen without judgement. She seeks understanding as a precursor to forgiveness.

Gregory S. O'Dea argues that "Lucy seems to care very much that she is before an audience; she takes great pains to hide feelings from them which would not flatter her" (O'Dea

48). Although O'Dea's claim constructs more of a vain Lucy concerned with "flatter[y]" in which I do not fully agree, I agree that Lucy is intentionally aware of how she reveals herself to the audience. In the passage, Lucy hypothesizes the multiple readers who may examine her text: "Religious reader," "moralist," "stern sage," "stoic," "cynic," and "epicure" (Brontë 143). However, O'Dea's claim that Lucy "hide[s] feelings" complicates the identity of the reader as the confessor. If we perceive the reader as the confessor, should Lucy be transparent about her afflictions? Lucy certainly hides her feelings from the reader on multiple occasions, as discussed in chapter two. O'Dea also claims "it is only to the reader (and at times, Paul Emmanuel) that she becomes opinionated and resentful" (O'Dea 43). It is important to note that O'Dea regards the intimacy of the narrator-reader relationship as more intimate than Lucy Snowe's relationship with Paul Emmanuel: Lucy Snowe's love interest. Consider this instance in chapter forty-one when Lucy withholds her disdain toward Justine Marie from M. Paul:

> "What is in a name?—what in three words? Till this moment I had listened with living joy—I had answered with gleeful quickness; a name froze me; three words struck me mute. The effect could not be hidden, and indeed I scarce tried to hide it.
>
> "What now?" said M. Paul.
>
> "Nothing."
>
> "Nothing! Your countenance changes: your colour and your very eyes fade. Nothing! You must be ill; you have some suffering; tell me what."
>
> I had nothing to tell" (Brontë 457).

Lucy repeatedly protests M. Paul's inquiries. It is the reader who is the first to know Lucy's feelings, but Lucy later converses with M. Paul about her feelings. The reader cannot know the content of this conversation because it is omitted from the text. Perhaps it was exactly what Lucy

informed the reader, but we cannot impose a fictional reality. She tells the reader "all escaped from [her] lips" (Brontë 457). Did the reader also receive "all [that] escaped from lips? We cannot know. What we do know is that Lucy consistently discloses her feelings to the reader, inviting the reader into a more intimate relationship with her, furthering Monin's claim that Lucy desires "an understanding and compassionate reader" (Monin 6). The reader is Lucy's greatest companion. Although Lucy is a complex character in her concealment of feelings, the reader is consistently granted access into her inner thoughts. Lucy is vulnerable with the reader because it is the reader, the confessor, whom she desires understanding from the most.

One of the most vulnerable narrator-Lucy moments in which she clarifies her feelings with the readers occurs after her confession with Père Silas. As discussed in the first chapter, character-Lucy's confession generates warm feelings of fulfillment, as Père Silas offers Lucy compassion and a kind ear. In her time of need, he presents Lucy with the consolation she so desires. Yet, narrator-Lucy shocks the reader with her authentic reaction to the situation as she observes the situation in retrospect:

> Did I, do you suppose, reader, contemplate venturing again within that worthy priest's reach? As soon should I have thought of walking into a Babylonish furnace. That priest had arms which could influence me: he was naturally kind, with a sentimental French kindness, to whose softness I knew myself not wholly impervious (Brontë 149).

As Lucy Snowe directly addresses the reader through a hypothetical question, offers her unvarnished opinions about Catholicism. Her hypothetical question is lined with tones of sarcasm. She criticizes Catholicism by likening it to a "Babylonish furnace" which I note in chapter one is a biblical allusion that is a critique of Catholicism. This allusion equates

Catholicism to heretical idolatry as it alludes to King Nebuchadnezzar's desire to be worshipped as an idol. Character-Lucy refrains from verbalizing this opinion to Père Silas and maintains a grateful composure within the setting of the confessional. Yet, she grants the reader a glimpse into her fuller feelings. The reader learns her inner thoughts about Catholicism and Catholic characters such M. Paul Emmanuel, Ginevra Fanshawe, and Père Silas; each of which Lucy critiques in her narrative. In the narrator-reader relationship, Lucy constructs the perception of full disclosure to receive understanding from the actual reader.

This quotation from chapter thirty also highlights Lucy's longing to not only share strong opinions with the reader but also her desire to be vulnerable with the reader. Stephanie Lo argues that "Lucy's acknowledgement of the reader is rather impersonal, almost professional" (Lo 1). Perhaps Stephanie Lo's discussion of "impersonal" and "almost professional" refers to the idea that confession "is not raw but channeled emotions" (Arruñada 445). The reader hears from narrator-Lucy's channeled emotions as she reflects in retrospect, but Character-Lucy's emotions are beyond reach. The above excerpt contradicts Lo's claim, as Lucy builds a personal relationship with the reader, revealing her desires and weaknesses. For example, Lucy, in the latter half of the novel, tells of her attraction to M. Paul to the reader. She states, "You should have seen him smile, reader" (Brontë 300). As in a friendship, these pieces of information must be earned. By offering this information, Lucy enlists the reader as a loyal companion, fostering a personal relationship. Lucy also fosters a personal relationship by revealing weakness to the reader. Lucy reveals her ability to be influenced by Père Silas which she perceives as a weakness of hers. She reveals herself as "not wholly impervious" to Père Silas's influence following her confession, acknowledging an area of weakness as a preventative means (Brontë 149). In an "impersonal" or "professional" relationship, one is not normally inclined to reveal weakness.

Instead, Lucy's acknowledgment of the reader is one of vulnerability. Lucy's acknowledgement of weakness coincides with her examination of conscience, ultimately preventing temptation.

Lucy also aligns the reader with Père Silas, the confessor, in the context of when Lucy seeks their intervention. In chapter one, I discuss Lucy's struggles with mental health as the inspiration for her confession with Père Silas. Similarly, Christian M. Monin argues "Lucy addresses her reader, and so very frequently, because of her isolation and lack of social interaction with others" (Monin 41). Lucy Snowe seeks Père Silas' compassion specifically when she feels none from those around her. Recall the earlier discussion of Lucy's nightmare in this chapter. Lucy's nightmare established her fearful "visitation from eternity" which condemned her to eternal solitude (Brontë 146). Lucy fears being alone. Hence, she seeks communion in promised relationships: a priest and the reader. Given that this passage precedes Lucy's confession with Père Silas, Lucy first seeks communion with a priest. It is directly following her confession that Lucy also seeks communion with the reader. Although Lucy addresses the reader on fifty-four occasions, she seeks a similar compassion from both Père Silas and the reader throughout the text because Lucy Snowe seeks relationship. When her continued commitment to Protestant methodology prevents her ability to partake in the Catholic confession, she imposes the role of the confessor upon the reader, seeking relationship in an ongoing confession.

For example, a few chapters following the confession scene, the reader receives an informal "confession" from Lucy Snowe about how she censors herself around Graham because she longs to preserve their friendship:

> "Still, reader, I am free to confess, that he often talked nonsense; but I strove to be unfailingly patient with him. I had had my lesson: I had learned how severe for

> me was the pain of crossing, or grieving, or disappointing him. In a strange and new sense, I grew most selfish, and quite powerless to deny myself the delight of indulging his mood, and being pliant to his will" (Brontë 179).

Lucy Snowe imposes the role of confessor upon the reader as she states, "I am free to confess" (Brontë 179). This small phrase exists as a parenthetical and is unnecessary in the context of the sentence. Lucy could have instead stated, "Still, reader, he often talked nonsense…" (Brontë 179). Furthermore, "reader" is also presented as a parenthetical and the sentence may simplify to "Still, he often talked nonsense" (Brontë 179). Yet, these small phrases are required to reinforce the narrator-reader relationship as confessant-confessor. Brontë opens the paragraph in a way that grants Lucy Snowe the intimacy and the seal of a confession. In this paragraph, Lucy submits herself to Graham to preserve their friendship. She becomes "most selfish and quite powerless… to his will" (Brontë 179), acknowledging areas of weakness. The adjective "powerless" also implies her temptation to succumb to another's will, Dr. John's will, eliminating her moral agency. Similar to how Lucy informs the reader of Père Silas' influence on her during confession, Lucy informs the reader of Graham's influence on her. It is her form of accountability. She entrusts the reader with this information, enlisting our loyalties because she trusts us more than Graham. In sharing information with the reader, narrator-Lucy builds intimacy in the narrator-reader relationship. However, character-Lucy builds friendship with Graham by withholding information. This illuminates Lucy's narration in which withholding of information, also perceived as a defense mechanism, can be a tool for building intimacy. Both the act of sharing and not sharing are vital in our construction of Lucy Snowe. This even more so aligns the role of the reader with the confessor who receives selective sharing of the confessant. Selective sharing points to a more accurate understanding of self in the acknowledgement of

privacy. Selective sharing inspires greater intimacy in both the narrator-reader and confessant-confessor relationship.

Up to this point of the chapter, I examine how Lucy Snowe imposes the role of the confessor upon the reader, but now I will examine the why. Why does she impose the role of confessor upon the reader? Readers naturally take on the form of listener with any book, but Brontë is particularly explicit about our responsibility as Lucy's reader. She withholds information from the reader, she shows disdain toward the reader, and she even criticizes her own structure of the narrative. The reader is Lucy's captive audience with the imposed responsibilities to listen, to respond, to understand and to forgive her. The first three responsibilities of the reader are examined in the above excerpts, but the final responsibility is a bit more complex. The actual reader is responsible for forgiveness.

Lucy seeks forgiveness for her multivalent identity. She cares so much about how the reader perceives her, because she wants the reader to identify Lucy Snowe in the way that she identifies herself as "I, Lucy Snowe" (Brontë 8). *Villette* is a story of identity. Lucy's story is one of identity and the times at which this identity is challenged. As a "Protestant in a Catholic land" (Clarke 2), her identity is frequently in question. Catholicism occupies the ultimate form of temptation as it offers Lucy community, it offers her love through M. Paul Emmanuel, and it offers her a way to escape her mind. Yet, it contradicts the self-reliant Protestant Lucy Snowe that the reader is introduced to at the start of the novel. At the end of the text, M. Paul calls Protestantism "the sole creed for 'Lucy'" (Brontë 461). Lucy seeks forgiveness for the moments in which her identity nearly breaks her "creed," fearing that she may one day become like the "ghostly nun" (Brontë 123). Lucy seeks forgiveness for the honest moments her identity is

misconstrued or challenged. Lucy needs the reader to both accept and forgive her so that she can establish her sense of self.

Seeking forgiveness for the moments in which she is tempted by Catholicism signifies the Catholic paradox of Villette. Narrator-Lucy employs the Catholic format of confession to critique Catholicism. Although she adamantly detests Catholic doctrine and her temptation for the faith, she models her narrative in the most innately Catholic way: sacramental confession. It is important to acknowledge that the Catholic confessional is the setting of Lucy's nearest conversation to Catholicism: the time in which she nearly converted. The confessional scene marks the climax of Lucy's faith journey, and the reinforcement of her Protestant identity. What does this paradox tell us? Is Brontë further critiquing Catholicism, by inverting the Catholic sacrament as a tool for criticism of itself? Does this indicate that Lucy holds on to remnants of her Catholic influences? Is Lucy still tempted by Catholicism?

Conclusion

Throughout the course of this thesis, I explore the Catholic paradox of *Villette.* Catholicism simultaneously serves as an illicit attraction for character-Lucy and a site of resentment for narrator-Lucy. Character-Lucy is drawn to aspects of Catholicism that offer personal and relational communion, temporarily remedying struggles of mental health. Narrator-Lucy recalls these instances with a retrospective bias. Hence, Catholicism is ironically presented as a form of temptation. In her exploration, Catholicism serves as a canvas for self-discovery. Lucy's sense of self becomes constructed by her absence from the Catholic community. Yet, in her self-discovery, she employs the Catholic methods available to her.

Chapter two examines Lucy's narrative role of the Catholic confessant. Despite adamantly criticizing Catholic doctrine, Lucy narrates similar to the Catholic confessant. Lucy embodies stereotypical Catholic guilt in her frequent examinations of conscience, a preparatory step for Catholic Confession. She capitalizes on her ability to craft her sense of self in what she reveals, and does not reveal, to the reader. Brontë writes moments where Lucy explicitly critiques her narrative and withholds information from the reader.

Chapter three examines Lucy's imposed role of confessor upon the reader. As one may anticipate the formulaic response of the priest in a confessional, Lucy anticipates the responses of her textualized reader. She crafts the readers' particular identities and hypothesizes critiques from her reader. This becomes a form of self-defense for Lucy.

The paradox is complete. Lucy critiques Catholicism, through the form of Catholic Confession. The thing that Lucy detests the most becomes her method of criticism. Yet there is another layer to this paradox that I do not explore in depth in the context of this project. I will

finish this essay by introducing this question for further exploration. I focused predominantly on Lucy Snowe, but there is a whole other argument regarding Charlotte Brontë's authorship of the novel. What does this paradox tell us about Charlotte Brontë's connection to Catholicism and the narrative of *Villette*?

From my research, I gather that Brontë inverts the Catholic Confession as a means to further critique Catholicism. Many critics have discussed Brontë's anti-Catholic feeling and it is clear that this plays out in this particular novel. We see that as an author she cannot stop engaging elements of Catholicism through the narrative. Brontë, through her narrative tool, the multivalent Lucy Snowe, intentionally crafts the novel even if the resulting meanings are not under any one agent's control. Brontë intertwines personal experience with Lucy's experience. Protestant Charlotte Brontë traveled to Belgium and fell in love with Roman Catholic Constantine Héger, much like Protestant Lucy Snowe falls in love with Roman Catholic M. Paul Emmanuel. Brontë also confesses to a Catholic priest while in Belgium, much like Lucy Snowe does at the climax of the novel (Clarke 968). Scholars such as Micael M. Clarke speculate other potential overlaps in Brontë's life and Lucy's narrative. Much like the physical screen which separates the confessant from the priest, Brontë feels the need for a screen narrator: Lucy Snowe. Fictional autobiography becomes Brontë's creative medium for her own Catholic confession. Although Brontë inverts the format of Catholic confession to further critique Catholicism, she too partakes in the Catholic confession. The Catholic paradox grows.

Bibliography

Arruñada, Benito. "Specialization and Rent Seeking in Moral Enforcement: The Case of Confession." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 48, no. 3, [Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Wiley], 2009, pp. 443–61, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40405639.

"Bible Gateway Passage: New American Standard Bible." *Bible Gateway*

Brontë, Charlotte, and Sally Minogue. *Villette*. Wordsworth Editions, 2000.

Carlson, Susan Anne (2020) The Impact of Clinical Depression on Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Brontë Studies, 45:1, 13-26, DOI: 10.1080/14748932.2020.1675399, Suzanne, et al. "Her Story: Charlotte Brontë's Letters." *Cambridge University Museums*, www.museums.cam.ac.uk/blog/2018/07/27/her-story-charlotte-brontes-letters/.

Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd ed., Our Sunday Visitor, 2000.

Clarke, Micael M. "Charlotte Brontë's 'Villette', Mid-Victorian Anti-Catholicism, and the Turn to Secularism." *ELH*, vol. 78, no. 4, 2011, pp. 967–989, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41337561.

Clark-Beattie, Rosemary. "Fables of Rebellion: Anti-Catholicism and the Structure of Villette." *ELH*, vol. 53, no. 4, 1986, p. 821., doi:10.2307/2873176.

"Confession Step by Step." *Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament*, 4 Dec. 2017, www.altoonacathedral.org/confession-step-by-step/.

Coté, Amy. "'A Handful of Loose Beads.'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 75, no. 4, 2021, pp. 473–494., doi:10.1525/ncl.2021.75.4.473.

Crosby, Christina. "Charlotte Brontë's Haunted Text." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*,

vol. 24, no. 4, [Rice University, Johns Hopkins University Press], 1984, pp. 701–15, https://doi.org/10.2307/450487.

"Examinations of Conscience." *USCCB*, www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/penance/examinations-of-conscience.

Gibson, Anna. (2017). Charlotte Brontë's First Person. Narrative. 25. 203-226. 10.1353/nar.2017.0009.

Keenan, James F. "Jesuit Casuistry or Jesuit Spirituality?: The Roots of Seventeenth-Century British Puritan Practical Divinity." *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, edited by John W. O'Malley et al., University of Toronto Press, 1999, pp. 627–40, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/9781442681569.40.

Lo, Stephanie. "The Appeal for Readerly Sympathy in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre and Villette." *Berkeley Undergraduate Journal*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2011, doi:10.5070/b3242011666.

Melton, J. Gordon. *Encyclopedia of Protestantism*. Facts On File, 2005.

Monin, Christan M. *Addressing the Reader in Charlotte Brontë's Novels: Jane Eyre, Villette, and the Professor*. 2010, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12648/6294.

Newman, John Henry. *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. Engage Classics, 2021.

O'Dea, Gregory S. "Narrator and Reader in Charlotte Brontë's Villette." *South Atlantic Review*, vol. 53, no. 1, South Atlantic Modern Language Association, 1988, pp. 41–57, https://doi.org/10.2307/3200400.

"Order of Mass." *USCCB*, www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass.

Pennington, Heidi L. *Creating Identity in the Victorian Fictional Autobiography*. University of Missouri, 2018.

Peschier, D. (2005). Nineteenth-century Anti-Catholic Discourse in the Brontë's Local Newspapers. In: Nineteenth-Century Anti-Catholic Discourses. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230505025_6

Pond, Kristen. "The Ethics of Silence in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*." *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, vol. 57 no. 4, 2017, p. 771-797. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/sel.2017.0034.

"Romanism, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/167100.

"Romanist Definition & Meaning." *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Romanist.

"Sermon." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sermon.

Stewart, Garrett. *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Vaisey, Stephen, and Christian Smith. "Catholic Guilt among U.S. Teenagers: A Research Note." *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 49, no. 4, [Religious Research Association, Inc., Springer], 2008, pp. 415–26, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20447515.

Vieco, Francisco José Cortés. "Unravelling the Body/Mind Reverberations of Secrets Woven into Charlotte Brontë's Villette." *Prague Journal of English Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2015, pp. 25–45., doi:10.1515/pjes-2015-0002.