Why Lucy Doesn't Care: Migration and Emotional Labor in Villette

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> "As if one could let you alone, when you are so peculiar and so mysterious! . . . But are you anybody?" persevered [Ginevra] . . . "Yes," I said, "I am a rising character: once an old lady's companion, then a nursery-governess, now a school-teacher."
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> —Brontë, *Villette*

The main character of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), Lucy Snowe, suffers from a famously incomprehensible psychological trauma. Like Ginevra, readers find her "so peculiar and so mysterious." *Villette* is often read as a surreal fairy tale or a protomodernist experimental narrative, but I want to argue that its innovative writing derives from what Leila May has called the "political and economic forces of materiality" affecting Lucy's conception of herself (60).[1] Lucy is a female migrant caregiver, a situation that generates a crisis about identity, vulnerability, and language, and in this article I draw on recent sociological studies to show that her "mysterious" psychological state actually conforms to well-known conditions among this vulnerable population. If Lucy is in many ways typical of the migrant caregiver, however, she is not just one among many such subjects; she is unique in that she is a fictional construct developing her own narrative, and that position allows us to recognize just how the interiority so fundamental to the novel form depends on class privilege. A subject who experiences her emotions as exploited for money, altered by migration, publicly erased, or privately fetishized cannot offer those feelings as unproblematic truths. Rather, I argue, the strategies that allow Lucy to survive her employment leave traces in language, and in this article, I show how *Villette* develops an alternative form of narrative.

Villette is unusual, but it is not alone. It is, rather, a crucial early narrative of this emerging sector of the global economy, and it can help us understand how to read other Victorian caregivers. The factors that afflict Lucy are actually widespread in Victorian fiction, which is full of governesses, companions, and nurses—people who give care for money without necessarily caring much at all, like Miss Briggs in William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Miss Macnulty in Anthony Trollope's

1 See Ayşe Çelikkol for a deeper analysis of the convergence of Brontë's domestic and capitalist ideas.

The Eustace Diamonds, and Mrs. Sparsit in *Hard Times*; governesses like Mrs. General in *Little Dorrit*; wives like Edith Dombey in *Dombey and Son*; and nurses to the elderly like Mary Garth in *Middlemarch*.[2] Moreover, particular experiences of Lucy Snowe's become definitive markers of migration when Jamaica Kincaid rewrites them for her own Lucy character, Lucy Potter, a century and a half later. *Villette* is a novel that helps set the terms for modern fictions of migration in the earliest years of the modern service economy.

These characters experience a dynamic that Arlie Russell Hochschild has famously designated "emotional labor." Hochschild's "emotional labor" means consigning aspects of one's affective life to commercial uses, thus creating a crisis of authenticity. Emotional labor "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others." Because such labor commodifies "a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality," the worker can become "estranged or alienated from" her core self (*Managed Heart* 7). After all, caregiving, an economic action, is not necessarily aligned with caring, an emotional reaction.

In its simplest form, we can say that Lucy—like Mrs. General or Miss Briggs—does not really care for the objects of her caregiving. In Lucy's case, this dissonance causes intense stress, but she also, paradoxically, cherishes it as a guarantor of psychological liberation, so that she does not combat it until it is nearly too late. Similarly, these minor characters in Charles Dickens, Trollope, and Thackeray may be experiencing an emotional split. Their flattery of their employers, utterances readers are inclined to condemn as hypocritical, may actually constitute a difficult negotiation between private feeling and public exigency. As Lana L. Dalley and Jill Rappoport remind us, "writing the history of nineteenth-century Economic Woman requires new modes of conceptualization that take into account her carefully circumscribed socioeconomic position and the behavior it elicited; she cannot simply be modeled on Economic Man" (2). A prime example of that new mode of conceptualization would be the need to manage emotional labor, so often assigned to women's employment.

What does emotional labor do to our reading of the Victorian novel? We need to read these caregivers as people whose inner truths and outer behavior have ceased to correlate. Characters like Mary Garth and Miss Macnulty must flatter employers whom they have good reason to mistrust, Mr Featherstone and Lizzie Eustace. Perhaps the frequent characterization of the companion as "stupid," as in the case of Miss Macnulty or Miss Briggs, actually evokes the kind of self-imposed stupefaction required for someone to retain self-respect while performing false friendship. Emotional labor can help us recognize the horror of a marriage like Edith Dombey's or Merry Chuzzlewit's, in which inauthentic feeling must be performed in the face of intimate daily (and nightly) contact. One coping technique might be to undertake ritualized activities that displace the actions these characters really want to do. We might rethink Mrs. Sparsit's stirrupped foot as a way of keeping herself from striding out of the room—or Mrs. General's nonsensical reiterations (papa,

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2   See Lauren N. Hoffer's articles on companions in Victorian fiction: "Grindstone" and "Employment Relations."

potatoes, poultry, prunes, and prisms) as a displacement of what she might really want to say. Lauren Hoffer argues that Rosa Dartle's performances of sympathy themselves "served as an apparatus of self-management" ("Grindstone" 204). We need to read these characters' acts not as markers of their personal honesty but as methods of coping with self-alienation.

In short, emotional labor may require us to develop reading protocols that see surface behaviors as cloaks for, not indicators of, inner feeling. When a character's inner feeling belies her external behavior, she can be comic as long as one focuses on her mechanistic actions (Mrs. General)—but if one intuits her agonized feelings, she becomes tragic (Rosa Dartle).

If this article were to discuss the Victorian caregiver character, we could address a large population of similar characters, any of whom could represent the group, using a sociological kind of approach in which the most valuable specimens are the most representative ones. However, in literary criticism, characters often become interesting inasmuch as they differ from the others. Lucy Snowe, fascinatingly, invites both sociological and literary readings to the extent that she manages to be both a unique figure and a prototypical example—à la Alex Woloch, both the one and the many. I want to focus on Lucy here not just as an exemplary emotional laborer but also as a character usefully unlike any other.

Lucy is the only major sufferer from emotional labor who writes her own story in Victorian fiction. Initially, she equates her readers with the employers from whom she must hide her deepest feelings, so she evades and baffles us. The materials she hides from the reader are her most sacred personal memories (the fate of her parents, her recognition of Graham, her discovery that M. Paul was the man who helped her when she disembarked in Labassecour). She is trying to protect this information from us because she assumes we want to monetize her emotions.[3] But the story of *Villette* is, in part, the story of Lucy gradually managing to imagine a different type of reader. It becomes possible for her to narrate her story because she comes to believe in a reader who is like a lover, not like an employer.

Charlotte Brontë herself knew the stress of emotional labor and drew on her own teaching experience in imagining Lucy Snowe's struggles. During her years as a governess, Brontë found the lack of privacy stifling. As she wrote to Emily in 1839, "I see now more clearly than I have ever done before that a private governess has no existence, is not considered as a living and rational being except as connected with the wearisome duties she has to fulfil. While she is teaching the children, working for them, amusing them, it is all right. If she steals a moment for herself she is a nuisance" (*Letters* 191). But showing exhaustion or depression was not permitted. When Brontë seemed downcast, her employer scolded her (193). To avoid such criticism, Brontë evidently learned to mask her feelings, but this performance was itself tiresome. She confided in her friend Ellen Nussey that "if teaching only—were requisite it would be smooth & easy—but it is the living in other people's houses—the estrangement from one's real character the adoption

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3   Of course, this is complicated by the fact that Charlotte Brontë does want to make money from *Villette* by selling her character's feelings. Ironically, Brontë is selling us a voyeuristic perspective on Lucy's agonizing resistance to being turned into a money-making spectacle.

of a cold frigid—apathetic exterior that is painful" (266). What she yearned for was "mental liberty" and freedom from "this weight of restraint" (195).

In the novels she wrote after her escape from teaching, Brontë interrogated how it felt to be a middle-class woman forced to work in education. *Jane Eyre* foregrounds Jane's advertising, salary negotiations, and frequent recourse to a language of professional labor to deflect Rochester's advances. The novel represents paid nursing as indifferent at best, via Grace Poole, the apothecary, and the hired nurse at Mrs. Reed's bedside. At the end of *Jane Eyre*, however, caregiving becomes voluntary. Jane chooses to become Rochester's nurse and Adéle's teacher, rendering her emotional labor authentic, loving, and delightful. Similarly, *Shirley* regards voluntary private caregiving as the emotional ideal, with Caroline and Mrs. Pryor engaged in a mutually sustaining dyad. Miriam Bailin explains that "in contrast to the unequal distribution of power and of labor which characterizes the relations between masters and dependents in the novel, the 'self-elected nurse' (as distinct from 'the hireling') and her patient take turns caring for the other in a cycle of dependency that prevents the permanent ascendance of one over the other" (64). Voluntary loving care is a very strong value in Victorian fiction.

However, in *Villette*, Brontë—unusually—focuses on paid care. All the companionship, teaching, and nursing are more or less unpleasant salaried services in this story, from Lucy's first job taking care of Miss Marchmont, to Dr. John's ministrations, to Lucy's management of "the crétin," Marie Broc. They are never recuperated as delightful private nurturing relationships. In *Villette*, loving voluntary care in the private sphere is provided only once, when Mrs. Bretton nurses Lucy in Labassecour, and nothing is more agonizingly clear to Lucy than that this care must end. When Lucy watches Marie Broc over the long vacation, she feels hopelessly degraded. Lucy has the experiences of a professional nurse but the feelings of a private individual. Paul Marchbanks reminds us that Victorian professional attendants presumably became inured to their charges' possibly messy intimate bodily functions, but such habituation would not necessarily have occurred in the private sphere; Lucy does not get used to Marie Broc's body (66). One might have expected loving private care to be highlighted in *Villette*, since Brontë wrote it after the horrific experience of nursing three dying siblings (Branwell, Emily, and Anne, all dead within eight months), as well as an elderly father, aunt, and servant, all with serious health issues.[4] But this is not the kind of nursing her novel describes. In *Villette*'s bleak modern world, private voluntary care is the exception, and professional caregiving, not necessarily based in real feeling, is the status quo.

Villette's insistence on paid care invites us to pair ordinary literary analysis with the kind of reading I am calling sociological. Admittedly, it seems strange to those of us trained in literary analysis to see a fictional character as a representative of a population, a prototypical migrant service provider. But in fact, Brontë invites such typifying readings. In *Villette*, the students are not individuated. They are all examples of the "continental 'female,'" who have more or less identically plump bodies, smooth hair, and amiable, phlegmatic calm (87, 235). Lucy calls them a

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4   Branwell died in September 1848, Emily in December 1848, and Anne in May 1849.

"swinish multitude" (91). The city itself is generically named Villette, or little city, and in an earlier draft, Brontë gave it an even more typifying term, Choseville (thing-city).[5] In *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment*, Amanda Anderson notes *Villette*'s tendency to "impersonality, what Lucy calls a 'disindividualizing' manner" (58). I concur with Anderson that this disindividuation is crucial to *Villette*, but in my reading, the cultivation of a flat, impersonal persona becomes a deeply problematic state, the product of a cruel pathology.

Indeed, disindividuation is one of the many disorienting strategies of *Villette*; how are readers to cope with a main character who does not seem to believe that the formative events of her life are worthy of our attention? I have argued that Lucy hides private information from us because she assumes we are out to exploit it. But it is also important that instead of telling us about her family disasters, she itemizes her employer's daily microaggressions. It is a different vision of narrative, a story based on quotidian daily events instead of catastrophic crises, suited to people wearily spending their lives in repeated small, demoralizing, emotionally false care acts, far from home.[6] Brontë foresaw that a new economic experience would require a new way of writing.

Victorian Migrations

It is important to keep in mind that Lucy is a fictional representative of a real global economic shift in the mid-nineteenth century. In Brontë's time, paid caregiving was often provided by people who were migrants: Irish servants, French chefs, German governesses. This population has some similarity to today's home health workers, nannies, housekeepers, day care providers, house cleaners, cooks, and senior-citizen center aides, many of whom have emigrated from other nations and who find that their work conditions are profoundly shaped by their capacity to function in an alien language and different culture. In *The Figure of the Migrant*, Thomas Nail argues that migration is one of the definitive experiences of modernity. As societies fluctuate, power dynamics expel certain populations and filter others, and the migrant becomes, in his words, "a socially constitutive power" (13).

Indeed, our ability to read *Villette* depends on our acceptance of the emerging norm of a global migrant caregiving population. In England, imperial shipping routes, travel outfitters, emigration manuals, colonialist initiatives, and patriotic rhetoric about making a British home in the wilderness all converged to make emigration popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century, particularly for unmarried women who were perceived as "superfluous" at home.[7] Today many states have strong, well-funded governmental programs encouraging citizens to go find work abroad, including the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration

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[5]   For readings of the "Choseville" name (and Ginevra's tendency to say "chose" to substitute for words she cannot remember) see McDonagh; and Badowska.

[6]   Rebecca Rainof explores a comparable dynamic, although she ascribes it to middle age, not work.

[7]   This dynamic has been thoroughly charted by Tamara Silvia Wagner, Rita S. Kranidis, and A. James Hammerton, respectively.

and similar programs in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Thailand (Aviv; Sassen 35; Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica* x). England in the mid-nineteenth century had a similar campaign, and Anne Longmuir argues that Lucy heeds the emigrationist rhetoric of the period.[8]

Nail argues that we need to stop reading the migrant in relation to states but rather do so in terms of a paradigm of mobility, in which the circulation of populations matters more than where they start or end. It is, therefore, crucial to note how traumatic Lucy's journey is, both the physical crossing to Labassecour and the longer journey in which she develops a kind of hybrid identity in transition between nations and homes. By 1853, the "dangerous crossing," already associated with the slave trade, had become a common trope in emigrant narratives, with the time spent on ship seen as morally and physically risky (Kranidis 154–64).[9] Alone on the dark waterfront, Lucy is cheated by a boatman, then abused by the stewardess, sickened by the voyage, and, when she finally reaches the port, disoriented by the different language and monetary system, harassed by strange men, and dangerously lost in a strange city. The coachman leaves her trunk behind, and because she has no French, she "could say nothing whatever" (*Villette* 68).

If we read *Villette* as an articulation of modern global migrant experience in the Anglophone tradition, then we can see this "dangerous crossing" as a trope that becomes central to later literature. Indeed, *Villette* establishes the "dangerous crossing" as more important than one's parents or childhood, since Lucy describes the former in detail while neglecting the latter or, more precisely, framing the latter *as* a dangerous crossing:

> *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 somehow have fallen over-board, 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 saltness of briny waves in my throat, and their icy pressure on my lungs. I even know there was a storm, and that not of one hour nor one day. 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.* (39)

Similarly, Kincaid's *Lucy* opens as the Antiguan au pair, Lucy Potter, arrives in Britain, disoriented and dismayed by the unfamiliar spectacle. Lucy Potter's journey feels as upsetting as Lucy Snowe's even though it is not literally dangerous, as if this constitutive emotion must be recorded even when the narrative conditions

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8   Brontë's friend Mary Taylor moved to New Zealand, and her strong advocacy of emigration may have influenced Brontë. Longmuir argues for Taylor's strong influence on Lucy Snowe. Hammerton depicts Taylor as an aggressive, energetic, plainspoken woman—not a source for Lucy Snowe in terms of personality, although she may have suggested some of Lucy's actions.

9   However, Marni Stanley points out that women tended to minimize their own discomfort in travel narratives.

have changed. Kincaid's Lucy, like Brontë's Lucy, refers to her childhood home only occasionally and parenthetically, and this replacement of one story of origin (parents) with another (crossing) can be read as one of the new narrative forms ushered in through stories of migration. *Villette*, of course, ends with the ultimate "dangerous crossing," the shipwreck and loss of M. Paul en route from Guadeloupe. Lucy Potter symbolically completes M. Paul's journey, moving from the West Indies to the Anglo-American world at last.

Lucy's life changes, not through marriage but through promotion. When Lucy suddenly gets appointed the English teacher of an unruly class of sixty teenage girls, she has no training, no license, no degree, not even a few minutes to prepare herself. Thus we experience Lucy's transition from intensive, individualized care to a pedagogical performance before a large crowd as a profoundly shocking shift. She moves from care work, here defined as intimate relations with another person or a small community, toward service work, performing for a larger public from something of a professional distance.[10] The contrast sharpens our sense of the different kinds of skills each demands. It makes us ask just what emotional tools might be required to shift from intimate care to public service, a change that may well be more jolting than moving from one middle-class home to another via the more conventional marriage plot.

In other respects, Lucy typifies migrant experiences. Both Victorian and modern migrants tend to be middle-class in their countries of origin. Modern migrants must also be "enterprising and adventurous enough to resist the social pressures to stay home and accept their lot in life" (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, "Introduction" 10). As Lucy begins to entertain the possibility of emigrating, she applauds herself as vigorous, energetic, strong-minded, and bold (49). Women often get the idea of migrating from meeting others who have traveled, and Lucy decides to emigrate after meeting a wealthy school friend who hired a Continental servant while abroad (51; Hochschild, "Love" 28).

Once she finds a live-in job, Lucy experiences the rampant national stereotyping that Susan N. Bayley has described as defining the lives of governesses abroad. Bayley describes the dominant stereotypes: the cold, hardy, practical English; the flighty, vain French; the drunken, poor Irish; and the honest but humorless and unattractive Germans (national stereotypes all represented among the personnel of the Pensionnat des Demoiselles) (174). "As a result [of mutual stereotyping], governesses were depersonalised and dehumanised, impugned for the purported misdeeds of their home countries, and pressured to deny or suppress their national and religious identities," Bayley explains (185). Lucy's "depersonalised and dehumanised" experience, however, also derives from theories of race. In the Victorian imagination, being English was a racial as much as a national identity.

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10   In modern economic thinking, service work simply means any kind of work that produces immaterial relations rather than material goods. It includes jobs in the financial, professional, educational, nursing, entertainment, clerical, legal, informational, advertising, or literary sectors, and it features "affective labor," which, like Hochschild's emotional labor, is work that makes another person feel better (Gooch 21; Hardt 91, 96). However, *Villette* contrasts two types of service work: intimate personal physical care versus public performance. This shows how a fictional case can offer a different definition of an economic category.

And Lucy's typicality—one of the most disorienting elements of her narrative style—is nowhere clearer than in the novel's racial language, where she is presented as nothing more or less than the generic Englishwoman.

Villette was published in 1853, in the midst of a ferment about racial characterization that included Robert Knox's 1850 *The Races of Men*, Arthur de Gobineau's *The Inequality of Human Races* (1853–55), and J. C. Nott and George R. Gliddon's *Types of Mankind* in 1854. To be English—or, in the new ethnological terms, to be Caucasian, Scandinavian, or Germanic—now meant to be part of a specifically defined race. Like Kincaid's Lucy Potter, who starts to see her own skin as black once she lives among white employers, Brontë's Lucy Snowe begins to regard herself as English when she moves to Labassecour, and each Lucy experiences her "racial" difference as somatically visible and uncomfortably tied to fundamental aspects of her personality. Lucy Snowe, as a middle-class white English woman, expects to domineer over others. Thus, when she herself becomes a racially marked subject of others' colonizing campaigns, her outrage is palpable, and we experience the shock along with her.

Lucy's Englishness appears to be written on the body.[11] M. Paul notes Englishwomen's "tall stature, their long necks, their thin arms" (*Villette* 378). By contrast, Lucy notes "the full, firm comeliness of Labassecourien contours" (144). Their national difference extends to personality and mind. M. Paul itemizes the Englishwomen's pedantic, skeptical, proud character and "pretentious virtue," and Lucy believes that the Labassecouriennes are lazy, stupid, insincere, and vain (378, 90–92). When national origin permanently determines identity, from lips to moral character, one cannot change one's nationality. In this respect, *Villette* seems to concur with the nineteenth-century consensus about the hierarchical races of man, in which bodily characteristics like one's forehead or nose corresponded to basic attributes. Knox insisted that "race is everything in human history; that the races of men are not the result of accident; that they are not convertible into each other by any contrivance whatever" (14).

On the other hand, the plot of *Villette* enacts a cosmopolitan understanding in which nationality is not an essential racial identity but a culture that could be adopted, rejected, or mixed with elements of other cultures. After all, as Lucy notes, "Villette is a cosmopolitan city, and in this school were girls of almost every European nation, and likewise of very varied rank in life" (90). Indeed, by the end of the novel, Lucy essentially becomes a hybrid English/Labassecourienne subject, as she speaks French fluently, runs a business, and becomes a permanent resident of the city.[12] No longer consigned to typical Englishwomanhood, Lucy becomes a person who can choose which cultural elements compose her identity.

[11] While Victorian ethnographers did believe that people belonging to a nation could constitute a race, there was not a one-to-one correspondence. Some races, like the Caucasian, covered several nations (Scandinavia, Germany, England); some nations included members of different races (England had Celts as well as Saxons; Canada had indigenous peoples alongside European settlers). Belgium, interestingly, was an uncertain case. Nott and Gliddon cited M. Thierry's theory that the Belgians were related to the Welsh and the Armoricans (i.e., racially different from the Saxons in England) (91).

[12] Çelikkol argues that Brontë endorses cosmopolitanism throughout her oeuvre, citing the sympathetic figures of Hunsden in *The Professor* and Robert Moore in *Shirley* (Çelikkol 104–8).

Cosmopolitan theorists explore how far Victorians might have embraced a fluid and flexible international persona rather than always working to export English-ness abroad. Such cosmopolitanism, according to Amanda Anderson, can be defined as "the capacious inclusion of multiple forms of affiliation, disaffiliation, and reaffiliation, simultaneously insisting on the need for informing principles of self-reflexivity, critique, and common humanity" (30).[13] This more multicultural view speaks of national origin as a personal choice, not a somatic core.[14] Some critics have argued that Lucy softens to embrace elements of Continental culture.[15]

Thus *Villette* seems to endorse both racial and cosmopolitan views of ethnic identity, sometimes simultaneously. Lucy asserts that she is essentially English—but her life story is one of progressive Labassecourienizing. Perhaps we could say that Lucy resists the cosmopolitan story Brontë is writing for her. Indeed, Lucy's Anglophilia is a psychological mechanism to cope with migration, a defensive retroactive construction of Englishness she erects precisely because her English identity seems to be getting diluted. It is because her constitutive migrant expe-rience is one of traumatic mobility that Lucy feels the need to insist that she is really rooted in a nation.

Most critics focus on the insistent way that Lucy asserts her Englishness. She often pronounces (if privately) on the inferiority of her interlocutors and seems scornfully impervious to their anti-English diatribes. Helen Cooper points out that "Lucy's identification of her Catholic pupils as 'mutineers,' 'a stiff-necked tribe,' 'swinish,' lazy, incapable of sustained mental effort, lacking in self-respect and in need of English discipline echoes familiar tropes in the literature of imperialism," reminiscent of missionary discourse (xliii). James Buzard agrees that Lucy regards "the Francophone Catholics among whom she lives in Villette as uncivilized sav-ages" (247).

However, we need to remember that Lucy adopts this language in the context of her employers' campaign to Labassecourienize her. They are constantly slip-ping her propaganda about Catholicism, attempting to infiltrate her mind and alter her affiliations. Lucy comes from a nation that fervently argued for its own moral superiority to the rest of the world, with women as the privileged carriers of that ideology. What she finds, however, is that Englishness does not confer some kind of magical potency. Thus, she pronounces on her national privilege out of defensive desperation when she finds herself targeted by someone else's quasi-colonizing campaign.

Lucy has to endure the mortifying experience of her employers' interpreting her every action in aggravatingly racial ways. She cannot just be herself; she represents all Englishwomen. The governess was "identified primarily with her nationality rather than her personality," writes Bayley (180). When she gazes at a painting, she

[13]   Also see Agathocleous; Agathocleous and Rudy; and Buzard.

[14]   Nott and Gliddon argued that some races were already biologically cosmopolitan because they had been historically intermingled from ages past (67).

[15]   See, for instance, Bonfiglio; Wong; Clarke; and Lawson and Shakinovsky.

is exhibiting the strangeness of Englishwomen; when she receives letters, she is revealing Englishwomen's odd notions of friendship (*Villette* 225, 325). When she annoys M. Paul, he tells her entire class that Englishwomen are unattractive. He "spared nothing—neither their minds, morals, manners, nor personal appearance. I specially remember his abuse of their tall stature, their long necks, their impious scepticism (!), their insufferable pride, their pretentious virtue" (378). But M. Paul's ascription of revolting body parts and reprehensible personality traits to a racial other is hardly just a "teasing denunciation" (Bayley 174). M. Paul's racism is far more overt than anything Kincaid's Lucy Potter encounters. For fifteen minutes, an employee has to sit silently while an employer expresses virulent denunciations of her kind's "minds, morals, manners, [and] personal appearance," her national history, and her cultural heroes, teaching the students a discourse that enables them to despise their teacher (*Villette* 37).

Lucy expresses a typical global-migrant anxiety when she explores whether her employers can work through their presuppositions about her national/racial makeup in order to continue employing her and when she has to balance between passionate defense of her home country and strategic silence so as not to offend those with power over her. Thus Lucy's utterances about race do not simply emanate from her internal character but rather are profoundly constrained by her vocational situation. If a character's very sense of self is a defensive reaction against her employers—and the narrator's statements seem at odds with the author's plot—readers are destabilized; racial identity and cultural residence no longer represent fundamental truths but rather strategic, temporary, shifting strategies. Brontë is inventing a new kind of narrative form, in which ongoing, involuntary employment conditions shape one's fundamental character. Readers are used to a bildungsroman, in which a young person grows to discover ideal work; but in migrant literature, the work comes first: uninteresting labor painfully, inexorably, remakes a person.

Kate Lawson and Lynn Shakinovsky insightfully note that *Villette*'s "most compelling phobia is that of not belonging, of having *no* place, of the state of being 'placeless.' . . . To be 'placeless' is to be unemployed, but for Lucy this position has larger reverberations as she is haunted from the outset by deprivation and dispossession" (932). Her Englishness, her Protestantism, then, can be read as resistance to Labassecour, ways of articulating a core self. Without language, possessions, or rank, Lucy no longer knows exactly who she is. Her growing faith in Englishness helps fill that role, waxing stronger in response to foreign challenges; it is not necessarily a preexisting truth. Her self is not essential but fluctuating, changing in response to external stimuli. Such transitionality, such hybridity, is a condition produced through the experience of migration, and it produces a character who morphs in ways that might bewilder a reader accustomed to a more stable idea of character. Nancy Armstrong has argued that we ought to read Jane Eyre the same way, as an "in-between Jane," characterized by transition between temporary homes, offering "a narrative that understands migration as the motive force of social history" (220). If mobility becomes Lucy's fundamental mode, it is not surprising that it also governs her experience of caregiving.

From Care to Service

Lucy's first caregiving job is companion to Miss Marchmont. Initially, Lucy dreads ministering to an invalid, but she softens when she learns how to treat an attack, finding that "by the time she was relieved, a sort of intimacy was already formed between us" (*Villette* 41). The act of care introduces the feeling of caring, "a growing sense of attachment" (42). But in the care dyad, Lucy effectively loses her own self. "Two hot, close rooms thus became my world; and a crippled old woman, my mistress, my friend, my all. Her service was my duty—her pain, my suffering—her relief, my hope—her anger, my punishment—her regard, my reward" (42). Lucy overidentifies with her cared-for, adapting to the sedentary, undernourished life of an invalid, becoming herself "thin, haggard, and hollow-eyed" (48). In this dangerously intimate care dyad, "all within me became narrowed to my lot" (42).

In her second job, at Madame Beck's *pensionnat*, Lucy continues to practice care work that is characterized by deep absorption, or, to use care theorist Nel Noddings's term, "engrossment" (17). Lucy adores little Georgette, the youngest child, carrying and caressing her (*Villette* 341). Lucy tells us that Georgette's "clasp and the nestling action with which she pressed her cheek to mine, made me almost cry with a tender pain . . . this pure little drop [of feeling] from a pure little source was too sweet: it penetrated deep, and subdued the heart, and sent a gush to the eyes" (134). As the "tender pain" indicates, this kind of love is "too sweet," reminding Lucy of the risk of merging herself in another.[16] This is a relationship Kincaid retained in her rewriting of *Villette*, giving Lucy Potter a special passion for her youngest charge, as if the relationship with a particular child becomes a necessary marker for care narratives, a sign that the caregiver can really care (53).

However, this engrossment is complicated by the fact that Lucy is responsible for all three Beck girls, Fifine and Désirée as well as Georgette. Fifine is likeable enough, but Désirée is "a vicious child" whose mother fails to control her, as Lucy tartly notes (102–3).[17] In caring for three children, the intense melding that Lucy had previously experienced with Miss Marchmont is no longer possible—her economic responsibility no longer aligns with her emotional loyalties. Georgette's mother sends her away, a real loss for Lucy, who remarks rather poignantly: "I was sorry; I loved the child, and her loss made me poorer than before" (139). Now she has two cared-fors for whom she cares very little. This transitional state prepares us for her next situation, when Lucy moves from care into something like a service economy, in which she must cater to a larger public or customer base. In a move very typical of employers, Madame Beck increases her workload without paying her

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[16]   Like Lucy, modern nannies and caregivers often pour intense passion into their relations with their charges, sometimes compensating for the children they themselves have left behind, sometimes making this relationship substitute for less satisfactory adult relations in a new place. They frequently go beyond their jobs, bringing gifts and helping the cared-for on their days off (Zelitzer 174–80). Such engrossment in another, Noddings argues, is fundamental to good care.

[17]   Interestingly, Lucy's response is typical of modern immigrant babysitters, who often feel that the mothers need to interact with their children more and discipline them more strictly (Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica* 146, 153).

market rates for her new job. ("Madame raised my salary; but she got thrice the work out of me she had extracted from Mr Wilson, at half the expense," notes Lucy shrewdly [89].)

When Madame Beck forces her to become the English teacher, Lucy steps into a classroom with sixty students who are "more numerous, more turbulent, and infinitely more unmanageable" than any other class as well as only a few years younger than she (87). Individual relations are impossible; she has to cope with a whole crowd. The hostile students revolt against their instructor, and Lucy feels fundamentally disempowered by her hesitant French. "I had no flow, only a hesitating trickle of language," she laments (88). Lucy must quickly develop a new method, and what she develops is acting. She substitutes dramatic visual tableaus of violence for words. Ripping a student's exercise, pushing a student into a closet and locking the door on her, Lucy achieves mastery over the girls (88–89). She learns to perform a kind of persona that keeps the girls disciplined and attentive. At first, Lucy is intellectually enlivened by this new challenge. She rejoices, "[I]t was pleasant. I felt I was getting on; not lying the stagnant prey of mould and rust, but polishing my faculties" (90). At night she lies awake "thinking what plan I had best adopt to get a reliable hold on these mutineers" (91).

In this respect, Lucy's pedagogy is the opposite of her previous one-on-one care experiences. In nursing, she passionately identified, but in teaching she deliberately distances. Whereas she previously offered intimately physical loving care, she now expresses hostility, even sadism, from her separate stance on the *estrade*. John Kucich notes that "Lucy Snowe's carefully orchestrated displays of anger against her students" are not authentic feelings but deliberate performances, much like her "calculated displays of contempt" for her frenemy Ginevra Fanshawe (917–18). As in her development of a defensive racial essentialism just when she is becoming most cosmopolitan, Lucy can recalibrate her identity in response to cultural pressures.

As a teacher, then, Lucy performs in a new way. Assuming a deliberately inauthentic performative self allows her to maintain a space of freedom, keeping a division between "the life of thought, and that of reality" (*Villette* 85). Lucy can feel pride in her "keen relish for dramatic expression" (156). Indeed, the famous scene in which Lucy acts in the vaudeville reveals, to her own surprise, just how skillful an actor she is, making her resolve to keep her acting curtailed (156). Acting can never become a pleasure in itself; it must be merely instrumental, a cover for something else. Behind this performance, she can retain her private self, guaranteed inaccessible in part because it operates in a language and according to cultural and religious norms that are not shared by school personnel.

In fact, Lucy comes to prize her secret self so much that she refuses a much better-paying job as companion to her friend Paulina, who might discover her private feelings. She declares, rather startlingly, given her previous two jobs: "To be either a private governess or a companion was unnatural to me. Rather than fill the former post in any great house, I would deliberately have taken a housemaid's place, bought a strong pair of gloves, swept bedrooms and staircases, and cleaned stoves and locks, in peace and independence. Rather than be a companion, I would have made shirts, and starved" (330). Lucy determines that she will never risk

engrossment again. By contrast, she exults, Madame Beck "left me free: she tied me to nothing—not to herself—not even to her interests," having given her the gift of her "liberty" (331). This is bitterly ironic, since the "liberty" she enjoys means only the chance to develop a secret self, whose maintenance consumes her. As her external self gets wholly co-opted, Lucy becomes more attached to a core reality that she cannot risk Paulina's discovering. She refuses the job so that she can continue to tend her self-destructive split.

As a teacher, then, Lucy has been conscripted into emotional labor. Hochschild argues that by commodifying human responsiveness, emotional labor pushes workers to fetishize a secret inner self, "an inner jewel that remains our unique possession no matter whose billboard is on our back or whose smile is on our face. We push this 'real self' further inside, making it more inaccessible" (*Managed Heart* 34). Lucy is required to show a smoothly agreeable front to Madame Beck and a carefully orchestrated disciplinary anger to her students, so both these aspects of herself come to seem tainted. Such self-management is exhausting for modern as well as Victorian caregivers. Lynn May Rivas notes that today, caregivers' "obligation to manage their emotions emerged as the most oppressive aspect of the job. Ironically, this emotional labor is not recognized as work. Rather, it is invisible" (77). By emphasizing this invisibility for the main character in a novel—a person who, structurally, ought to be the most visible—Brontë creates a disorienting mismatch between readerly expectations and economic realities.

Such economic realities also govern moods. Today, some service workers inflate their emotions to try to match the tone they have to project in order to make themselves feel authentic.[18] Others, however, like Lucy, take a grim pleasure in making the split as wide as possible. A waiter explains that "you experience a special rush when your job is to project an aura of warmth and hospitality while maintaining an almost clinical emotional distance. It's the thrill of the con" (Frame). Like this waiter, Lucy takes pleasure in intensifying her internal split, and one can imagine Mrs. General doing so as well. Lucy identifies her authentic self with spontaneity, irritability, perverseness, because such feelings are not "useful." They cannot be commodified; they in fact work against her continued employment and thus offer the momentary pleasure of private rebellion.

Service work was first defined as an economic category in 1853, coincidentally the same year *Villette* was published (Gooch 2). However, it has a longer history. Christine Kotchemidova claims that emotional labor begins with late eighteenth-century urbanization. In a traditional village, each worker enjoyed a local monopoly, and when there was only one blacksmith or miller, he had no incentive to try to attract customers by projecting good humor. However, when multiple small businesses came into competition, the most pleasant person attracted more customers (Kotchemidova 13). By the mid-nineteenth century, emotional labor was widely experienced, particularly by women, whose financial survival could depend on how well they pretended to care for those whom they were hired to watch.

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[18]   This is the strategy followed by Hochschild's subjects, flight attendants required to smile at all times and bill collectors who had to scream at creditors. They tried to work up these feelings internally so as to match their external effect.

Such an experience could lead to a traumatizing conflict between one's honesty and one's self-interest. The economic pressures of competition are very much in evidence in Lucy's life, for at any moment she can be replaced by another teacher, and indeed, the *pensionnat* itself could fail if parents decide to take their children elsewhere. In one crisis, the school seems about to collapse—"a dozen rival educational houses were ready" (110) to push the school into ruin—and it is only saved by Madame Beck's capacity to hide her anxiety, performing instead a careful, "good-humoured, easy grace," complete with "chuckling and rubbing [her hands] joyously" (111). The labor of performing pleasantries pays off. The parents are convinced, and the school is more popular than ever. Such a lesson is not lost on Lucy, although Lucy performs a different, much pricklier, role than her smooth employer.

Lucy's hunger for real feeling perhaps accounts for her attraction to the most natural, spontaneous person she knows, M. Paul. She is entranced by his utterly transparent emotional life, including his ebullitions of anger, his childish jealousies, his sudden rapprochements. As Hochschild remarks, once our culture has had to develop "an instrumental stance toward feeling," "we treat spontaneous feeling . . . as if it were scarce and precious; we raise it up as a virtue. It may not be too much to suggest that we are witnessing a call for the conservation of 'inner resources,' a call to save another wilderness from corporate use and keep it 'forever wild'" (*Managed Heart* 22). Lucy may feel something like this for M. Paul—his emotional wildness represents an ideal vision of liberation for her. However, "if the authentic self is a product of emotion work, in what sense can we say that managed emotions are less authentic?" asks Amy S. Wharton (174). M. Paul's emotional wildness is a product of social forces, too. His self-expression is possible because he enjoys privileged status as a male, an intellectual, and a cousin of Madame Beck. He cannot be fired as Lucy can be; he has a liberty she is structurally prevented from reaching. Moreover, as a lifelong Labassecourien, he can have a naive, unproblematic faith in the obvious value of his own culture, very different from Lucy's hybrid, fluid identity. The reader can only wonder what M. Paul's journey to Guadeloupe might have done to his sense of self, for he disappears on the way back, as if he literally can never come home again.[19]

The person who really shares Lucy's mobility is Graham, another migrant. But Graham has perhaps succeeded too well, acting so flawlessly he can no longer access uncomfortable truths. He has a diffuse amiability that she mistrusts, knowing that it does not reflect any particular feeling for her (402). Lucy calls him "faithless-looking" because he is so universally pleasing (19). Graham correlates to Lucy's specious performative cover, while M. Paul's passion matches her own fiery secret core self.

However, once she has set up a fetishized, authentic secret self, Lucy gets frustrated by her inability to inhabit it. She is forced to maintain her performative cover morning, noon, and night, so that the acting in which she once found delight

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[19]   His personal insecurity and his racist diatribes might also indicate a covert anxiety about Labassecourien superiority that would make an encounter with the West Indies particularly destabilizing.

becomes a source of unutterable weariness. Lucy's private space is also her public workplace; she can never let down her guard or visit her own private free space of feeling. Tellingly, Lucy continues to act when narrating to us. She yearns, "Oh!—to speak truth, and drop that tone of a false calm which long to sustain, outweighs nature's endurance" (297). Such a statement makes us ask why Lucy does not "speak truth" and why the implied addressee requires a "false calm." At this point, Lucy seems to be conceptualizing her relation to her reader as another employer-employee relationship that requires emotional labor—but she also recognizes the reader's potential for a different role, as shown by the fact that she pleads for the chance to tell us the "truth."

Madame Beck herself embodies the disorienting collusion of a private space designed for public visibility. Amanda Anderson notes that "just as her home is continuous with the institution of the school that she directs, so too her maternal activities are indistinguishable from her pedagogical ones: both are marked by secrecy, surveillance, and absence of affect" (50). Madame Beck treats her children like her employees, with cool distance, while students and teachers jostle in inappropriately intimate proximity. "For a lowly service worker, work is nearly indistinguishable from life," remarks Joshua Gooch (174).

While surveillance is a problem for modern caregivers, it had a different tenor in the nineteenth century, when household management books explicitly told the mistress of the house that it was her moral duty to make servants adhere to certain behavioral codes. Madame Beck and M. Paul constantly invade Lucy's private spaces. They participate in the power dynamic that scholars now call "maternalism": the employer managing the employee's intimate life under the guise of friendship. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo writes that such personal relations are "a key mechanism of oppression and labor control. According to this line of thinking, the employer's maternalism mandates the employee's rituals of deference, which reinforce inequality and hierarchy" (*Doméstica* 171).[20] In a Victorian context in which "deference and hierarchy" were seen as the natural, even divinely ordained order, maternalism would have been even more difficult to contest.

Lucy's situation may seem a result of her particularly friendless, traumatized personal history, but we can also read it as a structural norm: these things go with the job, no matter what her original history might have been. After all, Lucy Potter, who left behind a loving social world in Antigua, feels just as isolated as Lucy Snowe. The migrant caregiving plot is characterized by a sense of loneliness amid multitudes. "I might have had companions, and I chose solitude," Lucy says (*Villette* 139). Hondagneu-Sotelo describes live-in work in a similar way:

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[20]   Hondagneu-Sotelo explains maternalism, a term she credits to Judith Rollins (*Doméstica* 259n3). Many scholars have noted how commonly employer/employee relations exceed professional boundaries (Himmelweit 32; B. Anderson; Constable). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson analyzes a specifically racial American Civil War–era type of fictional maternalism in which a white woman "rescues" a disabled, often black, woman, as in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This sentimental humanitarian action offers the maternalist patron a feminine form of empowerment (Garland-Thomson 82–83, 88). Interestingly, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published just before *Villette*, and Brontë envied its power, fearing her own novel could never achieve its political strength (*Letters* 208).

The boundaries that we might normally take for granted disappear in live-in jobs. They have, as Evelyn Nakano Glenn has noted, "no clear line between work and non-work time," and the line between job space and private space is similarly blurred. Live-in nanny/housekeepers are at once socially isolated and surrounded by other people's territory; during the hours they remain on the employers' premises, their space, like their time, belongs to another. The sensation of being among others while remaining invisible, unknown and apart, of never being able to leave the margins, makes many live-in employees sad, lonely, and depressed. Melancholy sets in and doesn't necessarily lift on the weekends. (Doméstica 32)

This is not only true of Lucy Snowe and Lucy Potter but also of the caregivers whose point of view we follow in other Victorian fiction. Miss Wade rebuffs her schoolmates; Agnes Grey feels alone in her employer's family; Mary Garth feels isolation when caring for Featherstone. In a modernist text, solitude might indicate a unique, complicated individuality, but in a Victorian world in which social enmeshment feels necessary, it is often a marker of tragedy.

By the end of *Villette*, Lucy suffers extreme self-estrangement, cultivating the self-protectively drab camouflage of a ghost, or a nun, or a shadow, while feeling her own core self to be vividly enraged and alert. She carefully cultivates what Amanda Anderson calls the "nondescript cover" of her behavior (60). Caregivers can sometimes take a perverse pride (as Lucy does) in managing to make others overlook them. One modern caregiver explains: "[Y]ou're almost nonexistent and yet you're there. . . . [It's] like you're there, but you're not there . . . [when they can do something] without even realizing that they're doing it because you're there, that's quality work" (Rivas 75). Lucy, too, enjoys tricking others into overlooking her: "[I]n quarters where we can never be rightly known, we take pleasure, I think, in being consummately ignored" (*Villette* 109). Yet Lucy's "pleasure" derives, perversely, from controlling her own degradation. Rivas notes that "invisibility is the most extreme form of alienation—the ultimate manifestation of self-estrangement" (79). Lucy certainly feels invisible. She even uses the same metaphor modern workers use. One housekeeper complains that her boss would "act as if I was a chair, a table" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica* 198), just as Lucy notes that Graham treats her like one of the "unobtrusive articles of furniture, chairs of ordinary joiner's work" (*Villette* 108).[21]

However, Lucy also uses a particularly Victorian metaphor for alienated emotional labor, and this metaphor takes on (quite literally) an independent life. Lucy announces that she has "a staid manner of my own which ere now had been as good to me as cloak and hood of hodden gray; since under its favour I had been enabled to achieve with impunity, and even approbation, deeds that if attempted with an excited and unsettled air, would in some minds have stamped me as a dreamer and zealot" (49). It is crucial for Lucy that she conceptualize her external manner as merely a "cloak," beneath which she can actually be a "zealot."

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[21]   This seems to have been a common trope. Rosa Dartle is described as furniture (Hoffer, "Grindstone" 197). A German article advising governesses going to England warns that they will be treated like pieces of furniture (Bayley 181).

The two factors are linked, and each of her love interests perceives a different side. Because Lucy sees Graham as aligned with her colorless cover story, it is not surprising that this, in turn, is all Graham sees in her. When Graham casually calls her "'quiet Lucy Snowe,' [an] 'inoffensive shadow,'" she is dismayed by this evidence that she has performed her masquerade too well (351). But Lucy is charmed when M. Paul, the votary of intense interior feeling, errs on the other extreme, calling her an ambitious, flaming, ardent being (170–71). Whereas Graham credited her self-presentation as a shadow, M. Paul consistently identifies her with light—flames, rays—reaffirming the selfhood she wants to claim as her fundamental truth.[22] After all, although her last name is the famously cold Snowe, her first name is Lucy: light.[23]

If one were to design a costume for a person who imagines herself as shadow and flame, it might well be "a figure all black or white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white" (273). Since Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's formative reading, critics tend to see the nun as a symbol of sexual repression or disembodiment (425–26; Vrettos 68). While the image of a nun conveys a constrained, repressed life, it is important to recall that the real person wearing the nun's habit is Alfred de Hamal, a man enjoying an illicit romantic escapade. On the outside, there is a full outfit that gives one impression (virginal, female, selfless, silent)—on the inside, there is the opposite (sexually adventurous, male, pleasure-seeking, love-letter-writing). On the outside, there is a "dark, usurping shape, supine, long, and strange?. . . . It looks very black, I think it looks—not human" (*Villette* 519); on the inside, there is a shining light, for when de Hamal kindles a cigar in the attic, he produces "a solemn light, like a star, but broader" (186). Both a shadowy self and a frightening flame, the nun represents a horrifying embodiment of Lucy's pathologically split sense of self.

The nun makes Lucy's metaphors for herself—invisibility, inoffensive shadow—all too vivid. "She had no face—no features: all below her brow was masked with a white cloth" (329). To be a nun is to become faceless, silenced, shrouded, a generic inhabitant of the *pensionnat*, a terrifying vision of what Lucy might come to if she continues her emotional labor. This nightmarish vision represents Lucy's terror of dwindling into her surface self, of turning into nothing more than the grimly fake performance she maintains at the *pensionnat*.

The problem is that Lucy sees no way out. Lucy's employment status is too insecure to directly confront her boss. Her anxiety about getting a job with equally good conditions leads her to vow to tolerate the surveillance (131). Such a tacit armed truce is typical of put-upon care workers and their overdirecting employers (Hondagneu-Sotelo, "Blowups" 55–56). But with such intimate proximity of career and employer, resentment over extra work—and cultural and personal disagreements—can build up until an explosion occurs. Sometimes "a conflict begins over a mundane issue: a

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22 At the opera, M. Paul hisses (in Helen M. Cooper's translation): "[Y]ou seem sad, submissive, dreamy, but you are not those things; I will describe you: Savage! your soul is on fire, lightning in your eyes." Lucy retorts, "Yes, I have fire in my soul, and I have reason to!" (586).

23 In Kincaid's *Lucy,* the name derives from Lucifer, the devil. Kincaid allows Lucy Potter a level of rebelliousness that Lucy Snowe cannot own.

seemingly misspent hour, a seemingly sharp word. Quickly, the confrontation flares, exploding into a screaming match" ("Blowups" 55). In Lucy's case, the conflict begins when Madame Beck tells Lucy that she should go to bed (the "misspent hour"), and Lucy responds by shouting that Madame Beck needs to stay out of her life. However, their fight changes nothing and is never referred to again (*Villette* 494–95). Madame Beck's denial is typical, for quite often the employer engages in evasive shifts to cover up the breakdown of the relationship (Hondagneu-Sotelo, "Blowups" 65). In this case, although Madame Beck refuses to fire Lucy, Lucy can simply walk out because—fulfilling the immigrant dream—she has been able to start her own business.

From Caregiving to Caring

The pathologically split Lucy I have been describing is not someone who would (or could) narrate her own life. Torn between a devastatingly false surface and a violently furious private self, this Lucy has no language for her story. Refusing to speak preserves her cover of "invisibility" but also acts as passive-aggressive resistance to a reader she imagines as yet another exploitative employer. But I want to end this article with a more hopeful development: the restoration of self that allows her to tell her story. What happens is that Lucy develops an alternative model of a reader: a person who will listen to her, a person who cares for her, a person she can entrust with her truths.

   On the plot level, Lucy recovers mainly because M. Paul makes it possible for her to leave a bad job. Lucy loses her lover, but she gets her school, and (to her own surprise) she finds that running her own business gives her the happiest three years of her life.[24] Lucy's problem cannot be sexual repression (as Gilbert and Gubar assume [416]) or mourning for a lost maternal ideal (as Amanda Anderson surmises [55]), since neither of those factors changes at the end of *Villette* when Lucy has recovered. Rather, she achieves mental health through founding a new business and acclimating to Labassecourien culture. Her complaint is situational, based in an unbearably stressful care environment, so she recovers when she leaves it.[25]

   More profoundly, in M. Paul she acquires someone who wants to hear her story. She finally ceases to be invisible. Through the novel's forty-four direct addresses to the reader—more than in any of her previous novels, Helen H. Davis points out (204)—we can begin to intuit the character of the narratee. This person is sometimes sympathetic, but on the whole seems rather judgmental: apt to chide Lucy, get the wrong idea, issue religious diatribes, and overlook details.[26] Lucy's imagined

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24   Her union with M. Paul promises to be an example of "vocational marriage," a marriage that gives the woman meaningful work and remains an acceptable alternative in fiction until mid-century (Schaffer).

25   Helen H. Davis concurs that Lucy's story is fundamentally about work, not love. She argues that *Villette*'s narrative difficulties derive from its effort to present the socially unacceptable story of a successful, ambitious businesswoman who remains outside the marriage plot (202–3).

26   Particularly notable examples of such direct addresses to the reader can be found on 50, 77, 82, 173, and 273.

reader does not want to hear Lucy's "impressions" and, famously, needs reassuring fictions catering to naive beliefs about happy women's lives.[27] Who might this censorious, fussy, impatient, conventional figure remind us of but M. Paul? The narratee may not exactly be M. Paul but seems to be modeled on him in important respects, allowing us to read all of *Villette* as a long thank-you letter to Paul, a full explanation of what Lucy owes him, not just for his love but for the life he gave her, the career that allowed her to escape the *pensionnat*. Kincaid too provides her Lucy with an intimate friend, as if the invisible caregiver cannot bring her own story to speech unless she has a person who will hear it. In the caregiving narrative, the interlocutor need not be a romantic partner, just a person who sees past the caregiver's invisibility. Indeed, it is M. Paul's immediate provision of a private teaching facility—not the distant marital promise—that gives Lucy the emotional health to write her story. He does not make it home, and for all we know, the three years in the West Indies may have profoundly troubled his faith in Labassecourien ways. But when he exits Labassecour, he cedes his space to Lucy. She can step into his place (literally) and make it her home. And when he is absent, she can write to him, fully realizing herself in words, a pleasure that need not end simply because he vanishes. M. Paul has taught her how to write "in full-handed, full-hearted plenitude," for, as she remarks wonderingly, "[T]here was no sham and no cheat, and no hollow unreal in him" (544). This is a new idea of authentic writing that she can emulate.

It is perfectly true that Lucy's story is so mysterious as to be "almost incomprehensible"; as John Hughes concludes, "[T]he narrator follows bewildering, perverse, or obscure antinarrative principles that raise the shock and intensity of narrative alienation or disappointment to a new level" (Gilbert and Gubar 416; Hughes 716). But if Lucy is "bewildering, perverse, or obscure" as a narrator, perhaps that is because we have not accounted for the persistent effect of emotional labor on the development of narrative, the way such work twists narrative reliability in the same way it falsifies the worker's lived reality. *Villette* offers us a new narrative structure marked by different conventions: the difficult crossing, the beloved child, the invisible protagonist, the intimate friend, and a narrative voice organized by habituation to self-falsification.[28]

Villette also offers a bold political claim for Victorians: care work is costly. In an era in which care was lauded as the ultimate proof of feminine self-abnegation, love, and service to others, in an economic bracket in which women had to enact love for their students, mistresses, spouses, and relations in order to survive, *Villette* shows just how corrosive that felt. Brontë insists—correctly—that care work was

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[27] Lucy's readers disdain her "impressions" on 51 and 240, and Lucy tells us to imagine happier things on 39 and 546.

[28] It is worth noting that Miss Wade's brief account of herself in *Little Dorrit* features many of the same narrative conventions: crossings (she traverses between France and England), love for a child (her adoration for the girl at her school), invisibility (she insists on her own unimportance relative to her employers), and an intimate friend (Tattycoram). The major difference is that whereas Lucy Snowe insists on the falsity of her performances, Miss Wade aggressively proclaims her truthfulness—two different ways of coping with the felt inauthenticity of emotional labor.

becoming overwhelmingly a paid activity, relegated to exploited, underpaid migrant women. It offered either dangerous overidentification or sickeningly inauthentic performance. It generated frighteningly mobile, fluid identities. *Villette* fearlessly reveals the devastating results of learning to care without caring, learning to turn one's emotions into a form of labor in order to make a living.

But *Villette* also offers a way out. For what Lucy Snowe learns to do, eventually, is to achieve emotional labor in the other sense—not to perform caring as a condition of labor but, rather, to start working from love, to care deeply and authentically, feeling "such a motive for a persevering, a laborious, an enterprising, a patient and a brave course—I *could* not flag" (544). As another mid-Victorian writer mourned, in a world that "hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain," all we can do is to stay true to one another (Arnold). To care as Lucy does is so powerful that it can sustain her even when the cared-for is gone; she can replace the real person with the reader modeled on his memory.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

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