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Addressing the Reader in Charlotte Brontë's Novels:

Jane Eyre, Villette, and The Professor

by

Christan M. Monin

A thesis submitted to the Department of English of the State University of New York

College at Brockport, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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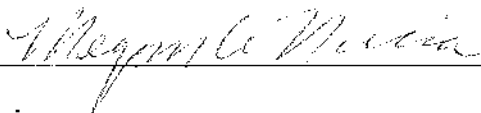
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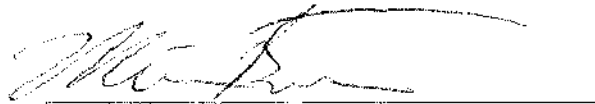
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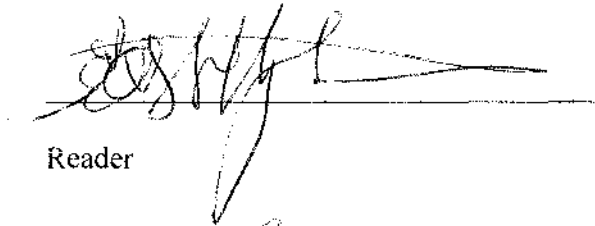
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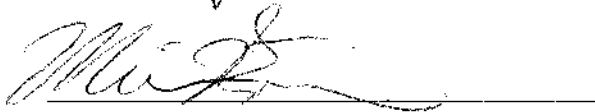
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Chair, Department of English

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To my family:

For never ceasing to love, encourage, and support me.

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Abstract

Charlotte Brontë's use of direct address in three of her novels, *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, and *The Professor* is fundamental for each character's growth in his or her respective novel. Addressing and communicating with the reader is the characters' only means for gaining an understanding and caring person in a life where they are social outcasts. Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, and William Crimsworth tackle vastly different struggles throughout their young lives: Jane longs for an empathetic listener, Lucy is wrought with jealousy and obsession, and William is privileged and arrogant. While each character deals with different struggles, they each have one commonality: solitude which results in perpetual loneliness. The sole outlet in a life of seclusion for the characters is to address their reader. Jane, Lucy, and William construct their reader in a way that ideally benefits them – they address their reader in the way that they would like to be addressed, or how they perceive others (the reader included) think of them. Jane longs for compassion and therefore addresses her reader as gentle. Because Lucy is oftentimes criticized by those around her, she addresses her reader in the same way: showing great anxieties about the way she perceives herself. While William has more advantages because he is male, he is still patronized by his family and others, a trait that William, perhaps inadvertently, bestows upon his reader. Regardless of the ways in which each character addresses his or her reader the end result is the same: Jane, Lucy, and William are validated by their understanding and compassionate reader.

Addressing the Reader in Charlotte Brontë's Novels:

Jane Eyre, *Villette*, and *The Professor*

"[. . .] to be shut out of human dialogue, to be silenced, isolated, and spoken for by others is to be denied identity and being, denied the space, [. . .] where the self 'lives.'" (Kaplan 6)

"Reader, I married him" is the most remembered line from Charlotte Brontë's beloved novel, *Jane Eyre*. Although this line is famous for the emotion it evokes for both the character and reader, the use of direct address in this nineteenth-century novel is something that has been relatively overlooked by scholars. Jane, Lucy, and William address their readers at dramatic points in their lives throughout the novel – they call out to someone who will listen to the stories they have to tell. Susan Sniader Lanser notes, "the name 'Reader' functions as a substitute for the epistolary proper name, [which . . .] reinforces the use of the public narratee as confidant in evocations that resemble acts of epistolary address" (186). This convention of direct address is found in all of Brontë's novels, but this project will focus primarily on *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Villette* (1853), and *The Professor* (1857). Each character addresses her or his reader with a different agenda – to gain an understanding friend, to obtain sympathy, and to make up for deficits in life. The use and frequency of direct address reveals the characters' loneliness, need for confidants, and precarious economic positions.

Brontë's use of direct address exists within the context of the epistolary tradition, and the technique is employed by contemporary female writers such as Jane Austen and George Eliot. The epistolary tradition has a direct link to salon culture in France, England, and Germany in the eighteenth-century. These salons were used by an array of people to unite and converse about literary topics. These oral means of communication are directly linked with the epistolary tradition because "a speaker [. . .] could always count upon attentive listeners," and "one must be free [. . .] to entertain and to be entertained, or merely be bored together" (Pohl 142). Regardless of what happens at these functions, friends come together and share an array of interests and emotions that link them in a way that cannot be found elsewhere. This tradition is then incorporated into letter writing where reciprocal communication and sociability are key: "[there] is a sense of absolute and profound self-exploration in the epistolary dialogue, a fermenting of (female) friendship and emotional intimacy" (152). Linda Mitchell notes the most important aspect of the epistolary tradition: "Equally fundamental, of course, is the very notion of reading letters, often on private matters, intended for someone else" (335). For each of the characters in Brontë's novels who send and receive letters, one pertinent matter is the ability to communicate with an understanding friend in a most private way. When privacy is compromised, as can be seen in Lucy Snowe's case, emotions become turbulent and anxiety ensues.

Brontë herself was a prodigious letter writer, often communicating with friends, family, and publishers through the most efficient means: letters. Because she

communicated with a variety of people by way of writing, it is only fitting that her characters follow suit. Brontë often wrote to one close friend, Nell, who may be the inspiration and model for her female characters' readers. Oftentimes at night Brontë and her siblings read aloud and discussed the stories they were writing. During these times the siblings were able to give each other feedback on their respective manuscripts. Elizabeth Gaskell notes how secluded Brontë feels after all of her siblings died – she now had no one to share stories with in the late evening hours: “In after years this was the time [evening – until nine o'clock at night] for discussing together the plots of their novels. And again, still later, this was the time for the last surviving sister to walk alone, from old accustomed habit, round and round the desolate room, thinking sadly upon the ‘days that were no more’” (118). The loneliness that Brontë feels from her losses is heart wrenching and reflects Lucy's secluded moments in the garden.

Brontë's own experiences with and personal success in letter writing is likely the reason for incorporating the epistolary tradition in her novels. The catharsis of writing one's joys and pains and the joy of receiving a comforting response from a friend is present not only in Brontë's life, but in her characters' lives as well. For those who are not writing and receiving letters, the use of direct address mimics the feelings that letters provide. In order to understand Brontë's use of addresses, we must first explore different motivations for which a narrator might address his or her reader. Patricia Beers states, “Charlotte Brontë writes of individuals, each with her own frustrations and her own solution to them” (88). Through addressing the reader,

Brontë's characters are able to obtain peace of mind through the release of their frustrations and fears. Robyn Warhol argues that there are two different types of narrators who practice either "distancing" or "engaging" their readers (811). A distancing narrator may give a name to the reader, can be ironical, and makes it known that the story he or she is telling is just that, a story and is completely fictional (812). Warhol argues, "The task of the engaging narrator [. . .] is to evoke sympathy and identification from an actual reader who is unknown to the author and therefore infinitely variable and unpredictable" (812). Using direct addresses in narratives is useful in evoking a specific reaction from the reader such as sympathy and understanding. This narrator is not known for giving the reader a name, which cuts down the list of relatable readers, but addresses her or him as either "reader" or "you." Warhol explains that stating "you" is more engaging than "reader," which insinuates a middle ground between a narrator who distances her reader rather than engages her reader in the respective novels. It is this "middle ground" Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, and William Crimsworth occupy, with their addresses most specifically calling to a "reader" and not as often to a "you."

Time within the novels and direct address is an aspect to consider when looking at the ways in which Jane, Lucy, and William address their readers. Throughout *Jane Eyre* Jane tends to move with fluidity between past and present tense. The reader becomes privy at the end of the novel that at the time Jane is writing she is married to Mr. Rochester and is living her happy ending. Lanser describes Jane's movement: "Jane's discourse mingles past and present tense, as if evoking the

experiencing and the narrating selves at once [. . .] Brontë's generalizing 'I' emphasizes syntactically the harmony between the younger protagonist and the older voice: what the one did the other still supports" (182-3). Whereas the child Jane can emphatically describe her discontent about living with her aunt and cousins the older narrator Jane is able to acknowledge her stress, and is able to mature into a levelheaded adult move on. Time in *Villette* and *The Professor* is different than in *Jane Eyre* because both texts are written mostly in the past tense. The use of the past tense evokes sympathy and understanding from the reader. Because William is patronized by his wealthy and cold uncles it is no wonder that he treats his pupils and his reader in the same manner. The same can be said for Jane and Lucy's experiences. The narrator draws an emotional situation to the reader's attention, and he or she is likely to sympathize.

The characters in these novels specifically choose to represent their readers in a certain manner, which explains something particular about the type of people they are and the situations that they find themselves in. All of these characters, Jane, Lucy, and William, are loners who spend most of their time engrossed with their own thoughts rather than engaging with the people around them. Jane is unable to find an adequate listener in the people she encounters. The silence and solitude Jane endured as a child follows her into adulthood – she keeps to herself, and in the presence of others, often says little. Lucy is orphaned, introverted, and initially supported by her godmother. Like Jane, Lucy carries her mild-mannered characteristics with her to *Villette*, and finds superficial friendships with few. William, a nuisance to his family

members, often finds himself in seclusion – he no longer knows the whereabouts of a good friend, and finds friendship in one with questionable motives. Because of their lack of friends and emotional confidants, the characters need to construct a sympathetic reader and ready listener. Each character's introverted tendencies foreclose their experience of such a friend in the flesh.

For Jane and Lucy, who live during a time when women are often stripped of possessions, the right to speak, and, therefore, the self, is why the narrator-reader relationship becomes so significant because “female epistolary voices tend to describe confinement more than liberation, isolation more than interaction, [and] to study the female epistolary voice, it would seem, is to record the ways it has been silenced” (Trouille 109). Addressing the reader is an outlet for the victimized characters who do not wish to be silenced. For instance, in *Jane Eyre*, after having a fruitful conversation with Helen for some time, Jane is abruptly silenced by her new friend: “You ask rather too many questions. I have given you answers enough for present” (*Jane Eyre* 44). For those women, Jane and Lucy, who have something to say and want to be heard, addressing the reader allows the heroines to express themselves to someone who does want to hear what she has to say without restraint. William, who is seen as young, lazy, unambitious, and without many friendly relations, has much of the same problem as Jane and Lucy. The people he encounters do not take him seriously, nor do they care to listen to what he has to say. His own brother regards William as if he is some foul creature: “He [Edward] said ‘Good Morning’ abruptly and nodded, and then he snatched, rather than took, a newspaper from the table, and

began to read it with the air of a master who seizes a pretext to escape the bore of conversing with an underling” (*The Professor* 1062). The reader in this instance becomes his only true friend among mere acquaintances. *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* will be discussed first due to the larger number of addresses given, and the ways in which the women address their readers. Both women are looking for a friend and an empathizing reader. *The Professor* will be discussed last due to William’s few addresses, which emphasize blatant contrasts to Jane and Lucy’s addresses. While William may be looking for a sympathizing reader he spends most of his time ostracizing and patronizing his reader. For all three of these characters the only solace and true friendship they find is through writing, and therefore, through their readers.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter Two, “*Jane Eyre* and her Gentle Reader,” the three subsections, *Jane at Gateshead Hall*, *Jane at Lowood School*, and *Jane at Thornfield Hall*, show the significance and progression of Jane’s addresses. The majority of *Jane Eyre* is comprised of Jane’s thoughts, both her young and then more mature thoughts, and occasionally of her speech and interaction with her Aunt Reed, Helen Burns, her teachers at Lowood school, and Mr. Rochester. Lisa Sternlieb argues that Jane’s addresses to her reader are a form of revenge against Rochester and others from her married years (18). She also claims that once Jane is offered the opportunity to speak beginning at Lowood school that Jane refuses to talk even with this newfound liberation (21). Contrary to this belief is Jane’s reason for addressing her reader, which stems from constantly being silenced in childhood: a trait that follows her into

her adult life. Her addresses are the result of her cruel aunt and cousins who abuse and silence her because she is poor, meek, and unattractive. Because Jane is unable to properly defend herself in childhood, she does not have the skills to do so in her adult life, which is why she is never able to tell anyone how horribly she was treated in her fragile childhood. Jane's goal throughout her trials is to tell people about the injustices she has suffered and to have them sympathize with her experiences. Upon close examination of the instances when Jane attempts to tell her story to someone, the reader can detect that she is never able to delve into her story the way she desires: her listeners only see a glimpse of the trials she has been through. When Jane does try to defend her behavior and tell of her trials, she is oftentimes ostracized by whomever her unfortunate listener happens to be. Occasionally it seems that an interaction will have fruitful results, but the end result is always the same. After Jane tells Helen about how she was treated by Mrs. Reed, Helen replies: "She has been unkind to you, no doubt, because, you see, she dislikes your cast of character, as Miss Scatcherd does mine; but how minutely you remember all she has done and said to you!" (*Jane Eyre* 51). Helen wants Jane to forgive, forget, and be grateful for all Mrs. Reed has provided for Jane without understanding the torture she went through at Gateshead Hall. Mr. Rochester is also content with enlightening Jane about his own past experiences, but does not offer her the same expression. Jane is silenced by her lover, friends, and foes alike.

Jane's quest throughout the novel is to find someone who is interested and willing to listen to all that she has to say without lending overcritical insight. Since

the people Jane interacts with on a regular basis cannot be bothered with her story Jane seeks out a “gentle reader” who is willing to listen to Jane as much as she needs it (194). Unlike the unconcerned people Jane is surrounded by, the reader Brontë constructs is interested in and listens to what Jane has to say; she will validate Jane’s troubles and her most excellent triumphs. Carla Kaplan wisely notes:

The story Jane tells is . . . the story of her own longing to talk, to find someone to credit her version of her life, to sympathize with her trials and listen as a friend. It is ultimately the story of the growth of a writer, someone who can extend the gesture—or invitation, if you will—of her own, assured voice to an unknown and unpredictable other (the reader). (9)

At the same time that Jane is intent on encountering someone who will listen to what she has to say, she is overwhelmed with others’ outpourings of their life histories and woes, which happens often when Jane is with Mr. Rochester. Unfortunately, the people she encounters do not want to be bothered, are critical of her actions, or are simply too self-absorbed to take notice of the pain Jane is suffering in her silence. As intent as these seeming friends are to say what they like to our dear Jane, they never allow Jane to share the things that are most important to her: the exception is her reader. Jane imagines her reader is there, ready to listen, and is emotionally available. In this way, Jane is finally able to tell her story.

Unlike Jane, Lucy Snowe, the leading lady of Brontë’s novel *Villette*, appears to have a different reason for addressing her reader, which is evident in Chapter Three: “Addressing an Educated Reader in *Villette*.” This chapter is also broken into

subsections: *An Educated and Critical Reader*; *Receiving*, and *the Theft of, Dr. John's Letters*; and *Lucy's Jealousy*. Lucy's frequent addresses parallel and give reasons for her many emotions that are not as prevalent in Jane and William's tales. Because of Lucy's experiences with the people around her, and lack thereof, her emotions and anxieties are much more prominent. Like Jane, Lucy is almost always alone with her thoughts, and rarely does the reader see her interacting with other characters in the novel. When Lucy does interact with others she appears to become overwhelmed and irritated by their presence, as is the case with Polly and Ginevra, the two women she is around the most. She is also often critiqued by the man she falls in love with – which ends up being reflected in her addresses to the reader: “On the concert I need not dwell; the reader would not care to have my impressions thereanent: and, indeed, it would not be worth while to record them, as they were the impressions of an ignorant crasse” (*Villette* 892). Even though Lucy assumes that her reader is criticizing her actions and way of thinking, she models specific reading behavior in the way that she responds to and cherishes Dr. Graham's letters.

Twentieth-century pagination is used when considering the lengths and number of addresses of the three novels in comparison to each other. *Villette* is comprised of 282 pages, and Lucy addresses her reader a total of 52 times. This is a considerable number of direct addresses considering that Jane only addresses her reader 26 times, and William addresses his reader a mere eleven times. Lucy appears to be in dire need of someone to converse with and to listen to her. She has recently lost her family and moved to a foreign land with very real language and cultural

barriers – sending her farther into loneliness and solitude. The addresses and blatant references to solitude may be a direct reflection of Brontë’s struggles in her own life. At the time she was writing the novel in 1853 three of her siblings, Branwell, Emily, and Anne, had died within eight months of each other from tuberculosis, and she no longer had her siblings to converse with in the evening. She went from having constant companionship at home and feedback about her narratives from her siblings to being immersed in silence and completely alone. The sadness that Brontë surely felt is clearly reflected in Lucy’s character: “a want of companionship maintained in my soul the cravings of a most deadly famine” (859), and is most likely the reason behind the number of addresses Lucy gives to her reader.

Brontë’s preference for heroines as her main characters and addressors, increases the significance of her only leading male character, William Crimsworth, in her novel *The Professor*. Differences in the ways in which the addresses are gendered can be found in Chapter Four: “*The Professor: Educating the Reader*,” in which Heather Glen notes, “For the world of *The Professor* is one less of reciprocity and sympathy than of estrangement and ‘Antipathy’ (36). Quite unlike Jane and Lucy’s stories is William’s story, which is filled with abruptness and abrasiveness (36). Again, this chapter is divided into three subsections: *William’s Sex, Wealth, and Opportunity; Educating the Reader*; and *William’s Letters*. This examinations demonstrates how different William is as a character, and how differently he chooses to address his reader. As a male character William encounters situations in which Jane and Lucy would never find themselves. Right from the start William has the

advantage over the two because of his status in society: he is male, wealthy, and highly educated. As a man, even if he is seen as an immature and at times cocky man by his peers and elders, he is still treated with a certain level of respect that neither Jane nor Lucy receives because of their sexes. William's less frequent number of addresses might be due to William's status as a man who has certain privileges that the heroines will never have – he does not necessarily need a kind and sympathetic reader. Instead, he adopts a pedagogic and somewhat condescending tone toward the reader which differs from the way in which Jane and Lucy approach the reader as a friend. William is oftentimes feminized by the powerful (and even cruel) people he is around, and then he turns around and addresses his reader with the same patronizing voice that he hears. Even though William is relatively powerful, he is a social outcast in the eyes of his family, and he has few acquaintances that he can call friends.

Throughout William's addresses the reader becomes distinctly aware that he is constantly assuming that we agree with what he believes: “[. . .] my readers will agree with me that there was nothing either very meritorious or very marvelous in the integrity and moderation of my conduct at Mdlle. Reuter's pensionnat de demoiselles” (*The Professor* 1112). At this point and many others, William is assigning specific qualities to his reader. There are also many times in which it seems that the reader is experiencing an event at exactly the same time as William. Another reason for the addresses in this particular novel is that William is interested in speaking the truth, and dedicates this novel to those who have “toiled in the same vocation as myself,” and who “will find in my experience frequent reflections of their

own” (1062). It may be due to the fact that William has led a less than satisfactory and unusual life that he wishes to share his experiences with others who might be able to relate, which will in turn validate his own life.

These chapters will examine Brontë’s three texts and discuss how *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, and *The Professor* use addresses to the reader. Each character has very specific reasons for addressing his or her reader, and the most important joining the three together: isolation and solitude. Regardless of each character’s situation, all three have that one similarity that fuses them together – without solitude would there be a need to address an unknown reader? Addressing the reader is so significant for these characters because each longs to be thought well of and to be immersed in conversation with those who are around them, but unfortunately, each character is denied this experience. Since the majority of the addresses are situated around events of emotional distress, it is clear that the reader is constructed as a confidant and a person who alleviates fears. The characters’ only outlet for freedom of expression and acceptance is through the individual they are writing to. For three diverse characters, Jane, Lucy, and William, the reader is constructed in the same way: to fulfill whatever emotional and social needs that character is lacking and unable to express in her or his life. My focus is on the importance of the characters’ addresses to their (sometimes very specific) readers, as well as the importance of reader response for the characters’ development throughout the novels. As time progresses and the narrator and reader build a relationship, the young characters blossom into strong, independent people who can think and provide for themselves, because someone has

cared enough to listen to both the important and, sometimes, insignificant things they wish to express. In these three novels, *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, and *The Professor*, the characters' use of direct address and the similarities in which they do so distinguishes them from Brontë's second novel, *Shirley* (1849), in which Brontë uses a third-person omniscient narrator.

The Conclusion suggests further areas for research on Brontë's novels and the concept of direct address. It also discusses the potential problems and the benefits of modifying *Jane Eyre* to better suit different populations (children and young adult books). Since the adaptations are much shorter than the original novel, important aspects are removed, such as Jane in the red room, along with addresses to the reader, while other aspects are highlighted: the gothic and mysterious. On the other hand, many adaptations of *Jane Eyre* include visual aids which assist a younger group with the content of the text. The shorter version of *Jane Eyre* also exposes young children to a wonderful classic novel that they may not have considered in its lengthy, complicated entirety. While the adaptations of Brontë's most beloved novel benefit a younger generation, do they detract from the beautiful and important writer-reader relationship with no or few addresses to the reader?

Chapter Two:

Jane Eyre and her “Gentle Reader”

Throughout Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre* (1847), Jane is treated harshly and unfairly by the majority of the people she encounters. During these times, she is silenced by friends and foes alike: Mrs. Reed, Bessie, Miss Temple, Mr. Brocklehurst, Helen Burns, and Mr. Rochester. Even when the occasional friend lends a sympathetic ear, Jane is not completely listened to or heard. Jane’s many attempts to share her early life stories with a friend are constantly dismissed which is one of the reasons for Brontë’s construction of Jane’s ideal reader – one who will listen intently. Jane, who has few friends throughout the novel, relies on the reader as her only means to share important news in her life which “inspire[s] a sense of intimacy with the heroine (rather like whispering gossip into the reader’s ear)” (Berg 30). Jane confides in her reader for a variety of reasons, the most important being that her reader is a caring friend who will listen to her stories in earnest without silencing her, unlike her acquaintances in the novel.

Before hashing out the logistics of the reasons behind addressing her reader, the two Jane characters will need to be distinguished. The vast majority of the novel is about the life events of a younger, character Jane Eyre (from childhood to young adulthood). This story of Jane-the-character is being told by an older version of herself: Jane-the-narrator (Jane who is now living with and married to Rochester – Mrs. Jane Rochester). This older version of Jane is wiser than her younger self who is

often aware that her behavior as a child and young woman was, at times, less than angelic. As Lanser explains: “the narrator looks back with sharp moral distance at the younger character and can tell her story only because she has changed” (179). She also explains the absence of addresses during Jane’s stay at both Gateshead Hall and Lowood school. It is the “distinction [. . .] between the experiencing child and the narrating adult” (182). Young Jane is often indignant, feisty, and has outbursts that get her in trouble with her aunt and cousins. It is also young Jane who has no real, supportive family, and no real friends throughout her lifetime. As a child, Jane suffered many injustices from her relatives and was oftentimes treated with cruelty. As the reader walks with Jane through her story, it becomes apparent that Jane is either silenced by others, or she silences herself. Jane-the-narrator benefits from looking back on her childhood, and seeking a friend in her beloved reader is a way for her to grow and heal the traumas she suffered throughout her lifetime with the assistance and friendly guidance of the only friend she has – her reader. By doing this, Jane-the-narrator is allowed to grow emotionally and have her past validated by the understanding friend she never had when she was in desperate need of friendship.

While Jane is a single woman for most of her life in the novel, patriarchal domination is explicit throughout her life. During the time period in which Jane’s story is set women are not recognized as individuals, but are merely their husband’s property (Rubenius 2). Women are said to be “saintly, yielding, forgiving and faithful” whereas men are the decision makers, the protectors, and the bread winners (Gordon 94). Since women at this time are considered property they have no physical

possessions – their clothes, household possessions, and even children, all belong to their husbands (Rubenius 2). Jane is treated as childlike and is stripped of her right to voice her own opinions. Women have few rights, and it is not uncommon for a woman to practice the acts of silence and obedience. Jane is subject to these constraints. Within these restrictions, Patricia Beers argues, “Charlotte Brontë writes of individuals, each with her own frustrations and her own solution to them” (88). As a child and young woman, Jane is expected to abide by her authority figures whether that is Mrs. Reed or Mr. Rochester. Like the average Victorian woman, Jane is expected to be obedient, which means that she keeps her opinions and thoughts to herself. This is where addressing the reader becomes of utmost importance to Jane-the-narrator. The reader is Jane’s only outlet in a patriarchal society.

At the beginning of Chapter Two the reader, unknowingly, is allowed the opportunity to listen to the opinion of Jane-the-narrator (we only find out at the end of the novel that the majority of Jane’s story is, in fact, the written work of the older and wiser Mrs. Jane Rochester). Here, the reader can see through Jane’s bird’s eye view of the situation that she does not condone much of the behavior of her younger self: “I was conscious that a moment’s mutiny had already rendered me liable to strange penalties, and, like any other rebel slave, I felt resolved, in my desperation, to go all lengths” (*Jane Eyre* 6). The use of the past tense “I felt” leads the reader to believe that the person speaking is not the enraged Jane-child but a mature Jane who is critically looking back on this scene from the future. As an adult, Jane understands that her child self is angry, feisty, and hasty with her accusations. As Jane’s addresses

to the reader are a form of healing for Jane Rochester, her critique of her younger self is another avenue to explore during the healing process. This quotation of Jane's younger thoughts reflects a mature glance at an irrational episode in childhood. At the time, Jane-the-character is sure that she is the only person who experiences injustices from cruel others. A friend most likely would have helped Jane to see that while her circumstances are wretched, she is not the only child who has been, or ever will be, ill-treated.

Since this novel is Jane-the-narrator's autobiography, Brontë uses particular grammatical tools, along with addressing the reader, to entice her reader into her story, which are also prominent in both *Villette* and *The Professor*. These tools strengthen the relationship between narrator and reader even more than just through addresses. Throughout the novel "m" dashes are used to signify to the reader that there is a pause in speech. Firstly, this dash is meant to make the reader pause and think about what the narrator is revealing. Secondly, and more importantly, the pause acts as a pause in speech does. When people are conversing face to face significant pauses are detected when the speaker deliberately ceases to speak in order to communicate a dramatic emphasis – readers will know they are being directly addressed. It is an intimate conversation between two close people and no more. An example of this is when Jane exclaims, "Reader! – I forgave him at that moment, and on the spot" (180). Jane has found out on her wedding day that Mr. Rochester is in fact already married to the mad woman in the attic, Bertha. After Rochester provides some explanation about the predicament they find themselves in, Jane addresses her

friend with this outcry. With the exclamation of “Reader!” it is as if our given name has been called. The reader’s attention is immediately brought to focus on what the speaker is about to say next. The exclamation is also a way in which Jane’s address to her reader is privatized – this epiphany of forgiveness is privileged to the reader alone. The dash is significant because after Jane has our attention she is going to tell us exactly why her declaration is so important, and why we, the reader, are addressed so specifically and with such emotion. She forgives Rochester when she sees the “remorse in his eyes [and the] unchanged love in his whole look and mien” (180). Brontë anticipates how readers will react to Jane’s softening towards Rochester.

The chapter has been broken down into three sections of Jane’s life: *Gateshead Hall*, *Lowood School*, and *Thornfield Hall*. These three residences encompass the majority of her addresses to her reader. It is here that Jane encounters the people who are either detrimental or helpful to her throughout her travels. Jane’s evolving relationship with her reader can be seen progressing as she moves from childhood at Gateshead Hall to womanhood at Thornfield Hall. It is here, at the beginning and middle of her life that Jane’s need to communicate with a caring, loving, and understanding other can only be fulfilled by her loyal reader.

Jane at Gateshead Hall

Jane is continuously silenced throughout her many travels and is especially so at her starting point at Gateshead Hall. Jane is completely aware that all of her family members, Mrs. Reed, John, Georgiana, and Eliza, do not like her. Mrs. Reed makes her disgust with Jane known to all as do Jane’s young cousins John and Georgiana,

who continuously torment the child. Mrs. Reed is the first person who unjustly silences Jane while she is in a fit of panic. Jane is sentenced to spend the night in the “red room” after quarreling with John Reed who instigates the fight. Jane is unjustly punished by Mrs. Reed while John, the instigator, is left unscathed. Jane begs forgiveness of Mrs. Reed and requests some other form of punishment because she has been scared out of her wits in the “red room,” to which Mrs. Reed responds: “Silence! This violence is almost repulsive” (11). Jane is not shown any sympathy from her aunt and states, “I was a precocious actress in her eyes: she sincerely looked on me as a compound of virulent passions, mean spirit, and dangerous duplicity” (11). While Jane-the-narrator recognizes that as a child she had a knack for the dramatic, the quote above suggests how hurt the child, and her older self, is by Mrs. Reed’s unfair judgment. Mrs. Reed feels threatened by Jane because her late husband appeared to care more for the unattractive and small infant-Jane than for his own genteel children and wife. Vengeance is one of the reasons for Mrs. Reed’s silencing Jane and cruel treatment. This is also why the young child would be more likely to hold her tongue during the majority of encounters with Mrs. Reed, and also why she continues to silence herself in times where she might speak. She is only too aware of the consequences should she open her mouth. Mrs. Reed’s misinterpretation of Jane’s actions, as can be seen in the scene with John Reed, follows Jane through her life. Being misread and misinterpreted by others is one reason behind Jane’s constant direction of her addresses to her reader – she does not want to be wrongly interpreted like she has been by people before.

Not only does Jane have to worry about Mrs. Reed who is perfectly comfortable with locking Jane away for things that are not her fault, but Jane also has to consider her oftentimes cruel cousins. At one point John Reed physically injures Jane with a book simply because he can. He has learned from his mother who Jane is to them: “you are a dependent, mama says” (4). Because the household sees Jane as a dependent, not the family member that she is, the Reeds believe she has no right to touch anything that is considered theirs including the book on *The History of British Birds* (2). John even states that he does not think that their mama should be so inclined to clothe, feed, or even have Jane “live with gentleman’s children” (4) let alone allow Jane the only solace she gets in the household browsing through a book and fantasizing about a different place and time. Jane is an outcast among family members who will jump at any opportunity to make sure she well understands her place in the house, and if she does not then violence will be enforced. This is precisely the setup for Jane’s fear of repercussions that establishes the way in which Jane interacts with Mr. Rochester and others later on.

At the moment when Bessie and Abbot are securing Jane in the red-room, Bessie tells Jane that she should be on her best behavior when interacting with the Reeds because even though they may be cruel to Jane they do allow her to live with them. Bessie implies that without the Reeds Jane would be a penniless orphan. Jane’s internal reaction to Bessie’s statement is heart wrenching: “I had nothing to say to these words: they were not new to me: my very first recollections of existence included hints of the same kind. This reproach of my dependence had become a

vague sing-song in my ear; very painful and crushing, but only half intelligible” (6). For all of Jane’s ten years of existence, she has known that the people she lives with, and by blood calls family, feel as if she is nothing but a burden, a parasite, and that without a moment’s warning she can be sent out of the house and forced to fend for herself. Jane has nothing to say in the face of Bessie’s reprimand – there is not room for her to speak. Silence becomes the survival strategy Jane uses not only to avoid physical abuse, but also to continue to receive basic necessities from the Reeds; sustenance and shelter over her head. She is distressed that no one cares for her and that she is seen as a dependent to the family – another reason for silence.

Along with informing Jane of the harsh reality of living with and being cared for by the Reeds, Bessie, Jane’s nursemaid, often insults Jane by telling her that she is ugly, “you were no beauty as a child,” and even as an eighteen year old girl, she still finds the words hurtful: “At eighteen most people wish to please, and the conviction that they have not an exterior likely to second that desire brings anything but gratification” (83). Bessie does not say such things about Jane because she wishes to hurt her, but they are hurtful and unnecessary critiques at the same time. Again, Jane’s appearance is critiqued. Bessie calls her “a queer, frightened, shy little thing” and tells her she “should be bolder” to which Jane replies, “What! To get more knocks!” (32). Jane knows that if she wishes to remain unscathed she must be a silent, passive, and obedient child. Even though Bessie has been a witness to the occurrences between Jane, her aunt, and cousins, she does not seem to understand the severity of the consequences that will be bestowed upon Jane if she does retaliate. In this way,

Jane has learned that silence is a more effective way of remaining unharmed rather than quarreling or causing trouble.

Jane continues to endure verbal abuse during one specific conversation Mrs. Reed has with Mr. Brocklehurst about Jane's disposition, to which Jane's replies, "You [Mrs. Reed] told Mr. Brocklehurst I had a bad character, a deceitful disposition" (30). Mrs. Reed speaks cruelly right in front of an impressionable ten year old child. Generally, an adult and parental figure is protective, uplifting, and supportive. Unfortunately for Jane, her Aunt Reed is the anti-parent, who purposely damages her spirit. Misconceptions about Jane's character occur with others at Gateshead Hall as well. The night that Mr. Lloyd suggests that Jane should be sent to school, Bessie and Abbot talk about Jane whom they believe to be asleep. Unfortunately, Jane is not asleep and overhears Abbot say, "if she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate for forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that" (19). This tells the Jane-child that she is not worth treating nicely because she is not attractive or wealthy, and therefore she should be silenced and made to endure. Not only do the obviously cruel adults shatter Jane's self-esteem, but kind others, unintentionally, do as well.

Even though Jane rarely speaks, it is evident from the beginning of the novel that Jane, even as a child, is intent on telling her story to someone: "With the childhood declaration, 'Speak I must' Jane resolves to narrate her own story, to explain and vindicate her life, to exercise her voice and participate in the 'joyous conversational murmur'" (Kreilkamp 333). Jane recognizes that she is silenced in

some way by all who are around her, and she needs an outlet to speak. There are many times throughout the course of the novel when Jane is asked a question, or to explain some matter, and she does not because she cannot – she does not know how to express herself because she has never been allowed to do so.

While Jane is silenced and treated cruelly by her family members, Jane has her first opportunity to tell a kind other her story when the doctor Mr. Lloyd is called to Gateshead. He assess Jane's condition after she loses consciousness when Mrs. Reed locks Jane in the "red room," after she has described her terror about being there with Mr. Reed's ghost (*Jane Eyre* 11-2). Mr. Lloyd's warm and friendly presence beside Jane's bed is comforting, and Jane is happy that he asks her what has happened – what put her in the state he finds her in. Jane finally has the first chance in her ten years to have someone listen to the injustices placed upon her by the Reed family. This is evident when Mr. Lloyd asks Jane to tell him her story, but she realizes that she cannot articulate the injustices done unto her: "she therefore stumbles through an account of her feelings that is sadly deficient . . ." (Bock 75). However, as soon as Jane half-heartedly explains what has happened between her and John, Mr. Lloyd loses his sympathy and becomes critical of Jane. He asks, "Don't you think Gateshead Hall a very beautiful house? Are you not very thankful to have such a fine place to live at?" (*Jane Eyre* 17). Mr. Lloyd does not explicitly silence Jane, but his lack of caring and his automatic response to Jane's ingratitude is enough to leave Jane silenced. Jane automatically ceases talking about what has happened between her, John, and Mrs. Reed and only answers the questions Mr. Lloyd asks her. As awful as

it is that Mr. Lloyd refuses Jane the personal gratification of telling her side of the story, he is most likely one of the best things that happens to Jane. Even though he does not allow Jane to speak, he does notice that her “nerves [are] not in a good state” (18). He is the one who suggests that she should be sent away from Gateshead Hall so that she can attend school and get well. Unfortunately, Mr. Lloyd does not allow Jane to tell her story, but she may have been given a greater gift – the gift of freedom from the Reeds and the opportunity to tell her story to others.

Surely, this inability to defend herself to Mr. Lloyd results from her experiences within Gateshead Hall and most likely because of her interaction with John Reed. Jane’s main concern with John is not to fight back when he goes on a tirade; it is to keep herself safe: “Accustomed to John Reed’s abuse, I never had an idea of replying to it: my care was how to endure the blow which would certainly follow the insult” (4). Clearly Jane is more intent on survival techniques than on defending herself against others’ misinterpretations of her.

During the rare times when Jane speaks her mind, which she occasionally does, she is overly dramatic, and it is clear that her older self does not condone the behavior. After John Reed has thrown the book at Jane’s head she expostulates: “Wicked and cruel boy! You are a murderer—you are like a slave-driver—you are like the Roman emperors!” (5). Jane comes to the conclusion that John Reed is like a Roman emperor based on reading *The History of Rome* through which Jane formulates opinions and “consistencies” between John Reed and Nero and Caligula (5). Both Nero and Caligula are the cruelest kind of leaders, and were responsible for

massive murders – Nero being responsible for the murder of his own mother (DiMaio). On a very basic level Jane would be able to see similarities between Nero, Caligula, and John Reed; all three are known for cruelty and bettering themselves at the expense of others. However, John Reed is really nothing like either Nero or Caligula. John Reed is not a murderer, although he does seem to send his mother to her death, and he does relish in tormenting and causing physical harm to Jane. Caught up in a fit of complete rage, Jane can see the basic similarities between the Roman emperors and John Reed, but even so, her correlation is not entirely accurate and is caused by the pain John has inflicted upon her. In this way she makes herself out to be the victim as she implies that John makes her out to be a slave, which also is not the case. The very fact that Jane's opinions are not listened to, or that they are heard and discounted, causes Jane to erupt into a fiery and passionately dramatic monologue. This dramatic event could possibly have been avoided if Jane was allowed to express her emotions and not made to bottle them. Unfortunately, Jane is forced into silence through obedience and the result is an off-base explosion. When Jane does manage to articulate her feelings and the event in which they find themselves, she is only reprimanded. On the other hand, though, in the presence of a kind other, Jane does know what she wants to say, which is where her reader-friend comes in to play. Since the people Jane interacts with on a regular basis cannot be bothered with her story Jane seeks out a "gentle reader" (*Jane Eyre* 194) who is willing to listen to Jane as closely and carefully as she needs it.

Up until this point at Gateshead Hall, Jane has no one to talk to. Even the nursemaid Bessie who is the nicest of the bunch at Gateshead is not friendly toward Jane – on more than one occasion Bessie tells Jane that she is ugly. This does nothing to help Jane’s already low self-esteem. Carla Kaplan notes of Jane’s solitude “that to be shut out of human dialogue, to be silenced, isolated, and spoken for by others is to be denied identity and being, denied the space, . . . where the self lives” (6). These reasons, not being loved or cared for by anyone, being told she’s ugly, constantly being put down, and being silenced are most likely the reasons why Jane-the-narrator does not address her reader at Gateshead Hall. She does not know that there is the possibility of encountering a person who will not crush her every move. Jane’s spirit wilts at Gateshead, and this is one of the many reasons that Jane finds a confidant in her reader. Even though Jane has many trials at Lowood school, it is only there that she starts to thrive because she has people around her who she can talk to, who are not constantly putting her down.

Jane at Lowood School

The first time Jane addresses the reader is when she becomes a pupil at Lowood School. Out of the toxic Gateshead Hall, Jane begins to realize that there is more to the world than cruel people whose sole goal in life is to make Jane’s life a misery. One of the most important figures in Jane’s life is Miss Temple, her only mother figure throughout the novel, and it is when she is describing her that she addresses the reader: “Let the reader add [. . .] refined features; a complexion, if pale, clear; and a stately air and carriage [. . .] a correct idea of the exterior of Miss Temple

– Maria Temple” (*Jane Eyre* 40). Miss Temple is the first and only person who takes a great interest in making sure that Jane is allowed to tell what she wants of her story.

Once at Lowood School Jane meets Helen Burns who is the next person to whom Jane will attempt to tell her story. Jane’s first attempt at having a successful listener fails with Mr. Lloyd, and unfortunately, Helen Burns is an “even less sympathetic listener” (Berg 41). Regrettably, like the rest, Jane is only able to get a small amount of her story told without receiving much sympathy. Helen scolds Jane for talking too much and expresses to Jane that it is not worth her while to feel such anger at Mrs. Reed, and it would be more productive to just forgive her (*Jane Eyre* 41). When talking with Helen, Jane is not even offered the opportunity to delve into her story because Helen is irritated about having a casual conversation with a newcomer. Jane does, however, ask Helen a laundry list of questions upon her arrival at Lowood, which is the first time that Jane actually has a long conversation with anyone. Conversing with Helen openly about her experiences at Gateshead almost takes the shape of a conversation with the reader. Helen helps Jane to see that she is not the only child who has ever been mistreated – the whole school is filled with children who have been disregarded due to familial neglect and death. Throughout this whole conversation Jane is able to ask questions and receive answers without being told that she should keep quiet. This is also the first time that Jane has a conversation with someone where her faults are not the main topic.

Back at Gateshead Hall, Jane had constantly been told she is naughty, ugly, or some other insult to her person even when she is talking with someone who does care

about her. Jane's faults do not come up in her discussion with Helen – until the end of the conversation. After a page and a half of discourse, Helen tires of Jane's questions and states, "You ask rather too many questions. I have given you answers enough for the present" (44). Even though Jane is silenced, her communication with Helen is a step in the right direction for obtaining a listener. Helen's only fault with Jane is that she asks too many questions – she does not call Jane a "bad animal" or a "rat," or anything resembling what would have been said about Jane at Gateshead Hall. Nonetheless, Jane is still denied her voice and her urge to speak and be heard. Since she does not find the perfect friend who will listen to her at Lowood, Jane creates her own friend: her reader.

Jane's next and very promising opportunity at speaking the truth about herself is awarded by Miss Temple. Miss Temple kindly and reassuringly offers Jane the right to clear misconceptions about her behavior after her encounter with Mr. Brocklehurst and public humiliation at the school. Miss Temple asks Jane to set the record straight so that everyone in the school, students and staff alike, will know that Jane is not the wicked child Mr. Brocklehurst makes her out to be. Miss Temple tells Jane after this incident: "[. . .] when a criminal is accused, he is always allowed to speak in his own defense. You have been charged with falsehood; defend yourself to me as well as you can" (63). This is the best possible moment for Jane. Miss Temple willingly and earnestly asks Jane to speak, to tell her story. Not only does Miss Temple ask Jane to tell her story, but she also recognizes that Jane has been wrongly accused. Jane modestly tells her tale and relishes in the fact that Miss Temple has

listened to her and believes her. This sounds like a great triumph for young Jane; however, it only lasts a short while. Prior to this realization, Jane's affections for Miss Temple are described as being similar to a child's feelings toward a warm, loving, and caring mother. Jane is content to bask in the fact that her mother figure has heard her story and does not think she is the naughty thing that most make her out to be. Unfortunately, in the very next moment Miss Temple's attention shifts abruptly from Jane to an extremely ill Helen: "She kissed me, and still keeping me at her side [. . .] she proceeded to address Helen Burns" (64). Bock notes here that once again Jane is cast into the role of silence as Miss Temple's attention is diverted to Helen (81).

From Lowood school and on, Jane-the-narrator addresses the reader a total of twenty-six times: twelve in the first half of the novel, and fourteen in the last half. A commonality in all of Jane's addresses to her reader is that she does it when something significant happens. Jane's most famous address, "READER, I married him," is one of the most significant addresses that Jane makes to her reader (*Jane Eyre* 429). Through her writing, it is clear to see that Jane is most content at this very point with her union to Mr. Rochester. While other addresses may not seem as significant, Jane is, in fact, reporting on something very important to her. For instance, Jane's first step into adulthood provokes anxiety and uncertainties. After passing time comfortably at Lowood school, Jane places an advertisement to become a governess in someone's home. After Jane notes all of her qualifications she says, "in those days, reader, this now narrow catalogue of accomplishments would have been held terribly comprehensive" (79). This may not seem very interesting to any

old reader, but Jane's understanding friend realizes that Jane is feeling apprehensive and anxious about her qualifications – is this list good enough for her to get the job? This type of uncertainty is something one wants to be able to share with a friend, and this is exactly what Jane does.

Jane at Thornfield Hall

Not only does this “gentle reader” listen to Jane, but this confidant understands and cares about all the trials and triumphs that Jane goes through. Jane describes how she is feeling in a direct address to the reader while she is traveling to Thornfield Hall for the first time. Jane writes to her reader at a stop in Millcote: “Reader, though I look comfortably accommodated, I am not very tranquil in mind” (85). Jane expresses her anxiety of traveling alone and experiencing unexpected events along the way.¹ At this point in Jane's travels, she is sure that someone is going to meet her in Millcote, and no one does. Jane does not know exactly where she is going, and not having someone to greet and help her along is extremely threatening and terrifying: “It is a very strange sensation to inexperienced youth to feel itself quite alone in the world, cut adrift from every connexion, uncertain whether the port to which it is bound can be reached” (85). Jane does see this experience as unsettling – maybe she will never find her way. However, Jane notes that she appears fine; it is only on the inside that she feels turmoil. This is one example of the contrast between Jane's outer appearance (what everyone sees) and her inner life – the reader, and the

¹ A direct connection can be made to *Villette's* Lucy Snowe's experience with travel. Like Jane, Lucy is quite anxious about traveling for the first time to an unknown land, and she also expresses how frightening her journey is. Lucy Snowe's anxiety and addresses to her reader will be discussed further in Chapter Three: Addressing an Educated Reader in *Villette*.

reader alone, is privileged to see these distinctions in Jane. Sharing this experience with an understanding friend eases and calms a nervous and anxious mind.

Along with being silenced by others, Jane unknowingly silences herself, which is a form of self-censorship. After being misread by the likes of Mrs. Reed and Mr. Brocklehurst, Jane reveals, and speaks little so as not to have to defend herself against misconceptions about her life – something that follows Jane throughout her young adult life. However, Mr. Rochester has no such reservations about his discourse and is very content to tell Jane many stories about his life, including the very personal story of his relationship with Adèle and her Parisian mother, as well as his relationship with Miss Ingram. Rochester often seeks Jane out for an evening chat or leisurely walk and continuously tells her that he needs her to be his confidant (84). She always listens to him with a close ear and never judges whatever he tells her even when he insinuates that Adèle may or may not be his daughter – he has no way of knowing (86). Here, Jane is modeling ideal reading behavior for her reader – for she reacts to Rochester as Brontë has constructed Jane’s reader to react to her words.

Jane has many opportunities to converse with Mr. Rochester, but she admits, “I, indeed, talked comparatively little, but I heard him [Mr. Rochester] talk with relish” (136). Jane is aware that she rarely speaks and it is her own decision not to. Mr. Rochester once asked her to “speak” and to talk about whatever she pleases (124). Instead of saying something – telling her story – she refuses to speak with the excuse that she will not speak about nothing in particular: “If he expects me to talk for the mere sake of talking and showing off, he will find he has addressed himself to

the wrong person” (124). Jane longs to talk about topics that have meaning, that are important, to one who truly cares about the trials she has gone through – she does not care to talk to someone who is looking for entertainment. She does not delve into her story at this very opportune time because she is uncomfortable with Mr. Rochester. At this particular point Mr. Rochester is acting peculiar, and Jane speculates that he has had too much to drink: “There was a smile on his lips, and his eyes sparkled, whether with wine or not, I am not sure” (121). After some conversation Jane concludes that his attitude and demeanor is indeed due to the wine: “Decidedly he has had too much wine” (123). Jane has only just met her employer, and she does not want to express herself to just anyone, much less someone who may be intoxicated and might be only partially interested in her tale. Mr. Rochester may be interested in what Jane has to say for the moment, but once the alcohol wears off and it is a new day he is not likely to be as interested as he appears to be at this moment. Jane clearly has anxieties about speaking in general, and because she has been unable to tell her story in the past, she might believe that anything she might have to say is unimportant and not worthy of recognition.

Jane’s tolerance for being silenced dwindles the more she comes in contact with society. As she begins to mature she becomes aware that each of the sexes has to deal with the same emotions in vastly different ways according to prescribed social norms. The different expressions of feelings between the sexes are yet another example of the woman’s position in Victorian society – and Jane’s inability to

communicate with those around her. From many years of being silenced and yearning for someone to confide in, Jane goes on a tirade:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings. (101)

This exclamation comes from Jane-the-narrator, an unofficial address to the reader. Granted, Jane is talking about work here, but her expression of dissatisfaction with how women are expected to behave in any aspect is evident. Jane is stating that men have many freedoms and that they are not expected to answer to anyone in particular. Jane feels like this is not the case for women. At this time, women are expected to do a certain kind of work, obey their husbands, and be silent. Jane is not satisfied with being silenced while men are allowed, and encouraged, to do whatever work they choose and express themselves at their will. Jane mentions that while she is content with her work and stay at Thornfield Hall that she might dare to think of how life might be if she had “more intercourse with my kind” (100). Jane again reveals her inner thoughts to her reader, thoughts that she feels she cannot express to those around her. Therefore, Jane is clearly represented as longing to have a friend to talk to. She longs for someone who understands the constraints put on women in *every* aspect of their lives: injustices she and other women have to endure on a daily basis.

Brontë constructs Jane's reader as someone Jane can express her oftentimes hidden and subversive feelings to, at the very least.

All of Jane's addresses revolve around important aspects of her life. In order to understand Jane's need to express her feelings of fright, excitement, and love to a reader, requires an examination of what exactly makes the addresses so vital to Jane's state of mind. Out of the twenty-six times that Jane addresses the reader, twelve of them have something to do with Mr. Rochester. The most important aspect that Jane focuses on is how she feels about Mr. Rochester. After getting to know Mr. Rochester better, Jane's opinions of his physical characteristics have changed. After talking with him Jane asks the reader if she still thinks Jane considers Mr. Rochester ugly, and Jane replies, "No, reader: gratitude and many associations, all pleasurable and genial, made his face the object I best liked to see; his presence in a room was more cheering than the brightest fire" (137). Jane constructs the reader as a friend who would delight in hearing her change of heart. Jane is realizing that she no longer thinks Mr. Rochester is an ugly, strange old man, but that she thinks he is something special. She completely enjoys being in the presence of Mr. Rochester and no longer dreads it when he calls for her to sit with him.

Frequency in addresses indicates Jane's state of mind, and her reliance on someone to share her innermost feelings with. During one moment of particular stress and anxiety, Jane addresses her reader twice in the span of two pages. First, she explains how she has come to love Mr. Rochester: "I have told you, reader, that I had learnt to love Mr. Rochester: I could not unlove him now, merely because I found that

he had ceased to notice me” (174). Jane is saying that the reader should already know how she has come to love Mr. Rochester, and her reader should not be judgmental because Jane just cannot help loving Mr. Rochester no matter what his actions are.

On the very next page Jane attempts to tell her reader-friend that she is not jealous of the woman who has stolen Mr. Rochester’s affections away from her: Blanche Ingram.² The reader’s presence is important to Jane during this time of high emotional distress. Jane is feeling unloved and worthless because Mr. Rochester is flaunting his relationship with Miss Ingram while she still loves him. Jane tries to convince her reader that she is not jealous of the woman who is to be Mr. Rochester’s future bride, but she does a terrible job in justifying her cause: “Much too, you will think, reader, to engender jealousy [. . .] But I was not jealous, or very rarely [. . .] Miss Ingram was beneath the mark of jealousy [. . .] Pardon the seeming paradox; I mean what I say” (174). Jane is trying to convince herself more than she is trying to convince her reader that she is not jealous of Miss Ingram – especially since in the paragraph above she tells her reader-friend how Blanche treats her like she is a contaminated leper. At the same time, while Jane converses with her reader about Blanche, she is fearful of being misread – of having her words misinterpreted. Such an occasion as this is when Jane needs a friend and to be able to wallow in her misery. Jane-the-narrator is making a point to address her friend to let her know about this unfortunate event. Even though narrator Jane at this point is married to Mr. Rochester, the fact that she brings up the situation between Mr. Rochester and

² Lucy Snowe also experiences the same sort of jealousy and agony over a woman becoming attached to the man she loves, Polly and Graham (951).

Blanche suggests that she may still feel hurt by her husband's past actions. By way of talking about the situation with a friend, Jane-the-narrator may be able to heal the part of her that was hurt by Mr. Rochester's charade with Blanche.

Jane's next address to the reader is greatly significant – Jane becomes aware that Mr. Rochester is still married to Bertha – on their supposed wedding day. Jane now knows that the love of her life has lied in the worst possible way. Even though Mr. Rochester tries with all his might to vindicate himself to Jane, she will not go forward and be his mistress. However, Mr. Rochester admits to Jane what a scoundrel he is and how much he repents his actions so that when he asks Jane for forgiveness, she replies: “Reader, I forgave him at the moment and on the spot [. . .] there was such unchanged love in his whole look and mien—I forgave him all: yet not in words, not outwardly; only at my heart's core” (284). If Jane had outwardly expressed her forgiveness to Mr. Rochester he may have taken advantage of her forgiveness. However, Jane's reader-friend has been with her through all her trials and knows the story behind her affections for Mr. Rochester. In this way, Brontë constructs Jane's reader as one who will understand where Jane is coming from even if she happens to be critical. She is still a friend to listen, understand, and ultimately still love Jane despite her faults.

The second to last time Jane addresses the reader is to say, “READER, I married him” (429). Jane's desire to share with her friend the most important aspect of her life to date is emphasized and catches the reader's attention with capital letters. This event is important to Jane, and she is eager to tell us that she is now married to

Mr. Rochester after such a long, dramatic courtship. Their relationship is for the most part a struggle. Even when the two finally confess their love for each other Jane finds out about Bertha, Rochester's insane wife, which ends in heartache. It is only at the end of the novel, after countless trials and near death instances, that the two can finally come together, and this is where the story ends. The reader, even if she does not agree with the match, does know what it means to Jane and why it is so important that she and Mr. Rochester are finally able to come together. Because she now has what she wants, a husband who will listen to the trials and triumphs Jane lives through, Jane does not need to write her story any more or address her reader-friend. She is beyond content and happy being married to Mr. Rochester. In addition, Jane's marriage to the now maimed Mr. Rochester might possibly be her ideal relationship – Jane continually has a problem with suturing her inner self with her outer self, and with Rochester's lack of vision he may not perceive the inconsistencies in his wife. Jane still has her reader, who is compassionate and understanding which in the end allows Jane-the-narrator to evolve, and mature as a person.

Jane's addresses to the reader are evidence of her urge to speak and be heard in a time when such things are not privileged to women. Jane finds comfort in knowing that her reader-friend will listen to her and be able to relate and understand her trials when no one throughout her travels as a young child and woman would. Even the most caring of people silence Jane, and she is forced to suffer in silence. In finding a compassionate other, Jane is able to express her feelings, find a friend, and have her story and injustices heard. Janet Freeman states: "With the gift of speech,

Jane is also given her story, for as she comes to understand the power of human utterance to represent human reality, so she is enabled to tell her life, to say to us, in effect, listen to my words, Reader—for the truth is in them” (699). By the end of the novel, because she is able to share her experiences, Jane’s spirit soars and she ends her narrative a happily married woman.

Chapter Three:

Addressing an Educated Reader in *Villette*

Lucy Snowe's need for an understanding and compassionate reader in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) is characterized by the number of times she addresses her reader and the intensity with which she does so. With the frequency of addresses Lucy gives throughout the novel, she can be seen as a needy, lonely and oftentimes insecure character who desperately needs to be connected with a friend. Not only does she address her reader more frequently than the characters in Brontë's other novels, but Lucy also assigns her reader specific, and oftentimes, critical qualities. This assignment of characters shows that Lucy is critical of others and afraid of harsh judgments. It is also a way for Lucy to model ideal reading practices. Despite her anticipation of her readers' negative critiques, she models a kinder and more engaged reading practice when she pores over Dr. John's letters. Brontë's own state of mind at the time she wrote *Villette* plays a crucial role in the events that unfold over the course of the novel, which helps to determine Lucy's incessant references to her reader.

Critics' focus on *Villette* is predominantly concerned with the gothic aspects of the novel such as doubling and insanity³. Critics agree that the novel is a direct response to the criticisms of Brontë's first novel, *The Professor*, as well as a comment on Brontë's own state of mind – Lucy's experiences at the school in *Villette* are

³ For further discussion on *Villette*, doubling, and other elements of the gothic see Christina Crosby's "Charlotte Brontë's Haunted Texts."

reminiscent of Brontë's at M. Heger's pensionnat. The novel also reflects the loneliness and times of solitude Brontë felt after her last sibling Anne passed away. One critic does suggest that "Direct address is a rarer phenomenon in *Villette* than in *Jane Eyre*" (Newman 57). Because Jane addresses her reader with such emotion Newman concludes that Lucy's apprehensiveness toward her reader results in a disconnection -- her wary addresses merely "drive the story she is telling" (58). However, Newman and other critics have failed to notice the connection between solitude, loneliness, and Lucy's need to address her reader. In addition, they have glanced over the significance of addresses to the reader which make up a dominant part of the novel. Lucy's desire and need to interact with others, and more particularly, the reader, has been completely overlooked. Lucy addresses her reader, and so very frequently, because of her isolation and lack of social interaction with others. It is clear that Lucy has an array of ideas, opinions, and thoughts that she is unable to express to those around her, and her sole option of trustworthy communication with a friend is with her reader.

As Brontë depicts her, Lucy Snowe is subjected to a life of solitude, as she is unable to find a most trustworthy friend throughout her travels. As an adolescent, Lucy travels to Villette where she is hired as a teacher at a boarding school for girls. Fortunately for Lucy, she runs into her godmother's son and takes up a short correspondence with him at the school. Lucy becomes obsessed with her letters from Dr. John, and becomes even more possessive of them after her stash has been raided and picked through by her superiors. Lucy considers this an unacceptable form of

reading practices: one that violates the implied confidentiality and privileged relationship between sender and recipient. Even though Lucy encounters a variety of people, there is no one who is committed to being a true friend to her. The closest friends she does have are oftentimes a nuisance to her; Ginevra Fanshawe and Polly Home de Bassompierre are depicted as tedious, uppity, and vain. Dr. Graham is engrossed in his work as well as with other ladies, and eventually, becomes Polly's betrothed. Along with Lucy's inevitable solitude is the question of her sanity – at various times a ghostly nun appears to her.⁴ Ultimately, Lucy leads a very secluded life where the majority of her human interaction is in the classroom, which is not an ideal setting for revealing fear, anxiety, and happiness.

The loneliness and solitude that Lucy Snowe feels throughout *Villette* is easily connected to Brontë's own state of mind when she wrote the novel. Three of her siblings passed away within eight months of each other; she went from having three constant companions to being entirely alone. Not only were the deaths of each sibling saddening, but Brontë had nursed her siblings during their illnesses, which is in itself exhausting. Brontë's state of mind during this time can be suggested from her own letters which have been collected by Elizabeth Gaskell after Brontë's death. The biography, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), is filled with letters between Brontë, her siblings, and friends, along with correspondence from her publishers and critics. In her lifetime, Brontë frequently corresponds with friends in particular through

⁴ After the trauma of what Lucy perceives to be M. Paul's inevitable marriage to his charge Justine Marie, the ghostly nun appears to Lucy in the midst of her hysteria: "My head reeled, for by the faint night lamp I saw stretched on my bed the old phantom—the NUN" (*Villette* 1039).

letters as this is her only way of timely communication. After Anne's death she writes to a friend who has been helping her through her siblings' illnesses and eventual deaths and tells her just how lonely she is: "The great trial is when evening closes and night approaches. At that hour we used to assemble in the dining-room—we used to talk. Now I sit by myself—necessarily, I am silent" (qtd. in Gaskell 321). While it is devastating to lose friends, siblings, it is equally traumatic for Brontë to lose the only real, physical companions she has: "Sometimes when I wake in the morning, and know that Solitude, Remembrance, and Longing are to be almost my sole companions all day through – that at night I shall go to bed with them, that they will long keep me sleepless – that next morning I shall wake to them again – sometimes, Nell, I have a heavy heart of it" (322). Brontë divulges her most painful and devastating feelings to her reader, a model that Lucy follows for unburdening her own sorrows.

Lucy experiences this same sort of loneliness during the school's break when students and teachers alike leave the school, and it is at this point that she becomes dangerously ill. In one of her letters to her publisher, Brontë says of Lucy's condition: "It was no impetus of healthy feeling which urged her to the confessional, for instance; it was the semi-delirium of solitary grief and sickness" (428). Without her siblings around for comfort and support, Brontë loses herself much like Lucy does. The process of writing *Villette* becomes an escape from Brontë's dreary and lonely life as Patricia Thompson notes, "Now, writing was no longer 'a boon' but something to escape from, into travel and prolonged visits, so desperate was her need for

companionship” (583). Lucy does these same things in order to stay (semi) sane from the deafening loneliness she feels around her.

An Educated and Critical Reader

The existence of any reader is not noteworthy, but what is significant is the way that Brontë constructs this reader as an educated individual, someone Lucy can identify with. Lucy’s continuous use of a freshly learned language, French, and her interaction with other teachers in Villette is evidence that Lucy is adamant about telling her story and gaining a friend who is an equal: an educated friend. The first example of this is through the use of language. As Lucy ventures out into the world and gains experience, her use of the English language becomes enmeshed with French. For the first hundred or so pages of the novel, Lucy and others who are around her speak only English. The distinguishing characteristic between Lucy’s hometown of Bretton, and her new home in Villette is the difference in language: English versus French. In the modest town of Bretton, it is unnecessary for Lucy to speak a foreign language fluently. She leads a rather sheltered and lonely life with her godmother, a small number of other family members, and a foster child for her only means of dialogue. It is only when Lucy comes to a French speaking land that this difference in location shows Lucy’s desire for educated, stimulating discourse and company. The differences in language become apparent right away. While waiting for her luggage Lucy says, “I could say nothing whatever; not possessing a phrase of *speaking* French: and it was French, and French only, the whole world seemed now gabbling around me” (*Villette* 803). It is not long, however, that Lucy learns the

language and recounts events to the reader in French, and she does not simply translate what others are saying from French to English. From here on out the reader is bombarded with the French language. Lucy assumes that her reader is capable of understanding French, for if she does not comprehend the language then her role as understanding friend is compromised.

As much as Lucy is looking for companionship with her reader, for the vast majority of her addresses Lucy is overly critical. Gregory O'Dea notes this critical attitude Lucy bestows on her reader. He says of Lucy, "Brontë instills in that character a perverse, forbidding attitude toward the reader. Lucy Snowe is designed to keep the reader 'on edge'; to elicit a complex response, combining in the reader a sense of alienation and victimization with a degree of sympathetic affinity" (41). O'Dea's argument is especially relevant when determining the reasons behind Lucy's addresses to her reader on the occasions that she gives him or her characteristics. Lucy often characterizes her reader as severe and judgmental on her behalf. When looking at the reasons behind Lucy's caustic words, the reader should note that she is oftentimes in a state of turmoil. Lucy's words imply that she is incredibly insecure, and imagining that the reader is in fact thinking critically of her. She is calling out to her readers, and she is bestowing upon us a very critical response to her own feelings. Brontë's use of these addresses is a bid for sympathy and understanding for her character.

During an eight-week vacation from school, a time when Lucy becomes especially lonely, she addresses her reader critically: "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” (*Villette* 858). This is one of the only times that Lucy assigns so many specific characteristics to her readers, and clearly, she is not bestowing the best of qualities upon us. Lucy is allowing her insecurities to overwhelm her, and through being harsh with her reader’s perceived reaction, she is inadvertently being hard on herself. It is more than likely that Lucy is not trying to alienate her reader-friend through this austere description, but is, indeed, constructed through these addresses, as having a low moment and is herself feeling all of these things. Since she is virtually alone at this point in the novel, misery from feelings of solitude is inevitable, and Lucy’s only outlet is to project her feelings onto the only confidant she has.

Lucy also acknowledges a critical reader elsewhere in the novel. Upon meeting Ginevra, Lucy is determined to locate Villette, but not before thinking of her reader’s critique of her decision: “Before you pronounce on the rashness of the proceeding, reader, look back to the point whence I started; consider the desert I had left, note how little I perilled: mine was the game where the player cannot lose and may win” (802). Not only does Lucy expect her reader to see the flaws of her decision, and think less of her for it, but Lucy, through her explanation, feels it is necessary to defend herself to her reader. It is important that the reader understands that Lucy has been through trials and that she will triumph. Since Lucy feels the need to explain without provocation, she just might feel that her attempt to find Villette is actually risky since she does state that she neither knows who Madame Beck is nor

where she is located (802). Being in a strange city where the locals speak a foreign language is a dangerous situation for Lucy. She recognizes this, but reassures her reader, she has it under control. It is fitting that Lucy should suggest this reaction from her reader because just a few short pages later she addresses her reader as “sensible” (811). A sensible reader-friend would surely not tell Lucy that her adventure to find Villette is necessarily a good idea. Through all these qualities bestowed upon the reader, Lucy does think highly of her reader, when she can stop herself from imagining the worst.

In addition to being critical of her reader, there are also a number of occasions when Lucy seems suspicious of the reader’s interest in Lucy’s story. At one point the reader is asked if he or she remembers a certain event in Lucy’s life: “The reader will, perhaps, remember the description of Madame Beck’s fête; nor will he have forgotten that at each anniversary a handsome present was subscribed for and offered by the school” (961). At another point Lucy asks, “Has the reader forgotten Miss Ginevra Fanshawe?” (816). Is Lucy accusing or critiquing her reader’s attendance of her stories through her choice of words? Is it terribly important that we remember this? Or is it just important for Lucy to be heard and to feel important through the reader’s attention to and remembrance of insignificant details in our friend’s life? Friends remember details. This is what Lucy is implying through her questions about subjects she has already touched on.

Receiving, and the Theft of, Dr. John’s Letters

Even though Lucy is defensive in regard to the type of person her reader is, she needs the support of this person during times of emotional disturbances such as fear and anxiety, as is the case when Lucy declares, "Reader, I felt alarmed!" (864). After a swoon Lucy wakes in a room that appears to be her home in Bretton. How strange it must be to wake and not know, or be very confused about where she is! It is essential for Lucy to have someone near to whom she can relay her fears in order to alleviate anxiety. Mild anxiety is also depicted in the form of absent letters by means of a snoop household director. Madame Beck continuously peeks through Lucy's drawers, and on one specific occasion, Mme. Beck discovers a package of letters which she proceeds to remove. Upon this startling discovery, Lucy says, "The reader will not too gravely regard the little circumstance that about this time the triply-enclosed packet of five letters temporarily disappeared from my bureau. Blank dismay was naturally my first sensation on making the discovery; but in a moment I took heart of grace" (937). Lucy panics when her most precious belongings, letters from Dr. John, have magically disappeared. Interestingly, once Lucy has regained her composure, she tells her reader that he or she should not be too alarmed because she is now in a sound state of mind and believes that if she waits patiently the letters will return to their home. Is she actually sound in mind about this occurrence, or is it her way of convincing the reader that this situation will pan out that allows her to ease her turbulent mind? It seems to be the latter.

The exchange of letters between characters is a significant aspect of the novel, especially considering that Lucy takes a turn at not only being the receiver but also

the reader of letters. As with other novels using the epistolary tradition, letters allow for conversations between individuals that might not have taken place otherwise. In Lucy's case, correspondence through letters between her and Dr. John is a way for Lucy to appease her loneliness while he is away (899). Lucy's reaction to receiving Dr. John's letters along with the actual contents of the letters is equally important. She whisks herself away and treats the letter as if it is the most precious treasure she could possibly receive (906). The first letter Dr. John sends Lucy concerns shared experiences from Villette. After reading this piece of prose, Lucy describes her ecstasy: "This present moment had no pain, no blot, no want; full, pure, perfect, it deeply blessed me. A passing seraph seemed to have rested beside me, leaned towards my heart, and reposed on its throb a softening, cooling, healing, hallowing wing" (909). Much can be said about Lucy's reactions to reading Dr. John's letters. Are her critical views of her reader a reflection of her own experiences being the reader of letters? Upon receiving a letter Lucy makes a dramatic and drawn out charade of her entire process of coming into possession of the letter to the time she finally reads it. Lucy is both critical of her reader and at the same time she displays an example of how her reader should react to the written word. One should cherish a letter from a beloved friend, but should not act in such an extreme manner. The letters also show the importance of having contact with a friend when no other means of correspondence is available, and this is Lucy's saving grace. She does not have many close friends, and having contact with one who describes the pleasure in their shared adventures is heartwarming. Unfortunately, this correspondence with Dr. John does

not last forever, and it is in her reader-friend who Lucy can find the most comfort in sharing her experiences, both good and bad. Lucy puts a great deal of importance on the letters she receives from Dr. John, and Mme. Beck's momentary thievery takes a toll on her

already raw and tense nerves.⁵

Through Lucy's actions and careful deliberation, she shows her reader just how precious her letters are to her: not only do the contents mean everything to her, but the contents also must be hidden from absolutely everyone apart from the intended reader. The casket that Lucy uses to conceal her letters is a way of containing what is most precious to her. Lucy is so possessive of her letters that after they have been returned, she takes an additional step in securing them – she must go a step further and bury the casket, which encloses the letters. Before Lucy chooses to bury her possessions, though, there is much deliberation and obsession over which place will be most secure to hide her treasure: “In what corner of this strange home was it possible to find security or secrecy? Where could a key be a safeguard, or a padlock a barrier?” (938). For paragraphs Lucy deliberates and meticulously contemplates the pros and cons of each hiding place she can think of. This decision to conceal her letters has come after Mme Beck and M. Paul have read her letters

⁵ Paralleling Mme. Beck's letter thievery is Arthur Huntingdon from Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). Both Helen and Lucy take great pains in concealing their most precious belongings. Like Lucy, Helen conceals her diary in a trunk only to discover that an unintended reader, her husband, has discovered her treasure, and is reading the material against her will. The Brontë sisters are commenting on the significance of writing, the violation of privacy, and the writer-reader relationship.

thoroughly, which makes it seem like burying the letters is an effort that comes a little too late – they already know the contents. The new security of her letters and the pains Lucy is forced to take to keep her treasure to herself brings her a strange and unfortunate sense of peace and calm: “In all this I had a dreary something—not pleasure—but a sad, lonely satisfaction” (939). Burying the letters will only protect her privacy from further intrusion, which is rather unlikely. However, Lucy’s rash and calculated decision to protect what is sacred to her shows how she feels about the contents of the letters and the impact they have on her happiness.

Patricia Johnson brings up a valid point about Lucy’s intent when writing letters to Dr. John. Her first letter in response to Dr. John has two versions. The first is a letter that is comprised of her overflowing emotions, and the second one is a more reasonable, and reserved letter. Johnson points out three aspects of these letters that should be considered: what is Lucy’s true personality? Is she the over-emotional girl, or is she guarded? The reader, in essence, is allowed to choose which version Lucy presents of herself is most related to whom we think she is. Johnson asks which letter comprises the “real” Lucy (617). It is possible that Lucy comprises both of these contradicting characteristics. She is at once the gushing, ecstatic girl, and also the modest and sensible girl embodied in one human being. Lucy often refers to her problems in deciding whether Feeling or Reason should be listened to.⁶ These vastly

⁶ Lucy notes the importance of the letters she receives from Dr. John and how she deals with the emotions evoked by his words. In response to his letters, when trying to decipher between “Feeling” and “Reason,” Lucy writes her own thoughts down:

When we had done—when two sheets were covered with the language of a strongly-adherent affection, a rooted and active gratitude [. . .]—when, then, I had given expression to a closely clinging and deeply-honoring attachment—an attachment that wanted to attract to itself and

different letters are another example of her inner-struggles with herself, and with her low esteem levels.

Lucy's Jealousy

There are four specific instances when Lucy calls out to her reader more often than she does at other points in the novel. Interestingly, these addresses all revolve around highly emotional conflicts that Lucy is facing: a quarrel with Dr. John, letters concerning Dr. John and an apparition, a quarrel with M. Paul, and finally, a misunderstanding about M. Paul's relationship with Justine Marie. Lucy's addresses are spread almost evenly throughout the novel – she starts from the very beginning and continues almost steadily through to the end. It is at this point in time that her addresses are most frequent, which, along with her words, shows just how anxious Lucy is about these very emotional times. There are a few instances when there are multiple addresses per page with only a couple of sentences or paragraphs between addresses. The first instance of Lucy's desperate address to the reader occurs within an appropriately titled chapter heading: "We Quarrel." Through Lucy's descriptions of Dr. John and her relationship to him, it becomes apparent that she develops affection toward him. During the quarrel Dr. John is talking relentlessly about the girl he admires, Ginevra Fanshawe, and he wishes to hear Lucy's opinion of what he perceives as her wonderful attributes. After misinterpreting Lucy's explanation and

take to its own lot all that was painful in the destiny of its object; that would, if it could, have absorbed and conducted away all storms and lightnings from an existence viewed with a passion of solicitude—then, just at that moment, the doors of my heart would shake, bolt and bar would yield, Reason would leap in vigorous and revengeful, snatch the full sheets, read, sneer, erase, tear up, re-write, fold, seal, direct, and send a terse, curt missive of a page.
(*Villette* 914)

fondness for the spoiled girl, he makes excuses for Ginevra's behavior to which Lucy says, "I submitted to be looked upon as humiliated, cast-off, and now pining confidante of the distinguished Miss Fanshawe: but, reader, it was a hard submission" (*Villette* 876). Not only does Lucy dislike the picture Dr. John has painted of Lucy's relationship with Ginevra, but she does not correct him of his error. She admits to her actual confidant, the reader, what her true feelings of the situation are, but does not stand to make them known to her flesh and blood friend Dr. John. This shows just how much trust Lucy instills in her reader, and how comfortable she is with this friend.

After becoming highly irritated with Dr. John and his infatuation with Genevra Fanshawe, and in a state of emotional turmoil, Lucy tells him how she feels about his behavior: "On all points but one you are a man, frank, healthful, right-thinking, clear-sighted: on this exceptional point you are but a slave. I declare, where Miss Fanshawe is concerned, you merit no respect; nor have you mine" (877). It is only after Lucy exclaims these words to Dr. John that she becomes aware of her words and how they have affected him. Lucy repents of what she has said in an address to the reader: "Dr. John had the one [feeling] in exquisite perfection; and because I have admitted that he was not endowed with the other [recognizing others' feelings] in equal degree, the reader will considerately refrain from passing to an extreme, and pronouncing him *un*-sympathising, unfeeling: on the contrary, he was a kind, generous man" (877). It is interesting that Lucy allows the reader in on her discovery right away; she tells the reader of her hasty mistake concerning Dr. John's

character but does not inform him of the same. Lucy allows Dr. John to continue believing that she has a very critical and unflattering opinion of his character, which we find out, is not actually the case. Clearly, Lucy has the utmost respect for Dr. John, but in a moment of haste she has said something that is brought about by jealousy. By relating the events to the reader Lucy recognizes that Dr. John deserves more credit than she has given him in this moment. Lucy's anxiety about what her reader will think of her is a recurring theme as well. While she is quick to relay her thoughts to her reader, her insecurities shine through with her consistent justifications of her feelings, which is her way of shaping the reader's responses.

Holding true with the time she lives in, Lucy partakes in letter writing. In Lucy's address concerning Dr. John and her accusations about his character, she makes it sound as if her address is in the form of a diary entry. She, herself, admits that she wrote as she felt in the moment: "I give the feeling as at the time I felt it; I describe the view of character as it appeared when discovered" (878). Oftentimes diary entries are done in haste without time to actually think things through properly – a time to vent without censorship. This is the case for her accusations of Dr. John, or at least, this is the impression she is trying to present to her reader. Brontë is implying that we might want to consider the consequences of speaking thoughts and opinions. It is clear through these four addresses in a short time that Lucy is in a state of agitation and emotional turbulence. The events leading up to the quarrel, the quarrel itself, and then the aftermath leave a toll on Lucy, and it is during this time that she expresses her feelings to her reader, when she cannot or does not know how to

express them to Dr. John. By way of addressing her reader and through introspection, Lucy is able to calm herself and think rationally about each situation.

The most frequent addresses to her reader in a short period of time are when Lucy steals off to the park. Lucy's anxiety over learning about the existence of Justine Marie, who Lucy thinks is a dead nun, is so great that she addresses her reader three times in the span of one short page. Once at the park, Lucy sees a gathering of people and finds out that one of them is, in fact, Justine Marie. As far as Lucy can tell, Justine Marie has some connection to M. Paul, the man she has come to love, and she fears it is engagement. The emotional trauma of this moment is apparent in Lucy's every word as she unfolds the facts of the appearance of one strange person in the company of Justine Marie: "I clasped my hands very hard, and I drew my breath very deep: I held in the cry, I devoured the ejaculation, I forbade the start, I spoke and I stirred no more than a stone; but I knew what I looked on; through the dimness left in my eyes by many nights' weeping, I knew him" (1036). Lucy seems to be stunned and on the brink of hysteria by this visual confirmation that M. Paul is near. The one she loves, whom she thinks has sailed away, is in the presence of another woman who is about to announce her engagement. It is no wonder that Lucy addresses her reader so frequently and with such intensity. During a moment when the world stands still and secrets are revealed, a friend is needed for sympathy and, in Lucy's case, to share in her most exciting news about a newfound discovery. While there are other points in the novel when Lucy addresses her reader multiple times, this particular situation carries the most weight and places the most reliance on the reader. Since Lucy is

writing all of this at a time after this particular instance, it should be noted that even looking back from a distance this event is privileged over other events in the novel. Such significance is measured by the number of times Lucy deems it necessary to confide in her reader for sympathy, for someone to share her terror, and simply to show her excitement.

Through her various forms of contact with the reader, Lucy Snowe is able to get past her most awful struggles. Lucy makes it clear that the reader is needed in times of desperation. Without the comfort of another human being around Lucy, the only person to turn to is her loving, understanding, and, sometimes, critical reader. Even though Lucy gives unflattering depictions of her reader, it is only a reflection of the turmoil that she is encountering that she is not able to express to anyone else. Lucy never informs her readers if her beloved M. Paul ever returns from his voyage safely -- we are left to conclude for ourselves whether or not he returns: "Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return" (1053). Regardless of Lucy's insecurities concerning the thoughts of her readers, it is clear that she instills confidence in us through her open-ended ending.

Insight can be found in Gaskell's memoir of her friend in which she explains the author's choice for her ending: "Mr. Brontë was anxious that her new tale should end well, as he disliked novels which left a melancholy impression upon the mind [. . .] he requested her to make her hero and heroine (like the heroes and heroines in fairy tales) 'marry, and live very happily ever after'" (427). Brontë's choice here responds

to the concerns of this actual reader, her father, but ultimately she leaves it up to her reader to determine the fate of M. Paul. Lucy lays great importance on having another human and friend to share her experiences with – and the importance of the reader's acting as if she is indeed a true, caring friend.

Chapter Four:

The Professor: Educating the Reader

Charlotte Brontë constructs William Crimsworth's reader of *The Professor* (written 1846, published 1857) in a different way than she constructs the heroines' readers in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. William, being the only male protagonist of the three novels, is more privileged because of his sex than his female counterparts who are subjected to a certain level of obedience and silence throughout their lives. Because William is allowed more freedoms and is treated with more equality than either Jane or Lucy his addresses to his reader tend to be more informative and, condescending, whereas the women address their readers in a more gentle and respectful fashion. Not only is this portrayed in his addresses to the reader, but also in the frequency of his addresses. William communicates with his reader a mere eleven times, whereas Jane addresses her reader over twice that at William at twenty-six times, and Lucy addresses her reader an astounding fifty-two times. One similarity he shares with his female counterparts is his place within his family: he is an outsider. Even though his family members assist him, William sees himself as a different type of person than either of his uncles and brother, which puts him at odds with the relations that he does have. William's addresses and lack thereof, pertain to his sex; he is able to accomplish more, at a quicker pace than our heroines and because of this, William is not as reliant on his reader for comfort, understanding, and care.

The Professor, though the last of Brontë's published work was, in fact, the first novel she wrote. Many critics linger on critiquing the novel which has been considered dull, flawed, "minor, ill-conceived, and un compelling" (Cohen 443). Brontë's attempt to create a first-person male narrator leaves some critics aghast, and Annette Federico argues, "critics have tended to see this as both an artistic error and an elision of her feminist voice" (324). Anne Longmuir also argues that critics tend to linger on "an overreliance on the author's biography" when it comes to analyzing her texts (163). Critical attempts to find distinct connections between addresses from William, Jane, and Lucy are virtually nonexistent. Due to the hefty number of negative reviews of her first novel, Brontë attempted to correct her errors through the novels following the rejection of *The Professor*: "It is 'a rehearsal for *Villette*' . . . or an early 'failed' attempt to create a heroine like Jane Eyre" (Federico 326). While the content of her first novel floundered, "Some critics have expressed gratitude for the novel's failure, which spurred Brontë to write the works for which she is renowned: *Jane Eyre* (1847), whose composition followed immediately upon *The Professor* and was intended as an antidote to it; and *Villette* (1853), which reworked much of its thematic material" (Cohen 443).

William's Sex, Wealth, and Opportunity

William's advantage over Jane and Lucy can be seen from the very beginning of *The Professor*. In a letter to his friend and schoolmate, Charles, William reminisces over times spent at Eton in school. The letter, comprising the entire first chapter, allows the reader to become aware that William is not only well educated, but that he

comes from a well-to-do family and that many avenues are available to him. After leaving his boarding school, William meets with his uncles, Lord Tyndale and John Seacombe, to discuss his future endeavors: “They asked me if I would enter the Church, and my uncle the nobleman offered me the living of Seacombe, which is a gift, if I would; then my uncle, Mr. Seacombe, hinted that when I became rector of Seacombe-cum-Scaife, I might perhaps be allowed to take, as mistress of my house and head of my parish, one of my six cousins” (*The Professor* 1057). These are extraordinary opportunities for such a young man, even if they are of no interest to our hero. Like Jane and Lucy, William has been entrusted to others, family members, for his upbringing. Fortunately for William, his kindred are wealthy and full of promising opportunities. While Jane and Lucy also rely on family to raise them, they surely are deficient in the opportunities allowed to them. In order for the women to enrich their lives with education and employment, both must actively seek it out. Fortunately for William, his family and other acquaintances seek out employment for him while he sits back and relaxes: “He also has a choice of professions, and obtains some influential male friends . . . who write letters of recommendation and advertise him about his investments” (Federico 330). William’s opportunities might lead him to view the world, as well as potential readers, differently.

William’s family connections provide advantages over Jane and Lucy, both who have come from poverty stricken families. While familial wealth is a defining factor dividing Jane and Lucy from William, there is a more significant factor to be considered. William is male. Sue Ann Betsinger notes the differences between the

sexes, not between he, Jane, and Lucy, but in William's own family: "he is his mother's son and resembles her, but he does not share her disadvantage, being female, and so he need not endure the injustice and misery that she knew" (103). Betsinger makes this remark concerning Hunsden's attempts to thrust William out into the working world. Clearly, familial wealth does not determine one's advantages for seeking what he desires in the world. If William's mother had been in his place, she would still have found herself at a disadvantage despite the wealth that her family holds, which she clearly does as Betsinger points out, "To be powerless, without social, economic, or legal status; to be unconfident, dependent, insecure, and vulnerable – is to be female" (103). William's mother, being female, is not portrayed as being treated as William has been. The reader does not ever hear of her being sent off to school, or of her brothers helping her financially and professionally, but the reader can take a good guess that she has not been offered this assistance. Because William is a male he is able to seek opportunities at ease that Jane and Lucy have to struggle for. Both Jane and Lucy make their way and find employment and a residence on their own. Federico states, "Crimsworth's masculinity automatically confers social and psychological advantages over, for example, Jane Eyre or Lucy Snowe" (330). William meets with a variety of men who make arrangements for him based on his likes and dislikes – William clearly has the advantage of the three.

William, Jane, and Lucy may have had very different experiences when it comes to opportunities; however, all three have similar experiences concerning relationships with family members and episodes of silencing the self. Like Jane,

William is treated unkindly and is often dismissed by his relations and rather unfriendly elder brother, Edward. While William's good fortune of having opportunity's door open to him seems promising, sadly, the truth behind such fortune is tainted by politics and vengeance. William's benefactors are threatened into taking responsibility for their nephew at the sacrifice of their political careers:

My uncle Crimsworth, an astute mercantile man, took the opportunity of writing a fierce letter to the candidate [Mr. Seacombe], stating that if he and Lord Tynedale did not consent to do something towards the support of their sister's orphan children, he would expose their relentless and malignant conduct towards that sister, and do his best to turn the circumstances against Seacombe's election. (*The Professor* 1058)

Like Jane, William knows that his family's support is not solely, or at all, based on love and the goodness of their hearts – his family is obligated to take action in order to keep their position and name respectable. Knowing how and why his family is helping him surely puts a damper on anything that William sets out to do – and is his reason for being uninterested in the opportunities they offer to him. Not only are his uncles offering placements that William does not want, but he also knows that they are only helping him to procure their status in society.

William's closest blood relation, his brother, is as bad as their uncles Tyndale and Seacombe when it comes to helping him; William is constantly a pity case to his family members. It is also impossible for William to feel any sort of connection to his family members when they are all rallying against each other. While he knows that

his uncles are shady, they are helping to launch him into a profession that will allow him to settle and make something of himself. Edward allows this rift within the family to further widen with his comments concerning William's relationship with their uncles: "I may as well remind you at the very outset of our connection, that 'no man can serve two masters.' Acquaintance with Lord Tynedale will be incompatible with assistance from me" (1060). This constant battle between family members leaves William as the unfortunate middleman, one with no one to trust or to turn to. Edward's reluctance and coldness towards his younger brother is unsettling and further makes William feel as if he is a burden.

In relation to William's always being on the outside of his family and his solitude comes his first address to his reader, which unsurprisingly arises at a time when he is at a party where he is not spoken to, and where he "looked weary, solitary, kept down like some desolate tutor or governess" (1066).⁷ Such a comparison feminizes William, who has also shown a distinct likeness to his mother. In Brontë's subsequent novels, she represents these characteristics, solitude and loneliness, in her female characters, Jane and Lucy. William, at this party, must feel completely alone among Edward's many guests. It is at this time that he chooses to address his reader. William notices a man next to him and states, "I turned; at my elbow stood a tall man, young, though probably five or six years older than I – in other respects of an appearance the opposite to commonplace; though just now, as I am not disposed to

⁷ This is precisely how Jane finds herself at one of Mr. Rochester's gatherings at Thornfield Hall – as she does not know any of his guests and is likely unwanted, she "retired to a window-seat" (*Jane Eyre* 159).

paint his portrait in detail, the reader must be content with the silhouette I have just thrown off; it was all I myself saw of him either” (1066). The interesting aspect of this address is that William does, indeed, know more about this character than he is telling us. The novel’s first chapter is a letter to a friend, and William morphs the prose into something many more can enjoy and identify with, which indicates that William is all knowledgeable about everything he incorporates into his narrative. He does know more about the gentleman but is unwilling, at this particular point, to delve into the circumstance in which he finds himself.⁸ Withholding pertinent information and addressing his reader as he does enable William and his reader to experience the same feelings of mystery, suspense, and wonder at who the gentleman is. Because the reader does not get the full picture, as William did not have the full picture of the situation, it allows William to revisit the scene with someone who understands the feelings William is experiencing. As William states that he feels like an unimportant servant girl at his own brother’s party, shutout and invisible, the reader allows for William to actually have contact with someone, even if he or she cannot physically be there to ease his mind about being the outcast.

Educating the Reader

Brontë constructs William as having a pedagogic approach when it comes to addressing his reader, which makes sense considering that his profession is as an educator in an established school. Many of William’s addresses are comprised of

⁸ This moment is equivalent to the onset of Lucy’s infatuation with Dr. John. Her neglect to inform the reader of her feelings is reminiscent of William’s reluctance to tell the reader more about the gentlemen at the party.

informing the reader of something – he does not focus solely on addressing his reader for comfort and understanding like Jane and Lucy. Most of William’s addresses are informing the reader of, generally, something new or precious to him: “Reader, perhaps you were never in Belgium. Haply you don’t know the physiognomy of the country?” (1081). After this question directed at the reader, William proceeds to explain his surroundings in great detail, assuming that his reader is unaware of Belgium. After his lengthy explanation, William addresses his reader a second time with a more defensive tone: “This is Belgium, reader. Look! don’t call the picture a flat or a dull one – it was neither flat nor dull to me when I first beheld it” (1081). William attempts to give his reader a glimpse of what Belgium is like, at least how it was when he first experienced the land. Like Jane and Lucy, William becomes defensive and feels as if he must vindicate his experiences. While Lucy assumes her reader is educated, William likely views himself, because of his place in society, as better educated and more knowledgeable than his reader. Here, the reader is allowed a glimpse into William’s life but is still kept at a distance through his professor-like intonation.

Twice, William outwardly patronizes his reader in his addresses with the arrogant emphasis of “Now, reader.” This most likely comes from his background in lecturing – informing his students of things of which they have no or limited knowledge. Such an example occurs after a lengthy description of a plain, but most intriguing young woman: “Now, reader, though I have spent more than a page in describing Mdlle. Henri, I know well enough that I have left on your mind’s eye no

distinct picture of her; I have not painted her complexion, nor her eyes, nor her hair, nor even drawn the outline of her shape” (1113). With the little we are privileged to know about this mysterious Middle Henri, why does William feel the need to point this out? Why does he keep his reader in such suspense, and then taunt us with implications that he does, in fact, know more about her and is purposely keeping us out of the loop? After the taunts, William informs his reader as to the purpose of keeping his reader in the dark, and shows his arrogance: “it is not my intention to communicate to you at once a knowledge I myself gained by little and little” (1114). This manipulative and controlling manner is a tool William uses in his classroom to keep his students interested and intrigued in a subject. William states in the first few pages that his readers should be like minded – fusing the two. With such personal connections Brontë constructs William as wanting his readers to learn all that he has at the same pace.

William’s second seemingly arrogant address comes after the reader is informed of William and Frances’ pending engagement: “Now, reader, during the last two pages I have been giving you honey fresh from flowers, but you must not live entirely on food so luscious; taste then a little gall – just a drop, by way of change” (1166). What an awful way to treat a reader-friend! The “gall” that William is all too happy to poison his reader with comes from his own dark demons of the past: a woman to be exact. During the height of William’s excitement with marriage and a forever kind of love, an old ghostly remembrance haunts him and makes him ill for several days. As with his previous address, William requires his reader to feel

everything exactly as he has in precisely the same manner: love, anticipation, and as he describes it, hypochondria. This provides yet another example of how William chooses another avenue to obtain the reader's sympathy. He is unconcerned with just telling the gritty details of the good and the bad – he makes the reader wait it out so he or she is able to experience the feelings that William must have been going through at the time.

William's status as a privileged male, together with his bouts of condescending arrogance concerning his addresses to his reader, can all be seen in one particular address: "I possess others [snapshots of the actions of the girls in his classroom], as marked and as little agreeable, but I will spare my reader the exhibition of them" (1103). William appears to have a protective attitude over his students in this instance. As a male in control of others, his job is not only to educate but also to protect his students, and possibly, the reader. The manner in which he addresses his reader has a haughty intonation; he has been through trials, and he will not burden the reader's mind – because, no, the behavior of the students just does not get any better (1103). William is behaving in exactly the manner in which men in his time would act: "aggressively masculine [. . .] locked into a socially sanctioned tone of superiority," which Federico describes as qualities assigned to men in Victorian society: "'power, breadth, distinctness, clarity, learning [. . .] shrewdness, knowledge of life, and humor,' along with 'masculine faults,' such as 'coarseness and passion'" (329). All of these characteristics can be seen in the ways in which he interacts with the people in the novel as well as the ways in which he addresses his reader.

William's Letters

A significant difference in the way letters are handled between *The Professor* and *Villette* is the importance placed upon them. Lucy obsesses over the letters she receives from Dr. John and after careful contemplation she sends him a response. William, on the other hand, writes a lengthy letter to a childhood friend, sends it to Charles, and never receives a reply. Charles seems to be the only person William is ever really connected with, which can be seen from the content of the letter that he writes. In great detail, William talks about his life: his parents' death, his reception at his brother's house, and his emotional reaction at seeing his mother's portrait, among other personal facts that one reserves for friends.

Like Lucy, William appears to obsess over the letter, but in a slightly different fashion. While Lucy obsesses over the contents of the letters sent to her by Dr. John, William obsesses over never having a letter in return and, therefore, commits his most intimate experiences to his reader – one who will serve as the friend he no longer is able to communicate with. Since William can no longer communicate with Charles through letters, he dedicates it to the public:

The leisure time I have at command, and which I intended to employ for his [Charles'] private benefit, I shall now dedicate to that of the public at large. My narrative is not exciting, and above all, not marvelous; but it may interest some individuals, who, having toiled in the same vocation as myself, will find in my experience frequent reflections of their own. The above letter will serve as an introduction. I now proceed. (*The Professor* 1062)

Lucy's other infatuation with keeping her letters private is also different from William who wants to share his once private letter with the world, and specifically for those who may have had similar experiences. Not only does he share something that once was private, but he embellishes upon a few pages to comprise a novel. As much as William does not address his reader, this need to share his experiences with someone is a cry for any sort of friendship.

William's disconnect from letter writing that Lucy does not experience is that William translates letters from English to German for his brother's business as a "second clerk" at the mill for some time and finds the job beyond tedious (1064). These letters are strictly business letters – answers translated into the language of the sender, which is clearly impersonal. William does feel a sense of pride that he is producing work that few are able to do, and that he is performing it well: "I served Edward as his second clerk faithfully, punctually, diligently. What was given me to do I have the power and the determination to do well" (1065). Since William has very little positive experience with letter writing, performing it for work for business men, and never receiving a reply from a friend makes William feel as if letters and letter writing is a useless task when it comes to personal affairs. On the other hand a manuscript where many are able to read it and through addressing his reader at key points in his life, William is able to have the correspondence that he longs for.

William has many advantages working in his favor: his social status, wealth, and prominent education allow him more freedoms than his female counterparts. He is able to move with ease from his life at school to his life in the workforce, whereas

Jane and Lucy must work twice as hard to have lesser positions. In addition, William's long lasting friendship with Hunsden becomes antagonistic, which is another reason for his particular addresses to his reader. While he needs someone to commune with because he never has anyone who is truly concerned with him, William's masculine identity allows for him to keep his reservations about seeking out others as confidants. Brontë constructs William as having a lesser need to communicate with others because he can take his trials and triumphs as a man – like a man in his time should.

Chapter Five:

Conclusion: The Child-Friendly *Jane Eyre*

Jane, Lucy, and William experience many different situations and interact with an array of people within Brontë's novels *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, and *The Professor*. Jane is forced into silence and therefore solitude; Lucy is anxious and believes that she is constantly being criticized by those around her, and William is patronized and in return treats those around him in a condescending manner. For all of their dissimilarities, there is one aspect of their lives that glues their experiences together. Because of their unfortunate circumstances, the characters are outsiders in their own lives and in their own families – if they have any. Jane and William are treated cruelly and abjectly by their closest blood relations, while Lucy is orphaned and sent to live with her godmother – she is still the outsider in a family. These situations that induce loneliness are the reasons for each character's address to his or her reader. Each may be looking for a different reaction and relationship with the reader, but the end result is the same. Jane, Lucy, and William's only shot at having a caring, understanding other – someone who allows them to feel worthwhile – is the reader. In this way, the characters are able to move forward with their lives and become happy, content, and successful individuals.

The use and frequency of each character's addresses corresponds with their views on silence and social norms. The women address their readers more frequently than William because in their lives they are unable to speak their needs and concerns

as much as they would like. From the very start of Jane's life experiences she is taught that she must be silent or she will be punished. She therefore travels through life with much to say but the inability to properly articulate what is on her mind – even once asked. Like Jane Lucy is silent. More often than not she is sitting in a garden or at her desk alone. Being raised without family in her godmother's home surely counts for her introverted tendencies. William gives the fewest addresses which likely stems from his place in society. Because he is male he is entitled to a voice – even if people around him do not think highly of him. Being male also enables him to have a prestigious education and the ability to move through life with relative ease, quite unlike both Jane and Lucy. He is also more fortunate from the start because of his familial wealth and all the opportunity that accompanies such assets. Because of his station in society when William does address his reader he does so in a patronizing and condescending manner – he spends most of his addresses educating and assuming ignorance of his reader instead of asking for understanding and sympathy. Regardless of the number of addresses or the ways in which each character does so, all of these reasons for addressing the reader come from needing an understanding friend, and having an intimate relationship with someone who listens without reservations.

Brontë's concern with the ways in which her characters address their readers is occasionally reflected by the situations she encounters in her own life. She converses through letters with a multitude of people including family, friends, publishers, and critics. Examination of these letters leads to one avenue of

construction of each of her three characters and their specific motives for addressing their readers. Each construction of the reader is meant to meet the needs of that particular character: Jane needs a loving friend and therefore addresses her reader sweetly; Lucy needs an escape from her isolation but addresses her reader critically; and William needs someone to educate and oftentimes addresses his reader in a patronizing manner. The specific construction of each reader enables the character to feel loved and among friends, when friends cannot be found. This same interest in the reader can also be found in modern adaptations of Brontë's work, specifically in *Jane Eyre*.

Further research into Charlotte Brontë's novels concerning direct address might include examining the ways in which the texts have been abridged and adapted for younger readers. The ways in which *Jane Eyre* (1847) and its adaptations change the relationship between writer and reader have implications for the novel as a whole. There are many ways in which an abridged version of a text is useful, especially when a classic novel like *Jane Eyre* is retold and available to a younger demographic. Abridged versions of texts, such as adapted chapter books and graphic novels, have both beneficial qualities as well as hindrances concerning the content of the novel. In order for a long novel to be child-friendly, a number of pages, and therefore events in the novel, must be cut in order to keep it to the point and maintain a child's often limited attention span. While the adaptation serves the purpose of engaging a child in a classic novel, the elimination of certain events and dialogue seriously compromises the writer-reader relationship.

An adaptation of *Jane Eyre* by Jane E. Gerver (1997) is a 99 page, large lettered chapter book. It is important to look at the length of the novel – it is a quarter of the length of the original! Clearly, the majority of the text is going to be cut, but what to keep? Most children’s books are relatively short chapter books, and they are kept to around one hundred pages. Children often have short attention spans, and reading a novel in which the main character can give an account of an event in one sentence that is as long as one full paragraph is unrealistic. In this adapted version, all the events are to the point and explained just enough so as to grant fluidity throughout the book. In this way, children have the pleasure of reading an interesting classic book without the frustration of trying to comprehend language that is beyond their years.

The first aspect of this abridged version of Jane’s story is that her use of the French language has been done away with. French is a great aspect of the novel even though it is not used in abundance; it is certainly used with emotion. Not only is Jane’s knowledge of French one of the determining factors for Mrs. Fairfax’s hiring her to teach Mr. Rochester’s French charge, but it is also an important aspect of the characters’ relationship with readers.⁹ The use of French in the original novel

⁹ Imagine an adaptation of *Villette* completely without French, which is a significant aspect of the novel. The inclusion of the language is one of the determining factors of how Lucy views herself as well as her relationship with her reader. One of the reasons she addresses her reader critically is due to how others view and treat her, which can be seen in interactions with M. Paul who continuously insults and criticizes Lucy. He scrutinizes Lucy’s choice of dress: “Et Mademoiselle Lucy est coquette comme dix Parisiennes, [. . .] A-t-on jamais vu une Anglaise pareille. Regardez plutôt son chapeau, et ses gants, et ses brodequins!” (*Villette* 986). Without *Villette*-native M. Paul’s insult in French, the reader would be able to understand M. Paul’s rudeness, but not to the fullest extent, via Lucy’s reaction: “These articles of dress were just like what my companions wore; certainly not one whit smarter—perhaps rather plainer than most” (986). The use of French is one more reminder of where Lucy is and the type of people she is surrounded by.

insinuates that the reader must have some knowledge of the language – for what would be the point for Jane to show off her ability to communicate with Adèle if no one understands even the simplest of their conversations? Even sans French, the language is still targeted toward children in grade school.

Along with differences in language, the events that were cut and which events were left in the adapted version of the text are surprising. death and the sick, it might be too frightening to think about, however, it would be easier to think about death when it is simply stated: “Many students, weak from the harsh winter, fell ill. Some even died” (11). Readers have been given a lot of information about the conditions of living at Lowood school, which is drastically different from anything a modern day child might experience and, therefore, is less relevant and less frightening.

Death is sometimes considered taboo when writing for children, but it also seems like it is more acceptable to talk about taboo things such as death when it is associated with bad characters. John and Mrs. Reed’s deaths are incorporated in the story whereas Helen’s death is left out. Helen’s death is not included because Helen is a good person. She befriends Jane, and they end up spending a good amount of time together. For children to see a good person and someone who could be their friend die it might be one of those scary situations. If Jane’s friend can die from being sick with a cough, then maybe the child reading can die from a cough. Depending on comprehension levels and maturity, this could be a frightening situation for a child to read. Robert Kastenbaum gives insight into this phenomenon through the example of a child seeing his goldfish (a beloved pet) floating in an odd manner. He says, “The

child's enquiring mind wants to know more, but it also recognizes the implied threat: "If a pretty little fish can die, then maybe this could happen to somebody else" (para 6). In order to remove this threat from a child's reading experience, the threat of a loved one dying is removed.

The three most important people Jane encounters and attempts to tell her story to, Mr. Lloyd, Helen Burns, and Miss Temple, are completely removed from the adaptation. With the omission of Jane's trauma in the red room, she has less to be angry about, and she has fewer complaints and reasons to try and interact with the people she encounters later on in the novel. This fit is the reason for bringing Mr. Lloyd to Gateshead, and, ultimately, why Jane is sent to Lowood school. Mr. Lloyd plays a very important part in the novel because he is the first person who ever shows any concern for the girl, outside of the maid, Bessie, who is nice, asks for her version of the story, but is often unsympathetic. Without this character's kindness, much is lost in the tale of young Jane's trials. Mr. Lloyd is also an essential character for events that happen later on in the novel. When Jane is accused of being a liar by Mr. Brocklehurst, it is Mr. Lloyd who confirms that Jane's statements are, indeed, true, and not false (*Jane Eyre* 66). Mr. Lloyd's account allows Jane's fellow-students to know that she is not the terrible person she is made out to be. This makes the adaptation less about Jane's trials, the need for an understanding person to talk to, and makes it more of a mystery novel, which is clearly stated on the back cover of the book:

Jane is happy at last [at Thornfield Hall]—but something strange is going on. She hears eerie laughter at night, and a ghostly woman roams the halls. Who *is* this woman? Why does everyone at Thornfield have a secret? And how will these mysteries change Jane's new life? (Gerver)

Based on this description children should be expecting to hear about Jane's account with the gothic, horror, and not about her struggles to speak and find someone who will listen to what she has to say.

The most useful tool in engaging a young reader is to use illustrations. A graphic novel is advantageous especially when a young person is engaging in a novel that is set in the Victorian era – an era that uses language differently than is used in the present day. Dorothy Wirtz explains, “Graphic illustration lends particularly well . . . to the study of the novel” and that young people might have the tendency “to lose one's way in a long novel” (508-9). Even with the omission of addresses the inclusion of pictures bridges the gap between narrator and reader.

With the omission of Jane's potential listeners is the virtual exclusion of the reader as a character. In the Gerver version of the novel, the reader is only addressed *once*, and that is to say her most famous line: “Reader, I married him” (98). After the horror that Jane has been through at Thornfield Hall it is fitting that she should let her reader know that now she is safe, sound, and happy with Mr. Rochester.

Unfortunately, all of Jane's other trials are completely lost and the reader's involvement is unnecessary. Along with Gerver's *Jane Eyre* is the graphic novel version, where there are NO addresses to the reader – not even to say that she and

Rochester are in wedded bliss. This lack of addresses to the reader is a complete disconnect from the original version of the novel and is much more impersonal. The reason people are so interested in *Jane Eyre* is because they feel a kindred friendship with the writer who keeps speaking directly to them about her struggles as well as her happiness – the reader is a helpful friend. In the abridged versions the reader does not have that role; they are simply entertained.

The most important reason for addresses in each of the three novels is to gain a friend through the reader. Through frequency of addresses, the ways in which the addresses are given by each character, and aspects of Brontë's own life struggles help to determine the characters' need for an understanding and sympathetic friend. Each character ultimately seeks the same response from the reader: love, sympathy, and understanding. Even though Jane, Lucy, and William address their readers in a different manner, Lucy addresses her reader twice over William, and William is much more abrasive in his addresses, each character is granted the reader he or she needs. It is only in the original novels that Jane, Lucy, and William are able to vindicate their sometimes wretched lives and also to bask in the glory of their triumphs with an ideal listener – someone who cares and is not otherwise preoccupied. Rochester, Mr. Paul, and the males in William's family attempt to appease their loved ones but oftentimes fail. They are merely interested in entertainment, are overly critical, or have ulterior motives. It is only the reader who can provide the comfort that the narrator needs without having a hidden agenda. Adaptations of *Jane Eyre* are beneficial for children who have not reached the maturity to read and understand the original text. Though

the adaptations often cannibalize Brontë's original text and alter its meaning, they do follow her attention to constructing readers and predicting reactions for Jane. In this way narrator and reader can continue a beloved relationship that bridges age gaps, and continues the love for a classic novel.

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