

[Studies in Literature]

The “Double Personalities” in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*

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Received: July 14, 2021

Accepted: November 15, 2021

Published: January 31, 2022

To cite this article: WANG Xin. (2021). The “Double Personalities” in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(4), 009–018, DOI: [10.53789/j.1653-0465.2021.0104.002](https://doi.org/10.53789/j.1653-0465.2021.0104.002)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.53789/j.1653-0465.2021.0104.002>

Abstract: In Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Villette*, the protagonist Lucy Snowe is characteristic of double personalities explicitly exhibited in three pairs—sexual desire against self-repression, imagination against reason, and split self of Ginevra Fanshawe against the other-self Paulina Marry. The paper probes into how Brontë uses the contradictory metaphor of “flame” and “frost” to represent Lucy’s double personalities and analyzes how she eventually integrates dualities. Her experience manifests Brontë’s double bind as a female writer. A feminist perspective is adopted to discuss the writer’s inner conflicts between the will to write and female conformity based on her portrayal of Lucy’s double personalities and realistic experiences. It suggests that Charlotte Brontë strives to seek a moderate and compromising integration between social and private identities, male and female lines, as a possible solution to deal with the dilemma of “double bind”.

Keywords: “double personalities”; flame; frost; compromising integration

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1. Introduction

In Charlotte Brontë’s period, women were expected to possess feminine qualities of obedience, submission, meekness and demanded to be devoted to domestic accomplishments featuring house managing and children-feeding; universally acknowledged as “angel in the house”. Therefore, when *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847, the physically unattractive but independent and rebellious heroine changed contemporary readers. Showalter comments on its style as “a volcanic literature of the body as well as of the heart, a sexual and often supernatural world” (2012: 104) and appreciates the writer as “the romantic, the spontaneous artist who ‘pours forth her feelings . . . without premeditation’” (ibid). However, compared to the “volcanic” flowing of emotion in *Jane Eyre*, the later 1853 novel *Villette*, published originally in three volumes, seems to be less radical, which intends

to strike a compromising balance and pursue possible harmony and combination. Lucy Snowe, the protagonist, is possessed with dual personalities with inner “flame” and “frost”. The pair is replete with metaphorical meanings and highly significant to her psychological world and dual personality. The author’s struggle with double bind and efforts in overcoming the dilemma can be better perceived. “Flame” is a metaphor of Lucy’s sexual desire for Graham, imagination, and split self of Ginevra Fanshawe, while “frost”, on the opposite, represents the self-repression of her sexual desire, reason, and the other divided self Paulina Marry. The contradictory pair coexists, pushing her to struggle in a dilemma, leading to a self-division, forcing her to discover her personal and social identity. Investigating Lucy’s double personalities in *Villette* helps further understand Charlotte Brontë’s dual roles as a Victorian woman and a professional writer. It exhibits the universal “double bind” that yokes Victorian female writers and how they strive to make their voice heard under such circumstances. Besides, it provides a refreshing insight into the novel by challenging the traditional view that Charlotte Brontë is a radical and extreme feminist.

As her name “Snowe”, which resembles “snow”, suggests, Lucy Snowe is an orphaned, detached, and taciturn girl. Before the publication of *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë wrote to W. S. Williams, explaining, “...Subsequently I rather regretted the change, and wished it ‘Snowe’ again... A cold name she must have...for she has about her an external coldness” (Brontë 2007: 210). The author’s intention to create a heroine with an unsympathetic character is evident. As her name demands, Lucy Snowe is intentionally designed to be a woman of agony and coldness. In *Villette*, many scenes reaffirm Brontë’s intention of endowing her with an icy character. For instance, on her way alone to London, she reports, “my hair, which, till a late period, withstood the frosts of time, lies now, at last white, under a white cap, like snow beneath the snow” (Brontë 1993: 38). The repetition of “white” and “snow” depicts a cold and tranquil scene and implies her loneliness, loss, and depression. Forced to leave her godmother, Mrs Bretton, she is stranded in a loss of identity. As O’Reilly comments, “Lucy Snowe is a displaced woman, who feels compelled to leave her narrative England to define an independent identification for herself” (1999: 69). The arrival at *Villette* is the starting point of her long journey to explore identity. On the other side, however, she is not without feelings. While reflecting on childhood, she voices, “Oh, my childhood! I had feelings: passive as I lived, little as I spoke, cold as I looked when I thought of past days, I could feel” (Brontë 1993: 99). The announcement of feelings manifests inner flame. The contradictory forces of flame and frost fight against each other, and she must struggle through an arduous journey of striking a balance. Lucy’s double personalities are illustrated from the following aspects.

2. Double Personalities: Flame and Frost

2.1 *Sexual desire against self-repression*

“Flame” is closely related to Lucy Snowe’s sexual desire and passion for John Graham Bretton, while “frost” signals her repression of them. “Flame” as well as “fire” implies her production of turbulent current of feelings. For instance, having recovered from a faint, she recalls that she has suffered “continual thirst”, so she experiences “a craving for nourishment” (Brontë 1993: 159). Then she feels confined to the room and longs for a change: “I wanted to see – to feel firelight” (ibid). She also admits that she keeps thinking of Graham and is

eager to see him.

It should be noted that “continual thirst”, “nourishment”, and “firelight” are beyond literal meanings. “Thirst” is a material figure making Lucy’s feelings for Graham vividly concrete, which reveals her ungratified eagerness and desire for the care and love from Graham. “Firelight” reflects that the desire and attention are burning, and their announcement is fervent. Nevertheless, she refuses to sit close to the hearth under the excuse that “the fire was too hot” and “in its shade, I found another seat which suited me better” (Brontë 1993: 160). Her intentional evasion of fire is an apparent sign of self-control of the desire to meet Graham, which fully displays the contradictory sides of her characters.

Despite the admiration for Graham, she feels inferior to his status. Another moment of her bargain between flame and frost happens when she quarrels with Graham about their different opinions of Ginevra Fanshawe. At first, the girl that attracted Graham is angelic, innocent, and sweet in his vision. Obsessed with her charm, he is so blind not to see any of her defects. Lucy, as an observer, is aware of her coquetting, flirting, and flaunting nature. She grows more impatient, envious, and disturbed with frequent questioning about whether he can win the girl’s preference. She confesses, “Sometimes he harassed me, despite my resolution to bear and hear...he struck so on the flint of what firmness I owned, that it emitted fire once again” (Brontë 1993: 179). “Flint”, initially referring to a piece of rock that can produce spark against steel, indicates the combination of flame and frost. Cold and complex, it corresponds with Lucy’s calm and stubborn characteristics. Graham’s words are like the steel that provokes fire against her firm, flint nature in her heart. “Fire” here signifies a mixed feeling of agony, anger, and jealousy – the agony of failure in winning the love of Graham, anger at his blind attachment to Ginevra, and jealousy of Ginevra’s male-attracting charm.

Additionally, her fire stimulated by Graham is manifested in her response to the loss of his letter. She is driven to a mental collapse: “I panted and pained, almost beside myself” (Brontë 1993: 229). When Graham turns up to comfort her, she feels that “A warm hand, taking my cold fingers, led me down to a room where there was a fire” (Brontë 1993: 230). Appearing along with Graham, fire serves as a metaphor of warmth, light, and hope, which can drag her out of her dark and cold tomb. It also displays Lucy’s yearning to see him and her satisfaction staying with him. To soothe her stressed nerve, Graham promises to write her more letters. While waiting for them, she reports, “I suppose animals kept in cages, and so scantily fed as to be always upon the verge of famine, await their food as I awaited a letter” (Brontë 1993: 249). Brontë compares Lucy’s unsatisfied sexual desire as “famine” resulting from a terrible lack of “food”, which refers to Graham’s letters and implies Graham himself, the salvation for her. “Food functions as an erotic discourse when Brontë uses it to metaphorically represent Lucy’s sexual identity” (Tanke 2006: 45). Graham awakens Lucy’s sexual appetite and craving for love and companionship.

Regarding Lucy’s feelings for Graham, Glen explains in “*Shirley and Villette*”, “He appears within Lucy’s narrative not merely as a figure of all that she lacks and longs for – beauty, confidence, felicity, prosperity, emotional assurance – but also as the dazzling object of annihilating unreturned desire” (2002: 145). Though it was theoretically possible to write female physical experiences, as Showalter discovers, Victorian women faced many obstacles against self-expression. They were taught to keep these experiences and forbidden to share them with men (2012: 81). In this sense, for Brontë, “flame” functions as a metaphorical image to represent female sexual desire under the yoke of social taboos.

2.2 *Imagination against reason*

The conflict between “flame” and “frost” is also a metaphor for Lucy’s struggle between imagination and reason, manifested in two pairs: the biblical figures Jael and Sisera; the two Greek mythology beauties Vashti and Cleopatra.

Lucy’s sexual desire for Graham and its self-repression is part of her imagination and reason, which accords with “flame” and “frost”. The rebellious desire is personified in Sisera and the rational in Jael, in line with the Biblical narrative that Jael kills Sisera when he sleeps and drives a nail through his temple. The biblical allusion of the victimizer Jael is inscribed in many nineteenth-century fictions to imply female power and creativity. In *Villette*, Brontë reveals Lucy’s inner conflict between the desire for freedom and conformity by employing Jael and Sisera “as a motif for metaphorical purposes, to plumb the psychological complexities of the character of the protagonist” (Wallhead 2001: 152). Isolated in a foreign country and trapped in the oppressive environment of Madame Beck’s school, Lucy undergoes “an identity crisis that pits her authentic or natural emotional self against her passionless social self” (O’Reilly H. 1999: 72). As reflected in her account, “Tonight, I was not so mutinous, nor so miserable. My Sisera lays quiet in the tent, slumbering” (Brontë 1993: 99). Her slumbering Sisera identifies with the self-incarceration of imagination or the passionate private self. Unlike the biblical victim Sisera, however, her Sisera does not die instead; it is “transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench” (ibid). It can be seen that the spirit of the victimizer Jael and victim Sisera coexist in her feelings, imposing her to balance between yearnings and self-imprisonment. “Curiously, Sisera does not die in Lucy’s vision, and this suggests that her yearnings to escape mental and almost total physical imprisonment are only curbed, not eliminated” (Wallhead 2001: 154). This is further proved in her following behavior. Despite the earnest desire for Graham’s letters, she deprives herself of kindling the fire of imagination and enjoying the delight. She is tortured by inner frost: “Reason still whispered me, laying on my shoulder a withered hand, and frostily touching my ear with the chill blue lips of eld” (Brontë 1993: 214). The fear that libidinal desires will possess her to overcome the burning imagination, so she writes two different answers in response to Graham’s letters, one of which is for her “own relief”, the other for “Graham’s perusal” (Brontë 1993: 236) and sends the second one. In addition to a desire for freedom, the material of biblical origin functions as the writer’s particular way of expressing her repressed writing will. Showalter found evidence of Brontë’s efforts to overcome the wish to write in a letter to Robert Southey for advice in pursuing her career, in which Southey was more than discouraging. She pointed Brontë emphasized her intensive desire to write even when teaching or sewing. Brontë’s imagination and talents are the slumbering Sisera, deliberately curbed and concealed but always prepared to awaken.

Apart from Jael and Sisera, Brontë’s “double bind” between the will to write and its repression is manifested in Lucy’s different attitudes to another pair, Vashti and Cleopatra. Her simmering rebellion is exhibited in the feverish attitude to the theatrical figure Vashti, who in history was a Persian queen renowned for beauty and was punished for her refusal to attend King Ahasuerus’s banquet; thus rejected by the Victorian society because of her unconventionality and inappropriateness. However, what Lucy observes in the actress is “the shadow of a royal Vashti: a queen, fair as the day once” (Brontë 1993: 240), and she discovers that the queen “wasted like wax inflame” (ibid), which symbolizes overwhelming energy, passion, enthusiasm, and impulse. Vashti strikes Lu-

cy not only as a beauty but also as an admiring artist excellent in performance on the stage with “astonished hope and hushed desire” (Brontë 1993: 242). However, she is disappointed that Graham only feels Vashti’s physical charm, for he “judged her as a woman, not an artist” (ibid). His cold attitude to the actress suggests their differences, which might account for his failure in interacting with Lucy spiritually. Here Brontë seems to suggest Victorian women writers’ talents were ignored by sexually biased male critics the same way as Vashti’s artistic gifts are denied by Graham. Showalter reveals that, between 1847 and 1875, most criticism “employed a double standard for men’s and women’s writing and seemed shocked or chagrined by individual women’s failures to conform to the stereotype” (2012: 76). Therefore, Brontë protests in claiming her identity as a writer, “I come before you as an author only” (qtd. in Showalter 96). The will to write and ambition to be treated relatively get so intense that during Vashti’s performance, Brontë deliberately sets the theatre on fire, “‘Fire’ rang through the gallery. ‘Fire!’ was repeated, reechoed, yelled forth” (1993: 243). The fire episode displays that “the rebellious passion of Vashti spills off the stage and manifests its power and danger” (Cosslett 1988: 44) and serves as a literary strategy to pour out the sincere feelings of writing freely. Gilbert and Gubar explain Vashti’s rebellion as a heroic tragedy built on the expense of death (1979: 423), so it is undoubtedly destructive to conventional womanhood. Paulina is hurt by the fire and faints in the riveting scene, which testifies the angelic, conventional delicate figure’s vulnerability in the face of rebellion. It also implies Showalter’s statement that the conflict between art and self-exposure leads to many Victorian women novelists suffering from sickness and headache; for instance, Geraldine Jewsbury fell ill each time she completed a book and finally gave up writing fiction on her doctor’s orders (2012: 81–82). Brontë’s repression of the will to write and conformity to female gentility can be further found in Lucy’s negative attitude to the portrait of Cleopatra. Although her pretentious physical features amaze Lucy, the “gypsy-giant” (Brontë 1993: 188) is more of a temptress of sensuality, evilness, and rebellion. It explains why Lucy considers her gesture of lying on the couch too casual and inappropriate. Brontë uses the biblical figures Jael and Sisera and the two beauties, Vashti and Cleopatra, to allude to the conflicting forces of imagination against reason, and writing will play against self-repression. She suggests imagination and the will to write could be potentially dangerous since Jael murders while Vashti causes fire in the theatre; therefore, the victim Sisera is also alive in Lucy’s heart to achieve equilibrium. In *Villette*, what Brontë endeavors to present is a moderate comprise of the conflicting forces of imagination and reason rather than an extreme elimination of female constrictions.

2.3 *Split selves: Ginevra Fanshawe and Paulina Marry*

The coexistence of “flame” and “frost” can also be found in Lucy’s split selves, which are respectively represented by two distinctive female figures, Ginevra Fanshawe and Paulina Mary. Ginevra is her alter-ego on the “flame” side, namely her self-gratifying, sensual and romantic side. First, compared with Paulina’s delicate, soft, and tender beauty, Ginevra’s attributes are plump, pink, and flaxen, while Lucy maintains a negative attitude to the wild and rough beauty of Ginevra. Despite this, she is bitterly envious of her charm to attract John and her excellent appetite for food. For some reason unknown, she is ready to share food with Ginevra. While sharing, she feels “never alienated” (Brontë 1993: 218). As discussed earlier, food symbolizes female sexual desire; therefore, her willingness to share food with Ginevra indicates her repressed hunger and admiration for equal male attention with the latter.

Furthermore, her feeling of being “never alienated” suggests the integration of their identities, which further demonstrates that Ginevra is her half self of flame. On the contrary, the other divided self of frost is represented by Paulina Marry, who is self-controlled and self-commanded. Evidence of Paulina’s frosty characteristic can be found in the description of her bedroom, which is “like snow-drift and mist” (Brontë 1993: 246). Here “snow” implies the traditional feminine icy side of both Paulina and Lucy. Another vital proof is that Paulina is suddenly driven to a faint by the fire set on the theatre where Vashti performs. The unconventional, passionate, rebellious, and fire-like Vashti is undoubtedly the enemy of conventional, obedient, and frost-like Paulina. She has the frosty trait and shares the same identity with Lucy.

There are many signs that Paulina is expressing Lucy’s oppressed feelings. For instance, confronted with Paulina’s control of her complicated feelings of reuniting with her father, Lucy says, “I wished she could utter some hysterical cry so that I might get relief and be at ease” (Brontë 1993: 9). She is experiencing Paulina’s repressed agony and grudge as if they were her own. Another example is Lucy’s reveal of a scene between her and little Polly, which she has concealed before. Once, she takes tiny Paulina home and passes a portrait of Graham, “a youth of sixteen, fair-complexioned... with a sunny sheen; penetrating eyes, an arch mouth, and a gay smile” (Brontë 1993: 157), a portrait attractive to romantic schoolgirls.

Nevertheless, Lucy discovers a hidden pain in the charming and delicately curved face. Out of curiosity, she asks Paulina her opinion of the portrait, and the latter does not answer for a while, but “at last a darkness went trembling through her sensitive eye” (Brontë 1993: 158). Therefore, she knows “the child feels it too” (ibid). Here “Lucy reveals a hidden kinship with Polly’s obsessive admiration, and her capacity to be hurt by him (Graham)” (Cosslett 1988: 42). Both fall in love with Graham and thus share empathy. The integration of their identities happens when Paulina cannot fall asleep at the painful thought of parting with Graham. Unlike other children, the little creature is mature, calm, independent, and self-disciplined, but that night she places absolute trust in Lucy and depends on her like a “ghost”. The word “ghost” depicts their combination of identities. As her name suggests, Paulina is the female form of Paul, the only man capable of comprehending and appreciating Lucy. Therefore, it makes sense that she is the only female that can read her. Lucy also feels, “If anyone knew me, it was little Paulina Mary” (Brontë 1993: 281). With all her sensual and romantic characteristics, Ginevra Fanshawe represents Lucy Snowe’s divided flame self, while tender, soft, and docile Paulina Mary represents her split frost self.

3. Integration of Lucy’s Dual Identities

The self-division of Lucy Snowe demands her to take on dual identities – social identity as Paulina and personal identity as Ginevra. On social occasions, she shows her frosty side and appears as a self-disciplined, independent, and confident teacher in Madame Beck’s girl school. At the same time, privately, she has the flame of desire, imagination, and rebellion. Curious about her identity, Ginevra once questions her, “Who are you, Miss Snowe?” (Brontë 1993: 287). She answers with a mocking tone, “Who I am I indeed? Perhaps a personage in disguise” (Brontë 1993: 288). As is shown, she does not deny the duality of her personality. Meanwhile, she strives to integrate the two identities and discover a new self.

The turning point of her incorporation of “flame” and “frost” happens after the fire in the theatre of Vashti.

The passionate, rebellious fire has hurt Paulina but transformed her into “a lamp chastely lucent, guarding against extinction, yet not hiding from worship, a flame vital and vestal” (Brontë 1993: 57). It is the first and the only time when “flame” is used to describe Paulina, seemingly contradictory to her original image as “frost”. However, one can feel her flame-like passionate affection for Graham later. Thus, it indicates that Paulina has learned to combine “flame” and “frost”, which is simultaneously what happens to Lucy Snowe. As Cosslett argues, “Vashti is also a warning to her of the self-destruction caused by female rebellion: Paulina can therefore be seen as a new self-image for Lucy, combining ‘fire’ and ‘ice’” (1988: 45). The integration of identities is a tremendous advance in her journey of finding her own, during which Paul Emanuel plays an essential role besides Paulina. He bears a physical resemblance to Lucy, but he also shares spiritual similarities. He claims Lucy to be his sister, “I was conscious of rapport between you and myself...we are alike – there is affinity” (Brontë 1993: 343). The shared “rapport”, as proved later, transcends the gap in their characters, nationality, and Protestant and Catholic creeds. Paul is the only man to see Lucy’s inner fire under her icy expression with sharp insight. He claims to have observed her hidden passion and saw “flame” in her glance. He observes her meticulously and even pries into her most private space – the desk. Lucy feels that “that hand of M. Emanuel’s was on the most intimate terms with my desk...ransacked and arranged the contents, almost as familiarly as my own” (1993: 321). The desk in her bedroom symbolizes the most secret place; hence Paul’s invasion of it indicates their spiritual consummation. Paul “with all his fire” for Lucy releases her caged passion and desire. He has lifted her from seeking physical desire to pursuing spiritual satisfaction.

In contrast to Graham’s letters, those of Paul’s are “real food that nourished, living water that refreshed” (Brontë 1993: 461). Lucy finally achieves the combination of flame and frost under his influence. Crosby maintains the most significant victory of *Villette* lies in “Lucy’s achievement of integration, a synthesis of her divided self, passion and reason, of heart and mind, of the sensible (sensual) and the intelligible” (2013: 126).

The above discussion endeavors to prove that Charlotte Brontë’s way of confronting female “double bind” is a compromised combination of dual identities to achieve possible harmony. Her attempt can be further explored in her cross-dressing in the school drama. She is assigned emergently to play a male role of a dude. She initially shows extreme disgust and rejection to the character, deliberately stigmatizing him as “emptiness, frivolity, and falsehood” (Brontë 1993: 124) and tries to avenge him by acting fatuitous. She adamantly refuses to dress up entirely as a male; however, urged by the pressure of Paul, she finally agrees to put on male clothes, but keeps her female underwear, “retaining my woman’s garb without the slightest retrenchment, I merely assumed in addition, a little vest, a collar, and cravat, and a paletot of small dimensions” (1993: 127). Lucy’s behavior of rejecting the male character and being dressed up is influenced by traditional gender norms, which regard cross-dressing as inappropriate for virtuous Victorian women. However, Brontë unexpectedly shifts Lucy’s attitude after she is disguised. Her former disgust and hatred are transformed into the desire and ambition on the stage to win over the male rival and win the heart of the leading female – Ginevra. She not only presents the original character but endows him with her creativity: The way she makes love to Ginevra and competition against another female character exhibits entirely masculine qualities; moreover, she changes the traits of the male character, turning the playboy into a knight-errant and creating her ideal stage role. She even acquires a sense of pleasure and value from this, “Without heart, without interest, I could not play it at all. It must be played – in went the yearned for reasoning – thus flavoured, I played it with relish” (Brontë 1993: 129). According to Butler, “the

notion of an original or primary identity is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing” (1999: 174). Lucy blurs male and female lines and challenges traditional gender stereotypes in the theatrical performance through the parody of masculine identity, temporarily reversing from object to the principal subject in a patriarchal culture. Her dressing up and disguising opens new space for gender mobility, making it possible to reset the context; as Butler maintains, “This perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization” (1999: 176).

Moreover, Lucy obtains a sense of freedom and rebellious spirit through cross-dressing. The shadows of British women writers in the 19th century, from Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters to George Eliot, can be observed. The female artists put on male covers and make comic parodies of masculine authority, attempting to show their artistic independence in this way. Nevertheless, Lucy’s cross-dressing is based on keeping her female costume, indicating that she only blurs gender boundaries and seeks coexistence instead of a radical rebellion against male authority. The stage provides her with a chance to manifest artistic passion. However, it is only temporary, for immediately after the performance, she returns to her previous alienated and isolated situation, “... but it would not do for a mere looker-on at life: the strength and longing must be put by” (Brontë 1993: 129). Her statement manifests Brontë’s compromised and ambivalent attitude: While appreciating her heroine’s quest for independence, she seems to keep a distance deliberately from doing the same.

4. Charlotte Brontë’s Double Bind

The contradictory metaphors of “flame” and “frost” offer an approach to exploring the psychological world of Lucy Snowe, who eventually achieves an integration of dualities. Compared to the radical, volcanic pouring out of feelings in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë in *Villette* is inclined to seek a life of balance and moderation by exhibiting conflicting forces. Her changed attitude is affected by real-life experiences.

As the autobiographical heroine of *Villette*, Lucy Snowe is partially a mirror of the writer. Before the publication of *Villette*, especially from late 1848 through 1852, Brontë suffered a series of death of her siblings, the first of which was her brother Patrick Branwell. His death, to some degree, brought her certain peace and deliverance considering his self-destructive conduct in the manhood. Unfortunately, at the heel of Branwell’s death came the illness of Emily Brontë, who refused stubbornly to accept medical treatment and thus put Charlotte into a miserable struggle. In less than one year, the youngest sister Anne Brontë died, the most devastating trauma. Their death brought terrible emptiness and loneliness to her, as she confessed in a letter to Ellen Nussey: “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” (Brontë 2007: 139). We can see how she was tortured and imprisoned by the bereavement of a family death. The same solitude can be found in Lucy Snowe, who also suffers family death and confines herself. The disconnection with the living world worsens Brontë’s identity crisis, accounting for why she arranges the isolated protagonist to struggle with flame and frost. Other female characters in *Villette* also suffer enormous pains: Mrs Bretton and Madame Beck are widowed; Miss Marchmont witnesses the death of her beloved man Frank; and Paul’s ex-lover Justine Marie is dead. The writer’s loving experience was not satisfying, neither. In the years before and during the writing of *Villette*, Charlotte kept a close relationship with the young English publisher George Smith, who was probably the model for Graham Bret-

ton. He much attracted her, but he was against marriage. Like Lucy, she had hoped and tried but had to accept her failure.

The pains caused by the loss of siblings and the unpromising love relationship might have contributed to the gloomy, darkened atmosphere and the contradictory traits of Lucy Snowe in *Villette*. Another essential factor, as discussed earlier, lies in Charlotte Brontë's dilemma as a female writer. In her time, women writers were confronted with a complicated situation. As Showalter points out, "to their contemporaries, nineteenth-century women writers were women first, artists second" (2012: 73). It reveals sexually biased criticism of women writers and their dilemma of dual identities. One way of dealing with the dilemma, as she examines, is to adopt male aliases, "A woman novelist, unless she disguised herself with a male pseudonym, had to expect critics to focus on her femininity and rank her with the other women writers of her day" (ibid). As usually known, George Eliot is the pseudonym of Marian Evans; Charlotte Brontë publishes works under cover of a series of masculine names, including Charles Thunder, Charles Townsend, and Captain Tree. Brontë could be quite radical towards attacks on woman novelists at an early age, as shown in the case that she once wrote directly to the critic of the *Economist* in protest and claimed her identity as neither man nor woman but an author only. The firm self-assertion of her identity as an author only manifests her strong "will to write" and desire to be judged fairly as a writer, regardless of which, she still attempted to delay the publication of *Villette* to avoid being specially treated by male critics and compared with peer woman writers. Brontë's conflict was rarely found in women writers of her time: They yearned for individual achievement and expressed intensely of the desire to accomplish genuine excellence, but the possibility of appearing "unwomanly" was constant anxiety and irritant. Showalter remarks, "Victorian feminine novelists thus found themselves in a double bind" (2012: 21). Specifically, they were confronted with conflicting urges of the will to write and female conformity, resistance, and obedience, passion, and repression. To overcome the anxiety of a double bind, Brontë unremittingly strives for conciliation between dual identities, as weaved in the life of her protagonist Lucy Snowe.

5. Conclusion

The paper has discussed how Lucy Snowe's double personalities are manifested through the metaphorical pair of "flame" and "frost" explored the reasons contributing to the protagonist's duality and the profound meanings behind it in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*. It has elaborated on the threefold meanings of "flame" and "frost". Through digging into the above three aspects, the protagonist's psychological world, Charlotte Brontë's intention to compose, and her situation as a female writer can be perceived. We can conclude from the analyzed details that one possible solution to acquire a whole and complete self for Brontë might be the moderate integration of social and private identities and the blurring of male and female lines, as her protagonist Lucy endeavors to seek a moderate and compromising integration between double personalities. When Showalter states *Jane Eyre* as a pouring out of feelings, it is a pity that she does not continue with an investigation of *Villette*, which is not correspondent with the writer's previous "volcanic" style. Instead, *Villette* attempts to balance, compromise, and pursue possible harmony. In this sense, it presents a complete image of Charlotte Brontë.

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(Editor: Joe Zhang)