The presentation of Lucy Westenra

Look at the following quotations, which are all either said by or about Lucy, prior to her transformation. Mark them as ‘P’ or ‘N’ depending on whether you think they contribute to a positive or a negative presentation of the character.

‘Why can’t they let a girl marry three men, or as many want her.’ (Chapter 5 p.81)

‘I couldn’t help feeling a sort of exultation that he was number two in one day.’ (Chapter 5 p.80)

‘so I leant over and kissed him’ (Chapter 5 p.81)

‘Lucy met me at the station, looking sweeter and lovelier than ever.’ (Chapter 6 p.85)

Lucy is asleep and breathing softly. She has more colour in her cheeks than usual, and looks, oh, so sweet. (Chapter 8 p.118)

‘I wanted no witness of poor Lucy’s condition.’ (Chapter 8 p.120)

‘She was breathing – not softly, as usual with her, but in long, heavy gasps’ (Chapter 8 p.121)

‘I was filled with anxiety for Lucy…for her reputation in case the story should get wind.’ (Chapter 8 p.122)

‘the fresh breeze had braced her up, and her pale cheeks were really more rosy.’ (Chapter 8 p.130)

‘Oceans of love and millions of kisses’ (Chapter 9 p.140)

Now look back over the quotations and identify where sexualised language or ideas are employed in the creation of the character.
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A key moment: Lucy sleepwalks

Re-read Mina’s description of finding Lucy sleepwalking on the cliffs of Whitby (from the beginning of chapter 8 to ‘Lucy is sleeping soundly’).

Identify where:

a) Mina shows antipathy to the idea of the ‘New Woman’

b) It is suggested that Mina is already too late to save Lucy

c) Lucy’s body is presented in an erotic manner

d) Lucy is presented as being sexually aroused

e) A woman’s reputation is presented as crucial

f) Lucy is presented as pure

g) Mina is presented as modest.

Consider: How is sexuality explicitly connected with death in this passage?

A second key moment: Lucy retells her sleepwalking

This is from Mina’s journal of 18 August, contained in chapter 8.

a) Why might Lucy describe the sensation of being bitten as ‘something very sweet and very bitter all around me at once’?

b) Where is it hinted that Lucy is already lost?

c) Where do we sense that Lucy is excited by the retelling of the dream?

Pulling it all together:

Which of these words describe Lucy, and which describe Mina?

Virginal  Selfish  Superficial  Innocent

Sexualised  Punished  Vain  Worldly

Flirtatious  Rewarded  Immature  Eroticised

Modest  Virtuous  Frivolous  Serious