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**A comparative Study between Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) and**

**And Taos Amrouche's *Jacinthe Noire* (1947)**

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## **Dedications**

To my dear parents and siblings;  
my lovely nephew and adorable niece,  
my colleagues and friends

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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates the autobiographical discourse in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) and Taos Amrouche's *Jacinthe Noire* (1947) through a comparison of various aspects of the two narratives. This study relies on Philip Leujene's 'autobiographical pact' that delineates the scope of the autobiography genre and provides the necessary material to distinguish it from the autobiographical novel and other literary forms. The analysis also resorts to Elizabeth R. Baer Dean's "The Journey Inward: Women's Autobiography" which perceives women's autobiography as an outward and inward journey to remember, reflect or reveal truth within themselves. This dissertation aims to demonstrate that the two writers appeal to the autobiographical writing to provide a deep insight into their inner lives and convey their perception of feminine identities as freed from patriarchal worldview and ostracism. This work contains three chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to the exploration of the socio-political contexts in the narratives. The second chapter retraces the inward and outward journeys undertaken by the two protagonists in their quests of self-fulfilment. The third chapter tackles the representation of the writers' identity through their fictional doubles. As a conclusion, it is found that, though the two novels belong to two different literary traditions and backgrounds, they convey women's need to share their experiences in order to make their voices audible.

**Key Words:** Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Taos Amrouche's *Jacinthe Noire*, autobiography, autobiographical novel, identity

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## **I- General Introduction**

Women's urging need to express their joys, frustrations, and social unease in a prompt way, leads them to the adoption of the autobiographical writing as a medium to expose their public and private experiences, reflect their inner life and convey their personal genius. The recourse to this literary genre allows them to make truthful records of their personal lives and achievements in an attempt to counter social discrimination and redress their positions in societies governed by harsh social norms and conventions.

Among the writers who have relied on this genre to recollect their self-identity through the modeling of their main characters on their own persons and by making them fit their experiences and personal life-stories stand out the English novelist Charlotte Brontë and the Algerian French writer Margerite Taos Amrouche. In their autobiographical novels, respectively *Villette* (1853) and *Jacinthe Noire* (1947), they use the autobiographical narrative to spot light on their fictional doubles' quest for self-fulfillment and accomplishment in their respective environments, and the different obstacles they have to surmount to fulfill their aspirations. The two aforesaid autobiographical novels are interesting because they shed light on two important contexts: the Victorian period with its prevailing patriarchal norms on the women's life governance for *Villette* and the French colonial period with its perception of the colonized women for *Jacinthe Noire*.

### **Review of Literature**

From the catholic tradition of confession to the art of introspection, autobiography has made its way through time to become an established classical literary genre. It is scholarly acknowledged that Saint Augustin, the founder of the western confessional writing, has been the first to set the broad parameters of autobiography in his renowned *Confessions* (397-401)

through which he has exposed his youthful sins and conversion to Christianity without hesitation.<sup>1</sup> Autobiography is a means of ‘self-expression’ springing from the individual’s life that succeeds to capture the readers’ interest and enhance their eagerness to know the personal life of autobiographers for whom “it [autobiographical writing] offers an ideal scope for satisfying that human urge and quest and curiosity about human nature.”<sup>2</sup>

The word ‘autobiography’ derives from three Greek words auto-bios- graphein meaning “self-life-writing”, and is commonly thought to have been coined by Robert Southy in 1809 to describe the work of a Portuguese poet, Francisco Viera.<sup>3</sup> Though the tradition of autobiography has been around many centuries earlier, it has only been since World War II, when formal analysis of all branches of literature flourished, that autobiography began receiving consideration. Hence onward great interest has been granted to this literary genre which has become a major subject of study and research in the twentieth century when two major bibliographies of autobiography were published: William Matthew’s *British Autobiography: An Annotated Bibliography of British Autobiographies Published or Written Before 1951* (1955) and Louis Kaplan’s *A Bibliography of American Autobiography* (1962). Surprisingly, these works make abstraction of many important autobiographies by women and pay little attention to them.

Adopting the same tendencies as their male counterparts, women didn’t withstand apart and used to write autobiographies and *The Book of Margery Kempe* is considered by some critics as the first English autobiography by a woman.<sup>4</sup> It was dictated in the early 1400 by a woman who could neither read nor write and recounts Margaret Kempe’s life from childbirth till her descent into madness passing by her religious and mundane life.<sup>5</sup> The manuscript was lost during centuries and its rediscovery in 1934 permitted the revalorization of the tradition of women autobiography.

Like Kempe's autobiography, many women's life stories have been written but unfortunately most of their writings were said to be 'unimportant, crude or illegitimate'<sup>6</sup> by almost all male critics. To illustrate this tendency to denigrate women's autobiographies and their relegation to non-important and trivial texts, Linda Anderson gives the example of Kate Millet's *Flying* (1979) qualified by a hostile male critic as being "Insignificant"<sup>7</sup>. The non-recognition and absence of women's text from accepted canon autobiographical writing created a gap for critical studies around this subject.

Until recently, women's autobiographies were considered unworthy because their lives were perceived as being dull and boring compared to those of well-known war heroes, statesmen and philosophers.<sup>8</sup> Estelle C. Jelinek supports this idea in one of her studies by stating that gender is a prominent factor in determining the relevance of an autobiography:

As men these women's experiences would be described in heroic or exceptional terms; alienation, initiation, manhood, neurosis, transformation, guilt, identity crisis and spiritual journeys. As women their experiences are viewed in more conventional terms; heartbreak, loneliness, anger, motherhood, humility, confusion and self-abnegation.<sup>9</sup>

The growing interest in women's literature in the 1960s led to the assertion of women's autobiographies importance and many studies have been conducted by feminist critics to demonstrate that women display various ways and strategies in writing the self and life experiences. Many theorists of women's autobiography including Patricia Meyer Spacks (1975), Estelle C. Jelinek (1980), Susan Stanford Friedman (1988) and others are amongst those who have contributed to fulfill this acknowledgement.

In her book *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography from Antiquity to the Present* (1986), Estelle C. Jelinek asserts that women's autobiography may be distinguished from men's autobiography in three different ways. The first one relies in the fact that women's autobiography tends to focus on their personal lives (family, friends and domestic matters) rather than on issues and matters of their society during their time. The second particularity is



their writing style which is characterized by the use of irony, humor and understatement to convey straightforward information. The third difference is related to the structure of their text which is fragmentary, rarely chronological and mostly organized into chapters that could stand alone.<sup>10</sup>

Some women feel the urge to write their autobiographies and share their experiences for varied motives and reasons. Through the narration of their own stories, they undertake the task of gathering with scrutiny scattered elements of their individual lives to instruct future generations about their positions and dilemmas during their time. The reconstitution of their identities mirrors their struggles toward self-accomplishment and assertion amongst male dominated cultures. The recollection of their journeys allows them to purge themselves from fear, frustration and remorse and relieve their memories.

Writing autobiographies allows women to define themselves as individuals far from biases and images fostered about them by society. It displays women's testimonies about their era and their commitment to redress the women's position in society. Autobiography is used by women as a kind of stand to express their aspirations and future prospects. Regardless their aim or motives, autobiographies attract large numbers of readers and critics eager to know more about the writer's ups and downs through the course of his or her life.

The motives to write autobiographies vary from one writer to another, nevertheless sometimes novelistic disguise may be necessary to preserve the writers' privacy and their acquaintance hence the recourse to autobiographical novel. Unlike the autobiography, which focuses on the reviewing of a life from a particular moment in time, the autobiographical novel is partially fiction. It is based on the recreation of some autobiographical events that are rendered more dramatic to accomplish specific artistic and thematic purposes. Its protagonist must be modeled after the author to evolve in a plotline that reflects and mirrors his or her life. It is based on the merging of autobiography and fictional elements, tells of circumstances

that occur outside the range of the author's direct experience and invites the reader to identify himself/herself with the hero and reduces the distance subsisting between the reader and the writer.<sup>10</sup>

### **Issue and Working Hypothesis**

Relying on the cultural, social and political affinities subsisting between colonial Algeria and Victorian England, this dissertation intends to bring into perspective Brontë's and Amrouche's respective autobiographical novels, *Villette* and *Jacinthe Noire*. The purpose of this comparison is twofold: one, to study how each writer uses the fictional autobiography; two, to follow each main character on the path of selfhood and emancipation. Thus our analysis will demonstrate that the two writers use the fictional autobiography as a tool to provide a deep insight into their inner lives and convey their perception of feminine identities freed from patriarchal worldview and ostracism.

### **Methodological Outline**

To deal with the above issue, this study relies on Philip Lejeune's perception of autobiography as a retrospective self-narrating and his 'autobiographical pact' (1971) that delineates the scope of the genre and provides necessary material to distinguish autobiography from the autobiographical novel and other literary forms. It also resorts to Elizabeth R. Baer Dean's "The Journey Inward: Women's Autobiography" (1987) that perceives women's autobiographies as inward journeys of recollection to retrace their identity quest. The justification of Dean's approach on autobiographical writing lies in the way her depiction of women's autobiography as an inward as well as outward journey is reflected in both Brontë's and Amrouche's narratives.

In addition to an introduction, method and materials, and a conclusion the research paper is divided into three chapters. The first chapter consists of the analysis of the contexts in which the two protagonists evolve and the use of the first person narrative "I" by Brontë and

Amrouche to confirm the autobiographical dimension of their texts. The second chapter is dedicated to the resistance emitted by the two protagonists to counter Patriarchal and colonial domination. The third chapter tackles the reflection of the authors' sense of identity on their fictional doubles.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, s.v 'Les Confessions (Saint Augustin),' (Accessed August 19, 2019), <https://fr.wikipedia.org>

<sup>2</sup> D.G.Naik, *Art of Autobiography*, Pune:Vidarbha Marathwada Book Company, 1962.p.10. qtd. In S.D.Sargar. "Autobiography as a Literary Genre"-Galax: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal, January 2013.

<<https://www.galaxyimrj.com> >

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, Lynda R. *Autobiography*. New Critical Idiom. New York: Rutledge, 2011; p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, s.v. "Margery Kempe," (accessed August19, 2019), <https://fr.wikipedia.org> .

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, Lynda R. *Autobiography*. New Critical Idiom. New York: Rutledge, 2011; p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.81.

<sup>8</sup> Jelinek, Estelle C. *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography From Antiquity to the Present*. Woodbridge: Twayne publishers, 1986; p.28. < <http://books.google.dz>>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.54.

<sup>10</sup> Roy, Pascal. 'The Autobiographical Novel and The Autobiography'. On Essays in Criticism, Volume IX (April 1959), Pages 134-150; p.135.

<<http://academic.oup.com/article-pdf> > (accessed August 19, 2019)

## **II- Method and Materials**

### **II-1 Theoretical Framework**

Since we are dealing with a comparative study between two autobiographical novels, we think it suitable to provide a general overview of the genre by defining it, emphasizing its characteristics and explaining its main motives.

#### **Autobiography: Definition and Characteristics**

Autobiography, one of the most important and popular literary forms, has been around many centuries earlier but its recognition as a literary genre came in the late eighteenth century. The term “autobiography” derives from three Greek words auto-bios- graphein meaning “self-life-writing. Great interest is granted to this literary genre which has become a major subject of study and researches in the twentieth century when attempts to define it, specify its characteristics and classify its motives are often made.

A multitude of definitions have been proposed by scholars to define “autobiography” and limit its scope. In 1970s Philippe Lejeune, a French theorist and scholar on autobiography, came with one of the most acknowledged and quoted definitions of autobiography: “[a] retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality”<sup>1</sup>. From this definition we infer that an autobiography is a written self account about one’s own experiences and development of personality. As he was unsatisfied with this broad functional definition, Lejeune states that there must be “identity between the author, the narrator and the protagonist” in a work to be classified as an “autobiography”<sup>2</sup> This means that the author should share the same identity with both the narrator and protagonist to be an autobiographer in other words a literary work can be recognized as an autobiography only if it respects the equation: the writer =the narrator= the protagonist.

The autobiography genre instigates many debates around its nature and particularity but there is consent on a set of common characteristics that should be associated to a literary work in order to be recognized as an autobiography.<sup>3</sup> These features include the identity of the self, the grammatical perspective of the work, and introspection.

According to the online Cambridge Dictionary, introspection is the examination of and attention to your own ideas, thoughts and feelings.<sup>4</sup> It implies the displaying of past events experienced by the self and the recollection of their impacts on one's life evolvement and progress. Most autobiographies are a form of introspection through which authors narrate and evaluate events occurred in their lives to grasp their significance and share it with their readers.

The grammatical perspective is the recourse to the first person singular 'I' in the narrating process. It is a common practice in most autobiographies. Its use is quite judicious because an autobiography deals with the story telling of one's own life, an eye witness record of one's life written by the author himself or herself; hence the writer cannot recount his or her past using a second or third person perspective even if it is not excluded. In his book *The Grammar of Autobiography* (2000), Jean Quigley supports this idea and states that "as soon as we are asked about ourselves, to tell our autobiography, we start to tell stories. We tell what happened; what we said, what we did."<sup>5</sup>

The identity of the self is linked to the "autobiographical pact" proposed by Philip Lejeune. The pact states that the author, the narrator and the protagonist must share the same identity in a work to be recognized as an autobiography. This pact is a "contract based on an intention to honor the signature"<sup>6</sup> and implies that the author and both the protagonist and narrator share a common identity which could be similar but non-identical as the author may use a pseudonym instead of his or her real name and change some details (the setting, the circumstances...) while relating facts of her or his life but once this contract is sealed the he or

she should stick to truth and only truth and honor the readers' trust. The self that the author constructs is projected within a story through a character. This story may not be a completely factual representation of the author's actual past self.<sup>7</sup>

### **Subdivisions Within the Autobiography Genre**

Despite authors' eagerness to produce accurate autobiographies, most of their enterprises fail because of their inability to describe events of their lives objectively. Bates thinks that 'there is in fact, no dividing line between autobiography and fiction'<sup>8</sup> the writing of an autobiography may be encroached by the author's subjectivity and the intrusion of some fictional elements to be a selective reconstruction of the ruminative past. The mingling of the factual and fictional elements has led to the creation of a subdivision within the genre of autobiography, the autobiographical novel.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike the autobiography, which focuses on the reviewing of a life from a particular moment in time, the autobiographical novel is partially fiction and does not fulfill "the autobiographical pact". It is based on the recreation of some autobiographical events that are rendered more dramatic to accomplish specific artistic and thematic purposes. Its protagonist must be modeled after the author to evolve in a plotline that reflects and mirrors his or her life. It is based on the merging of autobiography and fictional elements known as "autofiction".

Autofiction is a neologism coined by Serge Doubrovsky, a French author in 1977 to refer to his novel "*Fils*". In his attempt to qualify his novel, Doubrovsky states : « un rêve à la place je mets quoi a book bien sur substitut c'est pas le produit d'origine c'est pas du vrai c'est de l'ersatz [...] mais un livre c'est jamais réel c'est comme un rêve m'inscrire en livre c'est m'inscrire en FAUX même si c'est une vraie vie qu'on raconte c'est qu'une fiction [...] on y croit ça dit vrai mais en FABLE. »<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, autofiction is a form of fictionalized autobiography combining two narrative forms, autobiography and fiction. It is used purposely

to recount an author's life by recourse to the third person narrative (he or she). It is the use of fiction in the service of a search for a self.

In his book *On Autobiography*, Philip Lejeune states that: "all the methods that autobiography uses to convince us of the authenticity of its narrative can be imitated by the [autobiographical] novel, and often have been imitated."<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile a difference subsists between them and it relies in the fact that autobiography is based on an accurate depiction of the author's real life events who sticks to facts, whereas autobiographical novel draws some elements from the author's real life and combines it with fictional elements to produce a new colored version of his life. The autobiographical novel results from the creative blending of facts and fiction. Autobiographical novels mimic writer's real life instead of recounting it in an authentic way.<sup>12</sup>

The appeal to autobiography is quite common among many writers because it allows them to make their own introspection, and convey testimonies about appropriateness and inappropriateness of some actions experienced during their lives. This "popular genre", permits them to review and evaluate their past and express their self-evolvement process. Writing autobiographies gives the writers the opportunity to express their feelings and states of mind during particular moments of their lives and to relieve their consciousness from the burden of the past. Autobiography allows the assertion of the self and the seeing of life from one's angle. It allows the reconstruction of a present identity from the recollection of memories.

### **Autobiography as a Journey**

In her article "The Journey Inward: Women's Autobiography", Elizabeth R. Baer Dean says that most of women's autobiographies are journeys undertaken by women in order to fulfill a quest for identity. Some journeys involve traveling from one place to another to accomplish either a family visit, flee a war or a conflict zone or just for leisure and

entertainment. Other journeys are inward and instigate women to discover their sense of the self and write about it. These inward journeys result from a painful self-confrontation between the writer and her memory while trying to recollect moments of joy, sorrow, inhibition, frustration, fears.<sup>13</sup>

## **II-2 Materials**

Before starting this study we are going to give the biographies of the two authors and the summaries of their novels. This part of our dissertation does not only seek to introduce the two writers and their works but aims also at capturing the major events that marked their lives and have a direct impact on their writing career as well as their literary works. Moreover, we found it appropriate to shed light on the historical background of these two novels to locate their setting and highlight the aspects and elements that characterize them.

### **II-2.1 The Biographies of the Authors**

#### **II-2.1.1 Charlotte Brontë's Biography**

Charlotte Brontë is a famous English novelist best known for *Jane Eyre* (1847). She was born in Yorkshire, Northern England in 1816 to Reverend Patrick Brontë and his wife Maria Branwell.<sup>14</sup> She was the middle child of the couple. She had two elder sisters Maria and Elizabeth, two younger sisters Emily and Anne and a younger brother Branwell. At the age of five, Charlotte's mother died and her aunt Elizabeth Branwell was brought in to support her widower brother-in-law in up bringing his children.

In 1824, at the age of eight, Charlotte began her formal education along with Emily and her two eldest sisters by attending the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge.<sup>15</sup> The harsh, horrendous and unsanitary living conditions of the boarding school caused the death of her eldest sisters Maria and Elizabeth from Tuberculosis.<sup>16</sup> This sorrowful event urged her father to withdraw her and her sister from that school.



In 1831, at the age of 15, Charlotte enrolled as a student at Miss Wooler's School in Roe Head.<sup>17</sup> Though her schooling lasted only one year, she "was an indefatigable"<sup>18</sup> student and succeeded to grow to the top of her class where she made some lasting friendships. Once back home, she took the responsibility of teaching her sisters<sup>19</sup> and undertook the writing of her first poem. After receiving a proposal to fill the job position of a teacher from Roe Head in 1835, she left home again with the ambition of earning enough money to improve her family's position. She stayed there till the end of her engagement in 1838.<sup>20</sup>

Before departing for Brussels in February 1842, Charlotte was urged to work for months as a governess<sup>21</sup>-for the Whites at Upperwood- to support her brother Branwell and pay his debts. Once in Brussels, she enrolled with Emily at a school to improve their French and acquire some German.<sup>22</sup> There, she made the acquaintance of Constantine Hegér, a fine teacher of literature of unusual perception. Unrequited affections forced her to return to England in 1844 but her sojourn in Brussels would provide her with sustainable material for her upcoming novels mainly *Villette*.

After the failure of her attempt to start a school with her sisters at Haworth, Charlotte was full of embarrassment and anxiousness for her future.<sup>23</sup> She was overcome with depression until she came across a book of Emily's poetry. She convinced Emily and Anne to publish a book together and managed to print it under their own expenses. Because of contemporary societal pressures directed against female writers, their book *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton* (1846) was published under a pseudonym.<sup>24</sup> The book received only few reviews and only two copies of it were sold.

Charlotte transitioned her attention to her first novel *The Professor* which was never published during her life time since she didn't succeed to place it.<sup>25</sup> Hopefully *Jane Eyre* was accepted and published by Elder and Company on October 16, 1847.<sup>26</sup> The novel which

parallels Charlotte Brontë's life and experiences encountered an immediate success and become worldly recognized as an English canon work.

Her success and newly gained notoriety as a writer was altered by a grief caused by the death of her three remaining siblings.<sup>27</sup> These tragic circumstances didn't inhibit her creativity as she wrote and completed a tale entitled *Shirley* and three more poems. She had also resumed her worldly life and went many times to London where she met her publisher and made the acquaintance of her Biographer, Elizabeth Gaskell. 1853 was the year of the publication of her last novel *Villette* through which she displayed fragments of her experiences at the Pension Héger (Brussels).

At the age of 38, Charlotte Brontë married her father's curate Arthur Bell Nichols.<sup>28</sup> She was happy and devoted to the fulfillment of her duties as a wife. However her father's presentiment turned out as Charlotte's pregnancy was accompanied by exhausting sickness causing her death in March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1855.<sup>29</sup>

### **II-2.1.2 Marguerite Taos Amrouche's Biography**

Marguerite Taos Amrouche is an Algerian francophone writer. She is recognized as the first Female North African novelist. She was born in Tunis in 1913 to Belkacem and Fadhma Amrouche Ait Mansour.<sup>30</sup> She was the only daughter of the pair and the dignified heiress of her mother who was the first Algerian autobiographer. Her family was amongst a minority of natives to be converted to Roman Catholicism during the French occupation of Algeria, hence their removal to Tunisia before her birth. She had six brothers among them Jean El Mouhoub, a notorious poet and writer renowned for his political commitment and contribution to the Algerian Revolution.<sup>31</sup>

The Amrouche's life was spent in-between Tunisia and Algeria. In the beginning of the First World War, they spent nearly one year in Ighil Ali. Then they went back there in 1922 to celebrate the marriage of Paul Mohand.<sup>32</sup> The happy circumstance and agreeable

moments lived during this stay in Kabylie would provide Taous Amrouche with sustainable material for her novel *Street of Tambors (La Rue Des Tombourins)*, 1960).

In 1925, Taos' father bought a house in Maxula-Rades, in the neighborhood of Tunis, where the family lived for many years. Taos would stay there too till the obtaining of her Brevet Superieur in 1934.<sup>33</sup> The following year, she went to France and tried to get admission to l'Ecole Normal Superieur.<sup>34</sup> After only two months, she left the Pension and went back home with a stigma that was recounted in her autobiographical novel *Black Hyacinth (Jacinthe Noire)*, 1947).

In 1936, during a visit to her brother Jean, living at that time in Bone, she discovered her inspiration for the Berber Chant and her willing for the perpetuation of the Berber Oral Tradition.<sup>35</sup> Once back home, supported by Jean, she urged her mother to transmit the ritual Berber Chant and folk tales of Kabylie. Collaborating with her mother and Jean, she collected some kabyle legends, short stories, songs, poems and proverbs, a collection which was later published in a book entitled *The Magic Grain (Le Grain Magique)*, 1966).<sup>36</sup>

After months of training and industrious work on the Berber Chant, Taos started to present her repertoire of Kabyle songs in Paris and Munich. In 1939, she took part to the Congr s De Chant de Fez in Morocco and made a remarkable recital.<sup>37</sup> There, she got noticed by the Head Master of La Casa Velasquez, the Spaniard Maurice Legendre who offered her a scholarship in his institution.

Between 1940 and 1942, she settled in Madrid and made extensive researches to find out similarities between the Berber Chant and the Cante Jondo.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, she learnt Spanish and interpreted some Spanish songs with Ivette Grimond. During the same period, she made the acquaintance of her future husband, the painter Andr  Bourdil with whom she would have her unique daughter, Laurence.

Taos Amrouche seems to be the “Jack of all trades”. Not only was she a writer and a singer but also a radio presenter and producer. In 1945, she settled in France where her notoriety as a specialist of the Berber Chant was extensively acknowledged.<sup>39</sup> She released many phonograph albums and won Le Grand Prix de L’Academie du Disque Francais in 1967 for her album Chant Berbères de Kabylie.<sup>40</sup> Before this consecration, she was invited by the President Leopold Senghor to sing in the Festival Des Arts Nègre in Dakar in 1996. Her Last novel *l’Amant Imaginaire (The Imaginary Love)* was published one year before her death from a cancer in 1975.

## **II-2.2 Summaries of the Two Novels**

### ***II-2.2.1 Villette (1853)***

Charlotte Bronte’s *Villette* narrates the story of a young English woman with no family, Lucy Snow. Lucy is educated but without fortune. She is obliged to work as a nurse companion to secure her living. After the death of Miss Marchmont, the woman she was taking care of, she undertakes a daring trip to the continent. Her peregrination takes her to Villette, a town probably based in Brussels where she has encountered a series of fortunate incidents and succeeded to secure a job and a place where to live. Her new employer, Madame Beck, the owner of a boarding school for girls, initially hires her as a Bonne d’Enfant to take care of her daughters then elevates her to the position of an English Teacher.

In Madame Beck’s school, Lucy prospers as a teacher and earns enough money to support herself. Nevertheless, she feels lonely and depressed. She yearns for a caring family or friend. Her health declines until she faints one day while getting out from a church. By coincidence her savior happens to be John Graham Bretton, her godmother’s son, who settles in Villette as a doctor. Her merry reunion with her friends and their kindness help her to recuperate. On an outing to the theatre, the hazard brings to Lucy’s life two more childhood friends, Mr. Home and his sole daughter Paulina who is rescued from being trampled by Graham.

John Graham feels in love with Paulina and withdraws from Lucy's social life. Lucy returns to her monotonous routine in Madame Beck's school. She befriends M. Paul Emanuel whom she appreciates for his kindness and generosity. During this period, she proves a faithful believer in the Protestant faith. She counters all the attempts directed by Père Sillas, M. Paul Emanuel's preceptor, to convert her to Roman Catholicism. Lucy longs for more fulfillments in her life and after the departure of M. Paul Emanuel to the West Indies, she leaves Madame Beck's school to prosper in her own school which is improved thanks to an unexpected legacy from an old friend. She waits eagerly to the return of Paul Emanuel.

#### ***II-2.2.2 Jacinthe Noire (1947)***

Taos Amroche's *Black Hyacinth* recounts the story of a young Tunisian girl, Reine who is sent to Paris to pursue her studies. For the first time of her life, she has to live among strangers in a catholic pension. The establishment is directed by the devote Mlle Anatole who runs it with a religious discipline. There, Reine befriends Marie-Thérèse a French girl from the Provence. Marie-Thérèse admires and likes Reine who is radiant, authentic, sincere and audacious. She cares for her and fears for her from the reprisals of religious, cultural and racial stereotypes.

From her arrival to the pension, Reine is perceived by her comrades as a "stranger" susceptible of bringing disorder and instability to the group. She is spied, stigmatized and even isolated. Reine is determined and sticks to her cultural ideals. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of the establishment and the hypocrisy of its residents make her sick. Her health declines. She suffers profoundly from rejection as almost everyone in the pension sees her as "a lost soul" that needs to be rescued from devilish temptations. Reine is nursed by Marie-Thérèse with whom she shares reminiscences of moments of joys spent while being amongst her family and friends.

A feast is organized in the pension to celebrate the inauguration of the new chapel. Mlle Anatole and her submissive disciples are happy and cheerful. For this occasion, Père

Julien makes a sermon that instigates hope and faith in Reine's heart. The coming day, she goes to encounter him with the purpose of relieving her conscious from the burden of apprehension and religious doubts. Days later, she is cast out from the pensionnat after only two months of stay. She feels outraged by Pere Julien's transgression of the seal of confession. Though disappointed and deeply hurt, she keeps proud and faithful to her ideals. She goes back home and leaves Marie-Thérèse upset by the loss of a friend.

## **II-3 Historical Background of the Novels**

### **II-3.1 *Villette***

The nineteenth century England experiences the direct consequences of the French and Industrial revolution with all their pervasive consequences on the society in general and women in particular. This period of drastic changes, knew the emergence of a new gender ideology contrivedly conceived to protect women from exploitation and suffering by confining them to the private or 'domestic sphere'. Though the women's restriction to the home limited their opportunities and activities, it did not prevent them from occupying and carrying public activities.

During the Victorian Era, women were predestined to get married and raise a family to reach happiness and stability: 'marriage is a contract still more important; as the happiness of one's whole life may depend on it'.<sup>41</sup> Women were confined to the domestic sphere and deprived from almost all their legal rights as they could neither vote nor participate to the political governance of their country. They were forced by laws of convenience and patriarchal norms to stay at home and accomplish their domestic duties of cleaning, cooking and raising their children with abnegation and devotion. They were also required a complete obedience and submission to their husbands who had complete control over their properties and destiny. Women were denied many privileges and were even devoided from the right to ask for divorce.

Women's position and condition during the Victorian Era instigate the educated class, peculiarly the writers, to use their pens to stand against the injustices inflicted on women by laws and patriarchal norms. Many authors exhibited their accruing interest in their nineteenth century women by writing novels about their sufferings, endurances and reactions towards their societal inequalities. Charlotte Brontë is among the novelists who were drawn by experience as well as by imagination to the troubles of the Victorian women. She dramatized those cases in *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853) by exploring a variety of her contemporary issues as women's education, England's system of education, hypocrisy, humiliation and bigotry. She also contributed to the initiation of a women's emancipation movement that sought to relieve women from the burdens and injustices imposed upon them. Her novels provided her with the opportunity to denounce the cruelty of the society and its institution.

### **II-3.2 Jacinthe Noire (Black Hyacinth)**

The socio-economic conditions of the Algerian population during the French occupation of Algeria were torn up by misery, violence, and oppression. The population who spent many years attempting to fight and counter the colonization of their country were severely punished by the French authorities for their acts and thrown violently into poverty and depravation.<sup>42</sup> Losing their last hope of salvation after the defeats of Cheikh El Mokrani, Cheikh El Haddad and Lalla Fadhma N'Soumer and completely overwhelmed by despair and harsh socio-economic difficulties, the Algerian population sought the arrival of the first French missionaries 'Pères Blancs' like a note of hope for their distress.<sup>43</sup> The missionaries started their humanitarian work by healing the sick, feeding the poor and assisting the deprived. They succeeded to establish a connection with the natives, won their confidence and get perceived by the locals as saviors and miracle makers. Charity to bring to the light of the

Christ marked the beginning of the evangelization process and with it the assimilation of the colonized to the colonial culture in an attempt to extinguish the remnant of their resistance.<sup>44</sup>

During this period of harsh and horrendous conditions many Algerians seek refuge in these religious institutions. Belkacem and Fadhma Ait Mansour Amrouche (Taos Amrouche's parents) belong to this minority of kabyle people to be supported by 'les Peres Blancs' from their early childhood to become devoted Christian subjects nurtured by Christian ideals and precepts.<sup>45</sup> This conversion to the Christian faith, the source of their exile and rupture with their community, would have a major impact on their children's lives and writing careers. Indeed both Marie-Louise Taos and Jean El Mouhoub would dedicate most of their literary oeuvre to picture the stigmata of their double culture on their identity construction.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, Lynda R. *Autobiography*. New Critical Idiom. New York: Rutledge, 2011; p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>3</sup> Bates, E.Stuart. *Inside Out: An Introduction to Autobiography*. New York: Sheridan House, 1937, p.5.

<sup>4</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. "Introspection," accessed March 22, 2019. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

<sup>5</sup> Berryman, Charles. "Critical Mirrors: Theories of Autobiography." *Mosaic* 32.1 (1999):71

<sup>6</sup> Quigley, Jean. *The Grammar of Autobiography: A Development Account*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, INC, 2000, p.144.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, Lynda R. *Autobiography*. New Critical Idiom. New York: Rutledge, 2011; p.3.

<sup>8</sup> Bates, E.Stuart. *Inside Out: An Introduction to Autobiography*. New York: Sheridan House, 1937; p.9.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> "Dobrovskian Borrowing". *The Modern Language Review*, 97.3 (2002):566-76.

<sup>11</sup> Leujeune. Philip. *On Autobiography* (Theory and History of Literature). Forward by Paul John Eakin, translated by Katherine Leary. University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p.13.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Baer, Elizabeth R. "The Journey Inward: Women's Autobiography". *On Let's Talk About It* (1978) <https://www.okhumanities.org>

<sup>14</sup> Gaskell, Elizabeth. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. London: Humphrey Milford, 1919, p.37.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.47.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.56.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.75.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.93.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.109.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.160.



- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.174.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.222.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.234.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.261.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.264.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.297/303.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.463.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.469.
- <sup>30</sup> Amhis- Oukil, Djoher. *Taos Amrouche L'Exil et la Mémoire*. Alger: Casbah Editions, 2001, p.187-188.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Kames, Henry Home (2007).Principles of Equity, 4th Edition. Edinburgh, 1800, vol 4, the Making of Modern Law, Gale, Thomson Gale, Baylor. <http://galenet.galegroup.com>
- <sup>42</sup> . Amrouche, Taos. *Rue Des Tambourins*. Paris : Losfeld Editions, 1996, p.71
- <sup>43</sup> Révérend Père Malfrey, Cahier de Visite Du Poste Missionnaire de Ouarzen (Beni Yenni) en 1898.
- <sup>44</sup> Kezzi, Akila. L'Accord Im/possible Ecriture, Prise de Parole, Engagement et Identités Multiples Chez Marie-Louise Taos Amrouche. These de Doctorat en Etude du Genre, Littérature Française et Littérature Francophone ; p.55. [www.these.fr](http://www.these.fr)
- <sup>45</sup> Amrouche, Taos. *Rue Des Tambourins*. Paris : Losfeld Editions, 1996, p.71.

### III-Results

Our comparative study on Brontë's *Villette* (1853) and Amrouche's *Jacinthe Noire* (1947) has revealed that the two authors adopted the autobiographical writing in order to recount life events and their impact on their respective careers. The recourse to the methods of the autobiographical writing namely the first person narrative 'I' and introspection are commonly used by the two writers. We have noticed that Brontë used an autodiegetic narrative describing the use of the 'I' by the protagonist who is also the narrator of the work (the narrator= the protagonist) whereas Amrouche's homodiegetic narrative implies the dissociation of the protagonist from the narrative process (the protagonist ≠ the narrator).

Our study has also revealed that both Brontë and Amrouche relate the inward journeys undertaken by their fictional doubles, respectively Lucy Snowe and Reine, to recollect their quest for self-accomplishment and emancipation and share their thoughts on some issues reoccurring and crucial in their lives. Lucy Snowe recalls her daring travel to the continent (Brussels) to upraise her feminine condition and accomplish economic self-sufficiency during the Victorian Era when most women were expected to be submissive and confined to the domestic sphere to perform their assigned duties of domesticity and motherhood devotedly. Reine also retraces her departure to Paris with the intention of carrying on her studies and fulfilling her feminine's aspiration of emancipation and progress but once there she faces the biased perception of a second-class citizen that neither her education nor her commitment succeed to overcome.

Our investigation has also shown that though the two protagonists embark in the same adventure to evolve in nearly similar boarding institutions managed by women, their sojourn would take different turns as Lucy's quest will end up with success and recognition whereas Reine's attempt will finish by dismissal and exclusion. Our study reveals that the cultural and social belonging of Brontë's and Amrouche's main characters proves to be a crucial factor

during the process of their self-fulfillment. The acceptance of the Westerner Lucy and the rejection of the Oriental Reine reflect the Western Worldview and its hegemonic tendencies. Lastly, our study has revealed that women fictional autobiographies stress women's enterprise to liberate themselves from stereotype views and define their own experiences while struggling to survive under different circumstances in environments governed by harsh social norms and conventions.

## **IV-Discussion**

### **Chapter I: Oppression of Women: A Comparative Study of Patriarchy and Colonial Domination in *Villette* (1853) and *Jacinthe Noire* (1947)**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is dedicated to the study of affinities in contexts between Brontë's Victorian period and Amrouche's colonial era. It relies on the similarities between the Victorian patriarchal order and the French colonial domination and studies how the two contexts reveal the social norms and values faced by the two protagonists respectively Lucy Snowe and Reine while, trying to construct their sense of self against those established orders.

In this chapter's first section, we investigate the patriarchal worldview in *Villette* and highlight some binary oppositions between the 'reasonable' and 'strong' men and the supposedly 'weak' and 'emotional' Lucy Snowe who is the mask under which Brontë reveals the true color of her society. In the second section, we cover Amrouche's fictional double, Reine, and her marginalization by the pensionnat's comrades, due to her different cultural belonging and religious perception.

The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the two writers' use of the autobiographical narrative in order to depict their societies with all their defects and singularities through the use of the first person narrative and introspection. The chapter aims also at showcasing the two protagonists' reception by the institutions' (boarding school in *Villette* and boarding house in *Jacinthe Noire*) tenants and administrators.

#### **I-1 Patriarchal Order in *Villette* (1853)**

During the nineteenth century, Patriarchal Dominance has been the norm governing many societies, where women were summoned to obey unwillingly the rules defined for them by men. This social system confined women to domestic life by assigning the Cult of Domesticity, which perceives the good and virtuous woman as being emotional, weak,

submissive, and passive.<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Brontë is among a multitude of writers who conveyed the female experience of the nineteenth century through her literary works. *Villette*, her most mature work, parallels her life experiences, underpins her social concerns, showcases a woman's struggles against a tide of Victorian values and outlines a journey toward maturation and personal fulfillment. Through Lucy Snowe, a barely veiled portrait of herself, Charlotte Brontë conveys most of her ideals and principles. While acting as an arbiter of change, Brontë lends her voice to Lucy and makes her use the first person narrative to investigate, remember and contemplate her experience during her stay in Brussels.

*Villette*, draws its source material from Charlotte Brontë's traveling to Brussels (Belgium) in 1842 with her sister Emily to be enrolled in M and Mme Héger's pensionat as English and music teachers.<sup>2</sup> It yields the fictionalized life story of Lucy Snowe, a female character, trying to create her own sense of identity as an independent individual during the Victorian Period. Lucy Snowe, a twenty three years old woman, is homeless, friendless, penniless and hopeless. The death of her benefactress urges her to take a decision and boldly ventures to London where she has a revelation and resolves to tempt her chance abroad in the continent: "all at once my position rose on me like a ghost. Anomalous; desolate, almost blank of hope, it stood. What was I doing [there] in great London? What should I do on the morrow? What prospect had I in life? What friend had I on earth? Whence did I come? Whither should I go? What should I do?"<sup>3</sup> This moment of doubt relieves her and makes her spirit 'shook its always fettered wings half loose' and preludes her progress toward an inward journey of self-realization and accomplishment.

Lucy's crisis of identity and other indeterminate circumstances impels her departure from England to the Continent. Her journey leads her to Labassecour, where a masculine authority is quickly established as the gatekeeper of female position within the social structure. Once in Villette and after being frightened by two insolent 'Moustachioed men',

Lucy loses her way to the recommended Inn and finds herself instead in Madame Beck's 'Pensionnat de Demoiselles', where she hopes to find shelter and job. Having no formal reference or previous knowledge of Lucy, Madame Beck resorts to her cousin M. Paul and asks him whether she should hire the little English woman or not. Based uniquely on M. Paul's approbation and consent, Lucy is offered a position as a governess, a position already occupied by Charlotte Brontë herself in 1842 to support her brother Branwell and pay his debts. M. Paul is described by Lucy as the "vague arbiter of [her] destiny"<sup>4</sup> thanks to whom she is saved from the dangers of hostile streets: "by god's blessing I was spared the necessity of passing forth again into the lonesome, dreary, hostile streets."<sup>5</sup> M. Paul is Lucy's benefactor and his decisive role in her admission to Madame Beck's establishment permits her to escape the threat pressed upon her by the friendless position.

Lucy finds herself in a Pensionnat ruled by Madame Beck who has established her own system of management and regulation. Madame Beck directs her school with minuteness and scrutiny relying on "surveillance" and "espionage" to keep everything running smoothly: "as Madame Beck ruled by espionage, she of course had her staff of spies; she perfectly knew the quality of the tools she used, and while she would not scruple to handle the dirties for a dirty occasion..."<sup>6</sup> From this description, we may infer that Madame Beck's pensionnat is a kind of self-contained Matriarchal Institution. Nevertheless, the text reveals that another force is able to surpass her authority, M. Paul. On the occasion of the school wide examination, Lucy describes M. Paul as follows:

[...] the professor of literature, M. Paul, taking upon himself this duty. He, this school autocrat, gathered all and sundry reins in the hollow of his one hand; he irefully rejected any colleague; he would not have help. Madame herself, who evidently rather wished to undertake the examination in geography –her favorite study, which she taught well-, was forced to succumb, and be subordinate to her despotic kinsman's direction.<sup>7</sup>

This scene reveals the dominance of M. Paul, his superiority and the privilege of his position in Madame Beck's pensionnat which at first sight seems to be a woman's fief.

M. Paul examines in all subjects, except English, which he doesn't master. At first he is inclined to drop this examination rather than let Lucy conduct them. He changes his mind, makes prove of an irreconcilable paradox by pitying her desolate condition and deciding to help her: "after all, you are solitary, and a stranger, and you have your way to make and your bread to earn; it may be well that you should become known."<sup>8</sup> Despite his goodness, M. Paul dominance is once again displayed on the occasion of the school's Fête when he orders Lucy to replace one of his students charged with an important role in his play intended to be performed during the ceremony. He convoys her till the dreary attic full of rats and where the ghost of the nun is rumored to have appeared, locks her there and orders her to memorize and learn her role for the play for few hours: "without being allowed time or power to deliberate, I found myself in the same breath convoyed along as in a species of whirlwind, up stairs, up two pair of stairs, nay, actually up three; to the solitary and lofty attic was she borne, put in and locked in, the key being on the door, and that key he took with him, and vanished."<sup>9</sup> The scene unveils the despotism of M. Paul who masterfully orders Lucy to execute his command without breaking bounds and to learn the role assigned to her without delay or objection.

While wandering freely in a gallery, Lucy encounters M. Paul who is shocked at finding her alone without a chaperon and before the portrait of 'Cleopatra': "how dare you, a young person, sit coolly down, with the self-possession of a 'garçon' and look at that picture?"<sup>10</sup> M. Paul lectures her on the inappropriateness of contemplating such a picture and forces her instead to look at a didactical, flat series on the life of woman "la Vie d'une Femme", representing: a pale girl holding a prayer book: a veiled praying bride: followed by a young mother bent over her babies; and finally the same woman as a widow in black:

They were painted rather in a remarkable style -flat, dead, pale and formal. The first represented a 'Jeune Fille', coming out of a church -door; a missal in her hand, her dress very prim, her eyes cast down, her mouth pursed up ...The second a 'Mariée' with a long white veil, kneeling at a prie-dieu in her chamber holding her hands plastered together, finger to finger and showing the white of her eyes in a most exasperating manner. The third, a 'Jeune Mère' hanging disconsolate over a clayey

and puffy baby with a face like an unwholesome full moon. The forth a 'Veuve', being a black woman holding by the hand a black little girl, and the twain studiously surveying an elegant French monument, set up in a corner of some Père la Chaise.<sup>11</sup>

The symbolic of this scene goes to the Cult of Domesticity or cult of true womanhood that confined women to the domestic sphere where domesticity and motherhood were considered by society at large to be a sufficient emotional fulfillment for women.<sup>12</sup> It reveals the male's perception of womanhood and demonstrates 'the four stages of virtuous female'. M. Paul, by forcing Lucy to look at this painting wanted her to recognize that women should go through these four stages in order to gain respectability and honor instead of traveling abroad to earn their own living. Though resigned to obedience, Lucy shows some signs of resistance by depicting the 'Cleopatra' painting as absurd, meaningless and useless while seeing the representation of the women in the four stages of womanhood as horrific. Lucy's attitude reveals Charlotte Brontë's feminist perspective through the rejection of the established patriarchal order that view women uniquely as depicted in the "la Vie d'une Femme" painting.

Another striking indication of the patriarchal dominance in *Villette* is M. Paul's attitude toward Lucy's enterprise to acquire knowledge and instruction. His attitude is versatile and vacillates between sarcasm, severity, kindness and forbearance. He is helpful as long as Lucy shows herself deficient, but "when [her] faculties began to struggle themselves free, and [her] time of energy and fulfillment came; when [she] voluntarily doubled, tripled, quadrupled the tasks he set, to please him as [she] thought, his kindness became sternness."<sup>13</sup> He goes farther and accuses Lucy of intellectual pride, a desire for unfeminine knowledge and even of a secret acquaintance with the classics from which she is accused to have borrowed some extracts to enrich her compositions: "he would turn suddenly round and accuse me of the most far-fetched imitations and impossible plagiarisms, asserting that I extracted the pith out of books I had not so much as heard of..."<sup>14</sup> M. Paul's attitude reflects the perception of intellectual women during the Victorian period as 'lusus naturae'; "a luckless accident, a thing



for which there was neither place nor use in creation, wanted neither as wife nor worker.”<sup>15</sup> In other words women have to be passive, good-tempered and lovely as wives or workers but should never attempt to surpass men’s authority or knowledge.

The denigration of women’s intellectual capabilities is demonstrated again during Lucy’s examination by two ‘dandy professors’ of the college where M. Paul teaches. Their abrupt enterprise is due to their urging need to confirm whether the composition submitted for them by M. Paul is really written by Lucy or is just a mere forgery:

[Lucy] your business is to prove to these gentlemen that I am no liar. You will answer, to the best of your ability, such questions as they shall put. You will also write on such theme as they shall select. In their eyes, it appears I hold the position of an unprincipled imposter. I write essays; and, with deliberate forgery, sign to them my pupils’ name, and boast of them as their work. You will disprove this charge.<sup>16</sup>

Messieurs Boisseac and Rochemorte question the composition’s genuineness and want through this snap test to demonstrate that Lucy is a cheater. With disdain and arrogance, they proceed to their examination and ask Lucy a series of questions in different branches of knowledge varying from classics to French history. Lucy is molested and scorned just because men think her incapable of reasoning and writing a classical composition: “could they not see at once the crude hand of a novice in that composition they called a forgery?”<sup>17</sup> Lucy fails to answer almost all their questions but succeeds to make better on topics of general information. She has even succeeded to impress them by the quality of her composition on the topic of ‘human justice. This misconception of women’s intellectual capacities reflects Charlotte Brontë’s contemporary social pressures directed against women of her talent by male literary circles.

Madame Beck’s establishment serves as a representative sample portraying the patriarchal system governing most of the Victorian schools. M. Paul, the patriarchal figure, occupies a dominant, determining, yet protective and well meaning authority over Lucy’s fate and the domestic space she inhabits. He conveys the Victorian patriarchal worldview that stigmatized women reduced their capabilities and conditions them to subordination. Lucy’s environment is full of biases and obstacles positioned purposely by her male counterparts to

obstruct women's progression but her strong determination and fervent ambition would prove pertinent in her long process of self-assertion.

## **I-2 Marginalization and Cultural Alienation in *Jacinthe Noire* (1947)**

While the previous section tackled Brontë's depiction of the Victorian society with all its disparities regarding women's position and opportunities through Lucy's experience, this section focuses on Amrouche's surveying of the colonial society by exposing the racial and cultural discrimination faced by Reine. Amrouche's recourse to the first person narrative is conspicuous in the text but its use is attributed to Marie-Thérèse, Reine's best friend and alter-ego. Through the depiction of the colonial context by a French native, Amrouche succeeds to detach her protagonist's subjectivity and instill instead objectivity and accuracy to her narration.

During the long period of colonial occupation of Algeria from 1830 till 1962, France adopted many strategies to assimilate and alienate the Algerian identity. The conviction that cultural subjugation is more overwhelming and efficient than military dominance, urged the French to enhance the combination of formal schooling with evangelization to reach cultural and political dominance.<sup>16</sup> Though these policies contributed –somehow- to the decomposition of the traditional Algerian society, they had also given some Algerian women the opportunity to be enrolled in schools, acquire knowledge and reach emancipation. Taos Amrouche, who belonged to this 'minority' of educated christened Algerians, succeeded to master the French language and its rudiments and used it as a means to express her feminine and social concerns.<sup>18</sup> Through *Black Hyacinth*, Amrouche explores the colonial society through Reine's struggles to counter the stigmatization and alienation of a second-class citizen, who tries to get recognition despite her otherness.

For the first time in her life, Reine, Taos Amrouche's fictional double, travels abroad to rally Paris where she intends to carry on her studies: 'nous savions qu'une jeune fille devait

nous venir de Tunisie'.<sup>19</sup> She lodges in a boarding house 'la pension des Fille de Jephthé' which is directed by a kind of Reverend Mother, Mlle Anatole. She aspires to spend peaceful moments amongst mates and comrades belonging to different spheres and horizons. While trying to fulfill her ambitions, she is rapidly caught by the singularity of the environment where she is evolving and notices that the boarding house is governed by strict religious norms. Reine makes considerable efforts to be accepted amongst the group; unfortunately her efforts prove to be a failure and she has to face rejection and marginalization. She becomes disillusioned by the contrast subsisting between France's real established order and its conveyed 'mission civilisatrice' ideal.

Reine's life in the house parallels a significant episode of Taos Amrouche's life which is broadly evoked in her mother's autobiography *Histoire de Ma Vie*:

Au mois d'octobre, Marie-Louise-Taos fut reçue au brevet supérieur et nous demandâmes à la compagnie un emprunt pour l'envoyer en France continuer ses études ; nous avons même retenu pour elle une chambre à paris, dans une maison d'étudiantes. Mais elle ne put s'adapter et revint à Radès au bout de deux mois.<sup>20</sup>

On October, Marie-Louise-Taos succeeded her Brevet Supérieur so we asked my husband's company for a loan to be able to send her to France to carry on her studies. We had even booked a room for her in a boarding house in Paris but she could not conform to the institution's norms and came back home in Radès after only two months stay. (Translation: mine)

On the path of Fdhma Ait Mansour Amrouche, Taos, a dignified heiress of her mother, adopts the autobiographical writing to depict her experiences while evolving in Paris through her fictional double Reine.

Once in Paris, Reine finds herself progressing in a gloomy atmosphere far away from her beloved family and friends. She has to withstand the company of mostly devout religious 'teenagers' who spend most of their time conversing religious affairs and trying to save lost souls from damnation. She is perceived by most of her mates as a threat susceptible of affecting the serenity and cohesion of their group: 'je crois, dit de sa voix enfantine Paula, qu'elle peut être un élément de désordre dans notre maison. Vous ne trouvez pas? ...Moi, elle m'effraie.'<sup>21</sup> Reine is also branded as a strange African creature with different habits and

customs: ‘une seule d’entre nous me dérouté. Reine, cette Reine de race mystérieuse, de sang Africain...elle choque dans cette maison. Qu’était-elle venue faire? Et comment y a-t-elle échoué?’<sup>22</sup>Some of her comrades even mount a coalition against her and incite the others to prevent her from influencing them as they see her as a malicious creature: ‘elle est le génie du Mal, elle enjôle les être puis les détourne du bien.’<sup>23</sup>The boarders’ attitude and reaction toward Reine reflects the colonist’s perception of the colonized women as strange creatures (exotic) deprived from discernment and intellectual capacities susceptible of uprising their condition amongst French natives and comforts Eurocentric perspective that represents an inherent belief in the pre-eminence of the Europeans , their culture, knowledge and values.

In her attempt to integrate the community, Reine befriends Paula and other boarders and makes them some confidence about family, her lover, her favorite writers and poets and doesn’t hesitate to show her great admiration for Rousseau, Gide, and Rodin. She has even talked openly about her perception of life and religion to gain their trust. ‘de tout, elle parle avec passion, de son fiancé, de ses ancêtres, de ses amis, de son soleil, de tout, de tout...Elle glorifie la démesure et avoue son admiration pour Gide et Rousseau.’<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately for her, the pensionnat which in appearance seems ordinary serves as a fief for proselytism and the teaching of rigorous religious precepts:

Il faut qu’une maison d’étudiantes ait une apparence cosmopolite. Alors: Ludmila Polonaise, Stoïinka Bulgare, Reine Africaine. Trois curiosités. Il faut surtout que l’atmosphère soit libérale. Alors, une libre penseuse, une protestante, une orthodoxe et la façade est sauve...Mais cette liberté, elle la fait miroiter aux yeux de ses pensionnaires. C’est une attrape : car devant tant de confiance, tant de largeur d’esprit, qui songe à se méfier ?<sup>25</sup>

In appearance, a boarding house should seem cosmopolitan. So: Ludmila the Polish, Stoïinka the Bulgarian, Reine the African, three curiosities! The atmosphere should be liberal. For this a free thinker, a protestant, an orthodox and appearances are safe... but this freedom put forward before this boarders is just a trick. Who would be cautious in front of much confidence and broad mindedness? (Translation: mine)

Reine who is at first lured by the feigned tolerance of the boarding house would know that her openness and ‘joie de vivre’ will never be tolerated by the dogmatic life style of the boarding

house tenants. Her admiration for Rousseau and his conception of religion as a “religion naturelle”<sup>26</sup> freed from all dogmas and intermediates seen by Paula and her mates as a sign of heresy for which she should be reprimanded or excluded: ‘elle dit aussi, que dans ses actions et ses méditations, elle tâche de ne jamais s’éloigner de Dieu. L’hérésie habilement travestie! J’en éprouve du malaise. C’est se laisser guider par son instinct. L’instinct ! Qui nous orientera vers le bien ? Fol orgueil que de vouloir marcher droit et son guide.’<sup>27</sup>

Just like her fictional double, Taos Amrouche vows the same admiration for Rousseau. The initiator and advocator of human rights renowned for his support to victims of social inequalities and discrimination since he was himself a victim of persecution and fallacious accusations directed against him by his opponents, inspires Amrouche in her enterprise to expose the true reasons behind her exclusion from Mlle Anatole’s institution. So as in Rousseau’s *Confessions* (his autobiography), Amrouche deploys the same writing strategy, the same plotline and the same transposition of roles in her text.<sup>28</sup> She recreated the same context as in *Confessions* and juxtaposed Reine to Jean-Jaques who is similarly persecuted and criticized by almost all the Messieurs who parallel the boarders. In the same way Marie-Thérèse stands for Rousseau’s avatar and does her best to protect and help her friend, Reine. The recourse to autobiography is adopted purposely by the two writers to convey their personal experiences and express subtly their introspection. Through this genre, both Rousseau and Amrouche created a kind of fictional trial to counter the accusations directed against them (persecutors and detractors in the case of Rousseau and religious discourse in the case of Taos) in an attempt to restore their image in their respective environments.

Despite her Christian faith and her efforts to integrate, Reine is criticized and persecuted by almost all the boarders, ‘elle est d’une drôle de race. Elle n’a pas communiqué, et elle se farde scandaleusement.’<sup>29</sup> She becomes a subject of discussion on behalf whom many mysterious conversations and debates are held: ‘je suis le sujet que l’on étudie, elles sont

légion à m'épiere et à me juger. Je ne leur inspire pas confiance.'<sup>30</sup> She is also constantly spied and molested : 'je ne veux plus rester dans ce nid d'espionnes'.<sup>31</sup> Reine is considered as, 'comme une brebis malade qu'il faut soigner, l'arbre sauvage qu'il faut greffer.'<sup>32</sup> She is 'the stray sheep' that Mlle Anatole and her girls aspire to bring back to religion and faith. Reine is highly affected by their biased perception of her person. She is overburdened by her rejection and feels betrayed by the persons she trusted when she arrived at the pension. Nonetheless, she finds some comfort with her friend and alter ego, Marie-Thérèse who tries her best to lift up her spirit and protect her from the mischief of her comrades.

To fulfill her religious duties, Mlle Anatole decides to enlarge her establishment, increase its capacity of admission, and endow it with a private chapel to officiate religious ceremonies on it. She consults her superiors and succeeds to convince them of the appropriateness of her initiative: 'Mlle Anatole avait réussi brillamment dans sa mission: Mlle Sylvestre approuvait tout. Piano, pavilion étaient accorés. Elle ferait l'impossible pour assister à l'inauguration et rehausser de sa présence l'éclat de la fête.'<sup>33</sup> Consequently, there has been great enthusiasm and keen interest among the boarders who spare neither time nor energy to realize Mlle Anatole's project and made of the pension a 'ruche bénie'.

During this period, Reine who has just overcome her illness, becomes alienated , turns imprudent and starts to behave strangely: 'j'essaie en vain de comprendre pourquoi, elle [Reine], qui avait une conscience si aigüe du danger, se comporta de façon contradictoire et imprudent.'<sup>34</sup> Indeed her frustration and confusion is due to the oppressed feeling of rejection and exclusion resented by her as almost everybody in the pension takes part to the concretization of Mère Anna's project except her and her close friends: ' "Elles" ne vous ont pas fait envie? Une gerbe, Marie-Thérèse, quelle belle chose qu'une gerbe. Etre un épi isolé, quelle angoisse parfois!'<sup>35</sup> The symbolic of 'la gerbe' (sheaf) lays in the union between the different boarding house's occupants and their common commitment for the accomplishment

of their objective. Reine yearns to be an effective member of this group but her origins and avowed cultural and religious inclinations foster her marginalization by introverted conservative persons who stick to their values.

During a conversation on faith and religious devotion, Reine who is enthused by exaltation and willingness to relieve Berthe from her sickness, behaves imprudently and confesses to her that despite her Christian education, she has almost forgotten all her catechism, she appreciates deism and its fervent proponents and keeps similar to her grandmother who is still Muslim: 'je lui ai répondu que nous n'habitions pas le même monde et, qu'en dépit d'une éducation Chrétienne, je ne différais guère de ma vieille grand-mère, restée musulmane. Je lui ai avoué que j'assistais à la messe avec ferveur, mais comme à un mystère incompréhensible.'<sup>36</sup> This revelation accentuates Reine's alienation and makes her fall in a state of despair. She apprehends the consequences of her deed and is convinced that her moments of tranquility and serenity will come to an end as soon as her speech will be reported to Mlle Anatole by Berthe. She expects rejection because of her lack of religious devotion and commitment and gets depressed. Through Reine's revelation, Amrouche referred to her family's conversion to the Christian faith and their rupture with the remaining of their family and community stayed Muslims. She makes allusion to their exile and the different pains they endure while evolving abroad far away from their relatives and compatriots who had rejected them due to their conversion to Christianity.

The concretization of Mlle Anatole's project is settled by the inauguration of the chapel which is officiated by an eloquent sermon by Père Julien who also recites 'la cantique du printemps'. This canticle has held Reine spellbound and projected her in a state of jubilation and exaltation: 'Mon Père, jeta Reine dans une sorte d'égarement, mon Père, c'est presque insupportablement beau. C'est une marée de beauté qui monte, qui vous submerge... Et ce rythme ! Ce rythme prodigieux, de plus en plus impératif, tyrannique!' <sup>37</sup> Reine cheers

up, regains some confidence in the Christian faith and its agents and decides to meet Père Julien to make her confession and communion. She brings her project to fruition and encounters Père Julien on the convened day. She discusses with him all her trends and love experiences with her fiancé, Jaques. She is momentarily relieved and feels that all her troubles in the pension will come to an end thanks to this meeting. Unfortunately, Reine's hopes are soon frustrated by the decision of her dismissal resulting from Père Julien's transgression of the Seal of Confession.

Reine's sojourn in Mlle Anatole's institution is disastrous. Her experience reflects her creator's own experiment during her two months stay in Paris and depicts an environment full of religious devotion and dogma. Reine like Taos, tries her best to adapt and accommodate her personality to fit the code of conduct and standards of convenience determined by the boarding house's tenants which is a microcosm of the French/colonial society, but her authenticity and determination to perpetuate her cultural ideals through her habits, dress and language contributed highly to her banning from the group she wants to integrate. Her dismissal from the pensionnat may be perceived by many as a failure since Reine does not fulfill the purpose for which she rallies Paris; nevertheless it allows her to unveil the hypocrisy between formal discourses and reality and increase her determination to remain authentic and sincere.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we analyzed Brontë's depiction of the Victorian era and the different social norms that governed it by retracing her fictional double's experience in Labassecoure (Brussels). We have also enumerated the different obstacles positioned by Lucy's male counterparts to obstruct her progress toward self-assertion.



As far as Amrouche is concerned, we have noticed that she has adopted the same strategy as Brontë's by exposing the general atmosphere of Mlle Anatole's institution which is dominated by strict religious norms. Amrouche has also displayed Reine's efforts to integrate the group and her disillusionment by the gap subsisting between France's real established order and its conveyed 'Mission Civilisatrice' ideal.

By singling out their backgrounds' peculiarities and revealing the social norms and values governing them, Brontë and Amrouche hit the ground to prelude their protagonists' resistance against these established orders, and their commitment to develop their sense of the self studied in the second chapter.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian\\_britain/women\\_home/ideals\\_womanhood\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_01.shtml) /History ideals of womanhood in Victorian Britain

<sup>2</sup> Gaskell, Elizabeth. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. London: Humphrey Milford, 1939, p.174.

<sup>3</sup> Brontë, Charlotte. *Villette*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1999; p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,p.59.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.,p.59.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.,p.65.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.,p.140.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.142.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.,p.123.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.188.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.,p.188.

<sup>12</sup>[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian\\_britain/women\\_home/ideals\\_womanhood\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_01.shtml) /History ideals of womanhood in Victorian Britain

<sup>13</sup> Brontë, Charlotte. *Villette*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1999; p.329.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.330.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.332.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.374.

<sup>17</sup> Benaouida Bensaid/Tarek Ladjal, "The French Colonial Occupation and the Algerian National Identity: Alienation or Assimilationh?" *International Journal of Arab Culture Management and Sustainable Development*; 2(2/3): 142-152, January 2012. [https://www.researchgate.net/.../263698551\\_The\\_French\\_colonial\\_\(accessed\\_July\\_12\\_2019\).2](https://www.researchgate.net/.../263698551_The_French_colonial_(accessed_July_12_2019).2).

<sup>18</sup> Yacine, Tassadit. « Femmes et Ecriture : Taos Amrouche, précurseur du féminisme nord-africain » *Tumultes* N°37, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-tumultes-2011-2-page-147.htm> (accessed July, 14, 2019),147/148.

<sup>19</sup> Amrouche, Taos. *Jacinthe Noire*. Tizi-Ouzou: Editions Frantz Fanon, 2018; p.21.

<sup>20</sup> Ait Mansour Amrouche, Fadhma. *Histoire de Ma Vie*. Algeria: Hibre Editions, 2017, p.202.

<sup>20</sup> Amrouche, Taos. *Jacinthe Noire*. Tizi-Ouzou : Editions Frantz Fanon, 2018, p.59.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.60.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.60/61.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.61.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.149/150.

<sup>25</sup> Boniteau, Adrien. « Question Religieuse Chez Rousseau : Religion Naturelle et Religion Civique » 2016/10/03 / <http://phillitt.fr>

<sup>26</sup> Amrouche, Taos. *Jacinthe Noire*. Tizi-Ouzou: Frantz Fanon, 2018; p.62.

<sup>27</sup> Ada, Ribstein. En Marge d'un Genre : *Jacinthe Noire* de Taos Amrouche / Jeux et Enjeux de l'Enonciation Autobiographique. Mémoire de Master 1 de Lettres Modernes en Littérature Comparée et Francophonie, [www.limag.refer.org/new/index.php?inc=dspliv&liv=00019623](http://www.limag.refer.org/new/index.php?inc=dspliv&liv=00019623) (accessed July,3,2019),34.

<sup>28</sup> Amrouche, Taos. *Jacinthe Noire*. Tizi-Ouzou: Editions Frantz Fanon, 2018; p.269.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.130.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.199.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.220.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.206.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.219.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.215

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.219.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.275.

## **Chapter II: Resistance and Self-Affirmation**

### **Introduction**

This chapter deals with Lucy's and Reine's resistance against their social established orders and retraces their journeys toward self-accomplishment. It demonstrates that though the two protagonists share the same aspirations for success and easy pace integration, their experiences will take up different turns because of cross-cultural differences. Lucy's resistance against patriarchal order by the appropriation of some men's virtues to free herself from the shackles of subordination leads to success whereas Reine's rebellion against alienation through the perpetuation of her cultural ideals causes her dismissal.

The main purpose of this chapter is to show Brontë's and Amrouche's reflection of their own experiences in their protagonists' journeys. The chapter aims also at shedding light on the different strategies adopted by the two writers to justify their choices and transmit their prospects for the improvement of women's condition.

### **II-1 Lucy's Progress Toward Self-Assertion in *Villette***

In this section we are going to follow Lucy's quest for self-assertion and retrace her journey from her early life till her ascension to the position of a school directress passing by the different constraints she has to overcome.

Early in her life, Lucy is forced by her bereaved lot and other circumstances to self-reliance and exertion. She starts her working career as a nurse companion then thanks to providence and chance she is engaged by Madame Beck to fulfill the duties of a nursery governess, a position that does not loath her as she is eager to earn her bread and knowledge. Lucy is looking after her duties and performs her work diligently. She takes care of Madame Beck's children, hears their English lessons and prayers and repairs Madame's silk dress: "I was one day setting up-stairs, as usual, hearing the children their English lessons, and at the same time turning a silk dress for Madame."<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, she learns French by practicing it

in the day time and studying it at night. She is not really enchanted by the nature of her work but resolved herself to do it as it provides her daily bread and shelter.

Lucy does her work with abnegation and perseverance till the day when her position in Madame Beck's Pensionnat improves from a simple 'Bonne d'Enfant' to a prominent 'English Teacher'. On that day, the permanent English teacher has failed to come to his hour and Madame Beck, who is highly satisfied by Lucy's work and efficiency, takes a daring decision and asks her to take over his class. Madame Beck's sudden offer fosters Lucy's alienation and throws her into an emotional conflict caused by many apprehensions. She feels oppressed by her disposition and rudimentary mastery of French, the medium of the instruction and doubts her capacity to ensure such a task: "in fact, the difficulty before me were far from being wholly imaginary; some of them were real enough, and not the least substantial lay in my want of mastery over the medium through which I would be obliged to teach."<sup>2</sup> She also dreads the encounter of a large group of boisterous girls which would be a trial for any one in her condition. The reprisals of such a decision are quite perilous but Lucy makes prove of self-assertion takes the bull by the horns and accepts the challenge.

Lucy proceeds to her first lesson amidst the murmurs and the indiscipline of the girls who are not inclined to be taught by 'a bonne d'enfant' (nursery governess). The girls' reaction reflects the social establishment of the Victorian Era and the despising attitude adopted by the upper class toward the working class. Lucy is quite aware of her social position and knows well that the only way to gain respect is by proving her competency and effectiveness. She resolves to face the situation alone without relying on Madame Beck's intervention. She shows firmness, undertakes her task tactfully and succeeds to subdue her students who are expecting an easy victory over her: "I knew I looked a poor creature, and in many respects actually was so, yet nature had given me a voice that could make itself heard, if lifted in excitement and deepened by emotion."<sup>3</sup> Lucy's self-assertion and self-control is once

again displayed through her ingeniousness in controlling her pupils' insurrection and earning their respect and willing to follow their English lesson; "when I gravely and tranquilly returned to the estrade, courteously requested silence, and commenced a dictation as if nothing at all had happened- the pens travelled peacefully over the pages, and the remainder of the lesson passed in order and industry."<sup>4</sup>

Lucy's new employment stimulates her and raises her ambitions for better prospects. She manages to fill her time profitably. She is teaching others while studying herself to improve her level and gain more knowledge. She has no spare time and continues to acquire experience: "my time was now profitably filled up. What with teaching other and studying closely myself, I had hardly a spare moment."<sup>5</sup> Lucy serves as Charlotte Brontë's double and conveys her vision of Enlightenment. She is conscious that her unique chance toward self-improvement is through learning and hard work. She is resolute to improve her intellectual capacities and surmount all her plights to reach self-fulfillment.

Lucy gets to know better M. Paul whom she met on her first coming to Madame Beck's Pensionnat. Since then, she has learned that he is also teaching at the school where he is highly respected and appreciated by the pupils. During the school Fête, Lucy succeeds to earn his friendship by accepting to take over the part of a pupil, who has suddenly fallen ill, in the play he is directing. Despite her obedience, she overrides all his authority and zealousness to save his spectacle. She keeps control over her role and rejects to wear the male clothes given to her. She demands to dress as she wishes and proves her difference from the other submissive girls at the school: "...it [costume] must be arranged in my way: nobody must meddle; the things must not be forced on me."<sup>6</sup> Lucy's refusal to wear the men's costume and the accommodation of her assigned role in the play, conveys her resistance to the patriarchal order represented by M. Paul. It displays her will to have control on her deeds instead of being constantly controlled by men's directives or orders.

Just like Charlotte Brontë who had overcome a depression after her return from Brussels because of her unrequited love for her professor M Heger who was married, Lucy experiences the same condition during her two months vacation. She goes through a long period of despair and desolation. She remains alone in the school and her solitude makes her feel nervous and exhausted. She urges for company and someone to care for her: “a want for companionship maintained in my soul the cravings of a most deadly famine.”<sup>7</sup> Her work proves to be an outward support that keeps her from falling. Though teaching is not an important vocation, it diverts her thoughts and divides her interests. To overcome her depression, she makes prove of great determination and uses to march solitary through the hot September days in Villette. During one of her wanderings, she seeks help in a Catholic Church where a kind priest listens compassionately to her confession. While getting out of the church and trying to find her way back to the empty school, she meets a storm, collapses and faints. When Lucy awakens, she finds herself under the protection of friends.

Lucy's time with the Brettons passes agreeably under their care and guard ship. Their companionship proves beneficial for her well-being and once her health and vitality recovered; Lucy leaves them and gets back to the monotony of her work. She is “getting once more inured to the harness of school, and lapsing from the passionate pain of change to the palsy of custom.”<sup>8</sup> She sticks to her seriousness and keeps improving. Madame Beck rewards her efforts by granting her more liberty and by relieving her from many constraints. Lucy has the permission to get out more and meet her acquaintances. Meanwhile, she strengthens her friendship with the professor who becomes her teacher. Like M. Heger - C. Brontë's teacher during her schooling in Brussels- M. Paul would contribute highly to Lucy's education by lending her volumes of classics, interesting new works, magazines and romances and by teaching her the systematic branches of knowledge such as French literature and classics.

Lucy shows her interest and proves her worthiness. She appropriates men's eagerness toward knowledge and instruction and manages to improve her skills to get recognition and respect.

During Lucy's learning process, M. Paul is helpful and attentive, yet sometime he turns suspicious and accuses her of intellectual pride. His ambivalence and injustice stirs Lucy's aspiration and incites her to work harder in order to acquire the different subjects he pretends she is mastering and to overthrow his perception of women as the lesser sex: "there were times when I would have given my right hand to possess the treasures he ascribed to me." <sup>9</sup> Lucy's growing motivation and knowledge develop her faculty of imagination. She starts writing compositions which are carefully examined and corrected by her teacher. M. Paul is proud of her progress and urges her to take part to the public examination as a first place pupil (most advanced): "he has before afflicted me: namely, that on the next public examination-day I should engage -foreigner as I was- to take my place on the first form of first-class pupils, and with them improvise a composition in French, on any subject any spectator might dictate, without benefit of grammar or lexicon."<sup>10</sup> Lucy's intellectual enterprise stands as an opposition to the patriarchal qualities imposed on women during the Victorian period. Intellectuality frees her from submission and ignorance. It permits her to express her own opinions and shape her own sense of identity.

Lucy is full of hope and ambition. She wants to advance in life and plans to open a day school. This promising project would secure her future and make her independent. She makes saving plans, gets inspired by Madame Beck's success and intends to rent a house which would serve as a tenement and school at once: "courage, Lucy Snow! With self-denial and economy now, and steady exertion by-and-by, an object in life need not fail you."<sup>11</sup> Lucy is quite aware that her knowledge has not grown and ripened over time. She keeps working laboriously to remedy and fill her lacuna. But despite all her efforts, she fails to pass her public examination. She feels upset to seem *ignoramus* in the systematic branches of

knowledge. Nevertheless, she makes better on topics of general information and succeeds to impress her examiners with the quality of her composition on human justice. After this ordeal, Lucy and M. Paul reiterate their vows of friendship. They have a long conversation, share some confidences and Lucy tells M. Paul about her plan to open a school. Lucy shares Charlotte Brontë's aspiration to open a school and prosper in it. She would be the means by which Brontë's aborted projects and wishes would be fulfilled.

Lucy and M. Paul's friendship instigates many doubts among the latter's devoutly catholic relatives who perceive this relation with truer light and detect the growing love between Lucy and M. Paul. They devise a plan to send M. Paul to the West Indies on a family business and scheme to keep him away from Lucy during the time before his departure. Lucy is highly affected by this sudden news and waits with anguish for her friend to take leave from her. She grows sick and loses her temper. Everybody around her notices her illness and attributes her unease to a strong headache. To relieve her and sooth her mind, a sedative is given to her by a servant. This opiate rouses her mind to a feverish activity, intensifies her oppression and incites her to leave the school on a night wandering through Villette: "the classes seem to my thought, great dreary jails ... filled with spectral and intolerable memories, laid miserable amongst their straw and their manacles. The corridor offers a cheerful vista, leading to the high vestibule which opens direct upon the street"<sup>12</sup> Lucy's love story and its rejection by M. Paul's relatives mirrors Charlotte Brontë's unrequited love for M. Heger who was married to the head of the boarding school where she worked during her stay in Brussels. Indeed, her rejection and her parting from her friend and teacher who had taught her French through the study of literary masterpieces was a great and lasting grief for her.

Lucy's experience of the opiate and her night of wander through Villette set her on the way toward her own truth. She finishes by admitting to herself that she loves M. Paul and



that her pseudo freedom is just an illusion. After long whiles of wait, M. Paul succeeds to fend off his relatives (Père Silas and Madame Beck), comes to see Lucy with whom he goes on a long walk to say their farewells. He conducts her to a pleasant small house, in the suburbs of Villette, purposely equipped by his care to serve as a tenement and school for her sake. M. Paul has fixed all the details and has even printed a sheaf of advertisement leaflets bearing Lucy's name. He asks Lucy to live and work in the house till his return from the Indies. They celebrate this promising union, have an idyllic repast and converse about their future aspiration and prospects.

Lucy's new departure starts. She gets acquainted to her new situation. She works eagerly, gains more independence and receives comforting letter from her lover. Her school that started by bourgeois pupils soon attracted a higher class: "I commenced my school; I worked- I worked hard. I deemed myself the steward of his property, and determined, god willing, to render a good account. Pupils come -burghers at first- a higher class ere long."<sup>13</sup> Lucy's enterprise prospers and transforms from an externat to a boarding school thanks to an unexpected donation of a hundred pounds: "the secret of my success did not lie so much in myself, in any endowment, any power of mine, as in a new state of circumstances, a wonderfully changed life, a relieved heart."<sup>14</sup> Lucy leads a peaceful life while waiting M. Paul's eventual coming back.

Through the novel's epilogue, Charlotte Brontë simultaneously conforms to and subverts patriarchy. Lucy fits her era's expectancies and plans to marry M. Paul just like all her female counterparts who are well trained from their childhood to become perfect wives and mothers. Meanwhile, M. Paul's departure for the Indies and his long stay abroad provides her with the opportunity to lead her life toward independence and professional accomplishment. With her strong nature and determination, Lucy succeeds to surpass her bereaved lot and other constraining difficulties through self-assertion to become a notorious

school directress. Instead of questioning the Victorian values by rejecting patriarchy and rebelling against established norms related to women's position and status, Charlotte Brontë makes her heroine accommodate its virtues and principles of chastity, faithfulness, respectability and prudishness to prove that where there is a will there is a way.

## **II-2 Cultural Resistance in *Jacinthe Noire***

Just like Brontë who has displayed her recollected process of self-assertion through her fictional double's journey, Amrouche's recourse to the same strategy is conveyed by the depiction of Reine's aborted quest of emancipation by a biased society that she does not succeed to integrate. Amrouche tackles the issue of marginalization, which affects second-zone citizens evolving in colonial societies. She also parallels her commitment for the preservation of her ancestral Berber tradition with Reine's affirmation of her cultural belonging and her willingness to perpetuate its traditional value.

Since her arrival to the boarding house, Reine captivates and fascinates the boarders with her brightness and exuberance. She wears Berbere jewelry and colorful dress that distinguishes her from the others, Marie-Therese, Reine's friend and alter-ego says on her behalf : 'on eut dit que son grand corsage aux grandes manches ajournées de forme excentrique et de teinte violents me fascinait, ainsi que ses bijoux un peu barbares.'<sup>15</sup> Neither her Christian faith nor her access to the European culture succeed to detach Reine from her cultural traditions and values, and instead of simply adopting the western dress she customizes it with traditional adornment to signify her cultural belonging and denote her profound attachment to her origins. She exhibits and asserts her traditional culture purposely as a form of resistance to counter her unwelcoming by the boarding house's occupants displayed through their reaction against her difference. Reine shares this character trait with her creator who has spent most of her life working to save and perpetuate the Berbere culture

from loss and oblivion by collecting popular legends, songs and proverbs and publishing them in *Le Grain Magique* (1966).

Reine asserts her belonging and refuses to be likened to Spaniards, Caucasus or Syrians. She speaks proudly of her ancestral country and expresses openly her profound attachment to it: “quand Reine exprime sa tendresses pour le pays de ses ancêtres, sa voix se voile. Quand elle en dit la tragique beauté, sa voix devient rauque, son visage prend comme une expression de supplication...”<sup>16</sup> In many occasions, Reine confesses her homesickness and the harsh conditions that have urged her family to leave it in search of better prospects. She argues that despite their exile, their country’s love subsists in their hearts and will last till their death: “Notre pays est enfermé en notre âme. Qui nous le volera, ce pays idéal, à l’image du vrai, de celui qui nous a repoussés ? Nos yeux seuls peuvent le contempler sans en être aveuglés.”<sup>17</sup> Reine conveys Taos Amrouche’s memories of exile and the heartbreak she endures while living abroad.

When Reine rallied Paris, she has aspired to evolve in a serene atmosphere full of tolerance. She dreams to find in ‘la ville des lumières’ - renowned for its philosophers of Enlightenment and their advocacy of liberty, progress, religious tolerance, fraternity and individual liberty- acceptance and easy pace integration. She makes efforts to be well perceived by the boarding house’s residents and befriends some of them. She behaves spontaneously and doesn’t hesitate to share souvenirs of moments of joy and sorrow spent with her family and fiancé. Unfortunately for her, some of her comrades are full of biased perception and instead of accepting her; they try to adapt her to the pension’s code of conduct and its religious orientations. As Reine refuses to renounce her own values and sticks to her cultural ideals, she faces rejection and stigmatization. She feels disoriented by the reality of the pensionnat, a microcosm that mirrors the social relations between the foreigner Reine and the French students, and the hierarchical domination of the French society. Like Taos

Amroche, Reine wants to be recognized as she is and not as a perfect representative sample of the group she belongs to. Both of them fight against alienation and resist the process of assimilation which seeks to put the colonized in a purposely conceived mould that would contain them and prevent them from rebelling against their established authorities.

During the inauguration of the chapel, a dinner of celebration is organized. The descriptions of the different events occurred during this soiree display and illustrate the paradox subsisting between the ideal Catholic community extolling equality and tolerance and the hypocrisy of the pension where racism, inequality and injustice dominate. Through the depiction of this event, Taous Amrouche displays both the influence exercised on her by prominent French writers as Zola and Montesquieu and her perception of the French community with all its defects and disparities.<sup>18</sup> She reproduced Zola's strategy in *L'Assomoir* (*Le Festin de Gervaise* which is a parody of "La Sainte Cene") by caricaturing the Christian values and substituting them with the seven deadly sins .

She starts by comparing the gathered girls to a mob waiting impetuously the beginning of the circus games during the antique times to demonstrate that love and sharing is substituted to cruelty: "Less filles de Jephté et les Lucites, un peu surecitées, semblaient attendre...comme au cirque en attend."<sup>19</sup> Then, she reiterates her strategy by showing the prevailing of racism and gossiping amongst the boarders: "Les conversations mystérieuses s'activèrent, se firent passionnées. J'en saisis à droite et à gauche quelques bribes. « Elle est d'une drôle de race. »/ « Elle se farde scandaleusement." <sup>20</sup> Afterward, Amrouche unveils the gluttony of the invitees and the inequality subsisting between the occupants of the table of honor and the other commoners: "Par bonheur; on apporta la dinde en grand triomphe. On lui fait une ovation. Mlle Anatole la promena de table en table... Bien entendu, à la table d'honneur furent engloutis les meilleurs morceaux de la dinde. Nous n'eûmes, nous qu'une cuillerée de purée de marrons et quelques os et Reine moins encore."<sup>21</sup> She also emphasizes

on the hypocrisy of Mlle Anatole who is used to exalt spirituality and detachment from material goods: ‘celle qui se laissent atteindre par cette chose misérable qu’était un repas, celle qui ne savaient pas s’élever au-dessus de la matière.’”<sup>22</sup>

By making Marie-Thérèse adopt the same attitude as Usbek and Rica<sup>23</sup> (the two protagonists of Montesquieu’s *Lettres Persanes*), Taos Amrouche reverses Montesquieu’s narrative process (in his work, two foreigners have a piercing look on the French society with the purpose of analyzing and criticizing its customs and social structure) by making the French Character, Marie-Thérèse, convey Reine’s perception of the French society and more precisely the catholic community of the pension that stands as a representative sample of the whole community. Through her, Taos Amrouche examines, judges and criticizes the mores, social structure and opinions of the colonial society that advocates liberty and equality. The depiction of this celebration permits the revelation of the institution’s true color and sheds light on its defects.

*In the Wretched of the Earth* (1959), Fanon states that the “Colonized Intellectual” goes through three phases during his or her creative process:

Si nous voulions retrouver à travers les œuvres d’écrivains colonisés les différentes phases qui caractérisent cette évolution, nous verrions se profiler devant nos yeux un panorama en trois temps. Dans une première phase, l’intellectuel prouve qu’il a assimilé la culture de l’occupant. Ses œuvres correspondent point par point à celle de ses homologues...

Dans un deuxième temps le colonisé est ébranlé et décide de se souvenir...

Enfin dans une troisième phase, dite de combat, le colonisé, après avoir tenté de se perdre dans le peuple, de se perdre avec le peuple, va au contraire secouer le peuple...<sup>24</sup>

If we want to find throughout colonized writers’ works the different phases characterizing this evolution, we will perceive profiling before us a panorama of three phases. During the first phase, the intellectual proves his or her assimilation of the colonizer’s culture. His or her literary works match point per point to those of his or her counterparts...

In the second phase, the colonized is decided to remember and commemorate the past...

Finally, in the third phase, the combat phase, the colonized, after having tried to get lost amongst his or her nation, or with his or her nation, will afterward try to wake up the nation and get them move forward. (Translation: mine)

Very surprisingly, Amrouche's text fits perfectly Fanon's depiction of the 'colonized intellectual' and conveys her transition by these three phases of assimilation, alienation and the 'combat literature'. The first phase corresponds to the displaying of her cultural appreciations and the aforementioned imitations of renowned French writers as Rousseau, Zola and Montesquieu. The second phase is demonstrated through the criticizing of the French society and its mores. The third phase is a bit different because Amrouche shows only her unconditional and profound attachment for her cultural values and ideals without appealing to react against colonialism and its hegemonic worldview.

After Reine's dismissal from the boarding house following Père Julien's and some comrades 'betrayal' (Paula, Mimi, Augusta, Jeannette), Reine proves self-control and determination. She keeps proud, refuses to be pitied and forbids her friends (Marie-Thérèse, Adrienne, Gilberte, Marguerite la Bretonne...) to undertake any action to defend her or reprehend Mlle Anatol for her decision. The reasons advanced to justify her banning are qualified by her friends as being absurd and odious since there are among them even non believers who don't get the same sanction as Reine:

- C'est Inadmissible! Reprit-elle [Madeleine] avec indignation. Pourquoi la renvoyer ?
- Parce qu'elle [Reine] est de nous toutes la plus entière, la plus courageuse, la plus vraie, lançai-je tumultueusement.
- Parce qu'elle jure comme une négresse au milieu des femmes blanche, ajouta Adrienne.
- Mais ce n'est pas une raison ! répondit avec force Madeleine. Nous demande-t-on, ici, d'être autre chose que nous même ? Vous imaginez vous que je travestisse ma pensée ? Qui donc ignore que je suis incroyante ?
- Personne, convint Adrienne. Mais encore une fois vous êtes si l'on peut dire « moins voyante » que Reine, comprenez-vous ? Impossible de n'avoir pas l'œil et l'oreille attirés par elle. <sup>25</sup>
- It is unacceptable! She said [Madeleine] with indignation. Why to dismiss her?
- Because she [Reine] is among all of us the most complete, the most courageous, the most sincere, said I tumultuously.
- Because she swears like a Negress between white women, added Adrienne.

- It is not a convincing reason! Answered forcefully Madeleine. Are we asked here to be something else BUT ourselves? Could you imagine me concealing my thoughts? Who does ignore that I am an unbeliever?

- No one answered Adrienne. But once again you should admit that you are “less extravagant” than Reine! It is impossible to ignore her. (Translation: mine)

Despite her pain and disappointment, Reine resolves to clarify things before her departure and writes a prolix letter for Elizabeth to expound the reasons behind her dismissal. She explains to her friends that the main purpose of her letter is to convince Elizabeth that Mlle Anatole’s decision is unfair and to demonstrate that instead of being exasperated by her expulsion, she feels strengthened and confident: ‘que j’aie souffert, je ne n’aurai pas l’hypocrisie de le nier. Mais enfin je ne suis pas détruite, elle ne m’on pas fait douter de moi et c’est cela qu’il me fallait leur crier avant de m’en aller.’<sup>26</sup>

In the prologue of her letter, Reine states that she belongs to that category of people who renounced their ancestral beliefs in order to embrace Catholicism. She adds that her first impressions of the boarding house were positive but her mind changes rapidly as the observation of the group and its habits demonstrate their shallowness and hypocrisy. She enumerates some of the reasons advanced by Mlle Anatole to justify her action inter alia having a strong personality, having a different scale of values and speaking excessively of Rousseau and Gide. She argues that her dismissal after only a two month stay is comparable to the condemnation of Rousseau’s *Confessions* by people who have never taken time to read or understand them:

Certaines élèves poussent des cris en parlant de *Confessions* de Rousseau sans les avoir lues. N’est-ce pas une espèce de malhonnêteté de condamner ce que l’on n’a pas eu le courage, ou la force de lire ! Cette façon d’aborder livres et gens est extrêmement dangereuse, parce qu’elle éloigne de la vraie connaissance.<sup>27</sup>

In her diatribe, Reine deplores the Boarders’ attitude and their lack of empathy toward her. She advises to never judge a book by its cover and recommends tolerance and acceptance. Through this letter, Taos Amrouche reacts against the colonial hegemony and its

constant relegation of colonized population to second-zone citizens deprived of any hope of ascension or emancipation if not assimilated. She reveals the feelings and emotions she experienced during her two months stay in Paris and the pain she endures after her dismissal. She also reviews her memories to relieve herself from the burden of remorse by recollecting the events that have impacted her life as: renouncement to ancestral beliefs, exile, stigmatization as the other and exclusion. Both Taos and Reine face adversity and prove through their determination and strength of character that what does not kill you makes you stronger.

Reine takes the resolution to depart from the boarding house with dignity and plans to meet her Fiancé in Marseille, but before she leaves, she organizes a dinner of farewell for her friends in her brother's house and spends with them pleasant moments. She reminds Marie-Thérèse about her fears and emphasizes that all her apprehensions were well founded. She honors their friendship and promises to keep in touch with them. Reine's *joie de vivre* and authenticity prevail and her failure is soon forgotten to make room for hope and better prospects.

To round off this section, we may say that Reine reflects Taous Amrouche's values and her commitment to fight Ostracism and stigmatization. She refuses to abdicate and perseveres in the affirmation of her own personality despite the pressures exerted on her to adjust her behavior and make it fit the mores and conventions of the Christian community. Reine also mirrors Taos Amrouche's determination to perpetuate her cultural values and her eagerness to be recognized and appreciated as she is, a person shuttling between cultures fluently without discomfort or malaise.



## Conclusion

In this chapter we have dealt with Lucy's and Reine's resistance against patriarchal and colonial norms respectively and their commitment to reach a sense of identity as independent individuals. We have also demonstrated that the two protagonists share the same determination and eagerness to succeed and uplift their feminine condition. Our analysis of the two protagonist's journey has also revealed that their perseverance distance them from their female counterparts who used to obey their social norms and standards. Both Brontë's and Amrouche's fictional doubles mirror their willingness to upraise the women's condition and liberate them from preconceived ideas and biases related to their gender and social position. Their respective experiences have a repercussion on the forging of their sense" of identity studied in the third chapter

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Brontë, Charlotte. *Villette*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Edition Ltd, 1999 p.375.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.,p.67.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.,p.69.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,p.71.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.72.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.73.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.,p.127.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.145.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.,p.222.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.322.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.333.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.338.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.422.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.460.

<sup>15</sup> Amrouche, Taos. *Jacinthe Noire*. Tizi-Ouzou: Editions Frantz Fanon, 2018, p.23/24.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.25.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.197.

<sup>18</sup> Ada, Ribstein. En Marge d'un Genre : *Jacinthe Noire* de Taos Amrouche / Jeux et Enjeux de l'Enonciation Autobiographique. Mémoire de Master 1 de Lettres Modernes en Littérature Comparée et Francophonie, [www.limag.refer.org/new/index.php?Inc=dspliv&liv=00019623](http://www.limag.refer.org/new/index.php?Inc=dspliv&liv=00019623) (accessed July,3,2019),p.28.

<sup>16</sup> Amrouche, Taos. *Jacinthe Noire*. Tizi-Ouzou: Editions Frantz Fanon, 2018; p.268.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.269.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,p.270.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.238.

<sup>23</sup> Ada, Ribstein. En Marge d'un Genre : *Jacinthe Noire* de Taos Amrouche / Jeux et Enjeux de l'Enonciation Autobiographique. Mémoire de Master 1 de Lettres Modernes en Littérature Comparée et Francophonie, [www.limag.refer.org/new/index.php?Inc=dspliv&liv=00019623](http://www.limag.refer.org/new/index.php?Inc=dspliv&liv=00019623) (accessed July,3,2019),p.32.

<sup>24</sup> Fanon, Frantz. *Les Damnés de la Terre*. Bejaia : Edition Talantikit, 2015, p.205.

<sup>25</sup> Amrouche, Taos. *Jacinthe Noire*. Tizi-Ouzou: Editions Frantz Fanon, 2018; p.328.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.328.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.334.

## **Chapter III: Identity**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to discuss the reflection of Brontë's and Amrouche's sense of identity in their fictional doubles respectively Lucy Snowe and Reine. Our reading of the two autobiographical novels leads us to notice that the two authors come out with a new model of feminine spirit and independence. The main objective of this chapter is to spot light on the impact that the two writers' lives has on the forging of their sense of identity.

### **III-1 Lucy's Sense of Identity in Villette**

*Villette's* analysis shed light on the way Lucy gradually constructs her sense of identity in a world shaped by Victorian standards. Lucy's journey traces the evolution of a woman and exposes her society's flawed conception of women as docile and submissive creatures. Lucy moves from stage to stage while trying to forge an individual identity independent of collective society. Evolving in a world devoid of dynamic female role models and where social dependency was a social expectation, Lucy has learnt to survive and succeeded to stand as a model that encapsulates the true intelligence of real women and proves that unmarried women can become something else than grouchy spinsters or confined nuns. She proclaims her feminine independence, established her own sense of identity, transcends the idea of the Victorian prudish women and becomes a specimen for a new feminine identity.

Lucy Snow is a feminine heroine crafted upon her creator's image. She stands as her double and mirrors all her concerns and aspirations. She conveys her conception of the ideal women and showcases the different attributes and characteristics that they should have in order to free themselves from the specter of perfect specimen of Victorian women. She is endowed with discernment, free-thinking ideals, deep-rooted passion and intellect enabling her to rebel against conventions and established social norms. She proves her intellectual superiority by accommodating her condition to bypass subjection and social expectations. She defies assigned gender roles through the cultivation of a new worldview independent from her society and by undertaking a working career as a teacher. Though not a vocation or a choice, teaching allows her to secure her livelihood and saves her from necessity.

Lucy is "a mask under which Charlotte Brontë conceals her identity in order to reveal the unappealing reality of her emotional life and its central figures"<sup>1</sup> Like her creator; she struggles with the perception of nineteenth century women within their restrictive society and rebels against its emphasis on submissiveness and silence. She is a driving force, a woman who has suffered from the female's expected social conducts. She has an imaginative spirit and free thinking ideals. She is a dynamic and strong figure standing as a representative new feminine identity and incarnates Charlotte Brontë's ideal of womanhood as freed from exceedingly patriarchal worldview that used to reduce woman to a mere pretty toy pampered by a loving and caring father or husband. Through her atypical journey, Charlotte Brontë has demonstrated that an excluded woman may overcome her plights and transcend social marginalization and isolation to constitute a new female-self fulfillment.

Lucy is also the means through which Brontë has expressed her dissatisfaction with the Victorian world's emphasis on the ideally feminine and common gender role. She is propelled as a new model of feminine spirit and independence capable of having different perspectives apart from marriage or convent walls. Her desolate and deprived condition

doesn't inhibit her progress but provides her with an incommensurable determination and strength to surmount all her miseries to advance in life. Her independence helps her to rise up the social ladder and evolve from a nursery-governess to a respectable teacher then to a notorious school directress. Lucy's unconventional beliefs and attitudes mirror Charlotte Brontë's combativeness to upraise her female counterpart's condition and liberate them from preconceived ideas and biases related to their social position.

The autobiographical dimension of *Villette* is not to prove as many episodes in Lucy's life correspond to her creator's experience in Brussels and reflect Brontë's states of mind while evolving in a foreign country far away from her beloved family and homeland. It is the repository through which Charlotte Brontë has exposed the different events that had a major impact on the course of her life. Lucy is the spokeswoman that communicates her personal statements about women and the way they should be. Lucy's journey and quest for an individual identity have mirrored her own story and experience as an authoress and a knowledge seeker in a period when women were supposed to be passive and submissive. Lucy has traced her trip to Brussels, displayed her self-evolvement and depicted the different states of mind that she has gone through during that period of alienation. Writing this autobiographical novel has given Charlotte Brontë the opportunity to revisit her past and reconsider its events and circumstances to relief and console herself and above all impart her recommendations and wisdom. Iris Murdoch consolidates this claim and explains that 'any story that we tell about ourselves consoles us since it imposes patterns upon something which might otherwise seem intolerably chancy and incomplete'<sup>2</sup> from this we infer that recounting one's own story with all its joys and pains acts as a therapy and helps in healing and relieving overburdened consciousness and memories.

### III-2 Reine's Hybrid Sense of Identity in *Jacinthe Noire*

*Jacinthe Noire*'s analysis tackled Reine's two months stay in Mlle Anatole's boarding house and the misadventure she experienced there because of her otherness. Her journey recollects Taos Amrouche's own experience and conveys her commitment for self-assertion in an environment full of religious dogma and racial stereotypes. Reine makes efforts to fit the pensionnat's environment but all her attempts prove vain because the groups she wants to integrate require her assimilated and self effacing. She keeps authentic and sticks to her cultural values to counter alienation by affirming her difference. The particularity of Reine's background encompassing two cultures (ascribed and achieved), two religions (Catholicism and Islam) and two traditions (Berbere tradition mostly oral and the French tradition) predisposes her to cultivate a new form of identity that can be termed hybrid identity.

In postcolonial studies, the term 'hybridity' refers to the mixing of races (miscegenation) and cultures so that new forms of cultures are produced.<sup>2</sup> Therefore Taos Amrouche who belongs to a Kabyle family converted to Christianity by French Missionaries fits this description and may be recognized as a person with a hybrid sense of identity. Indeed her growing in a kabyle Muslim conservative environment full of traditional values, her family's exile to Tunisia, her education in the French school with all its precepts and ideals, and her Christian religion provide her with a rich cultural background expounded tactfully in *Black Hyacinth*. Through her novel's protagonist and fictional double, Amrouche conveys personal experience and her struggle to get recognition and acceptance despite her otherness. Reine vehicles most of her apprehensions and showcases her long process of self affirmation. She also reflects her personal battles to counter ostracism and her commitment to impose herself with all her singularity to counter the distortion of her cultural identity.

The recourse to the autobiographical writing allows Taos Amrouche to reveal the events that have marked her sojourn in Paris. The adoption of this genre also permits her to be

in conformity with the social norms and values that governed the Grand Maghreb at that time where patriarchy and Islamic dictate prevail over individual liberties and aspirations. Through her fictional double, Reine, Taos Amrouche focuses on the different elements that surround the construction of her identity. She evokes her cultural values and ideals to affirm herself and override her stigmatization as 'the strange other'. She also affirms her attachment to the French values that have branded her and stimulated her depart for Paris where she aspires to develop her intellectual capacities and upraise her feminine condition.

*Black Hyacinth* is a tribune through which Taous Amrouhe, retraces retrospectively her gaze on the boarding house, the different events she has experienced while evolving there and their impact on the forging of her personality . She relates that once in Paris, she keeps determined to acquire knowledge, to improve her mastery of literary, philosophical, artistic and poetic skills and to perpetuate her cultural traditions. She adds that she spares neither time nor energy to achieve her objectives and gets recognized for her courage and assumed faithfulness toward her ideals. Reine/Taos's exile family and beloved ones enhances her attachment to her origins and pushes her toward cultural affirmation through the wearing of Berber adornments and the exaltation of her ancestral country's grandeur. But despite her unconditional love for her country: 'mon pays est moi même'<sup>4</sup>, she also avows her profound passion for France: 'J'aime trop la France. J'aime ses auteurs [...] Je lui dois tout ce que je sais. Mon amour pour la France est réel, profond, comprenez : j'ai été façonnée par Paris.'<sup>5</sup>Interchangeably both Taos and Reine mirror their capacity to surmount ambivalence by conciliating ethnicity, religion and culture.

For Taos Amrouche 'toute ecriture est autobiographique'<sup>6</sup> since the writing process permits the manifestation of the universal and human values that nurtured her as sincerity, authenticity, tolerance, acceptance and truth. She advocates all these values and rejects hypocrisy, duplicity, and the contrast subsisting between formal religious discourse and

reality that reflects the true color of the civilizing mission which was meant to assimilate and subordinate natives. She extols freedom and self emancipation against social conformity that exercises pressure on individuals to make them fit social norms and conventions. She resists unitary identity and avows her multiplicity: ‘mes frères et mes sœurs de race manquent à mes yeux de subtilité, de finesse. notre vie champêtre me repose pendant les vacances, mais à la longue, elle m’ennuierait [...] je suis à mi-chemin de l’un et de l’autre.’<sup>7</sup> Her novelistic work is the means through which she goes beyond preconceived ideas about women to express publicly and without constraints her perception of the colonial society with its tendencies to accentuate social cleavages instead of reducing them.

Through the depiction of Reine’s journey and her rich and varied background, Taos Amrouche tries to explain the reasons behind her hybrid identity. Her strategy aims at explaining Reine’s quest of identity in a hostile atmosphere full of doxa (biases). She justifies Reine’s nonconformism by her urging need to counter the racial and cultural discrimination directed against her by almost all the borders, to resist ‘indigene’ women’s victimization and to affirm herself as an emancipated woman. Reine is Taos Amrouche image of a plural identity combining universal values, French cultural references, Berbere traditions and values, and religious tolerance. Reine stands as an ‘avant gardiste’ world citizen able to evolve in a cosmopolitan society without feigning cultural assimilation or fearing marginalization.

## **Conclusion**

Through this chapter, we have tried to show Lucy’s success to create her own sense of identity as an independent individual through the improvement of her condition. Then we have covered Rein’s commitment to counter ostracism by asserting the diversity and richness of her cultural values and ideals. We have also drawn parallels between Bonté’s and Amrouche’s fictional doubles to highlight the autobiographical dimension of their works that aim at reflecting their sense of the self.

### ***End notes***

<sup>1</sup>Carlisle, Janice. “The Face in the Mirror: *Villette* and the Conventions of Autobiography”. In: ELH46.2 (1979): 262-289. doi:10.2307/2872615-226.

<sup>2</sup>Murdocch, Iris. *The Sovereignty of God*. New York: Schocken Books, 1971, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup>Pramod K. Nayar. *The postcolonial Studies Dictionary*. <http://book/2551967/0f96bd>, p.91.

<sup>4</sup>Amrouche, Taos. *Jacinthe Noire*. Tizi-Ouzou: Editions Frantz Fanon, 2018, p.87.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.242/243.

<sup>6</sup>Amrouche, Taos. “ Tout est Autobiographie”, In Algérie Littérature Action, n° 176-170, Janvier –Avril 2/3, pp .42-46.

<sup>7</sup>Amrouche, Taos. *Jacinthe Noire*. Tizi-Ouzou: Editions Frantz Fanon, 2018, p.243



## V- General Conclusion

This dissertation is an investigation into the exploitation of autobiographical tools with reference to patriarchal and colonial domination in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) and Taos Amrouche's *Jacinthe Noire* (1947). The analysis of the two narratives *has* proved that though the two authors belong to different historical periods, they have adopted the same narrative strategy and modeled their fictional doubles on their own person purposely to convey their urging need for a means of expression susceptible of reflecting their opinions and positions in societies where women's voices were inaudible.

Through their respective narratives, Brontë and Amrouche, recollect the socio-political conditions during their respective eras and expose the harsh circumstances women were undergoing to fulfill their quests of emancipation and progress. In *Villette*, Lucy suffers from the nineteenth century perception of women as dependent and self-denying persons confined to domestic spheres where they were supposed to accomplish their household duties diligently. Through Lucy's experience, Brontë underpins her societal concerns and showcases the different constraints positioned by her male counterparts on women's way to thwart their personal and social emancipation.

In *Jacinthe Noire*, Mlle Anatole's institution serves as a sample to depict the biased perception of non French citizens. There, Reine experiences disparity and faces rejection and stigmatization because of her cultural ideals which were discordant with colonial aspirations for assimilation and accommodation. Reine mirrors Amrouche's disillusionment by the difference between "la France des Lumières" and its real colonial mindset.

The two novels dramatize the outward, as well the inward, journeys undertaken by the two narratives' protagonist to recollect their experiences in the continent, respectively labassecour (Brussels) and Paris, where they aspire to progress and reach self-

accomplishment. The course of events proves that while Lucy leads an easy pace integration toward success and recognition, Reine endures ostracism and finds herself dismissed instead.

The two narratives capture Brontë's and Amrouche's sense of identity through their main characters who experience cross-cultural conflicts and established social norms to stand out as ideals of womanhood freed from social norms' constraints and personal inhibitions. The writing of their autobiographical novels allows both of them to purge themselves from the painful and maturing process their lives have gone through and share the lessons learned from their own experiences.

Parallels between *Villette* and *Jacinthe Noire* do not stop with the use of autobiographical discourse and confession. They extend to the use of a number of stylistic devices, which in turn correlate with feminist thematic parameters. Therefore, this investigation could be a cornerstone for those whose area of interest appeals to explore gender roles and repression in women's fiction.

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