

VOLUME 35 NUMBER 2 JULY 2010

BRONTË STUDIES

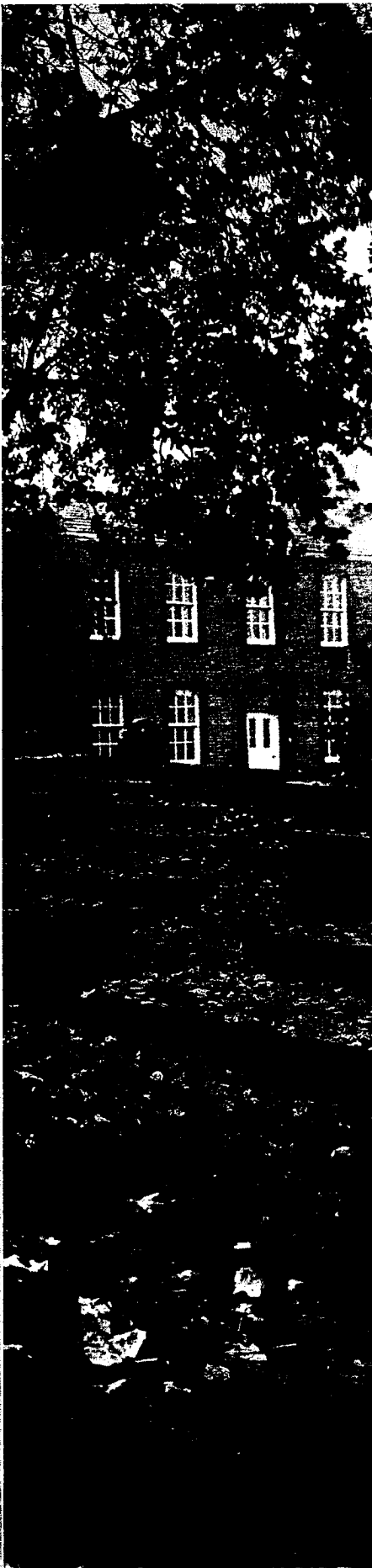
The Journal of the Brontë Society

Special Issue
Villette in Context

 Maney
Publishing

ISSN 1474-8932 (print)

Online at www.ingentaconnect.com



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From *Pasha* to Cleopatra and Vashti: The Oriental Other in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*

AIMILLIA MOHD RAMLI

Critics have argued that Jane's engagement with the Orient in *Jane Eyre* (1847) is grounded in the vocabulary of her role as liberator and the discourse of female slavery and male domination as represented by the use of the harem metaphor in the text. Yet little is said about how this same metaphor exposes in *Villette* (1853) the ambivalence inherent in the construction of a Western character that has been invaded by the so-called menacing influences of the Orient. In the novel, the Oriental familial institution of the harem is figuratively and literally seen as a contaminant that poses a threat to a racial and gendered colonial British character. It suggests that this contamination destabilizes this character, blurring the line that divides both East and West, fantasy and reality, and argues that the Oriental institution of the harem, the artistic representations of women as illustrated by the Orientalist portrait of Cleopatra and the actress playing Vashti and, finally, M. Paul, represent the different ways in which this character is gendered and orientalized.

KEYWORDS Charlotte Brontë, gender, harem, Orientalism, race, *Villette*

Critics argue that the romantic courtship between Jane and Rochester in *Jane Eyre* resembles the relationship that an Oriental despot-lover has with his potential female slave-partner and that the 'harem' metaphor is an essential part of Jane's articulation of women's condition in England because it suggests their situation through terms that identify the oppression of women as alien to British culture.¹ Reading the novel as centring on Jane's success at freeing Rochester from his tendencies towards Oriental despotism, they have, nonetheless, neglected to read *Villette* as another important work by Charlotte Brontë which relies on the very same metaphor to connect the Orient with male domination of women in the West.* It is also markedly different from the earlier novel because it constructs this Oriental invasion as being

* The author's use of 'Orient' and 'Orientalism' derives from Edward Said's theoretical exposition in *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978)

irrevocably damaging to the British male character. Unlike in *Jane Eyre*, the character of Lucy Snowe and nineteenth-century British society are shown to become permanently destabilized by their encounter with the Orient, particularly its institution of the harem.

The shift from a consolidated character to that which accepts internal ambivalences at the heart of any construction of self and the 'other' in *Villette* is a gradual one, and one that symbolizes a journey. By creating a protagonist, Lucy Snowe, who, as a displaced orphan, travels to a foreign place, the narrative adopts a strategy of alienation or detachment that serves to cut off all possible attachment from her surroundings. While the orphan's lack of familial ties could effectively turn him or her into a successful colonial agent, it also stresses his or her 'internal colonisation' and 'profound otherness' within Victorian society that attributes his or her status as 'dispossessed and without rights'.² Seen in this context, her isolation and alienation as an orphan enable Lucy to maintain a European character that allows her not only to disavow social ties, but also to recognize any possible foreign influence which threatens her. Lucy's 'internal colonisation', nonetheless, sets the context for her future identification with the rhetoric of enslavement in the Orientalized household in Britain. Already at the beginning of the novel, Lucy's status as an orphan brings forth the question of ambivalence inherent in any attempt at defining a British character.

Challenges to this British character are further presented in the book through the strange and antagonistic topographies of foreign places which enhance the protagonist's sense of isolation from society. Intending to travel to Belgium, her arrival in London on a dark, raw and rainy evening only increases her feelings of being an outcast. Lucy has begun to feel alienated, even while still in her motherland Britain. Its places are unrecognizable to her. London is compared to the ancient Oriental town, Babylon, with

a wilderness of which the vastness and the strangeness tried to the utmost any powers of clear thought and steady self-possession with which, in the absence of more brilliant faculties, Nature might have gifted [her].³

Like a lone explorer, unable to recognize and comprehend her surroundings, Lucy finds it difficult to respond linguistically to what she sees and encounters; even the primary medium of communication, the English language, becomes alien — it turns into 'a foreign tongue' (*V*, p. 106). She has already positioned herself out of the familiar space of Western reason and commonsense and into an alien Eastern space: the East is in the West.

Her journey east to the Continent serves to further her sense of isolation in a foreign country. Certainly, the narrative points to an increasingly imaginative reconstruction of *Villette* as an alien and unwelcoming space. Natural and societal forces conspire against her upon her arrival at the town, as she comments,

[T]he cold air and black scowl of the night seemed to rebuke me for my presumption in being where I was: the lights of the foreign sea-port town, glimmering round the foreign harbour, met me like unnumbered threatening eyes. (*V*, p. 118)

The threat that Lucy feels coming from the East in her narratives would shortly be transfigured into the form of an Oriental harem.

The Middle Eastern and North African familial institution of the harem is generally associated with the practices and cultures of the Muslim people who lived in these regions. 'Harem', originally a Turkish word, was adapted from the Arabic word حَرَامٌ (haram), meaning either 'something prohibited', and later from its derivative حَرَمٌ (haruma), meaning 'forbidden or unlawful'. Other than retaining all these meanings, the word 'harem' in Turkish has also come to denote private quarters within a house in which its residents are guaranteed privacy that should be honoured and respected by everyone, visitors and family members alike. Both traditional and popular European culture today, however, frequently construct it as a site of sexual licence, a forbidden territory, a segregated space barred to men and charged with erotic significance since it is a place where a number of women are thought to be imprisoned in order to serve the desires of a single and promiscuous dominant male.

Similar to the associations in *Jane Eyre* between the harem and European homes and institutions,⁴ *Villette* contains frequent allusions to the harem-like structures of the Rue Fossette and the other convents.⁵ In one passage, Lucy describes the Rue Fossette as a secluded, 'walled-in' and 'guarded dwelling' (V, p. 348). Through his acquaintance with the town, Dr John can also be said to assume figuratively the role of the master and gate-keeper of this enclosed yet extended space, a place inhabited by enfeathered women, a cavern-like enclosure which he unlocks with the two magical words, 'Open! Sesame' (V, p. 273).

The association Charlotte Brontë makes between the harem and the prison-house in both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* is in line with the general tendency in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European writing to emphasize the enslavement of women within Middle-Eastern and North-African societies. Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721) was the first and most influential work to set the contexts in Western literature for viewing the familial institution of the harem as a prison for women within a largely male, eighteenth-century Orientalist tradition of writing on the subject. As Joyce Zonana argues, it is Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792),⁶ however, which connected the despotism associated with the harem to the issue of women's oppression, not only in the Orient but also in Britain.⁷ Central to her narrative is her accusation that the degradation which European women were suffering was a result of the pernicious invasion and influence of Oriental institutions such as the harem, the forced marriages of young girls, and the selling of slave girls to the highest bidder, in Western culture. She also illustrates, from a European woman's point of view, the effects of tyranny of the Oriental system on the Oriental women.

'In a seraglio, I grant that all these arts are necessary, the epicure must have his palate tickled, or he will sink into apathy: but have women so little ambition as to be satisfied with such a condition?'⁸ What is clear from Wollstonecraft's text is the severity of her condemnation of the Oriental women, whom her description conveys as being barely 'animated'. Their supposedly semi-human state, she implies, explains their general acceptance of the seraglio (or harem) as a legitimate institution. Although there were women writers and travellers, like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Lucy Duff-Gordon, who did not share her prejudices against Oriental women and the familial institution of the harem, their ideas were generally unpopular.

Instead, the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that as early as the seventeenth century, the Italian word *seraglio*, meaning 'a place of confinement' and 'the family unit of various animals' were interchangeably used to render misleadingly the Turkish word *serai* meaning 'lodging' or 'palace'.

The pattern of viewing the harem as a home, albeit an imprisoning one, is one that is well established in Charlotte Brontë's writings. In *Villette*, the Brettons' house can easily be taken to resemble figuratively a typical harem with Dr John as the emblematic figure of the 'Grand Turk' or *pasha*, ruling over his household of women. In this house Dr John's doting female relatives, friends and servants surround him and tend to his every need, making clearer their resemblance to the harem slaves who enslave themselves to an Oriental potentate in a polygamous relationship. The women of Graham's childhood and Dr John's manhood, Mrs Bretton, Lucy Snowe and Paulina Home, live to fulfil the wishes of their 'king/lover' Dr John. And as the novel shows, Paulina adores him in her childhood and eventually falls in love with him and marries him. Consequently, Lucy aptly makes comical but clever references to him as 'The Grand Turk' and Paulina Home as the 'harem girl' in the novel. As Lucy describes them in one episode:

It was sufficiently comical to observe [Paulina] as she sat beside Graham, while he took that meal. In his absence she was a still personage, but with him the most officious, fidgety little body possible. I often wished she would mind herself and be tranquil; but no [...] he was more than the *Grand Turk* in her estimation. (V, p. 82; my emphasis)

While Lucy may not actually have been acquiescent to a male and female relationship that is structured along the lines of the harem-influenced pattern of mastery and enslavement, like the relationship that Paulina Homes has with Dr John, she yet suffers greatly from her internal need to be loved and be able to show love. To be freed from Dr John's affections would be for Lucy to recognize that the only kind of relationship that she might have with him would have to resemble his relationships with the other women in the novel. She, too, would have to over-indulge him and play a subservient role to his masterful figure like a group of harem women who allow themselves to be enslaved by an Oriental despot. In marrying Dr John and continuing to live with her father, Paulina embodies to perfection the figure of the harem-slave, fatally trapped in a harem that is occupied by two masters: her father and Dr John. Lucy later observes other alternative images of the harem-enslaved woman, the figure of Cleopatra, the subject of a painting, and the artist Vashti.

While Cleopatra in the painting is shown to be sexually submissive to her lover, she also mediates between Western men's and women's sexual desires for each other. On the one hand, the episode exposes the imbalance and unfair portrayal of women as powerless, enslaved subjects of male despotism, represented significantly by the male gaze. On the other, it also suggests that the portrait can become an agent of self-empowerment for female viewers if they identified with its subject; as the portrait of the queen asserts a form of power over the male spectators.⁹

The Cleopatra Lucy encounters in the art gallery is shown in a reclining posture amidst signs of feasting adopted in traditional Cleopatra sculptures and paintings. Lucy describes her as:

extremely well-fed: [. . .] She ought likewise to have worn decent garments; a gown covering her properly, which was not the case: out of abundance of material — seven-and-twenty yards, I should say, of drapery — she managed to make inefficient raiment. (V, p. 275)

In the nineteenth century, the dominant Western portrayal of female harem inhabitants, such as the painting described here, aligns their image as slaves with the notion of being highly sexualized; the Oriental woman is presumably given to libidinous and lascivious desires.

The issue of whether or not Lucy is impartial to this condemnation of the Eastern woman to the status of sexual object has become a matter of dispute among those interested in the field of gender politics and Orientalist art. It is a complex issue since the fact that *Villette* highlights a woman's response to the picture epitomizes in itself the possibility of altering both the conventional expectation that Orientalist art existed 'as a vehicle to maximize male sexual viewing pleasure'¹⁰ and the notion of male domination over female that is portrayed in the novel.

Clearly informed by a gendered power-politics of spectatorship, the Cleopatra episode alerts readers to the possibility that European women may find excitement from observing men being captivated by the female subjects of Orientalist art. Unlike Reina Lewis who, in *Gendering Orientalism*, uses the episode to focus on Western women's spectatorship of Orientalist art, arguing that it is mainly concerned with Lucy's identifying similarities between both Eastern and Western women's domestic or feminine sphere,¹¹ the most striking aspects of the episode are that the narrative is not so much composed of Lucy's observation of the queen but what the male characters thought of her sexualized portrayal. The episode, however, represents more than Lucy's acquiescence to a male-dominated sexualized portrait of Cleopatra.¹²

It highlights a complex relationship between the subjects in Orientalist paintings and the European women viewers in which the latter express their identification with the former, an affinity with the 'other' that borders on a need to be as 'desirable' as the 'other'. Lucy, though commenting disparagingly on the Cleopatra portrait, highlighting once again her still ingrained fear of the 'other', is, nonetheless, keenly attracted to the figure. As Lucy tells M. Paul, 'But I have looked at her a great many times while Monsieur has been talking: I can see her quite well from this corner' (V, p. 280). In an earlier episode, she even expresses her desire for the vision of life which Cleopatra exudes, 'Picture me then idle, basking, plump, and happy, stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed with constant sunshine, rocked by breezes indolently soft' (V, p. 94). But instead of expressing this desire outright, Lucy projects it on de Hamal whom she sees admiring the queen. As the simpering de Hamal gazes at the painting, Lucy happily comments, '[W]ith what admiration he gazed upon the Cleopatra!' (V, p. 281). Her reading of de Hamal's spectatorship of the queen suggests that she not only shares his admiration for the portrait but that she also experiences pleasure from watching him desire the latter.

In her analysis of this form of female voyeurism, Jenna Judd argues in her article, 'White-skinned Odalisque: The Residence of Patriarchy and the Means to Subvert it',¹³ that it is possible for female viewers of art to experience positive sensations through their spectatorship of the female subject of an Orientalist painting. As Judd explains, women can find pleasure

through their appreciation of the beauty of the female body and moreover, because of their conscious recognition that the featured figure powerfully secured the male gaze. The projection of the female viewer into the position of the represented figure facilitated the formation of a fantasy in which the viewer was able to feel herself absorbing the attention of a male voyeur through the potency of her beauty and sexuality. Similarly, in viewing the sexualized figure, the female viewer might relive a moment in which her own femaleness and innate sexuality enraptured and consequently subjected a man to an explicitly female form of power.¹⁴

Judd's explanation of the politics of desire inherent in female spectatorship of Orientalist paintings, though focusing on contemporary women as her subjects, suggests that Lucy's admiration of Cleopatra may have been caused by the former's desire to empower herself by identifying with the queen's sexuality. Thus, what the Cleopatra episode offers is an opportunity for Lucy not only to become desirable to the male gaze but also to assert a kind of control over the men in the narrative, a power which eludes a 'shadowy' Lucy in real life.

While the narrative implies Lucy's self-identification with the sexually empowering image of Cleopatra, it also suggests that this identification is riddled with anxiety connected to racial differences. The issue of race is highly significant in this episode since Judd's argument that the European women viewers identified with the Eastern female subject of Orientalist paintings rests on the idea that they both shared 'white' skins. Yet in *Villette*, readers are made cognizant of the fact that the portrait of Cleopatra is a racialized 'other', with 'dusk[y]' (V, p. 281) skin.

The issue of whether or not Cleopatra's foreign race impedes Lucy's identification with her, however, is irrelevant to the narrative. Susan Meyer, in *Imperialism at Home*, rightly demonstrates that in many of Charlotte Brontë's narratives, the racially 'other's' different skin colour or tone does not hinder white and European characters from identifying with it.¹⁵ While these references to Cleopatra's complexion are used to denigrate colonized and coloured people, they do not suggest that the protagonist cannot identify with the Oriental woman's colonized position. In fact, Lucy's lowly social position and her orphan status in the narrative clearly identify her as being subjected to an 'internal' form of colonization. Hence, Cleopatra's racial difference does not impede Lucy's identification with her empowering sexuality. Instead, it is because of their shared 'otherness' that Lucy is acutely aware that the Queen remains imprisoned by a patriarchal power that humiliates her by structuring her gendered and racialized representation.

While it is the painter of the Cleopatra portrait who is guilty of shaping a biased representation, it is the figure of the overpowering Oriental despot, Dr John, who embodies again the tyrannical force of patriarchy which stops Lucy from identifying completely with the Oriental figure of Cleopatra. When Lucy meets him as the last man she encounters at the gallery, she anticipates a lively and mind-invigorating discussion of the painting. Yet what Lucy's inquiry results in unearthing is his disgust of the picture, lambasting it with sexist and racist epithets. "Pooh!" said he. "My mother is a better-looking woman [...] Compare that mulatto with Ginevra!" (V, p. 282). Because of Dr John's chauvinist response to the painting, the episode predictably ends with Lucy's failure to find an acceptable alternative in the form of

Cleopatra, exposing the ambivalence at the heart of Lucy's dilemma: desiring to be sexually attractive to the male characters while, at the same time, recognizing that the desirable woman is the one who remains enslaved and open to the demands and condemnation of patriarchy. The imprisonment of women inside a harem resembles that of the imprisonment of Cleopatra inside the Western painter's gaze and form.

The question of female sexuality, artistic representation and race resurfaces again in the context of another spectacle — the dramatic portrayal of Vashti. Much like Cleopatra, the actress playing Vashti, assuming that the part depicts story of the Biblical Vashti, is also both feminized and racialized. Yet, instead of projecting her in an inferior position in relation to patriarchy, Charlotte Brontë's narrative resorts to portraying the actress in the role of Vashti as a wild, rebellious, unconquered and alluring alien space which a European explorer expects to encounter and penetrate, as Lucy remarks just as she is about to watch her performance. Lucy says:

Deeply did I feel myself privileged in having a place before that stage; I longed to see a being of whose powers I had heard reports which made me conceive peculiar anticipations. I wondered if she would justify her renown: with strange curiosity, with feelings severe and austere, yet of riveted interest, I waited. She was a study of such nature as had not encountered my eyes yet: a great and *new planet* she was: but in what shape? I waited her rising. (V, p. 338, my emphasis)

When Lucy finally sees her, the latter fits well with a Martinesque depiction of the present decadence of the Orient, 'What I saw was the shadow of a royal Vashti: a queen, fair as the day once, turned pale now like twilight, and wasted like wax in flame' (V, p. 339). Even though she is decaying, the actress playing Vashti is an important character in terms of an alternative and Oriental female personage in comparison to Cleopatra.

Like the Western construction of Cleopatra, the biblical queen, Vashti lacks the self-abnegation that characterizes the conventional ideal of a Victorian woman. She was a woman who paid no notice to the wishes of others. Summoned by her husband, King Ahasuerus, to show her beauty before the men of the court, she had disdainfully refused him. The king, angered by this insult, replaced her with a foreign orphan, Esther.

Lucy, who initially wants to conquer this alien, rebellious and feminine vision, soon sees a similitude between herself and the actress in the role of Vashti. For Lucy recognizes that both she and the actress are virtual outcasts in a sea of strangers and victims of male oppression, being the discarded lovers of Grand Turks, rejected by their lovers in favour of a younger woman. Although the onstage Vashti still maintains the languishing and idle self-importance which Cleopatra has made her trademark, she is admired by Lucy precisely because of her passionate resistance against a tyrannical Oriental despot, King Ahasuerus. The onstage Vashti exudes the power of resistance, a 'frenzy of energy' (V, p. 340), which is so unlike Cleopatra who is both harem-bound and picture-bound by the objectified gaze of the male painter.

For Lucy, the actress playing Vashti offers a challenge to Rubens who, although not an Orientalist, becomes the kind of painter whose female subjects, Matus argues, 'remind Lucy of the women she labels as Cleopatras'.¹⁶ Rubens is taunted by Lucy to acknowledge this different vision of an Oriental woman who does not sit meekly to

be painted but is active in her own image-construction. From Lucy's mouth readers hear:

Let Paul Peter Rubens wake from the dead, let him rise out of his cerements, and bring into this presence all the army of his fat women; the magian power or prophet-virtue gifting that slight rod of Moses, could, at one waft, release and re-mingle a sea spell-parted, whelming the heavy host with the down-rush of overthrown sea-ramparts. (V, p. 340)

Lucy's invoking of Cleopatra's painter to emerge and admire this example of active feminist rebellion is meant to provoke patriarchal forces into recognizing the often unappreciated contributions of female artists. Like Lucy, who refuses to wear an all-male costume in a theatrical production at the Pensionnat, the artist who plays Vashti rejects violently and energetically patriarchal imposition of its own views and values onto herself, depriving patriarchy of voyeuristic desires which may dehumanize her. Gilbert and Gubar argue that '[Charlotte] Brontë's actress, like the biblical queen, refuses to be treated as an object, and consciously rejects art that dehumanizes its subject or its audience'.¹⁷ These critics note that Lucy herself supports Vashti's rebellion by interrupting her rhapsodic description of the artists with references to Cleopatra to indicate that Vashti puts to shame the former.¹⁸ As Lucy comments, 'Place now the Cleopatra, or any other slug, before her as an obstacle, and see her cut through the pulpy mass as the scimitar of Saladin clove down the cushion' (V, p. 340). Because Cleopatra is silenced by her painter, the narrator resorts to a representation of Vashti to confront head-on the closed form of male culture in which female artistes are objectified as existing to serve male fantasies. Even in her performance, this resistance to being objectified is evident, as in Lucy's description of her on stage:

Suffering had struck that stage empress; and she stood before her audience neither yielding to, nor enduring, nor in finite measure, resenting it: she stood locked in struggle, rigid in resistance [...] A background and entourage and flooring of deepest crimson threw her out, white like alabaster — like silver: rather be it said, like Death. (V, p. 339)

The connection between Death and the actress playing Vashti's rebellion clearly attaches negative characteristics to female despotism. The episode clearly shows that female resistance or revolt against patriarchal domination is futile. The onstage Vashti, who is clearly rebellious, does not fit well into the model of female acquiescence to the power of the Turkish despot. Where Vashti and Lucy fervently seek to find recognition for female suffering and resistance, they meet with frustration. Dr John, whose opinions Lucy deems important enough to seek, has remained fascinated but unmoved by the artistic performance of a woman. As Lucy points out:

When I took time and regained inclination to glance at him, it amused and enlightened me to discover that he was watching that sinister and sovereign Vashti, not with wonder, nor worship, nor yet dismay, but simply with intense curiosity. Her agony did not pain him, her wild moan — worse than a shriek — did not much move him; her fury revolted him somewhat, but not to the point of horror. Cool young Briton! The pale cliffs of his

own England do not look down on the tides of the channel more calmly than he watched the Pythian inspiration of that night. (V, p. 341)

That the reference once again shifts to Dr John's despotism may serve to remind readers that the supposedly pernicious East has already invaded a Western space, personified by a Western man. And for Lucy to relate to the sufferings of the actress who performs Vashti seems to suggest a deep-seated identification with female revolt. Yet, alongside this show of empathy, Dr John and the actress remain racialized in Lucy's observation, as 'the pale cliffs of his own England' carries connotations not only alluding to Dr John's aloofness but also his fair complexion. This raises the issue of Vashti's foreignness or racial difference and how imperial Britain remains disinterested in the internal suffering of not only its women and but also the racial 'others'.

In this semi-fantasy world of Lucy's inner self and amidst the myriads of Oriental figures and references that embellish the novel, M. Paul occupies a special position. His identity and origins are vague, being 'of strain neither French nor Labassecourien' (V, p. 425). He is also present and associated with the most significant moments in Lucy's journey towards self-discovery and the crucial appearances of Oriental imagery in *Villette*.

In the initial stages of the novel, he is similar to the most emblematic figure of Oriental despotism, Dr John. Yet later he is identified with the passionate Vashti. M. Paul is shown to have overbearing and domineering character traits that continually manifest themselves through the narrative. Unjustly admonishing Lucy for being 'reckless, worldly, and epicurean; ambitious of greatness and feverishly athirst for the pomps and vanities of life' (V, p. 387) after catching her taking regular leaves from the convent to go to the Rue Cr cy, he is described by Lucy as a 'waspy little despot' (V, p. 388). Yet 'passion' is a word that is often used to describe M. Paul. As his speeches are passionate, so is his behaviour erratic, and his disposition frequently startles Lucy. As she comments on the way M. Paul looks at her, 'This very morning, in class, that gentleman had favoured me with a glance which he seemed to have borrowed from Vashti, the actress; I had not at the moment comprehended that blue, yet lurid, flash out of his angry eye' (V, p. 379).

M. Paul's death which heralds the ending of the novel, like many aspects of the novel, can be read in relation to the centrality of the harem metaphor that has tried to infiltrate the European world of *Villette*. Whilst other writers have striven to write fairy-tale endings of domestic bliss for their novels, M. Paul's death can be interpreted as a disavowal of the traditional concept of marriage, connected in the novel to women's enslavement. M. Paul faces an untimely death because he bears too much resemblance to both Oriental images and personae in the novel. While with his death, the 'melodrama and improbability' that G. H. Lewes had warned Charlotte Bront  against writing is ultimately avoided although at the cost of the novel's lack of excitement,¹⁹ the tragic ending can also be read as thematically important to any interpretation of *Villette* because it signifies a return to normality for the protagonist since there is no evident alternative to the Eastern pattern of male domination which structures domestic life. In this sense, his demise may serve as an indictment of a Western family structure that has already been infiltrated with values, deemed foreign to the West's conception of itself.

Notes

- ¹ Suvedrini Parera, *Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 79–102; Joyce Zonana, 'The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of *Jane Eyre*', in *Edward Said*, ed. by Patrick Williams (London: Sage, 2000), pp. 153–76. This article was originally published in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 18:3 (1993), 592–617; Deirdre David, 'The Governess of Empire: *Jane Eyre* Takes Care of India and Jamaica', in *Rule Britannia: Women, Empire, and Victorian Writing* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 77–117.
- ² Laura Peters, *Orphan Texts: Victorian Orphans, Culture and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 65.
- ³ Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, ed. by Mark Lilly (London: Penguin, 1983), p. 106; hereafter *V*. Subsequent references to this work are incorporated in the text and given in parenthesis after quotations.
- ⁴ In her examination of the narrative structure of this novel, Zonana argues that in it, 'one can see [...] that each household in which Jane finds herself is constructed to resemble a harem; each of the oppressors is characterised as a Mohematan [*sic*] despot; and each of her rebellions or escapes bears the accents of Roxanna, the harem inmate declaring her existence as a free soul. At Gateshead, at Lowood, at Thornfield, and at Moor House, one discovers a series of communities of dependent women, all subject to the whim of a single master who rules in his absence as much as his presence and who subjects the imprisoned women to the searching power of his gaze'. See Zonana, p. 164.
- ⁵ European traditional accounts often equate harems with nunneries, remarking on their apparent similarities, such as in the identical communal sleeping arrangements and the daily necessities that both provide for their inhabitants. See Ottaviano Bon et al., *A Description of the Grand Signor's Seraglio; or Turkish Emperours Court* (London: printed by Jo. Martin and Jo. Ridley at the Castle in Fleet-street by Ram Alley, 1653), p. 40.
- ⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982). Originally published in 1792.
- ⁷ Zonana, pp. 158–61.
- ⁸ Wollstonecraft, pp. 112–13.
- ⁹ For more discussion of the politics of vision in *Villette*, see Jane Kromm, 'Visual Culture and Scopic Custom in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*', in *Victorian Literature and Culture* (1998), pp. 369–94.
- ¹⁰ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Cooperation, 1972), p. 55.
- ¹¹ Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 35–43.
- ¹² J. L. Matus misleadingly interprets the episode as Lucy's submission to a sexualized model of male domination, identifying as the male viewer does, with the female model as a prostitute because it is surrounded by iconography associated with sexual debauchery. See J. L. Matus, 'Looking at Cleopatra: the Expression and Exhibition of Desire in *Villette*', in John Maynard, Adrienne-Asulander Munich and Sandra Donaldson, eds, *Victorian Literature and Culture* (New York: AMS, 1993).
- ¹³ Jenna Judd, 'White-Skinned Odalisque: The Residue of Patriarchy and the Means to Subvert It'. CHASS for University of Toronto website, <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~ikalmar/illustex/juddfashion.htm> (accessed on 3 March 2010).
- ¹⁴ Judd, p. 13.
- ¹⁵ Susan Meyer, *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women's Fiction* (London: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 60–95.
- ¹⁶ Matus, p. 361.
- ¹⁷ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979, reprinted 2000), p. 424.
- ¹⁸ Gilbert and Gubar, p. 424.
- ¹⁹ *Fraser's Magazine*, 36 (December 1847), 691–92.

Notes on contributor

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