

**Bangor University**

## **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**'On aurait pensé que la nature s'était trompée en leur donnant leurs sexes'  
masculine malaise, gender indeterminacy and sexual ambiguity in July Monarchy  
narratives**

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**‘ON AURAIT PENSÉ QUE LA NATURE S’ÉTAIT TROMPÉE EN LEUR  
DONNANT LEURS SEXES’:  
MASCULINE MALAISE, GENDER INDETERMINACY AND SEXUAL  
AMBIGUITY IN JULY MONARCHY NARRATIVES**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in  
Philosophy in French Studies

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## ABSTRACT

The July Monarchy period (1830–48) in France was characterised by numerous political, economic and social changes, which challenged sexual and gender categories, as well as traditional representations of masculinity. As such, they generated anxiety among young men from the middle and upper classes regarding their social role. This malaise was exacerbated by the fact that these men entering adulthood in the 1830s defined their gendered identity in comparison to the unattainable model of virility of the Napoleonic soldier.

This thesis argues that July Monarchy literary texts, as well as scientific texts, mirror this masculine malaise and question the sexual dichotomy through the representation of hermaphrodites, effeminate and hyper-masculine men, and masculine women. These sexually ambiguous characters reveal writers' ambiguous treatment of such a malaise. On the one hand, writers often acknowledge the necessity of a separation of the sexes that supports the gendered division of social roles. Their conservative position is notably shown by the negative depiction of young men as weak, puerile and suspected of homosexuality. On the other hand, however, they question the organisation of July Monarchy bourgeois society and highlight the social flaws that lead to young men's failure.

More significantly, many narratives display alternative gendered models, in which feminine qualities in men favour the regeneration of social order. The archetype of these characters combining masculine and feminine qualities is the figure of the hermaphrodite, who is portrayed as a monster and as an incarnation of ideal beauty. The medium of art is used to counterbalance the sexual dichotomy and transcend homosexuality. In short, this thesis argues that hermaphroditic characters are used in July Monarchy narratives as a means to critique the sexual and gender organisation of society and the subsequent masculine malaise.





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## INTRODUCTION: MASCULINE AMBIGUITIES DURING THE JULY MONARCHY (1830–

48)

### Introduction

Un sentiment de malaise inexprimable commença donc à fermenter dans tous les cœurs jeunes. Condamnés au repos par les souverains du monde, livrés aux cuistres de toute espèce, à l'oisiveté et à l'ennui, les jeunes gens voyaient se retirer d'eux les vagues écumantes contre lesquelles ils avaient préparé leurs bras. Tous ces gladiateurs frottés d'huile se sentaient au fond de l'âme une misère insupportable.<sup>1</sup>

The second chapter of *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, published separately in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* on 15 September 1835, analyses the generational malaise that characterises Alfred de Musset's contemporaries, which the writer calls, through his narrator Octave, 'maladie morale abominable' (59) and 'maladie du siècle' (82). According to the narrator, this malaise stems from the nostalgia for the grandeur attributed to Napoleonic times. The end of the Empire signifies the end of the opportunity to obtain glory. Young men believe in nothing (74) and are unable to elaborate a new path towards salvation that is different from that of Napoleon, their fallen divinity. Their era is uncertain: the past is destroyed, the glorious future seems unattainable and the present day is described with metaphors suggesting vagueness, roughness and the morbidity of the period (66–67). Young men therefore reluctantly resign themselves to a mediocre existence in a tedious, idle and lustful society. Musset's gloomy reading of the July Monarchy period in the light of a glorious past is shared by many of his contemporaries.

During the July Revolution, or *les Trois Glorieuses* (27–29 July 1830), the French ousted Charles X, the youngest brother of Louis XVI and Louis XVIII, after the publications of the Ordinances of Saint-Cloud (which notably suspended the liberty of the press, dissolved the newly elected Chamber of Deputies and restricted the right to vote). The Revolution not only ended the Restoration, but also, and above all, put a definitive end to the power of the ageing dynasty of the Bourbons, who (with the exceptions of the revolutionary period and the Empire) had been ruling France since 1589. In ousting the Bourbons, the July Monarchy not only opted for rupture certainly, but also for a certain element of continuity, notably by conserving a monarchical system and installing a cousin of the Bourbons on the throne; hence,

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred de Musset, *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, ed. by Sylvain Ledda (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 2010), p. 70. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text (*Confession*).

the famous motto: *quoique Bourbon* and *parce que Bourbon*. Louis-Philippe of Orleans, son of Philippe-Égalité, was descended from the cadet branch of the Bourbons, founded by Louis XIV's brother. The July Monarchy distinguished itself from the Ancien Régime because it instituted a constitutional regime influenced by liberalism. Louis-Philippe I was King of the French, rather than King of France, and developed the image of a *roi citoyen*.<sup>2</sup>

The new bourgeois and liberal monarchy encountered a period of manifold political, economic and social changes. Economic growth during the July Monarchy accelerated, especially in the industrial sector (heavy metals, coal, textiles and transportation infrastructures), setting the scene for the full-scale industrial revolution that would take place during the Second Empire. Capital rose thanks to the development of financial institutions. Women's rights enjoyed a brief period of support, notably by Saint-Simonians and Fourierists. The bourgeoisie, a social group including individuals as diverse as bankers, lawyers, doctors, notaries, civil servants and shopkeepers, benefitted from these political and economic changes.<sup>3</sup> As Robert Gildea summarises,

French society [...] was clearly in motion, as individuals took advantage of the opportunities offered by economic change and the expansion of the state, to which was geared a developing system of education. Legally, too, careers were open to the talents and could not be confined to any particular caste or corporation.<sup>4</sup>

In brief, the political, economic and social contexts of the July Monarchy seemed favourable for the development of personal ambitions and achievements.

Yet, the new regime did not fulfil its promises. Although legitimating the values of the Revolution, the July Monarchy society maintained privileges, especially aristocratic privileges, notably for those involved in administrative, diplomatic and military roles.<sup>5</sup> In *Balzac et le mal du siècle*, Pierre Barbéris highlights the paradox that seems to characterise this period:

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<sup>2</sup> For more on the July Revolution, the establishment of the July Monarchy and Louis-Philippe I, see H. A. C. Collingham, *The July Monarchy: A Political History of France, 1830–1848* (London and New York: Longman, 1988), pp. 6–33; Gabriel de Broglie, *La Monarchie de Juillet: 1830-1848* (Paris: Fayard, 2011), pp. 15–64.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the political, economic and social changes of the July Monarchy, see Roger Magraw, *France 1815–1914: The Bourgeois Century* (London: Fontana, 1983), pp. 51–88; Collingham, pp. 328–64; Robert Gildea, *Children of the Revolution: The French, 1799–1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2009 [Allen Lane, 2008]), pp. 47–53 and pp. 104–17; Broglie, pp. 153–66, pp. 181–92, pp. 198–210 and pp. 311–21. On the feminism of the Saint-Simonians, see chapter 5, p. 206 and p. 227.

<sup>4</sup> Gildea, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Barbéris, *Le monde de Balzac* (Paris: Arthaud, 1973), p. 488; Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 103–04; Judith Lyon-Caen, *La lecture et la vie: Les usages du roman au temps de Balzac*, pref. by Alain Corbin (Paris: Tallandier, 2006), p. 19; Broglie, p. 184.

avec la Révolution, s'était opérée une brusque accélération, avec une double conséquence: d'une part, s'étaient ouvertes d'extraordinaires possibilités d'emploi de soi. D'autre part, les barrières, un moment levées, s'étaient refermées. Tout était apparu possible, et tout était à nouveau mis en question.<sup>6</sup>

This *mal du siècle* to which Barbéris's title refers is the expression employed by Musset, but also by Balzac and other nineteenth-century writers, and which designates 'cette inquiétude et cette révolte [qui] montaient du plus profond de la conscience française, secouée par l'écroulement de l'ancien régime, par les difficultés du rationalisme classique, devenu une philosophie des satisfaits, par les premières contradictions de la révolution bourgeoise'.<sup>7</sup>

This thesis argues that *le mal du siècle* affecting young men from the middle and upper classes during the years 1830s and 1840s was caused by a pervasive feeling of insecurity towards their role as male individuals in society, owing to fissures in the biological and social model of sexual difference.<sup>8</sup> Masculinity was seen as a value under threat, as young men were judged weak and maladapted to exercising decisive functions in society and distinguishing themselves from women. Through the analysis of literary narratives set within this context, this thesis reveals the shifting perceptions of masculinity as a changeable characteristic that could be attributed to male and female beings during this period. The following study is therefore concerned with literary representations of 'deviant' masculinities and ambiguous genders, such as hermaphroditism, effeminacy, homosexuality, hyper-masculinity and female masculinity. Importantly, and in contrast to more traditional readings of this period, it argues that fictional works of the July Monarchy did not simply mirror the contemporary 'crisis' of masculinity by deploring the inability of young men to conform to an ideal model of masculinity, conceived of as strong, brave, honourable and self-assured. Rather, they explicitly and implicitly challenged concepts of masculinity by suggesting alternative models arising from the very flaws that were supposed to characterise a masculine malaise.<sup>9</sup> In their exploration of ambiguous genders, these French writers paved the way for the construction of a sexual and gender model that distanced itself from a strict separation of the sexes.

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<sup>6</sup> Pierre Barbéris, *Balzac et le mal du siècle: Contribution à une physiologie du monde moderne*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), I, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 33. See also pp. 31–32. For more on the origins of this expression, see Armand Hoog, 'Who Invented the *Mal du Siècle*', trans. by Beth Brombert, *Yale French Studies*, 13 (1954), 42–51.

<sup>8</sup> A female *mal du siècle* has also existed. For more on female *mal du siècle*, see Chantal Bertrand-Jennings, *Un autre mal du siècle: Le romantisme des romancières, 1800–1846* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> This study is distanced from Victoria Thompson's argument that sexual fluidity mirrored social fluidity during the July Monarchy. In contrast, this thesis argues that gender ambiguity denounced the illusory nature of social permeability: 'Creating Boundaries: Homosexuality and the Changing Social Order in France, 1830–1870', in *Homosexuality in Modern France*, ed. by Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan Jr. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 102–27 (p. 105).

## Theoretical Framework: Masculinities Studies and the ‘Crisis’ of Masculinity

Masculinities studies are relatively recent compared with women’s studies, which resulted from the rise of feminist theory in the 1960s.<sup>10</sup> Masculinity was previously conceived of as an ‘empty’, ‘invisible’, ‘neutral’ or ‘abstract’ category, as opposed to femininity, because it was considered to represent the human norm.<sup>11</sup> According to Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan, ‘[a] major activity of all cultures is the distribution and definition of gender roles, that is, the processes of categorization by which biological bodies are inserted into a culture’s signifying systems and assigned values and social roles’.<sup>12</sup> Masculinities studies constitute a branch of gender studies, which ‘looks at these processes of categorization and the ways in which societies construct, articulate and police sexuality’.<sup>13</sup> They were developed in reaction to women’s studies, not in opposition to feminist principles, but rather as their extension. If women’s role in society and history needed to be reassessed in the light of feminist theories, men’s role should meet a similar fate. Masculinities studies have highlighted the complexity of men’s functions, duties and expectations in society. Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett have cautiously defined masculinities as ‘those behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine’.<sup>14</sup>

A predominant component of masculinities studies is the analysis of the alleged ‘naturalism’ of men’s domination over women in patriarchal societies. Men were considered to be ‘naturally’ superior to women, according to the predominant ideology and were therefore encouraged to exercise their authority over women. This model of dominant masculinity has

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett, ‘The Sociology of Masculinity’, in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. by Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp. 1–26 (p. 1); Pierre Bourdieu, *La domination masculine* (Paris: Seuil, ‘Points/Essais’, 2002 [1998]), p. 22; Daniel Maira and Jean-Marie Roulin, ‘Constructions littéraires de la masculinité entre Lumières et Romantisme’, in *Masculinités en révolution de Rousseau à Balzac*, ed. by Daniel Maira and Jean-Marie Roulin (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2013), pp. 9–28 (p. 10).

<sup>11</sup> Élisabeth Badinter, *XY: De l’identité masculine* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, ‘Le Livre de Poche’, 1994 [Odile Jacob, 1992]), pp. 22–23; Antony Rowland, Emma Liggins and Eriks Uskalis, ‘Introduction’, in *Signs of Masculinity: Men in Literature 1700 to the Present*, ed. by Antony Rowland, Emma Liggins and Eriks Uskalis (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 3–36 (pp. 3–8); Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and Anna Clark, ‘Editors’ Preface: Historicizing Male Citizenship’, in *Representing Masculinity: Male Citizenship in Modern Western Culture*, ed. by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and Anna Clark (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. ix–xv (p. xii).

<sup>12</sup> Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan, ‘Gender Studies: Introduction’, in *A Cultural Studies Reader: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. by Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan (London, and New York: Longman, 1995), pp. 485–90 (p. 485).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Whitehead and Barrett, pp. 15–16.

been characterised by its relative permanence for more than two centuries and by the simplicity of its script: ‘impregnate women, protect dependents from danger, and provision [*sic*] kith and kin’.<sup>15</sup> Arthur Brittan calls *masculinism* ‘the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination’, whereas Pierre Bourdieu highlights how male domination can be exercised through symbolic violence, notably over women, outside of any kind of physical coercion, by making this domination appear ‘natural’.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, R. W. Connell refers to *hegemonic masculinity* as a gender practice that ensures the dominance of men over women in patriarchy.<sup>17</sup> As will be shown in chapter 1, Western societies were defined by a sexual difference, according to which the biological differences between men and women justified the social differences between them, as well as men’s supremacy. Values that were associated with men — activity, culture and reason — were ascribed greater importance than so-called feminine values — passivity, nature and emotion.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, their ‘natural’ dominance was reinforced by laws. In France, for example, the Napoleonic Code gave the paterfamilias and breadwinner full authority and power over his wife and his children.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of its relative stability, the model of a sexual difference that justified men’s authority has occasionally been weakened and questioned. Scholars have developed the concept of a ‘crisis’ of masculinity originally to designate a phenomenon that arose during the period following the Second World War, when men developed insecurities concerning their masculinity and their role within society. As will be shown, however, the notion of a ‘crisis’ of masculinity can be and also has been applied to other historical periods. If the precise nature of this ‘crisis’ is ‘elusive’ according to John Beynon, two concomitant characteristics can be identified: men’s loss of power and the ambiguous status of men’s ‘natural’ position of power.<sup>20</sup>

Firstly, Western societies in the second half of the twentieth century have experienced social changes that have undermined male dominance and caused ‘the perception that men have lost, or are losing, power or privilege relative to their prior status in these institutions [family, education and work]’, as Tim Edwards has indicated.<sup>21</sup> These upheavals have included feminist

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<sup>15</sup> David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 223. On the permanence of the dominant model of masculinity: Bourdieu, p. 114; Alain Corbin, ‘Préface’, in *Hommes et masculinités de 1789 à nos jours: Contributions à l’histoire du genre et de la sexualité en France*, ed. by Régis Revenin (Paris: Autrement, 2007), pp. 7–11 (p. 10).

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 4; Bourdieu, pp. 53–64.

<sup>17</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005 [1995]), esp. p. 77.

<sup>18</sup> David S. Gutterman, ‘Postmodernism and the Interrogation of Masculinity’, in *The Masculinities Reader*, pp. 56–71 (p. 58). See also Brittan, p. 199.

<sup>19</sup> Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993]), p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002), p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> Tim Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 8.

movements that provide women with legal rights in the private and public spheres, notably in the workplace; gay movements that have likewise seen more legal rights granted to same-sex couples; and the transition from an industrial economy to a services economy along with the resultant occupational precariousness.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, the characteristic attitudes and qualities that were associated with manhood and considered to be appropriate before the 1950s are currently being criticised.<sup>23</sup> John MacInnes points out that former masculine qualities such as will, strength, rationality and independence are now regarded as vices called abuse, destructive aggression, coldness and emotional inarticulacy.<sup>24</sup> As a result, men cannot refer to the traditional model of masculinity, since it is now stigmatised in Western societies. For example, men may nowadays be expected to show sensitivity, vulnerability and compassion to friends, women and children.<sup>25</sup> However, this new ‘sensitive’ man is often mocked in mass media, or generates scepticism, notably among feminists, and may be accused of lacking virility.<sup>26</sup> The complexity of modern expectations towards men and the scarcity of new alternative models contrast with the simplicity of their previous roles. In brief, the concept of a ‘crisis’ of masculinity relates to men’s insecurity towards their social roles due to the loss of references caused by important historical and social changes and the difficulties experienced of not conforming to an ideal virile model.

Whilst allowing scholars to describe the recent changes in the representation of masculinity, this concept of a ‘crisis’ of masculinity can be problematic due to its perception of masculinity as a stable, ahistorical and everlasting entity, which can be disrupted by sudden change.<sup>27</sup> In other words, it suggests that it is complicated to be a man only during certain periods of history, whereas being a man during other periods is a simpler task. Consequently, the use of the expression of a ‘crisis’ of masculinity must be nuanced by taking different factors into account: the geographical, social and historical contexts of the ‘crisis’, and the difference between an ideal model of masculinity and its realisation in daily life. The concept of a ‘crisis’ of masculinity does not concern every culture or every group of the male population; it is often

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<sup>22</sup> For more on the causes of a ‘crisis’ in masculinity, see Brittan, pp. 180–81; Whitehead and Barrett, pp. 6–9; Beynon, pp. 76–89; Connell, pp. 85–86; Edwards, pp. 8–16.

<sup>23</sup> Whitehead and Barrett, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity: The Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1998), p. 47. See also Badinter, pp. 213–14.

<sup>25</sup> Michael S. Kimmel, ‘The Contemporary “Crisis” of Masculinity in Historical Perspective’, in *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men’s Studies*, ed. by Harry Brod (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 121–53 (p. 121).

<sup>26</sup> Connell, p. 41, pp. 139–40 and p. 222; Christopher E. Forth and Bertrand Taithe, ‘Introduction’, in Christopher E. Forth and Bertrand Taithe, eds, *French Masculinities: History, Culture and Politics* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 1–14 (p. 11).

<sup>27</sup> Kimmel, p. 122; Whitehead and Barrett, p. 9; Beynon, p. 95; Connell, p. 73 and p. 82.



geographically and demographically determined, and may involve mostly middle-class men in Western societies.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, there is not one single ‘crisis’ of masculinity because other periods have shown similar ‘symptoms’ of insecure masculine identities like those characterising the second half of the twentieth century, for instance during the *fin de siècle* in France.<sup>29</sup> The American sociologist Michael Kimmel has convincingly argued that some historical moments are particularly favourable for giving rise to gender issues and masculine insecurity. During these periods, men feel unable to meet the ideal model of manliness that is considered to be the norm. The study of two historical periods that have experienced such a ‘crisis’, Restoration England (1688–1714) and the turn of the twentieth century in the United States (1880–1914), has enabled Kimmel to ‘identify how historical and social changes create the condition for gender crisis’ and to determine that ‘these crises occur at specific historical junctures, when structural changes transform the institutions of personal life such as marriage and the family, which are sources of gender identity’.<sup>30</sup> Following Kimmel’s analysis, Élisabeth Badinter reveals that social, economic and ideological upheavals may generate in women a desire for a change in the dominant values.<sup>31</sup> Their claims (equality in marriage and the right to vote, for instance) and their contestation of men’s superiority are perceived as a threat towards men’s identity and role in society. If women study, work, vote and generally carry out masculine tasks, men are afraid of being compelled to take care of their children and do the household chores. Badinter highlights an important correlation between insecure masculine identities and the supposed flaws associated with traditionally feminine types of behaviour. This parallel is typically drawn by linking insecure men with individuals considered to be the enemies of ideal masculinity, such as puerile men, exotic ‘others’ (such as Jews), effeminate men and homosexuals, who become characterised by similar stereotypes.<sup>32</sup>

Above all, a masculine malaise relates to the discrepancy between the ideal model of masculinity and the ‘real’ experience of men. Knowing how men experienced their masculine identities in daily life is nevertheless problematic because the dominant virile model impedes

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<sup>28</sup> Edwards, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, Annelise Maugue, *L’identité masculine en crise au tournant du siècle: 1871–1914* (Paris: Rivages, 1987) and Christopher E. Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Kimmel, p. 123.

<sup>31</sup> Badinter, pp. 24–41. See also Kimmel’s analysis of Restoration England, pp. 124–37; Connell, pp. 191–92.

<sup>32</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 56–106. Forth highlights how Jewishness was associated with effeminacy in the *fin-de-siècle* France and how the Dreyfus Affair supported the expression of anxieties towards French masculine identity.

them from confiding their feelings. As Anne-Marie Sohn argues, ‘le masculin, parce qu’il est naturalisé, reste le plus souvent implicite. [...] rares sont les jeunes hommes à s’épancher sur leur moi et surtout à laisser des traces écrites de leurs états d’âme’.<sup>33</sup> However, perceptions concerning the masculinity of a specific period — in this case, the first half of the nineteenth century — can partially be accessed through the literary and non-literary discourses of the time. Whereas scientific discourses of the nineteenth century (as well as legal discourses, such as the *Code civil*) reveal a propensity to a prescriptive definition of masculinity, enjoining men to conform to a strong model of masculinity, narrative discourses often depict men who struggle with reaching this virile norm and who appear to be weak, selfish and cowardly. As Lawrence Schehr puts it: ‘In literature, at least, models of male desire and models of the male body exist that are ambiguous, nondisjunctive, and non-integral.’<sup>34</sup>

Accordingly, the fissures that appear in the strong model of masculinity favour the development of gender and sexual ambiguities. Men and women may deliberately or unconsciously adopt behaviours that are considered to be characteristic of the opposite sex. Such gender ambiguities are generally judged negatively in Western societies and are widely criticised. Even nowadays, when gender categories are more permeable, male and female individuals are still often expected to conform to gender stereotypes. For instance, Toril Moi reports the case of a woman who sued the accounting firm where she worked for not promoting her on the grounds that she exhibited a stereotypically masculine attitude.<sup>35</sup> Her dominant behaviour was judged to be compatible with the position that she coveted; yet it was dismissed because it failed to meet social expectations where gender roles are concerned. Similarly, the ‘sensitive’ man mentioned earlier raises criticism and scepticism because he does not act as a man should. Disparagement of gender ambiguities was even stronger in the nineteenth century. However, as will be argued, the denunciation of a ‘crisis’ of masculinity could also encourage a more positive reflection on gender roles in society.

In summary, a ‘crisis’ of masculinity refers to men’s insecurity towards their role in society by highlighting the difficulty to conform to a stable and idealised model of virility and by questioning men’s domination and traditional values during a specific period. However, it is preferable, to follow Connell and Edwards, to identify tendencies towards a ‘crisis’ for

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<sup>33</sup> Anne-Marie Sohn, *‘Sois un homme!’: La construction de la masculinité au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2009), p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> Lawrence R. Schehr, *Parts of an Andrology: On Representations of Men’s Bodies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Toril Moi, ‘What Is a Woman? Sex, Gender and the Body in Feminist Theory’, in *What Is a Woman? And Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 3–120 (pp. 100–02).

specific groups of men rather than an overall ‘crisis’.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, this thesis identifies tendencies towards a ‘crisis’ of masculinity — and therefore refers more frequently to a masculine malaise or to masculine insecurity than to a ‘crisis’ — in young, middle-class men during the first half of the nineteenth century, and especially the July Monarchy. Such tendencies towards a ‘crisis’ are considered to cause gender ambiguities among young men, who fail to conform to virile expectations. This masculine malaise is often indirectly addressed through social discourses that reduce its complexity to stereotypical negative images of ‘otherness’, such as effeminacy, excessive virility and hermaphroditism.

### **Literature Overview: Masculinity in the Nineteenth Century**

Masculinities studies have mostly focused on the twentieth century, before extending their field of analysis to previous periods and adopting historical and literary perspectives, rather than being confined to the realm of sociology. The extension to other fields of human sciences has nevertheless been a slow process. To date, the French nineteenth century has raised little interest from researchers in masculinity. As Nigel Harkness argues: ‘Whereas nineteenth-century studies have demonstrated the centrality of femininity to canonical fiction [...], masculinity has received little sustained treatment in either the literary or socio-historical fields.’<sup>37</sup> Some notable exceptions can, nonetheless, be highlighted, although the dual concepts of a ‘crisis’ of masculinity and of gender ambiguities, which constitute important theoretical frameworks of this thesis, are seldom used for this purpose.

French studies on a masculine malaise in the nineteenth century did not, at first, refer to masculinities studies and they used the more general concept of *le mal du siècle*. Published in 1970, Barbéris’s vast essay, *Balzac et le mal du siècle*, brings up a ‘crisis’ that mostly appears in the 1830s and that is designated as *le mal du siècle*, referring to the expectations and disappointments generated by the renewal of social structures.<sup>38</sup> By taking Balzac’s works as the *fil conducteur* of his thought, Barbéris argues that *le mal du siècle* is grounded in the contradiction between the extension of the range of possibilities offered to men due to the abolition of the Ancien Régime and the disenchanting realisation of the maladjustment of their

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<sup>36</sup> Connell, p. 84 and pp. 201–02; Edwards, pp. 16–17 and p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> Nigel Harkness, *Men of their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand’s Fiction* (London: Legenda, 2007), p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Barbéris, *Balzac et le mal du siècle*, I, p. 33.

values in the new society.<sup>39</sup> Despite its completeness and erudition, his work lacks a rigorous theoretical framework.

Similarly, Pierre Laforgue's *L'éros romantique* (1998) and *L'œdipe romantique* (2002) are two of the few studies that consider the whole period from the end of the Restoration to the beginning of the July Monarchy and analyse insecure masculinity, although indirectly. In *L'éros romantique*, Laforgue points to the recurrence of stories of (physically) impossible love and scabrous relationships, whilst *L'œdipe romantique* examines young men's inability to become subjects as they are victims of unfinished or defective parental models.<sup>40</sup> Laforgue's corpus shares some of the literary narratives analysed in this thesis. However, his aim differs from that of this study, as he argues that these narratives denounce the materialism of a society dominated by money and the lack of social cohesion, by situating their plots at the margins of society.<sup>41</sup> Conversely, this thesis argues that these literary texts do not challenge the unitary organisation of society in itself, but rather the social oppression exercised by the sexual dichotomy.

The notion of a masculine malaise, and even of a 'crisis' of masculinity, in nineteenth-century French society first appeared in historical studies, although sometimes indirectly. In *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (1993), Robert Nye shows interest in changes in male identity over time. He provides a thorough study of masculinity in France from the end of the Ancien Régime to the aftermath of the First World War by analysing the medical domain as well as the revival of the duel to develop the notion of bourgeois honour. His work highlights 'how the bodies and sexuality of upper-class males and their modes of sociability and conflict were related to their elite social and political status'.<sup>42</sup>

André Rauch's *Crise de l'identité masculine* (2000) perhaps offers the most extensive historical study of the nineteenth-century 'crisis' in France. This historian analyses the changes in the role of men in society generated by the French Revolution, such as the development of a society of production and the passage from a hierarchical society to a relatively egalitarian one.<sup>43</sup> He argues that origins and sex had previously constituted stable factors of identity in the Ancien Régime, but that the perception of masculine identity was modified in the nineteenth century, notably due to the advent of the bourgeois ideal promoting the valorisation of the family, professional success, social ascension and respectability. Although he does not refer to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., notably, I, p. 107.

<sup>40</sup> Pierre Laforgue, *L'œdipe romantique: Le jeune homme, le désir et l'histoire en 1830* (Grenoble: Ellug, 2002), p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Pierre Laforgue, *L'éros romantique: Représentations de l'amour en 1830* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> Nye, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> André Rauch, *Crise de l'identité masculine: 1789–1914* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 'Pluriel', 2000), pp. 8–10.

masculinities studies, Rauch highlights one of the main ‘symptoms’ of the ‘crisis’ of masculinity; that is, men suffering from this new instability associated with historical and social changes that caused changes to men’s behaviour within society.<sup>44</sup>

The popularity of masculinities studies has increased at the beginning of the twenty-first century, notably in France where they used to be overlooked, perhaps because they are inscribed in the Anglo-Saxon domain of gender studies.<sup>45</sup> Recent collective books have studied French masculinity during the last two centuries, often from a historical perspective, as well as a literary one. *French Masculinities: History, Culture and Politics* (2007), edited by Christopher Forth and Bertrand Taithe, examines the connection between masculinity and national identity; *Hommes et masculinités de 1789 à nos jours* (2007), edited by Régis Revenin, studies the history of masculinities from the perspectives of sexuality, work, war, religion and race; *Masculinités en révolution* (2013), edited by Daniel Maira and Jean-Marie Roulin, synthesises and expands French research about masculinity in the nineteenth century, as well as studying how various literary and non-literary works create categories of thinking and, thus, construct masculinity.<sup>46</sup>

Masculinities studies have also provided a few in-depth literary analyses of particular novels and writers. This is the case with Margaret Waller’s *The Male Malady* (1993), which studies Romantic fictions that focus on male protagonists, written by Chateaubriand, Staël, Constant, Stendhal and Sand, and published during the first third of the nineteenth century. Analysing the representation of male characters’ antisocial and submissive behaviour, she argues that ‘the image of a self-absorbed young man lost in moody contemplation sums up the malady (*le mal*) that is said to characterize the entire modern, secular era (*le siècle*)’.<sup>47</sup> Waller explicitly establishes a connection between *mal du siècle* and masculinity (sometimes referring to a *mâle du siècle*), although she does not fully explain from where this *mal du siècle* originates in the period that she studies.<sup>48</sup>

Mary Orr’s works focus on the literary texts of one author, Gustave Flaubert. She carefully points out that the construction of sexual and gendered identities occurs in specific historical contexts, and notably through the influence of the Napoleonic Code, and that these

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>45</sup> Forth and Taithe, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Maira and Roulin, p. 24.

<sup>47</sup> Margaret Waller, *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 11 and p. 18.

identities must be analysed accordingly.<sup>49</sup> In *Madame Bovary: Representations of the Masculine* (1999) and *Flaubert: Writing the Masculine* (2000), she examines the processes through which Flaubert's novels show and question how men, too, have been victims of patriarchy and how older generations and institutions have maintained men who do not conform to a traditional masculine model in a juvenile or scapegoated state.<sup>50</sup>

Explicitly critiquing the notion of a 'crisis' of masculinity, Nigel Harkness's essay, *Men of Their Words* (2007), analyses the representation of masculinity in George Sand's novels and, especially 'the role of language and the significance of the performative speech act in the formation and regulation of masculinity'.<sup>51</sup> Harkness argues that literary works do not simply and passively represent masculinity, but have an impact on societies and human communities, by advocating, deliberately or involuntarily, alternative models of masculinity.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Harkness sustains Lynne Segal's claim, which states that, due to the unattainability of power to which it is associated, '[m]asculinity is always in crisis'.<sup>53</sup>

However, the vision of a French nineteenth-century man who questions his masculinity, is not shared by every historian. In *'Sois un homme!'* (2009), the French historian Anne-Marie Sohn studies the construction of masculinity during the French nineteenth century, especially through the models of peers and adults, but does not refer to the notion of 'crisis' (even less during the July Monarchy). Rather, she delineates the contours of what can be regarded as the ideal of a virile masculinity, at that time based on strength and courage, and points to the rise of a new conception of honour based on self-control during the Belle Époque.<sup>54</sup>

More strikingly, the second volume of *Histoire de la virilité*, dedicated to the nineteenth century and edited by Alain Corbin, is entitled *Le triomphe de la virilité*.<sup>55</sup> This book, which analyses different experiences of masculinity (for instance duelling, sport and sexual energy), perceives the nineteenth century as the paroxysm of virility. In a triadic schema of rise (from Antiquity to Enlightenment), apogee (the nineteenth century) and decline (the twentieth century), it is the volume dedicated to the twentieth century that is called *La virilité en crise?*

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<sup>49</sup> Mary Orr, *Madame Bovary: Representations of the Masculine* (Bern: Lang, 'Romanticism and after in France', 1999), pp. 19–20 and p. 23; Mary Orr, *Flaubert: Writing the Masculine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 4–8.

<sup>50</sup> Orr, *Madame Bovary*, esp. pp. 12–14 and pp. 212–13; Orr, *Flaubert*, pp. 10–12, pp. 14–15, p. 18 and pp. 197–98.

<sup>51</sup> Harkness, p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>53</sup> Lynne Segal, 'Back to the Boys? Temptations of the Good Gender Theorist', quoted by Harkness, p. 20.

<sup>54</sup> Sohn, p. 114. See also pp. 389–439.

<sup>55</sup> Alain Corbin, ed., *Histoire de la virilité*, II: *Le triomphe de la virilité: Le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2011). Also mentioned by Maira and Roulin, p. 27.

The model of virility that is presented in the second volume is, indeed, triumphant. Men are encouraged to be brave, honourable and enterprising both in the public and private spheres.

However, this thesis intends to highlight that a gap exists between this ideal model of virility and its concretisation among men, probably because the criteria of virility were so demanding that they seemed unachievable. It does not mean that Corbin's schema should be replaced by another ternary structure, because periods of triumphant and insecure masculinities can alternate and even overlap within the same century. Rather, this thesis argues that the July Monarchy constituted one of these periods of masculine malaise — a period that is often overlooked, notably in Forth and Taithe's collective book, where no article covers the July Monarchy. This thesis also stands apart from its predecessors by highlighting the connection between the ideal model of masculinity and scientific texts, whereas these texts have been little studied in the context of masculinities studies. The use of scientific writings to analyse literary texts highlights both a correlation and a discrepancy between these two kinds of texts where the figure of the hermaphrodite is concerned. A high value was placed on the latter in both literary and scientific texts, although their interpretation of hermaphroditism may have varied at times. Accordingly, this thesis argues that the constant of the hermaphrodite in these texts echoes the destabilisation of gender and sexual categories that characterises the first half of the nineteenth century.

### **Differences between *Masculinité* and *Virilité***

So far, *masculinity* and *virility* have been used interchangeably. However, the difference of meaning between their French equivalents is far from simple. In his introduction to *Le triomphe de la virilité*, Corbin argues:

Celui qui hésite à se lancer à l'assaut le jour du combat, celui qui choisit d'engager un remplaçant parce qu'il a tiré un mauvais numéro lors du conseil de révision, celui qui n'a pas su sauver son semblable au péril de sa vie [...], tous ceux-là manquent de virilité mais leur masculinité ne saurait, pour autant, être contestée.<sup>56</sup>

It can be understood from Corbin's words that *masculinité* designates the biological characteristic of being a man — *maleness* in English —, whereas *virilité* refers to the characteristics that are culturally associated with the male sex. In their introduction to *Masculinités en révolution*, Maira and Roulin highlight a similar difference. Not as emphatic

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<sup>56</sup> Alain Corbin, 'Introduction', in *Le triomphe de la virilité*, pp. 7–11 (p. 10).

as Corbin, they argue that *masculinité* is the intrinsic state of a man, whereas *virilité* is mostly determined by the constant need to prove its existence.<sup>57</sup> However, a glance through French dictionaries of the nineteenth century reveals that the difference in French is not as strong as these authors suggest.

The first observation is that these substantives are not as common as the adjectives from which they derive; lexicographers therefore define them by referring to *masculin* and *viril*. Sohn recalls the rarity of the concept of masculinity in the nineteenth century and departs from Corbin by considering *virilité* exclusively from a biological perspective: ‘La “masculinité” est une notion étrangère aux hommes du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ces derniers ne connaissent qu’une “virilité” réduite à ses fondements biologiques.’<sup>58</sup> The sixth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* (1835) defines *masculinité* as ‘caractère, qualité de mâle’, whilst Émile Littré later defines it in the second edition of his *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1873–77) as ‘caractère de ce qui est masculin’.<sup>59</sup> *Masculin* is primarily defined in the dictionaries of the Académie française and Littré as ‘qui appartient, qui a rapport au mâle’ (other definitions relate to law, grammar and versification). The biological implication of *mâle* is confirmed by the first example provided by both dictionaries: ‘le sexe masculin’. Maira and Roulin, however, rightly point out that ‘qui a rapport’ indicates that masculinity can also be acquired.<sup>60</sup> Littré gives another definition that confirms the possible non-biological essence of masculinity: ‘en mauvaise part, qui a un caractère d’homme, en parlant d’une femme’. This definition does not refer to biology exclusively (although it will be shown in the first chapter that the masculinity of mannish women was believed to be, in part, of physiological origin), but to a cultural perception of masculinity.<sup>61</sup>

The definitions of *virilité* and *viril* also combine biological and cultural connotations. These words stem from the Latin substantive *vir*, which means ‘man’ (in opposition to *homo*, which designates the human being in general). *Virtus* is also connected to *vir* and designates ‘le courage, l’énergie morale et, de là, s’emploie pour toute espèce de qualité et de mérite

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<sup>57</sup> Maira and Roulin, p. 15. They used Alain Rey’s *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, diverse editions of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, as well as Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* (see p. 12, footnote 12). Harkness studies ‘masculinité’, ‘masculin’, ‘féminin’, ‘homme’, ‘femme’ and ‘genre’ entries in the *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (p. 17 and pp. 20–25). Forth and Taithe study definitions of masculinity and virility in Furetière’s *Dictionnaire universel* (pp. 5–6).

<sup>58</sup> Sohn, p. 11.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Masculinité’, in *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn, 2 vols (Paris: Firmin-Didot frères, 1835), II, p. 174; Émile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française* <<http://www.littre.org>> [accessed 14 November 2014]

<sup>60</sup> Maira and Roulin, p. 13.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Masculin’, in *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, II, p. 174; Littré <<http://www.littre.org>> [accessed 14 November 2014].



masculin'.<sup>62</sup> The 'real' man is by definition virile; that is, brave and determined by moral qualities. *Virilité* is first defined as a period of a man's life: 'âge viril' (or 'l'âge d'un homme fait' under the 'viril' entry) in both dictionaries of the Académie française and Littré. The biological dimension of this definition also has cultural implications, as a child and an old man are not considered to be as virile as middle-aged men. Moreover, *virilité* also refers to a man's ability to father children: 'Il se dit aussi pour signifier, dans l'homme, la puissance, la capacité d'engendrer' (Académie) and 'chez l'homme, capacité d'engendrer' (Littré). Once again, these definitions exclude some male individuals, such as children, as well as impotent and sterile men, and imply that they are not entirely male. The reference to 'puissance' in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* and the other definition of *virilité* as 'force, vigueur' in Littré's dictionary leave the realm of biology to indicate qualities that a man is susceptible to have.<sup>63</sup> *Viril* reinforces the ambiguity between biology and culture. It is defined by the two dictionaries as 'qui appartient à l'homme, en tant que mâle', with the examples 'sexe viril' (both dictionaries), 'membre viril' (Académie) and 'force virile' (Littré). It must be noted that 'qui a rapport', which related to the possibility of acquiring the property of masculinity according to Maira and Roulin, has here disappeared. Figuratively, the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* indicates that 'âme virile, courage viril, action virile' signify 'âme ferme, courage digne d'un homme, action vigoureuse', whereas Littré employs the same adjectives without mentioning the substantives, or turns substantives used by the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* into adjectives ('ferme, courageux, digne d'un homme').<sup>64</sup> The changes in meaning that occur in these dictionaries — from referring to physical qualities to referring to moral ones — highlight the fact that virile characteristics are viewed as always positive in a man (a principle that is also used in scientific writings).

Definitions of the same terms in a twenty-first-century dictionary have not varied a great deal over the course of one century. *Masculinité* can signify 'qualité d'homme, de mâle' from a biological perspective, but *Le Petit Robert* also refers to the 'virilité' entry through the definition 'ensemble des caractéristiques masculines'. *Virilité*, in contrast, is first deemed as a physical characteristic — 'ensemble des attributs et des caractéristiques physiques et sexuelles de l'homme' — before being perceived in a cultural perspective — 'symbolique qui s'y rattache

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<sup>62</sup> 'Vertu', in *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (Paris: Le Robert, 1992), II, pp. 2240–41.

<sup>63</sup> 'Virilité', in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, II, p. 941; Littré <<http://www.littre.org>> [accessed 14 November 2014].

<sup>64</sup> 'Viril', in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, II, pp. 940–41; Littré <<http://www.littre.org>> [accessed 14 November 2014].

(opposé à *féminité*)'.<sup>65</sup> These semantic ambiguities from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries suggest that French does not distinguish between biological and cultural definitions of masculinity. This is contrary to the distinctions we notice in English, in which the vocabulary is richer and the biological and cultural conceptions of man are relatively separate: *maleness* and, to a lesser extent, *manhood*, on the one hand; *masculinity*, *manliness* and *virility*, on the other hand.<sup>66</sup> As language can reflect cultural attitudes, it can be inferred that the French considered, perhaps even more than other Western societies, that masculine characteristics stemmed from the male attributes of an individual. In this perspective, deviations from traditional models of virility have been perceived, not only as social and cultural abnormalities, but also as physical abnormalities. A man who does not behave as a man is supposed to do is suspected of not being a 'real' man. This study opts to employ the word *masculinity* to refer to the physical, behavioural and moral qualities that were expected from men in the nineteenth century because they were believed to derive from their male sex and were defined in opposition to the 'feminine' qualities of female individuals. Moreover, *virility* and *manliness* go further, as these terms refer to an intensified version of masculine characteristics.

### **Masculinity during the July Monarchy**

This thesis argues that the numerous political, economic and social upheavals that occurred during the July Monarchy favoured the development of a masculine malaise, such as those identified by Kimmel and Badinter in other periods. This insecurity was depicted and critiqued through the means of gender and sexual ambiguities. Certainly, the signs of young men's uncertainty towards their social role date back at least to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Some male characters from French novels written during Napoleonic times and the Restoration, such as Chateaubriand's René (1802), Claire de Duras's Olivier (1822) and Stendhal's Octave in *Armance* (1827), also express tendencies towards a 'crisis'. However, the changes that took place after the July Revolution increased men's insecurity. These changes generated great expectations, but also great disappointment among young men from the aristocratic and bourgeois upper classes, who felt pulled between 'les promesses de mobilité et l'inertie des hiérarchies anciennes'.<sup>67</sup> The bourgeois of the July Monarchy would eventually become

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<sup>65</sup> 'Masculinité' and 'virilité', in *Le Nouveau Petit Robert: Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris: Le Robert-SEJER, 2004), p. 1581 and p. 2784.

<sup>66</sup> 'Maleness', 'manhood', 'manliness', 'masculinity' and 'virility', in *The Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 1071, p. 1076, p. 1077, p. 1088 and p. 1984.

<sup>67</sup> Lyon-Caen, p. 191.

representatives of the social norms in many areas by imposing their values — most notably that of money, which was both criticised as a disease and admired as a driving force for innovation.<sup>68</sup> However, despite the July Revolution, the richest notables in France were still aristocrats.<sup>69</sup> As a result, the bourgeoisie felt, if not powerless, certainly uncomfortable to say the least, about its position: ‘the sense of dislocation experienced by the members of the middle-class under the early July Monarchy came to be felt not as tragically metaphysical, but as concretely situational’.<sup>70</sup>

The reasons for the ‘sense of dislocation’, or insecurity, of the post-Napoleonic generation have been well documented. Peter Brooks has analysed the grounds for the failure of the Restoration regime as presented in Balzac’s novels.<sup>71</sup> The main cause of this failure stems from the governing elite’s rejection of the intellectual middle-class youth in the ruling of the affairs of the state, in order to consolidate its own power. As Brooks points out, Balzac ‘writes about the Restoration from the perspective of the period that followed it’.<sup>72</sup> Balzac’s judgement of the periods that are described in the novels occurring before the July Monarchy, such as *Illusions perdues* and *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, is not, therefore, devoid of his perception of the period in which he was writing. Barbéris, indeed, cautions readers: ‘Les dates d’affabulation des romans de Balzac compteront moins que la date à laquelle ils ont été écrits.’<sup>73</sup> Balzac and many of his colleagues were preoccupied by July Monarchy society, regardless of the time about which they were writing, following the belief (which is held by authors of historical novels) that past and present are intertwined.<sup>74</sup>

Accordingly, the paradox of continuity and rupture on which the July Monarchy seemed to be based is noticeable in the elites’ treatment of younger generations coming from the upper bourgeoisie and the weakened aristocracy. Barbéris stresses the solidarity between young men:

Comment [...] ne s’établirait-il pas une sorte de fraternité entre les jeunes nobles dépouillés jadis de leurs espoirs par la Révolution, les jeunes intellectuels bourgeois tenus en suspicion par les émigrés revenus et ces autres jeunes bourgeois, peu argentés, qui se sentent déjà barrés dans leur avenir par leur impécuniosité?<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Collingham, p. 334.

<sup>69</sup> Magraw, p. 78.

<sup>70</sup> Richard Terdiman, ‘Structures of Initiation: On Semiotics Education and Its Contradictions in Balzac’, *Yale French Studies*, 63 (1982), 198–226 (p. 202).

<sup>71</sup> Peter Brooks, ‘Balzac: Epistemophilia and the Collapse of the Restoration’, *Yale French Studies*, 101 (2001), 119–31 (pp. 127–28).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>73</sup> Barbéris, *Balzac et le mal du siècle*, I, pp. 76–77.

<sup>74</sup> Jean Molino, ‘Qu’est-ce que le roman historique?’, *Revue d’Histoire littéraire de la France*, 75:2-3 (March–June 1975), 195–234 (p. 217).

<sup>75</sup> Barbéris, *Le monde de Balzac*, p. 488.

The existing elites sought progress and wanted to break with the society of the Ancien Régime, as well as the Empire, but were incapable of taking steps in order to ensure this rupture. On the one hand, university studies and prestigious careers in the public service, which used to be exclusive to the social elite and especially the aristocracy, became accessible to a larger number of people during the July Monarchy period. On the other hand, and as several scholars have argued, the educational system was deficient, since it did not prepare young people for the realities of the world and produced more members of the elite than were required. This, in turn, condemned young people to precarious living conditions and unsatisfactory careers.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, numerous key posts within the July Monarchy administration and government were occupied by former Bonapartists. As will be shown, although these men represented obstacles to social ascension, they were, nonetheless, perceived as heroic figures by the younger male population.<sup>77</sup> In short, the education of young bourgeois men aroused their ambition and their desires, but society was often unable to fulfil them.<sup>78</sup>

By way of introduction to this central theme, Vautrin's depiction of Rastignac's limited professional and financial opportunities in *Le Père Goriot*, unless he marries the (potentially) fabulously wealthy but plain heiress Victorine Taillefer, reflects the failure of the system:

Ayez des protections, vous serez procureur du roi à trente ans, avec mille écus d'appointements, et vous épouserez la fille du maire. Si vous faites quelques-unes de ces petites bassesses politiques [...], vous serez, à quarante ans, procureur général, et vous pourrez devenir député. [...] J'ai l'honneur de vous faire observer [...] qu'il n'y a que vingt procureurs généraux en France, et que vous êtes vingt mille aspirants au grade, parmi lesquels il se rencontre des farceurs qui vendraient leur famille pour monter d'un cran. Si le métier vous dégoûte, voyons autre chose. Le baron de Rastignac veut-il être avocat? [...] Si ce métier vous menait à bien, je ne dirais pas non; mais trouvez-moi dans Paris cinq avocats qui, à cinquante ans, gagnent plus de cinquante mille francs par an.<sup>79</sup>

Vautrin's estimation is so accurate that the French economist Thomas Piketty dedicates numerous pages of his essay, *Le capital au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, to an analysis of his speech in order to explain the difference between income from capital (such as inheritance, properties and lands)

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<sup>76</sup> Terdiman, p. 204; Magraw, p. 83; Rauch, p. 109; Lyon-Caen, pp. 218–20; Broglie, pp. 165–66.

<sup>77</sup> Barbéris, *Balzac et le mal du siècle*, II, pp. 1645–46.

<sup>78</sup> Barbéris, *Le monde de Balzac*, p. 489. See also pp. 417–19 and pp. 495–96.

<sup>79</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Le Père Goriot*, ed. by Stéphane Vachon (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 'Le Livre de Poche Classique', 1995), pp. 164–65. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text (*Goriot*). Gildea also refers to this extract (pp. 105–06). Magraw reports the words of an Orleanist bureaucrat who confirmed Balzac's observation by claiming that '[i]n Paris of very 1200 [students] reading for the law, 20 achieve fame, 80 fortune, 200 a modest living — the rest vegetate' (p. 83).

and income from work: ‘dans la France du début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle [...], le travail et les études ne permettent pas d’atteindre la même aisance que l’héritage et les revenus du patrimoine’.<sup>80</sup> During the period in which Balzac lived and wrote, the income of 1% of the population that received the highest inheritance was between twenty-five and thirty times higher than the average annual income (about 500 francs), whereas the salary of the 1% of the best-paid employees (such as judges and prosecutors) was only ten times higher than the average income.<sup>81</sup> In other words, July Monarchy society, like many nineteenth-century European societies, was not meritocratic, but aristocratic. It perpetuated the inequalities of the Ancien Régime, since a talented, hard-working and experienced judge would never be as wealthy as the heir of a rich person, often an aristocrat. Deprived of capital, as well as of external signs of wealth (sumptuous clothes, jewels, pieces of art, and a horse and carriage), young men could also be deprived of political power. Even though the legal age for voting was lowered from thirty to twenty-five and the age for being elected was lowered from forty to thirty during the July Monarchy, most men were excluded from the spheres of political power.<sup>82</sup> This was in spite of the fact that only those who paid at least 200 francs of taxes could qualify as voters.

Consequently, young men felt disillusioned regarding their future, suffered from their inability to satisfy what Laforgue calls their ‘vouloir-vivre’ and doubted their role in the new society established by the July Monarchy.<sup>83</sup> Their insecurity undermined the roles that they were, nonetheless, expected to fulfil as husbands, fathers, self-controlled and hard-working bourgeois, as well as decision-makers. Since being a man implied being able to play a decisive role in the public sphere, expressing weakness and effeminacy was a disavowal of masculine virtues and led to the renunciation of power and political influence, a renunciation which sometimes took the form of bohemianism and artistic aspirations.<sup>84</sup> Artistic and literary expression was a means of being provocative, retiring from bourgeois lifestyle and, above all, reflecting (on) the sentiments of insecure masculinity of their time.

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<sup>80</sup> Thomas Piketty, *Le capital au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2013), p. 381.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 647.

<sup>82</sup> Paul H. Beik, *Louis Philippe and the July Monarchy* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1965), p. 31.

<sup>83</sup> Laforgue, *L’eros romantique*, p. 130. See also Laforgue, *L’œdipe romantique*, pp. 11–12; Magraw, p. 83. This disillusionment towards the social organisation of the July Monarchy is perceptible in the letters of readers sent to Balzac and Eugène Sue that are analysed by Judith Lyon-Caen (pp. 237–43).

<sup>84</sup> Magraw, pp. 83–84.

## A Model of Masculinity: The Napoleonic Soldier

Like in the twentieth century, when the so-called ‘crisis’ of masculinity followed the Second World War, a period of intense military activity, men’s insecurity during the Restoration and the July Monarchy succeeded the revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Needless to say, military life was — and still is — seen as one promoting manly values. The problem that young men had to face in the first half of the nineteenth century can be formulated as follows: how to be a man when virile perfection seems to have already been reached? Indeed, the figures of Napoleon and his soldiers of the Great Army embodied a model of a virile, brave and honourable masculinity, which was perceived as perfect, and thus seemed impossible to surpass, or even equal.

Neither the end of Napoleon’s Empire, nor the Emperor’s deportation to Saint Helena in October 1815 and the dismissal of his soldiers, who had to reintegrate into civilian life (with varying levels of success), brought about an end to the Napoleonic legend. Sudhir Hazareesingh shows the popularity of Napoleon, or at least, of a fantasised image of Napoleon, as a lawgiver, a defender of freedom and the values of the Revolution, and as a Romantic hero, which lasted throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. This legendary Napoleon was worshipped as a role model for decades by different generations and social groups. His cult was expressed in many objects decorated with the Emperor’s effigy or with scenes of his most famous battles.<sup>85</sup> The Emperor thus began to represent something of a mythological figure, in Roland Barthes’s sense of the word *myth*. In other words, Napoleon himself, as a form, meant nothing, but was significant as a message, or a system of communication.<sup>86</sup> Rauch has thus rightly stated: ‘L’épopée impériale sert [...] de mythe, où la conscience de défendre la patrie se subordonne à celle de défendre le courage, c’est-à-dire l’identité masculine.’<sup>87</sup> The images of Napoleon on tobacco boxes and the tales of his victories signify the grandeur of France, the values of the Revolution and an ideal virility, rather than solely representing the Emperor.

Napoleonic soldiers, or *grogards*, were also signifiers of the Napoleonic myth depicting the grandeur of France. They consequently benefitted from extensive popularity. Certainly, they had been mistreated and even persecuted by Restoration authorities, but overall

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<sup>85</sup> Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Legend of Napoleon* (London: Granta Books, 2004), p. 2 and pp. 72–98. See also Jean Tulard, *Le mythe de Napoléon* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1971).

<sup>86</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Seuil, ‘Points/Essais’, 1957), p. 222.

<sup>87</sup> Rauch, p. 81. See also Barbéris, *Balzac et le mal du siècle*, II, p. 1641.

they remained appreciated by the French population.<sup>88</sup> After 1830, the popularity of Napoleon and his emissaries was renewed, as they could be openly worshipped, whereas Louis-Philippe's regime attempted to make amends and to define an institutionalised framework for Napoleon's cult (with, for example, the repatriation of his remains in 1840).<sup>89</sup> Napoleonic soldiers played an 'active role in the propagation of the Napoleonic "legend" [which] earned them a privileged position in artistic and literary representations of the Napoleonic cult'.<sup>90</sup> Not only did they contribute to this cult, but they were also objects of popular admiration, mainly outside the official networks of the regime, notably through the oral transmissions of their successes, and their veneration 'bec[a]me deeply entrenched in the collective French consciousness'.<sup>91</sup>

The generation of the soldiers of the Great Army was a military and virile one. The Napoleonic soldier was seen as the incarnation of an idealised masculinity promoting martial virtues, such as honour, glory and eagerness to protect the fatherland.<sup>92</sup> Napoleon used his numerous soldiers to promote his vision of a military masculinity among civilians.<sup>93</sup> More generally, the Emperor and his soldiers conveyed values inherited from the Revolution. In *Napoleonic Friendship*, Brian Joseph Martin, has highlighted how the development of mutual respect and friendship among soldiers, originating in revolutionary fraternity, was used as a strategy to ensure regimental unity and, thus, greater efficiency on the battlefield.<sup>94</sup> Likewise, citizenship and military life were interconnected. According to Anna Clark, the perfect citizen was endowed with the qualities of a warrior during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, and military service itself was an important means of becoming a citizen during the Empire.<sup>95</sup> The ideal citizen was depicted in speeches and artistic works, such as paintings and theatre plays, as a strong, virile, patriotic, courageous and gallant man.<sup>96</sup> In other words, the warrior was established as a model of masculinity during revolutionary and imperial times, and

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<sup>88</sup> Jean Lucas-Dubreton, *Le culte de Napoléon: 1815–1848* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1960), pp. 27–48; Hazareesingh, p. 236; Brian Joseph Martin, *Napoleonic Friendship: Military Fraternity, Intimacy, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011), pp. 152–57.

<sup>89</sup> Lucas-Dubreton, pp. 298–328; Barbéris, *Balzac et le mal du siècle*, II, p. 1641; Tulard, p. 63; Tiziana Goruppi, 'Gli eredi de "l'Enfant du siècle": Il mito de Napoleone nella *Confession* di Musset', *Studi Francesi*, 48:1 (January–April 2004), 101–07 (p. 106); Hazareesingh, p. 151 and pp. 154–55; Michael J. Hughes, 'Making Frenchmen into Warriors: Martial Masculinity in Napoleonic France', in *French Masculinities*, pp. 51–66 (p. 63).

<sup>90</sup> Hazareesingh, p. 237. See also Tulard, p. 41.

<sup>91</sup> Hazareesingh, p. 240

<sup>92</sup> Hughes, pp. 51–52. Honour became a true institution with Bonaparte's creation of the Légion d'honneur in 1802: Jean-Paul Bertaud, 'La virilité militaire', in *Le triomphe de la virilité*, pp. 157–202 (p. 171).

<sup>93</sup> Hughes, p. 53 and p. 62.

<sup>94</sup> Martin, esp. p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> Anna Clark, 'The Rhetoric of Masculine Citizenship: Concepts and Representations in Modern Western Political Culture', in *Representing Masculinity*, pp. 3–22 (p. 11). Mosse also points out that the citizen army during revolutionary times was a 'school for manliness' (p. 50).

<sup>96</sup> Alan Forrest, 'Citizenship and Masculinity: The Revolutionary Citizen-Soldier and His Legacy', in *Representing Masculinity*, pp. 111–29 (pp. 112–17). See also Hughes, p. 63; Bertaud, pp. 167–69 and pp. 176–78.

this model was the yardstick by which male individuals' masculine identity was measured and perpetuated during the July Monarchy.<sup>97</sup> As will be shown, the specific political and socio-cultural context of the July Monarchy, different from the previous revolutionary and Napoleonic times, did not enable young men to express their masculinity in the same way as the previous generation had done. Their masculinity was therefore judged inferior.

### **Periodisation and Corpus**

The July Monarchy is characterised by undeniable literary effervescence. Firstly, the Romantic movement experienced its peak during this period, led by Victor Hugo, who assumed the function of the theoretician of the movement with his *Préface de Cromwell* (1827), a position confirmed on the 25 February 1830 with the famous *bataille d'Hernani*. Secondly, the Realist novel was born under the influence of Stendhal and Balzac, who invented the codes of the modern novel.<sup>98</sup> Yet, the coherence of this historical period seems to have escaped literary critics who often choose to study either Romantic or Realist works. The themes and anxiety expressed in July Monarchy narratives transcend the frontiers strictly defined by literary history. The insecurity stemming from masculine malaise can be found in the works of writers with varied political, ideological and artistic backgrounds.

This thesis examines twelve literary narratives written during the July Monarchy period that mirror, as well as participate in the construction of, and changes to the sexual dichotomy that underpin a 'crisis' of masculinity and gender ambiguities. All twelve of these works were penned by renowned writers of the time and depict protagonists with gender and sexual ambiguities, whilst illustrating different aspects of French society and customs, such as provincial life, the aristocratic milieu, the prison and the trials of social ascension. The *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* of this corpus are determined by the reign of Louis-Philippe I (1830–48). Henri de Latouche's novel, *Fragoletta: Naples et Paris en 1799*, published in 1829, constitutes an exception. This often overlooked novel has nonetheless been included, as it initiates the representation of the hermaphrodite in the nineteenth-century French novel. There is a significant focus on the novels of Honoré de Balzac in this thesis, due to the nature of the project of *La Comédie humaine*, which aspired to cover the totality of French society, and due

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<sup>97</sup> Mosse, p. 51; Rauch, p. 14 and p. 47; Deborah Gutermann, 'Le désir et l'entrave: L'impuissance dans la construction de l'identité masculine romantique: première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Hommes et masculinités*, pp. 55–74 (p. 55).

<sup>98</sup> Cohen, p. 13.



to the process of *personnages reparaissants*.<sup>99</sup> *Sarrasine* (1831), *La Fille aux yeux d'or* (1835), *Illusions perdues* (1837–43), *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838–47), *Béatrix* (1839–45) and *La Cousine Bette* (1846) are the narratives that have been selected among the numerous novels and novellas that compose the *Études des mœurs* section of *La Comédie humaine*, in order to establish the correlation between ambiguous masculinities and social customs.<sup>100</sup> Through the stories of a castrato who is mistaken for a woman, an effeminate and violent dandy in love with an exotic, lesbian girl, an ambitious but weak poet mentored by a criminal, a talented woman writer and a vengeful spinster, Balzac has depicted and critiqued the complexity of gender relations in French society. The present corpus also includes two novels by George Sand: the first edition of *Lélia* (1833), which depicts a ‘feminist mal du siècle’, and *Mauprat* (1837), the tale of the education of a wild child by the woman who loves him.<sup>101</sup> Victor Hugo’s short novel, *Claude Gueux* (1834), is also analysed. This story is inspired by historical events: a prisoner kills the prison warden who used to bully him. Théophile Gautier’s *Mademoiselle de Maupin: Double amour* (1835) constitutes one of the most sophisticated developments of the topics of homosexuality, hermaphroditism and aesthetics and thus features in the corpus as well. Finally, this thesis analyses Alfred de Musset’s *La Confession d’un enfant du siècle* (1836), which oscillates between a *roman personnel* and fiction, and expresses the masculine malaise that characterises young men during the July Monarchy.<sup>102</sup>

The present corpus also includes numerous scientific writings, as they offer valuable information on the perception of sexual and gender matters in nineteenth-century French society. Some of these texts consist of articles from the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales par une société de médecins et de chirurgiens* (1812–22) and the *Encyclopédie des sciences médicales* (1835). The corpus also comprises medico-legal essays: Paul-Augustin-Olivier Mahon’s *Médecine légale et police médicale* (1807), François-Emmanuel Fodéré’s *Traité de médecine légale et d’hygiène publique ou de police de santé* (1813) and Ambroise Tardieu’s *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs* (1857). Other scientific texts considered in this thesis are treatises dedicated to a specific disease or group of individuals. Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis’s *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme* (1802) is dedicated to man

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<sup>99</sup> Honoré de Balzac claims in his *Avant-propos de la Comédie humaine*: ‘La Société ne fait-elle pas de l’homme, suivant les milieux où son action se déploie, autant d’hommes différents qu’il y a de variétés en zoologie?’: in *La Comédie humaine*, ed. by Marcel Bouteron, 11 vols (Paris: Gallimard, ‘Bibliothèque de la Pléiade’, 1951), I, pp. 3–16 (p. 4)

<sup>100</sup> Interesting works in term of genders that figure in the *Études philosophiques*, such as *La Peau de chagrin* (1831) and *Séraphita* (1835), have therefore been rejected.

<sup>101</sup> Waller, p. 136. This edition of *Lélia* has been chosen over the 1839 edition for its explicit discourse about women’s sexuality. As a play, or ‘roman dialogué’, *Gabriel* (1839) has also been excluded.

<sup>102</sup> Summaries of the plots of these novels can be found in the first appendix, pp. 239–245.

(and woman)'s physical and moral characteristics; Jacques Louis Moreau de la Sarthe's *Histoire naturelle de la femme* (1803), Julien-Joseph Virey's *De la femme* (1823) and Charles François Menville de Ponsan's *Histoire médicale et philosophique de la femme* (1845), to woman's anatomy, physiology, personality and diseases; Hubert Lauvergne's *Les forçats* (1841), to customs and diseases of convicts; Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste Parent-Duchâtelet's *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris* (1836), to prostitution and Parisian prostitutes; Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's *Traité de tératologie* (1832–37), to physical monstrosities; Étienne Esquirol's *Des maladies mentales* (1838), to mental illness and J.-G. Human's *Nosographie des maladies vénériennes* (1838), to venereal diseases. Many of these texts were published prior to the July Monarchy, but the conception of sex and gender that is established in these scientific writings is grounded in the common beliefs and norms of the nineteenth century. They provide the discursive context in which these normative *idées reçues* are used and critiqued by novelists of the July Monarchy. Tardieu's forensic essay is the only text published after 1848. It has nonetheless been included because it epitomises the considerations about homosexuality that had been developed by his predecessors during the July Monarchy.

## **Thesis Overview**

The citation that is included in the title of this thesis is borrowed from Balzac's *La Cousine Bette*. The narrator's commentary on the old maid Lisbeth Fischer and her protégé Wenceslas Steinbock states that 'on aurait pensé que la nature s'était trompée en leur donnant leurs sexes'.<sup>103</sup> This narrator highlights the sexual ambivalence of the protagonists of the novels by referring to a supposed order of nature that attributes specific biological and psychological characteristics to each sex. Moreover, the use of the plural ('leurs sexes') adds ambiguity to the expression because it suggests that each individual has more than one sex. Balzac's sentence thus summarises two positions that will be analysed in this thesis: the belief in a sexual dichotomy and the awareness of the fragility of such a binary system.

In the first instance, this thesis uses the aforementioned scientific texts to determine how differences between the sexes were conceived during the first part of the nineteenth century, a period in which the concept of gender was not yet acknowledged, let alone theorised. In the second instance, this study is not only concerned with the literary representation, but also with the critique of masculine insecurity and the traditional conception of the separation of the sexes,

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<sup>103</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *La Cousine Bette*, ed. by Roger Pierrot (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 'Le Livre de Poche Classiques', 2000), p. 89. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text (*Bette*).

as well as the attempts to find alternative models to the dominant masculinity that was imposed on male individuals by French society. Each of the four subsequent chapters focuses on a specific trope correlated to gender and sexual ambiguities. These four chapters will each analyse three literary narratives from the twelve literary texts that have been selected (as well as referring briefly to other narratives of the period), which are judged to be particularly relevant in their depiction and critique of a specific aspect of insecure masculinity. This means, firstly, that the organisation of this study is thematic, rather than chronological; secondly, that conclusions drawn in a chapter about a character, a situation or a problem may be valid for other characters, situations or problems that present similar characteristics. The sustained arguments highlight the importance of the topic of hermaphroditism. This theme intensifies the issues of opposition and fusion of masculinity and femininity that characterise July Monarchy narratives, and, as such, provides a model for challenging the constraints of the sexual dichotomy overall.

Chapter 1, 'Sexual Dichotomy, Hermaphroditism and Male Homosexuality in Nineteenth-Century French Scientific Discourse', provides contextual and cultural background to this thesis by studying French scientific writings of the first half of the nineteenth century. The examination of these texts determines how nineteenth-century French society was defined by the separation of the sexes. According to this principle, men and women exercised different social duties that were 'naturally' determined by their physical and psychological differences. In the first instance, this chapter analyses scientists' slippage from a bodily and physiological definition of sex to what is deemed nowadays as a cultural, or gendered, definition. It also examines the problem raised by individuals who did not conform to the physical and behavioural norms, especially masculine women, hermaphrodites and male homosexuals. Scientists judged them to be scientifically, socially and legally objectionable because their existence in itself challenged the legitimacy of the sexual dichotomy. It will be shown that scientific strategies thus consisted in assimilating hermaphrodites and homosexuals to one pole of the sexual dichotomy, or in marginalising them.

Having determined the framework in which men and women's characteristics and social roles were considered within nineteenth-century scientific thought, chapter 2, 'Hermaphroditism, Transvestism and Gender Indeterminacy', demonstrates how the depiction of hermaphroditic characters in Latouche's *Fragoletta*, Balzac's *Sarrasine* and Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* allows writers to express their anxiety towards masculine insecurity and even challenge the norm of the separation of the sexes. Paradoxically, it also shows their reluctance to transgress the sexual dichotomy. The hermaphrodite is portrayed both as an embodiment of ideal beauty according to Classical aesthetics, and as a monster, suffering from

exclusion, cursed by God and suspected of homosexuality due to his/her bi-sexuality.<sup>104</sup> The literary discourse about homosexuality appears to abandon moral condemnation by adopting an aesthetic perspective, rooted in a Neoclassical model that promoted the beauty of effeminate young men. The transformation of hermaphroditic figures into real or fantasised pieces of art enables writers to glorify the concomitance of masculine and feminine qualities in an individual. *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, in particular, shows that the symbolic creation of a third sex which would combine physical, moral and intellectual qualities of each gender successfully thwarts the sexual dichotomy.

Chapter 3, 'Masculine Insecurity, Effeminacy and Homosexuality', studies literary narratives that apparently reject the positive interpretation of sexual and gender ambiguities, which was notably characteristic of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, in order to criticise the reversal of the traditional representation of masculinity. It analyses the cases of Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré in *Illusions perdues* and *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, and Musset's Octave in *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* as fictional incarnations of a masculine malaise. It points out that these protagonists are characterised by so-called feminine flaws, such as weakness, passivity and inconstancy, which are seen to hinder their masculinity. In contrast to the fantasised and thus unattainable model of ideal virility embodied by the Napoleonic soldier, the insecurity of these protagonists is revealed to be conveyed by their feminine beauty, as well as their childishness and narcissism. More importantly, this chapter studies the suggestion of homosexuality in Balzac's novels. It shows, on the one hand, how homosexuality is employed as a means of discrediting young men in their ability to renew the social order, notably through similar rhetorical strategies as those used in scientific writings. On the other hand, the use of Badinter's notion of *l'homme réconcilié* highlights the fact that a homosexual (such as Vautrin) can embody a positive alternative to the masculine malaise because he combines harmoniously masculine and feminine qualities.

Chapter 4, 'Hyper-masculinity, Animality and Power', studies in Sand's *Mauprat*, Balzac's *La Fille aux yeux d'or* and Hugo's *Claude Gueux* what constitutes the hyper-masculine response to the masculine insecurity analysed in the previous chapter. This overcompensatory strategy consists of an excessive display of masculine behaviour that turns the conventional signs of virility into aggressiveness and violence. Balzac, Hugo and, above all, Sand often adopt the images of the animal and the savage to depict such conducts. The

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<sup>104</sup> This spelling of *bi-sexuality* and *bi-sexual* corresponds to Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's *hermaphrodite bisexuel* (see appendix 2, p. 247) and designates a hermaphrodite endowed with two sexes, and not someone who feels equal attraction to men and women. The two notions were, nonetheless, intertwined.

reference to nature, traditionally associated with femininity, highlights the feminine and 'corrupt' dimension that paradoxically underpins hyper-masculinity. The depiction of hyper-masculinity also enables writers to explore relations between civilisation and violence and to examine the notion of power in Western societies through orientalist and animalistic imagery. It is argued, however, that this power is judged fragile, as it can be counterbalanced by a female power that is regarded either as a beneficial influence or as a dangerous and emasculating threat.

Assuming that masculinity is not limited to male individuals, chapter 5, 'Female Masculinity, Maternity and Gender Prescriptions', finally examines the construction of female masculinity in Sand's *Lélia* and Balzac's *Béatrix* and *La Cousine Bette*. Masculine women display physical and behavioural characteristics that were believed to be typical of men, and, more generally, occupy allegedly masculine functions in society. This chapter highlights the ambiguous position of writers, especially Balzac, with regard to masculine women. These women's anti-conformism, notably in their rejection of marriage, motherhood and heteronormative sexuality, as well as the combination of their reputedly masculine qualities, such as intelligence, dynamism and assertiveness, with their maternal tenderness towards their lovers, present them concurrently as superior beings and menaces to the social order. Accordingly, the power that is conveyed by their masculinity is contained through the disappearance, seclusion, and/or death of the female protagonist, whilst exemplifying and advocating women's possible agency and equality.

In brief, this thesis argues that French narratives of the July Monarchy period renegotiated sexual and gender categories, notably by mirroring and critiquing a pervasive sentiment of masculine malaise. It demonstrates that the representation of insecure, flawed or 'deviant' masculinities is precisely what enables narratives to construct a new model of gender relations that challenges hegemonic masculinity. The images of hermaphrodites, homosexuals, effeminate or hyper-masculine men and masculine women are not usually exhibited as frightening counter-models in these texts. Rather, they are used to reveal the extent to which masculinity and society in general can be regenerated through alternative models and through underestimated agents of masculinity, promoting values traditionally perceived and despised as feminine. The July Monarchy literary narratives thus favour the study of the development of a masculine identity that is constructed outside the traditional categories of virility.



## CHAPTER 1: SEXUAL DICHOTOMY, HERMAPHRODITISM AND MALE HOMOSEXUALITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE

### Introduction

Throughout January 2014, several French right-wing movements, which had previously protested against *le mariage pour tous* (the law that opened up marriage to same-sex couples), rose up against what they called *la théorie du genre*. This expression referred to their simplistic and often erroneous interpretation of the interdisciplinary field of gender studies. They feared that this *théorie du genre* would be taught at school, that children would learn that they are not born, but rather become girls or boys, and even that practical lessons in masturbation would be organised at school.<sup>105</sup> Their anxiety stemmed from a traditional representation of the sexes and the social roles that are attributed to them. However, a few months previously, in November 2013, Germany began to allow babies who were born without a determined male or female sex to be temporarily registered with no mention of sex in order to give the necessary time to parents and doctors to assign a sex.<sup>106</sup> Australia went even further in April 2014, as the country recognised the existence of a third sex, called *neutral*, to designate individuals who tally with neither the category of *man* nor of *woman* in a medical sense.<sup>107</sup> The decisions made in Germany and Australia reveal that the categories of sex are complicated, to say the least.

These three contemporary examples show the complexity of the concept of sex, as well as the lack of ambiguity that society generally associates with this concept. *The Oxford Dictionary of English* defines *sex* as ‘either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and most other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions’.<sup>108</sup> The definition emphasises the separation between two groups of humans (and other living things): the male and the female. A possible etymology of *sex* is the Latin verb *secare*, which means ‘to cut’ or ‘to divide’.<sup>109</sup> As the definition and the etymology reveal, in Western culture, there has been little doubt traditionally that only two sexes exist. The social

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<sup>105</sup> ‘Après des boycotts, Peillon dément tout enseignement du “genre” à l’école’, *Le Monde*, 28 January 2014 <[http://www.lemonde.fr/education/article/2014/01/28/apres-des-boycotts-peillon-dement-tout-enseignement-du-genre-a-l-ecole\\_4355885\\_1473685.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/education/article/2014/01/28/apres-des-boycotts-peillon-dement-tout-enseignement-du-genre-a-l-ecole_4355885_1473685.html)> [accessed 12 August 2014]

<sup>106</sup> ‘L’Allemagne légalise un troisième sexe’, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 30 October 2013 <<http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/societe/20131030.OBS3162/l-allemande-reconnait-les-enfants-nes-sans-sexe-determine.html>> [accessed 12 August 2014]

<sup>107</sup> ‘Genre neutre: l’Australie reconnaît l’existence d’un troisième sexe’, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 2 April 2014 <<http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/monde/20140402.OBS2284/genre-neutre-l-australie-reconnait-un-troisieme-sexe.html>> [accessed 12 August 2014]

<sup>108</sup> ‘Sex’, in *The Oxford Dictionary of English*, p. 1631.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Sexe’, in *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, II, pp. 1937–38.

concept of the separation of the sexes, or rather the sexual dichotomy, is often claimed to be the result of ‘natural’, biological differences between men and women. In contrast, other cultures recognise the existence of a third sex (which can include homosexuals, hermaphrodites and transvestites) and they designate it with a specific name. For instance, the *Mahus* in Polynesia and the *Hijras* in India, who were either born hermaphrodite or chose a hermaphroditic lifestyle, are assigned a definite identity.<sup>110</sup> These examples suggest that the separation between a male sex and a female sex is not as simple as it has traditionally been believed to be. The biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling claims that it does not correspond to the complexity of the human body for which ‘[t]here is no either/or’; rather, she argues that, instead of two polar opposites, ‘there are shades of difference’.<sup>111</sup>

For at least two centuries, physical, but also psychological and social oppositions between a male sex and a female sex were largely accepted. However, the existence of individuals who did not fit in with this sexual dichotomy, notably hermaphrodites, who had the characteristics of both sexes, and homosexuals, who displayed a sexual interest for their own sex, showed the limits of traditional concepts of sex. During the second half of the twentieth century, a distinction was made between sex as a biological reality, and gender as a cultural construction:

Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex.<sup>112</sup>

The American philosopher Judith Butler claims, nonetheless, that the meaning of *construction* is far from unproblematic. Even when gender is acknowledged to be culturally constructed, it is still thought to be the consequence of social determinism. In *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, she argues that the idea of a natural sex is itself constructed and eradicates the sex/gender distinction: ‘gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which “sexed nature” or “a natural sex” is produced and established as “prediscursive”, prior to culture’.<sup>113</sup> Whilst it is difficult to agree with Butler

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<sup>110</sup> Rommel Mendès-Leite, ‘Inconstance des sexes et des genres dans les sociétés non occidentales’, in *Différenciation sexuelle et identités: Clinique, art et littérature*, ed. by Jean-Yves Tamet, pref. by Pierre Chatelain (Paris: In Press, 2012), pp. 111–32 (pp. 114–17). For more on third sexes in non-Western cultures, see also Gilmore, p. 222; Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 108–09.

<sup>111</sup> Fausto-Sterling, p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 6.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.



when she asserts that sex is determined by gender and thus dismisses biological facts, it remains true that, thanks to her work and to gender studies more broadly, the sexual dichotomy and the correlations between male and masculine, and female and feminine are judged untenable nowadays, at least in academic discourses.<sup>114</sup> However, they are still commonplace in society, as the recent opponents to *la théorie du genre* have shown.

In contrast, the distinction between sex and gender was not taken into consideration by nineteenth-century doctors and scientists, although they were aware of the existence of sexually ambiguous individuals. Consequently, the social notion of gender is largely absent from their texts.<sup>115</sup> At that time, the French word *genre* was used in many fields (natural history, literature, fine arts, music, fashion and grammar, for instance), but it was the word *sexe* that was used to designate the social and cultural role assigned to each sex.<sup>116</sup> There was no opposition between them because gender was believed to be a consequence of a person's biological sex.<sup>117</sup> In other words, gender was regarded as being as 'natural' as genitalia.

French literary texts during the nineteenth century were influenced by, and therefore often mirrored (while sometimes challenging), the traditional perception of the sexes as radically opposed. Before embarking on the study of literary narratives of the July Monarchy and their representations of sexes, genders and sexual ambiguities, it is important to understand how sexes and genders were conceived of at that time. Scientific writings offer a clear explanation of the separation of the sexes. By examining genitalia and organs, they emphasise the bodily definition of the sexes that is omnipresent during the nineteenth century, whilst also being concerned with the implications of scientific observations about the sexual dichotomy in daily life. They set out arguments based both on scientific examinations and on contemporaneous beliefs to discuss the question of sexual dichotomy. The scientific discourse on sex and common preconceptions about the sexes were mutually reinforcing.

This chapter analyses scientific discourse in the first half of the nineteenth century (from 1802 to 1857) by studying articles in medical dictionaries, scientific monographs, forensic essays and works that combine scientific, philosophical and moral considerations from that time. This panorama of fifty years of scientific writings sustains the argument that scientists

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<sup>114</sup> Toril Moi has written an insightful critique of poststructuralists' — and especially Butler's — rejection of biological facts when discussing the distinction between sex and gender (pp. 30–58; esp. pp. 45–54 for Butler).

<sup>115</sup> It is also the case in modern French texts, where *genre* struggles to find a place in French feminist studies: Ilana Löwy and Hélène Rouch, 'Genèse et développement du genre: Les sciences et les origines de la distinction entre sexe et genre', in *Cahiers du Genre*, 34 (2003), 5–16 (p. 5).

<sup>116</sup> 'Genre', in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn (1835), I, p. 832.

<sup>117</sup> Théophile Gautier, nevertheless, distinguished between the sex of the soul and the biological sex in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, as will be shown in the analysis conducted in chapter 2 (pp. 107–08).

firmly believed in the separation of the sexes and identified the moral, social and ideological implications of such a separation in the foundation of sexual norms, particularly for men. In this chapter, this ‘normative’ man is envisaged in a point of opposition to different individuals. Firstly, women constituted the complementary pole to men. Secondly, men were opposed to hermaphrodites, who were seen as ‘monstrous’ individuals who combined in their bodies characteristics from the male and female sexes. Finally, men were opposed to homosexuals, who were regarded as ‘abnormal’ because of their sexual attraction to the same sex and, as such, could be seen as ‘psychosexual hermaphrodites’, to borrow the phrasing of German and English sexologists (Albert Moll, Johann Ludwig Casper, Richard von Kraft-Ebing and Henry Havelock Ellis).<sup>118</sup> Each section focuses on one of these figures and highlights the scientists’ attempts to deny the existence of individuals with sexual and gendered ambiguities by assimilating them to the norm that they had defined. This chapter argues that the study of these individuals nevertheless challenged the essentialist and normative separation of the sexes that scientists intended to uphold because, by excluding these persons from the sexual dichotomy, they revealed its instability.

### **The Separation of the Sexes: Distinctions between Men and Women**

Where the sexual dichotomy was concerned, French physicians at the beginning of the nineteenth century generally argued that men and women were different not simply because of their genitalia, but also because of their physiology, which influenced their ideas and their morals. They focused especially on women’s constitutions and mentalities, studying beings whom they physically and psychologically distinguished from men and analysing how this distinction was decisive for procreation. The corpus of scientific writings on women includes the fifth memoir of the physician, philosopher and politician Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis’s *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme* (1802), called ‘De l’influence des sexes sur le caractère des idées et des affections morales’; the doctor Jacques Louis Moreau de la Sarthe’s extensive *Histoire naturelle de la femme* (1803); the anthropologist and pharmacist Julien-Joseph Virey’s *De la femme, sous ses rapports physiologique, moral et littéraire* (1825) and

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<sup>118</sup> Pierre Hahn, *Nos ancêtres les pervers: La vie des homosexuels sous le second empire*, pref. by Michael Sibalís (Béziers: H&O, 2006 [Paris: Orban, 1979]), p. 91; Alice Domurat Dreger, ‘Hermaphrodites in Love: The Truth of the Gonads’, in *Science and Homosexualities*, ed. by Vernon A. Rosario (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 46–66 (p. 59). See also ‘hermaphrodites de l’esprit’: Régis Revenin, ‘Conceptions et théories savantes de l’homosexualité masculine en France, de la monarchie de Juillet à la Première Guerre mondiale’, *Revue d’Histoire des Sciences Humaines*, 17:2 (2007), 23–45 (p. 28).

the physician Charles François Menville de Ponsan's *Histoire médicale et philosophique de la femme* (1845).<sup>119</sup>

The principle of fundamental differences between the sexes does not emanate exclusively from scientific discourses. In his highly influential treatise, *Émile ou de l'éducation* (1762), Jean-Jacques Rousseau stated: 'En tout ce qui tient au sexe la femme et l'homme ont partout des rapports et partout des différences'.<sup>120</sup> The philosopher established that the sexual difference between men and women determined moral differences that influenced the duties assigned to each sex. He argued that the main function of a woman was to please men, especially her husband, by her virtue, modesty, common sense and docility. Scientific writings of the beginning of the nineteenth century echoed and extended, through scientific argumentation, Rousseau's educational doctrine. Cabanis, Moreau de la Sarthe, Virey and Menville de Ponsan were all categorical in their judgement that men and women's different genitals (a man had a penis, a scrotum and testes; a woman had a vagina, a uterus and ovaries) were the foundation upon which to differentiate between the male and female sexes.

However, the concept of two fundamentally opposite sexes, what Thomas Laqueur calls a two-sex model, or incommensurability, which is employed by nineteenth-century scientists, was relatively recent in the sense that it was an invention of the Enlightenment. Prior to this, and since the time of Aristotle and Galen, a one-sex model prevailed, according to which female genitalia were identical to male ones, but were simply internal and judged inferior to those of men. The relation between male and female genitals was not that of incommensurability, or opposition, but of hierarchy.<sup>121</sup> The perspective of two opposite sexes that is sustained by Cabanis, Moreau de la Sarthe, Virey and Menville de Ponsan is challenged by modern endocrinologists and paediatricians. When determining the sex of an individual, they also

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<sup>119</sup> Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, 2 vols (Paris: Crapart, Caille et Ravier, 1802), I, pp. 310–97; Jacques Louis Moreau de la Sarthe, *Histoire naturelle de la femme suivie d'un traité d'hygiène appliquée à son régime physique et moral aux différentes époques de la vie*, 2 vols (Paris: Duprat, 1803), I, pp. 14–15 and pp. 69–70; Julien-Joseph Virey, *De la femme, sous ses rapports physiologique, moral et littéraire*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris: Crochard Libraire, 1825 [1823]), p. 5; Charles François Menville de Ponsan, *Histoire médicale et philosophique de la femme considérée dans toutes les époques principales de sa vie avec tous les changements qui surviennent dans son physique et son moral avec l'hygiène applicable à son sexe et toutes les maladies qui peuvent l'atteindre aux différents âges*, 3 vols (Paris: Amyot-Labé, 1845), I, pp. 3–4. For primary sources, the first reference is given in footnote and further references are given after quotations in the text. The spelling of our corpus has been modernised and corrected when necessary.

<sup>120</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'éducation*, ed. by André Chartrak (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 2009), p. 515.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas Laqueur, 'Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology', in *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 1–41 (esp. pp. 2–3); Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), esp. pp. 4–6 and p. 23.

consider factors that were unknown in the nineteenth century, such as chromosomes and genes, which alter their conception of the sexes. In contrast, the anatomy of external and internal genital organs was the only tangible evidence of the sex of an individual in the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, genital difference is neither sufficient nor absolute, because genitalia are not always devoid of ambiguities. It was also necessary to determine other bodily signs of maleness or femaleness, established by genitalia themselves, which were not only important because of their reproductive functions, but also because of their influence on other organs. This ‘incontestable’ influence, as Cabanis argues (I, 320), is different in men and women. Virey claims that a woman is more influenced by her genitalia, especially her uterus, than men, and even goes as far as to argue that they are the principle of her entire biological structure: ‘Tout individu femelle est uniquement créé pour la propagation; ses organes sexuels sont la racine et la base de toute sa structure’ (2).<sup>122</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe also affirms: ‘Le sexe le plus faible et le plus sensible doit plus à la nature, le sexe le plus fort doit davantage à la civilisation’ (I, 698; see also 187–88, 203–06, 680). Both illustrate what Sherry Ortner has questioned in her article, ‘Is Female to Male What Nature Is to Culture?’; that is, women’s universal inferiority is due to their reputed closeness to nature determined by their procreative functions and their psyche modelled by their mothering role.<sup>123</sup> The importance of the body in a woman’s identity is supposedly an obstacle to the development of her cultural capacities, notably her intelligence (Moreau, I, 119–21; II, 403; Virey, 171, 173).

The influence of genitalia on other organs was considered to produce physical characteristics, or secondary sexual characteristics, that differentiate each sex and participate in the sexual identity of an individual. Cabanis, Moreau de la Sarthe, Virey and Menville de Ponsan (as well as experts in hermaphroditism and homosexuality, as will be shown later) establish a portrait of men and women that is based on the principle of the opposition between these characteristics. For instance, women are smooth, men are hairy; women are cold, men are warm; women are moist, men are dry, women are pale, men are tanned; and so forth (Cabanis, I, 316; Moreau, I, 88–210; Virey, 69–70, 172–88; Menville, I, 17–21). Moreover, body and physiology are important because they influence the personality and behaviour of an individual. A keyword is *sensibilité*, which covers physical and psychological characteristics. Women,

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<sup>122</sup> Rousseau made a similar observation: ‘Le mâle n’est mâle qu’en certains instants, la femelle est femelle toute sa vie, ou du moins toute sa jeunesse; tout la rappelle sans cesse à son sexe, et, pour en bien remplir les fonctions, il lui faut une constitution qui si rapporte’ (520). See also Menville, I, 4–5, 49–50, 121–24.

<sup>123</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, ‘Is Female to Male What Nature Is to Culture?’, in *A Cultural Studies Reader*, pp. 492–508.

according to these authors, are more sensitive than men (Cabanis, I, 334–35, 350; Moreau, I, 112–13, 118; Virey, vii, 103–04; Menville, I, 55–61). This sensitivity is physically determined by their weaker constitution and nervous system, and is believed to affect their culinary, musical and tactile tastes. In relation to personality and tastes, sensitivity determines women’s emotions and instincts (Cabanis, I, 361), whereas men are seen as less emotional and more rational. Women’s emotional sensitivity and nervous weakness are responsible for their passivity and changeability (Moreau, I, 693–95; Virey, 220–23).

The difference between male and the female physical and psychological characteristics is attributed to the social functions that each sex must exercise. As Cabanis summarises: ‘la nature n’a pas simplement distingué les sexes par les seuls organes, instruments directs de la génération: entre l’homme et la femme il existe d’autres différences de structure, qui se rapportent plutôt au rôle qui leur est assigné’ (I, 315–16; see also Menville, I, 48–49). A woman’s ‘natural’ and desired mission is to be a mother (Moreau, II, 146, 186). The smoothness of her body and the gentleness of her character enable her to exercise her maternal duties, from the point of conception through the care of her children (Cabanis, I, 349–52, 357; Virey, 215).<sup>124</sup> Conversely, a man is judged too clumsy, too impatient and too tough to take care of an infant (Cabanis, I, 355–56). It is only natural, therefore, that he performs physical and intellectual work, which requires his strength and intelligence, in the public sphere (Cabanis, I, 349; Virey, 174). All these differences are judged necessary. Cabanis summarises the portrait of man and woman: ‘Il faut que l’homme soit fort, audacieux, entreprenant; que la femme soit faible, timide, rusée’, before solemnly adding: ‘Telle est la loi de la nature’ (I, 348).

We might well question such a statement. Indeed, why was this opposition between male and female physiologies and behaviours seen as a necessity? Why does a woman need to be weak, even when she delivers a baby, which was still a life-threatening procedure in Cabanis’s day (I, 349)?<sup>125</sup> And why does the man need to be strong all the time? Cabanis’s declaration is too categorical to not reveal any ambiguity regarding women’s role in society. His excessive reliance on nature can be interpreted as a secular attempt to maintain a social order based on a sexual dichotomy.<sup>126</sup> If the physical and psychological differences between men and women are revealed to be insignificant, the whole organisation of society collapses. As a result, Virey justifies these sexual differences by referring to the only functions for which

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<sup>124</sup> For more on maternal duties, see chapter 5, pp. 216–20.

<sup>125</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe (II, 341) and Virey (140) mention that female death rate is the highest between twenty and thirty-five years old, when they are more likely to bear children.

<sup>126</sup> In these texts, natural laws replace God’s laws, but, like divine laws, they cannot be transgressed.

these differences are necessary: procreation. However, psychological difference must be added to genital difference during procreation. Virey argues that reproduction is possible only if man and woman complete each other; that is, if each of them brings in the union of qualities of which the other is deprived. He emphasises the importance of complementarity between man and woman, a concept that is analogous to Laqueur's 'incommensurability': 'L'homme sans la femme n'est point un être complet' (2).<sup>127</sup> They become complementary because of their physiological and emotional opposition. Men are characterised by overabundance, force, generosity and liberality; women, as beings that are timid and lacking (*en moins*), and that have to absorb men's excess in order to find a balance (195). A man's physiological manhood is believed to be reflected in his virile appearance, which shows how tight the link between secondary sexual characteristics and sex was believed to be.<sup>128</sup>

According to the principle of complementarity, a woman who absorbs the surplus of sperm that is produced by her partner during sexual intercourse acquires some masculine qualities, such as energy, strength and robustness (Menville, I, 242). Masculinisation is therefore the destiny of a married woman: '[e]lle est maintenant, par rapport à la jeune vierge, ce que l'homme est à l'égard de la femme' (Ibid.; see also Virey, 181). However, this process occurs in small proportions and does not affect her overall femininity. An excess of masculine semen in a woman would be deemed to be dangerous because she would develop excessively manly characteristics. The prostitute, or at least the promiscuous woman, is referred to as a masculine woman, or 'hommasse' (Virey, 86, 104, 181), namely a woman characterised by physical and behavioural traits generally attributed to men, owing to her numerous relations with men and the large quantity of male semen that she has received.

Along with the old woman (Moreau, I, 404), the sterile woman (Cabanis, I, 320–21; Virey, 170–71) and the intellectual woman who prefers reading books over feminine activities (Virey, 5), the *vivandière* (the woman who follows military troops as a sutler) also belongs to the category of masculine women, as illustrated in this unflattering portrait:

Voyez les femmes les plus hommasses, ces *viragines* audacieuses, dont tous les organes sont très développés, tels que les parties sexuelles dilatées, les mamelons du sein ouverts, dont la parole est haute, criarde, arrogante, dont les gestes sont provocants, dont la démarche est délibérée, l'air hardi, la trogne masculine, même le ton grenadier. En effet, les courtisanes, les vivandières se présentent avec ce maintien et ces qualités demi-viriles, comme si elles étaient déjà transformées à moitié en l'autre sexe à force de

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<sup>127</sup> Menville de Ponsan went even further to explain their complementarity by referring to the myth of the androgyne, according to which man and woman constitute the same being separated in two halves that attempt to reunite (I, xviii, 3). For more on the myth of the androgyne, see chapter 2, p. 71.

<sup>128</sup> Nye, p. 60.

cohabiter avec les hommes, et il en est plusieurs auxquelles pousse un peu de barbe au menton, surtout en avançant en âge. (Virey, 86; original emphasis)

The association between courtesans and *vivandières* may be due to the fact that *vivandières* and laundry workers were often regarded as prostitutes; consequently, sutlers might receive a great quantity of sperm during encounters with soldiers.<sup>129</sup> However, Virey's text paradoxically highlights the fact that masculine women are characterised by some very feminised physical characteristics, such as the development of female secondary sexual characteristics (the large breasts, the nipples and the piercing voice), whereas their gestures, gait, expression and tone are judged to be masculine. This implies that their masculinisation is not simply the result of the absorption of sperm, but is at least partly caused by a principle of imitation, according to which women living in close proximity to men copy their attitude. Accordingly, there is a contradiction in Virey's text, as he shows — rather than stating — that masculinisation is not solely a biological process.

Furthermore, mannish women are described by Virey as *viragines*. The sixth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1835) defines a virago as a 'fille ou femme de grande taille, qui a l'air d'un homme', adding: 'ne se dit que par dérision'.<sup>130</sup> The masculine woman is blamed for her masculine allure (just as effeminate men will be criticised in texts relating to homosexuality), as her behaviour defies the modesty that is supposed to be typical of women. A woman who has been virilised by her numerous encounters with men, allegedly because of her frivolity, paradoxically becomes unable to attract men, since she is judged repellent for the senses by Virey (176–77), who states: 'Jamais une femme masculine ne sera bien chérie d'un homme; il croirait pécher avec elle comme avec son semblable, et il éprouve presque le même genre de répugnance' (194; see also Menville, I, 39). He claims that masculine women call the virility of their lovers into question because these men are attracted to the characteristics of their own gender and are therefore suspected of homosexuality.

Masculine women can also be perceived as homosexuals. References to lesbians were rare in scientific writings of the early nineteenth century (Éric Bordas calls this phenomenon 'l'invisibilité lesbienne') because lesbianism did not raise the same scientific interest as male homosexuality.<sup>131</sup> To French scientists, intercourse between women was not characterised by

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<sup>129</sup> Bertaud, 'L'armée et le brevet de virilité', in *Le triomphe de la virilité*, pp. 63–79 (p. 75).

<sup>130</sup> 'Virago', in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn (1835), II, p. 940. In his similar definition, Littré also emphasises the pejorative connotation: <<http://www.littre.org>> [accessed 21 November 2013].

<sup>131</sup> Éric Bordas, 'Introduction: Comment en parlait-on?', *Romantisme*, 159 (2013), 3–17 (p. 15). Likewise, Christopher Rivers points to the inability to speak explicitly about female homosexuality: 'Inintelligibles pour une femme honnête: Sexuality, Textuality and Knowledge in Diderot's *La Religieuse* and Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*', *Romance Review*, 86:1 (January 1995), 1–29 (pp. 16–22).

the same level of genital involvement as anal intercourse between men; as a result, it could not be regarded as a collection of acts involving genitalia.<sup>132</sup> On another level, physicians' homophobia was not as strong in the case of lesbianism because same-sex relationships between women 'had a voyeuristic appeal to straight men', although it defied the patriarchal model.<sup>133</sup> Lesbianism was, nonetheless, perceived as an 'aberration de l'amour' according to Moreau de la Sarthe (II, 270), who warned his readers against its dangerous consequences (none of which were detailed), using this policy of discretion that is characteristic of the treatment of lesbianism in scientific writings throughout most of the nineteenth century. The word *tribade* for instance, more common than *lesbienne* at that time (although the latter was employed by Moreau de la Sarthe; I, 53), is defined in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* as a 'femme qui abuse de son sexe avec une autre femme.'<sup>134</sup> Significantly, having defined it, the lexicographer immediately states that '[o]n évite d'employer ce mot'.

Observations about lesbians were thus generally sociological rather than medical. In Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet's investigation about prostitution in Paris, lesbianism is presented as a common practice among prostitutes and prisoners, but the physical characteristics of lesbian prostitutes are not described.<sup>135</sup> As prostitutes were seen as mannish, it can be inferred that lesbians were similarly mannish. In Virey's text, lesbianism appears to be the consequence and not the cause of a woman's virility. He points out that 'la femme hommasse, ayant trop de qualités masculines dans sa constitution, tend à se rejeter sur son sexe, comme pour s'efféminer, et afin de retrouver ses qualités naturelles' (198). His comment raises three issues: first, the procedure through which the mannish woman re-acquires her 'natural', feminine qualities; second, the consequences of this re-acquisition of her feminine qualities on her sexuality; and finally, the reasons for which the mannish woman's partner, supposedly feminine, is attracted by the masculine woman. There is no thorough interpretation of female masculinity and lesbianism, as the lesbian has yet to be pathologised.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Alain Corbin, 'La rencontre des corps', in *Histoire du corps*, II: *De la Révolution à la Grande Guerre*, ed. by Alain Corbin (Paris: Seuil, 'Points', 2005), pp. 151–219 (pp. 207–08); Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 472–73.

<sup>133</sup> Leslie Choquette, 'Homosexuals in the City: Representations of Lesbian and Gay Space in Nineteenth-Century Paris', in *Homosexuality in French History and Culture*, ed. by Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibal (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2001), pp. 149–67 (p. 149). See also Vernon A. Rosario, 'Pointy Penises, Fashion Crimes, and Hysterical Mollies: The Pederasts' Inversions', in *Homosexuality in Modern France*, pp. 146–76 (pp. 166–67). For instance, Virey connected two fantasies of the Western man: sapphism and the Turkish harem (34).

<sup>134</sup> 'Tribade', in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, II, p. 882 (emphasis added).

<sup>135</sup> Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste Parent-Duchâtelet, *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris, considérée sous le rapport de l'hygiène publique, de la morale et de l'administration: Ouvrage appuyé de documens statistiques puisés dans les archives de la Préfecture de police*, 2 vols (Paris: Baillière, 1836), I, pp. 161–65.

<sup>136</sup> Jane Ussher, *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 84.



The figure of the masculine woman, who was usually depicted as a lesbian, or as old or sterile, has paradoxically shown that the physical and psychological oppositions between men and women were regarded as necessary for them to fulfil their procreative functions and to engender ideally virile offspring. On the one hand, this implies more male than female births: Virey puts the ratio at 96 girls for 100 boys in France. This surplus of male births is compensated for by the higher mortality rate of male infants and adults who die from their masculine activities, such as war and dangerous work (138–40).<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, a virile progeny consists of manly boys. A woman who dominates her husband will mother effeminate boys, according to Virey. In his opinion, virility is the sign of superior nations, whereas effeminacy leads to the degeneration of the ‘race’ (147–48). Linked to this perspective, the Orient is viewed as feminised and judged to be inferior to the West.<sup>138</sup> It must not therefore be sought as a model for sexual and gender relations between men and women. Yet, the oriental harem generated considerable fantasy among Western men (and women) in the nineteenth century.<sup>139</sup> Since ‘fantasy and desire, as unconscious processes, play a fundamental role in the colonial relation that is established with the colonized’, Virey must fight against the prejudices of his male reader and belittle the fantasy of polygamy as a virile lifestyle.<sup>140</sup> In order to do so, he does not replace this fantasy with accurate anthropological accounts of the harem, but creates a new, negatively connoted image of polygamy that emphasises its degenerative consequences. Polygamy is judged to be non-virile because the authority of the polygamous husband is divided between his wives, and so is his semen, which produces a feminised lineage.<sup>141</sup> Virey positions his arguments within a nationalistic discourse in which he affirms the superiority of European and, perhaps unsurprisingly, French culture, precisely because it follows the example of nature (132) in opting for monogamous marriages. Other cultures, which are fashioned by European fantasies about an exotic and erotic Orient, are judged imperfect. Yet, Virey’s text reveals the scientist’s anxiety that the superiority of the French nation may be threatened by degeneration due to the lack of complementarity between male and female partners. He consequently

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<sup>137</sup> For more on the sex ratio, see Nye, pp. 86–87.

<sup>138</sup> See Edward W. Said’s definition of Orientalism as ‘a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient’: *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin Books, 1995 [Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978]), p. 3. On the femininity of the Orient, see notably Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 56 and p. 92.

<sup>139</sup> Mary Roberts, *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2007), esp. p. 9.

<sup>140</sup> Yeğenoğlu, p. 2.

<sup>141</sup> Joan DelPlato’s study shows that the belief that the multiple pleasures provided by multiple wives had a weakening effect on men (but not on their progeny) was shared by other Westerners: *Multiple Wives, Multiple Pleasures: Representing the Harem, 1800–1875* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), pp. 19–20.

prescribes appropriate sexual and psychological behaviour in order to consolidate, or re-establish, national and racial supremacy.

The physiological and psychological differences between the sexes, which lead to the prevalence of virile offspring, are thus justified by the greater good: to ensure the survival of the human species and, additionally, the superiority of Western cultures. For Virey, these differences do not mean that woman is inferior to man. A woman must not attempt to abolish such differences and to behave like a man because her body has not been created to assume such a role, which would be noxious to her (87–88, 237–39). She lacks the male essence that allows a man to be a ‘real’ man, physically and morally, and exercise his power:

C’est donc le sperme, et l’ardeur, l’énergie qu’il imprime à tout le corps du mâle, qui fortifie les muscles, tend le système nerveux, grossit la voix, fait germer les poils et la barbe, dessèche et échauffe la complexion masculine, inspire le courage, les hautes pensées, rend le caractère franc, simple, magnanime. (180)<sup>142</sup>

Virey argues that there is a natural order: social distinctions between men and women are due to physiological differences. Fighting against nature is pointless and even dangerous, as celibacy, for instance, is considered to cause cancer (Virey, 83). The scientist’s chain of reasoning originates in the physiology of male and female sexes and leads to the objectivisation of the traits and social roles attributed to each sex. The social difference based on sexual and physiological variations determines both male dominance and the contempt with which scientists held women at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This disdain characterises virtually all the depictions of women made by men in Western societies. Nancy Tuana has demonstrated how different metaphysical, philosophical and scientific traditions over the centuries have ‘proved’ that women were judged inferior to men, specifically ‘less perfect, less evolved, less divine, less rational, less moral, less healthy’.<sup>143</sup> Virey’s *en moins* principle follows these traditions. However, early nineteenth-century French scientists often used a contrived approach to reach the same conclusions. Although they defined the relations between men and women as complementary rather than inferior, they did not eradicate, but merely altered the previous hierarchical conception.<sup>144</sup> The sexual equality between man and woman that Virey asserted when claiming that woman is, by her nature, as perfect as man is by his (10) is belittled in practice by the fact that woman’s perfection is defined by her capacity to accept

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<sup>142</sup> Cabanis already pointed to the virtues of sperm (I, 329–30).

<sup>143</sup> Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex: Scientific, Religious, and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman’s Nature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. xi.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82; Laqueur, ‘Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology’, p. 35.

her inferior status in the organisation of society. For instance, Virey declared that women were happier to live in ‘une douce sujétion’ (88) than to long for ‘une domination pour laquelle elles ne sont pas nées’ (Ibid.; see also 254; Menville, I, 241). Mentioning female happiness enables him to justify male hegemony and to convey the patriarchal and patronising idea that men know better than women what is good for them, while reassessing women’s inferiority.

The world depicted by Cabanis, Moreau de la Sarthe, Virey and Menville de Ponsan is that of French society at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Men and women, who are portrayed as models of mankind and womankind, are white, wealthy and mostly bourgeois. Certainly, Virey dedicates a chapter to women around the world (‘Variétés du sexe féminin selon les divers climats et les différentes races d’hommes’; 14–57), but this chapter is mostly a collection of exotic anecdotes that apparently have little impact on his physiological and psychological reflections. However, by presenting polygamous societies as counter-models, rather than alternative models, which readers should avoid (despite the temptations of the fantasised harem), the exotic anecdotes highlight the Eurocentrism and thus the subjectivity of the norm.

According to scientific writings, French society is fully organised through sexual dichotomy. Men and women are physically, emotionally, intellectually and even geographically separated: a woman’s place is in the household and that of a man is on the battlefield, in political assemblies or at university. Individuals, such as eunuchs (Cabanis, I, 384–90; Moreau, I, 192; Virey, 180, 210, 231), hermaphrodites and homosexuals, who do not belong to any side of the sexual dichotomy, do not belong to this organised society either. They are deemed to be the exceptions that prove the rule rather than real alternatives. Cabanis claims: ‘On sait que les eunuques sont, en général, la classe la plus vile de l’espèce humaine’ (I, 386). Generalisations here replace accurate analysis. ‘Other’ beings nonetheless exist, and their existence is problematic because it destabilises the sexual and gender norms. The following sections analyse the increasing interest in hermaphrodites and homosexuals in the nineteenth century, and in so doing reveal the inherent fragility of the sexual dichotomy.

### **Characteristics of Hermaphroditism**

While French scientific consideration of hermaphroditism can be traced back to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (including to Ambroise Paré’s treatise *Des monstres et des prodiges*; 1573), the main text dedicated to hermaphroditism during the July Monarchy period is included

in the French biologist Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's *Traité de tératologie* (1832–37).<sup>145</sup> Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire was the inventor of the modern science of teratology (as well as of the word *tératologie*), which consists of the scientific study of physical monstrosities. He considered that monstrosity, including hermaphroditism, was not a supernatural phenomenon, and therefore unexplainable, but was rather determined by natural laws, or the same laws that govern the organisation of 'normal' beings. His classification of different types of hermaphroditism was a reference point for most French physicians during the nineteenth century.<sup>146</sup> In her extensive essay about medical perspective on hermaphrodites in France and Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Alice Dreger has highlighted the fact that the gonads (testes and ovaries) were increasingly seen as the only reliable markers of the 'real' sex of an individual.<sup>147</sup> While the conceptualisation of hermaphroditism and the examination and the treatment of hermaphroditic bodies seem to have changed little throughout the nineteenth century, this exclusive focus on the gonads does not appear in the texts that are analysed here. Nineteenth-century studies of hermaphroditism prior to Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's treatise include an addition of Moreau de la Sarthe's second chapter (I, 211–29), the first book of *Médecine légale et police médicale* (1807), by Paul-Augustin-Olivier Mahon, professor at the School of Medicine in Paris, and an article written by a Parisian physician named Marc, in the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales par une société de médecins et de chirurgiens*, a medical dictionary in sixty volumes published between 1812 and 1822.<sup>148</sup>

The hermaphrodite naturally transgresses the separation of the sexes because s/he<sup>149</sup> reverses the natural law expounded by Cabanis. Scientists' perplexity when confronted with a hermaphroditic body can be explained as follows: if genitalia fashion the physiology and behaviour of individuals, and determine their social functions, how should the role of someone

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<sup>145</sup> Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, *Histoire générale et particulière des anomalies de l'organisation chez l'homme et les animaux, ouvrage comprenant des recherches sur les caractères, la classification, l'influence physiologique et pathologique, les rapports généraux, les lois et les causes des monstruosités, variétés et vices de conformation, ou Traité de tératologie*, 4 vols. (Paris: Baillière, 1832–37), II (1836), pp. 30–173. Michel Foucault points out that during the Middle Ages and even until the sixteenth century hermaphrodites were executed because they were considered to be monsters: *Les anormaux: Cours au Collège de France (1974–1975)* (Paris: Gallimard-Seuil, 1999), p. 62. For more on hermaphrodites before the nineteenth century, see also Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, 'The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature: Sexual Ambiguity in Early Modern France', *GLQ*, 1:4 (1995), 419–38.

<sup>146</sup> Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 140. See also Fausto-Sterling, pp. 36–37.

<sup>147</sup> Dreger, *Hermaphrodites*, esp. pp. 139–66.

<sup>148</sup> Paul-Augustin-Olivier Mahon, 'Hermaphrodites', *Médecine légale et police médicale*, 3 vols (Paris: Bertrand, 1807), I, pp. 90–112; Marc, 'Hermaphrodite', in *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales par une société de médecins et de chirurgiens*, ed. by Nicolas-Philibert Adelon *et al.*, 60 vols (Paris: Panckoucke, 1812–22), XXI (1817), pp. 86–121.

<sup>149</sup> This personal pronoun, as well as *his/her*, *him/her*, etc., will be used to refer to hermaphrodites.

who has, say, testes and a uterus, be determined? Mahon, Marc and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire defined hermaphrodites approximately as individuals who manifested both sexes or, at least, of some of each sex's characteristics.<sup>150</sup> This immediate attenuation of their definition is relevant because it highlights one essential principle to their theories: the true, perfect or absolute hermaphrodite, one who has complete male and female reproductive systems and, as a result, is able to impregnate and be impregnated (Moreau, I, 213; Mahon, I, 90; Marc, 86–87; Geoffroy, II, 30), does not exist. Scientists thus distanced themselves from mythological and aesthetic conceptions. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire relegates the allusion to the god Hermaphroditus to a footnote (30, footnote 2), while Marc asserts that the word *hermaphrodite* is inaccurate but that it is kept in the absence of a better name (89).<sup>151</sup>

These scientists adopted an anthropocentric or, at least, what can be called 'mammalocentric' perspective. They admitted that true hermaphroditism exists and is the common characteristic of plants and some 'inferior' animals such as molluscs and shellfishes, which can procreate on their own or be both male and female. However, their studies mainly focused on human beings, even though they did not exclude other mammals, such as ruminants and dogs. Whereas hermaphroditism represents the norm of plants and molluscs, it is the exception (an error of nature or a monstrosity) for humans and other mammals, because it does not correspond to the 'type spécifique' that exists for the majority of individuals in a group (Geoffroy, I [1832], 30). According to scientists, hermaphroditism is 'abnormal' and deserves scientific attention because of its relative rarity.<sup>152</sup> The rarity of absolute hermaphroditism is caused by physiological and anatomical reasons. The human pelvis cannot contain complete male and female genitalia: at least one genital system is incomplete (Mahon, I, 112; Marc, 88; Geoffroy, II, 171–73).

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<sup>150</sup> 'On entend par *hermaphrodite* un individu qui réunit les deux sexes, ou les parties sexuelles ou naturelles du mâle et de la femelle' (Mahon, I, 90); 'Hermaphrodite, s. m. et adj., *hermaphroditus*, individu qui réunit les deux sexes' (Marc, 86); 'l'hermaphrodisme consiste en un mélange, soit apparent, soit plus ou moins réel et distinct des attributs de la génération départis aux deux sexes' (Ibid., 88); 'L'*hermaphrodisme* est la réunion chez le même individu des deux sexes ou de quelques-uns de leurs caractères' (Geoffroy, II, 31).

<sup>151</sup> The frequent changes of name nowadays to designate sexual ambiguities — *hermaphroditism* has long been abandoned for the benefit of *intersex* and, since 2005, DSD (*Disorder of Sexual Development*) — highlight the same difficulty of conceptualising such sexual differences as that met by Marc and his peers: Jean-Yves Tamet, Patricia Bretonès and Claire-Lise Gay, 'Se représenter puis se nommer: Une courte histoire de la nomination de sujets atteints d'anomalie de la différenciation sexuelle', in *Différenciation sexuelle et identités*, pp. 19–27 (p. 25).

<sup>152</sup> No estimation of the number of hermaphrodites has been made for nineteenth-century France, but Dreger estimates that one to three births out of two thousands are hermaphroditic in the United States (*Hermaphrodites*, pp. 40–43), while Fausto-Sterling provides an estimation of 1.7% (p. 51) and Gabrielle Houbre puts the figure at 2% in France: 'Dans l'ombre de l'*hermaphrodite*: Hommes et femmes en famille dans la France du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle', *CLIO: Histoire, femmes et sociétés*, 34 (2011), 85–104 (p. 85, footnote 2). Despite their variety, these figures show that hermaphroditism is not, actually, such a rare condition.

The rarity of human hermaphroditism is also illustrated by the fact that scientists constantly quoted previous sources rather than presenting original observations, because contemporary case studies were either unavailable or raised little interest among the medical community.<sup>153</sup> Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, for instance, mentioned only one observation that he himself had made on a human being — but quoted the report of a colleague (II, 102). This practice corresponds to Gérard Genette’s definition of intertextuality as ‘la présence effective d’un texte dans un autre’.<sup>154</sup> Here, intertextuality often goes beyond the simple reference to the work of a colleague, but consists of long quotations displayed over multiple pages. These citations confuse the identity of the *je* and suggest that authors are interchangeable since the second seems to embrace the opinion of the first. The vagueness of the grammatical subject supports the idea that opinions about hermaphrodites are objective, since they meet no contradiction among the scientific community, whereas conflicting perspectives were frequent in practice. Moreover, the habit of long quotations reveals a lack of critical distance from the original text. Marc, for example, quoted Béclard who described the case of the female hermaphrodite Marie-Madeleine Lefort, who had a twenty-seven-centimetre long clitoris (called ‘corps conoïde’; 98). Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire cited the same report but modified one element (the change is explained in a footnote): ‘centimètres’ becomes ‘millimètres’ (II, 103, footnote 1). Marc copied Béclard’s mistake without realising the incongruity of the figures.

Accordingly, the case studies mentioned by the four scientists become exemplary of the hermaphroditic condition. This is above all the case of Jean Pierre, whose body was examined by Hugues Maret in 1767, since he is presented by Mahon as the paragon of human hermaphroditism. Like Marc, Mahon quotes the entirety of Maret’s report, which roughly represents half of his article. The importance of Pierre’s case is due to the fact that Mahon did not establish a classification of hermaphroditism in its various forms. As his bias was to reject the likelihood of a true hermaphrodite, he set out to prove that even the individual closest to this ‘ideal’ did not have both complete sexes. By quoting Maret, Mahon denied him/her a clear position in society:

Mais, quoique la nature ait paru en quelque sorte prodigue en sa faveur, les dons qu’elle lui avait faits ne devaient pas exciter sa reconnaissance, puisque, par cette prodigalité, il avait été rendu inhabile aux fonctions auxquelles l’un et l’autre sont destinés. [...] Jean Pierre, qui était sensiblement homme et femme, n’était cependant, dans le fait, ni

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<sup>153</sup> This contrasts with the extensive interest for human hermaphroditism in early modern France and, above all, at the end of the nineteenth century: Daston and Park, p. 425; Dreger, *Hermaphrodites*, pp. 25–26.

<sup>154</sup> This definition, in *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*, focuses on the text and its relation with other texts, sometimes replacing the notion of sources and quotations: quoted by Antoine Compagnon, *Le démon de la théorie: Littérature et sens commun* (Paris: Seuil, ‘Points/Essais’, 1998), p. 129.

l'un ni l'autre; et son état, qui augmente le nombre de cette espèce de monstres, rend l'existence des *hermaphrodites* parfaits bien peu vraisemblable. (I, 110–11)

Maret's text presents hermaphroditism as a poisoned gift from nature. Moreau de la Sarthe, who was as eager as Mahon to demonstrate the impossibility of true hermaphrodites, condemned his specimens to a 'triste neutralité' (I, 229). Far from the ideal Ovidian myth of Hermaphroditus that is mentioned by Marc (86), hermaphrodites are regarded as monsters, notably because of their ineffectiveness in the process of perpetuating the human species.<sup>155</sup>

Marc and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, however, adopted a different perspective. In an attempt to defy physiological ambiguities, they tried to establish the causes of hermaphroditism and, above all, to identify various types. Their classifications share many of the same characteristics.<sup>156</sup> Both Marc and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire identified two types that they did not consider to be proper hermaphroditisms: what would later be called pseudo-male hermaphroditism and pseudo-female hermaphroditism. Hermaphrodites' genitalia were seen as deceptive because they resembled the genitalia of the other sex. Men looked like women because of atrophied penises and undescended testes, and women looked like men because of hypertrophied clitorises and external ovaries. They also determined one group in which it was almost impossible to identify a predominating sex (neutral hermaphroditism) and one group in which both sexes were equally important (mixed hermaphroditism). They inserted evidence from cases provided by their predecessors as exemplifications of their classifications. The use of these cases is often, but not always, identical.

Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's classification is, nonetheless, more sophisticated, because he established two macro-categories.<sup>157</sup> The first macro-category, hermaphroditism without excess, is an elaboration on categories mentioned previously; individuals have only one reproductive system, partly male, partly female. The other macro-category is called hermaphroditism with excess; complex hermaphrodites have two reproductive systems, more or less complete. The latter macro-category was ignored by Marc, probably because it was even more infrequent than the other types of hermaphroditism. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, indeed, gives only two examples of human cases, who are regarded as complex female hermaphrodites by him and mixed hermaphrodites by Marc. This suggests that Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire felt the need

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<sup>155</sup> For more on Hermaphroditus, see chapter 2, p. 69.

<sup>156</sup> For tables of Marc and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's classifications, see appendix 2, p. 247.

<sup>157</sup> Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire did not regard the reproductive system as a whole but divided it into six segments (three levels and two sides — left and right): two deep segments (ovaries or testes), two medium ones (matrix or prostate) and two external ones (clitoris and vulva or penis and scrotum) (II, 50). If all these segments, or the majority of them, were male, the individual was male, and vice versa.

to create the macro-category of hermaphroditism with excess to rectify the imprecision of the categorisation of his predecessor who included in the mixed group every hermaphrodite that was too complex to be identified.

These differences in classifying cases highlight the ambivalence of the dominant sex discourse since scientists did not agree in establishing a defined limit between male and female categories based on genitalia. The divergences can also be caused by the fact that they are based on second-hand observations by other scientists and doctors who might not be aware of the importance of their medical examination when writing down their observations. Scientists complained about the lack of information provided by colleagues (Geoffroy, II, 72, 116) and considered that the best examination is the one that they practised themselves. These kinds of examinations of hermaphroditic bodies could be quite invasive. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, for instance, described the examination of the body of an Italian hermaphrodite, which included the introduction of two fingers into a potential vagina (II, 77). When examining a living body, physicians faced the problem that it could be hurt and, consequently, that they could not probe the organs as far as they would have liked, as Marc suggested in his advice for the identification of the sex of a hermaphrodite (116). The physician Bécларd declared that he could not practise a deeper examination because the female hermaphrodite Marie Lefort refused further examination after a tube was inserted at least three times in her bladder and her anus (Marc, 99; Geoffroy, II, 103–04). Consequently, it emerges from the scientists' comments that, for the purposes of science, a good hermaphrodite is a dead hermaphrodite (see Moreau, I, 226–27).<sup>158</sup> Death allows physicians to carry out the dissection of the body, which provides priceless information about the genitalia, and thus the 'real' sex, of an individual. Mahon mocked those who believed in the existence of the perfect hermaphrodite, but never checked their 'conjecture' by dissecting bodies (I, 95). The importance that Mahon and Marc gave to the case of Jean Pierre is probably due to the fact he was dead when his body was examined by Maret. Moreover, living hermaphrodites were not considered reliable sources for commenting on their own sex because their opinion could have been misled by the 'wrong' education that they received or because they lied for their own interest (Marc, 116). Marc's text suggests that some female hermaphrodites were aware of their 'real' sex, but wanted to benefit from male privileges and, in so doing, challenged and deliberately subverted the sexual dichotomy.

As can be noted from their observations, Marc and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire attached great importance to genitalia in their classification of hermaphrodites, just as Cabanis, Moreau de la

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<sup>158</sup> Such perspective is also that of later experts. See Dreger, *Hermaphrodites*, p. 52, p. 86 and p. 149.



Sarthe, Virey and Menville de Ponsan did when studying women. Their approach contrasts with that of several, but not all, twenty-first century scientists. The endocrinologist Pierre Mouriquand claims that genitalia are only ‘la partie visible de l’iceberg’ among the four types of sex that he distinguishes: internal sex based on biological and genetic data (hormones, genes and chromosomes); external sex, or genitalia; functional sex based on the ability to procreate and social sex based on cultural and educational milieu.<sup>159</sup> This ‘tip of the iceberg’ is the only part of the human sex that was visible in the nineteenth century, as the internal sex was unknown and the functional and social sexes were not differentiated from the external sex. As a result, scientists based their classifications on this external sex. Conversely, Jean-Yves Tamet’s collective book on hermaphroditism is devoid of such classifications.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, even though she has jokingly described a five-sex system similar to Marc’s classification, Fausto-Sterling actually classifies hermaphroditisms according to their genetic causes.<sup>161</sup> The current biological knowledge on sexual differentiation argues that the nature of the second sexual chromosome (X or Y) determines the chromosomal sex, but several sexual genes that are not present on the sexual chromosomes also influence the sexual differentiation. Furthermore, each embryo possesses a double set of ducts: the Wolffian ducts (rudimentary male genitalia) and the Müllerian ducts (rudimentary female genitalia). In a male individual, the Anti-Müllerian Factor prevents the Müllerian ducts from developing, whereas testosterone influences the development of Wolffian ducts; conversely, Müllerian ducts will develop and become female genitals under the influence of oestrogen in a female individual. The complexity of the human sexual development facilitates the outbreak of irregularities. If there are anomalies in the genetic code, if a gene is altered by a hereditary mutation or if the influence of hormones is disturbed by endocrine disruptors, such as viruses and pollutants, the differentiation of the sexes will be incomplete and generate cases of undetermined sex.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Pierre Mouriquand, ‘S’asseoir dehors’, in *Différenciation sexuelle et identités*, pp. 53–64 (pp. 60–61; quote p. 61).

<sup>160</sup> Tamet, ed., *Différenciation sexuelle et identités* (2012), cited edition.

<sup>161</sup> To male and female categories, Fausto-Sterling (p. 78) adds herms (true hermaphrodites), merms (male pseudo-hermaphrodites) and fermes (female pseudo-hermaphrodites).

<sup>162</sup> For more on human sexual differentiation, see Pierre Chatelain, Yves Morel and Marc Nicolino, ‘Le développement et la différenciation sexuels’, in *Différenciation sexuelle et identités*, pp. 31–44; Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 16–26 and pp. 119–20. The causes of hermaphroditism are multiple: an extra X chromosome in male individuals (Klinefelter Syndrome); the lack of a second X chromosome in females (Turner Syndrome); the malfunction of the enzymes involved in the production of steroid hormones in females (Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia [CAH]); the inability of the male body to detect testosterone, resulting in the development of a very feminised body (Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome [AIS]); the lack of an enzyme called 5-alpha-reductase that is able to convert testosterone into dihydrotestosterone (5-alpha-reductase [5-AR] deficiency); the opening of the urethra not at the tip of the penis, but at its base for instance (hypospadias): Dreger, *Hermaphrodites*, pp. 35–41; Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, p. 52; Intersex Society of North America website <<http://www.isna.org>> [accessed 27 October 2014].

When attempting to identify the causes of hermaphroditism, Marc (111–12) and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (II, 41–42, 53) stressed the difficulty of the task. The latter recalled the theory of unity of composition to explain the origins of hermaphroditism. According to this theory, male and female genitalia are established according to the same anatomic type, although having opposite physiological functions. In other words, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire believed that genitalia were originally undifferentiated in the embryo (II, 43–44) and highlighted the similarity between the sexes rather than their opposition:

si chaque partie de l'appareil mâle est essentiellement analogue par sa composition élémentaire à une partie de l'appareil femelle, si leur diversité apparente résulte seulement de quelques différences dans le mode ou dans le degré de leur développement, rien de plus facile à concevoir que l'existence d'états intermédiaires entre ces deux états extrêmes, entre ces deux formes opposées qui constituent l'état normal de l'un et de l'autre sexe. (II, 44–45)

This general resemblance explains the reason why a penis can resemble a clitoris and testes can resemble ovaries. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's affirmation contradicts Moreau de la Sarthe's claim (which conforms to Laqueur's two-sex model) that men and women have a different structure (I, 185–86) and is prior to Laqueur's timeline of the theorisation of an androgynous embryo.<sup>163</sup> Marc, nevertheless, had already suggested this hypothesis by noting that testes and ovaries were at first formed in the same area of the body (112). Uncertainties still remain nowadays. The role of the ovaries in sexual development, for instance, is as little known today as it was during Marc's time (113–14) and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's time (II, 56).<sup>164</sup> The latter admits that it is impossible to identify the causes of hermaphroditism as long as scientists ignore how sex is 'normally' constituted (II, 53). Similarly, Mouriquand observes: 'qu'est-ce qui fait qu'un garçon est un garçon et une fille une fille? [...] à l'aube du troisième millénaire on est incapable de répondre à cette question dans sa globalité'.<sup>165</sup>

Not only did Marc and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire attempt to determine the causes of hermaphroditism, they also took its social consequences into account by envisaging the medico-legal applications of scientific observations. As they point out, the roles of the physician are to identify the sex of a hermaphrodite and to determine whether a hermaphrodite is able to procreate (Marc, 116–20; Geoffroy, III [1836], 572–78), although Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire relativises the second function, since impotence was not a ground for marriage annulment (III,

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<sup>163</sup> Laqueur, 'Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology', p. 3; Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 10.

<sup>164</sup> Chatelain, Morel and Nicolino, p. 43; Fausto-Sterling, *Sex/Gender*, p. 17.

<sup>165</sup> Mouriquand, p. 58.

572).<sup>166</sup> The task of doctors and scientists is not for the sake of science, but, allegedly, for the sake of society. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, unable to foretell that same-sex marriage would one day become a reality in France, mentions the danger of uniting two people of the same sex (III, 573–74). Marc — and indeed Butler almost two centuries later — shows the importance that parents, doctors, the government and the Church (in other words, society) give to sex, by the simple question: is it a boy or a girl?<sup>167</sup>

Les premiers mots d'une femme délivrée du travail de l'accouchement sont: qu'est-ce que j'ai fait? Est-ce une fille, est-ce un garçon, s'écrient à la fois le père, la famille et les assistants? De quel sexe est l'enfant qui vient de naître, demande l'officier de l'état civil? Quel enfant présentez-vous à l'église, dit le ministre des autels? (90–91)

According to Marc, since absolute hermaphroditism does not exist, every single hermaphrodite has a predominant sex that the physician must be able to identify if he is cautious enough when examining his/her body (114–15). For the rare cases of neutral or mixed hermaphrodites, he must highlight the difficulty of his task and 'rechercher, s'il est possible, dans les goûts et les habitudes de l'hermaphrodite, le sexe qu'il convient de déclarer prédominant' (115).

Marc's statements are instructive for two reasons. Firstly, they show that, although used to observing ambiguous bodies, scientists could not admit the existence of individuals with undetermined sex. Marc and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's texts contain several contradictions. On the one hand, they declared that some of the cases observed were neutral or mixed, which reveals their inability to determine a prevalent sex (Geoffroy, III, 573) and stresses the similarities between male and female reproductive organs. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire even declared that the determination of the sex could be impossible (III, 574–75). On the other hand, they claimed on a regular basis that just such an absence of a sex was impossible. They rejected the idea that one could genuinely be deprived of a specific sex. Certainly, failing to identify a sex could be due to the lack of information at their disposition. However, their certainty that such sex existed highlights the pressure exercised by society, which requires the strict separation of the sexes to function harmoniously, as Cabanis and Virey's texts have illustrated. The only concession of Moreau de la Sarthe (I, 221), Marc (115) and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (III, 577) is the indication of the *predominance* of a sex instead of its complete existence.

Secondly, Marc's comments highlight the consideration of psychological factors in attributing a sex to a hermaphrodite. Given that scientists must determine the sex of an

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<sup>166</sup> For more on marriage and hermaphroditic impotence, see Houbre, p. 94.

<sup>167</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 7.

individual to meet legal requirements and that genitalia can be deceptive, they found another approach in evaluating tastes, habits and activities in order to fulfil their mission. Many cases described by Mahon, Marc and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire show that tastes and behaviours are as important as the anatomical and physiological description of the hermaphrodites because the scientists thought that each sex was predisposed to specific gendered behaviours. Like Cabanis, Virey and Menville de Ponsan, the scientists considered that masculinity and femininity were natural and therefore not constructed by culture. Rather than physiological sex and psychological gender being perceived as separate, the latter was deemed to be the product of the former. Education, therefore, failed to hide the ‘real’ sex of a hermaphrodite, which could be revealed by his/her activities. Consequently, scientists had to take behavioural information into account in order to determine the sex of a hermaphrodite. Biographical details are thus frequent in their writings. For example, the case of the male hermaphrodite Marie-Marguerite shows that, at puberty, not only did the body of the young ‘girl’ change, but ‘her’ tastes changed as well. ‘She’ preferred working in the fields to taking care of the household and the poultry yard; once ‘her’ sex had been officially changed, ‘she’ became a good ploughman (Marc, 91, 93). The fact that Marie-Marguerite’s tastes evolved (or that ‘natural’ tastes replaced those imposed by education) displays ‘her’ inability to be a ‘real’ woman.

Scientists of the first half of the nineteenth century collectively denied the existence of hermaphrodites because their (partial) bi-sexuality questioned the so-called ‘natural’ separation of the sexes. This increasing rejection of hermaphrodites paved the way for the controversial surgical ‘correction’ of hermaphrodites in the twentieth century in order to force their whole body to conform to the identified predominant sex.<sup>168</sup>

### **Characteristics of Homosexuality**

Whereas hermaphroditism had long been part of scientific discourses, scientific considerations relating to homosexuality were still in their infancy during the July Monarchy, although homosexuality was well-known through religious, moral and legal discourses.<sup>169</sup> In the first volume of his *Histoire de la sexualité*, Michel Foucault has suggested that the figure of the homosexual, and more generally that of the so-called pervert, were creations of the second half

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<sup>168</sup> The ‘Epilogue’ of Dreger’s *Hermaphrodites* is dedicated to the case of twentieth-century hermaphrodites and their sex reassignment (pp. 167–201).

<sup>169</sup> On the legal discourse about homosexuality, see Graham Robb, *Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Picador, 2003), pp. 17–39; William A. Peniston, *Pederasts and Others: Urban Culture and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004), pp. 13–22.

of the nineteenth century. Previously, only the existence of the sodomite was acknowledged, who was deemed to be a criminal who acted against the law by having anal intercourse (sodomy being a crime in France until 1791) and was therefore condemned for his actions. Conversely, the pervert was considered mentally ill and was scrutinised by physicians because it was his mind-set, not his actions, that was controversial.<sup>170</sup> The use of the term *homosexuality* to talk about same-sex relationships in the first half of the nineteenth century is therefore anachronistic. The term was coined in German by the Hungarian Karl-Maria Kertbeny in the 1860s and first appeared in French scientific discourse in the 1890s; it became common in the French language only after the Second World War.<sup>171</sup> It is nonetheless used here for practical reasons. The most frequent terms in scientific writings at that time were logically *sodomy* and *pederasty*. The nineteenth-century usage of these words was, in various contexts, both broader and narrower than its current usage. On the one hand, academic articles about sodomy usually disregarded anal intercourse with women; on the other hand, pederastic relations did not necessarily imply the presence of an adolescent in the nineteenth-century use of the term.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, homosexuality was never the object of a scientific treatise, but appeared in the course of sentences within treatises relating to other topics (such as prostitution, prison and venereal diseases) or in short articles in medical dictionaries. What strikes the modern reader of these texts is the predominance of an embedded anxiety within these texts. Physicians and scientists are led by their fear of being mistaken for the objects of their studies and must therefore immediately inform their audience that they disapprove of the customs and conducts that they describe. Their vocabulary is both depreciatory and moralistic: ‘vice’, ‘perversité’, ‘immoralité’, ‘infâme’, ‘abominable’, ‘vil’, ‘dépravé’, ‘honteux’ are terms frequently used in the articles of the authors of *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*.<sup>172</sup> They must stress the fact that they unveil homosexuality begrudgingly, for the sake of science and social order. Nigel Smith has called this strategy the *reluctance-discourse*.<sup>173</sup> It is illustrated by the opening sentence of François-Emmanuel Fodéré’s article on

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<sup>170</sup> Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, I: *La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), pp. 50–67. For more on the difference between the sodomite and the homosexual, see Rosario pp. 167–68; Revenin, p. 26.

<sup>171</sup> Régis Revenin, ‘Homosexualité et virilité’, dans *Le triomphe de la virilité*, pp. 369–401 (p. 369).

<sup>172</sup> Reydellet, ‘Pédérastie’, in *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, XL (1819), pp. 37–45; François Fournier Pescay, ‘Sodomie’, in *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, LI (1821), pp. 441–48. See Claude Courouve’s inventory of substantives and adjectives associated with male homosexuality from the Renaissance until the twentieth century: *Vocabulaire de l’homosexualité masculine* (Paris: Payot, 1985), pp. 26–28. See also Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérard, ‘Homosexualité des *alphadécédets*: Remarques sur un innommable des dictionnaires conformes, et recours aux excentriques’, *Romantisme*, 159 (2013), 19–34.

<sup>173</sup> Nigel E. Smith, ‘Silence, Secrecy, and Scientific Discourse in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Articulations of Difference: Gender Studies and Writing in French*, ed. by Dominique D. Fisher and Lawrence R. Schehr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 83–99 (p. 87). See also Hahn, pp. 49–50.

sodomy, which was emphatically quoted by the French forensic scientist Ambroise Tardieu at the beginning of the section of his *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs* dedicated to pederasty: ‘Que ne puis-je éviter de salir ma plume de l’infâme turpitude des pédérastes!’<sup>174</sup> What is not mentioned by Smith is the so-called heroic attitude adopted by these scientists. Tardieu claims his bravery in dealing with such an ‘appalling’ topic: ‘J’ai dit que je ne reculerais pas devant l’ignominie du tableau; c’est ici qu’il faut en retracer les traits les plus hideux, et emprunter jusqu’au langage des êtres dégradés, dont je veux essayer d’ébaucher la repoussante image’ (118; see also 7). However, Tardieu’s zeal in examining pederastic bodies and the numerous revisions of his *Étude médico-légale* call his declared repulsion into question and show the increasing interest of the scientific community in, and the popularity of, such a topic.<sup>175</sup>

Moreover, the parts of the articles from the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* that are strictly dedicated to scientific considerations are short. For instance, in François Fournier Pescay’s ‘Sodomie’ entry, only one fifteenth of the article relates to medical concerns; that is, the description of the symptoms of sodomites. The rest of the article mostly develops a history of sodomy which highlights the opposition between the Hebrews, who condemned it in Genesis, and other peoples during Antiquity and more modern times who practised it freely. These references stress the fact that sodomy is always deemed to be a foreign vice.<sup>176</sup> Likewise, almost all of Reydellet’s article on pederasty attempts to demonstrate the inferiority of the Ancients where morals were concerned. Reydellet elusively defines *pédérastie* as a ‘vice infâme que la morale, la nature et la raison réprouvent également’ (37), probably assuming that the etymology is sufficiently explicit. The occurrence of historical and moral considerations contrasts with the editorial promise to privilege experimental methods and observations in the introduction of the *Dictionnaire*.<sup>177</sup> However, Smith’s labelling of texts on homosexuality as ‘pseudo-scientific’ is anachronistic and corresponds to the viewpoint of a twenty-first-century reader, because the scientific prominence of their authors and their publication in medical dictionaries and essays reinforced their scientific status.<sup>178</sup>

It is important to note that the discourse of doctors who examined homosexual bodies during this period asserts that the sexual identity of homosexual individuals can be located in

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<sup>174</sup> François-Emmanuel Fodéré, ‘Sodomie’, in *Traité de médecine légale et d’hygiène publique ou de police de santé*, 6 vols (Paris: Mame, 1813), IV, pp. 374–76 (p. 374); Ambroise Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris: Baillière, 1858 [1857]), p. 112.

<sup>175</sup> Smith, p. 89.

<sup>176</sup> Courouve, p. 28; Robb, p. 7.

<sup>177</sup> Renauldin, ‘Introduction’, in *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, I (1812), p. clxix.

<sup>178</sup> Smith, p. 83 and p. 86.

their sexual organs. Physicians distinguished between the roles played during anal intercourse; that is, between the one who sodomises (the active) and the one who is sodomised (the passive), and identified specific symptoms accordingly. During the first part of the nineteenth century, physicians focused on men who took the passive role in sodomy and pointed to numerous deformations of the anal area and the buttocks (contusions, excrescences, ulcerations, fissures that are called *rhagades*, inflammation, excessively large buttocks, relaxation of the sphincter, anal tearing, swollen anal rolls of fat that are similar to labia and other deformations) as well as diseases such as haemorrhoids, cancerous states called *squirres* and syphilis.<sup>179</sup> These long enumerations of obscure medical jargon demonstrate the physicians' willingness to identify any peculiarity of the anal area as a medical symptom of homosexuality. They not only represented homosexuality as a collection of sexual acts, but, above all, as a collection of acts which had a pathological effect on the body. As Régis Revenin states: 'la médecine légale insiste [...] sur les stigmates physiques supposés de l'homosexualité, bien plus que sur les causes physiologiques ou psychologiques de cette nouvelle perversion sexuelle'.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, Smith rightly argues that, like women, homosexuals were reduced to their sexual organs.<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, these detailed descriptions were seldom the results of personal observations; it appears that, like experts in hermaphroditism, scientists copied each other's articles because they judged symptoms to be commonplaces. For example, Fodéré (375) enumerates exactly the same symptoms of sodomy and in the same order as Mahon (I, 138).<sup>182</sup>

The most spectacular of the passive homosexual's symptoms was cited as the *anus infundibuliforme* (a funnel-shaped anus) by Tardieu (135–37), as well as by Reydellet (45) and Hubert Lauvergne, the latter of whom was chief medical officer at the hospital of the *bagne* of Toulon.<sup>183</sup> Reydellet (45), Tardieu (135) and Parent-Duchâtelet (I, 226) attributed the discovery of the funnel-shaped anus to Cullerier. Whilst it probably was the discovery of Michel Cullerier, a physician and surgeon who studied syphilis, the source for this information is not referenced clearly by any of the three physicians. The invocation of Cullerier as the 'father' of the *anus*

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<sup>179</sup> Mahon, 'Sodomie', in *Médecine légale et police médicale*, I, pp. 138–39 (p. 138); Fodéré, p. 375; Reydellet, p. 45; Fournier Pescay, p. 447; Fr. Eusèbe de Salles, 'Médecine légale' dans *Encyclopédie des sciences médicales ou Traité général, méthodique et complet des diverses branches de l'art de guérir, 2<sup>nd</sup> division: Médecine*, ed. by Jean-Louis Alibert *et al.* (Paris: Bureau de l'Encyclopédie, 1835), pp. 1–291 (pp. 224–25); J.-G. Human, *Nosographie des maladies vénériennes ou Étude comparée des divers agents thérapeutiques qui ont été mis en usage pour combattre ce genre d'affections* (Paris: Béchét Jeune, 1838), pp. 84–85.

<sup>180</sup> Revenin, 'Homosexualité et virilité', p. 377. See also Peniston, p. 53.

<sup>181</sup> Smith, pp. 91–92.

<sup>182</sup> Admittedly, he cited Mahon, but it is in relation to another observation (his colleague's warning against mistaking symptoms of venereal diseases for sodomy).

<sup>183</sup> Hubert Lauvergne, *Les forçats considérés sous le rapport physiologique, moral et intellectuel, observés au bagne de Toulon* (Paris: Baillière, 1841), p. 289.

*infundibuliforme* seems to reinforce the assertion that such a monstrous anus is real. However, the objectivity suggested by the mention of a medical authority is called into question by the absence of bibliographical references that would be expected from scientific works. The uncertainty concerning the specificity of Cullerier's *anus infundibuliforme* theory, his method of observation and his sample undermines his authority. Parent-Duchâtelet, for instance, has serious doubts since he did not notice anything similar. He wisely concludes that this demonstrated a 'nouvelle preuve de la réserve extrême qu'il faut mettre en médecine légale dans toutes les décisions, et du danger de se fier d'une manière trop exclusive à ces assertions qu'on rencontre malheureusement trop souvent dans les livres de médecine' (I, 227). Tardieu, however, did not have the same reservation.

Tardieu's *Étude médico-légale* is divided into three sections, from apparently less to more serious types of crime: public immorality, rape and pederasty. This last section is based on the medical examination of homosexual bodies. The interest of Tardieu's study is not its novelty, as most of his observations had been made by his colleagues; it is the systematisation of his discourse. Homosexuality is not confined to a short dictionary article focusing mostly on cultural and historical aspects or briefly mentioned in an essay that focuses on another topic; it is now an important object of study. Homosexuals are divided into categories; descriptions are detailed and statistics are elaborated. With the publication of the first edition of Tardieu's study, homosexuality thus entered into the field of science and the era of medicalisation. It is pathologised; that is, deemed as a disease that must be examined, treated and cured.<sup>184</sup>

In his study, Tardieu emphasised the difference between an active and a passive partner and showed that signs of pederasty (132–47) varied according to the role that the pederast was susceptible to playing during anal intercourses, although his sample included many patients who were both passive and active, or uncharacterised.<sup>185</sup> The characteristics of the anus of the passive partner, notably the *anus infundibuliforme*, had already been noted by previous physicians, but, unlike his colleagues, Tardieu developed a thorough analysis of the shape of the penis of an active homosexual (144–47). Such a penis is either long, thinner at the end, and resembles the penis of a dog, or it is very big, with a thin glans that looks like the muzzle of an animal. As a result of this observation, active homosexuals were assimilated to animals. He also

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<sup>184</sup> On the popularity of Tardieu's treatise, see Jean-Paul Aron and Roger Kempf, *Le pénis et la démoralisation de l'Occident* (Paris: Grasset, 1978), p. 85; Rosario, p. 148; Thompson, p. 114.

<sup>185</sup> Tardieu (129) claimed to have observed 206 bodies that he classified into four categories: exclusively passive (ninety-nine; that is, almost half of the cases), exclusively active (eighteen), both active and passive (seventy-two: more than one third) and uncharacterised (seventeen). These figures make the distinction between different categories of homosexuals unconvincing, since active homosexuals are rare and uncharacterised homosexuals are as frequent as active ones.



argued that the penis of a pederast is twisted like a corkscrew; this shape would be due to the torsion that it must operate to penetrate the anus. Furthermore, he observed that some homosexuals had a twisted mouth, short teeth and thick, deformed lips due to their ‘plus abjectes complaisances’ and ‘usage infâme’ (143), which is, one can assume, fellatio.

Tardieu’s representations of the indelible marks that sodomy leaves on homosexual bodies highlight his eagerness to consider sodomy (and fellatio) as constitutive of the physical identity of homosexuals. This perspective is manifest in his biased interpretation of Parent-Duchâtelet’s lack of evidence of funnel-shaped anuses in female prostitutes submitted to sodomy. Rather than calling Cullerier’s theory into question, as Parent-Duchâtelet implicitly invites the reader to do, Tardieu concluded that anal intercourse did not affect the female body in the same way as it affected the male, homosexual body (135). Tardieu did not attempt to explain why the same actions did not have the same consequences, but this absence of explanation attests to his willingness to distort the facts to comply with his interpretation of sodomy.<sup>186</sup>

Vernon Rosario considers that the notion of pederasty in Tardieu’s writings ‘undermines the oft-recited Foucauldian tenet that an epistemic break exists between pederasty and homosexuality’.<sup>187</sup> Certainly, Tardieu’s *Étude médico-légale* cannot be unequivocally read in the light of sodomitic or homosexual same-sex relations. However, rather than interpreting it as evidence of Foucault’s inaccuracy, it can be viewed as an illustration of a period of transition from the conception of same-sex relationships as a collection of sodomitic acts to homosexuality as an identity. On the one hand, Tardieu focused on acts ‘against nature’, mostly between men, but did not exclude intercourse with women. For instance, the first of his *Observations*, which constitute a collection of medical cases, is that of a woman who had anal sex with her husband (162–63). On the other hand, other sections display an understanding of homosexuality as an identity. Tardieu dedicated many pages to pederastic prostitution in which young male prostitutes, called *tantes*, or their pimps, blackmail their clients.<sup>188</sup> He observes that ‘ce sont surtout ceux que l’on appelle *tantes*, c’est-à-dire ceux qui se prostituent aux véritables pédérastes, qui recherchent parfois à leur tour les rapports avec les femmes’ (122; original emphasis). Here, the physician clearly distinguishes between acts and identity. The *tantes* are

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<sup>186</sup> Paradoxically, in his study of the police ledger of arrests for public offences against decency in the 1870s, Peniston points out that, out of 328 listed cases, only fourteen cases of anal intercourse were reported, as men were mostly arrested for masturbating each other, exhibitionism and solicitation (p. 92). Connell shows that male homosexuality is also often associated with sodomy nowadays, whereas it is not as frequent as it is thought (p. 62).

<sup>187</sup> Rosario, p. 150.

<sup>188</sup> *Tante* stems from prison slang of the beginning of the nineteenth century and originally designated the male homosexual prisoner, the male homosexual by analogy, then a male prostitute: Courouve, ‘Tante’, pp. 207–09.

not *true* pederasts because, although they practise sodomy, they do not feel pleasure in such acts, contrary to their clients. Likewise, Eusèbe de Salles differentiated ‘real’ sodomites from the ones who practise anal sex because they are deprived of women on ships, in prisons, boarding schools and seminaries (224).

In later essays that indirectly related to homosexuality and dated from the end of the 1830s and the 1840s, and, above all, in Tardieu’s study, considerations of the behaviour and psychological make-up of homosexuals gradually competed with a definition of homosexuality based strictly on bodies and sexual acts.<sup>189</sup> Certainly, homosexuality was only defined as a mental illness in France after the publication of Jean-Martin Charcot and Valentin Magnan’s article ‘Inversion du sens génital et autres perversions sexuelles’ (1882). This pathologising of homosexuality came about considerably later in France than it did in Germany, where the works of psychiatrists, such as Johann Casper, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Karl Westphal, defined homosexuality in psychiatric terms in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>190</sup> Yet, earlier, French scientists had acknowledged the idea that homosexuality influenced the personality and the tastes of pederasts, and had accepted that the homosexual was not only defined by his participation in anal sex, but also by the effect that his attraction for other men had on his personality. However, in the first half of the nineteenth century, these personality traits were only noted in passing or were only seen as the result of the effeminate physiology of a male homosexual. The categorisation of the sex of the homosexual came into increasing conflict with his gendered traits. He challenged the coherence and stability that categories of sex are supposed to bring to a society ruled by the norm of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’.<sup>191</sup> Whilst his body was male, he manifested behaviours socially defined as feminine, and thus defied the arguments defending a ‘natural’ separation of the sexes. Accordingly, physiological interpretations yielded ground to these gendered behaviours.

Like eunuchs and impotent men whose physiologies and personalities were assimilated with those of women because they lacked sperm (Virey, 180), homosexuals seemed to be

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<sup>189</sup> For Philippe Lejeune, the change is even later (the 1860s), although the primary texts analysed in the following paragraphs challenge this claim: ‘Autobiographie et homosexualité en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle’, *Romantisme*, 56 (1987), 79–94 (p. 80).

<sup>190</sup> Robert A. Nye, ‘Sex Difference and Male Homosexuality in French Medical Discourse, 1830–1930’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 63 (1989), 32–51 (p. 41); Rosario, pp. 155–56; Daniel Grojnowski, ed., *Confessions d’un inverti-né suivies de Confidences et aveux d’un Parisien* (Paris: Corti, 2007), p. 29; Revenin, ‘Conceptions et théories savantes’, pp. 30–31; Julie Mazaleigue-Labaste, ‘De l’amour socratique à l’homosexualité grecque’, *Romantisme*, 159 (2013), 35–46 (p. 41). Revenin explains the late entrance of psychological theory, regarded as German, in France by the rivalry between the two countries (‘Homosexualité et virilité’, p. 377).

<sup>191</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. ix. Butler borrows this expression from Adrienne Rich: ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence’, in *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979–1986* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. 23–75.

deprived of the beneficial influence that sperm is supposed to have on men, as described earlier by Virey. Homosexuals, like eunuchs, were thought to display female physiological characteristics.<sup>192</sup> Their skin is smooth and soft, their muscles are weak and their voice is high-pitched (Cabanis, I, 385, 388–89; Virey, 180). Lauvergne pointed to the similarity that was believed to exist between a homosexual and a castrato: ‘La voix de cet homme est faible, tourne à celle du *castrat*’ (288; original emphasis). For Cabanis, their walk was also a symptom of their physiological difference, since it was supposed to be the result of the width of their pelvis, which was similar to a female pelvis. When they walked, they drew a large curve around their centre of gravity (I, 388–89). The psychiatrist Étienne Esquirol also observed the particularity of the homosexual gait, but was unusual in attributing it to imitation rather than to bodily conformation.<sup>193</sup> He was one of the first doctors adopting a psychiatric perspective on homosexuality, or, to be more accurate, transgenderism (what he called ‘maladie des Scythes’, following Hippocrates’s terminology; 523), although he did not give further explanation of this point.<sup>194</sup> He considered it more generally to be the result of the mental illness of someone who thinks that he or she belongs to the opposite sex and he likened these people to those who think that they are wolves, dogs or cats, for example.

Here, the physiological definition becomes increasingly stretched as scientists tried to use it to explain a wide variety of behaviours socially gendered as feminine. It was not only the deviations from the ‘normal’ male body that constituted the homosexual (their effete physical constitution, their canine penis or their funnel-shaped anus), but also their general look, choice of clothes, allure and tastes. Eusèbe de Salles summarised the opinion of most authors by saying: ‘Les individus portés à la sodomie ont en général un caractère efféminé’ (224). According to William Peniston, it was a commonly held opinion in the nineteenth century that the appearances, mannerisms and behaviour of homosexuals were effeminate (and indeed this opinion is still held nowadays), although it was hardly supported by facts.<sup>195</sup> Michael Sibal

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<sup>192</sup> It can be difficult to determine if the authors refer to eunuchs or homosexuals due to the prudishness of the language.

<sup>193</sup> Étienne Esquirol, *Des maladies mentales: Considérées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal*, 2 vols (Paris: Baillière, 1838), I, p. 525.

<sup>194</sup> The Ancient Greeks thought that the Scythians, a people from Central Asia, suffered from a disease who made them either sterile or inclined to adopt feminine customs, depending on the versions: Marie Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite: Mythes et rites de la Bisexualité dans l’Antiquité classique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958), pp. 60–61. On transgenderism, see chapter 2, p. 108, footnote 341.

<sup>195</sup> Peniston’s study challenges this notion, given that only four cases of overt effeminacy are reported out of 328: two of transvestism and two of men acting like women (pp. 102–04).

has also stated that the young male prostitute of the Palais-Royal became the stereotypical embodiment of the homosexual, thus supporting the image of the effete homosexual.<sup>196</sup>

Lauvergne and Tardieu are the most explicit writers regarding the effeminacy of homosexuals. The physician of the *bagne* described convicts who smelled of musk and amber and wore silk and batiste, elegant coffee-coloured clothes, sophisticated shoes, white stockings and small chains around the neck (290). Likewise, Tardieu enumerated general signs that are relative to the external look of the pederasts:

Les cheveux frisés, le teint fardé, le col découvert, la taille serrée de manière à faire saillir les formes, les doigts, les oreilles, la poitrine chargés de bijoux, toute la personne exhalant l'odeur des parfums les plus pénétrants, et dans la main, un mouchoir, des fleurs, ou quelque travail d'aiguille, telle est la physionomie étrange, repoussante, et à bon droit suspecte, qui trahit les pédérastes. (130)

Although there is no explicit comparison with women, these descriptions highlight the supposed feminine nature of the homosexuals. Virey (70) and Menville de Ponsan (I, 50) pointed to similar characteristics of female tastes and concerns with appearance when they declared that young girls liked shiny jewellery. Similarly, Esquirol (I, 525), Lauvergne (292–93) and Tardieu (130–31) described men who spent a considerable amount of time on their *toilette*, curled their hair, wore feminine outfits and admired themselves in the mirror. Looking at oneself in a mirror is usually associated with women's behaviour and is considered an act of vanity. However, the mirror can help homosexuals construct their own gendered identity, away from the patriarchal and virile norms.<sup>197</sup> It is interesting to note that scientists' meticulous descriptions of homosexuals' appearance are comparable to homosexuals' care for their looks and that they show their inadmissible fascination for their case studies.

Vanity, or *coquetterie*, which was regarded as typical of women, is often used, notably by Lauvergne (289, 292–94), to qualify the behaviour of homosexuals. In women, *coquetterie*, in reasonable proportions, was deemed a quality which responded to a biological impulse for the continuation of the species; it was the natural way for a woman to attract a man, secure his protection and start a family (Moreau, I, 712–14; II, 401; Virey, 191, 200, 242; Menville, I, 44–48, 103–04). In contrast, male *coquetterie* is 'abject' for Tardieu not only because biology dictates that men must seduce women by their strength and their power, but also because this

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<sup>196</sup> Michael Sibalís, 'The Palais-Royal and the Homosexual Subculture of Nineteenth-Century Paris', in *Homosexuality in French History and Culture*, pp. 117–29 (p. 127).

<sup>197</sup> On the association between mirrors and female vanity and their role in constructing female identity, see Jenyjoy La Belle, *Herself Beheld: The Literature of the Looking Glass* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 14–20.

elegance is actually thought to hide the ‘filth’ of homosexuals (130, 131; see also Eusèbe de Salles, 224). Nineteenth-century definitions of masculinity dictated that men are not naturally *coquet*, and thus a vain man is not a ‘real’ man. Where Tardieu’s essay is concerned, Smith rightly argues — and his reflection can be extended to Tardieu’s colleagues, especially Lauvergne — that the stereotypical depiction of the homosexuals as effeminate inspires ridicule and scorn for them.<sup>198</sup> Physicians suggest that the hybrid gender of homosexuals lacks the positive attributes of both genders, as Cabanis claimed for eunuchs, whose humanity is allegedly altered by their physical mutilation (I, 386). Homosexuals are depicted as lacking masculine courage and honour, without gaining feminine tenderness. The gendered characteristics of homosexuals contravened society’s strict definitions of the division of the sexes, and thus made it impossible to categorise them as either male or female.

As noted earlier, in the early nineteenth century, homosexuals were identified as such by physicians on the basis of the shape of their penises and, even more commonly, of their anuses. The conception of homosexuality grounded exclusively in men’s physical constitution, however, faced obstacles as it did not enable doctors to explain the gendered traits that they perceived to be feminine gendered traits, such as *coquetterie*. Gradually, as the century advanced, this identification would give way to more psychological interpretations of same-sex relationships.

### **From Genitalia to Behaviour: The Determination of the Sex of an Individual**

All these texts, written by scientists from diverse backgrounds, regarded the body as the key to defining an individual’s sexual identity. Virey’s consideration that genitalia represent the roots of the female constitution highlights this opinion. Likewise, experts in hermaphroditism evaluated genitalia as indicators of an individual’s sexual identity. Medical observations and the description of human bodies, especially of the genitalia consequently constitute an important part of the scientific reflections reviewed in this chapter. The writings of Mahon (102–04), Marc (93; 97–100; 102–03; 106–07), Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (71–72; 75; 97–99; 102–04; 117–18; 136–39; 154–55; 159; 164–65) and Tardieu (133–43; 145–47) contain numerous descriptions of the genitalia of patients and prisoners, either from their own observations or, more frequently, from those of their colleagues. Marc (116) and Tardieu (149–51) gave advice about the methods of practising medical examinations on hermaphrodites and

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<sup>198</sup> Smith, p. 89.

homosexuals. Tardieu even indicated ‘tricks’ in order to overcome prisoners’ ruses to hide their homosexual condition (150). Examinations of hermaphroditic and homosexual bodies implied the use of exploratory techniques, such as the introduction of a finger into the vagina or the anus (Geoffroy, II, 77, 81; Tardieu, 150), a gesture that is not only highly invasive, but has sexual and even homoerotic connotations in the latter case. Smith notes that Tardieu adopts the dominant role and ‘penetrates his “patient” in the name of science’.<sup>199</sup> This medical behaviour entails a paradox: scientists’ dedication to their work and to demonstrating the harmful effects of homosexuality led them to adopt what could be regarded as homosexual behaviour. It would be simplistic, however, to interpret physicians’ acts and writings as produced by closeted homosexuals. Rather than expressing ‘a closeted desire to engage in homosexual acts’, these texts demonstrate a scientific bias.<sup>200</sup> Scientists judged the context of sodomitic acts to be as relevant as the acts themselves, although they never described the nature of these contexts in detail. Tardieu’s text, for instance, shows that the introduction of fingers and objects into the anus is considered to be acceptable and even recommended in a medical examination, whereas the introduction of foreign objects is condemned in other contexts, such as relations between prostitutes and clients (141–43). The importance of contexts, such as anal intercourse with a prostitute, reveals that external and internal sexual organs, physical characteristics and participation in sodomitic acts alone were not regarded to be convincing evidence to determine the homosexuality of an individual.

Secondary sexual characteristics, such as hair, voice and breasts, are important to define the sexual identity of a person, because they are immediately visible and do not necessitate any in-depth medical examination. As Cabanis stressed, the differences between male and female secondary sexual characteristics are due to the functions of each individual. Marc highlighted the influence of the ovaries and, above all, the testicles on the general organisation of the body during puberty; that is, on the secondary sexual characteristics. However, the absence or the deficiency in the secretion of seminal liquid, for instance, gives a feminine constitution to a male hermaphrodite (Marc, 113). In other words, although genitalia and physiological characteristics were still deemed of primary importance in the definition of the sexual identity of homosexuals and hermaphrodites, they were sometimes judged unreliable. Accordingly, behaviour, activities, tastes and other psychological characteristics of homosexuals and hermaphrodites were regarded as relevant because they were thought to be caused by the sexual organisation of the body. Moreau de la Sarthe and Virey, for example, highlighted the influence

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

of the uterus on the sensitivity of women and how their sensitive constitution affected their tastes and their personality. Likewise, a correlation was established between the supposedly womanly physiology of homosexuals and their effeminate tastes and allure. Experts also considered that the habits and tastes of a hermaphrodite were relevant to determine their predominant sex, as the case of Marie-Marguerite has shown. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire concluded about Marie-Jeanne, another male hermaphrodite mistaken for a girl: ‘ses goûts, ses plaisirs étaient [...] ceux d’un homme, son caractère viril se trahissait en lui par des traits [...] évidents’ (II, 73). In the teratologist’s opinion, behaviour is even more revealing than physical appearance because it highlights what genitalia fail to express.

In another extract, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire noted that tastes, instincts and habits revealed and unveiled the male sex of a hermaphrodite (II, 65). The use of the verbs *révéler* indicates that an individual’s ‘real’ sexual identity cannot be hidden. Likewise, Lauvergne and Tardieu chose the lexical fields of betrayal and denunciation to discuss homosexuals’ identity. Homosexuals are *betrayed* by their physiognomy, according to Tardieu (130), and Lauvergne points out that ‘[l]es sexes douteux se dénoncent d’eux-mêmes aux regards exercés d’un médecin’ (288). The pejorative connotation of these verbs is clear. Homosexuals’s effete tendencies do not belong to their biological sex; they therefore ‘naturally’ emerge in order to reveal their ‘deviant’ nature to scientists. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire also used (*se*) *trahir* (II, 73), but with a laudatory purpose in mind. Marie-Jeanne is right to behave like a man and express masculine tastes, as *he* is a man; conversely, homosexuals should not behave like women, as they are not women. This difference in lexicon may be due to an inherent difference between homosexuals and hermaphrodites. Whereas the ambiguity of hermaphroditic bodies does not hinder their re-categorisation if their gendered behaviours belie their apparent physical sex, homosexuals cannot be re-categorised as women. Whilst having undeniably male sexual organs, they still defy the gender dichotomy expected by society. This challenge to patriarchal categories was seen as a betrayal to the very idea of manliness.

Comparing nineteenth-century scientific writings with those of the twenty-first-century shows that the importance of gendered habits and tastes when determining the sex of an individual has not disappeared. The perspective has, however, changed. Habits do not reveal or betray the ‘real’ sex — that is, the genetic and anatomical sex —; they indicate what Mouriquand calls ‘l’identité sexuelle individuelle’, in other words how individuals define themselves despite their biological sex.<sup>201</sup> The urologist reports the case of a patient who was

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<sup>201</sup> Mouriquand, p. 59.

identified as a girl at birth and raised accordingly, even though her karyotype was XY. She had no vagina and no breasts, but testes, a long clitoris and hair on her face. However, despite her male characteristics, she felt like a girl and was operated upon and treated with female hormones to feminise her.<sup>202</sup> Conversely, the reports of nineteenth-century scientists focused exclusively on the biological sex and did not take ‘l’identité sexuelle individuelle’ into account. They repeatedly mentioned hermaphrodites who truly believed themselves male or female (Marc, 100; Geoffroy, II, 72), but not what they felt when they were told that they were mistaken, as if their perception of their own body was irrelevant.<sup>203</sup> Their change of sexual identity is presented as unproblematic, because it was supposed to correspond to the order of nature, which was thought to condition their psychological traits.

Some evidence, nevertheless, contradicts the simplicity of this process. Marie-Marguerite’s official request to change his birth certificate makes him appear keen to be a man, but, according to Worbe’s report, he had to become accustomed to the idea of renouncing his psychological female identity (Marc, 92). The latter case of Adélaïde Herculine Barbin, who was identified as a girl when s/he was born, but reassigned as a man in 1860, at the age of twenty-one, also demonstrates that the change of sexual identity can be traumatic. His/her account, a unique testimony of the living conditions of a nineteenth-century hermaphrodite, reveals that the new man renamed Abel lost his friends, his engagement as a teacher in a school for girls and even his social position. As he was stopped in his social ascension, he felt he had no choice but to commit suicide.<sup>204</sup> Tardieu presents the case of Barbin as proof of the dangers caused by an erroneous sex assignation at birth, but neglects to mention that the hermaphrodite’s misfortunes mostly commenced after this mistake was corrected.<sup>205</sup>

The definition of sexual habits in nineteenth-century writings did not take ‘l’identité sexuelle individuelle’ into account, but did include sexuality. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, for instance, reported the case of Joséphine Badré, a male hermaphrodite who was aroused in the presence of women (II, 85). Badré’s erotic attraction to women was not judged to be lesbianism, since it revealed *his* ‘real’ sex. In the doctors’ biased accounts, there were no such individuals as homosexual hermaphrodites. They considered that hermaphrodites’ sexuality must be

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., pp. 53–54.

<sup>203</sup> The absence of hermaphrodites’ accounts about their own bodies and state of mind has also been underlined by Dreger (*Hermaphrodites*, p. 167) and Houbre (p. 92). See also Daston and Park, p. 426.

<sup>204</sup> The ‘Souvenirs’ of Herculine Barbin have been published by Michel Foucault in *Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978). For more on Barbin’s social position, see Nathaniel Wing, *Between Genders: Narrating Difference in Early French Modernism* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2010), pp. 122–24; Claude Burgelin, ‘Le cas Herculine B.’, in *Différenciation sexuelle et identités*, pp. 93–100 (pp. 99–100).

<sup>205</sup> Ambroise Tardieu, ‘Question médico-légale de l’identité dans les rapports avec les vices de conformation des organes sexuels’ (1874), in Foucault, ed., *Herculine Barbin*, pp. 135–36.



compatible with their predominant sex in a heteronormative context. For example, Dreger has described the case of Louise-Julia-Anna, a male hermaphrodite in the 1890s who confused doctors because he felt desire for men, in opposition with what his ‘real’ physiological sex should make him feel.<sup>206</sup> In the doctors’ opinion, if hermaphrodites were attracted to the ‘wrong’ sex, it was due to the education that they had received and it certainly did not correspond to their psychological make-up. Even for the bi-sexual hermaphrodite (the type of hermaphrodite that is closest to the perfect hermaphrodite), Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire assumed that ‘il est fort douteux que ses penchants le portassent à la fois vers les deux sexes’ (II, 171). The equation between predominant physiological sex and sexuality has not changed nowadays. In her article ‘The Five Sexes, Revisited’, Fausto-Sterling notes that ‘success in [surgical] gender assignment has traditionally been defined as living in that gender as a heterosexual.’<sup>207</sup>

Nineteenth-century scientists’ rejection of hermaphroditic homosexuality tallies with the need to classify hermaphrodites into categories that comply with the dominant discourse of sexual dichotomy and compulsory heterosexuality. The goal of these categories is to offer a stable identity framework for individuals. The impossibility of conforming to one of these categories appears to deprive individuals of their identity. Butler argues:

as ‘identity’ is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of ‘the person’ is called into question by the cultural emergence of those ‘incoherent’ or ‘discontinuous’ gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined.<sup>208</sup>

Mixtures of categories including ‘incoherent’ or ‘discontinuous’ gendered beings, to borrow Butler’s terminology, not only call ‘the very notion of “the person”’ into question, but they also threaten the system of separating the sexes. What if, in a French society prior to the legalisation of marriage between same-sex individuals, a male hermaphrodite, previously mistaken for a woman, had married a man? The need to identify the predominant sex of a hermaphrodite with invasive examinations not only fulfils scientific curiosity; it is also in line with a legal approach intended to validate patriarchal discourse, since medical conclusions regarding the sex of an individual can lead to the dissolution of his/her marriage.

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<sup>206</sup> Dreger, ‘Hermaphrodites in Love’, pp. 46–49 and p. 56; *Hermaphrodites*, pp. 110–13 and pp. 115–16.

<sup>207</sup> Anne Fausto-Sterling, ‘The Five Sexes, Revisited’, *The Sciences*, 40:4 (July–August 2000), 19–23 (p. 22).

<sup>208</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 17.

## Normalisation and Moralisation of Sex

By examining and describing individuals who did not correspond to social norms, scientists displayed two goals: firstly, and above all, to assert the norm, and secondly to marginalise these individuals. The latter goal is illustrated by Tardieu and the scientists who wrote on homosexuality. They exhibited a strong aversion for pederasty and ‘a tone of moral outrage [that] took precedence over one of clinical detachment’.<sup>209</sup> Tardieu stressed his horror towards these acts ‘against nature’ and played the role of the martyr for science who only agreed to explore such a ‘dreadful’ topic in order to advance science and progress. With the appalling descriptions of dog-like or corkscrew-shaped penises, enormous buttocks and funnel-shaped anuses, Tardieu managed to make the pederasts look abnormal, even monstrous. They appear to be hybrid beings: partly human, partly animal, partly object, partly male and partly female. However, Peniston’s investigation of the Parisians arrested for public offences against decency contradicts several medical commonplaces about homosexuals, such as their effeminacy and their predilection for sodomy. Although his study relates to a later period than the July Monarchy (the 1870s) and represents only a sample of the homosexual population, it is unlikely that the situation had vastly changed in thirty years. The figure of the homosexual created by scientists is a fantasised monster whose mission is to keep ‘respectable’ male citizens defined against, and distanced from, the temptation of homosexuality.

The hegemonic discourse of scientists regarding homosexuality challenges Anna Marie Smith’s claim that hegemony ‘depends on the normalisation of the idea that there is no alternative’.<sup>210</sup> Scientific writings do not explicitly deny the existence of alternatives, but these are presented as dreadful and thus untenable. The representation of fringe states and behaviours allows the scientists to affirm the norm. This norm is not only numerical, as the hermaphrodites are ‘abnormal’ because they are rare, but it is also and primarily ideological: it represents an ideal of sexuality, family and lifestyle. Relations between men and women must contribute to the grandeur of France by allowing the male population to develop numerically and in terms of virility. It must be noted that, as argued by Laqueur, the physician becomes the new ‘moral preceptor of society’.<sup>211</sup> The replacement of the priest by the doctor is exemplified in the ‘Souvenirs’ of Barbin, in which the hermaphrodite reports the words of the physician who

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<sup>209</sup> Nye, ‘Sex Difference’, p. 33.

<sup>210</sup> Anna Marie Smith, ‘Hegemony Trouble: The Political Theories of Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’, in *The Lesser Evil and the Greater Good: The Theory and Politics of Social Diversity*, ed. by Jeffrey Weeks (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1994), pp. 222–34 (p. 230).

<sup>211</sup> Laqueur, ‘Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology’, p. 29; Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 215.

examined him/her: ‘vous ne devez pas seulement voir en moi un médecin, mais un confesseur’.<sup>212</sup> In the attitude of these scientific men, the heterosexual model, by implicit comparison with the ‘abject’ signs of pederasty so enthusiastically described by Tardieu, is the only one that is sustainable. Similarly, Virey imposes a vision of the relations between men and women that is moral and family-centred, and condemns vicious practices by referring to science and medicine rather than to morals. Masturbation, an excessive number of female partners, female celibacy and polygamy are criticised because they are judged unhealthy and counter-procreative. Where polygamy is concerned, Virey concludes:

Il en résulte cette vérité morale aussi bien que médicale, [à] savoir que l’état le plus heureux pour l’espèce humaine, le plus favorable à sa santé, le plus conforme à la raison, est de *suivre la nature* sans en abuser, soit par excès, soit par défaut. (130; original emphasis)

Medicine and morality correspond in this case because they are supported by nature, which purportedly condemns celibacy, encourages monogamous marriage and valorises moderate and reproductive intercourse, according to Virey and Moreau de la Sarthe (I, 198). Their model of sexuality and sexual identity coincides with the promotion of the patriarchal family with the paterfamilias exercising a soft domination over his wife, who is pleased with her lot. If the reader had doubts regarding the ‘natural’ patriarchal system, Moreau de la Sarthe confirms: ‘La nature semble avoir conféré à l’homme le droit de gouverner’ (I, 728).

Nature has determined the strict categories of men and women, but homosexuals and eunuchs, like hermaphrodites to a lesser extent, can belong neither to the prestigious category of men, defined by chivalric honour, in Nye’s interpretation of Virey’s text, nor to the female category.<sup>213</sup> As a consequence, they contravene the norm. When confronted with such ambivalent figures, the texts display signs of anxiety. Cabanis asks about masculine women: ‘quelle sera la place de ces êtres incertains, qui ne sont, à proprement parler, d’aucun sexe?’ (I, 363). For Lauvergne, the convict Frédéric is an ‘homme douteux’ and adds: ‘nous avouons l’erreur de la nature dans les êtres homologues de Frédéric’ (293). He believes homosexuals to be subhumans and designates them as ‘ces avortons de notre race, ces homoncules’ (299), as did Tardieu when assimilating them to animals and objects. The lexical reduction of their person (see the diminutive suffix *-cule*), as well as the perception of homosexuals as criminals and the

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<sup>212</sup> Barbin, ‘Mes souvenirs’, p. 89.

<sup>213</sup> Nye, *Masculinity and Male Code of Honor*, p. 62.

inclusion of hermaphroditism in essays dedicated to teratology constitute attempts to minimise their importance within the dominant discourse.

The rejection of men who do not correspond to the male norm is illustrated by Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's claim in a chapter dedicated to the functions of forensic medicine with regard to the problems of sexual identity:

La destinée de chaque enfant nouveau-né, du moment où son sexe est connu ou déclaré connu, se trouve donc réglée à l'avance pour les circonstances principales de sa vie: il est rangé dans l'une ou l'autre de ces deux grandes classes à laquelle appartiennent des fonctions non seulement différentes, mais presque inverses dans la famille aussi bien que dans la société. À cet égard, point d'intermédiaires; nos lois n'en admettent pas l'existence; n'en prévoient pas la possibilité. (III, 573)

Every new-born child must be sexually identified because society and law have attributed specific functions for each sex. These functions must be fulfilled in order to be a useful citizen. From this perspective of strict sexual difference, the position of the effeminate man, of the masculine woman, of the homosexual and of the hermaphrodite seems to be an aberration. The hermaphrodite and his/her fellows are devoid of a firm identity because they are split across two entities, male and female. As Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's text points out, this contradiction is impossible to accept and must be resolved by scientists through empirical observation. The teratologist and his colleagues normalise the hermaphrodite by arguing that there is usually a 'real' identity, a sex that predominates despite the ambiguous genitalia. Nonetheless, they cannot deny that these individuals exist and, by their simple existence, they question scientists' implacable insistence on sexual dichotomy.

## **Conclusion**

This analysis of scientific writings focusing on women, homosexuals and hermaphrodites during the first half of the nineteenth century shows that scientists made a diagnosis that was primarily based on physical and biological characteristics, which could be deformed through human action. This approach reveals the obsession among the nineteenth-century French scientific community with the patriarchal necessity to separate the sexes. The examination of homosexual, hermaphroditic and mannish bodies reveals the scientists' eagerness to turn them into 'abnormal' creatures. Consequently, the scrutiny and the classification of these unconventional bodies excluded them from the 'normal' categories of maleness and femaleness.

The focus on bodies and genitalia, nonetheless, had its limits. By admitting the existence of 'deviant' bodies, scientists seemed to call into question the very sexual dichotomy on which their arguments were based. Accordingly, experts in hermaphroditism had to determine a predominant sex to adhere to an idealised sexual dichotomy. The determination of this predominant sex had to be supported by a psychological and behavioural approach. Tastes, habits and other psychological characteristics were considered to be as relevant as genitalia because they were believed to stem from the organisation of the body itself. Rather than challenging the results of the focalisation on genitalia, as is the case nowadays (where a person's own sense of gender identification is taken into account), the psychological aspects only served to justify empirical observations. In the case of homosexuals, no reconciliation between physical and psychological characteristics seemed possible. Despite their allegedly feminine tastes and their deformed anuses and penises, they remained men.



## CHAPTER 2: HERMAPHRODITISM, TRANSVESTISM AND GENDER INDETERMINACY

### Introduction

Like the scientific texts analysed in the previous chapter, literary narratives of the July Monarchy also endorse traditional distinctions between sex and gender. This norm provided writers with a stable framework that was shared by their readers and allowed these authors to refer to masculine and feminine characteristics without having to explain the meaning of these traits. Yet, also like the scientific texts, the framework of these literary texts reveals that this sexual dichotomy was restrictive and incapable of representing male and female relations in contemporary French society. In order to explain this idea, this chapter analyses how hermaphroditic characters became powerful vehicles through which the constraints of sexual and gender norms were challenged in literary narratives.

Stretching the boundaries of sexual ambiguity, the figure of the hermaphrodite enjoyed great popularity in literary narratives of the 1830s. This fictional hermaphrodite has little in common with ‘real’ intersex beings (as they are called nowadays) represented in nineteenth-century French scientific writings. This fictional character does not relate directly to scientific readings, but rather to Hermaphroditus, the son of the god Hermes and the goddess Aphrodite, in Greek mythology. According to Ovid’s version of the myth in the *Metamorphoses*, the god was born a boy and became the object of the nymph Salmacis’s desire. Since Hermaphroditus had rejected her, she surprised him while having a bath in a fountain in Caria and then wrapped herself around his body. She begged the gods to unite her forever to him. Her wish was granted; the two became one individual with both sexes.<sup>214</sup> Hermaphroditus further wished that any being who would bathe in that fountain would likewise turn into a bi-sexual creature, a curse that highlights the fact that the bi-sexuality of the god is realised against his own volition and experienced as a burden, rather than a gift.

Marie Delcourt and Frédéric Monneyron consider that Ovid’s version of the myth is unconventional, since the bi-sexuality of Hermaphroditus traditionally comes from birth and not from metamorphosis.<sup>215</sup> The cult of Hermaphroditus, which appeared in the Hellenic world

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<sup>214</sup> ‘When they were mated together in a close embrace, they were not two, but a two-fold form, so that they could not be called male or female, and seemed neither or either’: Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4<sup>th</sup> book, vv. 377–79, trans. by Anthony S. Kline <<http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Metamorph4.htm>> [accessed 29 October 2012].

<sup>215</sup> Delcourt, p. 81; Frédéric Monneyron, *L’androgynie romantique: Du mythe au mythe littéraire* (Grenoble: Ellug, 1994), p. 19.

in the fourth century BC, had obscure origins and little popularity in Greece.<sup>216</sup> Delcourt highlights the paradox between Hermaphroditus's lack of popularity during Antiquity and the success of hermaphroditic, androgynous or bi-sexual entities:

L'étrange est que le mythe nouveau, qui semblait si bien fait pour servir de support à ces imaginations, n'en a pas attiré une seule. Les poètes n'ont prêté à Hermaphrodite aucune aventure, contents de broder un peu sur sa naissance. Et les cosmogonies tardives, hantées par le rêve de l'androgynie, n'en ont pas fait le propre du dieu le mieux fait pour la symboliser [...]. C'est ainsi que, dans la littérature, Hermaphrodite est une idée plutôt qu'une personne.<sup>217</sup>

Applying Delcourt's statement to the July Monarchy context, this chapter argues that the figure of the hermaphrodite is used as a means of critiquing the issues that arise around gender ambiguities. Hermaphroditus is not depicted for him/herself, but personifies the fusion of sexual duality, because s/he may be regarded as a symbol of unity achieved by sexual embrace.<sup>218</sup>

Due to his/her bi-sexuality, Hermaphroditus belongs to the category of composite monsters, defined by Pierre Jourde as 'assemblages hétérogènes des espèces, des règnes, des sexes, réunion de plusieurs êtres'.<sup>219</sup> They are usually considered to be ugly either because each part of them is unpleasant or because the assemblage itself is judged unnatural: '[c]'est parce que les fragments hétérogènes qu'il [le monstre composite] joint sans ordre ne parviennent pas à s'unir qu'il est monstrueux'.<sup>220</sup> The ugliness of the parts, however, cannot explain the monstrosity of the hermaphrodite, as each body incarnates the perfection of his/her sex. The German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann and a modern critic such as Pierre Laforgue have been enthusiastic about the beauty of hermaphrodites and have established a correlation between Hermaphroditus and ideal beauty in Neoclassical aesthetics.<sup>221</sup> It must be assumed that the hermaphrodite's monstrosity stems from the heterogeneity that results from the assemblage of the two sexes.

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<sup>216</sup> Delcourt, pp. 68–71; Monneyron, p. 18.

<sup>217</sup> Delcourt, p. 2. See also p. 3.

<sup>218</sup> Michel Crouzet, 'Gautier et le problème de "créer"', *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 72:4 (July–August 1972), 659–87 (p. 675); Monneyron, p. 20.

<sup>219</sup> Pierre Jourde, *Littérature monstre: Études sur la modernité littéraire* (Paris: L'Esprit des péninsules, 2008), p. 238. The Chimera, who gathers in its body a lioness, a snake and a goat, also belongs to this category.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>221</sup> Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, p. 212. In contrast, Kari Weil highlights the notion of change that is contained in the concept of hermaphrodite, as s/he is regarded as the result of a metamorphosis, suggesting that *hermaphrodite* recalls the Romantic changing nature of beauty, while *androgynie* is associated with Classical art and beauty: 'Romantic Androgyny and its Discontents: The Case of *Mlle de Maupin*', *Romantic Review*, 78:3 (May 1987), 348–58 (p. 349). This suggestion is rather surprising, since the artistic representations of Hermaphroditus were celebrated as masterpieces of Classical art.



From this perspective, the hermaphrodite differs from the analogous concept of the androgyne, whose myth is told by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*.<sup>222</sup> Human beings used to be double, round-shaped creatures: twice male, twice female, or both male and female, namely androgynous (*androgyne* means 'man-woman' in Greek). Zeus separated them when they conspired against the gods. Each half henceforth longed for its fellow and attempted to reunite through sexual encounter. Unlike Hermaphroditus for whom the fusion of the male and female bodies is made against his/her will, it is the separation of sexed halves that is against the will of the androgynes. The androgyne is also connected to cabbalistic interpretations of Genesis according to which the first man Adam was originally male and female.<sup>223</sup> Although sometimes being regarded as synonymous, the *androgyne* and the *hermaphrodite* in fact appear to designate different entities.<sup>224</sup> The first is often considered to embody a positive, almost angelic, Romantic representation of metaphysical bi-sexuality, while the latter is seen as a negative, decadent and even corrupt version of bi-sexuality because of its sensual implications.<sup>225</sup> The perfect completeness of the androgyne is opposed to the hermaphrodite's impossible search for this absolute. The latter is, therefore, characterised by incompleteness.<sup>226</sup>

Although the term *hermaphrodite* is used throughout this chapter, it does not designate an unequivocally negative individual. This term possesses the double advantage of emphasising the physicality of the bi-sexual figure while sustaining its ambivalent connotations. Firstly, it refers both to a god whose main characteristic is a corporeal metamorphosis and whose popularity was great in Classical painting and sculpture, and to a human being whose body has

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<sup>222</sup> Plato, *Lysis. Symposium. Gorgias*, ed. and trans. by W. R. M. Lamb (London: W. Heinemann-Macmillan, 1914), pp. 132–51.

<sup>223</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Méphistophélès et l'androgyne* (Paris: Gallimard, 'Idées', 1962), pp. 150–51; A. J. L. Busst, *The Image of the Androgyne in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 4; Monneyron, pp. 28–39.

<sup>224</sup> Busst considers that the distinction between them is arbitrary (p. 1). Likewise, Josiane Rolland combines references to androgyny in her chapter about hermaphroditism: 'Rédemption ou malédiction? Destins de l'hermaphrodisme', in *Différenciation sexuelle et identités*, pp. 77–91. Laforgue usually uses *androgyne* about *Fragoletta* (*L'éros romantique*, pp. 87–107) and *hermaphrodite* about *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (pp. 205–24). Monneyron and Crouzet usually refer to nineteenth-century bi-sexual creatures as *androgynes*.

<sup>225</sup> Eliade, pp. 143–44; Busst, pp. 10–11; Lucienne Frappier-Mazur, 'Balzac et l'androgyne: Personnages, symboles et métaphores androgynes dans *La Comédie humaine*', *L'Année balzacienne*, 1<sup>st</sup> ser. (1973), 253–77; Joséphin Péladan, *De l'Androgyne: Théorie plastique* (Puisseaux: Pardès, 'Rebis', 1988), pp. 39–41 and pp. 62–67. A remarkable illustration of the philosophical and religious aspects of the myth of the androgyne during the July Monarchy times is Balzac's Swedenborgian novel *Séraphîta* (Paris: Harmattan, 'Les introuvables', 1973), published in 1834. See Geneviève Delattre's interpretation of the androgyne: 'De *Séraphîta* à *La Fille aux yeux d'or*', *L'Année balzacienne*, 1<sup>st</sup> ser. (1970), 183–226.

<sup>226</sup> Valeria Ramacciotti, 'L'esilio dell'androgino', *Studi di letteratura francese*, 16 (1990), 188–201 (p. 190). See also Martial Guéron, ed., *Monstres, merveilles et créatures fantastiques* (Paris: Hazan, 2011), p. 111. This opposition between androgyne/completeness and hermaphrodite/incompleteness is especially manifest in Pierre Albouy, 'Le mythe de l'androgyne dans *Mademoiselle de Maupin*', *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 72:4 (July–August 1972), 600–08 (p. 601, p. 605 and p. 607).

male and female characteristics. Secondly, the combination of positive, Classical beauty and of negative, erotic bi-sexuality renders the hermaphrodite appropriate for representing the ambivalence of the main protagonists in this chapter. These protagonists will often be designated as hermaphroditic characters rather than hermaphrodites to highlight the fact that hermaphroditism does not refer here to physical bi-sexuality exclusively, but can also designate characters whose sex has been surgically altered, such as castrati, or who display gender (not sexual) indeterminacy, revealed through transvestism for example. Hermaphroditic characters share several characteristics with masculine women and effeminate men, who will be studied in chapter 3 and chapter 5; they nevertheless differ from these figures because it is not only their gender, but also and especially their sex that is called into question in these novels.

This chapter focuses on one novella and two novels representing hermaphroditic characters. *Fragoletta: Naples et Paris en 1799* (1829) written by Henri de Latouche, is a historical novel that oscillates between an adventure story, a gothic novel and a love story between the French officer Marius d'Hauteville and Camille, a hermaphrodite. Usually discredited by its critics, *Fragoletta* is, nevertheless, an important literary work because it is the first nineteenth-century French novel to represent a hermaphrodite, and, as such, it influenced Balzac and Gautier when writing *Séraphîta* and *Mademoiselle de Maupin* respectively.<sup>227</sup> Balzac's novella *Sarrasine*, first published in *La Revue de Paris* in 1830 and later rewritten to be connected to *La Comédie humaine*, is structured as a frame story in which is told the tale of the sculptor Sarrasine who falls in love with the castrato Zambinella because he thinks that the singer is a woman.<sup>228</sup> Finally, Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835) offers the most elaborate reflection on hermaphroditism, although it does not include a 'real' hermaphrodite, as the poet d'Albert falls in love with a boy named Théodore de Sérannes, unaware of the fact that he is a transvestite girl by the name of Madeleine de Maupin.

None of these plots actually occurs during the July Monarchy. *Fragoletta* and the main plot of *Sarrasine* take place during the eighteenth century, whilst *Mademoiselle de Maupin* occurs at the end of the seventeenth century, as it was roughly inspired by the life of the

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<sup>227</sup> Michel Crouzet, 'Monstres et merveilles: Poétique de l'Androgyne, à propos de *Fragoletta*', *Romantisme*, 45 (1984), 25–41 (p. 25 and p. 27). Balzac wrote to Madame Hanska: '*Séraphîta* serait les deux natures en un seul être, comme *Fragoletta*, mais avec cette différence que je suppose cette créature un ange arrivé à sa dernière transfiguration et brisant son enveloppe pour monter aux cieux' (*Lettres à Mme Hanska*, quoted by Crouzet, 'À propos de *Fragoletta*', p. 25). On Latouche's influence on Balzac, see Helen O. Borowitz, 'Balzac's Unknown Masters', *Romanic Review*, 72:4 (November 1981), 425–41 (pp. 439–41).

<sup>228</sup> For more on the particularities of this frame story, see Pierre Citron, 'Interprétation de *Sarrasine*', *L'Année balzacienne*, 1<sup>st</sup> ser. (1972), 81–95 (pp. 81–82 and pp. 91–92).

adventuress and actress Julie d'Aubigny, or Mademoiselle de Maupin (1670–1707).<sup>229</sup> The correlations between the timeframes of the stories and the context of their writing are loose. Certainly, *Fragoletta* follows the principle of the historical novel, according to which the past may be used to depict and instruct the present, as the Restoration of the Italian Bourbons recalls the Restoration of the French Bourbons during Latouche's time.<sup>230</sup> *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, nonetheless, is detached from historical references. Likewise, the narrator of *Sarrasine* stresses the difference between olden times and the present day, relative to the lot of castrati, when he claims that they no longer exist in Italy.<sup>231</sup> The critique of 1830s society is achieved indirectly, by positing the plots of the narratives outside their immediate society, or rather at its margins.<sup>232</sup> Despite the historical distance or indifference towards historical events, and perhaps owing to their position in the background of political and historical action, the marginal hermaphroditic characters allegorise the plight of individuals unable to conform to the sexual norm.

This chapter first uses the concepts of transvestism and gender performativity to determine how the writers depict the bi-sexuality of the hermaphroditic characters Camille, Zambinella and Madeleine without ever challenging the sexual dichotomy. Hermaphrodites are then analysed in light of the common belief that they are monsters, and therefore act as a powerful means to represent rejection and marginalisation. Their bi-sexuality allows them to be connected to homosexuality, an association that is both discredited and valorised through an aesthetic process that is being termed here the *hermaphroditisation* of a character. As will be shown, this process often makes use of pieces of art, defined as *heterotopias* (a Foucauldian concept), as a means to mediate hermaphroditic bodies, notably by presenting them as embodiments of ideal beauty and freeing them from their monstrous connotations in order to integrate them into society. Ultimately, this chapter argues that hermaphroditism is paradoxically used as a means of both expressing masculine insecurity and overcoming this insecurity (notably through the hermaphroditic character Madeleine). This is due to the sexual and moral ambivalence of the hermaphrodite, which is both perfect and yet monstrous.

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<sup>229</sup> For more on the historical Mademoiselle de Maupin, see Monneyron, pp. 119–20; Jennifer Waelti-Walters, *Damned Women: Lesbians in French Novels, 1796–1996* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), p. 27.

<sup>230</sup> Molino, pp. 216–18; Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, p. 59.

<sup>231</sup> Castrati, nevertheless, sang in the Sistine Chapel choir until 1898. The narrator is misled by the fact that Napoleon intended to stop this practice, but it started again when the French withdrew from Italy: Yvonne Noble, 'Castrati, Balzac, and "BartheS/Z"', *Comparative Drama*, 31:1 (Spring 1997), 28–41 (pp. 34–35).

<sup>232</sup> Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, pp. 16–17. Surprisingly, this comment is made for other narratives, as the scholar regards *Fragoletta*, *Sarrasine* and *Mademoiselle de Maupin* as having historical and social references.

## Portraits of Hermaphrodites: Transgressing the Sexual Dichotomy?

As hermaphroditic characters are by definition double, their portrayals are dual as well. Each hermaphrodite is successively depicted as a man, and then as a woman (or conversely), rather than as simultaneously a man and a woman, because his/her hermaphroditism is not immediately, and sometimes never, identified. Camille is portrayed as Fragoletta and Philippe, her so-called twin brother;<sup>233</sup> Madeleine de Maupin, as Madeleine and Théodore de Sérannes; Zambinella, as the *prima donna* and the old man.<sup>234</sup> This does not mean that each gendered portrayal of hermaphrodites cannot contain characteristics of the other gender, but rather that, in spite of these hermaphroditic characteristics, his/her sex is not questioned in these descriptions. It is argued in this section that the double portrait of the hermaphroditic characters reveals the difficulties that authors face in distancing themselves from the norm of the separation of the sexes, even when describing characters with dual gender and/or sex. As with the scientific texts, the descriptions of these hermaphrodites are grounded in references not only to physical characteristics, but also to psychological characteristics, such as tastes and activities, that look beyond the manifestation of a visible sex. Whilst in the opinion of Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and his colleagues these interests are supposed to disclose the ‘real’ sex of an individual, in these narratives they demonstrate that this notion is far more complex.

The complexity of both the sex and the gender of the hermaphroditic protagonists is elaborated through the construction of the narratives. *Fragoletta* is divided into two parts: the first part takes place in Naples, during the Napoleonic Italian campaign; and the second in Paris, before Napoleon’s coup d’état. Following this division, the hermaphrodite Camille presents him/herself in Italy as an innocent and boyish girl, known as Fragoletta, and in France as a vicious and perfidious boy, ‘her’ brother Philippe Adriani. In *Sarrasine*, the principle of *mise en abyme* that is adopted in the novella allows the narrator to depict Zambinella as an old man in the outer story and a young woman in most of the embedded story. While the feminine version of Zambinella incarnates for Sarrasine the ideal woman, the old Zambinella is perceived by other characters, first as a supernatural and frightful creature, then as a decaying, ludicrous and anachronistic *barbon* because the castrato has lost the seduction of his looks and his voice.

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<sup>233</sup> In Latouche’s novel, *Camille* refers to the female self of the hermaphrodite, whereas the name of his/her elder brother Philippe is adopted to introduce his/her male self. In this study, however, *Camille* is used to refer to the whole person of the hermaphrodite, while Camille’s nickname *Fragoletta* designates the female side and *Philippe*, the male side.

<sup>234</sup> According to Italian operatic terminology, a soprano castrato was called *primo uomo*, whereas *prima donna* designated a female soprano: Patrick Barbier, *The World of the Castrati: The History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon*, trans. by Margaret Crosland (London: Souvenir Press, 1996), p. 2. The narrator’s mistake is therefore deliberately misleading. Barthes calls *prima donna* a ‘leurre’: *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil, ‘Tel Quel’, 1970), p. 117.

As for *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, the novel is a hybrid creation, just like its female protagonist.<sup>235</sup> It combines theatrical dialogues, aesthetic reflections on theatre and a performance of Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. It also incorporates three different narrators: one heterodiegetic narrator who narrates three out of the seventeen chapters of the novel, and two homodiegetic narrators, d'Albert (the main character and the privileged viewpoint of the novel) and Madeleine de Maupin. The homodiegetic chapters are usually letters addressed to a penfriend. Madeleine appears to be the beautiful young man Théodore in d'Albert's letters to Silvio, whereas Madeleine's own letters to Graciosa reveal her sex. Moreover, the narrator is seldom omniscient in these three narratives. Either it is a third-person narrator that adopts the perspective of a character (d'Hauteville in *Fragoletta*) or a first-person narrator, as in *Sarrasine* and in most chapters of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. Additionally, in *Sarrasine*, the first-person narrator espouses the viewpoint of Sarrasine in the embedded story.<sup>236</sup> In brief, it appears that the variety of genres that characterises these narratives reproduces the variety of genders within the stories.

The case of *Fragoletta* outstandingly reveals the difficulty of conceiving a fully bi-sexual individual, as the novel struggles to deal with the complexity and the variety of sexes. Camille is never presented as being simultaneously a boy and a girl in spite of his/her bi-sexual body. Camille is not *both* male *and* female; s/he is not *neither* male *nor* female; s/he is *either* male *or* female.<sup>237</sup> As a modest young girl, the hermaphrodite rejects d'Hauteville's love in Naples; as a bold young man, s/he seduces d'Hauteville's sister Eugénie in Paris. Whilst first depicting the hermaphrodite as a girl, the heterodiegetic narrator stresses her absence of female characteristics, such as curves: 'Camille n'avait rien [...] des attraits qui soumettent nos sens'.<sup>238</sup> Her sexless appearance is attributed to her age, since Camille is an adolescent. This explanation appears to tally with scientific studies on hermaphroditism. As shown in chapter 1, scientists reported many cases of hermaphroditic children who were attributed a 'wrong' sex at their birth

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<sup>235</sup> The hybridism of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* has been analysed by Jean-Marie Roulin, 'Confusion des sexes, mélange des genres et quête du sens dans *Mademoiselle de Maupin*', *Romantisme*, 103 (1999), 31–40. See also Albouy, p. 604; Anne Bouchard, 'Le masque et le miroir dans *Mademoiselle de Maupin*', *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 72:4 (July–August 1972), 583–99 (pp. 593–94); Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, pp. 210–11; Wing, p. 30.

<sup>236</sup> Citron, who offers a biographical interpretation of *Sarrasine*, even suggests that the narrator and Sarrasine are closely related as they both embody two versions of Balzac: the sculptor is the young Balzac whilst the narrator is an older Balzac (pp. 87–90).

<sup>237</sup> Crouzet is incorrect when considering that Camille is 'ni masculin ni féminin', and thus announcing la Zambinella ('À propos de *Fragoletta*', p. 35). However, he previously claimed that 'l'Androgyne est saisi par moitiés scindées qui jamais ne se rejoignent' (p. 33).

<sup>238</sup> Henri de Latouche, *Fragoletta: Naples et Paris en 1799*, 2 vols (Paris: Delloye, 1840), I, p. 31. See also I, p. 14. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text (*Fragoletta*).

because their sexual ambiguity was barely noticeable during childhood; the ‘real’ sex made itself known with the development of secondary sexual characteristics at puberty. In contrast, the Ancients considered such cases to be changes of sex.<sup>239</sup> From a scientific perspective, Camille was prepubescent in Italy and reached puberty in Paris after months of separation, where he developed male characteristics. However, this empirical explanation cannot be adopted because Latouche does not seem to have elaborated his character according to scientific coherence and, for the sake of the plot, constantly spreads confusion. For instance, at the end of the novel, the doctor of the monastery who examines the dying Camille appears to have identified female genitalia in him/her (‘il faut porter ce cadavre chez les sœurs de la Miséricorde’; II, 235). Latouche’s strategy of depicting a hermaphrodite alternatively as either male or female does not challenge, but rather reinforces, the traditional dual system of sexes.

Unlike the case of Camille, that of Madeleine de Maupin suggests the possibility of an ambiguously gendered identity, although she is physically the least hermaphroditic protagonist of the present corpus. Her gendered identity as a woman is called into question in Gautier’s novel, thus offering a modern perspective on the correlation between sex and gender. Whilst *Fragoletta* shows that the depiction of a ‘real’ hermaphrodite can hinder the reflection on sexual and gender ambiguity, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* highlights how a symbolic hermaphrodite can successfully question the sexual dichotomy. Both hermaphrodites, however, are similarly described at some point in the novels as physically female, but masculine in their behaviour and tastes. The writers make the hermaphrodites fathomable by portraying them as boyish girls. As Barbara Creed observes, ‘During the early stage, the tomboy [...] behaves like a “little man” enjoying boy’s games, pursuing active sports, refusing to wear dresses or engage in feminine pursuits.’<sup>240</sup> Likewise, Fragoletta playfully attacks d’Hauteville, takes physical exercise, goes fishing, rides a horse and wears male clothes when she travels in the mountains and by the sea (*Fragoletta*, I, 16–17). The latter also prefers male activities, as she writes: ‘j’aime les chevaux, l’escrime, tous les exercices violents, je me plais à grimper et à courir çà et là comme un jeune garçon’.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, Fragoletta exhibits indifference to traditional female concerns. Her carelessness regarding her clothes and the threat that the sun exercises on her white complexion highlights the absence of *coquetterie* in her (*Fragoletta*, I, 13).

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<sup>239</sup> Delcourt, p. 66.

<sup>240</sup> Barbara Creed, ‘Lesbian Bodies: Tribades, Tomboys and Tarts’, in *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, ed. by Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 111–124 (p. 117).

<sup>241</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, ed. by Michel Crouzet (Paris: Gallimard, ‘Folio Classique’, 1973), p. 327. Further references to this novel are given after quotations in the text (*Maupin*).

While the adult Camille changes sex in the narrative process and is depicted as a man, the adult Madeleine does not abandon her masculine behaviour. She continues practising male activities and is considered by men to be one of them since she easily engages in homosocial bonding, which has been defined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as ‘social bonds between persons of the same sex’.<sup>242</sup> Her conduct with Rosette is that of a womaniser, like the conduct of Philippe in *Fragoletta*. Overcoming her timidity, she lavishes intimate caresses on Rosette (*Maupin*, 366–67). In other words, she is incapable of embracing the fate of a young tomboy: to renounce her masculinity and ‘to capture a man whose job it is to “tame” her as if she were a wild animal’.<sup>243</sup> Madeleine does not relinquish her male clothes and does not marry a domineering man, just as Fragoletta refused to marry d’Hauteville. She adopts a male identity and willingly has intercourse with another girl. While Creed claims that the tomboy who refuses to conform to the patriarchal model and to act as a feminine woman is stigmatised as a lesbian, it appears, in the case of Madeleine, that sapphism is not an object of stigmatisation, but rather an expression of independence and agency.<sup>244</sup>

Transvestism is the means employed in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* to introduce sexual ambiguity and to critique the separation of the sexes without going as far as to challenge the sexual dichotomy. Whilst Camille cannot be considered to be a transvestite because both sexes are constitutive of his/her sexual identity, Madeleine and the castrato Zambinella are cross-dressers because they wear clothes that are not typical of their physical sex. Transvestite characters were common in baroque literature, notably in Shakespeare’s comedies, including *As You Like It*, which displays the girl Rosalind who pretends to be a man. Marjorie Garber explains the function of female cross-dressing in Shakespeare’s comedies as follows: ‘Cross-dressing [...] was playful and liminal — and also ameliorative and educational, whether for the “women” in the plays (Rosalind *et al.*) or for the audience’.<sup>245</sup> The principle of cross-dressing within the plays was reinforced by cross-casting; that is, ‘the practice of men playing female roles in the theatre’, notably in the Elizabethan theatre and the Roman opera.<sup>246</sup> Garber argues that male transvestism constitutes the norm, rather than the exception, in numerous dramatic traditions.<sup>247</sup> When actresses were permitted on the English stage, cross-dressing plots did not

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<sup>242</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 1.

<sup>243</sup> Creed, p. 117.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>245</sup> Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London: Penguin Books, 1993 [Routledge, 1992]), p. 72.

<sup>246</sup> Julia Prest, ‘Cross-casting in French Court Ballet: Monstrous Aberration or Theatrical Convention?’, *Romance Studies*, 21:3 (October 2003), 157–68 (p. 159). The opposite (actresses in male clothes) was uncommon.

<sup>247</sup> Garber, pp. 39–40.

disappear, because the exhibition of actresses' legs in male trousers had a sexual appeal.<sup>248</sup> This erotic dimension is also relevant for the transvestism in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

Garber has analysed the explanations of cross-dressing and judged 'unconvincing' and 'problematic' a common scenario that appears in many modern fictions (especially films, but also in Shakespeare's comedies), which she calls the *progress narrative*:

Each [transvestite] is 'compelled' by social and economic forces to disguise himself or herself [...]. Each, that is, is said to embrace transvestism unwillingly, as an instrumental strategy rather than an erotic pleasure and play space; [...] heterosexual desire is for a time apparently thwarted by the cross-dresser's assumed identity, so that it becomes necessary for him or her to unmask. The ideological implications of this pattern are clear: cross-dressing can be 'fun' or 'functional' so long as it occupies a liminal space and a temporary time period.<sup>249</sup>

From this perspective, cross-dressing is not the result of a willing choice, but is rather a temporary alternative to cultural, social and financial issues. It is a 'progress' because it improves cross-dressers' living conditions. The *progress narrative* explanation cannot be used to explain the case of Madeleine, whose transvestism is motivated neither by economic nor by social reasons; nor is it restricted to a specific time. An indeterminate and yet long period separates Madeleine's first visit to Rosette's castle from the second one when she meets d'Albert. More significantly, her final departure suggests that she does not plan to renounce her male attire. Likewise, the necessity for her to 'unmask' (to borrow Garber's terminology) might be appropriate in order to seduce d'Albert, but is not compulsory regarding her relationship with Rosette. Certainly, Madeleine joins her in her bedroom in Rosalind's outfit, not Théodore's, but with the purpose of achieving homoerotic relations, which the *progress narrative* aims to deny.

Madeleine's strongest motivations for cross-dressing are curiosity and a thirst for knowledge, notably about *scientia sexualis*, as Christopher Rivers argues, using Foucauldian terminology.<sup>250</sup> Foucault defines a *scientia sexualis* civilisation as one which '[a] développé au cours des siècles, pour dire la vérité du sexe, des procédures qui s'ordonnent pour l'essentiel à une forme de pouvoir-savoir rigoureusement opposée à l'art des initiations et au secret

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<sup>248</sup> Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, 'Undress, Cross-dress, Redress: Aphra Behn and the Manipulation of Genre', in *Women and Dramatic Production, 1550–1700*, ed. by Alison Findlay and Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, with Gweno Williams (Harlow and New York: Longman, 2000), pp. 151–76 (p. 170). See also Prest, p. 158; Julia Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV: Cross-Casting and the Performance of Gender in Drama, Ballet, and Opera* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>249</sup> Garber, p. 70.

<sup>250</sup> Rivers, pp. 12–15.



magistral'.<sup>251</sup> Whereas an *ars erotica* civilisation valorises the notion of pleasure, the *scientia sexualis* considers sex to be a secret that can be accessed only by experts. As a result, *savoir*, *apprendre*, *connaître* and their derivatives are frequently used in Madeleine's letters. Her quest for knowledge of men, or, more accurately, for knowledge of the difference between the sexes, is expressed more than once (*Maupin*, 243, 255). Nowhere, however, is it expressed more frankly than in the following sentence: 'je voulais étudier l'homme à fond, l'anatomiser fibre par fibre avec un scalpel inexorable et le tenir tout vif et tout palpitant sur ma table de dissection' (247). The desire for exhaustive and scientific knowledge is highlighted by the medical, even surgical, vocabulary, which recalls scientists' sexual fascination for homosexuals. More significantly, the aforementioned sentence reveals the erotic dimension that is intrinsic to Madeleine's thirst for knowledge about the sexual difference. Willing to penetrate into the mysteries of men's sexual difference already means defining herself as a sexual being who wants to exercise a sensual domination over men, which anticipates the end of the novel, when Madeleine uses d'Albert to discover sexual intercourse.

The *progress narrative* explanation seems *a priori* more convincing for the situation of the castrato Zambinella, as the castration of a son represented a large sum of money for humble families or, at the very least, the possibility to improve the son's living conditions.<sup>252</sup> Zambinella himself became immensely rich and famous owing to his operatic career. However, if the *progress narrative* persuasively clarifies Zambinella's cross-dressing (and cross-casting) on stage, it fails to explain the core of *Sarrasine*; that is, his cross-dressing off stage. The justification offered by the castrato — 'Je n'ai consenti à vous tromper que pour plaire à mes camarades, qui voulaient rire' — is practical because it clears him of the responsibility of the deceit, but it is also unsatisfactory because it does not explain why he is so proficient in incarnating a woman and, above all, why he accepts this mission so willingly.<sup>253</sup> His name already casts doubt over his virility, since it can be assumed that *Zambinella* is not a female first name (contrary to what Sarrasine thinks, calling him *la Zambinella*), but either his last name or, as was then common, a pseudonym. And yet, most castrati's pseudonyms had a masculine ending in *-o* or *-i*. *Cortona*, the exception in Patrick Barbier's listing of pseudonyms, is explained by the fact that it designates the castrato's hometown.<sup>254</sup> The choice of a feminine

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<sup>251</sup> Foucault, *La volonté de savoir*, p. 78. For more on *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica*, see pp. 71–98.

<sup>252</sup> Garber, p. 254. See also Barbier, p. 21; Noble, p. 31.

<sup>253</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Sarrasine. Gambarà. Massimilla Doni*, ed. by Pierre Brunel (Paris: Gallimard, 'Folio Classique', 1995), p. 75. Further references to these editions are given after quotations in the text (*Sarrasine*).

<sup>254</sup> Barbier, pp. 83–85. Significantly, Cortona was considered to be the lover of Gian Gastone de' Medici (pp. 151–52).

pseudonym suggests that the castrato has claimed his feminine identity long before taking part in the hoax.

Zambinella, although male, appears to be the perfect representation of traditionally feminine behaviour, as the narrator claims: ‘C’était la femme avec ses peurs soudaines, ses caprices sans raison, ses troubles instinctifs, ses audaces sans cause, ses bravades et sa délicieuse finesse de sentiment’ (*Sarrasine*, 71). His case goes beyond effeminacy and supports the concept of gender performativity that is developed by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*. She suggests that ‘[t]here is not gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results’.<sup>255</sup> In other words, there is no ‘original’ or ‘real’ gender; it is always an imitation. The characteristics that are considered to reveal the gender of an individual are unconsciously adopted to correspond to a cultural norm. Women perform feminine behaviours and men perform virile behaviours because it is what is expected from them.

If gender is a performative act, as Butler argues, this means that a gender can be performed by a person whose sex is not traditionally associated with this gender.<sup>256</sup> Whilst being a man, Zambinella outstandingly performs femininity. This performance must be mistaken neither for the theatrical show that he produces on the stage of the opera house nor for the appearance of the ridiculous effete old man at the Lantys, nostalgic for his former years of beauty, femininity and fame. Zambinella’s performance internalises feminine behaviours and all those feminine personality traits that make Sarrasine certain that he fell in love with a woman. Not only is Zambinella physically feminine due to his soft voice and his womanly beauty, but his actions and behaviour highlight the contradictory Romantic representation of woman as an angel and a demon. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have convincingly shown that women are defined in Western culture according to the antagonism angel–monster; that is, two equally reductive roles of either spiritual and passive goodness, or carnal and assertive evil.<sup>257</sup> Simone de Beauvoir also listed masculine myths about women and highlighted the recurrence of the themes of women’s bodily monstrosity (due to their sexuality and their

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<sup>255</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 25.

<sup>256</sup> Butler, however, has distanced her arguments from the numerous interpretations of gender performativity as relating exclusively to ‘queer’ performativity. On the reception and re-readings of *Gender Trouble*: Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 24–27; Elisa Glick, ‘Sex Positive: Feminism, Queer Theory, and the Politics of Transgression’, *Feminist Review*, 64 (Spring 2000), 19–45 (pp. 35–37).

<sup>257</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000 [1979]), pp. 27–44. For women’s representation in French literature, see Ruth P. Thomas, ‘The Death of an Ideal: Female Suicides in the Eighteenth-Century French Novel’, in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. by Samia I. Spencer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 321–31.

menstruations) as well as of their submissive saintliness.<sup>258</sup> The correlation between these two contrary characterisations of women as angels and monsters is emphasised by the narrator's attempts to '[envelop] the character in broad generalizations about women in general'.<sup>259</sup> On the one hand, Zambinella exhibits signs of sensitivity, delicacy, modesty, superstition and timorousness. On the other hand, he acts as a capricious, voluptuous and nonchalant seductress, playing 'footsie' with Sarrasine (66), just as Octave's mistress does in *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*.<sup>260</sup> He is, most of all, a *coquette* (47, 57, 64, 65, 69), a trait that assimilates him to Béatrix de Rochefide (52), who is also a convincing performer of femininity, but in a heteronormative fashion.<sup>261</sup> In the castrato's performance of femininity, it is, however, difficult to distinguish between Zambinella's internalised femininity, the hoax and Sarrasine's bias. The observation that the sculptor makes to Zambinella, who is afraid of a grass snake — 'oserez-vous bien prétendre que vous n'êtes pas femme?' (71) — shows that Sarrasine is keen to interpret any feminine behaviour as proof of femaleness.

For Sarrasine, if an individual behaves according to specific gender patterns, he or she must belong to the sex traditionally associated with that gender; in other words, gender performativity always equates to sex performativity. His belief can be linked with Butler's claim in *Bodies That Matter* that sex is also performative; that it is also culturally constructed.<sup>262</sup> Whilst this claim may be exaggerated, it nevertheless appears that sex is often interpreted through gender displays.<sup>263</sup> Individuals are compelled to perform the gender that relies on their sex because they are determined by regulatory norms, which are those of compulsory heterosexuality.<sup>264</sup> It can nonetheless be argued that Zambinella's sex escapes clear classification. Although his sex does not seem to correspond to the gender that is performed, it has been altered by the surgery that he endured in his boyhood and cannot be regarded as entirely male. Biological sex is defined according to different parameters, such as external and internal genitals, chromosomes and hormones (most of them unknown in Balzac's time).<sup>265</sup> Zambinella's anatomical and chromosomal sex is male, but castration has modified his hormonal sex, since the absence of testosterone causes excessive activity of female

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<sup>258</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 'Idées', 1949), I, pp. 187–278 (esp. pp. 261–62).

<sup>259</sup> Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 83.

<sup>260</sup> Caprice is associated with Zambinella's supposed femininity (64, 71) and with his celebrity (74), after Sarrasine has learned of Zambinella's 'real' sex.

<sup>261</sup> On Béatrix's typical femininity, see chapter 5, p. 195 and pp. 205–06.

<sup>262</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, for instance p. 5.

<sup>263</sup> See chapter 1, pp. 30–31.

<sup>264</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 12.

<sup>265</sup> Fausto-Sterling, *Sex/Gender*, pp. 3–11; Chatelain, Morel and Nicolino, pp. 31–44.

hormones.<sup>266</sup> As a castrato, Zambinella might develop female secondary sexual characteristics, such as the desired high-pitched voice, prominent breasts, deposits of fat on the hips and the thighs, and, conversely, he might not have grown male characteristics such as facial hairs and an Adam's apple.<sup>267</sup>

While not arguing, as Barthes does, that the text lies when asserting that Zambinella is a man, Zambinella's female sex is nonetheless suggested in the following excerpt: 'Pendant une huitaine de jours, il [Sarrasine] vécut toute une vie, occupé le matin à pétrir la glaise à l'aide de laquelle il réussissait à copier la Zambinella, malgré les voiles, les jupes, les corsets et les nœuds de rubans qui la lui dérobaient' (60).<sup>268</sup> As Thomas Pavel notes, the verb *copier* is ambiguous.<sup>269</sup> Manifestly, the sculptor does not copy Zambinella, since the female garments that allegedly prevent him from seeing the *prima donna*'s female sex actually conceal an important part of Zambinella's body: his penis. Female attire here acts as a fetish and replaces the female sex that the singer lacks. Yet, the opposition between the 'real' male sex and the fantasised female sex of Zambinella is not as clear as it seems because of the secondary female sexual characteristics of his body. It is impossible to be certain that Zambinella's corset does not hide a bosom.<sup>270</sup> The modification of Zambinella's male sex suggests that his performance of a feminine gender is also due to his physique and that this performance is therefore expected of him on stage as well as in his daily life. Cabanis (I, 384–90), Moreau de la Sarthe (I, 195–97) and Virey (180, 210, 231) repeatedly asserted that a man deprived of his physical virility borders on being a woman, and thus cannot fully be considered a man.

The case of Zambinella demonstrates that, while intuitively perceiving the principle of gender performativity, writers cannot actually conceive of an individual that can harmoniously combine characteristics of both sexes and both genders. The hermaphrodite is thus never constructed as a fully bi-sexual individual, but rather through gendered alternatives that make the hermaphrodite more comprehensible for the reader, such as tomboyishness, effeminacy, transvestitism and gender performativity.<sup>271</sup> The inability to fathom a bi-sexual individual

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<sup>266</sup> On the effects of castration, see Barbier, p. 14; Noble, p. 31; Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV*, p. 131.

<sup>267</sup> Barbier, pp. 13–14.

<sup>268</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 48. Sandy Petrey's contestation of Barthes's claim appears exaggerated: 'Speech Acts, and the Realist Differences: *S/Z* versus *Sarrasine*', *PMLA*, 102:2 (March 1987), 153–65 (pp. 156–58).

<sup>269</sup> Thomas Pavel, 'Énergie et Illusion: Sur les protagonistes de *Sarrasine*', *French Forum*, 21:3 (September 1996), 301–18 (p. 308).

<sup>270</sup> Barthes, however, is certain of the fact. He claims: 'ce qu'il faut dissimuler, c'est qu'il n'a rien' (*S/Z*, p. 148), when commenting on: '[s]a poitrine, dont une dentelle dissimulait les trésors par un luxe de coquetterie' (*Sarrasine*, 65).

<sup>271</sup> Effeminacy has not been developed here in the case of the male side of Camille, but it is present in *Fragoletta*. While highlighting the manliness of Philippe's traits and personality (II, 30), the novel shows not only that Philippe has a white and effeminate hand and obviously looks identical to his 'sister', but also that he displays feminine

outside of the categories of maleness or femaleness contributes to the ambiguous position of the writers when judging these characters as monstrous.

### **Hermaphroditic Monstrosity and Exclusion**

The inherent ambivalence of the hermaphrodite raises the implicit question: is the hermaphrodite a superior being, who has overcome the difference of sex, or is s/he a monster? Whilst the perfection of the hermaphrodite will be studied later, this section examines how these narratives adopt an ambiguous position towards the hermaphrodite, presenting him/her as a physical monster and discrediting him/her on moral grounds. The ideal beauty of the hermaphrodite contradicts the Christian tradition. S/he seems not to belong to the Creation because s/he does not stem from Adam and Eve, the original man and woman. The rejection does not originate outside the hermaphrodite, since the protagonists often admire the hermaphroditic character (because they are not aware of his/her hermaphroditic identity). It is the hermaphrodite him/herself, especially in *Fragoletta*, who voices the conception of his/her own ontological situation. These moments of hermaphroditic speeches are all the more significant as the hermaphrodites occupy a relatively secondary position in the narratives and are usually mediated through an external narrator or another character. These discourses are fashioned by the tragic dimension of those who cannot identify with the sexual and gender dichotomy. The exceptional nature of the hermaphrodite as a bi-sexual individual contributes to posit him/her as a genuine product of the Romantic *mal du siècle*.<sup>272</sup>

The theme of curse is omnipresent in *Fragoletta*.<sup>273</sup> It is expressed by Camille, mostly in his/her identity as Philippe, who is perceived as more wicked than his female counterpart. The sense of a curse is first experienced as a feeling of being different and of not belonging to Creation. Camille tells d'Hauteville before fighting: 'Qu'y a-t-il de commun entre moi et les créatures humaines? Je ne suis pas de leur espèce' (II, 226–27; see also 225). Camille defines him/herself as an 'erreur, crime ou rebut de [la] nature' (II, 126), because his/her existence defies understanding (II, 194). Latouche's fictional hermaphrodite is accurate in this respect, as discourses of being cursed, of difference and isolation also appear in the writings of historical hermaphrodites, such as Herculine Barbin. In his/her 'Souvenirs' published by Foucault, the hermaphrodite asserts his/her cursed and lonely nature from the outset: 'J'ai beaucoup souffert,

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behaviour in the company of Eugénie, who notices his skills in embroidery and hair-plaiting as well as his ability to talk to her as if he were one of her girlfriends (II, 45–46).

<sup>272</sup> For more on the connection between hermaphroditism and *mal du siècle*, see Busst, pp. 39–41.

<sup>273</sup> Crouzet, 'À propos de *Fragoletta*', p. 36; Ramacciotti, p. 195; Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, p. 97.

et j'ai souffert seul! seul! abandonné de tous! Ma place n'était pas marquée dans ce monde qui me fuyait, qui m'avait maudit'.<sup>274</sup> Whether Barbin, an avid reader, actually read *Fragoletta* and identified with the character is not known, although s/he did adopt the same gender-neutral first name, *Camille*. Similar experiences of isolation are also to be found in twentieth-century accounts of hermaphrodites that are certainly not influenced by *Fragoletta*.<sup>275</sup> This suggests that isolation and the feeling of being cursed are intrinsic to the narrative framing of the hermaphrodite.

For Camille and Barbin, the identification of their sexual difference leads to feelings of loneliness, rejection and even being cursed, the most primitive form of excommunication and exclusion.<sup>276</sup> Camille's love for Eugénie is the only means available for reversing the sentiment of exclusion (II, 125). Yet, the hermaphrodite's singularity makes him/her unsuitable for amorous relationships. The hermaphrodite's difference means that s/he is unable to find his/her opposite in the logic of the separation of the sexes, as Barbin observes when s/he complains: 'Jamais une vierge ne t'accordera les droits sacrés d'un époux'.<sup>277</sup> In Camille's speech, God is held responsible, not for making an error when creating him/her, but for giving him/her an existence that differs from the existence of other creatures: 'Dieu lui-même est injuste aussi, car l'existence qu'il m'a donnée porterait malheur à qui placerait en moi une espérance d'attachement' (I, 112). The curse is therefore extended to anyone who dares to love him/her by condemning them to an impossible love. While the hermaphrodite symbolises the union of two bodies in one and thus illustrates the principle of androgynous completion, his/her bodily difference, perceived as a form of incompleteness, prevents him/her from concretely realising this fusion with another being. The burden of contradictory fates causes the hermaphrodite to view God as an unfair and whimsical being (II, 125) that enjoys torturing His creatures in transgressing His own laws.

Camille's impiety is an exception in hermaphrodites' discourses. Despite feeling that s/he is at the mercy of destiny, Barbin for example is resigned to submitting him/herself to God's will.<sup>278</sup> Conversely, Camille's ungodliness is not caused by anger, but by misery, for s/he

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<sup>274</sup> Barbin, p. 9. See also: 'Et maintenant seul!... seul!... pour toujours! Abandonné, proscrit au milieu de mes frères! Eh! que dis-je! Ai-je le droit de donner ce nom à ceux qui m'environnent? [...] Va, maudit, poursuis ta tâche! Le monde que tu invoques n'était pas fait pour toi. Tu n'étais pas fait pour lui' (p. 111).

<sup>275</sup> The twentieth-century intersexed activist Cheryl Chase similarly uses a vocabulary of monstrosity and solitude when recalling the discovery of her medical records: 'Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism', in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 300–14 (p. 304).

<sup>276</sup> Elisabeth Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1986), p. 2.

<sup>277</sup> Barbin, p. 105.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

considers that his/her place is in Hell owing to the curse of which s/he is a victim. S/he appears as a character who made a pact with the devil: 'Oubliez une misérable créature: j'étais un de ces réprouvés à qui le temps était vendu, le terme du pacte approche, il faut regagner l'enfer' (II, 124). The individual with whom the hermaphrodite made the pact is unknown because Camille's obsession with Hell highlights a contradiction in his/her reasoning. On the one hand, s/he considers that s/he is condemned to Hell because s/he is excluded from God's love (228). On the other hand, s/he judges his/her life to be a burden and a torment, and, consequently, wants to die, suggesting that s/he believes in redemption and Heaven (229–30). His/her Inferno is on earth and is linked with the original sin of knowledge: 'connaître est déjà un enfer, et pour m'affranchir de celui-là, je commence à dépouiller l'âme humaine' (194). The knowledge to which Camille refers is that of the union of the sexes. As a hermaphrodite, Camille possesses this knowledge 'naturally'; for others, however, it is usually gained through sexual intercourse, as is the case with Madeleine.

The cause of Camille's malediction is not explained. The burden of the 'sins' of parents is supposed to be transmitted to their children from a Christian perspective, and also from a scientific one (according to the principles of heredity). Likewise, Camille might be the offspring of an adulterous relationship and bear the physical mark of the union of his/her parents. The novel, nevertheless, contradicts this theory because Camille is not the offspring of the sinful monk Savérelli, even though this monk was in love with his/her mother and was deceived into believing that he had intercourse with her.<sup>279</sup> As Camille's father is Adriani, it means that the hermaphrodite's curse is contingent. Camille is thus akin to Cain, Abel's brother and murderer in Genesis, not only because both of them bear a mark on their bodies (a mark of God's protection in the case of Cain and a fruit-shaped spot on the right arm of Camille, which explains the nickname *Fragoletta*; I, 75), but because they both mistrust God's will. The hermaphrodite shares with Lord Byron's Cain (1821) the obsession of knowledge, although the object of this knowledge is different and expressed in reversed terms. Whereas Cain is obsessed with death, or rather with his current ignorance of death and with his ineluctable knowledge of death as a mortal being, Camille is haunted by his/her current knowledge of the union of the sexes and by her ignorance of the union of the sexes with other individuals as a hermaphrodite.<sup>280</sup> Above all, both of them are excluded by God without motivated grounds. In *The Curse of Cain*, Regina

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<sup>279</sup> The mother of the hermaphrodite remains faithful to her husband by sending a maidservant in her stead.

<sup>280</sup> George Gordon Byron, *Cain*, in *Lord Byron's Cain: Twelve Essays and a Text with Variants and Annotations*, ed. by Truman Guy Steffan (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1968), pp. 153–258 (for instance, Act I, vv. 268–299, pp. 174–75; vv. 451–460, pp. 184–85).

Schwartz argues that God is responsible for the first biblical murder by favouring Abel over Cain and, consequently, is as criminal as Cain: ‘What kind of God is this who chooses one sacrifice [Abel’s] over the other [Cain’s]? [...] who excludes some and prefers others, who casts some out[?]’<sup>281</sup> Likewise, Camille is cast out, unable to understand the reasons for his/her exclusion, and is angry about his/her condition. His/her case, like that of Cain in Schwartz’s interpretation, highlights God’s unfairness because He has mischievously modified His own creation to include one being who is unable to bond with other humans. Schwartz’s reading of Cain undermines the representation of the biblical character as a criminal, and rather posits him as a victim, thus supporting the Romantic rehabilitation of this character.<sup>282</sup> Similarly, Latouche’s novel highlights the fact that, although Camille is a potential criminal, due to his/her (and especially his) wicked nature, s/he is also a victim of God’s whim and abandonment.

Like Camille, Zambinella is a hermaphroditic character who struggles with his creator. Zambinella is not simply a creature of God, as he has been fashioned by three other creators: an anonymous barber who operated on the castrato in his boyhood, his mentor Prince Chigi and Sarrasine. The singer’s beautiful voice and looks have been brought about by the human intervention of severing the ducts to his testes, causing the absence of production of androgens and the overproduction of female hormones. Sarrasine’s words referring to the beauty of the *prima donna* — ‘C’était plus qu’une femme, c’était un chef-d’œuvre!’ (*Sarrasine*, 58) — indicate his perfection and artificiality, while anticipating Chigi’s revelations and echoing the observations about the old man, who is called an ‘homme artificiel’ in the frame story (40). The word *création*, which was previously used in the text to refer to Classical art (57), is therefore also appropriate for describing the protagonist (58). Zambinella is also perceived as a creature, a more pejorative term that denies the humanity to the referent.<sup>283</sup> Zambinella tempers the fervour of Sarrasine by calling himself ‘une créature maudite’ (69), expressing the same feeling of being cursed as Camille. Like the hermaphrodite of *Fragoletta*, Zambinella feels excluded from the world and, consequently, turns his feelings of seclusion into hatred: ‘J’abhorre les hommes encore plus peut-être que je ne hais les femmes’ (69). Zambinella’s misanthropy exceeds his misogyny, and his hatred for men mirrors the hermaphrodite’s anger against God since they are responsible for his exclusion. God, nevertheless, is not spared because He

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<sup>281</sup> Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>282</sup> Vautrin is also compared with Cain. See chapter 3, pp. 143–44.

<sup>283</sup> ‘Élément de la création non doté du statut de “personne”’ is one of the definitions of *créature*: *Le Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé* <<http://atilf.atilf.fr/dendien/scripts/tlfiv5/advanced.exe?8;s=3827004810>> [accessed 15 August 2012].



provided him with his feminine beauty: ‘Fatale beauté!’, the castrato whispers while looking at the sky, and thus at Heaven, with horror (70).

Not only does the word *créature* signify inferiority, it is also a common euphemism to designate the condition of castrati. Chigi unveils the enigma of Zambinella by saying: ‘ne savez-vous pas par quelles créatures les rôles de femme sont remplis dans les États du pape?’ (73), whilst the narrator finishes his story by saying: ‘On n’y [en Italie] fait plus de ces malheureuses créatures’ (78). Unlike a *chef-d’œuvre*, the term *créature* does not connote the ideal beauty and voice of the castrato, but refers to the physical human being and his surgical operation. Euphemism is also present in *Fragoletta* and is used to allude to the process of castration, when it appears on a sign: ‘Qui si castrano i puti miravigliosamente’ (literally: ‘Boys are castrated wonderfully here’), which Latouche freely translates: ‘Ici on *perfectionne* les petits garçons’ (II, 178; original emphasis). The perfection embodied by castrati is denied by the narrator, who instead mocks and criticises a tradition that has been little accepted in France.<sup>284</sup> The perfection of castrati is also questioned by Béatrix, when admiring the portrait of Adonis inspired by Zambinella: ‘Un être si parfait existe-t-il?’ (*Sarrasine*, 49). The novella suggests that beauty is possible only through artificiality and performance.

The castrato’s physical perfection is mainly challenged by the revelation of his ‘real’ sex, which leads to Sarrasine’s violent acts and an offensive speech in which the castrato is called a monster (76). Sarrasine also threatens the singer by claiming: ‘Tu n’es rien. Homme ou femme, je te tuerais! mais...’ (75). Although the use of the conditional and the conjunction *mais* diminish the impact of the threat, this assertion nevertheless reflects the anger arising from Sarrasine’s inability to fathom Zambinella’s sexual identity. Sarrasine denies it, first openly, then by stating an alternative construction to which Zambinella does not belong because it follows the common belief in the separation of the sexes. Sarrasine struggles to conceive of an individual without a determinate sex (and a gender suitable to that sex). His partial threat is justified by his own fear of sexual and gender indeterminacy, as well as of sterility, expressed as follows: ‘toi qui ne peux donner la vie à rien, tu m’as dépeuplé la terre de toutes ses femmes’ (76). Sarrasine’s fear of sterility, associated with the castrato’s sexual indeterminacy, echoes the fears of Virey and other scientists relating to the depopulation and degeneration of French society. Just as the scientists dread the feminisation of French males, so the sculptor perceives himself as lacking virility and holds Zambinella’s sterility (caused by his emasculation) responsible for his own sexual ambiguity. As Barthes points out: ‘Sarrasine contemple en

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<sup>284</sup> Barbier, pp. 186–201; Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV*, pp. 137–38 and pp. 146–48.

Zambinella sa propre castration'.<sup>285</sup> However, whilst the castrato's sterility mirrors the most extreme cases of hermaphroditism, it does not deprive him of descendants. Certain aspects of his patrimony have been transmitted to his family. His double nature has been divided between his great-nephew and his great-niece.<sup>286</sup> His femininity, however, is emphasised, as his great-nephew, who resembles Antinous (38), is effeminate (and potentially homosexual). More significantly, Zambinella has given his love of music and his beautiful voice to his great-niece Marianina, who is not only endowed with a flawless technique, but also with passion. The infertility of hermaphrodites is thus overcome by the ability to transmit an aesthetic heritage. Art, as will be revealed, becomes the sanctuary of hermaphroditic characters by counterbalancing their monstrosity.

Valeria Ramacciotti has established a connection between Camille, Zambinella and Madeleine as victims of exclusion.<sup>287</sup> This association is nevertheless exaggerated in the case of the latter. *Mademoiselle de Maupin* differs from *Fragoletta* because the protagonist in pain is not Madeleine, the hermaphroditic character, but d'Albert, the man who falls in love with such a character. The insecure young man shares the same sentiments of difference, loneliness and incompleteness, although his exclusion is not presented as a divine curse.<sup>288</sup> His quest for beauty differentiates him from other men and prevents him from having relations with them: 'les autres hommes ne sont guère pour moi que des fantômes, et je ne sens pas leur existence' (*Maupin*, 124). His thoughts, which are full of boredom and detachment, are rightly judged by Monneyron to be typical of Romantic heroes suffering from *le mal du siècle*.<sup>289</sup> On the contrary, Madeleine suffers neither from loneliness nor from exclusion. Her quest for knowledge about the sexual difference between men and women is not experienced as a burden. Unlike Camille and Zambinella, her destiny is not marked by decay and brutal death. She is able to assume her identity and enter the world instead of running away from it, unlike d'Albert who locks himself in a castle to brood over questions of beauty and art whilst shunning the rest of the world.<sup>290</sup> Albert Smith also understands Madeleine's departure as her failure to find durable happiness with d'Albert.<sup>291</sup> However, this interpretation misreads the purpose of her quest, as she seeks

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<sup>285</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 113. See also pp. 42–43, p. 171, p. 181, pp. 204–08 and pp. 216–18. On castration in *Sarrasine*, see also Jean Reboul, 'Sarrasine ou la castration personnifiée', *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, 7 (1967), 91–96.

<sup>286</sup> Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, p. 135.

<sup>287</sup> Ramacciotti, p. 189.

<sup>288</sup> D'Albert's incompleteness has been analysed by Weil (pp. 353–54).

<sup>289</sup> Monneyron, p. 100.

<sup>290</sup> Ramacciotti's reading of the end of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* as illustrating the 'annullamento' (that is, annihilation) of the hermaphrodite (p. 198) appears to be dubious.

<sup>291</sup> Albert B. Smith, 'Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*: The Quest for Happiness', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 32 (1971), 168–74 (p. 172). See also Arne Schnack, 'Surface et profondeur dans *Mademoiselle de Maupin*', *Orbis Litterarum*, 36 (1981), 28–36 (p. 31).

knowledge rather than happiness, and therefore leaves the castle because she has learned all that she could with d'Albert and Rosette, and needs to go elsewhere to put her knowledge into practice.

As 'products' of *le mal du siècle*, hermaphrodites feel as though they do not belong to humanity due to the bi-sexuality that has been fashioned by their creators, either God or men. Their physical monstrosity causes isolation, which leads to sentiments of incompleteness and even hatred against those who have rejected them. Their monstrosity is also judged to be immoral as they are suspected of homosexuality due to their 'natural' bi-sexuality.

### **Hermaphroditism and Homosexuality**

The previous chapter has shown that homosexuality was judged to be a physical and psychological monstrosity in the nineteenth-century medical field. It has also demonstrated that the connection between same-sex relations and hermaphroditism was concurrently highlighted and denied in scientific writings because the hermaphrodite was compelled to choose a partner belonging to the opposite sex of his/her own predominant sex to meet the norm of heterosexuality.<sup>292</sup> The correlation between homosexuality, monstrosity and gender ambiguity is not, however, just the prerogative of medical texts. It would appear that homosexuality and hermaphroditism have also been connected in society generally in order to render these 'deviant' behaviours or characteristics more intelligible. As Garber observes with regard to cross-dressing, 'if there is a difference (between gay and straight), we want to be able to *see* it, and if we see a difference (a man in women's clothes), we want to be able to *interpret* it'.<sup>293</sup> Similarly, when nineteenth-century novels suggest, or even depict, homoerotic relations, they may connect homosexuality to hermaphroditism in a relation that is inversely proportional to the degree of hermaphroditism of the protagonists.

Whilst the consideration of homosexuality in *Fragoletta* is limited, it constitutes the cornerstone of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. Camille's sexuality in *Fragoletta* appears to be the most intelligible. As a bi-sexual individual, s/he displays feelings for members of both sexes, depending on the sexual identity that s/he assumes. As a girl, Fragoletta unintentionally provokes the love of d'Hauteville; as a man, Philippe deliberately seduces Eugénie. The passivity of the female side of the hermaphrodite can be interpreted in one or two ways. Either it corresponds to the feminine, 'natural' and highly recommended inclination to modesty

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<sup>292</sup> See chapter 1, pp. 62–63.

<sup>293</sup> Garber, p. 130; original emphasis. See also Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV*, p. 5.

concerning relations with men, which is coupled with the hermaphrodite's youth and ignorance in the domain of love; or it must be regarded as scorn for all men. If one follows Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's claim about a bi-sexual hermaphrodite's impossible inclination to both sexes and the necessity of choosing an appropriate partner for his/her predominant sex (II, 171), this means that Camille's predominant sex must be male, as s/he chooses a female partner. This conclusion, however, challenges the observation of the doctor who perceives Camille's dead body as female, once again creating sexual confusion and preventing the reader from restricting the interpretation of Camille to one sex only. It is also dubious that Camille should be interpreted as a lesbian character. The construction of the novel separates the feminine side from the masculine side of the hermaphrodite. The feminine side portrayed in the first part of *Fragoletta* is positively connoted, determined by innocence and purity. In contrast, the explicit Sapphic relationship between the Messalina-like queen Caroline and her girlfriend Emma Hamilton (who happens to be the mistress of Napoleon's enemy, Admiral Nelson) is depicted as immoral, monstrous and stereotypical. These women are judged vicious, manipulative and careless, as they lasciviously talk about politics and the future of the Neapolitan people whilst having a bath together (I, 177–86). As for his/her body, the hermaphrodite's sexuality is depicted in an *either/or* perspective that avoids making claims that contradict compulsory heterosexuality.

In *Sarrasine*, the connection between homosexuality and gender indeterminacy is more clearly affirmed. Sarrasine's strong reaction to the revelation of Zambinella's 'real' sex (he abducts and threatens to kill the castrato) is due to the fact that the singer's feminine performance calls the sculptor's masculinity into question. Throughout the embedded story, the sculptor Sarrasine is presented by the narrator as hyper-masculine; he exhibits a violent virility in which the traditional characteristics of male behaviour are turned into flaws.<sup>294</sup> His restlessness (*Sarrasine*, 53), his uncommon energy (53, 55), his absence of *coquetterie* (56), his rejection of authority, his taste for fighting (53–54), his impiety (54, 68) and even his ugliness (56) appear to be evidence of his manliness.

His manhood, however, is questioned by his name, which has feminine and oriental connotations. The suffix *-ine* is a common one for French female first names and *sarrasin* designates a 'musulman d'Orient, d'Afrique ou d'Espagne, au Moyen Âge'.<sup>295</sup> Similarly, his

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<sup>294</sup> On hyper-masculinity, see chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>295</sup> 'Sarrasin, ine' in *Le Nouveau Petit Robert*, p. 2364. The femininity of *Sarrasine* has also been noted by Barthes (*S/Z*, p. 24), Citron (p. 90) and Reboul (p. 93). Citron also underlines the orientalism of *Sarrasine* in 'Le rêve asiatique de Balzac', *L'Année balzacienne*, 1<sup>st</sup> ser. (1968), 303–36 (pp. 310–11). For his part, Jean Seznec suggests

virility has not been proved by female conquests, since he had only one mistress, the dancer Clotilde, and only for a brief period, which may explain his attraction for the very feminine Zambinella and his rejection of any masculine woman, ‘une femme forte, une Sapho, courageuse, pleine d’énergie, de passion’ (72). Because of his femininity, Zambinella enables Sarrasine to assert his own virility, as Barbara Johnson accurately argues.<sup>296</sup> Like those men whose ‘style of life [...] protest[s] its masculinity just a little too much not to convey an underlying insecurity’, Sarrasine’s virility is faltering.<sup>297</sup> As a result, he dreads what might be considered to be potential threats to his virility and is compelled to adopt overcompensatory behaviour to conceal a fear of his own effeminacy. This fear is the ultimate form of homophobia: the ‘secret fear of one’s own homosexual wishes’.<sup>298</sup> Sarrasine’s erroneous attraction to another man suggests ‘que c’est sa propre identité qui n’est pas sûre et que son erreur n’en est peut-être pas une’.<sup>299</sup> He cannot accept to be regarded as non-virile and homosexual by Zambinella’s friends in spite of his active performance of a masculine identity. More importantly, he cannot admit that they might be right, that the deception almost occurred of his own volition, because he repeatedly rejected the clues of Zambinella’s maleness: the singer offered to be ‘un ami dévoué’ (69), and even suggested ‘Si je n’étais pas une femme?’ (70). The fact that he cannot help but identify himself with the castrato — a resemblance that he judges appalling (‘Tu m’as ravalé jusqu’à toi’; 76) — results in attempts to eliminate Zambinella.<sup>300</sup> Yet, Zambinella’s sexuality has not been clearly defined by the narrator. Certainly, as with many young castrati in Rome, he is the protégé of an ecclesiastic man, the jealous Cardinal Cicognara, with whom he may have had sexual relationships.<sup>301</sup> Although no conclusion can be made about the meaning of their relationship, Sarrasine nevertheless interprets the sartorial difference that he perceives (Zambinella’s transvestism) as an unacceptable sexual difference.

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that Balzac found this name in Diderot’s *Salon de 1767* which mentioned a sculptor who lived in the seventeenth century and was named Jacques Sarrasin: ‘Diderot et Sarrasine’, *Diderot Studies*, 4 (1963), 237–45 (pp. 239–40).

<sup>296</sup> Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 9–10.

<sup>297</sup> Naomi Segal makes this observation about Ernest Hemingway: *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (London: Virago Press, 1990), p. 112.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158. See also Katherine Kolb, ‘The Tenor of Sarrasine’, *PMLA*, 120:5 (October 2005), 1560–75 (p. 1570).

<sup>299</sup> Éric Bordas, ‘Sarrasine de Balzac: Une Poétique du Contresens’, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 31:1-2 (Fall–Winter 2002–03), 41–52 (p. 41).

<sup>300</sup> The similarities between the sculptor and the singer (sensitivity, ignorance, fear of the realities of life and even attires) have been underlined by Kolb (pp. 1570–71).

<sup>301</sup> Barbier, p. 153.

Homosexuality is as monstrous and unbearable to d'Albert in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* as it is to Sarrasine. Confronted with his growing attraction to Théodore, d'Albert first adopts a strategy of denial in his letters to Silvio. Certainly, he confesses his attraction to another man, but attempts to reject his feelings by considering them to be 'impossible' (*Maupin*, 213, 217) and by highlighting his inner confusion (220). Contrary to Pierre Albouy's claim that d'Albert never really had doubts about the sex of Théodore, it is unlikely that he considered Théodore to be a woman before the production of *As You Like It*.<sup>302</sup> Admittedly, d'Albert asserts: 'Il faut que Théodore soit une femme déguisée; la chose est impossible autrement' (223), but his insistence on the necessity of Théodore's femaleness shows that he is trying to convince himself, not Silvio.

The confession itself is made reluctantly, as the ellipses indicate: 'Enfin, à travers tous les voiles dont elle s'enveloppait, j'ai découvert l'affreuse vérité... Silvio, j'aime... Oh! non, je ne pourrai jamais te le dire... j'aime un homme!' (220). The lexical fields of shame, guilt and monstrosity are used to designate d'Albert's passion. This passion is 'insensée, coupable et odieuse' and 'une honte dont la rougeur ne s'éteindra jamais sur mon front' (220). The object of this guilty passion is regarded as demonic. Théodore's beautiful hand, for example, is described as the claw of Satan (217), whilst d'Albert compares himself to the snake of Eden (218). Once he realises that Théodore is a woman, he can call his supposed same-sex love monstrous because he knows that his passion no longer challenges morals: 'Je sentis s'évanouir l'horreur que j'avais de moi-même, et je fus délivré de l'ennui de me regarder comme un monstre' (294). Monstrosity and shame are connected in the following excerpt:

Aimer comme j'aimais d'un amour monstrueux, invouable, et que pourtant l'on ne peut déraciner de son cœur; [...] que sont les passions ordinaires à côté de celle-là, une passion honteuse d'elle-même, sans espérance, et dont le succès improbable serait un crime et vous ferait mourir de honte? (296)

Here, the attraction for Théodore is not depicted as a platonic inclination. D'Albert contemplates the possibility of sexual intercourse with Théodore in terms that immediately condemn any same-sex relationship through the association between the negatively connoted adjective 'monstrueux' and the concepts of shame and crime.<sup>303</sup>

Later, the poet refers to his youth, traditionally a time of innocence:

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<sup>302</sup> Albouy, p. 602. On the contrary, Monneyron argues that d'Albert never calls Théodore's masculine identity into question (p. 108).

<sup>303</sup> Sodomy is, indeed, a crime punished by death at the time where d'Albert is supposed to write.

Cette monstruosité remplaçait pour moi les fraîches et pudiques illusions du bel âge; mes rêves de tendresse si doucement caressés, le soir, à la lisière des bois, par les petits sentiers rougissants, ou le long des blanches terrasses de marbre, près de la pièce d'eau du parc, devaient donc se métamorphoser en ce sphinx perfide, au sourire douteux, à la voix ambiguë et devant lequel je me tenais debout sans oser entreprendre d'expliquer l'énigme! (296–97)

The supposed innocence of his youth is highlighted by the reference to bucolic landscapes and by words connoting purity. However, this fantasised 'bel âge' and his dreams of tenderness are illusions. The lexical field of purity emphasises the perfidiousness of his present desire, which is designated through the vocabulary of deception. In the phrases 'cette monstruosité' and 'ce sphinx perfide', both demonstrative adjectives have no direct, grammatical referent in the text. It must therefore be sought outside the text. Whilst Jean-Marie Roulin considers that they can refer to Madeleine, it is more appropriate to correlate them, not to a person, but to a feeling; that is, homoeroticism.<sup>304</sup> This grammatical rupture underlines the difficulty of expressing such a horrifying love in a heteronormative context.

By using typical Christian references, such as Satan and the snake in the Garden of Eden (an obvious phallic symbol, like the grass snake which scares Zambinella), in opposition to purity and innocence, d'Albert depicts himself and his desires as immoral, diabolical and anti-Christian. The potential of homosexuality as a means of anti-bourgeois contestation is not, however, exploited by d'Albert. On the contrary, his need to confess his secret makes him a genuine product of Foucault's *scientia sexualis* civilisation. This practice of sexual discourse stems from the Catholic confession, especially the confession of the flesh.<sup>305</sup> Foucault has shown the progressive expansion of this practice, which became exercised in the frameworks of family, school, justice and medicine.<sup>306</sup> The confession does not only relate to sexual acts, but also to obsessions, images and desires. Likewise, the main theme of d'Albert's confession is not his actions (as his love remains platonic until he discovers Théodore's 'real' sex), but rather his thoughts and anxiety regarding his homoerotic desires. Furthermore, Foucault has suggested that a confession is a power relationship in which the one who holds the power is the one who listens to the confession because he or she can judge, punish and forgive.<sup>307</sup> The interlocutor in this case is the silent Silvio, who embodies a bourgeois society whose gaze is ever-present and that may be keen on condemning d'Albert's desires. Consequently, the young

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<sup>304</sup> Roulin, pp. 31–32.

<sup>305</sup> Foucault, *La volonté de savoir*, pp. 27–30.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78–80.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83. For more on the fear of not being forgiven, see Martine Reid, 'La confession selon Musset', *Littérature*, 67 (1987), 53–72 (p. 56).

man must be able to convince his audience (Silvio and the bourgeois readers) that his feelings are innocent in making them culturally acceptable. D'Albert manages to do so by substituting the topic of monstrosity for that of beauty in turning his same-sex love quest into an aesthetic quest.

The novel first appears to follow the Romantic aesthetic principle that dominates the nineteenth century (even though the plot is supposed to occur in the seventeenth century) according to which beauty is essentially a female attribute, whereas male beauty is considered to be inexistent or to raise suspicion regarding a man's sexuality. As Lawrence Schehr argues, there is a risk that a beautiful man would be suspected of effeminacy, marginality and foppery in the Romantic period.<sup>308</sup> This belief in beauty as a female attribute is seemingly shared by Madeleine and d'Albert. Madeleine, for instance, claims: 'l'homme ne me tente pas beaucoup; car il n'a pas la beauté comme la femme' (383), whilst d'Albert conceives of Théodore as the embodiment of feminine beauty, thoroughly admired and frequently described with superlative phrases, despite 'his' apparent male sex.<sup>309</sup> The young man's sexual ambiguity is noted straight away in terms that are reminiscent of Madame de Rochefide's observation of the portrait of Adonis in *Sarrasine*. Whilst d'Albert claims that '[I]e seul défaut qu'il [Théodore] ait, c'est d'être trop beau et d'avoir des traits trop délicats pour un homme' (178), Béatrix criticises Adonis by saying: 'Il est trop beau pour un homme' (*Sarrasine*, 49). Théodore and Adonis's male (but feminine) beauty appears disconcerting in the Romantic context.

D'Albert later adopts another perspective to explain Théodore's beauty. He explicitly states that male (but effeminate) beauty belongs to another time; only ancient men, heroes and gods were able to reach such a degree of beauty (*Maupin*, 237, 354). He now refers to the Neoclassical aesthetics that were defined at the end of the eighteenth century under the influence of the art historian Winckelmann. Thanks to the study of ancient Greek statues and their Roman copies, the Neoclassical model established by Winckelmann, promoted effeminate beauty, because it was characterised by traits, such as suavety, softness, curvaceousness and passivity, which were deemed to be feminine in the nineteenth century; however, these traits were embodied by, and appreciated in, men.<sup>310</sup> The male beauty of a sensual and passive epebe in Neoclassical art is illustrated by the fictitious painting of Adonis and Girodet's *Le Sommeil d'Endymion* (1791), which is mentioned in *Sarrasine* as inspired by Zambinella (*Sarrasine*,

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<sup>308</sup> Schehr, p. 78.

<sup>309</sup> Examples of superlative phrases: 'ce qui me [d'Albert] charme le plus'; 'Il est impossible d'avoir meilleure grâce'; 'Il est muni d'une paire d'yeux les plus beaux et les plus noirs du monde'; 'Il est vraiment parfait' (178).

<sup>310</sup> The Neoclassical aesthetics promoting male beauty and their opposition with Romantic aesthetics are developed in detail in chapter 3, pp. 124–26.



77).<sup>311</sup> With his slimness, smoothness, silvery voice, long curly hair, as well as his girl-like hands and feet, Théodore belongs to this category of beautiful and sexually ambivalent young men and therefore to Neoclassical aesthetics.<sup>312</sup> The focus on Théodore's walk — 'il a quelque chose de moelleux et d'onduleux dans la démarche [...] qui est on ne peut plus agréable' (178) — reveals once again the importance of the gait as a gendered characteristic in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the constant description of his body as undulating illustrates the fact that Gautier was familiar with Winckelmann's writings.<sup>313</sup> It corresponds to what Mechthild Fend calls, referring to the art historian's aesthetics, *ligne ondoyante*, a sensual and almost aquatic fluidity of the contours that is supposed to define feminine and androgynous bodies in Classical art.<sup>314</sup> For example, regarding the sexually ambiguous god Bacchus, Winckelmann observed: 'The forms of his limbs are soft and flowing, as though inflated by a gentle breath'.<sup>315</sup> By claiming an objective and deserved admiration for Théodore's beauty, d'Albert posits himself, not as a lover, but as an aesthete. His strategy is to counterbalance his 'monstrous' feelings for a man by constantly referring to the Classical canon of beautiful and sexually ambivalent men in order to justify his attraction.

D'Albert's approach is not innovative. Many homosexuals of the nineteenth century attempted to legitimise their lifestyle by establishing a continuity between the Greeks' morals and their own, notably by referring to famous historical or mythological, alleged or recognised, homosexuals (for example, Achilles, Patroclus, Plato and Michelangelo).<sup>316</sup> Likewise, d'Albert justifies this passion for another man by linking it to Western cultural models, here Latin literature. Citing the Roman poets Catullus, Tibullus, Martial and Virgil, as well as their 'sérail monstrueux' (225–26) not only allows him to claim his passion for beauty and refinement, but, above all, reminds his reader of the pederastic customs of this admired civilisation. This attests, therefore, to the unwillingness of nineteenth-century French society to acknowledge this type of love, as male names of the poets' lovers were banned from textbooks by being feminised

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<sup>311</sup> For more on the function of the painting of *Endymion/Adonis* in *Sarrasine*, see Mechthild Fend, *Les limites de la masculinité: L'androgynie dans l'art et la théorie de l'art en France, 1750–1830*, trans. by Jean Torrent (Paris: La Découverte, 2011), pp. 211–26.

<sup>312</sup> Carol Rifelj has analysed the role of hair as a gendered characteristic and a seducing factor in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*: 'Nobody's Perfect: Hair and Sexual Identity in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*', *Dalhousie French Studies*, 69 (Winter 2004), 33–41.

<sup>313</sup> Raymond Giraud, 'Winckelmann's Part in Gautier's Perception of Classical Beauty', *Yale French Studies*, 38 (1967), 172–82.

<sup>314</sup> Fend, pp. 50–62. See also Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 170. For Roulin, undulations are an important feminine characteristic in the novel (p. 38). The expression 'lignes ondoyantes' appeared in Menville de Ponsan (I, 21).

<sup>315</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Ancient Art: Among the Greeks*, trans. by Giles Henry Lodge (London: Chapman, 1850), p. 93. On flowing beauty, see also p. 44 and pp. 47–49.

<sup>316</sup> Mosse, p. 88; Robb, p. 144.

(225). D'Albert himself is not freed from censorship, as the use of 'monstrueux' shows that he shares this repugnance for homosexuality.

The most efficient strategy to make his passion for a man more acceptable is by recalling the figure of Hermaphroditus, a process that can be described as the hermaphroditisation of the object of desire, here Théodore.<sup>317</sup> Hermaphroditus is not known as a homosexual god, but, because of his 'natural' bi-sexuality, he embodies the ideal of the sexually ambivalent ephebe celebrated by Greco-Roman and Neoclassical arts. The reference is not always directly connected to Madeleine, as the word *Hermaphrodite* appears for the first time before the existence of Théodore is even revealed. D'Albert explains his attempts to merge his body and that of Rosette in a sexual embrace and compares himself to 'l'antique Salmacis, l'amoureuse du jeune Hermaphrodite' (128). Interestingly, the young man compares himself, not with the young male god, but with his female counterpart, the naiad Salmacis, thus assuming the feminine characteristics that have been associated with him, notably by his rivals.<sup>318</sup> D'Albert, however, usually establishes a strong textual correlation between Hermaphroditus and Théodore. In the part of his confession to Silvio where he intends to justify his love for an effeminate man, he highlights the popularity of the mythological monster: 'l'hermaphrodite est [...] une des chimères les plus ardemment caressées de l'antiquité idolâtre' (237). Like the Latin poets and their 'monstrous' harem, he situates himself, not on the fringe, but as a simple follower of sophisticated Classical culture.

The description of Hermaphroditus is extensive and rich in laudatory vocabulary praising the monster's sensuality and harmony, the latter being an essential quality in the conception of Classical beauty.<sup>319</sup> The monstrosity of Hermaphroditus is a perfection that exceeds the beauty of the individuals according to d'Albert's description:

C'est en effet une des plus suaves créations du génie païen que ce fils d'Hermès et d'Aphrodite. Il ne se peut rien imaginer de plus ravissant au monde que ces deux corps tous deux parfaits, harmonieusement fondus ensemble, que ces deux beautés si égales et si différentes qui n'en forment plus qu'une supérieure à toutes deux, parce qu'elles se tempèrent et se font valoir réciproquement (237)

This description highlights the harmonious, composite and therefore perfect beauty of Hermaphroditus. Gautier's definition of Hermaphroditus's beauty reverses the argument of the

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<sup>317</sup> In contrast, Madeleine does not use aesthetic reasoning to justify her attraction to Rosette, although she refers to women's beauty. Unlike d'Albert, she feels no guilt in loving another woman. Rivers highlights the difference between her speech and that of Suzanne in Diderot's *La Religieuse*, referring to theology and sin (p. 15).

<sup>318</sup> On d'Albert's portrait by his rivals, see chapter 3, p. 136.

<sup>319</sup> Mosse, p. 29.

scientists of his time. Whereas they deemed the sterility of ‘real’ hermaphrodites to be monstrous, the god’s sterility illustrates Gautier’s defence of the uselessness of art and beauty in the Préface. Gautier criticises the journalists who expect literature and arts to be useful; that is, to contribute to the moralisation, wellbeing and progress of humankind (50). Conversely, he suggests that beauty cannot support utilitarian functions: ‘Il n’y a de vraiment beau que ce qui ne peut servir à rien’ (54). Hermaphroditus is therefore the paragon of beauty because he is not ‘médicalement bien conformé, en état de faire des enfants’ (53), to rewrite Gautier’s words. Due both to his/her sensuality and to his/her sterility, or ineffectiveness, Hermaphroditus embodies the ‘érotisation du beau’, the object of Gautier’s quest according to Michel Crouzet.<sup>320</sup> His/her beauty is grounded in the contradictory and yet harmonious combination of male and female beautiful traits belonging to the young man and the nymph:

Le torse est un composé des monstruosités les plus charmantes: sur la poitrine potelée et pleine de l’éphèbe s’arrondit avec une grâce étrange la gorge d’une jeune vierge. Sous les flancs bien enveloppés et d’une mollesse toute féminine, on devine les dentelés et les côtes, comme aux flancs d’un jeune garçon; le ventre est un peu plat pour une femme, un peu rond pour un homme, et toute l’habitude du corps a quelque chose de nuageux et d’indécis qu’il est impossible de rendre, et dont l’attrait est tout particulier. (238)

This portrait of Hermaphroditus recalls, once again, the principle of the undulating line of the contours, the softness and the curviness of female (and androgynous) bodies, according to Winckelmann’s aesthetic principles, and the firmness of male bodies. Although harmonious, such an assembling is conceived as strange and unique. It appears that oxymoron (‘monstruosités les plus charmantes’) is the only figure of speech able to express the complexity of such a creature. This rarity justifies d’Albert’s aesthetic quest. He admits that: ‘j’avais peur, à force de chercher le beau et de m’agiter pour y parvenir, de tomber à la fin dans l’impossible ou dans le monstrueux’ (213). His later rhetoric, nevertheless, implies that this monstrosity, or impossibility, is not the supposed horror of homosexuality, but the perfection of the object of his quest for beauty.

Despite the perception of Théodore as the embodiment of Hermaphroditus’s perfect beauty, d’Albert expresses reservations about Théodore’s masculinity, as his female features are overwhelming: ‘Théodore serait à coup sûr un excellent modèle de ce genre de beauté; cependant je trouve que la portion féminine l’emporte chez lui, et qu’il lui est plus resté de Salmacis qu’à l’Hermaphrodite des Métamorphoses’ (238). This observation must be linked with his comment about Théodore’s excess of beauty (178). Interestingly, the dominance of the

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<sup>320</sup> Michel Crouzet, ‘Mademoiselle de Maupin ou l’Éros romantique’, *Romantisme*, 8 (1974), 2–21 (p. 4).

female side in the Hermaphroditus incarnated by Théodore seems to call the whole association with the young god into question for d'Albert, whereas the feminine characteristics that he highlights were those observed by Winckelmann about hermaphrodites and Greek gods. For instance, Winckelmann noted embodiments of ephebic beauty in Apollo and Bacchus, who combined 'the forms of prolonged youth in the female sex with the masculine forms of a beautiful young man' and were therefore 'plumper, rounder, and softer'.<sup>321</sup> In other words, what was conceived of as evidence of both feminine and male beauty in the Classical canon is considered by d'Albert to be a clue to Théodore's femaleness. Consequently, he interprets Salmacis's side in Théodore as a challenge to his sex when he claims in his letter to 'Rosalind': 'Mais vous êtes une femme, nous ne sommes plus au temps des métamorphoses; — Adonis et Hermaphrodite sont morts, — et ce n'est plus par un homme qu'un pareil degré de beauté pourrait être atteint' (354). A shift is therefore perceptible in his reasoning, indicating that he does not refer to the Neoclassical model of beauty, but to the Romantic model, according to which beauty is exclusively feminine, presenting Théodore (as well as Camille and Zambinella) as aberrations. The reference to the ideal beauty of Hermaphroditus thus becomes useless as d'Albert does not have to justify a heterosexual, and thus conventional, desire for a woman.

In brief, the cases of *Sarrasine* and, above all, d'Albert have shown that a discourse about male homosexuality is fruitless because it is invaded by the sentiments of shame and guilt in a society determined by Christian values where homosexuality is judged to be a crime or, at least, an offence to morals. It must therefore be replaced by an aesthetic discourse based on a Neoclassical model that promotes the beauty of effeminate young men. The discourse about Hermaphroditus in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* has proved to be the only possible way to discuss homoerotic feelings in a morally non-condemnable perspective and has shown its efficiency in turning a monster into an object of praise.

### **Hermaphrodites, Heterotopias and Art**

The beauty of the bodies of hermaphrodites is crucial to the narratives, notably to diminish their alleged physical and moral monstrosities. This importance is expressed through the medium of art, which is omnipresent throughout the novels: sculpture in *Fragoletta* and *Sarrasine*, music and opera in *Sarrasine*, and Shakespearean comedies in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. Art, arguably, constitutes one of these spaces described by Foucault as *hétérotopies*, which are:

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<sup>321</sup> Winckelmann, p. 56.

des lieux réels, des lieux effectifs, des lieux qui ont [été] dessinés dans l'institution même de la société, et qui sont des sortes de contre-emplacements, sortes d'utopies effectivement réalisées dans lesquelles les emplacements réels [...] sont à la fois représentés, contestés et inversés, des sortes de lieux qui sont hors de tous les lieux, bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables.<sup>322</sup>

The utopia of art is embodied in material spaces: the pieces of art and the places of art. The Museum of Naples (which shelters the artistic treasures from the newly discovered cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum), the Roman opera house, the salon of the ambassador where Zambinella sings, Sarrasine's studio, the stage on which d'Albert, Madeleine and Rosette play *As You Like It*, the room in which d'Albert writes his letters to Silvio, even the statues of Hermaphroditus sculpted by Polykles at the Museum of Naples and of la Zambinella fashioned by Sarrasine, might be seen as heterotopias. In these spaces, beauty comes to life; homosexuality is confessed; fusion between the sexes is realised. The theatre and the museum are two examples of heterotopias given by Foucault. A theatre illustrates the capacity of heterotopias to juxtapose several spaces in one, whilst a museum is a space in which time is perpetually accumulated and suspended. These functions appear in the hermaphroditic narratives. Shakespeare's comedy and the personal drama of d'Albert and Madeleine co-exist in the same space, whilst Rosalind and Orlando's story echoes Madeleine and d'Albert's own situation. In the Museum of Naples, the past is conserved and protected; visitors admire ancient masterpieces and discuss ancient traditions.

Heterotopias, nevertheless, exceed these functions in hermaphroditic narratives, as they aim to allow the hermaphrodites to fathom or reveal their true, 'other' nature. Camille understands what s/he is when s/he discovers the statue of Hermaphroditus and can evaluate the difference between his/her own condition and old hermaphrodites, either real or fantasised. It is while rehearsing *As You Like It* that d'Albert comprehends the 'real' sex of the impersonator of Rosalind and the cross-dressed identity that is constitutive of hermaphroditic characters. Similarly, Sarrasine realises that Zambinella is a man when he hears him sing at a private concert in male attire. Heterotopias also have the function of emphasising how the 'real' spaces are illusory and/or disorganised. The heterotopias in *Fragoletta*, *Sarrasine* and *Mademoiselle de Maupin* have a similar function to the Puritan and Jesuitical colonies in America mentioned by Foucault, which appear to be ideal places due to their flawless

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<sup>322</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Des espaces autres' (conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 March 1967), in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, 5 (October 1984) pp. 46–49 <<http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.fr.html>> [accessed 07 October 2012].

organisation of space and activities and, therefore, show by contrast the disorganisation and deception of 'real' spaces. These heterotopias reveal that sexual dichotomy and compulsory heterosexuality are deceiving norms. In the Museum of Naples and only there, bi-sexuality is celebrated; elsewhere hermaphrodites are despised and even condemned to death. On the stage of the opera house, Zambinella is a masterpiece, whereas he is a ridiculous effete old man at the Lanty hotel. The performance of Shakespeare's play enables d'Albert to express his feelings, whereas he must conceal them in daily life.

The bodies of the hermaphrodites, however, are the most important heterotopias in the narratives. Like other heterotopias, these spaces exist; they represent, contest and invert human bodies. In them, the sexual ambiguity of human beings is emphasised and the alignment between sex and gender is called into question. Being male and masculine (or female and feminine) is neither evident nor natural in 'real' societies, as shown by the hermaphroditic beings who combine diverse genders and sexes. The transformation of their bodies into heterotopias is achieved because they are mediated through, or converted into, pieces of art. They become utopian, or, in an aesthetic perspective, ideally beautiful. As has been seen in the previous section, the figure of Hermaphroditus (or hermaphrodites) represents the ultimate embodiment of ideal beauty, combining masculine and feminine traits:

[Art] united the beauties and attributes of both sexes in the figures of hermaphrodites. The great number of hermaphrodites [...] shows that artists sought to express in the mixed nature of the two sexes an image of higher beauty; this image was ideal. [...] every artist cannot have an opportunity of seeing so rare a deviation of nature; and hermaphrodites, like those produced by sculpture, are probably never seen in real life. All figures of this kind have maiden breasts, together with the male organs of generation; the form in other respects, as well as the features of the face, is feminine.<sup>323</sup>

Winckelmann presented the sculptures of hermaphrodites as improvements of 'real' Asian eunuchs.<sup>324</sup> The artistic approach is thus in continuity with the traditions of Asia Minor. In both cases, the goal is to create a beautiful and youthful individual, combining the virility of a man with the soft traits of a girl. The art historian, nonetheless, perceives no correspondence between the 'real' hermaphrodites and the artistic ones. Although he admitted the past existence of hermaphrodites, he doubted that artistic representations of hermaphrodites could be inspired by 'real' ones.

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<sup>323</sup> Winckelman, pp. 56–57.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

The discrepancy between ‘real’ and artistic hermaphrodites is highlighted in *Fragoletta* during the visit of d’Hauteville and Camille to the museum of Naples. Their guide, the Italian poetess Éléonore Pimentale, reveals to the officer that the statue of Polykles by which he is fascinated represents Hermaphroditus. The description of the sculpture corresponds to the so-called *Sleeping Hermaphroditus*, lying on a bed sculpted by the baroque artist Bernini, now at the Louvre Museum (*Fragoletta*, I, 60).<sup>325</sup> The sight of this statue offers a pretext for Éléonore’s panegyric on the beauty of hermaphrodites. She attempts to convince the sceptical d’Hauteville (61) not only of the existence but, above all, of the perfection of hermaphrodites. She first refers to Greek philosophy, especially to the myth of the androgyne, then to the Bible, suggesting that Adam and Eve constituted one being before the female sex was extracted from the first man (61–62). Afterwards, her speech borrows arguments from scientific discourses (62–63) and tallies with the observations of the eighteenth-century scientists who examined cases of animal and plant hermaphroditism.<sup>326</sup>

These metaphysical and scientific arguments do not convince d’Hauteville, who is unable to renounce his belief in the sexual dichotomy. He continues considering ‘real’ hermaphrodites to be monstrous and reluctantly mentions their destiny, as they were pushed into the sea in Athens and into the Tiber in Rome (62). Following this ancient tradition, Camille will later attempt to throw him/herself into the sea. Éléonore is an ambiguously gendered character herself, since she has conquered the masculine domains of science and erudition. She appears as a female embodiment of Winckelmann, because she exhibits aesthetic enthusiasm for Hermaphroditus that is reminiscent of the arguments of the art historian, just like d’Albert did in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. The beauty of both sexes embodies an ideal beauty characterised by completeness: ‘Vous demandez ce qu’a voulu l’artiste en composant ce chef-d’œuvre? Combiner [...] la beauté de Camille et la vôtre, réunir dans une figure adorable tout ce que la nature avare n’aurait du reste séparé que pour nous’ (62), Éléonore tells d’Hauteville. In a Platonic conception, the bi-sexual figure also symbolises the physical love between a man and a woman, the fusion of their bodies: ‘vous demandez ce qu’a voulu Polyclès? Personnifier l’union des corps, représenter cette alliance de deux êtres que l’amour précipite en un seul’ (63).

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<sup>325</sup> The presence of the *Sleeping Hermaphroditus* in Naples is rather surprising, as it was moved directly from Villa Borghese into the Louvre in 1807. Although Latouche, following the Classical tradition, attributes the statue to the Greek sculptor Polykles, this paternity is uncertain. For more on the contestation of Polykles’s paternity, see Lodge (Winckelmann’s translator), p. 57, footnote k; Delcourt, p. 97; ‘Hermaphrodite endormi’ on Louvre Museum website <<http://www.louvre.fr/oeuvre-notices/hermaphrodite-endormi>> [accessed 4 March 2014].

<sup>326</sup> Monneyron, p. 54.

Camille's body is thus mediated through Polykles's Hermaphroditus, especially as his/her father was a sculptor. He has fashioned Camille as much as Polykles has sculpted Hermaphroditus. The hermaphrodite becomes the living embodiment of an ancient and unquestionably admired sculpture since his/her beauty is regarded as equivalent to that of the statue. Here, however, the similarity ends. Camille's fate is different from Polykles's creation. The hermaphrodite's astonishment when s/he discovers the identity of the statue and his/her embarrassment during Éléonore and d'Hauteville's discussion (61, 62, 65) is not due to female modesty, contrary to what the French officer imagines. It is caused by the discrepancy between his/her perception of his/her own body and the idealisation of this body in the statue, or, as Monneyron expresses it: 'la gêne de Camille devant l'hermaphrodite de marbre est celle d'un être qui voit idéalisée sa propre anomalie'.<sup>327</sup> The statue of Hermaphroditus serves as a mirror, as it supports an oxymoronic experience (to borrow Jenijoy La Belle's terminology).<sup>328</sup> This statue reflects both the self and the other, which means that it reveals Camille's true identity, while making him/her appear as a stranger, even to him/herself. In other words, it is the means through which Camille becomes able to conceive of his/her estranged sexual identity.

The admiration of Éléonore for Hermaphroditus is reproduced in that of d'Hauteville and Eugénie for the hermaphrodite. Each of the siblings admires one aspect of the sexual identity of the hermaphrodite, whilst also appreciating the opposite gendered side. While Marius likes the tomboyish Fragoletta, his sister enjoys the company of her friend Philippe who acts like a girlfriend. The 'real' hermaphrodite, however, knows that his/her condition does not correspond to Éléonore's metaphysical and aesthetic exaltation. Despite a beauty similar to that of the marble Hermaphroditus, his/her existence is not idealistic and shares similarities with that of ancient hermaphrodites, whose deaths represent a radical form of exclusion.

Sculpture is also a salient element of the plot of *Sarrasine*, as the eponymous character, like Camille's father, is a sculptor. From the first appearance of Zambinella, Sarrasine judges 'her' as the embodiment of ideal beauty, a feeling that is expressed through a laudatory repertoire that is similar to d'Albert's descriptions of Théodore (*Sarrasine*, 58). The sculptor adopts an artistic approach analogous to that of the legendary painter Zeuxis, who realised a painting of Helen of Troy by combining the features of several beautiful girls, because he was

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., p. 57. For Fabio Vasarri, the discovery of Polykles's statue means the transition from childhood to adulthood for Camille: 'I nomi dell'ermafrodito: L'esempio di *Fragoletta*', *Rivista di letterature moderne e comparate*, 44:2 (April–June 1991), 120–29 (pp. 123–24). For more on the hiatus between mythical and historical hermaphrodite, see Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, p. 105.

<sup>328</sup> La Belle, p. 42.



unable to find a woman who would embody his ideal of female beauty.<sup>329</sup> Likewise, Sarrasine regards Zambinella's body as composite, because it combines the most attractive parts of otherwise 'ignoble' individuals. According to the narrator, Sarrasine

demand[ait] à un modèle, souvent ignoble, les rondeurs d'une jambe accomplie; à tel autre, les contours du sein; à celui-là, ses blanches épaules; prenant enfin le cou d'une jeune fille, et les mains de cette femme, et les genoux polis de cet enfant, sans rencontrer jamais sous le ciel froid de Paris les riches et suaves créations de la Grèce antique. La Zambinella lui montrait réunies, bien vivantes et délicates, ces exquis proportions de la nature féminine si ardemment désirées. (57–58)

Both the extract from *Sarrasine* and the legend of Zeuxis suggest that perfect beauty does not exist in nature as a whole. This beauty must be mediated by pieces of art, specifically of the art of ancient Greece, in order to exist. It is therefore not surprising that Zambinella's perfect beauty emanates from an artificial being.

As 'real' beauty is inherently artificial or artistic in *Sarrasine*, the sculptor attempts to transform Zambinella into a tangible piece of art. However, the drawings and the sculpture that are supposed to copy 'her' fascinating beauty do not imitate nature. Sarrasine fails to realise that the composite external beauty of Zambinella, which assembles the most perfect parts of previous models, reflects the hybridism of the singer's sex. The sculptor fashions a new being by interpreting the face and especially the voice of his model, whose body is concealed by layers of fabric. The female statue of Zambinella is the epitome of the castrato's femininity. Like Polykles's Hermaphroditus, it embodies ideal beauty, here not only feminine, but also female, obeying Romantic rather than Classical aesthetics. The sculptor creates a woman according to his desires, thus becoming a modern Pygmalion. Unlike Prince Chigi, who shaped his ideal Zambinella for profit, Sarrasine sincerely loves his creation. The mention of the mythological sculptor is not associated with the act of creation in the novella, but appears in a periphrasis that designates Galatea, Pygmalion's statue, and metaphorically refers to Zambinella: 'Sarrasine dévorait des yeux la statue de Pygmalion, pour lui descendue de son piédestal' (58). The narrator thus posits the castrato as an object (Sarrasine and Chigi's creature), not as a subject. Whereas the medium of art promoted Zambinella as a living

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<sup>329</sup> For more on Zeuxis and *Sarrasine*, see Helen O. Borowitz, 'Balzac's *Sarrasine*: The Sculptor as Narcissus', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 5:3-4 (Spring–Summer 1977), 171–85 (p. 177); Patrick O'Donovan, 'Avatars of the Artist: Narrative Approaches to the Work of the Painter', in *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. by Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 222–36 (p. 223).

embodiment of ideal beauty, it also objectifies him, as he is reduced to being the plaything of Sarrasine.<sup>330</sup> The castrato somehow becomes prisoner of his own status as a masterpiece.

Referring to the theme of Pygmalion in the novella, Per Nykrog suggests that Sarrasine is not a Pygmalion, but a naïve artist, since he does not accept the fact that art is never a copy of reality.<sup>331</sup> Yet, Sarrasine remains a Pygmalion-like figure because he is able to create a perfect representation of feminine beauty and give life to his work. He created *la Zambinella* when sculpting ‘her’ statue. Whereas the singer was objectified by the sculptor (and by the narrator, following his viewpoint), the statue has become an independent subject whose destiny does not depend on its creator. Unlike sterile hermaphrodites and castrati, Zambinella’s sculptural representation is able to generate ‘offspring’. Cardinal Cicognara acquired the statue and had a marble copy made; the Lantys asked the artist Vien to reproduce the marble copy; finally, Girodet allegedly found his inspiration for *Eudymion* in Vien’s copy. The statue not only escapes the ‘death’ that its creator had planned for it by throwing a hammer at it, but it is also brought to life in different shapes and, more importantly, different sexes. Regarded as a woman by Sarrasine, it recovers the ‘real’ sex of its model in Girodet’s painting. These successive changes of sex illustrate that Zambinella cannot be constrained to a male or a female identity. They also reveal that the body of the castrato, like that of the hermaphrodite, struggles to achieve acceptance outside an artistic thinking.

To summarise, pieces of art play an important role in the hermaphroditic narratives in their capacity to act as heterotopias. They mediate the bodies of hermaphrodites and therefore allow them to express their ‘true’ nature and to denounce the illusory norm of the separation of the sexes. Only art, because of its ability to create as well as to represent, can make these bodies fathomable and acceptable, whereas ‘real’ hermaphroditic characters are confined to monstrosity. This observation, however, is restricted to the domain of fiction. As was shown previously, the narratives themselves, as pieces of art, cannot conceive of the existence of ‘real’ hermaphrodites. The reintegration of hermaphrodites to the realm of (partial) normativity through art, nevertheless, allows them to engage with the social realities of life.

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<sup>330</sup> Nigel Harkness shows that the myth of Pygmalion is connected to male dominance (p. 136 and p. 139). He also points out that Madame de Rochefide, the narratee, is almost a victim of this objectification, but escapes by refusing the contract that is offered to her: ‘Resisting Petrification in George Sand’s *Lélia* and Balzac’s *Sarrasine*’, *French Studies*, 59:2 (2005), 159–72 (p. 168 and pp. 170–71). Madame de Rochefide protests: ‘vous me faites à votre goût. Singulière tyrannie! Vous voulez que je ne sois pas *moi*’ (*Sarrasine*, 52; original emphasis). Similarly, Johnson mentions ‘sculpturesque clichés about feminine beauty’ (p. 10).

<sup>331</sup> Per Nykrog, ‘On Seeing and Nothingness: Balzac’s *Sarrasine*’, *Romanic Review*, 83:4 (November 1992), 437–44 (p. 442). Chambers has also noted that Sarrasine and Madame de Rochefide commit the error of confusing art with reality (p. 80).

## The Renewal of Masculinity

The previous sections have explored the variations in the representation of hermaphroditic characters from physical and moral aberrations to incarnations of ideal beauty. This section develops the issue of masculinity and opposes the insecure virility of male characters with the possibility of masculine regeneration through a hermaphroditic protagonist: Madeleine de Maupin. Embodiments of manhood in the three narratives are compromised at best. D'Albert, who is vain and narcissistic, and who chooses isolation over action, stands for masculine insecurity. With his overcompensating hyper-masculine behaviour, Sarrasine is not spared from insecurity either. The sculptor reveals that adopting a supposedly unproblematic form of virility promoted by nineteenth-century society is unsustainable because it cannot conceal men's weaknesses and leads to doubt and death; ultimately, he lets Cardinal Cicognara's henchmen kill him in an act of a passivity that exemplifies his inner femininity. Even Napoleon, who makes a brief appearance in *Fragoletta* at the onset of his coup d'état, is described as frail and unimpressive by the narrator (II, 136–37).

Certainly, d'Hauteville, at first glance, seems unaffected by masculine insecurity, as he combines numerous virile qualities. He can be regarded as a noteworthy incarnation of the Napoleonic officer, since he is brave, chivalrous and educated, and despises cowardice, while displaying magnanimity towards his enemies — in opposition to the Italians' obsession with revenge (*Fragoletta*, I, 116). He is honourable, even in the private sphere, as is seen when he refuses to take advantage of Fragoletta, and when he promptly avenges Eugénie's dishonour. However, standing by his principles of generosity, he first offers his sister's hand in marriage to Philippe. D'Hauteville is, nevertheless, blind to the 'real' nature of Camille, unable to realise that the girl whom he loves and his enemy are the same individual. His blinkered attitude affects his involvement in historical events. Whilst playing a significant role in the war against the Italian royalists in the Neapolitan plot, he refuses to take part in the coup of 18 Brumaire (II, 135–38).

The refusal to become involved in historical events is not specific to d'Hauteville. Despite his/her adoptive father's interest in politics and support for the French side, Camille is also not interested in history. The hermaphrodite disappears during the war between the French and Cardinal Ruffo's royalist army, and leaves Paris just before Napoleon's coup d'état. It is rather surprising that Latouche, a moderate republican who denounces the Restoration of the Italian Bourbons and the rise of Napoleon in *Fragoletta*, does not explicitly link the situation

of the protagonists to this historical period.<sup>332</sup> Attempting to connect the myth of the androgyne to the historical motif, Crouzet asks: ‘Faut-il mettre en rapport la quête par d’Hauteville de l’être et de l’amour impossibles et la quête de la liberté?’, but he rightly stresses the lack of coherence in Latouche’s novel, which prevents him from validating this suggestion.<sup>333</sup> As for Laforgue, he argues that the hermaphrodite represents the disorder of historical events and the exclusion of meaning, but the link between these events and Camille appears too loose for such an assertion.<sup>334</sup> Conversely, s/he seems to represent young men’s rejection of contestation and of political involvement in historical events, a tendency that also appears in *Sarrasine*, as the sculptor does not know that the performance of women on stages was not allowed in Papal States. The protagonists’ lack of participation mirrors the growing lack of interest that the young men of the July Monarchy took in historical events and their rejection of political actions against the regime that limited their liberties. Roger Magraw argues that, during the revolution in 1848, despite their enthusiasm for republicans such as Jules Michelet, few students participated in the revolution and the only casualty among them was a student who accidentally fell off a barricade.<sup>335</sup>

The conclusion that might be drawn from these hermaphroditic narratives is as follows: young men appear too disconnected from reality to be regarded as suitable rulers. As a result, the regeneration of masculinity cannot be realised by young male characters, but by hermaphroditic individuals who reconcile virile and feminine qualities. The ambiguities relative to the moral principles of Camille and Zambinella appear to be overcome by Madeleine in order to embody an ideal form of masculinity. The hermaphroditisation of ‘Théodore’ is not the result of d’Albert’s fantasies exclusively; Madeleine also perceives herself as a hermaphroditic being, although she does not explicitly refer to Hermaphroditus — even if she is aware of the existence of the god (*Maupin*, 333). In other words, she accentuates the position of masculine women in terms of gender ambiguities, as she is certain that she does not belong to the feminine gender.

From the beginning of the tale of her adventures, she stresses the lack of ‘romanesque’ (244) in her personality, an adjective that highlights a sentimental, and thus feminine, connotation.<sup>336</sup> She also despises feminine activities:

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<sup>332</sup> Crouzet, ‘À propos de *Fragoletta*’, p. 41; Laforgue, *L’eros romantique*, p. 103.

<sup>333</sup> Crouzet, ‘À propos de *Fragoletta*’, p. 31.

<sup>334</sup> Laforgue, *L’eros romantique*, p. 96.

<sup>335</sup> Magraw, p. 88. See also Broglie, p. 166.

<sup>336</sup> *Romanesque* must be understood as ‘qui tient du roman; qui est merveilleux comme les aventures de roman, ou exalté comme les personnages de roman, comme les sentiments qu’on leur prête’: ‘Romanesque’, in *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn (1835), II, p. 672. This meaning is in opposition with another use of ‘romanesque’

il m'ennuie de me tenir assise les deux pieds joints, les coudes collés au flanc, de baisser modestement les yeux, de parler d'une petite voix flûtée et mielleuse, et de faire passer dix millions de fois un bout de laine dans les trous d'un canevas; — je n'aime pas à obéir le moins du monde, et le mot que je dis le plus souvent est: — Je veux. (327)

Her representation of feminine activities highlights the imperative of modesty that is imposed on women and denounces Rousseau's claim that women must be subservient to men and cannot express their will.<sup>337</sup> Her 'Je veux' reveals her assertive temperament, deemed to be manly according to nineteenth-century gender criteria.

From this perspective, Madeleine regards her masculine disguise as her natural clothes (327). Cross-dressing enables her to reveal her true self, contrary to social and cultural norms, and to feel erotic pleasure in the opposition between her masculine outfit and behaviour, and her female body. This feeling contradicts the claim of Robert Stoller, a psychoanalyst and expert in gender dysphoria, according to which transvestism can only be grounded in the erotic contrast between feminine clothes or behaviour and the penis as an assertion of masculinity, which implies that female transvestites do not exist.<sup>338</sup> Madeleine's pleasure is, in contrast, mainly stimulated by the manipulation of a sword, an obvious phallic object, when she fights in a duel against Alcibiade, Rosette's brother, for instance ('ce bruit et ces éclairs tourbillonnants de l'acier m'enivraient et m'éblouissaient'; 371).<sup>339</sup>

Not only does Madeleine reject her behavioural femininity and prefer masculine conduct, but she is also able to verbalise her experience (showing that she is capable of displaying 'viriles pensées'; 327). She establishes an opposition between the sex of the body and the sex of the soul; that is, between sex (femaleness) and gender (femininity), revealing a remarkable awareness of the difference between biological sex and cultural gender at a time in which the modern meaning of *genre* did not exist: 'Il arrive souvent que le sexe de l'âme ne soit point pareil à celui du corps' (327). Assimilating herself to the masculine gender does not impede her from criticising the male sex along with representatives of her own sex. She does

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in the novel (249), which refers to the adventures told in a novel and thus has a masculine connotation that corresponds to Madeleine's personality.

<sup>337</sup> Miranda Gill, *Eccentricity and the Cultural Imagination in the Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 54. Many examples of the imperative of women's submission can be found in *Émile*, for instance: 'Il résulte de cette contrainte habituelle une docilité dont les femmes ont besoin toute leur vie, puisqu'elles ne cessent jamais d'être assujetties ou à un homme, ou aux jugements des hommes, et qu'il ne leur est jamais permis de se mettre au-dessus de ces jugements' (534).

<sup>338</sup> Garber, pp. 95–96 and pp. 98–99.

<sup>339</sup> She also feels pleasure when engaging in erotic activities with Rosette in male clothes: 'je sentis sa gorge demie nue et révoltée, bondir contre ma poitrine, et ses doigts enlacés se crispent dans mes cheveux. — Un frisson me courut tout le long du corps, et les pointes de mes seins se dressèrent' (339–40).

not envy the lot of men because of their alleged ugliness, rude behaviour and stupidity (378–80, 383–84) and is not keen on renouncing her femaleness, even though it does not suit her masculine mind (328). If she wants to be a man fully, it is only because she does not conceive that a woman can love another woman (339, 384–85). However, her experience with Rosette teaches her alternatives to heterosexual love.<sup>340</sup> In this regard, Madeleine cannot be considered as transgender.<sup>341</sup> She overcomes the separation of the sexes, as she discards both sexes and claims to belong to a third one:

En vérité, ni l'un ni l'autre de ces deux sexes n'est le mien; je n'ai ni la soumission imbécile, ni la timidité, ni les petitesesses de la femme; je n'ai pas les vices des hommes, leur dégoûtante crapule et leurs penchants brutaux: — je suis d'un troisième sexe à part qui n'a pas encore de nom: au-dessus ou au-dessous, plus défectueux ou supérieur: j'ai le corps et l'âme d'une femme, l'esprit et la force d'un homme, et j'ai trop ou pas assez de l'un et de l'autre pour me pouvoir accoupler avec l'un d'eux. (393–94)

Once again, women are depicted as subservient, timid and petty. Although containing an 'embryon de révolte féminine', to borrow Chantal Bertrand-Jennings's words, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is not a feminist novel advocating the empowerment of women.<sup>342</sup> Gautier's female character never blames men for women's submission, which is justified in the novel by their numerous flaws. Yet, neither are men privileged, as they are portrayed as debauched and brutal.

Rejecting each pole of the sexual dichotomy equally, Madeleine adopts a dialectical reasoning by claiming to belong to a third sex. *Troisième sexe* refers here to a new sex — and its own gendering — that combines the qualities of both sexes, namely the beauty and the soul of women, and the strength and the mind of men.<sup>343</sup> It appears that individuals belonging to the third gender such as Madeleine unite one physical and one moral quality of each sex: beauty and strength; soul and mind. Physically, Madeleine merges two aesthetic ideals: a virile and strong beauty, and a feminine and delicate beauty. Where her moral qualities are concerned, Madeleine's words that she does not have a woman's soul (327) are paradoxical. It can be assumed, however, that the word *âme* highlights women's sensitivity in the previous extract, whereas it refers to a more general moral composition in this excerpt.

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<sup>340</sup> Rivers stresses her ignorance of lesbian sex (pp. 3–4; p. 6; pp. 10–11) and points to the role of d'Albert in this revelation: 'Ironically, the truth of homosexuality seems to come to Madeleine through her (hetero-)sexual initiation by d'Albert' (p. 21).

<sup>341</sup> A person with a trans identity is defined as 'anyone who does not feel comfortable in the gender role they were attributed with at birth, or who has a gender identity at odds with the labels "man" and "woman" credited to them by formal authorities'. This definition highlights the external imposition of a gender identity on an individual: Stephen Whittle, 'Foreword', in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, pp. xi–xvi (p. xi).

<sup>342</sup> Bertrand-Jennings, p. 125.

<sup>343</sup> This meaning differs from that intended by the same phrase in Balzac's novel *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*. See chapter 3, p. 138.

Although she pretends to doubt the superiority of the third sex to which she belongs, this is arguably be false modesty. She judges her sex to be greater than traditional sexes, since she emphasises men and women's flaws, whereas she gathers the physical, moral and intellectual qualities of both sexes, creating a new, perfect individual. Madeleine also underlines the inaccuracy of language to express hermaphroditism, as she points out that there is no name to designate her new sex. She highlights the fact that few Western cultures recognise the existence of hermaphroditic beings and, accordingly, few have a proper name to designate them.<sup>344</sup> The narrator of *Sarrasine* and Herculine Barbin make a similar observation when the first designates the old Zambinella as 'cette créature sans nom dans le langage humain' (45) and the latter calls him/herself 'un être sans nom'.<sup>345</sup> Their judgements, nevertheless, are mainly negative, as they refer to creatures regarded as either ridiculous or cursed.<sup>346</sup> In contrast, Madeleine deplors this lacuna in vocabulary because she advocates the superiority of the hermaphroditic sex. Her words contrast with those of the physician Lauvergne who expressed his concerns about effeminate men, calling them 'sexes douteux' (288; see also Cabanis, I, 363). For him, people of ambiguous sex are outcasts, like Camille; for Madeleine, they are superior. She is thus able to reverse the curse of hermaphroditic creatures by questioning the separation of the sexes and assuming the qualities of each.

Madeleine also refuses d'Albert's process of objectification. Like Sarrasine with Zambinella — as well as d'Hauteville with Camille —, the young man has put her on a pedestal, appreciating her as the embodiment of ideal beauty, but neglecting her as a human being. He never considers the possibility that Madeleine might not love him. This is indeed the case, as she only mentions him towards the end of her final letter to Graciosa and casually writes about him: 'si je ne l'aimais pas avec passion, il me plaisait assez pour ne point le laisser sécher d'amour sur pied' (*Maupin*, 396), thus showing how little she cares for him. In response to his reification, she objectifies him by using him to discover the mystery of sexual intimacy, before abandoning him. She uses this new knowledge to have sexual intercourse with Rosette, then leaves the castle definitively to seek new adventures. This resourcefulness and eagerness to be part of the world not only contrast with d'Albert's passivity and seclusion, but also demonstrate Madeleine's ability to overcome gendered and sexual oppositions imposed by social rules.

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<sup>344</sup> See chapter 1, p. 30.

<sup>345</sup> Barbin, p. 113.

<sup>346</sup> The position of Barbin is quite complex because s/he claims the superiority of his/her angelic nature (*Ibid.*) in a fit of what Burgelin calls *megalomania* (p. 99).

In brief, although Madeleine de Maupin shows disinterest for historical events, like the other young men and hermaphroditic protagonists studied here, she nonetheless represents historical dynamism and embodies a new type of active masculinity. She claims that she belongs to a third sex, which combines the physical, intellectual and moral qualities of each of the two conventional sexes, and is therefore superior to both masculinity and femininity. Her hermaphroditism enables her to refuse confinement and to explore new sexual territories.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the hermaphrodite is at the centre of the aesthetic and social preoccupations of July Monarchy literature by focusing on the three novels *Fragoletta*, *Sarrasine* and *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. The representation of bi-sexual individuals is a means for writers to examine the correlation between sex and gender, and express their anxiety towards masculine insecurity, loneliness and difference, as well as their fear of feminisation and even homosexuality. By his/her very existence, the hermaphrodite not only mirrors the sexual or gender insecurity of men, but also casts doubt over the gendered identity of the male protagonists and underlines their femininity, which was perceived negatively in patriarchal French society. The depiction of 'real' or symbolic hermaphroditism, however, is a successful strategy only up to a certain point because writers cannot distance themselves from the separation of the sexes and conceive of a fully bi-sexual individual, despite the depiction of tomboyishness, transvestism and gender performativity. Camille, the 'real' hermaphrodite, is either a man or a woman, and the castrato Zambinella justifies his perfect embodiment of femininity by the scam organised by his colleagues against Sarrasine. Only Madeleine de Maupin fully assumes her dual identity. The disclosure of her 'real' sex does not annihilate the gender that is supposed to be denied by the revelation, but allows her to become a reconciled hermaphroditic subject.

This chapter has also shown how the aestheticisation of a character is a means to turn a shameful homoerotic desire into a quest for beauty. Art is able to transform the principles of monstrosity, rejection and marginalisation that are contained in hermaphroditism into ideal beauty. The body of the hermaphrodite becomes a real but idealised space that rejects the Western norm of sexual difference and demonstrates the fusion of the sexes. It enables a writer such as Gautier to valorise the co-presence of masculine and feminine qualities in an individual. At the same time, however, the medium of art objectifies the hermaphroditic character. This



can be regarded as a flaw because being a subject is mandatory when becoming an active member of society.

The objectification of the hermaphrodite through art is reinforced by the fact that Classical art and Greek mythology were widely regarded as universal and, consequently, they annihilated temporality. Balzac justifies the choice of a mythological figure to depict a contemporary 'crisis' by mentioning the evocative power of myths: 'Il est déplorable, au xix [sic] siècle, d'aller chercher les images de la Mythologie grecque; mais je n'ai jamais été si frappé que je le suis de la puissante vérité de ces mythes'.<sup>347</sup> The eternal dimension of the hermaphrodite suggests that the insecurity, as well as the sexual and gender indeterminacy that this figure embodies is apparently timeless. As hermaphrodites are outside of society, they are outside of history. The medium of mythology and the absence of a definite connection between the writing context and the fictional context of the characters reveal the writers' unease about discussing an issue that must have been felt as all too present. Accordingly, the resourcefulness of a hermaphroditic character, such as Madeleine, contrasts with the insecurity displayed by most male characters in the novels of the July Monarchy and reflects their inability to be active members of the French society, as the next chapter illustrates.

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<sup>347</sup> Balzac, *Lettres à l'Étrangère*, quoted by Borowitz, 'Balzac's *Sarrasine*', p. 174.



### CHAPTER 3: MASCULINE INSECURITY, EFFEMINACY AND HOMOSEXUALITY

#### Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis showed the importance that French scientists and society in general attributed to sexual difference. Chapter 2 analysed the literary renegotiation of this sexual difference through the figure of the hermaphrodite and revealed how sexual ambiguity was deemed to be necessary in order to overcome social insecurity. In contrast, this chapter studies the discourse that seemingly differs from positive sexual ambiguities in July Monarchy novels, and highlights the often negative opinion vis-à-vis the gender ambiguity that is deemed to characterise young men. Among the many male characters displaying masculine insecurity, Octave, the main protagonist and narrator of Musset's *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (1836), and Lucien Chardon de Rubempré, who appears in Balzac's *Illusions perdues* (1837–43) and *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838–47), constitute two examples of the masculine malaise that is depicted and denounced in July Monarchy narratives. Together, they embody noteworthy signs of a 'crisis' of masculinity that are recurrent in the French literature of the first half of the nineteenth century, such as insecurity, effeminacy, immaturity and possible homosexuality.

The extract from the second chapter of *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* quoted in the epigraph of the introduction to this thesis reveals Musset's awareness of the generational malaise that constitutes *le mal du siècle*. Gilles Castagnès has pointed to the discrepancy between the description of *le mal du siècle* in the second chapter of the novel and Octave's disease, which consists of love sickness and, above all, jealousy. Despite this, the construction of the novel encourages the reader to interpret Octave's disease as 'la maladie du siècle' in order to justify it.<sup>348</sup> Even though 'la maladie du siècle' does not tally with Octave's delirious jealousy, the introduction to this thesis revealed how the social, political and economic changes that occurred during the July Monarchy favoured the emergence of this social phenomenon. Accordingly, this chapter argues that writers depicted feminine and fragile young men as a means to express their anxiety that the sexual dichotomy may not be the stable framework that it was believed to be and may be overthrown by gender ambiguities. By so doing, writers

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<sup>348</sup> Gilles Castagnès, 'La Confession d'un enfant du siècle: Un romantisme de façade?', in *Musset: Un romantique né classique*, ed. by Sylvain Ledda and Frank Lestringant (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2009), pp. 87–102 (pp. 88–91). See also Ronald Grimsley, 'Romantic Emotion in Musset's *Confession d'un enfant du siècle*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 9:2 (Spring 1970), 125–42 (p. 126); Reid, p. 71; Goruppi, p. 106.

condemned such effeminate protagonists, whilst envisaging alternatives to the rigid models of sexual difference.

By taking as its starting point the problematic relationship between young men and the unachievable masculine model of the Napoleonic soldier, this chapter analyses how society ascribes to these men feminine traits that are viewed as corrupting. As a result, these young men are unable to exercise effective roles within society, an incapacity that is conveyed by their physical and psychological ‘feminine’ weaknesses, or by their puerility, which reveals their rejection of responsibility and their need for protection. Whilst effeminacy and immaturity are seen as factors that limit this generation of men, there emerges in Balzac’s treatment a more complex attitude towards homosexuality, which is paradoxically used as a vector for criticising men’s alleged social incompetence and for praising the combination of masculine and feminine qualities. This chapter essentially highlights both the gender ambiguity that is conveyed by Octave and Lucien and how this ambiguity alters the way in which their actions may be interpreted. Although they are not considered to be obvious challenges to maleness, they nevertheless call the bearings of traditional masculinity into question. Accordingly, the masculine ideal of the Napoleonic soldier is not promoted in these novels. Rather, it is argued that the character of Vautrin constitutes an alternative to both masculine insecurity and the triumphant model of virility.

### **The Son of the Napoleonic Soldier**

The exemplary model of masculinity during the first half of the nineteenth century was examined earlier in this thesis.<sup>349</sup> Napoleon and his *grogards* embodied the ideal qualities of valour and honour that were expected from all men. As will be shown, both the admiration and the anxiety of the generation of young men reaching their adulthood in the 1830s were increased because of the alleged perfection (and consequent inaccessibility) of the Napoleonic model of masculinity embodied by their fathers. Stendhal’s heroes Julien Sorel and Fabrice del Dongo are two fictional examples of this fascination for the figures of Napoleon and his soldiers of the Great Army.<sup>350</sup> Brian Joseph Martin sees in these characters the incarnations of, respectively, ‘wannabes’ and ‘latecomers’, in reference to those young men who had not personally experienced the Napoleonic era, but who grew up lulled by the stories of imperial grandeur,

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<sup>349</sup> On the Napoleonic soldier and the Napoleonic myth, see introduction, pp. 20–22.

<sup>350</sup> Balzac himself constitutes a non-fictional example of this generation of admirers: Sharif Gemie, ‘Balzac and the Moral Crisis of the July Monarchy’, *European History Quarterly*, 19 (1989), 469–94 (p. 471).

who idealised the Empire and who yearned to equal the soldiers of the Great Army in bravery.<sup>351</sup> Whilst it is not always military glory which characters from novels written during the July Monarchy period desire, they are, nevertheless, fashioned by the idealisation of virile values that echo those of the revolutionary and Napoleonic era that preceded the period in which these novels were written.

The fathers held the same appeal for the young generation as the Napoleonic soldiers themselves. Writers, such as Hugo, Musset and Sand, were all the offspring of soldiers and civil servants of the Empire. In the second chapter of *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, Musset depicts the gap between the admiration for the previous generation and the weakness of the generation which came after the heroes of the Napoleonic wars:

Pendant les guerres de l'Empire, tandis que les maris et les frères étaient en Allemagne, les mères inquiètes avaient mis au monde une génération ardente, pâle, nerveuse. Conçus entre deux batailles, élevés dans les collèges aux roulements des tambours, des milliers d'enfants se regardaient entre eux d'un œil sombre, en essayant leurs muscles chétifs. De temps en temps leurs pères ensanglantés apparaissaient, les soulevaient sur leurs poitrines chamarrées d'or, puis les posaient à terre et remontaient à cheval. (60)

Two characteristics of this new generation emerge from this excerpt: their physical and psychological weakness conveyed by their paleness and nervousness, as well as their ardent ambition. These boys, however, cannot realise their ambition, as they lack the strength to express it. Raised in a bellicose context, they long to prove their worth to their classmates, who impersonate potential enemies, and above all to their fathers — those distant figures who appear as glorious, bloody war gods. Later on, in the same chapter, these children, then grown up, are portrayed as nostalgic for a fantasised past that they have never experienced. The imperial times are presented as an epic period in which the generation of their fathers was enthusiastically offered as a tribute to the demigod Emperor (60, 61). Invited by Napoleon, the first 'enfant du siècle', to avenge him, the young generation is unable to comply with his request; arguably, this may have been due to the anxiety caused by feelings of inadequacy when confronted with the overwhelming myth of the Emperor.<sup>352</sup>

Musset's narrator here expresses the difficulties of the post-Napoleonic generation in assuming its masculine position. One of the reasons why the young men of the Restoration and the July Monarchy could not express their virility in the same way as their fathers is because

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<sup>351</sup> Martin, pp. 103–25 (esp. pp. 105–08 and pp. 115–16).

<sup>352</sup> Goruppi, pp. 101–04. Napoleon calls himself 'enfant du siècle' in Las Cases's *Mémoires de Saint-Hélène* (quoted by Goruppi, p. 101), as well as claiming: 'Quelle jeunesse [...] je laisse après moi! C'est pourtant mon ouvrage! Elle me vengera suffisamment par tout ce qu'elle vaudra' (p. 102).

they did not experience continuous wars. With the exception of the conquest of Algeria, which started under the reign of Charles X, the military action of Louis-Philippe's regime was considerably limited.<sup>353</sup> The young men's feeling of inferiority in comparison with the idealised image of their fathers means that they cannot possibly succeed them as authority figures. Accordingly, patriarchal figures, such as Octave's father, Baron du Guénic in *Béatrix* and Baron Hulot d'Ervy in *La Cousine Bette*, continue to exercise their authority, regardless of their suitability for doing so.

Indeed, to writers such as Balzac, the absolute admiration for the father figure appears to be exaggerated and based on symbolic, rather than existing, qualities. This fascination, in the form of the Napoleonic cult, is both depicted and challenged in *La Cousine Bette*. In the Hulot family, the father is worshipped by his wife and children, and especially by his son Victorin: 'Quant à Hulot fils, élevé dans l'admiration du baron, en qui chacun voyait un des géants qui secondèrent Napoléon, il savait devoir sa position au nom, à la place et à la considération paternelle' (46). The reputation of Baron Hulot d'Ervy, a compulsive womaniser who squanders his fortune on his mistresses, stems from his position as one of the Emperor's lieutenants (and from the renown of his brother, Marshal Hulot, a hero of the revolutionary wars), rather than from his personal merits. Likewise, Victorin Hulot, a young lawyer, enjoys a good professional situation as a result of his father's reputation. Moreover, the use of 'en qui chacun voyait', rather than 'qui était', implies that this reputation is likely to be exaggerated. This extract chimes with Saint-Paulien's observation concerning many officers of the Great Army in *La Comédie humaine*, including Baron Hulot, who became drunkards, crooks, informers, paupers, ridiculous men and even criminals because they were unable to do anything but fight wars.<sup>354</sup>

Balzac overtly ridicules another Napoleonic soldier who appears in *Illusions perdues*: Giroudeau, the uncle of the editor Finot and the handyman of the editorial offices. Giroudeau is nostalgic for the Empire, as his uniform-like clothes, his repeated 'broum! broum!' noise (reminiscent of a military march or the noise of a cannon), his digressions about Napoleonic times and the tales of his memories as an officer in the Great Army confirm.<sup>355</sup> In addition to being the object of ridicule, this almost senile man also represents the difficulties experienced by former soldiers who were often persecuted and humiliated during the Restoration, often

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<sup>353</sup> For more on the conquest of Algeria, see Bertaud, 'La virilité militaire', p. 183; Broglie, pp. 330–34.

<sup>354</sup> Saint-Paulien, *Napoléon, Balzac et l'Empire de 'la Comédie humaine'* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1979), p. 279. See also p. 37 and p. 352.

<sup>355</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, ed. by Maurice Ménard (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 'Le Livre de Poche Classiques', 1983), pp. 190–91. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text (*Illusions*).

deprived of half of their pension (which earned them their nickname of *demi-soldes*), put on inactive reserve duty and unlikely to practise a military career.<sup>356</sup> *Illusions perdues* depicts the former *grogard* as having no choice but to work as a cashier for his nephew, which suggests that the former heroes were despised for their inutility during Balzac's times. However, Giroudeau is not devoid of common sense, unlike Lucien de Rubempré. It is assumed from his speech that military services are more important than a writing career, as journalists manipulate information to flatter the dominant opinion and to promote their own cause. He denounces the arrogance of young journalists, while considering that these *pékings* would have been mediocre soldiers in Napoleon's army (191). The rest of the story contradicts neither his critical analysis of journalism nor his claim about the ineptitude of young men.

Whilst Balzac's text oscillates between contempt for old soldiers, sympathy for their misery and admiration for their wit, it is less ambivalent in relation to Napoleon and the excess of ambition caused by his example. This is illustrated in the first part of *Illusions perdues*. Lucien expresses doubts regarding his relationship with Madame de Bargeton and the role that she plays in the promotion of his literary career, but he is soon convinced that he will be able to succeed thanks to his talent rather than his mistress. The narrator then comments: 'L'exemple de Napoléon, si fatal au Dix-neuvième Siècle par les prétentions qu'il inspire à tant de gens médiocres, apparut à Lucien qui jeta ses calculs au vent en se les reprochant' (52). The main clause and the relative clause indicate that Lucien prefers the path of genius (the word is used in the previous sentence) — that is, Napoleon's path — over calculation, but the adjectival group claims that this path is unsuitable for mediocre people and implies that Lucien could be such a person. Scientists, such as Moreau de la Sarthe, (I, 712; II, 397) and Menville de Ponsan (I, vi), claimed that ambition was a masculine trait that incompatible with women's weaker constitution. Accordingly, Balzac's text shows how ambition in a young, effete man can have dangerous, even 'fatal', consequences. Lucien's fate is foretold in this sentence: he is condemned to lose his illusions because he is not the Napoleonic genius that he thought he was. Vautrin, adopting the identity of the Spanish priest Carlos Herrera, makes a similar observation when meeting Lucien (510–11). It is suggested, through the omniscient narrator and one of the main characters of *La Comédie Humaine*, that Lucien, as a man of his generation and one of Balzac's contemporaries, has been fashioned by a Napoleonic ambition that tallies with the typical masculine ideal of strength and power. The text shows that his generation, overwhelmed

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<sup>356</sup> Hazareesingh, p. 236; Martin, pp. 152–57.

by the Napoleonic legend, struggles to build a new masculine ideal that would replace Hulot and Giroudeau's obsolete virile ideals.

### **The Weak Man**

Young men in July Monarchy narratives are often depicted as the reverse of Napoleonic soldiers. Rather than being strong, brave and honourable, they are seen as weak, cowardly, self-interested and erratic. These flaws recall the nineteenth-century physicians' belief in women's inconstancy, influenced by their physical sensitivity and their generally weaker constitution. In other words, like eunuchs, hermaphrodites and homosexuals in scientific texts, these fictional and insecure young men participate in the denigration of the male species since they are unable to conform physically and, above all, psychologically, to virile standards. This section argues that their selfishness, passivity, cowardice and inability to focus on specific problems impede their success and condemn them to mediocrity, social failure and even death. Their failure highlights the anxiety of the generation of young bourgeois men and aristocrats towards its social structures and its doubts regarding its ability to renew its elite.

The connection between these young men, and especially Lucien, and women or feminised figures is a significant characteristic of their depiction. Metaphorically speaking, Lucien is a hermaphrodite, as he is similar to 'toutes ces natures à demi féminines' (*Illusions*, 381). This observation is made whilst Lucien's maid prostitutes herself so that he might have enough money to pay for his journey back to Angouleme. This exemplifies his selfish passivity where the sacrifices of others are concerned. Even Daniel d'Arthez, one of his few real friends, calls Lucien a 'femmelette' in a letter to Lucien's sister, Ève Séchard, because he likes to 'paraître' (406). The use of 'femmelette' is doubly insulting, as it compares him to a woman and implies weakness, as well as a lack of energy. Ève is also aware of the vanity of her brother, since she tells their mother: 'dans un poète il y a [...] une jolie femme de la pire espèce' (471). Daniel and Ève's lucidity, when analysing Lucien's personality and absence of morals, is shared by Vautrin, who is usually Lucien's most faithful ally, but nevertheless considers the poet to be 'une femme manquée'.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, ed. by Patrick Berthier (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 'Le Livre de Poche Classiques', 2008), p. 677. Similarly, Calyste du Guénic is compared to 'une fille déguisée en homme': Honoré de Balzac, *Béatrix*, ed. by Michel Lichtlé (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 'Le Livre de Poche Classiques', 2012), p. 125. Further references to these editions are given after quotations in the text (*Splendeurs* and *Béatrix*).



The comparison with women is a pretext to highlight Lucien's flaws, 'naturally' perceived as feminine. His inconsistency and egocentricity are widely recognised.<sup>358</sup> Severely but accurately, d'Arthez describes Lucien as lazy, easily influenced and oblivious to his friends' sacrifices (*Illusions*, 407–08). Lucien himself is lucid where his flaws are concerned, as he notes in his farewell letter to his sister: 'ma cervelle est intermittente' (500). For the narrator of *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, Lucien is one of 'ces hommes faibles et avides, pleins de tendresse dans le cœur et de lâcheté dans le caractère' (226). Vautrin shares this general opinion, when he confesses to the *juge d'instruction* Camusot, with the confidence of an expert, that 'je connais Lucien, c'est une âme de femme, de poète et de méridional, sans consistance ni volonté' (*Splendeurs*, 498). The convict is not blinded by his love when identifying the young man's flaws. Whilst negative opinions are not as vehemently stated in *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, it appears that Octave's weakness is presented as a corruption of his former nature, an intermediate step between goodness and malice, as he observes: 'Tu as commencé par être bon; tu deviens faible, et tu seras méchant' (336). Octave and the other young protagonists have renounced the typically masculine characteristics mentioned by John MacInnes and David Gutterman that were analysed in the introduction to this thesis (activity, strength, reason and willpower), but are not able to replace them with positive alternatives.<sup>359</sup>

Certainly, male protagonists of July Monarchy narratives have no monopoly on weakness and insecurity. Male characters of early nineteenth-century novels are also defined as changeable and discontented. Chateaubriand's René stresses his inconstancy and his thirst for solitude; Claire de Duras' Olivier lacks *caractère* and energy; while Stendhal's Octave is melancholic and misanthropic.<sup>360</sup> Their feebleness, however, is explained by their 'secret': incest and, above all, impotence. The recurrence of impotence mirrors the castration of the physical penis in favour of a symbolic phallus, according to Lawrence Schehr, whereas no such obvious obsession can be found in novels of the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>361</sup> Male characters in July

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<sup>358</sup> This is also true for the academic world. A. S. Byatt confessed at the beginning of her article that she 'intensely disliked Lucien', listed many examples of the poet's selfishness and concluded: 'He is not only weak and narcissistic. He is fatally stupid': 'The Death of Lucien de Rubempré', in *The Novel, II: Forms and Themes*, ed. by Franco Moretti (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 389–408 (p. 389 and p. 403). More nuanced, Jacques Noiray has suggested that Lucien lacks the ability to feel remorse: 'Mémoire, oubli, illusion dans *Illusions perdues*', *L'Année balzacienne*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 8 (2007), 185–96 (p. 191). He also perceived Lucien's flaws as typically feminine (pp. 191–92).

<sup>359</sup> MacInnes, p. 47; Gutterman, p. 58. See also introduction, pp. 5–6.

<sup>360</sup> François-René de Chateaubriand, *Atala. René. Les aventures du dernier Abencérage*, ed. by Jean-Claude Berchet (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1996), p. 169 and pp. 177–79; Claire de Duras, *Ourika. Édouard. Olivier ou le Secret*, ed. by Marie-Bénédicte Diethelm (Paris: Gallimard, 'Folio Classique', 2007), p. 238; Stendhal, *Armance*, ed. by Armand Hoog (Paris: Gallimard, 'Folio Classique', 1975), pp. 50–51, p. 104 and p. 133.

<sup>361</sup> Schehr, pp. 85–87. See also Waller's and Gutermann's essays.

Monarchy narratives seldom benefit from such explanations of their anxiety. Instead, they are more frequently assimilated to women, more involved in social activities and more often depicted as unsuitable for exercising responsible functions than their earlier counterparts.

Lucien's story, for instance, is deeply inscribed in the social context of his time. Like many young men of his generation who follow Napoleon's example, he is characterised by the masculine trait of ambition (*Illusions*, 24, 82, 117, 306, 359), in spite of his many feminine flaws. Lucien's ambition relates mainly to his desire for socio-economic acknowledgement. Lucien Chardon is ashamed of his father's common origins and yearns to erase *Chardon* from his birth certificate and bear the name of his aristocratic mother: *de Rubempré* (*Illusions*, 48). Later, he submits himself to the convict Vautrin in order to fulfil his dreams of wealth and nobility, acting as a kept man and using his mistresses to satisfy his interests. By denouncing the dangers of ambition in young men, Balzac's novels echo a specific social context that seems mostly absent from the novels of the 1820s.

Lucien's obsession with his name needs to be understood in a socio-historical context that maintained the privileges of the Ancien Régime. In a society in which key positions were held by elders, as vestiges of the Empire or even the Ancien Régime, educated young men could not satisfy their ambitious desire for prestigious careers. Ralph Kingston observes that the July Monarchy administration knew that 'educated young men from good families were living in poverty while languishing as copy clerks'.<sup>362</sup> Scholars have shown that work is an important component in the foundation of masculine identity and, as a result, the lack of employment prospects and insecurity in the workplace are considered to play a significant role in the twentieth-century 'crisis' of masculinity.<sup>363</sup> In a nineteenth-century French bourgeois society that promoted hard work, the lack of interesting work prospects was also likely to be emasculating.

Consequently, a career in art proved to be an appropriate alternative to these post-Napoleonic young men, who were unable to express virility through strength, power and self-control. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have pointed out, literature (and allegedly art in general) was perceived as a male activity in the nineteenth century and authorship was judged to be a procedure similar to paternity.<sup>364</sup> Young men's maxim seemed to be: I write (or paint, or sculpt), therefore I am a man. Many male characters in the corpus of this study choose an

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<sup>362</sup> Ralph Kingston, *Bureaucrats and Bourgeois Society: Office Politics and Individual Credit in France 1789–1848* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 131.

<sup>363</sup> Brittan, p. 25; Badinter, pp. 31–32 and p. 135; Beynon, p. 14 and pp. 86–88; Edwards, pp. 8–9.

<sup>364</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, pp. 3–11. See also Michael D. Garval, *A Dream of Stone: Fame, Vision, and Monumentality in Nineteenth-Century French Literary Culture* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 61–71.

artistic career. Lucien, d'Albert and Sténio are poets; Octave is a painter; and Wenceslas and Sarrasine are sculptors (as well as the father of the hermaphrodite Camille). This strategy of masculinisation is not only fictional. Catherine Nesci has shown how Eugène Delacroix became a *grand homme* thanks to his painting, *La Barque de Dante* (1822), whereas his brothers distinguished themselves by choosing a military career. She concludes:

Pour Eugène [...], la voie militaire pour atteindre le statut de grand homme se trouva barrée après l'effondrement de l'Empire. L'art et la panthéonisation (du vivant de l'artiste) prirent donc le relais de l'héroïsme martial et de la grandeur politique; l'artiste, pourtant d'une santé précaire, triompha des guerriers.<sup>365</sup>

If the medium of art can be a powerful device for virilisation, it also appears to be a means of expressing uncertainty and anxiety in one or two ways. Firstly, artists express their disillusionment through the arts. This is the approach of a first-person narrator, such as Octave in *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, whose reflections relate to his inability to find his place in society, or to his unease in the environment in which he lives. These thoughts may echo those of the writer, and by extension, those of his contemporaries. Secondly, young male artists also express their anxiety through their failure to produce art. Octave introduces himself as a painter (*Confession*, 95), but he never describes himself as actively practising any of his artistic interests in the story, a characteristic that is shared by d'Albert and, to a lesser extent, by Wenceslas.<sup>366</sup> Barbéris has observed this attitude in several characters of *La Comédie humaine* and has pointed to their 'incapacité matérielle et psychologique à travailler'.<sup>367</sup>

Octave explains his incapacity to concentrate on a specific activity as follows: 'Je savais par cœur une grande quantité de choses, mais rien par ordre, de façon que j'avais la tête à la fois vide et gonflée, comme une éponge' (*Confession*, 95). Octave's sponge-like head recalls Lucien's reference to his 'cervelle intermittente'. Like the feminine Lucien, Octave is easily distracted and changeable. He lacks masculine stability that would help him take up the careers that his father has suggested, which are likely to be traditional vocations, such as law, medicine and the army.<sup>368</sup> Octave's lack of ability to choose reveals his immaturity.<sup>369</sup> He justifies this inability by claiming: 'je serai un homme, mais non une espèce d'homme particulière' (93).

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<sup>365</sup> Catherine Nesci, 'Splendeurs et misères du "grand homme": De la catabase médiévale aux masculinités modernes (Dante, Delacroix, Balzac)', in *Masculinités en révolution*, pp. 135–54 (p. 137).

<sup>366</sup> This characteristic has been noted for d'Albert by Laforgue (*L'éros romantique*, pp. 207–08 and pp. 216–19).

<sup>367</sup> Barbéris, *Le monde de Balzac*, p. 191.

<sup>368</sup> Kristina Wingård Vareille observes that Sténio in *Lélia* also refuses to choose any career: *Socialité, sexualité et les impasses de l'histoire: L'évolution de la thématique sandienne d'Indiana (1832) à Mauprat (1837)* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987), p. 182.

<sup>369</sup> Grimsley, p. 128.

Yet, his refusal to define himself specifically as a man in order to embody a human ideal paradoxically hinders his masculinity because, in his case, generality becomes the absence of identity and values.

Young men's attraction towards an artistic occupation appears to be partly determined by the particular perception of failure in the realm of the arts. Artistic failure is widely accepted in Romantic culture because it is inscribed in 'the image of the artist in conflict with society, a rebel whose originality is measured by the misunderstanding to which he falls victim, or by the scandal which he provokes'.<sup>370</sup> Artistic unpopularity is not a failure in itself; it is even glorified given that it 'becomes a veiled sign of success' and reveals the artist's uncompromised genius, as Patrick O'Donovan observes about Balzac's *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*.<sup>371</sup> This depiction of the artist as a misunderstood genius allows him to sublimate his difficult position.<sup>372</sup> This posture also enables him to delay indefinitely the questioning of his talent, as the answer will be given in an undetermined future, probably after his death, which signifies that it is by no means his current concern. In the case of Octave, adopting the posture of the cursed artist allows him to avoid producing a masterpiece and, thus, failing in the strict sense of the term.

Lucien, who dreams of becoming an 'enfant sublime', as he is ironically called by Sixte du Châtelet (*Illusions*, 40) and Blondet (250), seems, at first glance, more involved in his artistic career, but the latter is in fact mostly used to climb the social ladder. As Per Nykrog and Annie Jourdan have noted, Lucien only commits himself to a literary career in the hope of accessing glory and, above all, the upper classes.<sup>373</sup> The use of *de Rubempré* as a pen-name shows that he seeks the renown and the wealth that his birth has denied him through poetry and a novel, before being overwhelmed by his journalistic aspirations. However, throughout *Illusions perdues*, Lucien is a passive poet. His poetic production occurs prior to his encounter with Madame de Bargeton, as Jourdan has observed; that is, before the beginning of the story.<sup>374</sup> The narrator and the anonymous author of an article that celebrates the return of Lucien to Angoulême (467–68, 483) share a common irony when mentioning Lucien. Not only do they call him a poet when he has renounced his poetic endeavours, but they also call him the author or poet of *Les*

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<sup>370</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Link between Literary and Artistic Struggles', trans. by Elinor Dorday, in *Artistic Relations*, pp. 30–39 (p. 31).

<sup>371</sup> O'Donovan, p. 231. See also Paul Smith, 'Literature and Art', in *French Studies*, 61:1 (January 2007), 1–13 (p. 3).

<sup>372</sup> Paul Smith, p. 3.

<sup>373</sup> Per Nykrog, 'Illusions perdues dans ses grandes lignes: Stratégies et tactiques romanesques', *Balzac: Illusions perdues: 'l'œuvre capitale dans l'œuvre'*, ed. by Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon, *CRIN*, 18 (1988), 34–46 (p. 36); Annie Jourdan, 'Le triomphe de Lucien de Rubempré: Faux poète, vrai dandy', in *Balzac: Illusions perdues*, 62–77 (p. 67).

<sup>374</sup> Jourdan, p. 67.

*Marguerites*, when this collection of sonnets was yet to be published (218, 261, 384, 423, 470, 476; *Splendeurs*, 106). The frequency of this denomination increases in the third part of *Illusions perdues*, when it becomes certain that *Les Marguerites* will not be published. Its repetition ironically emphasises Lucien's failure in the literary realm.

*Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* demonstrates the fragility of Lucien's artistic ambition and the limited importance that he gave to his literary career, as he has completely abandoned it by the time he officially becomes *de Rubempré*:

Lucien [...] abandonna si bien toute pensée de gloire littéraire qu'il fut insensible aux succès de son roman, republié sous son vrai titre de *L'Archer de Charles IX*, et au bruit que fit son recueil de sonnets intitulés *Les Marguerites* vendu par Dauriat en une seule semaine. 'C'est un succès posthume', répondit-il en riant à mademoiselle des Touches qui le complimentait. (113–14)

Lucien's detachment vis-à-vis his literary success invalidates the plot of *Illusions perdues* by showing that the poet's actions (writing and seeking a publisher, for instance), which would serve to affirm his social and masculine standing, are devoid of meaning in the sequel. Worse, Lucien's association with Vautrin is here perceived as suicidal, since the young man portrays himself as dead, implying that Vautrin's rescuing of Lucien did not stop his suicide, but only delayed it.<sup>375</sup> Lucien, the poet, dies at the end of *Illusions perdues* to give way to the passive accomplice of a common scam.

In the novels of the 1830s and 1840s, the arts, at first glance, help young men to compensate for their 'natural' and 'feminine' weakness, which prevents them from exercising traditional careers in society, and to develop a kind of alternative masculinity to manly and bourgeois identities. However, the artistic path does not succeed in overcoming the protagonists' generational weakness. Lucien renounces his faltering artistic ambitions and chooses the easy and illegal path of fraud to satisfy his dreams of social promotion, whereas Octave abandons his artistic posturing to seek refuge in a dysfunctional relationship apparently

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<sup>375</sup> Obsessed with suicide, Lucien considers it three times in *Illusions perdues* before hanging himself in his cell at the Conciergerie, in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, because he cannot stand to be dishonoured by his confessions revealing his close relationship with the criminal Vautrin. Lucien's incentive to commit suicide is his pride, which differentiates him from Romantic figures of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as Goethe's Werther, Foscolo's Jacopo Ortis and Alfred de Vigny's Chatterton, who are motivated by impossible love or unattainable poetic aspirations. Lucien is not ashamed of his actions but of their potential reception by his circle, notably because they impede his social ascension. His obsession with suicide is presented as a continuous failure, since not only can suicide itself be interpreted as a failure, but the repetition of Lucien's failed suicide attempts illustrates his inability to take any action. Lucien is not the only man of our corpus to be obsessed with suicide. Wenceslas also tries to kill himself and is saved by Lisbeth Fischer. Octave considers committing suicide as well (*Confession*, 338). Sténio also attempts to commit suicide, then kills himself at the end of *Lélia*. For more on young men's suicide in *La Comédie humaine*, see Barbéris, *Le monde de Balzac*, pp. 537–50.

devoid of links with social and artistic issues. Social disengagement and vain ambition appear to be these young men's only options.

### **The Beautiful Man**

Estranged from the virile and strong model of the Napoleonic soldier because of his weakness, Lucien de Rubempré distinguishes himself from this manly ideal because of his remarkable and effeminate beauty. Certainly, this type of beautiful man appears elsewhere in the works of Balzac and other writers of the July Monarchy period, notably in the corpus of this study. However, no representation of effete beauty is as thorough as that of Lucien, whose beauty is constantly mentioned throughout *Illusions perdues* and *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*. As Franco Moretti argues, with reference to *Illusions perdues*, beauty is 'simply affirmed and reiterated'.<sup>376</sup> Lucien's beauty is frequently commented on by the omniscient narrator, as well as by Lucien's friends and enemies, sometimes without relevance — during a discussion about an editorial disagreement, for instance (*Illusions*, 219). He often seems reduced to his beauty, as though the multiple facets of his character, such as his wit (221, 327) and his talent for poetry (255, 284), were insignificant. In other words, Lucien's beauty appears as a façade, which does not conceal, but rather eradicates his inner qualities.

Lucien's beauty corresponds to the eighteenth-century Neoclassical aesthetics inspired by Johann Joachim Winckelmann that conceived of beauty as the prerogative of men, rather than women. The nature of this male beauty, however, varies depending on art historians' interpretations. According to George Mosse, Winckelmann's rediscovery and interpretation of Greek sculpture played a decisive role in the creation of the stereotype of ideal masculinity that remained stable throughout the next two centuries.<sup>377</sup> Winckelmann studied statues representing young men, and highlighted the beauty of male bodies, the harmony of their proportions and the regularity of their features. He perceived these statues (notably that of Laocoön, a model of male heroism and restraint),<sup>378</sup> as a mixture of 'noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur'.<sup>379</sup> In

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<sup>376</sup> Franco Moretti specifies that 'beauty is never described', because he considers that beauty is apprehended only through comparisons and metaphors, but it will soon be shown how these figures of speech are inscribed in descriptions of beauty: 'Homo Palpitans: Balzac's Novels and Urban Personality', in *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms*, trans. by Susan Fischer, David Forgacs and David Miller (London and New York: Verso, 1988 [1983]), pp. 109–29 (p. 113). See also Barthes's claim: 'La beauté (contrairement à la laideur) ne peut vraiment s'expliquer: elle se dit, s'affirme, se répète en chaque partie du corps mais ne se décrit pas' (*S/Z*, p. 40).

<sup>377</sup> Mosse, pp. 29–39.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29 and pp. 32–33.

<sup>379</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann's designation of Greek statues: 'Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks' (1755), in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann*,

other words, the physical beauty of young Greek men was thought to reflect the moral values that Winckelmann's society wanted to promote: power, virility and self-control. This stoic and virile beauty, depicting the ideal male citizen during revolutionary times, was notably illustrated in David's painting, *Le Serment des Horaces* (1784–85).<sup>380</sup>

Lucien's beauty, however, represents a departure from this kind of ideal male beauty (which is that of Napoleonic soldiers), as it does not correspond to the combination of physical and moral virile characteristics that Winckelmann highlighted in Greek sculptures. The interpretation of Neoclassical aesthetics sustained by the art historians Abigail Solomon-Godeau and Mechthild Fend, which was briefly developed in chapter 2 when analysing d'Albert's aestheticisation of homosexuality, offers more similarities with Lucien's beauty. Solomon-Godeau declares that not one, but two aesthetic male archetypes concomitantly existed in French Neoclassical art: 'a heroic, virile, and purposeful manhood understood as active and dominating' (such as the Horatii in David's painting); and 'a typically younger model — adolescent or ephebic — whose sensual and erotic appeal derives at least in part from its relative passivity'.<sup>381</sup> The latter was notably embodied by the young shepherd Endymion in *Le Sommeil d'Endymion* by Girodet (1791), a painting of considerable importance in *Sarrasine*, as seen in chapter 2. Fend also highlights the increasing popularity of the depiction of beautiful, sexually ambivalent adolescents as incarnations of the antique ideal beauty at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>382</sup> In other words, the conception of male beauty that predominated at that time was intrinsically hermaphroditic: it possessed feminine attributes, or characteristics that were generally judged to belong to women, which were nonetheless embodied by male bodies.

For Solomon-Godeau, this sensual male nude must not be interpreted through a homoerotic or homosexual reading, but through a homosocial one.<sup>383</sup> The beautiful, erotic and feminised ephebe did not promote homosexuality. Reviews of *Salons* at the end of the eighteenth century indicate that spectators were unaware of, or unwilling to notice, a homoerotic dimension to the paintings.<sup>384</sup> The Neoclassical ephebe did not defend feminine values either. On the contrary, Solomon-Godeau rightly argues that the image of the beautiful

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*Herder, Schiller, Goethe*, trans. and ed. by H. S. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 32–54 (p. 42 and p. 44).

<sup>380</sup> Mosse, p. 53; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), p. 10; Clark, p. 3; Fend, p. 68; Nesci, p. 144.

<sup>381</sup> Solomon-Godeau, p. 26. See also p. 88.

<sup>382</sup> Fend, p. 43.

<sup>383</sup> Solomon-Godeau, pp. 48–50.

<sup>384</sup> On Girodet's painting, for instance, see Solomon-Godeau, pp. 66–68. See also the comments on Guérin's painting *Aurore et Céphale* (1810) (p. 161) and Granger's *Apollon et Cyparissus* (1817) (p. 167). See also Fend, pp. 121–22; Francis Moulinat, 'Les Amours grecques: Homosexualité et représentations, du *Léonidas* de Jacques-Louis David (1799–1814) au *Swimming Hole* de Thomas Eakins (1885)', *Romantisme*, 159 (2013), 73–83 (p. 77).

man doubly excluded women, firstly by displaying femininity that was freed from emasculating eroticism, then by reincorporating this femininity into a male body.<sup>385</sup>

In spite of their differences, the studies of Mosse, Solomon-Godeau and Fend suggest that, by the end of the eighteenth century, beauty was mainly defined as male. However, *Madeleine de Maupin* has shown that an important aesthetic shift was occurring between the Neoclassical and Romantic periods, since beauty would principally become deemed a female attribute in Romantic culture.<sup>386</sup> Solomon-Godeau notes:

In the course of the four decades between the French Revolution of 1789 and the establishment of the July Monarchy in 1830, the heroic male nude, alpha and omega of history painting, gradually lost its privileged position *in practice*, to be increasingly eclipsed, and ultimately supplanted, by the female nude.<sup>387</sup>

Similarly, Fend indicates the gradual unease of art critics towards the end of the Empire and the beginning of the Restoration when confronted with the effeminacy and sensuality of Girodet's Endymion, whose homoerotic element became perceptible.<sup>388</sup> Potts also argues that the Apollo Belvedere, who used to be regarded as an embodiment of ideal male beauty, became 'a slightly outdated image' in the early nineteenth century.<sup>389</sup>

*Illusions perdues* and *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, as novels written during the July Monarchy period, are grounded in the Romantic assumption that male beauty cannot exist as a positive attribute.<sup>390</sup> The feminine beauty that is constantly mentioned in these novels is mostly attributed to the male character Lucien. As such, his beauty is both promoted through the reference to the previous, Neoclassical aesthetic tradition and disparaged as anachronistic and potentially weakening. His portrait abundantly draws on Greek mythology, since he is compared to mythological gods and ancient historical heroes endowed with feminine physical qualities, such as delicacy, indolence and sensuality. He is compared, for instance, to Bacchus (*Illusions*, 23), Apollo (124, 227), Antinous (124) and a figure of Girodet, which might be Endymion (227).<sup>391</sup> Lucien's initial portrait in *Illusions perdues*, constructed in opposition to his friend David Séchard — a good man, but as ugly as Silenus (23) — is as follows:

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<sup>385</sup> Solomon-Godeau, p. 7, p. 89 and p. 122.

<sup>386</sup> The concept of female beauty, conceived in opposition to male sublimity is already present in Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757); Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 107; Potts, pp. 113–14.

<sup>387</sup> Solomon-Godeau, p. 43 (original emphasis). See also p. 22.

<sup>388</sup> Fend, pp. 141–49.

<sup>389</sup> Potts, p. 125.

<sup>390</sup> Schehr, p. 83.

<sup>391</sup> Suggestion made by Nesci (pp. 152–53).



Lucien se tenait dans la pose gracieuse trouvée par les sculpteurs pour le Bacchus indien. Son visage avait la distinction des lignes de la beauté antique: c'était un front et un nez grecs, la blancheur veloutée des femmes, des yeux noirs tant ils étaient bleus, des yeux pleins d'amour, et dont le blanc le disputait en fraîcheur à celui d'un enfant. Ces beaux yeux étaient surmontés de sourcils comme tracés par un pinceau chinois et bordés de longs cils châains. Le long des joues brillait un duvet soyeux dont la couleur s'harmonisait à celle d'une blonde chevelure naturellement bouclée. Une suavité divine respirait dans ses tempes d'un blanc doré. Une incomparable noblesse était empreinte dans son menton court, relevé sans brusquerie. Le sourire des anges tristes errait sur ses lèvres de corail rehaussées par de belles dents. Il avait les mains de l'homme bien né, des mains élégantes, à un signe desquelles les hommes devaient obéir et que les femmes aiment à baiser. Lucien était mince et de taille moyenne. À voir ses pieds, un homme aurait été d'autant plus tenté de le prendre pour une jeune fille déguisée, que, semblable à la plupart des hommes fins, pour ne pas dire astucieux, il avait les hanches conformées comme celles d'une femme. (23–24)

Lucien's portrait primarily aims to transform him into an artistic masterpiece. A resemblance to sculptures and paintings is underlined in his depiction. It develops across an abundant network of nouns and adjectives denoting artistic perfection, for instance in the choice of colours characterising his features (marble, white and golden). Reviving the Neoclassical tradition of beautiful epebes, Lucien's portrait patently refers to Greek sculpture, emphasising his grace and harmony. While disguised, there is an erotic dimension to Balzac's portrayal of Lucien. The comparison with the god of wine Dionysus-Bacchus, for instance, is ambivalent. As Marie Delcourt has claimed, Dionysus is not only an effeminate epebe in the Hellenistic tradition, but also a bisexual god associated with cross-dressing rites in more ancient traditions.<sup>392</sup> The reference to Bacchus also suggests a connection with another effeminate and potentially homoerotic Greek epebe: Girodet's Endymion, who lies on a panther skin, a Dionysian symbol.<sup>393</sup> So, too, does Lucien's golden and curled hair, similar to that of the young man painted by Girodet. Lucien's effeminacy is also conveyed in his portrait through the qualities of smoothness, suavity and slimness of his general appearance and through the details of his facial characteristics. His femininity becomes more explicit towards the end of the portrait, as the prose draws the reader towards his girlish feet and womanly hips. A wide pelvis was one of the characteristics of the statues of Bacchus and Apollo, embodiments of ideal juvenile beauty according to Winckelmann, who described 'the most beautiful statues' of the god of wine as follows: 'always with delicate, round limbs, and the full expanded hips of the female sex'.<sup>394</sup> This wide pelvis was also a noticeable trait of homosexuals and eunuchs

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<sup>392</sup> Delcourt, p. 20 and pp. 39–42.

<sup>393</sup> Fend, p. 97.

<sup>394</sup> Winckelmann, *History of the Ancient Art*, p. 93. See also Fend, pp. 50–51.

according to Cabanis.<sup>395</sup> Finally, the portrait emphasises Lucien's nobility. His aristocratic origin is physically visible in his hands and his chin, but it is also reflected in his attitude and his 'natural' capacity to be obeyed. In his physiognomy, Lucien has been able to achieve his dream of social promotion. The predominance of Lucien's noble ascendance is a means of re-establishing a link between femininity and the aristocracy, which had been frequently perceived as effeminate since the eighteenth century.<sup>396</sup> In brief, the network of references to Lucien's feminine nature undermines the positive connotation of beauty and questions Lucien's manliness and capacity to rule.

Lucien de Rubempré is not the only young man depicted as beautifully effeminate in the corpus of novels selected for this study. Henri de Marsay in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, Calyste du Guénic in *Béatrix*, Wenceslas Steinbock in *La Cousine Bette*, and Sténio in *Lélia* share the same effeminate, Greek and indolent beauty.<sup>397</sup> Lucien's depiction, however, is the most emblematic. His aesthetic discrepancy in this new Romantic society mirrors other inadequacies, such as weakness and inconstancy. In other words, feminine beauty is not condemned for itself, but because it assimilates Lucien to a woman. His supposedly feminine inner nature, physically displayed in his outer beauty, follows Lavater's principle according to which physiognomy was a reflection of the connection between the soul and the body.<sup>398</sup> Accordingly, the feminine nature of Lucien's beauty discredits him as a manly, powerful and virtuous character, whilst supporting his feminine weakness, as he is inherently idle, vain and foolish (*Illusions*, 83–84, 357).<sup>399</sup> Whilst seducing many women and men within the novels, his beauty is, indeed, suspect and even regarded as deceptive by numerous characters. The dangers of beauty in young men are best expressed by the secret agent La Peyrade to his daughter Lydie:

La beauté chez les hommes n'est pas toujours le signe de la bonté. Les jeunes gens doués d'un extérieur agréable ne rencontrent aucune difficulté au début de la vie, ils ne déploient alors aucun talent, ils sont corrompus par les avances que leur fait le monde, et il faut leur payer plus tard les intérêts de leurs qualités! (*Spendeurs*, 188)

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<sup>395</sup> On wide pelves, see chapter 1, p. 57.

<sup>396</sup> See notably Rauch, pp. 28–30; Clark, p. 12.

<sup>397</sup> See for instance Calyste du Guénic and Henri de Marsay's portraits: *Béatrix*, 125–26; Honoré de Balzac, *La Fille aux yeux d'or* in *Ferragus. La Fille aux yeux d'or*, ed. by Michel Lichtlé (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 2014 [1988]), p. 244 and p. 248. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text (*Fille*).

<sup>398</sup> Mosse, p. 25–27.

<sup>399</sup> The same discrediting strategy of reducing a man to his beauty has recently been used by Pierre Jourde and Éric Naulleau when portraying the French writer Florian Zeller: 'Florian Zeller est beau, dans sa jeunesse. [...] En dehors de cela, Florian Zeller a pour principales caractéristiques, au début du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'être plutôt beau garçon et d'avoir beaucoup de cheveux': *Le Jourde et Naulleau: Précis de littérature du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Mango Littérature, 2008), p. 96.

Balzac's novels challenge La Peyrade's opinion, according to which attractive men do not have to prove their value; neither do they meet obstacles on their path to success. However, as the previous section has argued, beautiful young men do not always succeed and this experience of failure is even more difficult because, following La Peyrade's belief, they have not been prepared for it.

Lucien's beauty is perhaps the most striking characteristic of the protagonist, which overshadows other aspects of his personality. It is grounded in Neoclassical aesthetics, which promoted male and yet effeminate beauty, embodied in mythological figures, such as Apollo, Bacchus and Endymion. Accordingly, the young poet's beauty posits him as an anachronistic and thus maladjusted character during the nineteenth century. Hardly a quality, Lucien's feminine beauty reflects his effete and puerile inner nature, questions his masculinity and highlights his inability to act honourably.

### **The Puerile Man**

A masculine malaise can be conveyed through the idea of childishness, since this association challenges and undermines the masculinity of a man (or a specific male group).<sup>400</sup> As previously noted when analysing the relationship of the young men of the July Monarchy in comparison with their fathers' generation, the former were often associated with children. The symbolic link between paternity and authority is concretised in the *Code civil*, which, in 1804, asserted the authority of the father over his wife and children.<sup>401</sup> Deprived of parental authority (or any sort of authority), a woman owed obedience to her husband (whereas he owed his wife protection) and she had the same legal status as minors and the insane. The *Code civil* corresponds to what Jacques Lacan calls the *Nom-du-Père*, the association of the paternal function with the symbolic function of representative of the Law. As Lacan explains: 'C'est dans le *nom du père* qu'il nous faut reconnaître le support de la fonction symbolique qui, depuis l'orée des temps historiques, identifie sa personne [du père] à la figure de la loi.'<sup>402</sup> Needless to say, Napoleon is a clear embodiment of the Law.

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<sup>400</sup> For example, Melanie Ulz, has shown how Egyptians were depicted as children in Andrea Appiani's painting, *Général Desaix en Égypte* (1801): 'Napoleon and His Colonized "Others": The Demise of Citizenship in Postrevolutionary and Napoleonic History Paintings', in *Representing Masculinity*, pp. 45–66 (p. 49).

<sup>401</sup> See articles 212–26 and 371–87 on conjugal duties and paternal authority: *Code civil des Français, édition originale et seule officielle* (Paris: Imprimerie de la République, 1804), pp. 53–55 and pp. 92–95. For more on the Napoleonic Code and women, see Diana Holmes, *French Women's Writing: 1848–1994* (London and Atlantic Highlands: Athlone, 1996), p. 6; Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 77–78; Bertrand-Jennings, pp. 12–13.

<sup>402</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 'Le champ freudien', 1966), p. 278.

Octave and Lucien, who personify the effeminate young men forced to comply with the *Nom-du-Père*, the Napoleonic Code and the unfair social system analysed in the introduction, are often depicted as children. Mary Orr notes that ‘[t]he Code can be seen to be the Law of the New Fathers determined to keep its children [...] in perennial childhood to prevent a repetition of Revolution’.<sup>403</sup> Lucien’s childishness is perceptible to Vautrin when they first meet, as the escaped convict tells him: ‘Vous êtes un enfant, vous ne connaissez ni les hommes, ni les choses’ (*Illusions*, 508).<sup>404</sup> Likewise, the term *enfant* in *La Confession d’un enfant du siècle* not only highlights Octave’s affiliation to his time; it also emphasises his condition as a lost child.<sup>405</sup> Like Lucien, he displays insecurity because he does not understand the codes of the world in which he lives. Octave’s portrayal of himself as a child attests to the exceptional nature of his confession, given that male writers were often reluctant to write about childhood memories in their autobiographies because a child’s experiences could seem trivial.<sup>406</sup> In contrast, childhood memories were more frequent in women’s memoirs.<sup>407</sup>

Fleeing his failed attempt at debauchery, Octave leaves Paris and settles in the countryside. There, he takes up residence in his father’s house and, since he is unable to live his own life, he adopts that of his father by wearing the latter’s clothes and imitating his habits. Although he pretends to worship independence (*Confession*, 93), the young man’s experience in his father’s house proves that he needs to follow a paternal model to be able to fashion his life. Only by abandoning his autonomy and, as Ronald Grimsley rightly suggested, by returning to the past — that is, regressing — can Octave temporarily find peace and happiness.<sup>408</sup> This serenity is, however, of short duration. His relationship with Brigitte soon becomes the source of new torments. Octave summarises his nature in the internal speech that he pronounces after attempting to kill Brigitte: ‘Je suis un fou, un insensé, un enfant qui s’est cru un homme’ (345). As in the Napoleonic Code, puerility is connected to madness, which implies irresponsibility, as well as the absence of reason. Maija Lehtonen has indeed noted that the word *enfant* is not only used in the novel to connote innocence, especially when Octave applies it to himself in

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<sup>403</sup> Orr, *Madame Bovary*, p. 23.

<sup>404</sup> He also paternalistically calls him ‘enfant’, ‘jeune homme’ and ‘mon Petit’ (*Illusions*, 504, 509, 511–12, 514, 519). Such expressions are also frequently employed by Lélia and Félicité to designate their lovers.

<sup>405</sup> Rosemary Lloyd, surprisingly, considers that the notion of the child that is supported by *enfant du siècle* is hardly compatible with more traditional definitions of the substantive: *The Land of Lost Content: Children and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. viii.

<sup>406</sup> Lloyd, pp. 33–37.

<sup>407</sup> Beauvoir, II, pp. 358–60.

<sup>408</sup> Grimsley, p. 132.

conversations, but also to emphasise his lack of experience and a sense of responsibility.<sup>409</sup> Octave's autonomous ideal is therefore challenged by his need for protection and support.

The association between young men and children constitutes a common marker of a 'crisis' of masculinity.<sup>410</sup> Immaturity is characterised by insouciance; that is, the refusal to acknowledge one's own responsibility. This characteristic is judged to be customary and even positive in children, as they are objectively exempt of responsibilities, but it is noxious for Octave, who is not only an adult, but also his father's heir. Negative in itself, insouciance is also condemned because it degenerates into mischievousness and even cruelty. This behaviour is contrary to the image of purity that is associated with childhood, notably in the Romantic tradition.<sup>411</sup> Octave observes: 'J'avais commencé par me montrer insouciant; j'en vins bientôt à me montrer méchant' (*Confession*, 269; see also 247). Driven mad by jealousy, he is compelled to provoke Brigitte and test her limits, just like a child would, although he knows that she is faithful to him. His offences against Brigitte consist of comparing her with other women. He also forces her to comply with his expectations by imitating his former mistress, even though she was not a good person. Octave's need to humiliate Brigitte is exacerbated when he treats her even less respectfully than he would a prostitute (270). This cruelty, when disclosed within the adult context of sexual intercourse, shows the reappearance of the adult underneath the orphan child and, more importantly, highlights Octave's ambivalence towards his status as a child, as he cannot admit his fragility.

Yet, the absence of a father and/or a mother and feelings of anxiety lead both Octave and Lucien to seek a substitute father or mother figure, a protector who would take charge and make all the important decisions for these carefree protagonists, whilst providing them with love and sentimental security. Roger Bellet points out that Octave's generation not only consists of 'enfants du Siècle', but also 'de la Femme'.<sup>412</sup> The search for a maternal figure is thus as constitutive of a young man's identity as is his relation to his father. Octave seeks substitutes for his absent mother and consequently chooses motherly women to be his mistresses, such as

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<sup>409</sup> Maija Lehtonen, *Essai sur la 'Confession d'un enfant du siècle'* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1982), pp. 25–26.

<sup>410</sup> In relation to the post-war 'crisis', the American psychoanalyst Dan Kiley published a practical handbook in which he described carefree middle-class men characterised by immaturity, irresponsibility, anxiety, narcissism, inability to bond with other persons and conflicts with father or mother figures: *Le syndrome de Peter Pan: Ces hommes qui ont refusé de grandir*, trans. by Jean Duriau (Paris: Laffont, 1985), notably pp. 19–25. The symptoms described by Kiley are not typical of the second half of the twentieth century; they appear to characterise men in 'crisis' during several historical periods, including that of the July Monarchy. Badinter presents quite a similar portrait of the childish man that she calls 'l'homme mou', namely the soft man (pp. 222–26).

<sup>411</sup> Lloyd, esp. p. 65.

<sup>412</sup> Roger Bellet, 'La confession politique des enfants malades du siècle', *Europe: Revue littéraire mensuelle*, 583–84 (November–December 1977), 126–35 (pp. 131–34).

his former mistress and, more successfully, Brigitte.<sup>413</sup> Both of them are older than him and are widows, a marital status that allegedly gives them independence, as they are not subservient to a husband or a father.<sup>414</sup> Despite her motherly virtues — ‘je ne suis pas votre maîtresse tous les jours; il y en a beaucoup où je suis, où je veux être votre mère’ (258) —, Brigitte is nevertheless unable to provide Octave with a sense of security because of his jealousy.

In spite of his quest for a nurturing maternal figure, the young man rejects attempts to be freed from his childish and insecure state. The fourth part of the novel depicts the alternation between quarrels and reconciliations that shape the relationship between Octave and Brigitte. Octave’s jealousy, triggered by a white lie told by his mistress — about a composition of her invention that she attributes to a famous composer (229) —, highlights the fact that he needs to doubt Brigitte’s fidelity in order to define his identity. The puerile man prefers ambiguity over certainty, because the latter would characterise him as an accomplished man, an option that is unbearable to him. This uncertainty takes the form of deferring decisions, for instance, when Octave keeps postponing his trip with Brigitte: ‘nous ne l’avions pas décidé encore [le lieu où nous allons nous ensevelir], et nous trouvions à cette incertitude un plaisir si vif et si nouveau, que nous feignons, pour ainsi dire, de ne pouvoir nous fixer sur rien’ (275). By changing his mind and delaying his decisions, the young man enjoys a kind of irresponsible freedom.

Octave’s love for a woman who embodies in many ways the ideal mother constitutes only one side of his Oedipus complex. The novel also pre-empts Freud, according to whom a young boy not only desires his mother, but also expresses hostility towards his father, deemed to be a rival.<sup>415</sup> However, the novel complexifies this Oedipal relationship because the identity of the fatherly rival is symbolic: the *Nom-du-Père*. None of the ‘real’ male figures constitute convincing rivals. For instance, Octave is posthumously reconciled with his father (by adopting his lifestyle) in an Oedipal approach of identification with his father, rather than in a confrontational relationship. Potential rivals such Brigitte’s husband and her friend (and allegedly former lover) M. de Dalens never appear in the novel — and raise little jealousy in Octave (234–42). Nor is the young man jealous of Brigitte’s friend, Abbot Mercanson; rather, Octave despises him for embodying all the flaws of the *petite-bourgeoisie* — pedantry,

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<sup>413</sup> Grimsley, p. 135; Anthony Rizzuto, ‘Octave in Alfred de Musset’s *La Confession d’un enfant du siècle*’, *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, 24:1 (1977), 83–94 (p. 87); Lehtonen, p. 26 and p. 52; Susan M. Levin, *The Romantic Art of Confession: De Quincey, Musset, Sand, Lamb, Hogg, Frémy, Soulié, Janin* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998), pp. 50–51. The absence of Octave’s mother has been noted by Castagnès (pp. 96–98) and Reid (p. 65). For more on maternal mistresses, see chapter 5, p. 221.

<sup>414</sup> Beauvoir, II, p. 11.

<sup>415</sup> Freud, ‘An Autobiographical Study’, in *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage Books, 1995), pp. 2–41 (p. 22); ‘A Special Type of Choice Made by Men’, p. 392; ‘The Ego and the Id’, pp. 628–58 (p. 640).

hypocrisy and affectation (199–200). Henri Smith, the young man with whom Brigitte falls in love, is Octave’s real rival, but the similarities between the two men are too considerable to deem their relationship to be antagonistic.<sup>416</sup> As Octave’s paternal rival is the *Nom-du-Père* and not a ‘real’ father, it means that the ‘family romance’, to borrow Freud’s words, becomes a social romance.<sup>417</sup> The conflict is shifted towards a social perspective in which what is at stake is not only the possession of the mother, but also the possession of the authority to rule society. Yet, by refusing to choose a career, as well as by his artistic passivity and his imitation of his father’s lifestyle, Octave avoids assuming the kind of responsibility that is supposed to characterise a man.

Although none of the novels within the corpus of novels studied here develop the rivalry between a young man and a (symbolic) father as much as Musset’s novel does, the relationship between a motherly mistress and a younger man appears in many of them. Lisbeth Fischer takes the main decisions regarding Wenceslas Steinbock’s career and adulterous relationships in *La Cousine Bette*, whilst Edmée de Mauprat takes responsibility for her cousin Bernard’s education in *Mauprat*, and Félicité des Touches encourages Calyste du Guénic to discover culture in *Béatrix*. The maternal figure also appears in many July Monarchy narratives, notably in Stendhal’s novels.<sup>418</sup> In *Illusions perdues*, it is, above all, a man and not a woman who plays the role of protector. Vautrin spontaneously gives his protection to the father-orphan Lucien and organises the latter’s life so that he can access the aristocratic life of which he always dreamt, thus giving financial security and discipline to his protégé. Lucien remains passive, agreeing to marry Clotilde de Grandlieu, a girl whom he does not love, and to let his mistress Esther prostitute herself to establish his capital. Previously, in *Illusions perdues*, David Séchard, Ève, Madame de Bargeton, Daniel d’Arthez, Finot, as well as Lousteau and the clique of journalists all acted as Lucien’s mentors, which reveals the poet’s desire for protection and his inability to take control of his life.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> The resemblance between Octave and Smith has also been noted by Reid (p. 69) and Franziska Meier, ‘La “Mort de l’auteur” dans l’écriture autobiographique romantique: À propos du “jeune” François-René de Chateaubriand (*René*) et d’Alfred de Musset (*La Confession d’un enfant du siècle*)’, *French Studies*, 67:3 (July 2013), 323–39 (p. 336).

<sup>417</sup> Freud, ‘Family Romances’, in *The Freud Reader*, pp. 297–300.

<sup>418</sup> Julien Sorel in *Le Rouge et le Noir* and Fabrice del Dongo in *La Chartreuse de Parme* are both attracted to older women. The latter, for instance, is loved by his aunt, Gina Sanseverina, who fulfils maternal needs by protecting him, but also by imposing her views on his ecclesiastical career and his escape from the Farnese tower (although he is happy in jail), while meeting little resistance to her projects. Fabrice is submitted to other women’s will, help and initiatives: the jailer’s wife, the *cantinière*, and the Flemish innkeeper and her daughters provide advice and care during the Waterloo episode. He will later accommodate to the conditions of Clélia Conti, who made the vow to the Madonna of never seeing her lover and therefore only meets him in the dark.

<sup>419</sup> Julia Chamard-Bergeron calls the relationship between Lucien and David, d’Arthez, Lousteau and Vautrin *friendship*. However, she highlights the inequality within it, at least with David, as one gives and the other receives.

As Octave's rejection of Brigitte's sensibility has demonstrated, childlike, narcissistic characters do not always recognise the merits of their protectors. Lucien suffers from his mother's and his sister's rejection of his help when he comes back to Angouleme after failing in Paris (*Illusions*, 466). He interprets it as the cessation of their love for him and the result of their bourgeois lifestyle — 'Elles sont bourgeoises, elles ne peuvent pas me comprendre' (Ibid.) — whereas in fact it derives from their lucidity towards his changeability. Lucien's ingratitude towards his family is sustained by his ingratitude towards his spiritual father Vautrin, whom he betrays when questioned by the magistrate Camusot. Whilst he admits being ungrateful in his farewell letter (*Splendeurs*, 530), he nonetheless accuses Vautrin of being responsible for his suicide in the same letter (531). Discussing the concept of gratitude in the eighteenth century, Patrick Coleman points out that this virtue was thought to reveal one's education and nobility of birth as well as nobility of character.<sup>420</sup> Lucien's ingratitude reveals his failure to be an accomplished man, just as the revocation of his testimony shows his incapacity to assume his own words; that is, to be a man of his words, to borrow from Nigel Harkness's title, *Men of their Words*.

The characteristics of Octave and Brigitte's relationship cannot be applied to that of Lucien and Vautrin. In spite of his paternal and even maternal qualities, as will be demonstrated later, the convict is not the equivalent of Brigitte, since he is not Lucien's official lover, and he embodies a subversive *Nom-du-Père*. The subsequent two sections of this chapter analyse the relationship between the young man and his protector in two ways: the homoerotic dimension of their bond and the reversal of the patriarchal order through the character of Vautrin.

### **The Protégé as a Figure of Homosexuality**

When discussing the sexual ambiguity of the relations between protector and protégé, Balzac's novels develop a critical discourse based on the stereotypes traditionally associated with homosexuality in order to subvert them. As Schehr has argued: 'Dans un monde ostensiblement hétérosexuel, Balzac rend les positions d'adresse, de sexualité, et de genre tout à fait *queer*'.<sup>421</sup> When Vautrin, as Carlos Herrera, meets Lucien at the end of *Illusions perdues*, he offers him a

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Therefore, it is preferable to consider these relationships to be based on protection: "Vous croyez aux amis": L'amitié dans *Illusions perdues*, *L'Année balzacienne*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 10 (2009), 283–313 (p. 287). Finot anticipates Vautrin by offering a 'demonic' pact to Lucien: 'vous êtes à moi, n'est-ce pas?' (278).

<sup>420</sup> Patrick Coleman, *Anger, Gratitude and the Enlightenment Writer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 20.

<sup>421</sup> Lawrence R. Schehr, 'Homme-diégèse', in *Balzac ou la tentation de l'impossible*, ed. by Robert Mahieu and Franc Schuerewegen (Paris: SEDES, 1998), pp. 135–41 (p. 141; original emphasis).



pact: ‘si tu veux signer le pacte, me donner une seule preuve d’obéissance, elle est grande, je la veux! eh! bien la diligence de Bordeaux portera quinze mille francs à ta sœur...’ (520).<sup>422</sup> This proof of obedience has raised considerable controversy among readers when discussing Vautrin’s and Lucien’s sexuality. For some readers, there is no doubt that Lucien is a homosexual and that the pact is a strictly sexual one; on the other hand, the homoerotic nature of Lucien and Vautrin’s relationship is highly dubious for others.<sup>423</sup> Whilst Michael Lucey considers that those who openly mention Lucien’s homosexuality are too adamant, his analysis nonetheless asserts that the sexual nature of the ‘preuve’ is obvious.<sup>424</sup> In so doing, however, Lucey overlooks the strategy of avoidance that is adopted by Balzac who chooses to be vague about this relationship.

The interest in Lucien and Vautrin’s relationship does not lie in the knowledge of its exact nature (in other words, whether or not they have a sexual relationship), but rather in the self-censorship adopted by the narrator to discuss their bond and discredit Lucien as an insecure young man. This censorship shares similarities with that employed by nineteenth-century scientists in their discourses about homosexuality and sodomy. The resemblances between scientific and literary texts are not restricted to the topic of homosexuality, but are also connected to the way in which homosexuality is constructed as a topic. The discursive strategies adopted by Balzac’s narrator use the same stereotypes of weakness and effeminacy as those that were associated with homosexuals in scientific writings in order to question Lucien’s suitability to take an active part in society. The present section analyses how Balzac’s strategy of *avoidance-discourse*, according to which doctors admit the existence of a ‘vice’ in their writings but are reluctant to be more specific regarding its nature, echoes and, above all, challenges the ambivalent position of the upper classes where this topic is concerned.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> For more on the pact in *Illusions perdues*, see Mireille Labouret, ‘Méphistophélès et l’Androgyne: Les figures du pacte dans *Illusions perdues*’, *L’Année balzacienne*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 17 (1996), 211–30; André Vanoncini, ‘Le pacte: Structures et évolutions d’un motif balzacien’, *L’Année balzacienne*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 3 (2002), 279–92 (p. 284); Chamard-Bergeron, pp. 305–11.

<sup>423</sup> The debate is summarised by Philippe Berthier, ‘Balzac du côté de Sodome’, *L’Année balzacienne*, 1<sup>st</sup> ser. (1979), 147–77 (pp. 153–54); Michael Lucey, *The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social Forms of Sexuality* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 186. Whilst admitting Vautrin’s homosexuality, Barbéris rejects the homoerotic character of Lucien and Vautrin’s couple (*Le monde de Balzac*, pp. 431–37). Likewise, D. A. Miller refers to ‘Vautrin’s Platonized homosexuality’: ‘Balzac’s Illusions Lost and Found’, *Yale French Studies*, 67 (1984), 164–81 (p. 175).

<sup>424</sup> Lucey, p. 186.

<sup>425</sup> See Nigel Smith’s terminology, pp. 86–87. Similarly, in his introduction to the volume of *Romantisme* dedicated to ‘Sodome et Gomorrhe’, Bordas points to the practice of allusion and *sous-entendu* in the discourse about homosexuality (p. 8). Diana Knight uses Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* to refer to the notion of secrecy that is intrinsic to discourses about homosexuality: ‘Skeletons in the Closet: Homosocial Secrets in Balzac’s *La Comédie Humaine*’, *French Studies*, 57:2 (April 2003), 167–80 (esp. p. 172). Berthier mentions the fact that Vautrin loves men ‘dans les trous du discours’ (p. 153).

Chapter 1 has highlighted how male homosexuality was associated with effeminacy in scientific writings, notably in Tardieu's excerpt in which he described homosexuals' alleged obsession with clothes, accessories, jewels, perfumes and make-up. This representation of homosexuals echoes not only the emphasis on feminine beauty in Lucien de Rubempré's portrait, but also d'Albert and Henri de Marsay's inclination for fashion and the numerous hours that they dedicate to their *toilette*, like the men described by Lauvergne and Esquirol.<sup>426</sup> D'Albert's *coquetterie* in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is a striking example of this phenomenon:

— Il m'est revenu que beaucoup d'entre eux avaient amèrement critiqué ma façon de me mettre, et avaient dit que je m'habillais d'une manière trop efféminée: que mes cheveux étaient bouclés et lustrés avec plus de soin qu'il ne convenait; que cela, joint à ma figure imberbe, me donnait un air damoiseau on ne peut plus ridicule; que j'affectais pour mes vêtements des étoffes riches et brillantes qui sentaient leur théâtre, et que je ressemblais plus à un comédien qu'à un homme: — toutes les banalités qu'on dit pour se donner le droit d'être sale et de porter des habits pauvres et mal coupés. (*Maupin*, 115)

D'Albert's physical femininity is notably revealed through the fact that he is beardless. It was generally considered that a beard and a moustache were visible signs of manhood and their absence could potentially suggest homosexuality.<sup>427</sup> His effeminacy is also presented as a choice, as he deliberately accentuates his feminine looks by dressing like a woman, according to his rivals. Like the homosexuals described by Tardieu and Lauvergne, d'Albert wears colourful fabrics, shiny accessories and curls his hair. Interestingly, his feminine appearance is deemed to be that of an actor, which recalls the principle of performativity analysed in chapter 2. In contrast, virility is seen to be devoid of affectation, excusing both unclean clothes and poor taste in attire.

The similar expressions that appear in both scientific treatises and literary texts show that the overt effeminacy of homosexuals was an *idée reçue* during the early nineteenth century. For instance, in *Illusions perdues*, d'Arthez writes to Ève Séchard to dismiss her concerns about Lucien's possible criminality: 'Rassurez-vous, Lucien n'ira jamais jusqu'au crime, il n'en aurait pas la force' (406–07), whereas the physician of the *bagne* of Toulon Lauvergne affirms in his *Forçats* that effete convicts 'ne tueront pas comme assassins, puisqu'une femme n'en a pas la force physique!' (299). The impossibility of committing murder — since such an act requires physical strength which is not supposed to exist in either women or men sharing similarities

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<sup>426</sup> For example, the scene of de Marsay's *toilette* in *Fille*, 266; *Maupin*, 89. On effeminacy in scientific texts about homosexuality, see chapter 1, pp. 56–59.

<sup>427</sup> Sohn, pp. 27–28; Corbin, 'Introduction', p. 8; Revenin, 'Homosexualité et virilité', p. 398.

with women — is the common intertextual thread linking the ideas found in Balzac and Lauvergne. The resemblance between the two expressions suggests the common belief that effeminate convicts, women, physical weakness and the inability to commit murder could be grouped together under the same banner.

Balzac's use of the scientists' strategy of *avoidance-discourse* goes even further than the scientific treatises by neglecting to refer to male homosexuality where such a reference would be expected. Balzac's in-depth description of the galleries of the Palais-Royal (*Illusions*, 209–14; see also *Splendeurs*, 59–60) emphasises the fact that these galleries are a place for female prostitution. However, the description omits to mention, or even to allude to, the fact that they were also an important space for male prostitution and homosexual subculture since the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>428</sup> Although this absence of common knowledge hardly constitutes incontestable evidence of Balzac's reluctance to refer to homosexuality, such omission is nonetheless surprising. It is likely that Balzac knew about the existence of male prostitutes since their presence raised many complaints from shopkeepers and locals at the time.<sup>429</sup> Its omission only suggests that self-censorship was practised by Balzac where issues with regard to homosexuality were concerned.

Another strategy used by the narrator of *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* bears a resemblance to the discourse of scientists, but with different effects. Some physicians chose to write the most explicit extracts about homosexuality in Latin (notably those describing anal penetration).<sup>430</sup> This strategy, which Nigel Smith terms the *disguise-discourse*, intends 'to protect the sensibility and the morality of readers, and [...] to flaunt knowledge of the secret and thus assert power'.<sup>431</sup> Balzac's narrator also chooses a language that is not understood by everyone, namely prison slang. In this case, his choice is justified by the fact that some characters within the narrative use this language. The convicts, recognising their fellow Jacques Collin, ask him whether he came to the Conciergerie to free his *tante*, Théodore Calvi, who has been sentenced to death. In order to explain the meaning of *tante*, the narrator tells an allegedly true story:

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<sup>428</sup> Sibalis, pp. 117–29 (esp. pp. 121–23 for the July Monarchy period); Peniston, p. 131. For more on the descriptions of the galleries, see Régine Borderie, 'Esthétique du bizarre: *Illusions perdues*', *L'Année balzacienne*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 6 (2005), 175–98 (pp. 190–97) and Byatt, pp. 396–97.

<sup>429</sup> Sibalis, pp. 121–22.

<sup>430</sup> Aron and Kempf (p. 57), as well as Nigel Smith (p. 88), give the example of a Dr Moll using Latin in his texts. *Disguise-discourse* is not limited to anal intercourse. When having to describe what happens to a woman's body during sexual intercourse with a man, Moreau de la Sarthe quotes a text of Haller called 'Quae feminis in coitus accident' ['The things which may happen to women during intercourse'] and written in Latin, 'dans une langue où la décence ne s'oppose point à la liberté et à l'exactitude de l'expression' (II, 162).

<sup>431</sup> Nigel Smith, pp. 87–88.

Pour donner une vague idée du personnage que les reclus, les argousins et les surveillants appellent *une tante*, il suffira de rapporter ce mot magnifique du directeur d'une des maisons centrales au feu lord Durham, qui visita toutes les prisons pendant son séjour à Paris.

[...]

'Je ne mène pas là Votre Seigneurie, dit-il, car c'est le quartier des *tantes*...

— *Hao!* fit lord Durham, et qu'est-ce?

— C'est le troisième sexe, milord.' (*Splendeurs*, 599; original emphasis)

This anecdote explains the significance of the slang word *tante* — a male homosexual prisoner, as explained in chapter 1 — by using an enigmatic phrase.<sup>432</sup> The 'troisième sexe' entry in Courouve's dictionary of male homosexuality shows that this expression was not common in Balzac's time.<sup>433</sup> Like the Latin texts, Balzac's anecdote arouses the curiosity of the reader because the reference to sex between men is veiled.<sup>434</sup>

Yet, the self-censorship practised by Balzac does not simply aim to protect the sensibility and the morality of his readers, but also to assert his power, and, as Philippe Berthier has pointed out, to imprison the prisoner in the exotic role of social and sexual pervert by using slang.<sup>435</sup> Certainly, Balzac enters into a relation of superiority and seduction with the readers of his novels who, as Lise Queffelec has claimed, were perceived as female or feminised during the July Monarchy.<sup>436</sup> Judith Lyon-Caen's analysis of the letters sent to Balzac by readers reveals nonetheless that his readership was more varied and included readers of both sexes and from different social milieux.<sup>437</sup> The main purpose of this almost erotic auctorial bond is therefore to generate connivance with those able to grasp the meaning of the story. Balzac thus creates a homosocial bond with his potential male readers.<sup>438</sup> This conniving and seductive bond between the author and the reader is reminiscent of the relationship between Vautrin and Lucien — where Balzac would be linked with the convict and the reader would be linked with his protégé — and means that a connection between the two men is not blameworthy in itself. Rather, what is condemned is the uncertainty that characterises Lucien's identity and the indecisive nature of his relationships with men. Chapter 1 showed scientists' interest in

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<sup>432</sup> See chapter 1, p. 55, footnote 188.

<sup>433</sup> Courouve, 'Troisième sexe', pp. 212–16.

<sup>434</sup> Nigel Smith, p. 88.

<sup>435</sup> Berthier, p. 149.

<sup>436</sup> Lise Queffelec, 'Le lecteur du roman comme lectrice: Stratégies romanesques et stratégies critiques sous la Monarchie de Juillet', *Romantisme*, 53 (1986), 9–21 (pp. 10–11 and p. 17). See also Lyon-Caen, p. 90.

<sup>437</sup> Lyon-Caen, notably pp. 136–37.

<sup>438</sup> Rivers points to the importance of a homosocial bond between a male author and a male reader for *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (pp. 18–19).

identifying and categorising individuals according to their genitalia and activities. Accordingly, Lucien's uncertain sexual and gendered identity challenges society's need for clarity.

Neither openly blamed, nor praised, Vautrin and Lucien's bond generates paradoxical discourses throughout *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*. On the one hand, the Balzacian narrator denounces the hypocrisy of the characters; on the other hand, he adheres to the morals of his time by reproducing their very hypocrisy, as he also avoids being explicit about the nature of their relationship, when he uses the word *ami* rather than *amant* to 'translate' slang (*Splendeurs*, 601, 606). Characters of the novel, like the omniscient narrator, use the strategy of *avoidance-discourse* and are disinclined to designate explicitly the nature of the links that unite Vautrin and Lucien. Twice during a conversation, some characters are about to pronounce a compromising word, but choose another word, one that is more socially acceptable, to describe the relationship between the two men. Firstly, Madame Camusot, the wife of the investigating magistrate, visits Lucien's ex-mistress, Diane de Maufrigneuse, in order to ensure her husband's promotion. She reveals to the duchess that it is likely that Vautrin 'a mis en lieu sûr les lettres les plus compromettantes des maîtresses de son... — Son ami, dit vivement la duchesse' (650–51). Madame Camusot, out of decency, hesitates to qualify the bond between the poet and the convict in front of the duchess. Diane de Maufrigneuse is, however, able to understand what her interlocutor has implied, as the sharpness of her reply suggests. It is inadmissible for her to hear a friend of hers (and above all an ex-lover) being named as the lover of a convict, or, indeed, to hear any other analogous expression. Secondly, very soon after the meeting between the two women, Camusot and Monsieur de Grandville, the general Prosecutor, discuss the case of Vautrin. Camusot explains: 'Il [Vautrin] est en ce moment auprès de votre condamné à mort [Théodore Calvi], qui fut jadis au bagne pour lui ce que Lucien était à Paris... son protégé!' (669).<sup>439</sup> The magistrate practises self-censorship in order not to offend Grandville by insinuating that a person who belongs to the aristocracy, as he does, has the same morals as a convict, even though the relationship between Vautrin and Calvi was made quite explicit in the text. In both cases, speakers seem to renounce designating the relationship between Lucien and Vautrin as homoerotic. In having his characters adopt this strategy, Balzac not only imitates contemporary society, but also suggests that homosexuality, deemed to be a threat to the social order, cannot be avoided by simply refusing to name it.

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<sup>439</sup> There are numerous other examples of euphemism in the novel that characterise Lucien and Vautrin's relationship: Lucien is 'le compagnon intime d'un forçat évadé' for the narrator (427), 'l'ami, l'élève d'un forçat évadé' for Prosecutor Grandville (521) and Madame de Sérizy mentions the 'mariage de ce forçat avec Lucien de Rubempré' (554). See also the warden's ironical answer to the doctor's observation about Vautrin's paternity (569–70).

Lucey has also noted this discursive strategy, but does not establish any correlation with scientific writings. He thus neglects the contextual dimension of Balzac's writing because the avoidance strategy that Balzac gives to his characters is typical of the discourse about homosexuals during the first half of the nineteenth century. Above all, Lucey overestimates the importance of the word *tante*, when he argues: 'Given that everyone in the justice system knows this word [*tante*], what it means, and how to use it, it is quite interesting to note how close people come to applying it to Lucien, without ever quite daring to do so.'<sup>440</sup> Certainly, Grandville, Camusot and even his wife, who is involved in her husband's work out of self-interest, would be familiar with prison slang, but it is doubtful that Madame de Maufrigneuse would have heard of such a word. Moreover, the word *protégé* itself, used by Camusot, is not devoid of ambiguity. In *La Cousine Bette*, Crevel, who courts Adeline Hulot, asks her: 'savez-vous que votre monstre d'homme [son mari] a *protégé* Jenny Cadine, à l'âge de treize ans?' (34; original emphasis). The emphasis on *protégé* implies that M. Hulot has helped Jenny to start her acting career in exchange for her favours. *Protégé*, in the world of *La Comédie humaine*, is thus a socially acceptable synonym for *lover*, whose homoerotic connotations are comprehensible, even for upper-class interlocutors, when talking about two men.

The text thus shifts back and forth between two universes and their own jargons: one in which relationships between two men are acceptable and designated accordingly (but this universe is probably unknown to the readers who can only establish their understanding on the clues given by the text) and one in which these relations are unacceptable and which does not consequently have an appropriate vocabulary at its disposal. Balzac's text, nonetheless, shows that vocabulary from the upper classes is not innocent and, through understatement and comparison with heterosexual relationships, manages to develop a level of explicitness that catches up with the penitentiary vocabulary. In other words, it is not the homoerotic nature of Lucien and Vautrin's bond that aristocrats reject, but rather the directness of the vocabulary of homosexuality and the 'flaws' with which homosexuality is symbolically associated. However, Balzac's text reveals that the avoidance strategy, which is typical of the social discourse about homosexuality emphasises the very weakness that it is supposed to conceal; the uncertainty regarding young men's gendered identity is paradoxically highlighted by the veils of mysteries that surround homosexuality.

Lucien, who is presented as insecure, emotionally unstable (as he is torn between Esther, Clothilde de Grandlieu, Madame de Maufrigneuse, Madame de Sérizy and Vautrin) and who is

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<sup>440</sup> Lucey, p. 219.

implicitly disparaged for his homosexuality, is doomed to failure. He is unable to be a substitute for the Law, as his intrinsic weaknesses, depicted through the means of femininity, inconstancy and alleged homosexuality, have undermined his ability to exercise power and authority in a patriarchal society and to criticise this society. The date chosen for his suicide (15 May 1830), shortly before the promulgation of the conservative Ordinances of Saint-Cloud and therefore before the political and social commitment of the Parisians during the July Revolution, reveals his social and political incapacity. It shows that the revitalisation of the social order can come neither from Lucien, Octave or other young men, nor from the patriarchal elites, who were either senile, like the Napoleonic soldiers, or portrayed as clinging to the privileges of the Ancien Régime.<sup>441</sup> The only character who embodies a way forward for this post-imperial society is Vautrin, a protagonist who is as openly homosexual as it was possible to be in 1840s literary fiction.<sup>442</sup>

### **The Reconciled Man**

The leap from Lucien to Vautrin is performed by the convict himself, who invites the reader to assimilate the two characters. He deliberately creates a confused identity when expressing his desire to become Lucien ('je me ferai vous', *Illusions*, 515; 'Ce beau jeune homme, c'est moi!'; 519). He aspires to be Lucien since he perceives the poet as an example of perfection because of his beauty, his youth and his aristocratic origins. However, Vautrin surpasses Lucien as a direct result of the convict's adaptability. As will be shown in this section, this quality is notably based on his ability to reconcile both his masculine and feminine sides and therefore allows him to support the changes in society and to assert his social role.<sup>443</sup>

Although there is neither a defence nor a valorisation of homosexuality within the novels, Balzac envisages the possibility for a man to assume his homosexuality through the character of Vautrin. As a member of the underworld, as well as an escaped convict and a Machiavellian figure (*Splendeurs*, 411, 650), Vautrin is the villain of *La Comédie humaine* par excellence. However, there is, overall, no disapproving judgement made against him. Indeed,

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<sup>441</sup> David Séchard's father, a mean man who swindles his own son in *Illusions perdues*, and Mercanson, the pedantic and hypocritical priest in *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, also attest to the rejection of the patriarchal model.

<sup>442</sup> Vautrin 'n'aime pas les femmes' (*Goriot*, 233) and complains about '[I]es hommes assez bêtes pour aimer une femme' (*Splendeurs*, 627). According to Knight, he is 'the only explicitly self-identified homosexual in the whole of *La Comédie humaine*' (p. 171).

<sup>443</sup> Other convicts in our corpus appear as models of masculinity. Trenmor, the friend of Lélia, is a repentant former convict who gives the image of masculinity at rest, while Claude Gueux is a quiet convict who kills a bullying warden.

as will be demonstrated, his homosexuality is precisely what spares him. The protector/protégé couple incarnated by Vautrin and Lucien is characterised by a relationship of opposition. Whilst Lucien's alleged homosexuality is notably conveyed through his feminisation and is therefore criticised as a sign of weakness and insecurity, Vautrin's virility is never questioned. He is clearly depicted as an embodiment of masculine values.

The process through which Vautrin's virilisation operates uses the same narrative strategies as that of Lucien's effeminacy; that is, by referring to ancient mythology. Rather than suggesting the beauty and grace of ephebes, references to Greek and Roman heroes here recall the image of strength, which is typical of the manly ideal according to Mosse. In *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, Vautrin is undressed in front of Camusot. The narrator comments on the scene as follows: 'on put admirer un torse velu d'une puissance cyclopéenne. C'était l'Hercule Farnèse de Naples sans sa colossale exagération' (479; see also 70, 411, 499, 562, 601; *Illusions*, 516). The mythological hero Hercules is a patent symbol of manly strength, as well as of virile attractiveness. Although old and ugly — his face is covered with scars (*Splendeurs*, 70, 322) —, Vautrin's body is eroticised. Magistrates and witnesses constantly expect him to remove his clothes (484–85), officially to check the mark of the *bagne* on his shoulder. When Madame Poiret, who used to live in the same house as Vautrin at the time of *Le Père Goriot*, asks to see his bare chest in order to recognise him, she provokes the hilarity of Camusot and the clerk (and of Vautrin himself), whereas they do not question their own fascination for his naked body. Like Lucien, Vautrin is able to seduce both sexes, with his manly attributes that include Herculean shoulders and a hirsute torso.<sup>444</sup>

The third section of *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, 'Où mènent les mauvais chemins', and the respective cross-examinations of Vautrin and his accomplice reveal the fundamental opposition of character between the protector and the protégé. Lucien demonstrates his weakness, when harassed by Camusot, and admits not only the real identity of the so-called Carlos Herrera, but also the suspect provenance of the false priest's money. In contrast, Vautrin is so resourceful and assertive during the interrogation that the magistrate cannot help but question his own certainties. The reader accordingly feels a sense of complicity with the convict, while deploring Lucien's lack of ingenuity. The text lays heavy emphasis on the difference between the poet and the man of action (an obvious allusion to Lucien and

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<sup>444</sup> For more on Lucien's seduction, see Lucey, p. 216; Patrick Berthier, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, p. 497, footnote 1; Chamard-Bergeron, p. 288. See also Marguerite Drevon and Jeannine Guichardet's article in which they detail ambiguous friendships in *La Comédie humaine* and concentrate especially on that of Lucien and Vautrin: 'Fameux sexorama', *L'Année balzacienne*, 1<sup>st</sup> ser. (1972), 257–74 (pp. 264–66).



Vautrin): ‘l’un se livre au sentiment pour le reproduire en images vives, il ne juge qu’après; tandis que l’autre sent et juge à la fois’ (509). The leonine courage that the convict has shown is opposed to the attitude of the nearly slaughtered animal that characterises Lucien (Ibid.). The text also denounces, through Lucien, the inability of young men to use the resources with which they have been endowed. Lucien is an educated, clever man, but he is unable to use his mind in practical situations, in accordance with Richard Terdiman’s observation that the French educational system did not prepare young people for the realities of life.<sup>445</sup> Conversely, Vautrin does not benefit from the same educational background, yet his experience has taught him to be audacious and to use common sense. All things considered, Vautrin’s masculinity is not only an expression of strength, violence and action, it is above all a vector of resourcefulness, cunning and capacity to cope with adversity — virile qualities that can correspond to the Latin *virtus* and that are necessary for playing an active role in society.

Despite his ingratitude, Lucien admits, quite reluctantly, the superiority of his protector in his farewell letter (*Splendeurs*, 530–32; reproduced with variations in 570–72), which acknowledges the failure of the poet (a failure that is confirmed by his suicide). Lucien’s style is ambivalent, probably because the false abbot, to whom the letter is addressed, is not the only recipient of the letter; the poet assumes that it will also be read by Camusot or another representative of the justice system. The ambivalence of Lucien’s letter also lies in the expression of mixed feelings towards his protector. It oscillates between the formal *vous* and the affectionate *tu*. Like Vautrin, Lucien endorses the emotional filiation between them (‘fils spirituel’, 530; ‘paternelle tendresse’, 532), whilst denying any paternal links. When Camusot previously told him that Vautrin claimed to be his father, Lucien was not only shocked by the usurpation of identity, but also perhaps because of the incest that this lie implied (507–08). The tone of the letter changes when, after deploring his ingratitude towards his protector and his inability to fulfil Vautrin’s ambitious projects, Lucien’s portrayal of his mentor reveals his fascination for Vautrin’s evil side and his awe for his ‘poésie du mal’ (531). The poet reminds Vautrin of his claim when they met in *Illusions perdues* that he belongs to the posterity of both Cain and Abel: good to his friends and cruel to his enemies (*Illusions*, 516). Lucien likens the so-called abbot with a demon and a lion (a typical comparison in the novel, but here containing

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<sup>445</sup> Terdiman, p. 204.

an ideal of cruelty that is absent elsewhere), before comparing Vautrin to Napoleon and to other grandiose historical figures:<sup>446</sup>

Il y a la postérité de Caïn et celle d'Abel [...]. Caïn, dans le grand drame de l'Humanité, c'est l'opposition. [...] Parmi les démons de cette filiation, il s'en trouve, de temps en temps, de terribles, à organisations vastes, qui résument toutes les forces humaines [...]. Ces gens-là sont dangereux dans la Société comme des lions le seraient en pleine Normandie [...]. Quand Dieu le veut, ces êtres mystérieux sont Moïse, Attila, Charlemagne, Mahomet ou Napoléon; mais, quand il laisse rouiller au fond de l'océan d'une génération ces instruments gigantesques, ils ne sont plus que Pugatcheff, Robespierre, Louvel et l'abbé Carlos Herrera. (*Splendeurs*, 531)

Vautrin is aligned with one of those mysterious and dangerous men meant for a great fate, like Napoleon; but, unlike the Emperor, he is seen as having been abandoned by God. Lucien emphasises not only Vautrin's ability to fascinate, but also the danger that he represents and the fear that he arouses (531). This comparison with Napoleon links Vautrin with patriarchal traditions, whilst the difference between them underlines the subversion of patriarchal leadership.<sup>447</sup> The criminal is a proteiform character who combines his malice, inherited from his Cain filiation, with his Abel side, defined by empathy and generosity. In other words, rather than being characterised by either uncompromised manliness or excessive effeminacy, Vautrin is able to combine the qualities that are supposed to be typical of each: tenderness and aggressiveness. Like hermaphrodites such as Madeleine, his success lies in his ability to reconcile the contrary natures within himself.

Yet, the nature of Vautrin's feelings for Lucien and, more generally, for beautiful young men (Eugène de Rastignac in *Le Père Goriot* and Théodore Calvi in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*) is often seen as problematic and reduced to anti-authoritarian behaviour.<sup>448</sup> Certainly, the polemical dimension of their relationship is important, but must not conceal the fact that the depiction of Vautrin's same-sex love mostly attempts to redefine social relations and, specifically, parental relations. Indeed, Vautrin and Lucien's relationship subverts homosocial bonds because it combines homoeroticism and parental affection. The qualities displayed by the criminal, namely tenderness and protectiveness, are salient in what Badinter

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<sup>446</sup> Jeannine Guichardet has analysed the character of Vautrin as the greatest 'doublure' of Napoleon in *La Comédie humaine*: 'Doublures historiques en scène parisienne', *L'Année balzacienne*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 5 (1984), 307–25 (pp. 322–25).

<sup>447</sup> Vautrin is not devoid of patriarchal aspirations: 'J'ai besoin de deux cent mille francs, parce que je veux deux cents nègres, afin de satisfaire mon goût pour la vie patriarcale' (*Goriot*, 168).

<sup>448</sup> Philippe Berthier, p. 170. Gerald H. Storz also considers that 'the homosexual figure comes to represent a major revolutionary force': 'The Homosexual Paradigm in Balzac, Gide, and Genet', in *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts/Critical Texts*, ed. by George Stambolian and Elaine Marks, pref. by Richard Howard (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990 [1979]), pp. 186–209 (p. 186).

has named *l'homme réconcilié*, 'le *gentle man* [sic] qui sait allier solidité et sensibilité'.<sup>449</sup> Vautrin is a reconciled man, not only because he reconciles 'certaines choses qui sont ou qui semblent opposées', but also because this reconciliation is a reconciliation with himself; that is, a means of being at peace with himself, by allowing him to reinvent his identity.<sup>450</sup> Badinter has called for a paternal revolution, which would valorise the role of the father in the process of parenting, as long as he is able to express his femininity when nurturing his offspring.<sup>451</sup>

Seen in this light, would Vautrin be the ideal modern father? *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* is not far from pointing us towards the conclusion that he would. The new man defined by Badinter, emerging during a time of social uncertainty, resembles the former convict of the 1830s and 1840s who is able to transcend his criminal status and become a loving father — or a fatherly lover. Certainly, Vautrin does not become a good man thanks to Lucien (he will keep exercising his Machiavellian mind until the end of the novel), but his love modifies readers' interpretation of the character, as they are explicitly invited to admire Vautrin by an oxymoron that highlights the paradoxical nature of the convict: 'n'est-il pas monstrueusement beau par son attachement digne de la race canine envers celui dont il fait son ami?' (*Splendeurs*, 563). Moreover, his dog-like, faithful love can be compared to the love of his former neighbour Goriot for his ungrateful daughters, as this model of fatherhood was also likened to a dog.<sup>452</sup> Vautrin thus becomes another 'Christ de la Paternité' (*Goriot*, 282). Like Badinter's ideal father, Vautrin is able to combine paternal and maternal love. Indeed, when he learns of Lucien's death, he tells the doctor and the warden of the prison: 'Vous n'êtes pères [...] que d'une manière; ... je suis mère, aussi!' (*Splendeurs*, 569). Similarly, his desperate embrace of Lucien's dead body has rightly been interpreted as an allusion to the representation of a *Pietà*.<sup>453</sup> Moreover, his pathetic speech to Prosecutor Grandville, in which he expresses his affection through tender appellations such as 'ce cher enfant' and 'le petit' (677–78; see also 564–65), not only aims at gaining his interlocutor's sympathy by showing love and suffering for Lucien, but also demonstrates the extent of his affection, in opposition to his image of the rough master of the underworld.<sup>454</sup> Vautrin defines his role as maternal and behaves like a devoted mother to Lucien (*Splendeurs*, 99, 573; *Illusions*, 504).

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<sup>449</sup> Badinter, p. 239. On *l'homme réconcilié*, see pp. 239–74.

<sup>450</sup> 'Réconcilier', in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn (1835), II, p. 584.

<sup>451</sup> Badinter, pp. 247–71.

<sup>452</sup> For a reference to dog-like love, see also *Goriot*, 178. The similarity between them is also noted by Barbéris (*Le monde de Balzac*, pp. 434–35) and Guichardet (p. 323).

<sup>453</sup> Philippe Berthier, p. 165. Drevon and Guichardet highlight the contrast between Vautrin's attitude and that of Lisbeth Fischer, who abandons her friend Valérie Marneffe when she is dying (p. 262).

<sup>454</sup> Lucey, pp. 216–18. See also Philippe Berthier, p. 173.

Philippe Berthier is thus right to point to the intensity of the relationships between men in prison in Balzac's novel.<sup>455</sup> Vautrin's relationships with his protégés, within or without prison, are more intense than those of other protectors. The same generosity is directed towards Théodore Calvi, Lucien's predecessor, then successor in Vautrin's heart. The Head of Security Bibi-Lupin, also a former convict, claims that Jacques Collin used to make 'de bien belles *patarasses*' for Calvi (*Splendeurs*, 610; original emphasis). Those are, as the text explains (Ibid.), pads of tow and cloth to protect the convict's flesh from the rings of the chain. This anecdote contradicts D. A. Miller's claim that Vautrin is only sexually involved with Calvi.<sup>456</sup> His love is subversive because it reproduces ideal parental love, whilst the convict simultaneously expects favours in return.

The final part of *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* displays the integration of the former convict Vautrin into the social order. He becomes the new Head of Security; that is, the representative of the *Nom-du-Père*, by making a bargain with Prosecutor Grandville (he gives him the compromising letters that the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and the Comtesse de Sérizy wrote to their lover Lucien). The narrator concludes the novel as follows: 'Après avoir exercé ses fonctions pendant environ quinze ans, Jacques Collin s'est retiré vers 1845' (726). Vautrin has thus been appointed Head of Security just before the July Revolution and has exercised his career during most of the July Monarchy. For Philippe Berthier, the fact that a criminal is the representative of the Law highlights the loss of order of this period.<sup>457</sup> However, as Lucey has observed, it is the context of the Restoration (Charles X is about to promulgate the Ordinances of Saint-Cloud) that allows the King and the aristocratic prosecutor to hire a criminal.<sup>458</sup> Such an appointment would not have been possible during the July Monarchy, in which the collusion between Law and Aristocracy was not as strong.

The conclusion of *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* suggests a peaceful career for Vautrin and an *embourgeoisement* of his character, although it is incorrect to assert, as Storzer does, that Vautrin had to lose his (homo)sexual identity to be integrated into society.<sup>459</sup> On the contrary, he does not renounce his relationship with young men, and notably Calvi, to access his new functions. It is also erroneous to consider his appointment to be a decline of character, as André Vanoncini suggests when calling him a 'banal défenseur du contrat social'.<sup>460</sup> Vautrin

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<sup>455</sup> Philippe Berthier, p. 150.

<sup>456</sup> Miller, p. 177.

<sup>457</sup> Philippe Berthier, p. 175.

<sup>458</sup> Lucey, p. 221.

<sup>459</sup> Storzer, pp. 189–90. In contrast, Saint-Paulien considers that it is not Vautrin, but society that has demeaned itself to Vautrin's level (p. 268).

<sup>460</sup> Vanoncini, p. 291.

is mentioned in *La Cousine Bette* (431–32) during a conversation between Victorin Hulot and Jacqueline Collin, the aunt of the ex-convict. This reference reveals that he has kept his subversive nature, since he is keen on organising the murder of Valérie Marneffe and Crével to preserve the familial order, under the threat of Lisbeth Fischer and Valérie. Vautrin, the former criminal and convict, becomes involved with the Minister for War, a former Napoleonic soldier, to become the defender of the recommendation ‘la Famille, c’est sacré’ (435).<sup>461</sup> His Herculean appearance predisposes him to be a champion of French values, just as Hercules was for a time the symbol of the French Republic.<sup>462</sup> His characteristic identity — namely his homosexuality and criminality — is integrated into a new order. ‘La dernière incarnation de Vautrin’ (the title of the final part of *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*) is that of a reconciled man who, thanks to his decisiveness, resourcefulness and influence, is able to contribute to the renewal of the July Monarchy society; that is, to play an active social or political role and even exercise authority, whilst reinventing his traditional patriarchal attributes and subverting homosocial bonds between men.

Finally, it is necessary to return briefly to *La Confession d’un enfant du siècle*. An equivalent character to Vautrin in Musset’s novel is Henri Smith, the positive alter ego of Octave, as he embodies the regeneration of Octave’s lost generation. Moreover, Octave himself also appears as a ‘reconciled man’ in the final chapter of the novel. He is perceived as ‘l’enfant qui devient homme’ (348), whereas he previously described himself as a child who thought of himself as a man (345). He is in a process of maturation, which has not yet been achieved, but which promises a better future. This change is emphasised by a change of narrator. The story is now told by a third-person narrator, which not only constitutes a rupture with the past, but also undermines the egocentric traits that Octave had thus far exhibited. He is able to act as an adult, to make responsible choices and to sacrifice his own happiness to the person whom he loves. He renounces Brigitte, for whom he was noxious, and accepts the role as her brother, which implies a tenderness and protectiveness similar to that of a father. He ‘gives’ her to Smith, described as ‘brave, bon et honnête’ (349; see also 291, 293) and who is loved by her. The optimism of Octave’s reconciliation with himself and with his former mistress is confirmed by the beautiful weather during their farewell (347, 351).

In brief, the reconciled man, especially when embodied by Vautrin, is able to combine masculine and feminine qualities and to act as both a paternal and a maternal figure without challenging his virility. This association of antithetical qualities not only moves away from

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<sup>461</sup> Knight, p. 171.

<sup>462</sup> Potts, p. 135; Solomon-Godeau, p. 203; Rauch, p. 31; Clark, p. 10; Fend, p. 104; Maira and Roulin, p. 9.

traditionally disparaging perceptions of homosexuality, but also allows such a man to consolidate his position in society by subverting the opposition between patriarchy and male insecurity.

## Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the signs of insecurity and failure in July Monarchy narratives represented the difficulty of young men to conform to the masculine side of the sexual dichotomy. This masculine malaise is notably due to the discrepancy between the ideal image of virility embodied by the Napoleonic soldier and the scarcity of means available to young men to achieve this manly model. A strong correlation is therefore established between male protagonists and women, as well as children, because they allegedly share the same physical attributes and the same moral flaws, such as passivity, changeability and irresponsibility. These weaknesses determine young men's inability to work and to produce pieces of art; that is, to assume a virile position in society. The incapacity to achieve the masculine model is also illustrated through a regression vis-à-vis the image of the ideal father as the representative of the Law. More importantly, Balzac's treatment of homosexuality not only illustrates the censorship that affects homosexual behaviours, but also the disparagement of homosexuality, since it is perceived as symptomatic of young men's failure, as well as social and sexual unproductivity. Yet, paradoxically, homosexuality in Balzac's novels is also presented as transcending generations, as has been shown through the figure of Vautrin. The reconciled man can move on to the next stage, that of creating his own rules.

This transfer from Lucien to Vautrin and, to lesser extent, from Octave to the new Octave/Smith, in other words from poorly appreciated characters to more popular figures, indicates that it is not the characters themselves that are condemnable, but their insecurity.<sup>463</sup> As Barbéris notes, however, men such as Lucien are not the only ones responsible for their failures.<sup>464</sup> The system that creates a gap between ambition and possible achievements renders young men insecure and inclined to run away from their social responsibilities. As such, the novels that have been analysed in this chapter do not invite a return to a patriarchal and manly model, since the representatives of patriarchy, such as the Napoleonic soldiers, are as

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<sup>463</sup> Byatt's antipathy towards Lucien has already been mentioned (p. 119, footnote 358). Although not as explicit, Michelle Coquillat also shows that she disapproves of Octave's conduct and justifications of his actions, notably: 'il soupire pour la forme, mais il est aussi très satisfait: il se donne le beau rôle, et son attendrissement est sur lui-même': *La poétique du mâle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), p. 334. See also Bellet, p. 133.

<sup>464</sup> Barbéris, *Le monde de Balzac*, p. 395.

blameworthy as the insecure young men, and are often ridiculed. These texts suggest an alternative model to both the traditional representations of manliness and the victims of the patriarchal system. This alternative model is represented by Vautrin, who succeeds in reconciling his masculinity (strength, power and reason) and his femininity (tenderness and protectiveness). This combination of opposing natures enables him to exercise his masculine power, whilst still openly displaying his homoerotic and maternal/paternal affection for young men. More generally, it reveals that confident masculinity can only exist through the recognition of the virtues of femininity displayed by Vautrin.





## CHAPTER 4: HYPER-MASCULINITY, ANIMALITY AND POWER

### Introduction

Despite their fragility, the male protagonists of the novels studied in the previous chapter attempt to prove their virility by adopting a customary masculine posture: fighting and, more specifically, duelling, to defend their honour, after they have been offended by a physical or verbal provocation.<sup>465</sup> This practice stemmed from military and aristocratic codes of honour, but was progressively adopted by the bourgeoisie in the wake of the revolutionary and imperial wars. Duelling constituted a civilised framework for violence that differentiated it from fighting with knives or bare hands, which characterised the lower classes in the opinion of members of the ruling classes.<sup>466</sup> Octave prefers duelling over fighting for these reasons: ‘je résistai [...] à l’envie que j’avais de le [son adversaire] frapper ou de l’insulter, ces sortes de violence étant toujours hideuses et inutiles, du moment que la loi permet le combat en règle’ (*Confession*, 84). Both Lucien and Octave fight in a duel with a friend; the former with the member of the Cénacle Michel Chrestien, who spat on him; the latter with a friend who played ‘footsie’ with Octave’s mistress. Both cases present the duel as a half-success where affirming one’s masculinity is concerned. Both Octave and Lucien lose the fights and are injured in the process, but compensate for their failure by showing unexpectedly brave behaviour.

The aggressiveness displayed by characters such as Octave and Lucien constitutes the focus of this chapter. Representations and critiques of masculinity during the July Monarchy were not restricted to a supposedly failing and feminised masculinity, but also included the opposite end of the masculine spectrum: an excess of masculinity, or what is termed *hyper-masculinity*. This notion has been little theorised, especially in the context of the nineteenth century.<sup>467</sup> To understand its significance, reference must be made to *The End of Masculinity*,

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<sup>465</sup> Sohn, pp. 122–23.

<sup>466</sup> François Guillet, ‘Le duel et la défense de l’honneur viril’, in *Le triomphe de la virilité*, pp. 83–124 (pp. 98–100 and 104–05). See also pp. 112–14. On the *embourgeoisement* of the duel, see Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*, p. 133 and p. 145. Historians agree that duelling was revived during the first half of the nineteenth century, but not on which period this resurgence occurred: Nye has argued that the form of the modern civil duel was established between 1815 and 1848 and its popularity increased after 1850 (p. 135); Sohn has suggested that the revival took place during the Restoration (p. 122); and Guillet has highlighted the importance of the political duel during the July Monarchy and the Third Republic (p. 96 and p. 117).

<sup>467</sup> Only Dana Oswald suggests a definition of the term: ‘Hypermasculinity is a category marked by inflated physical traits, as well as performances of aggression and domination’: ‘Monstrous Gender: Geographies of Ambiguity’, in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. by Asa Simon Mittman and Peter J. Dendle (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 343–63 (p. 347). The terms *hyper-masculine* and *hyper-virile* (or their derivatives) appear in the following texts, but without being theorised: Pierre Michel, ‘Discours romanesque, discours érotique, discours mythique dans *La Fille aux yeux d’or*’, in *La femme*

in which John MacInnes highlights the stigmatisation of former masculine qualities in the twentieth century as vices.<sup>468</sup> If courage and strength are two masculine traits that have traditionally been praised, abuse and aggressiveness can be deemed to be their negative undersides. In other words, hyper-masculinity can be defined as the excessive display of what is considered to be masculine behaviours and activities to the point of causing harm.

As the term indicates, hyper-masculinity primarily refers to male conduct. This conforms to the belief that violence is a male characteristic, even though women also perform violent acts.<sup>469</sup> John Braithwaite and Kathleen Daly adopt a perspective on violence that is little nuanced: ‘Violence is gendered: it is a problem and consequence of masculinity.’<sup>470</sup> In *Masculinities and Crime*, James W. Messerschmidt recalls feminist theories about male violence and argues that, according to radical feminists (Kate Millett, Susan Griffin and Susan Brownmiller, for instance), violence is intrinsic to the male nature, and male violence, especially rape, is a patriarchal weapon to maintain control over women.<sup>471</sup> Whilst these essentialist views on male violence have been widely criticised, notably by Lynne Segal and Elizabeth Stanko, male violence still commonly appears as the norm and female violence as the exception. The narratives in this chapter show that this perspective is not new. Paradoxically, they also illustrate the fact that, while uncommon, violence can also be female and as lethal as male violence.

Hyper-masculinity is not simply the opposite of insecure masculinity; it can also derive from it and constitute a form of compensation for masculine insecurity and effeminacy, as illustrated by Octave and Lucien’s duels. A common belief was — and still is — that aggressive behaviour was/is mostly characterised the working class and was/is pursued as a compensatory strategy. Research in sociology and criminology has shown that violence closely relates to poverty, unemployment, deeper role distinctions between men and women, and men’s powerlessness at work.<sup>472</sup> Messerschmidt argues that crimes committed by working-class men

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*au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Littérature et idéologie*, ed. by Université de Lyon II: Centre Littérature et idéologies au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1979), pp. 179–87 (p. 185); Badinter, *XY*, p. 40 and p. 237; Nye, *Masculinity and Male Honor*, p. 67; Orr, *Flaubert*, p. 10; Crompton, p. 88 and p. 98; Connell, p. 118 and p. 156; Maira and Roulin, p. 19.

<sup>468</sup> MacInnes, p. 47. See also introduction, p. 6.

<sup>469</sup> Segal, p. 264.

<sup>470</sup> John Braithwaite and Kathleen Daly, ‘Masculinities, Violence and Communitarian Control’, in *Just Boys Doing Business? Men, Masculinities and Crime*, ed. by Tim Newburn and Elizabeth A. Stanko (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 189–213 (p. 189).

<sup>471</sup> James W. Messerschmidt, *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory*, foreword by R. W. Connell (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1993), pp. 32–38. See also Segal, pp. 233–41; Elizabeth A. Stanko, ‘Challenging the Problem of Men’s Individual Violence’, in *Just Boys Doing Business?*, pp. 32–45 (pp. 39–40).

<sup>472</sup> Segal, p. 239, pp. 255–58 and pp. 263–66; Messerschmidt, pp. 148–50; Connell, pp. 98–103.

in the street, workplace and family, aimed at women as well as other men, reveal that working-class men reproduce the dominant social structures, while attempting to challenge them. These men emphasise, for instance, the gender division of labour and power by ‘express[ing] their masculinity as patriarchs, attempting to control the labor and sexuality of “their women”’.<sup>473</sup> Likewise, Connell argues that men who harass or attack women often feel entitled to do so by an ideology of male dominance.<sup>474</sup> In other words, hyper-masculinity and male violence derive from a virile hegemonic model that has been widely accepted, notably in nineteenth-century French society.

The narratives studied in this chapter both support and challenge the commonly-held idea of excessively masculine behaviour as a sign of lower-class conduct, as they also display a kind of violence that can be associated with the privileged classes. Accordingly, hyper-masculinity is analysed first and foremost through two characters who belong to the aristocracy: Henri de Marsay in Balzac’s short novel *La Fille aux yeux d’or* (1835) and Bernard de Mauprat in George Sand’s *Mauprat* (1837). The former is the illegitimate son of an English lord and a young French noblewoman; the latter is the last descendant of a family of country nobles, who have become bandits. Despite their noble origins, these characters exhibit violent and animalistic behaviour as a means to assume power and affirm their virility. Bernard and Henri’s problematic and even condemnable embodiments of hyper-masculinity contrast with the somewhat idealised hyper-masculinity of Claude Gueux from the eponymous narrative by Victor Hugo (1834). In this short novel, Hugo developed topics that were dear to him, such as society’s injustice and cruelty, and presented Claude Gueux not only as a highly masculinised and violent man, but above all as a charismatic convict, and importantly, as a role model and a Christ-like figure.

Whilst *Mauprat*, *La Fille aux yeux d’or* and *Claude Gueux* have been widely analysed, thus far no analysis has sought to compare these novels, especially in terms of their depictions of excessive masculinity. Accordingly, this chapter highlights, and engages with, the complex representations of hyper-masculine behaviours in July Monarchy literature through the comparative study of these novels. Hyper-masculinity in *Mauprat* is underpinned by a kind of ‘naturalism’ (characterised by animality and savagery) that challenges the traditional gendered construction of nature as feminine found within other texts in this corpus. In contrast, Balzac reveals the dangers of a civilised and aristocratic hyper-masculinity by focusing on the representation of power in French society as a Western version of oriental despotism. This

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<sup>473</sup> Messerschmidt, p. 150. For examples of working-class crimes, see pp. 119–53.

<sup>474</sup> Connell, p. 83

chapter also analyses the notion of female hyper-masculinity, or, as it is called in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, 'le pouvoir féminin'; an ambivalent female force (seen as both positive and negative) that has so far received little attention and that is able to tame the violence of male protagonists. Ultimately, this chapter shows that female intervention into hyper-masculine behaviour is not only connected to individual characters that feature in these novels, but also mirrors society, and especially its judicial system. As such, hyper-masculinity will be shown to act as a trope for social cruelty and injustice.

### **Male Violence and Aggressive Behaviour in *Mauprat***

At the beginning of *Mauprat*, the young Bernard de Mauprat, raised by his cruel uncles, has developed a loathing for the so-called wizard Patience because he is convinced that the old man has spoken badly about his family. He organises a kind of punitive expedition to the wizard's lair, located at the sinister Tour Gazeau:

Un sentiment de haine s'empara de moi, et, résolu de venger l'affront fait par lui [Patience] à mon nom, je mis une pierre dans ma fronde, et, sans autres préliminaires, je la lançai avec vigueur.  
[...] la pierre siffla à son oreille et alla frapper une chouette apprivoisée qui faisait les délices de Patience [...]. La chouette jeta un cri aigu et tomba sanglante aux pieds de son maître [...].<sup>475</sup>

This episode, which reveals Bernard's aristocratic pride and violent nature, has persuasively been interpreted by Michèle Hecquet as an exemplification of the feudal oppression that nobles exerted against peasants.<sup>476</sup> More significantly, this episode displays Bernard's childish wickedness and constitutes an attempt to reproduce the hyper-masculine and aggressive behaviour of his uncles. In this episode, as in most of the novel, Bernard's hyper-masculinity is apparently simple to fathom. However, in his study of 'queer' masculinity in *Mauprat*, Nigel Harkness rightly shows that this seemingly unproblematic vision of Bernard's masculinity needs to be corrected by highlighting the political aspect to his masculinity, the 'queer' dimension of his attraction to his masculine cousin Edmée and his friendship with the Edmée-like Arthur. Harkness also argues that Bernard's displays of masculine violence unsuccessfully

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<sup>475</sup> George Sand, *Mauprat*, ed. by Claude Sicard (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969), pp. 56–57. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>476</sup> Michèle Hecquet, *Lecture de 'Mauprat' de George Sand* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1990), p. 67.

aim at compensating for his submission to his cousin.<sup>477</sup> Expanding upon Harkness's analysis, the following study highlights the complexity and the contradictions of Bernard's hyper-masculinity by arguing that it differs from ideally virile masculinity for at least two reasons. On the one hand, Bernard is characterised by traits that are deemed to belong to the working classes, while, on the other hand, he is defined by his innate nature that is ambiguously defined in terms of gender, as it is depicted as both virile and feminine.

The first incongruity found within the young Bernard's hyper-masculinity is that both he and his uncles adopt behaviours that are characteristic of male peasants, despite the fact that they are proud of their noble ascendancy. Apparently acting like members of the lower classes, they express what may be considered to be typically manly behaviour; they drink, make crude jokes and boast about their sexual performance to prove their manliness (69–70). This behaviour is usually explained as being connected to the relative powerlessness of some social groups.<sup>478</sup> Although the *Coupe-Jarret* Mauprats hold feudal authority in Berry, their dominant position is threatened, notably by socio-economic factors. Not only are the members of the elder branch of this family penniless, but they also have no political power or influence and no support from the police. The fight led by Bernard's uncles to defend Roche-Mauprat from the *maréchaussée* illustrates their marginalised position in an increasingly centralised regime that is turning feudal lords into outlaws, constrained to survive on intimidation and petty theft after the death of the patriarch Tristan de Mauprat (67). This fight also shows that the difference between hyper-masculinity and hegemonic masculinity (to borrow R. W. Connell's words) is mostly ideological rather than factual.<sup>479</sup> It is the interpretation of the Mauprats and the *maréchaussée*'s bellicose actions as 'aggressive' or 'noble' that justifies their condemnation or their praise.

The marginalisation of the Mauprats during this Enlightenment period is revealed by their alternative value system. They do not refer to the eighteenth-century model of aristocracy, which is perceived as effeminate, but rather to a feudal, legendary and manly nobility illustrated by epic rather than chivalrous tales.<sup>480</sup> Indeed, Anne Vila has argued that eighteenth-century French social practices promoted *honnêteté*, which stemmed from the rise of a permanent court society, in which wit, grace and conversational skills replaced old values, such as chivalric

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<sup>477</sup> Nigel Harkness, 'Une masculinité trop visible et les enjeux de la fraternité "queer" dans *Mauprat* de George Sand (1837)', in *Masculinités en révolution*, pp. 227–42 (p. 238).

<sup>478</sup> Beynon, p. 20. See also Segal, p. 110.

<sup>479</sup> Connell, for instance, p. 77, p. 114, p. 128, p. 146, pp. 160–62, p. 212, p. 216, p. 232 and pp. 264–65.

<sup>480</sup> On the alleged effeminacy of aristocracy, see chapter 3, p. 128.

bravery and duelling.<sup>481</sup> Tristan de Mauprat, Bernard's grandfather, teaches his grandson his retrograde vision of society, according to which heroic knights are opposed to pusillanimous nobles of the Enlightenment period:

j'avais absolument les idées qu'eût pu avoir un servant d'armes au temps de la barbarie féodale. [...] Je savais, pour toute histoire des hommes, les légendes et les ballades de la chevalerie que mon grand-père me racontait le soir lorsqu'il avait le temps de songer à ce qu'il appelait mon éducation; et quand je lui adressais quelque question sur le temps présent, il me répondait que les temps étaient bien changés, que tous les Français étaient devenus traîtres et félons, qu'ils avaient fait peur aux rois, et que ceux-ci avaient abandonné lâchement la noblesse, laquelle, à son tour, avait eu la couardise de renoncer à ses privilèges et de se laisser faire la loi par les manants. (45–46)

Tristan justifies the brigandage of his family by associating it with knightly actions, an ideal of virility that is both fantasised and obsolete. He also expresses an ideological position that sharply contrasts with the younger branch of Mauprats. Whereas the *Coupe-Jarrets* deplore the progress of the Enlightenment, their *Casse-Tête* cousins (belonging to the 'cowardly' nobility) long for the Revolution. Tristan's vocabulary does not belong to the eighteenth century, but to a phantasmagorical past in which the Mauprats were powerful. His laudatory words towards his side of the Mauprat family highlight his refusal to acknowledge the decline of his offspring. Because of their ideological background and social activities, the Mauprats are anachronistic representatives of the aristocracy who have more in common with brigands than with the courtly nobility.

In the same way that the Mauprats imitate a fantasised chivalric model, imitation is also characteristic of Bernard's hyper-masculinity. Despite suffering as a result of their cruelty (45), the boy still tries to behave like his uncles by reproducing the aggressive conduct that they adopted with him, as well as with their serfs and enemies. His value system is altered by the education that he has received from his grandfather and uncles. Actions that are traditionally considered to be wrong because they emanate from bandits are promoted to the rank of bravery through an anachronistic knightly code: 'Ce qui, hors de notre tanière, s'appelait, pour les autres hommes, assassiner, piller, et torturer, on m'apprenait à l'appeler combattre, vaincre et soumettre' (45). In order to express his manliness, Bernard forms his own gang, not unlike the outlawed association that his uncles form with their vassals. His gang consists of subservient young peasants, over whom he asserts his seigniorial prerogatives, in an attempt to rebuild the failing power of the aristocracy, revealing the Mauprats' nostalgic desire to return to the past.

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<sup>481</sup> Anne C. Vila, 'Elite Masculinities in Eighteenth-Century France', in *French Masculinities*, pp. 15–30 (p. 19).

Bernard gives orders to his subordinates, insults them (55), threatens the faithful Sylvain (59) and beats him (62). However, like the waning authority of the nobility, his leadership is precarious, since his so-called friends do not hesitate to disobey and abandon him because they are more afraid of the wizard Patience than they are afraid of Bernard.

Another means for Bernard to assert his virility is to ‘faire une femme’, in the words of Anne-Marie Sohn.<sup>482</sup> His sexual prowess, however, has not been proven, as he remains a virgin until marrying his cousin Edmée. His virginity is experienced as a humiliation in a world where (hetero)sexual conquest is a common means to affirm one’s virility. To put an end to his shame, he claims that he is going to rape his captive cousin. Yet, he remains unable and unwilling to hurt her despite his strong desire for her and his alleged contempt for women, which he expresses through the word *filles* (72), employed here as a synonym for a prostitute. His incapacity to rape Edmée shows that the principle of imitation that is inherent in his hyper-masculinity is flawed because he does not share his uncles’ brutality. The hatred that he feels for them, especially for Jean, protects him from being as cruel and depraved as they are. Even though he pretends the opposite — ‘le métier de mes oncles ne me causait par lui-même aucune répugnance’ (45) —, the long recollection of the actions of his uncles, who torture and rob whomever is reckless enough to go to Roche-Mauprat, as well as of the misery of their victims (46–47), brings to light his ability to feel sympathy. The old narrator, while doubting his aptitude to experience genuine compassion, nonetheless adds: ‘il est certain que j’éprouvais ce sentiment de commisération égoïste qui est dans la nature, et qui, perfectionné et ennobli, est devenu la charité chez les hommes civilisés’ (46–47).

Whilst the narrator suggests the advantage of culture over nature, in contrast with the doctrine of a philosopher such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (who plays a determinant role in Bernard’s education), the superiority of one over the other is never definitely asserted.<sup>483</sup> Patience, the ‘philosophe rustique’ (48), for example, is seen as a positive character in spite of, or because of, his so-called savagery. As will be examined in the next section, hyper-masculinity is linked with savagery, and thus to nature; however, the association between hyper-masculinity and nature does not stigmatise nature itself. Bernard and Patience appear as characters who are more in tune with their natural instincts; both are deeply but differently attached to nature and initially hostile to civilisation, in opposition to the ‘cultural’ Edmée.

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<sup>482</sup> Sohn, p. 168.

<sup>483</sup> Vareille observes: ‘Le dialogue entre nature et culture contenu dans *Mauprat* s’achève donc sur la constatation que ni l’une ni l’autre ne sont essentiellement et inconditionnellement bonnes’ (p. 447). Gérald Schaeffer also highlights ‘le passage de la nature à la culture, sans que cette dernière efface la première’: ‘“Nature” chez George Sand: Une lecture de *Mauprat*’, *Romantisme*, 30 (1980), 5–12 (p. 8).

Bernard's obsession with counterbalancing his cultural weakness with fierce behaviour risks associating him with femininity, which has been interpreted as more closely aligned with nature. It must be remembered that, in nineteenth-century French society, women, not men, were traditionally perceived as driven by their organs and their instincts, in other words by nature. The demonstrations of hyper-masculinity 'naturalise' him and, consequently, feminise him because they alienate him from the cultural pole of masculinity.

In *Mauprat*, therefore, Sand subverts the traditional associations between femininity and nature, and between masculinity and culture, without entirely rejecting them. As Yvette Bozon-Scalzitti argues, in *Mauprat* '[c]'est l'homme qui occupe la place connotée féminine de la nature, de l'instinct, de l'impulsivité, et la femme le lieu dit viril de la raison et de la maîtrise'.<sup>484</sup> The process that Bernard undergoes through his relationship with his cousin Edmée substitutes his more 'natural' hyper-masculinity (which is paradoxically compromised by its feminine connotations) for an ideal, 'cultural' and 'reasonable' masculinity. Yet, this too is feminised because it has been instituted by a woman.<sup>485</sup>

In brief, Bernard's masculinity is inscribed with 'naturalism' and imitation, notably with that of his uncles' anachronistic brutal behaviour, which is associated in the novel with the lower classes. The following section of this chapter determines the literary process through which nature becomes masculinised in *Mauprat*, while the protagonist's eventual submission to a culture embodied by a feminine character is explained in the section entitled 'Le pouvoir féminin'.

### **Animality and Savagery: The Case of Bernard de Mauprat**

Whilst nature is traditionally a feminine reference through its association with instinct and an absence of reason, it also connotes a primitive force, which is equally inherent in representations of violent and aggressive behaviours. The obedience to a 'natural' order intrinsic to hyper-masculine behaviours jeopardises ideal forms of masculinity (the fantasised model of the Napoleonic soldier, for example) and renders it 'inferior'. In other words, hyper-masculinity is paradoxically connected with its very opposite — femininity — and these two apparently contrary essences cohabit in the notion of nature, which can in turn appear nurturing and hostile. Two figures of this hyper-masculine/feminine nature that are recurrent in *Mauprat* are the

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<sup>484</sup> Yvette Bozon-Scalzitti, 'Mauprat ou la Belle et la Bête', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 10:1-2 (Fall–Winter 1981–82), 1–16 (p. 2).

<sup>485</sup> Harkness has come to a similar conclusion (*Men of their Words*, p. 75).



animal and the savage. The lexical fields of animality, brutality and savagery are frequently used to describe the hyper-masculine behaviours of Bernard (and his family). Animal comparisons and metaphors not only mirror Bernard's animalistic nature, but also assert a certain type of civilised masculinity by spurning a more 'natural' (and therefore socially inferior) form of masculinity. These comparisons and metaphors are organised according to a sophisticated and progressive literary system, yet their relevance has been overlooked. While critics such as Annabelle Rea, Martine Reid and Harkness briefly mention the references to animals, they do not analyse the effects of these animalistic comparisons.<sup>486</sup>

Images of animals in *Mauprat* are expressed by the old narrator Bernard and the young Bernard's entourage, especially his detractors (the prosecutor, the audience at Bernard's trial and Mademoiselle Leblanc, Edmée's attendant, who is his most ferocious critic). Bernard usually compares himself, or is compared by others, to wild European animals, such as a wolf (*Mauprat*, 81, 96, 105), a lynx (82), a badger (105), a bear (*Ibid.*) and a kite (*Ibid.*), as well as to more exotic animals, such as a lion (100, 172) and a tiger (275), or simply an animal without information about the species (128, 161). It is important to consider what these references to animals imply in the dynamics of the novel. Certainly, the comparison to animals is not an original literary process *per se*. Jean de La Fontaine, for instance, as well as Aesop and Phaedrus before him, used it abundantly in their fables. It is nevertheless often used because it allows writers to highlight specific human traits that are symbolically associated with animals. As the philosopher Dominique Lestel states: 'De nombreuses cultures détournent les figures de l'animal pour parler de l'homme, comme si ce qui caractérise l'animal constituait un "tiers pensant", auquel l'homme a recours pour se penser lui-même'.<sup>487</sup> In *Mauprat*, numerous characters identify Bernard with animalistic characteristics in order to highlight, or even denounce, his 'uncivilised' behaviour, and therefore to justify their rejection of him.

Firstly, the animal often represents 'otherness' from a human perspective.<sup>488</sup> With the exception of Edmée, the characters use animalistic images, especially comparisons with wild animals, to stress the difference between Bernard and themselves. This difference is based on the roughness of the young man in opposition to their own civilised manners. The animalistic

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<sup>486</sup> Annabelle Rea, 'Maternity and Marriage: Sand's Use of Fairy Tale and Myth', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 12:2 (Fall 1979), 37–47 (p. 39); Martine Reid, *Mauprat: Mariage et maternité chez Sand*, *Romantisme*, 76 (1992), 43–59 (p. 50); Harkness, 'Une masculinité trop visible', p. 230.

<sup>487</sup> Dominique Lestel, *L'animalité: Essai sur le statut de l'humain* (Paris: Hatier, 'Optiques Philosophie', 1996), p. 44.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6. On traditional characteristics of hominisation, see pp. 55–57.

images express not only fear, but also contempt for his difference. This scorn is evident in Mademoiselle Leblanc's speech:

Il a l'air d'un ours, d'un blaireau, d'un loup, d'un milan, de tout plutôt que d'un homme!  
[...] Quelles mains! Quelles jambes! Et encore ce n'est rien à présent qu'il est un peu  
décrassé. Il fallait le voir le jour où il est arrivé avec son sarreau et ses guêtres de cuir;  
c'était à trembler! (105)

Her reference to a badger, an allegedly malodorous but relatively harmless animal, reveals the extent of her contempt for Bernard.<sup>489</sup> By calling him a badger, she asserts her own superiority due to her self-declared mastery of culture and refinement. This act of naming corresponds to Jacques Derrida's observation that animals do not name themselves, but are named by Adam, following God's instruction, in order to command them, and thus asserts Mademoiselle Leblanc's assumed superiority.<sup>490</sup> It is no coincidence that she continues her speech to Edmée by mentioning Bernard's filth when he arrived at Sainte-Sévère, the castle of the *Casse-Tête* Mauprats, and later mentions his refusal to wear powder, with a plethora of depreciative expressions (105). For her, powder is the symbol of civilisation. Edmée replies that it is an absurd fashion and prefers his dark hair *au naturel*, showing that she distinguishes real civilisation from its false ornaments and is able to appreciate his 'natural' qualities.

Moreover, the act of calling a man an animal is intended to attack and insult his human dignity.<sup>491</sup> Derrida argues that *bêtise* and *bestialité*, referring to the absence of reason and violence, are meaningless when describing animals because they designate human traits exclusively. Mentioning the *bêtise* or the bestiality of an animal constitutes anthropomorphisms.<sup>492</sup> In *Mauprat*, the dual perception of man in terms of *bêtise* and *bestialité* is frequently used to degrade individuals. The idea of *bêtise*, or stupidity, is expressed in the novel through the words *bête* and *brute*.<sup>493</sup> Bernard, for instance, aggressively asks his uncles: 'Croyez-vous que je sois une bête?' (72), when he wants to prove that he understood their hoax

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<sup>489</sup> 'Mammifère d'Europe, sorte de bête puante qui se creuse un terrier': 'blaireau', in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn (1835), I, p. 191.

<sup>490</sup> Jacques Derrida, *L'animal que donc je suis*, ed. by Marie-Louise Mallet (Paris: Galilée, 2006), pp. 33–37.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., p. 143. Thomas Bouchet has shown, for instance, how caricatures of Louis-Philippe, comparing him to animals (as well as plants) participated in '[l]a volonté d'attenter à la dignité royale': 'Face de roi: Assauts graphiques et crises de la représentation sous la monarchie de Juillet', in *Usages politiques de l'animalité*, ed. by Jean-Luc Guichet (Paris: Harmattan, 2008), pp. 21–41 (p. 24).

<sup>492</sup> Derrida, p. 65 and p. 93.

<sup>493</sup> *Brute* means 'la bête considérée dans ce qu'elle a de plus éloigné de l'homme': 'brute', in Littré <<http://www.littre.org>> [accessed 13 October 2014]. See also the definition of 'brute', in the 6<sup>th</sup> edition (1835) of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, as 'animal privé de raison', 'se dit principalement des bêtes qui sont le plus dépourvues d'intelligence et de sensibilité' and 'se dit d'une personne qui n'a ni esprit ni raison, ou qui, comme la brute, s'abandonne sans modération à ses penchants' (I, p. 237).

regarding Edmée. Likewise, Jean de Mauprat insults his brother Antoine to assert his superiority: ‘Et quel bruit pouvez-vous faire qui ne vous conduise à la roue, *lourde bête*?’ (292; original emphasis). The adjective *lourd*, which reinforces the stupidity relating to *bête*, is reminiscent of a previous observation made by Bernard, which highlighted the improvements in his personality due to Edmée’s teaching: ‘Je n’étais plus cet animal lourd et dormeur que la digestion fatiguait, que la fatigue abrutissait’ (161). Here, bodily activities (eating and sleeping) are opposed to the activity of the mind and are therefore despised.<sup>494</sup> Bernard’s brutality and refusal to become educated are strongly rejected by Edmée, although she admires some of his ‘natural’ qualities, such his rejection of ‘civilised’ vanity and pomp. The word *brute* and its derivatives always have a negative connotation in the novel (44, 62, 69, 74, 81, 94, 97, 116, 144, 161) and such words are used by Edmée, for example, to express her anger towards her cousin (123, 249, 309). Like her, Bernard will come to despise his moral and intellectual lack of education and his coarseness, accentuated by the rough treatments that he endured from his family during his childhood. In the conclusion of his tale, Bernard distances himself from Edmée and Rousseau’s doctrine, according to which man is essentially born good (314), because he considers that he was born flawed due to his hyper-masculinity and animality. However, the novel argues that such a ‘flaw’ — his hyper-masculine and brutal state — is not eternal and can be rectified by the appropriate education.

Bernard refers to his animality to emphasise his wild nature and obedience to his instincts rather than his reason. Animality is not only ‘other’ but, as Mademoiselle Leblanc’s commentaries have illustrated, also pejorative. ‘Elle [l’animalité] est liée à cette dimension de l’humain que celui-ci occulte, notamment en disqualifiant son corps, ses désirs ou ses affects par rapport à son esprit et à sa rationalité’, observes Lestel.<sup>495</sup> Animal instinct — characterised in Classical philosophy as hereditary, unconscious, stereotypical (that is, producing repetitive actions) and impeccable (which means that it is not perfectible) — is defined in opposition to human reason; admittedly, men have drives, or tendencies, but no instincts.<sup>496</sup> In this case, animals are opposed to both human beings and, to a lesser extent, males, because women were believed to be more instinctive. Stressing Bernard’s instincts implies denigrating his intelligence, therefore his human status as well as his virile status, and asserting his inferiority. For instance, during his trial, the prosecutor draws attention to his ‘méchants instincts’ (277);

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<sup>494</sup> See also Mademoiselle Leblanc’s words, as she calls Bernard ‘balourd’ and points out that ‘[i]l dort comme un loir’ (105).

<sup>495</sup> Lestel, p. 60.

<sup>496</sup> Lucien Malson, *Animaux et philosophes* (Paris: Laveur, 2008), pp. 167–87.

the adjective here highlights his alleged meanness, as well as his mediocrity.<sup>497</sup> In the prosecutor's view, instinct is always mediocre when compared to the supremacy of intelligence.

Animals are patently described as deprived of intelligence, even though some of them are able to adapt to new situations, solve problems and even acquire some language.<sup>498</sup> Yet, in a classically philosophical conception, animals do not speak: 'la parole distingue l'homme des animaux', claimed Rousseau.<sup>499</sup> The opposition between animalistic lack of speech and human speech can be transposed into the context of *Mauprat*, in which the tensions between rudimentary and civilised speech replace the former opposition. Whilst Bernard is manifestly capable of speaking, the fact that he gradually becomes able to form socially acceptable responses is more important. When he arrives at Sainte-Sévère, he is so astonished by everyone's politeness that he is unable to speak; however, he observes: 'Je retrouvai pourtant la faculté de répondre' (101), a comment that can be extended to his general situation. By becoming integrated into the family of the *Casse-Tête* Mauprats, he is henceforth able to reply, to go beyond the answer of a simple question to exhibit wit and irony, to have philosophical arguments with Edmée's father and therefore to cut across classes by developing a civilised voice. An example of his ability to use irony and wit is his reply when being asked whether he is hungry and likes good wine: 'Beaucoup plus que le latin' (101). His answer suggests different meanings and levels of interpretations. Certainly, Bernard prefers wine over Latin, but he stresses above all his refusal to dismiss bodily satisfactions for an education that he then judges useless.

Furthermore, anticipating Lacan, according to whom the animal is unable to pretend (what he calls *feindre la feinte*; that is, to deceive through speech by deforming the truth), Bernard seems to conceive of lying and deceiving as prerogatives of culture and humanity when he accuses Edmée of pretending to love him in order to escape his violence (122).<sup>500</sup> His allegations are grounded, as Edmée's ambiguous promise — 'Je jure [...] de n'être à personne avant d'être à vous' (84) — highlights her human mastery of cultivating double meaning. Likewise, Bernard's acquisition of wit and irony (as other forms of pretence) demonstrates his

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<sup>497</sup> *Méchant* can mean 'mauvais, qui ne vaut rien dans son genre'. The mediocre connotation is mostly expressed when the adjective precedes the substantive: 'méchant', in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn (1835), II, p. 181.

<sup>498</sup> Malson, pp. 189–203.

<sup>499</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, quoted by Malson, p. 76. This conception has, nonetheless, been challenged by modern philosophers, notably by Derrida, who expresses his reservations towards Lacan's argument that animals are supposed to be deprived of language or, more specifically, of the ability to reply; for Lacan, they can react to stimuli, but cannot answer questions: Derrida: p. 168 and p. 172. The importance of language in *Mauprat* has been highlighted by Bozon-Scalzitti (pp. 14–15) and Harkness (*Men of their Words*, pp. 76–77).

<sup>500</sup> Derrida, pp. 174–82.

gradual civilising process over the course of the novel. Not only does he deem lying to be a cultural symptom, he also considers it to be a characteristic of women.<sup>501</sup> Edmée denies this assertion and argues that deception and ruse, or what Pierre Bourdieu would call ‘violence douce’, are the resources of the oppressed (124) and can therefore be used as weapons to elevate society’s victims.<sup>502</sup> Edmée’s observation is akin to a common belief found within Classical philosophy, according to which men are born flawed, contrary to animals, which are born perfect and are therefore unable to improve. Derrida finds the origin of men’s flaw in the myth of Prometheus. The Titan stole fire, in other words art and techniques, from the gods to help men, because his brother Epimetheus endowed all the races of animals with gifts but left men naked. From an original flaw, man has become superior.<sup>503</sup> When connecting the myth of Prometheus to Edmée’s words, it is as though instruments of civilisation such as wit were the prerogatives of women in *Mauprat*. Women, and especially Edmée, therefore appear to be more human than men and to have the ability not only to master language but also to distort it. This reversal of the gendered connotations of nature and culture is once again revealed to be important in *Mauprat*.

Bernard is not only referred to as an animal, but also as ‘sauvage’ or even as an ‘enfant sauvage’ by Edmée and his detractors (105, 125, 141, 308, 309). This description tends to have a pejorative nuance, as the word highlights his connection to nature and his uncivilised identity. Bernard, however, depicts his savagery as an object of pride, especially in the first part of the novel, for instance when talking about his ‘fierté sauvage’ (101; see also 45, 160). These references to the ideal of the noble savage (‘a mythic personification of natural goodness by a romantic glorification of savage life’, according to Ter Ellingson’s definition) not only correspond to a valorisation of nature, but are also a strategy to defend himself against the aggressions of civilisation and culture.<sup>504</sup> The concept of wildness thus expresses Bernard’s resistance to what Western societies call ‘civilisation’. When Bernard starts to embrace Edmée’s education, the word ‘sauvage’ only refers to a temporary behaviour and has neither positive nor negative connotations (137). The main change in Bernard’s relation to savagery takes place during his military experience in America. This country is the wild land par

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<sup>501</sup> Beauvoir (I, p. 414) does not make any statement such as that of Bernard, but she argues that the experience of hiding her menstruation taught the young woman how to lie.

<sup>502</sup> Bourdieu, *La domination masculine*, p. 52.

<sup>503</sup> Derrida, pp. 39–40.

<sup>504</sup> Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001), p. 1. Ellingson recalls the fact that the myth of the noble savage is erroneously and persistently attributed to Rousseau (esp. pp. 1–4). However, owing to the importance of the Genevan philosopher in *Mauprat*, it is likely that Sand also considered him to be the ‘inventor’ of this myth.

excellence, surrounded by wild nature (181) and populated with ‘savage’ inhabitants (180). In America, Bernard accomplishes the last step of his education. He is moved by the fear of returning to his former wild habits, now considered despicable, and praises his friend Arthur because ‘sans lui je fusse redevenu peut-être, sinon le coupe-jarret de la Roche-Mauprat, du moins le sauvage de la Varenne’ (182). His wild past, called ‘sentiment de ma vie sauvage’ (252), is more than ever judged to be a dangerous failure from which Bernard attempts to escape when he is tempted to possess Edmée by force, just before Antoine de Mauprat shoots her (249–52).

Bernard’s so-called savagery and lack of civilisation, as well as his incapacity to understand refined language, are corrected by appropriate education. He points out that the polite language that is spoken at Sainte-Sévère ‘était pour moi comme une langue tout à fait nouvelle que je comprenais, mais que je ne pouvais parler’ (101). It is Edmée who directs his studies, although the actual teacher is Abbot Aubert, and she provides him with the intellectual and sentimental support that he needs. Edmée’s pedagogy is guided by Rousseau, whose influence is explicitly stated by the narrator: ‘elle était imbue de l’*Émile*, et mettait en pratique les idées systématiques de son cher philosophe’ (152). Many critics have underscored the importance of Rousseau’s treatise *Émile* as Edmée’s model for education. Yves Chastagnaret in particular highlights how educational methods are sometimes modified (for instance, in depicting teaching as a non-linear process and in including auxiliary pedagogues) to better fulfil the purpose of perfecting individuals assigned by Rousseau to education.<sup>505</sup> It is true that the advantage of this pedagogy is that it does not suppress the natural part of the child, but allows him to interact with the world, rather than being separated from it. The teaching is practical, oriented to Bernard’s needs rather than to ornamental knowledge. For this reason, Edmée decides not to teach him Latin because ‘l’important était de former [s]on cœur et [s]a raison avec des idées, au lieu d’orner [s]on esprit avec des mots’ (151). Edmée’s pedagogical decision shows that the priority is given to the reinforcement of intelligence and the development of social skills. She acts as a Pygmalion when she pursues this pedagogy, as she fashions for herself the perfect partner (in opposition to her dull fiancé Monsieur de La Marche) owing to her intellectual, cultural and moral superiority.<sup>506</sup>

In conclusion, the interest of philosophers such as Rousseau in wild children, mentioned by Lestel, must be highlighted. This interest was motivated by the belief that ‘il est possible de

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<sup>505</sup> Yves Chastagnaret, ‘*Mauprat*, ou du bon usage de l’*Émile*’, *Présence de George Sand*, 8 (May 1980), 10–15.

<sup>506</sup> On Pygmalion, see chapter 2, pp. 103–04.

sortir de l'humain pour pénétrer dans l'animalité et d'en ressortir pour revenir à l'humain'.<sup>507</sup> The case of Bernard can be considered to be fully successful, since the young man has abandoned the fierceness and wildness of his animality, which previously earned him not only the fear but also the disdain of his entourage.<sup>508</sup> His case, nonetheless, shows that the passage from nature to culture means instilling customs and habits, here a feminising process because Bernard adapts to the model offered by Edmée.<sup>509</sup> As such, he is a figure that challenges the commonly-held assumption that nature is always feminine and, consequently, that civilisation is always masculine. More importantly, his case indicates that hyper-masculinity can be lessened with adequate treatment and, accordingly, that the border between hyper-masculinity and dominant masculinity is thin. Edmée's love and patient teaching enable Bernard, the wild boy badly raised by his cruel family, to abandon the realms of savagery and reveal his wise and affectionate nature.<sup>510</sup> His hyper-masculinity is domesticated and becomes an idealised virility with Bernard ultimately joining the revolutionary army. The framing device that introduces the old Bernard attests to his mastery of a generally happy as well as virile life, in contrast with the contemporary 'génération efféminée' (34) embodied by the narrator.

### **Hyper-masculinity and Power: The Case of Henri de Marsay**

While Bernard's hyper-masculinity is presented as an openly aggressive, 'natural' instinct, the hyper-masculinity of Henri de Marsay in *La Fille aux yeux d'or* is apparently detached from

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<sup>507</sup> Lestel, p. 13. Bernard shares similarities with the wild child Victor de l'Aveyron, discovered in the village of Saint-Sernin-sur-Rance in 1800. Dr Jean Itard, an expert in deafness, attempted to educate and civilise him. The educational experiments of Itard are recorded in two essays published at an interval of six years: *De l'éducation d'un homme sauvage ou des premiers développemens physiques et moraux du jeune sauvage de l'Aveyron* (Paris: Goujon, 1801) and *Rapport fait à son Excellence le Ministre de l'Intérieur sur les nouveaux développemens et l'état actuel du sauvage de l'Aveyron* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1807). Bernard and Victor have been victims of the same mistreatments. While Serge Aroles considers Victor to be a 'faux enfant sauvage', he sees in him an 'authentique enfant martyr', victim of physical abuse and psychosocial deprivation, a situation that is similar to Bernard, who is hated and hit by his uncles: *L'énigme des enfants-loups: Une certitude biologique mais un déni des archives, 1304–1954* (Paris: Publibook, 2007), p. 218. Bernard's educational experience also resembles Victor's, although he has not been deprived of the company of men. Edmée's functions combine those of Itard, the teacher with whom she shares a common interest for Condillac, and Madame Guérin, the housekeeper and the main provider for, and recipient of, Victor's affection.

<sup>508</sup> This analysis challenges Elena Patrick's perception of Bernard's absence of evolution and of Edmée's bourgeois submission to him: 'George Sand's *Mauprat*: A Gendered Way from Aristocracy to Bourgeoisie', *George Sand Studies*, 26 (2007), 73–87 (notably pp. 76–77 and p. 81).

<sup>509</sup> See Bernard's narrative comments: 'J'étais sobre, j'étais, sinon doux et patient, du moins affectueux et sensible; je concevais au plus haut point les lois de l'honneur et le respect de la dignité d'autrui; mais l'amour était le plus redoutable de mes ennemis, car il se rattachait à tout ce que j'avais acquis de moralité et de délicatesse; c'était le lien entre l'homme ancien et l'homme nouveau, lien indissoluble et dont le milieu m'était presque impossible à trouver' (251).

<sup>510</sup> *Mauprat* has been compared to Madame Leprince de Beaumont's tale *La Belle et la Bête*, in which a horrific but good-natured beast is turned into a human being thanks to the love of a young woman: Bozon-Scalzitti, quoted article. See also Rea, p. 37, p. 41 and pp. 46–47; Reid, '*Mauprat*', pp. 50–51.

this relatively traditional perception of violence.<sup>511</sup> Like Bernard, Henri can be violent and animalistic, because, as this novel shows, base violent instincts can also be depicted as existing in people with high social, economic and political backgrounds. Indeed, it is judged to be even more harmful than more conventional violence, such as fights and assaults.<sup>512</sup> Nonetheless, this biased perspective that favours men from the upper classes benefits the aristocrat Henri de Marsay because he not only evades prosecution for the violence that he commits against his mistress, but he also climbs the social ladder and becomes an apparently major political figure within the July Monarchy. The unconventional association between animality and civilisation, notably dandyism, is distanced from French forms of ‘civilisation’ and helps to question the weaknesses of male power, perceived as despotic and misogynistic, in the July Monarchy context.

At first glance, no character seems as distant from animality and wildness as Henri de Marsay. Although he is the illegitimate son of an English lord, Lord Dudley, Henri’s pedigree seems impeccable. Dudley married Henri’s mother, the Marquise de Vordac, to a respectable old gentleman in exchange for a *rente* of one hundred thousand francs. Since his mother, his biological father and his legal father were uninterested in him, Henri was raised by an old aunt and the Abbot de Maronis who gave him an education as complete as it was un-Catholic. Armed with his aristocratic title, hybrid origin and education, Henri apparently has everything that is needed to succeed in Parisian society. At twenty-two years old, he masters the art of dandyism by turning his life into a masterpiece, as well as developing a culture of refinement, non-conformity, narcissistic exhibitionism and impassibility.<sup>513</sup> In brief, Henri is a model both as a dandy and as an incarnation of civilising values. His mastery of the codes of dandyism is highlighted during the scene of his *toilette*, when he washes and dresses in front of his friend Paul de Manerville. He dedicates hours to his toilette (two and a half hours, to be precise), like the father of dandyism Beau Brummell (1778–1840) and like Alfred d’Orsay (1801–52), a possible model for Henri, who brought English dandyism to France.<sup>514</sup> This activity reveals his concern for his looks and his taste for performance because he requires an audience: Paul. While the control of emotions that is required from a dandy seems to alienate him from women and

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<sup>511</sup> *La Fille aux yeux d’or* is the third and last of the novels of *L’Histoire des Treize*. The others include *Ferragus* (1833) and *La Duchesse de Langeais* (1833; first published under the title *Ne touchez pas à la hache*). *Les Treize*, or *Dévorants* constitute a powerful secret society, which includes Henri de Marsay. Its prologue is dedicated to a curious *tableau* of July Monarchy Parisian society, depicted as a Dantesque Inferno dominated by gold and pleasure.

<sup>512</sup> Stanko, p. 35.

<sup>513</sup> For more on the characteristics of dandies, see Karin Becker, *Le dandysme littéraire en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Orléans: Paradigme, 2010), esp. pp. 2–6. On Henri de Marsay as a dandy, see pp. 83–89.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16 and p. 34. On Henri as the literary embodiment of Alfred d’Orsay, see p. 35 and p. 84.



animals, Henri, nevertheless, illustrates a more ambiguous relationship between civilisation and animality.

Henri is not the only animalistic character in *La Fille aux yeux d'or* since most of the main protagonists are animalised. Paquita has 'deux yeux jaunes comme ceux des tigres' (257), as does her mother, a frightening woman who is compared to a wide range of mythological monsters (276–77). Christemio, Paquita's mulatto protector, has the eyes of a vulture (272). The Marquise de San-Réal is also compared to a ferocious animal after murdering Paquita (307–08). Paul de Manerville attributes to himself the virtues of his friend Henri: 'il avait l'air de dire: — Ne nous insultez pas, nous sommes de vrais tigres' (254–55). This affirmation is untrue in the case of Paul, because he is a feeble young man who is unable to find his place in Paris and needs Henri's protection; but it is more appropriate for Henri. Even the postman is called Moinot, which 's'écrit absolument comme un moineau [*sic*]' (264). Analysing the animality of other characters is beyond the scope of this study. However, it must be noted that their animality was easily comprehensible for Balzac's reader, because it appeared to stem from their exoticism and 'otherness'. Orientalism and felinity are often associated in the novel. As non-European protagonists (they are Spanish, Creole, oriental, mulatto and all of these origins combined), Margarita, Paquita and Christemio were considered by the nineteenth-century French audience to be less civilised and therefore lesser humans.<sup>515</sup> Conversely, in the perspective of a scientist such as Virey Henri's Frenchness would be in principle incompatible with savagery.<sup>516</sup> The novel creates a network of animalistic references that highlights the savagery of the characters and connects Henri to them, revealing that he is an animal despite his veneer of civilisation.

The resemblance between the young aristocrat and the mulatto, for instance, is striking. Apparently, these men have nothing in common: de Marsay is a pure product of European civilisation, while Christemio is an African (or Chinese, as the narrator creates confusion)<sup>517</sup> slave, devoted to his mistress to the point of abnegation, and devoid of intelligence ('irréflexion d'enfant'; 271). Yet, the two of them share a magnetic power (256 for Henri, 274 for Christemio) and the same gaze. Henri has 'un air [...] féroce et significatif' (303) after Paquita erroneously pronounced the name of the Marquise at the peak of passion, whilst '[l]e mulâtre jeta sur Henri un coup d'œil [...] épouvantablement significatif' (305), when leaving

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<sup>515</sup> For more on exoticism and hybridism in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, see Doris Y. Kadish, 'Hybrids in Balzac's *La Fille aux yeux d'or*', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 16:3-4 (Spring–Summer 1988), 270–78; T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, "'The Other Woman': Reading a Body of Difference in Balzac's *La Fille aux yeux d'or*", *Symposium*, 51:1 (Spring 1997), 43–50.

<sup>516</sup> On Virey's position about France as a model for civilisation, see chapter 1, p. 39.

<sup>517</sup> Pierre Citron observes that Balzac frequently amalgamates India and West Indies, Africans, Asians, Orientals, mulattoes and creoles ('Le rêve asiatique de Balzac', pp. 306–07).

the hotel San-Réal after their third rendezvous. Whereas Christemio's eyes are similar to those of a bird of prey, Henri swoops down on Paquita '[c]omme un aigle qui fond sur sa proie' (286–87). However, here the resemblance ends. Despite his inferior status, Christemio is a faithful and honourable man who dies while attempting to protect his mistress from the Marquise. Conversely, Henri loses interest in Paquita after she is cruelly murdered and even jokes about her death.<sup>518</sup> There seems to be an ironic exchange between their shared characteristics. The slave seizes the qualities of the aristocrat, while the latter embodies the supposed savagery of the former.

Henri is also compared to his half-sister Margarita through their shared mistress. Paquita adopts the same submissive attitude with each of the siblings and generates the same reaction from them. To Henri, she gives a dagger 'par un geste de soumission qui aurait attendri un tigre' (287); while the Marquise stabs her, she shouts 'des cris affaiblis qui eussent attendri des tigres' (306). The relative clauses adopt a similar structure and an analogous vocabulary. The words that describe Paquita's behaviour underscore her weakness, whereas Lord Dudley's children are implicitly compared to tigers. The use of the conditional emphasises their cruelty and insensitivity. They are even tougher than tigers because they are not moved by her soft gestures and cries.

The comparisons between Henri and big cats, either tigers or lions, are frequent in the novel and highlight the different aspects of Henri's personality.<sup>519</sup> On the one hand, the association with such animals emphasises his courage (248), his proud attitude (255) and his aristocratic nature; on the other hand, it also reveals the same 'unprincipled aggression' as that identified by Peter Heymans in Edmund Burke's depiction of tigers in *Reflection on the Revolution in France* (1790).<sup>520</sup> As the king of the beasts and a fierce predator, the lion reflects Henri's noble yet terrible nature.<sup>521</sup> This image is apparently compatible with his status as a dandy, since the term *lion* designated a kind of fashionable and eccentric dandy during the July Monarchy.<sup>522</sup> In *Illusions perdues*, a more mature de Marsay is called 'le lion parisien' (149) by the narrator, playing with the polysemy of the substantive. As for the tiger, it not only

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<sup>518</sup> Final dialogue between Henri and Paul: '— Eh bien, qu'est devenue notre belle FILLE AUX YEUX D'OR, grand scélérat? — Elle est morte. — De quoi? — De la poitrine.' (310)

<sup>519</sup> They are also characteristic of Lisbeth Fischer's portrait. See chapter 5, p. 196. See also Pascale Krumm, 'La Bette noire de Balzac', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 28:3 (September–December 1991), 254–63.

<sup>520</sup> Peter Heymans, *Animality in British Romanticism: The Aesthetics of Species* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), p. 103

<sup>521</sup> On the signification of lion, see Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, trans. by Jack Sage, foreword by Herbert Read (London: Routledge & Kenan Paul, 1971 [1962]), pp. 189–90; Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 116–18.

<sup>522</sup> Félix Derière, *Physiologie du lion*, illustrated by Gavarni and Honoré Daumier (Paris: Delahaye, 1842), esp. pp. 8–13 and pp. 17–20. See also Gill, pp. 76–78; Becker, p. 8 and p. 36.

conveys the same impression of ferocity and nobility as the lion, but it also stresses the oriental flavour of the novel.<sup>523</sup> Additionally, this big cat is often associated with Dionysus, a Greek god with oriental origins and androgynous traits that recall those of Henri.<sup>524</sup> The associations between Henri, lions and tigers also refer to his cry. Like a big cat, the young man does not shout, but roars to express anger and jealousy (*Fille*, 296, 303). In other words, contrary to Karin Becker's claim that Henri is able to control his emotions, the references to lions and tigers reveal that the young aristocrat has not been able to reach the dandy's ideal of impassibility and indeed suffers from outbreaks of violence.<sup>525</sup> Henri's tantrum, when he discovers that Paquita has another lover, demonstrates that he is subject to his emotions, which are expressed through his animalistic behaviour. This conduct emphasises and somehow undermines the paradoxical nature of the connection between lions and dandies in the vocabulary of July Monarchy society, whilst showing that aristocrats are as prompt to exhibit violent behaviour as members of lower classes.

Henri's leonine and manly characteristics, however, serve to compensate for a graceful beauty that reminds that of numerous hermaphroditic and effeminate characters.<sup>526</sup> His softness and quietness also risk compromising his masculinity. Becker observes: 'Son apparence douce et féminine est [...] contrebalancée par une certaine virilité du comportement, par un regard énergique et une volonté prononcée'.<sup>527</sup> These characteristics are noticeable especially in *Illusions perdues*, in which his obviously effeminate beauty is 'corrigée par un regard fixe, calme, fauve et rigide comme celui d'un tigre' (140). The narrator's vision is erroneous as it appears, at least in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, that his male qualities (he is a good fighter, an experienced rider and a skilled cabman; *Fille*, 248) barely conceal and certainly do not correct those feminine characteristics that are viewed as weaknesses.

Henri de Marsay's rejection of his femininity is accompanied with a desire for power that distinguishes him from Lucien, Calyste, Sténio, d'Albert and many of the other young and effeminate men studied here:

Il [de Marsay] avait grandi par un concours de circonstances secrètes qui l'investissaient d'un immense pouvoir inconnu. Ce jeune homme avait en main un sceptre plus puissant que ne l'est celui des rois modernes presque tous bridés par les lois dans leurs moindres

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<sup>523</sup> For more on the oriental colour, see Citron, 'Le rêve asiatique de Balzac', pp. 319–35; Pierre Saint-Amand, 'Balzac oriental: *La Fille aux yeux d'or*', *Romantic Review*, 79:2 (March 1988), 329–40.

<sup>524</sup> Cirlot, pp. 342–43; Ferber, pp. 217–18. On the androgyny of Dionysus-Bacchus, see chapter 2, p. 95 and p. 98; chapter 3, p. 127.

<sup>525</sup> Becker, p. 86.

<sup>526</sup> See chapter 3, p. 128.

<sup>527</sup> Becker, p. 84

volontés. De Marsay exerçait le pouvoir autocratique du despote oriental. Mais ce pouvoir, si stupidement mis en œuvre dans l'Asie par des hommes abrutis, était décuplé par l'intelligence européenne, par l'esprit français, le plus vif, le plus acéré de tous les instruments intelligentiels. Henri pouvait ce qu'il voulait dans l'intérêt de ses plaisirs et de ses vanités. Cette invisible action sur le monde social l'avait revêtu d'une majesté réelle, mais secrète, sans emphase et repliée sur lui-même. [...] Les femmes aiment prodigieusement ces gens qui se nomment pachas eux-mêmes, qui semblent accompagnés de lions, de bourreaux, et marchent dans un appareil de terreur. Il en résulte chez ces hommes une sécurité d'action, une certitude de pouvoir, une fierté de regard, une conscience léonine qui réalise pour les femmes le type de force qu'elles rêvent toutes. Ainsi était de Marsay. (281–82)

This long paragraph describes Henri's personality through stereotypical and heterogeneous oriental imagery. The opposition between Europe and Asia is doubled by an opposition between stupidity, or numbness (the Asians are 'abrutis', a qualifying adjective that is analogous to the animalistic vocabulary used in *Mauprat*), and intelligence. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the narrator regards intelligence as European, and particularly as French. Asia is here a fantasised land perceived not only as exotic by the narrator, but also as the cradle of power. The essence of oriental power is found in its despotism, a coupling that has been associated in Western minds since Antiquity (in Plato and Aristotle's writings for example), with Montesquieu contributing to more modern conceptions of the oriental despot.<sup>528</sup> The sovereignty of an Asian king is curtailed neither by laws nor by democracy. Henri becomes the European embodiment of the oriental despot, perfected by his cleverness and cunning.

A similar correlation between oriental, or feline, force and intelligence is later found in the novel when Henri realises that he has been deceived by Paquita: 'il laissa éclater le rugissement du tigre dont une gazelle se serait moquée, le cri d'un tigre qui joignait à la force de la bête l'intelligence du démon' (296). This metaphor suggests, if any doubt subsisted, that Henri's absolutism is cruel and dangerous. As the above quotation indicates, de Marsay arouses both fear and admiration since he is surrounded by fearsome characters, such as executioners and lions, but he also has a quiet self-assurance in his exercising of power that impresses women. The reference to a lion, as a real entity and as a metaphor ('une conscience léonine'), is especially useful for expressing the combination of fierceness and grandeur that is supposed to characterise him.

The references to big cats aim to support another determinant reference in the novel: de Marsay's power. This power can be defined as 'the capacity of an individual to realise his will,

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<sup>528</sup> Franco Venturi, 'Oriental Despotism', trans. by Lotte F. Jacoby and Ian M. Taylor, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24:1 (January–March 1963), 133–42 (pp. 133–38).

even against the opposition of others'.<sup>529</sup> Here, power could be read through Marxist and postcolonial definitions of the concept based on the oppression of a group of individuals by another group, especially in this case the exploitation of a female slave by a male aristocrat.<sup>530</sup> However, de Marsay's power tallies better with Michel Foucault's concept of power. Lawrence Olivier's analysis of power in Foucault's texts underlines its negativity (since there is no theory of power, and power is defined by what it is not), as well as the importance of the notion of strategy.<sup>531</sup> In *La volonté de savoir*, Foucault claims: 'le pouvoir, ce n'est pas une institution, et ce n'est pas une structure, ce n'est pas une certaine puissance dont certains seraient dotés: c'est le nom qu'on prête à une situation stratégique complexe dans une société donnée'.<sup>532</sup> Foucault also perceives strategic games as a means of influencing the behaviour of other individuals.<sup>533</sup> Power thus consists of strategies aimed at integrating multiple and unstable power relations.

Henri's power is, indeed, only a strategy of power. This exemplifies what can be designated as the dispositional properties of power, which 'are essentially "counter-actual"; that is, they refer to what might be and not necessarily to what is'.<sup>534</sup> His power is performative because his authority only stems from his strategy of pretending that he is powerful based on his 'natural' and social dispositions, and on the exhibition of the traditional attributes of power (the leonine attitude for example). In an essay connecting the main plot of *La Fille aux yeux d'or* with the notions of work and proletariat, Nicole Mozet refers to Henri's posture as his 'simulacre de pouvoir', whereas Catherine Perry calls it in another article his 'omnipotence virtuelle'.<sup>535</sup> However, both critics, and especially Perry, overlook the denigration of Henri's power that is expressed in the novel. *La Fille aux yeux d'or* highlights the fact that even the external signs of his power do not have strong foundations. Certainly, he is an aristocrat, but his noble birth is compromised by his illegitimate and foreign origins. He also depends financially on his friend Paul. It is only the projection of his aspiration to power in the

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<sup>529</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, quoted by Jerry Tew, *Social Theory, Power and Practice* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 155. Tew is more specific about how an individual can realise his or her will, as he mentions that he or she 'can influence or force another to do something that they would not otherwise have done' (Ibid.).

<sup>530</sup> On Marxist definition, see Lawrence Olivier, 'La question du pouvoir chez Foucault: Espace, stratégie et dispositif', *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique*, 21:1 (March 1988), 83–98 (p. 85).

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., notably pp. 83–85 and pp. 88–91.

<sup>532</sup> Foucault, *La volonté de savoir*, p. 123.

<sup>533</sup> Michel Foucault, 'The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom', quoted by Barry Hindess, *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 99.

<sup>534</sup> Keith Dowding, *Power* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), p. 4.

<sup>535</sup> Nicole Mozet, *Balzac au pluriel* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 'Écrivains', 1990), p. 137; Catherine Perry, 'La Fille aux yeux d'or et la quête paradoxale de l'infini', *L'Année balzacienne*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 14 (1993), 261–84 (p. 264).

phantasmagorical form of an omnipotent pasha that gives him power and hides his impotence. This simulation of power will lead de Marsay to acquire seemingly real power in subsequent texts of *La Comédie humaine*, the political authority of a Prime Minister.

Despite his overall weakness, the young man has paradoxically embraced a political fate and even become Prime Minister in Balzac's fictitious July Monarchy. His situation is apparently better than that of many young men of our corpus, who are characterised by their social and political ineptitude. Yet, while being a Prime Minister is undoubtedly one of the highest political functions to which one can aspire, it is an empty title in the case of de Marsay. In a chapter of *Balzac dans le texte* dedicated to the genesis of de Marsay, Pierre Laforgue convincingly argues that *La Fille aux yeux d'or* is the first and only episode in *La Comédie humaine* in which Henri plays an important role in spite of his subsequent political ascension.<sup>536</sup> Laforgue asks: 'où est vraiment "l'énorme figure de de Marsay" dans *La Comédie humaine*? On touche ici une des limites de l'œuvre. Balzac n'a pas donné toute sa stature à de Marsay'.<sup>537</sup> The scholar also points out that Henri dies in 1834, in other words, the year of his first appearance in *La Comédie humaine*.<sup>538</sup> This shows how ineffective his power is, as he is condemned to failure and death from the beginning. To further develop Laforgue's analysis, *La Fille aux yeux d'or* can be compared to *Le Père Goriot*, Eugène de Rastignac's *Bildungsroman*. In the latter novel, Rastignac, one of the most important characters of *La Comédie humaine*, achieves his sentimental and social development. His famous address to Paris: 'À nous deux maintenant!' (354) posits him as a fighter and a conqueror.<sup>539</sup> After all, he did not succumb to the temptations embodied by the demonic Vautrin (and therefore succeeded where the weak Lucien will fail). His pragmatism allows him to escape the insecure destiny of most of his male contemporaries and presents him as a rare example of confident masculinity in the first half of the nineteenth century. As for de Marsay, it would be a mistake to assume that he would meet the same fate as Rastignac because of their similarities and their friendship. Rather, his *Bildungsroman* ends in failure. From the episode of *La Fille aux yeux d'or* onwards, Henri can only regress.

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<sup>536</sup> Pierre Laforgue, *Balzac dans le texte: Études de génétique et de sociocritique* (Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire: Piro, 2006), pp. 69–84 (esp. pp. 78–82).

<sup>537</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid., pp. 83–84. See also Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, p. 203; Owen N. Heathcote, 'The Engendering of Violence and the Violation of Gender in Honoré de Balzac's *La Fille aux yeux d'or*', *Romance Studies*, 22 (Autumn 1993), 99–112 (p. 108); Owen N. Heathcote, 'Balzac entre fantaisie et fantasme: L'exemple de *La Fille aux yeux d'or*', *L'Année balzacienne*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 13 (2012), 181–99 (p. 193).

<sup>539</sup> On Rastignac's success despite his effeminacy, see Schehr, 'Homme-diégèse', p. 139.

Owing to Henri's political fate, we may ask whether Balzac intends to question the politics of the July Monarchy through this protagonist. As a Prime Minister of the July Monarchy, Henri may be equated to historical Prime Ministers, but it is difficult to find similarities between Henri and the bankers Jacques Laffitte and Casimir Perier or the Napoleonic marshal Jean Soult. The creation of a European despot such as Henri may aim to criticise the politics of the *juste milieu* of the king, as he rejects any democratic compromise and favours absolute authority. While Balzac judged July Monarchy society to be waning, he did not share Legitimists' views, which he found to be disconnected from reality.<sup>540</sup> Moreover, there is little or no resemblance between the aristocratic Henri de Marsay and the 'bourgeois' king Louis-Philippe I. Paul Beik stresses the king's lack of charisma: 'The king's popularity is difficult to assess, but it is probable that he was accepted by most people without inspiring devotion'.<sup>541</sup> Conversely, Henri's magnetism is emphasised in the novel and he seems to raise a strong cult of personality around him (especially with de Manerville), as would an oriental king, assimilated to a god, and of course Napoleon, as shown in the introduction to this thesis. Could Henri be an incarnation of Napoleon? The story of the novel takes place in April 1815, in other words during the *Cent-Jours*, which supports this hypothesis. Arguably, in embodying the Emperor's greatness, Henri denounces his despotism and his cruelty at the same time, and shows that institutionalised hegemonic masculinity often equates to hyper-masculinity. Above all, he allows Balzac's text to shed new light on Napoleon because it challenges his representation as a glorious and almighty figure. Accordingly, *La Fille aux yeux d'or* reflects Balzac's ambiguous views towards Napoleon by depicting the male protagonist through a combination of fascination and abhorrence.<sup>542</sup> It appears that no *grand homme* can exist either in the universe of *La Comédie humaine*, or during the July Monarchy period. Any attempt at grandeur is undermined by excessive displays of power, threat and ineffectiveness, here embodied by the fantasy of the oriental despot.

The threat and despotism that underpin the oriental fantasy are best expressed in the representation of violence. Art historians consider that the portrait of Henri is reminiscent of Delacroix's painting *La Mort de Sardanapale* (1828), in which the Assyrian king decides to die surrounded by his possessions whilst watching his wives being executed, because of the disenchanted authority that characterises both men.<sup>543</sup> Like the figure of Sardanapale, Henri

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<sup>540</sup> Gemie, p. 469 and p. 472.

<sup>541</sup> Beik, p. 34.

<sup>542</sup> On Balzac's ambiguous views towards Napoleon, see chapter 3, pp. 116–18.

<sup>543</sup> For instance Henry F. Majewski, 'Painting as Intertext in Balzac's *La Fille aux yeux d'or*', *Symposium*, 45:1 (Spring 1991), 370–84 (pp. 375–78). *La Fille aux yeux d'or* is dedicated to Delacroix.

adopts the position of a distant, unemotional and yet omnipotent cruelty. The façade of the impassive Parisian dandy progressively disintegrates and allows a bestial violence to appear. Henri threatens, roars at, hits and fights against his admiring victims: women. While critics have argued about the misogyny of the novel itself, the attitude of its main protagonist towards women leaves little doubt regarding his misogyny.<sup>544</sup> Contrary to Bernard, who is able to recognise women's merits, especially those of his cousin, Henri remains spiteful towards women throughout his life. His misogyny originates in his fear of women. His violence and animality are not signs of power; they appear to be desperate attempts to mask his impotence and diminish the threat to his virility that women represent. His speech to Paul in which he justifies his lifestyle as a *fat* reveals the extent of his contempt for women. The *fat*, he explains, is obsessed with his looks and therefore only interested in petty things: 'Et qu'est-ce que la femme? Une petite chose, un ensemble de niaiseries' (267). However, his apparent scorn aims to conceal his fear of women: '[I]a misogynie qui caractérise le discours du fat traduit [...] sa peur fondamentale de l'autre sexe, son incapacité à assumer le mystère d'un être foncièrement différent de lui', argues Lucette Czyba.<sup>545</sup>

Paquita is doubly different from him because she is a woman — she embodies an idealised femininity according to Henri (258) — and because she is a foreigner. Balzac blends her identities to give her fantasised origins: she is Spanish, Creole and Oriental all at the same time (as well as blond and brunette; 257, 286).<sup>546</sup> As a foreigner, she is almost silent and she can neither speak nor read French.<sup>547</sup> She belongs to the category of passive, distant, objectified and eroticised oriental women that are widely present in nineteenth-century European literature. Lisa Lowe has shown that oriental women in Flaubert's works (Salammbô and Kuchuk-Hânem) are depicted as 'modestly virginal and erotically alluring' in order to convey their ambivalence and 'otherness'.<sup>548</sup> Likewise, Paquita is characterised by the same combination of innocence and eroticism: 'Si la *Fille aux yeux d'or* était vierge, elle n'était certes pas innocente', notes the narrator, alluding to her lesbianism (289). Paquita is perceived by de Marsay as a sexualised object and a slave. This subjugation aims at reducing the threat that, as a woman, she represents for Henri. He despises her for her caution and considers her warning against the danger of

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<sup>544</sup> Lucette Czyba, 'Misogynie et gynophobie dans *La Fille aux yeux d'or*', in *La femme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 139–49; Heathcote, 'The Engendering of Violence', pp. 100–01; Perry, p. 273; Lucey, p. 119.

<sup>545</sup> Czyba, p. 145.

<sup>546</sup> For more on her otherness, see Sharpley-Whiting, quoted article.

<sup>547</sup> For more on the silence of the subaltern, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak? (Abbreviated by the Author)', in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2006 [1995]), pp. 28–37.

<sup>548</sup> Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 86.



daggers to be the result of her ‘romanesque’, thus feminine, imagination.<sup>549</sup> Henri contemptuously interprets Paquita’s sense of ‘romanesque’ as a trait common to all women (274). His misinterpretation of the events and inability to interpret signs have been pointed out by several critics.<sup>550</sup> This deliberate blindness depends on his misogynous determination to underestimate women in order to compensate for his inability to dominate them, as will soon be shown.

Henri’s misogyny is not only embedded in contempt, it also needs force to be displayed. He frequently adopts the posture of an animal trainer (Henri finds strength ‘pour dompter cette fille’; 301) and his discourse repeatedly refers to the conquest (269, 301), domination (289) and possession (279) of women, and especially of Paquita. He keeps threatening to kill Paquita if she is unfaithful to him (279), whilst knowing that she belongs to someone else (he is simply mistaken about the sex of her lover), and he attempts to slay her when she pronounces the name of her mistress (303–04). His preferred weapon is a dagger, a phallic weapon whose gendered symbolism is altered in the text by being wielded by women.<sup>551</sup> It is Paquita herself who suggests using the knife to Henri (273). She first mentions it through her emissary Christemio (who also uses a similar weapon against Henri when he refuses to be blindfolded); then she shows Henri the dagger that she keeps in her boudoir when Henri wants to know the identity of the one ‘qui règne ici’ (287); finally, the name that she pronounces by mistake when having sex with Henri is ‘un coup de poignard’ for him (302). This dagger is in fact the Marquise’s symbol. She is the threat that Paquita feared and, in the end, she is the one who uses it to kill Paquita. Ultimately, Henri attempts and fails to appropriate a masculine weapon that has been distorted and re-appropriated by women. The symbolism of the dagger highlights the fact that Henri’s displays of animalistic and civilised hyper-masculinity prove inefficient.

As such, *La Fille aux yeux d’or* depicts the failure of a man who is submitted to a feminine threat. In so doing, the novel questions the foundations of male power during the July Monarchy. Henri’s alleged advantages as a man and a member of a powerful secret society are reduced to nothing in comparison to his half-sister. The novel denounces the weakness of a superficial and futile authority, based only on simulation, which animalistic violence and the attributes of a refined power fail to conceal.

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<sup>549</sup> See chapter 2, p. 106. On the connection between novels, women and emotions, see Queffelec, p. 12.

<sup>550</sup> Shoshana Felman, ‘Rereading Femininity’, *Yale French Studies*, 62 (1981), 19–44 (p. 26–27); Wing, p. 148 and p. 152; Elisabeth Gerwin, ‘Power in the City: Balzac’s *Flâneur* in *La Fille aux yeux d’or*’, in *Institutions and Power in Nineteenth-Century French Literature and Culture*, ed. by David Evans and Kate Griffiths (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011), pp. 101–14 (p. 113); Heathcote, ‘Balzac entre fantaisie et fantasme’, p. 189. It recalls d’Hauteville’s inability to interpret the signs relative to the hermaphroditic identity of Camille.

<sup>551</sup> Felman (p. 32) and Perry (p. 278) have also interpreted the dagger as a phallic symbol used by a woman.

## ‘Le Pouvoir Féminin’

Hyper-masculinity is not limited to men, but can also be found in female characters, and notably in Margarita-Euphémia Porrabénil, Marquise de San-Réal. Paquita raises the topic of the superiority of female power over male power in a conversation with Henri de Marsay. After alluding to his involvement in *les Treize*, which justifies his inability to leave the country, Henri de Marsay guarantees Paquita that he will protect her: ‘je puis te faire dans Paris un asile où nul pouvoir humain n’arrivera’ (*Fille*, 298). Paquita replies with terror: ‘Non [...], tu oublies le pouvoir féminin’ (299), referring to her mistress. Hyper-masculine women like the Marquise, who embodies such female power in *La Fille aux yeux d’or*, are different from the figure of the masculine woman who is studied in the next chapter. The latter usually allows men to blossom and society to progress by displaying typically masculine qualities, such as activity and assertiveness. Conversely, it emerges from *La Fille aux yeux d’or* that a hyper-masculine woman is an ambivalent figure, as she dominates and even destroys hyper-masculine men by using the same weapons as her victims, notably violence and animality.

Hyper-masculine women, and Margarita in particular, can be connected with the figure of the *femme fatale* due to the lethal power that they exercise. Like many *femmes fatales*, the Marquise is an exotic, beautiful, erotic and unattainable woman who causes the death of her lover and is therefore a threat, especially to male dominance.<sup>552</sup> Certainly, Paquita is the direct victim of her retaliation, but, as will be pointed out, the real fall is that of Henri, as he appears powerless when facing the Marquise’s intervention. Analysing the figure of the *femme fatale* in colonial novels, Jennifer Yee has highlighted the disturbing danger that this figure represents for a man and his virility: ‘the *femme fatale* appears [...] as the incarnation of a threat against which man’s only hope is to reaffirm his masculinity’.<sup>553</sup> However, while the men in Yee’s corpus are usually able to vanquish women’s influence, Henri fails to do so. This difference in the impact of the *femme fatale* on men is due to the fact that the Marquise’s power exceeds that of a ‘regular’ *femme fatale* owing to the animalistic and hyper-masculine violence that underpins it, as well as to the ambivalent nature of her violence.<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>552</sup> Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. by Angus Davidson, foreword by Frank Kermode, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970 [1933]), pp. 213–16.

<sup>553</sup> Jennifer Yee, ‘Colonial Virility and the *Femme Fatale*: Scenes from the Battle of the Sexes in French Indochina’, *French Studies*, 54:4 (2000), 469–78 (p. 473).

<sup>554</sup> Yee describes the *femmes fatales* of her corpus as ‘beasts of prey’ (p. 470). However, they do not display the same ferocity as Margarita’s.

Adeline Tintner has read the end of *La Fille aux yeux d'or* as representative of the failure of the Marquise because of her grief for Paquita's death, and despite her choice to spend the rest of her life in a convent.<sup>555</sup> The overall impression, nevertheless, is her triumph over Henri. First, she remains Paquita's favourite lover (notwithstanding the novelty of sexual intercourse with a man for the young girl), as is highlighted when she inadvertently pronounces the nickname of the Marquise, *Mariquita*, when reaching the climax of her relation with Henri. Not only is *Mariquita* an affectionate diminutive of Margarita-Euphémia, whose final *-a* leaves no doubt regarding the sex of Henri's rival, it is also the combination of the female lovers' names: Mar(garita) y (and) (Pa)quita.<sup>556</sup> By pronouncing this/these name(s), Paquita declares the intimate relationship between the two women. In addition, she implicitly questions her male lover's manliness since *mariquita* designates a male homosexual in Spanish, as many critics have noted.<sup>557</sup> Most significantly, the Marquise kills Paquita when she comes back from London and discovers her mistress's infidelity, thus stealing Henri's own revenge: 'Cette femme m'aura pris jusqu'à ma vengeance!' (306). While de Marsay first plans to bring her to justice, he changes his mind out of fraternal solidarity and romantic interest. In brief, the Marquise wins on all counts, leaving Henri deprived of love, retaliation and justice. *La Fille aux yeux d'or* is thus the story of the failure of a man, dominated by the superiority of a woman.

The previous section showed that the Marquise, like Henri, is depicted as an animal, and specifically as a tiger. Her animality is even more pronounced and violent than that of Henri, owing to the brevity and, thus, intensity of her appearance. She is, in turn, portrayed as a weak and a powerful animal. Perhaps unsurprisingly, her weakness is due to her female condition: 'La marquise était femme: elle avait calculé sa vengeance avec cette perfection de perfidie qui distingue les animaux faibles' (306). It quickly becomes clear, however, that her weakness is also her strength. Her animality is asserted and, at the same time, denied by reaffirming human qualities. Indeed, calculation requires the use of reason, which is a human and even masculine quality that is displayed by Henri when he realises that it is dangerous to commit unpremeditated murder: 'il avait déjà pensé, malgré l'emportement de sa colère, qu'il était peu

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<sup>555</sup> Adeline R. Tintner, 'James and Balzac: *The Bostonians* and *La Fille aux yeux d'or*', *Comparative Literature*, 29:3 (Summer 1977), 241–54 (p. 246). See also Isabelle de Courtivron, 'Weak Men and Fatal Women: The Sand Image', in *Homosexualities and French Literature*, pp. 210–27 (p. 220).

<sup>556</sup> Felman, pp. 30–31; Perry, p. 281. Felman considers that *Mariquita* can also be interpreted as the association of Paquita with Mar(say). However, this reading is irrelevant since the function of *Mariquita* is to exclude Henri from the relationship.

<sup>557</sup> Serge Gaubert, 'La Fille aux yeux d'or: Un texte-charade', in *La Femme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 167–77 (p. 172); Felman, p. 30; Saint-Amand, p. 336, footnote 14; Perry, p. 272. For Wayne Conner, the choice of *Mariquita* has been influenced by Mérimée's *Théâtre de Clara*: 'La composition de *La Fille aux yeux d'or*', *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 56:4 (October–December 1956), 535–47 (pp. 536–39).

prudent de se commettre avec la justice en tuant cette fille à l'improviste et sans en avoir préparé le meurtre de manière à s'assurer l'impunité' (303). In the case of Margarita, it is, however, a degenerated version of calculation and intelligence — perfidy — that is presented. Intelligence can therefore be perceived as typical of tough women.<sup>558</sup> The marquise's animality is then depicted in the more traditional terms of violence. The macabre description of Paquita's boudoir covered with blood and of her body torn to pieces contributes to the depiction of Margarita's ferocity. The Marquise is also animalised through the eroticised description of her body:

Sa tête avide et furieuse respirait l'odeur du sang. Sa bouche haletante restait entrouverte, et ses narines ne suffisaient pas à ses aspirations. Certains animaux, mis en fureur, fondent sur leur ennemi, le mettent à mort, et, tranquilles dans leur victoire, semblent avoir tout oublié. Il en est d'autres qui tournent autour de leur victime, qui la gardent en craignant qu'on ne la leur vienne enlever, et qui, semblables à l'Achille d'Homère, font neuf fois le tour de Troie en traînant leur ennemi par les pieds. Ainsi était la marquise. Elle ne vit pas Henri. [...] elle était trop enivrée de sang chaud, trop animée par la lutte, trop exaltée pour apercevoir Paris entier [...]. (307–08)

Sara Pappas highlights the major difference between this excerpt and the one relating to Henri (both including the sentence: 'Ainsi était...'): while Henri is surrounded with animals and executioners, the Marquise is the animal and the executioner.<sup>559</sup> Margarita is portrayed as an animal so obsessed with the smell and the view of blood, and the pleasure of killing, that she forgets all that surrounds her and focuses only on enjoying the possession of her dead mistress's body. The rationality that characterised her planning of Paquita's death has now vanished in the execution of her revenge and gives way to a purely instinctive, sensorial and feral creature, combining female irrationality ('trop exaltée') with male violence ('sa tête avide et furieuse'). Whilst she embodies bestiality in this extract even more than Henri and thus re-establishes the alleged 'naturalism' of women, she is also compared to an idealised figure of masculinity: Achilles, hero of the *Iliad*. This comparison highlights the ambivalence of the character because the allegedly superior humanity of Achilles is flawed, since the demigod has a fatal weakness. *La Fille aux yeux d'or* claims that male power can be countered only by a power that shares and accentuates the same essences: domination, violence and ambiguity.

The ambivalence of Margarita's characterisation is reminiscent of that of Judith, the biblical heroine who seduced and beheaded the Assyrian general Holofernes to save the Jewish

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<sup>558</sup> Sherrie A. Inness states about a comic heroine: 'she waits to attack her victim, carefully calculating the best time for an attack', a tough attitude that is similar to that of the Marquise when murdering Paquita: *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 26.

<sup>559</sup> Sara Pappas, 'Opening the Door: Reinterpreting Interior Space and Transpositions of Art in *La Fille aux yeux d'or* via Assia Djebar', *Symposium*, 64:3 (2010), 169–86 (pp. 178–79).

people in that they share a common murderous and yet transcendent nature. In *Judith Sexual Warrior*, Margarita Stocker has highlighted the ambiguity of this young widow, simultaneously a chaste instrument of God and a sexualised murderess.<sup>560</sup> Likewise, the Marquise cannot unambiguously be interpreted as a negative character although she is undoubtedly condemned for her violent action. After all, like Judith's sword, Margarita's weapon is an *arme blanche* and, as Stocker points out, Judith's sword is what distinguishes the 'good' Judith from the 'bad' Salome in iconographic representations (both are depicted as beautiful young women holding the head of a dead man).<sup>561</sup> The murder of Paquita by Margarita can be compared to a religious ceremonial. It corresponds to René Girard's concept of *la crise sacrificielle*, which 'est perte de la différence entre violence impure et violence purificatrice', when sacrificial ritual is required to end violence.<sup>562</sup> Paquita's death appears as a sacrifice that ends Henri's violent behaviour and seemingly leads to a return to order by allowing Henri to rise politically, whilst challenging hegemonic masculinity. Margarita's purifying and almost religious violence is confirmed by her decision to become a nun. It does not mean that Paquita's murder is intrinsically just and that Henri's disgrace is praised, but that Henri's ostensibly hyper-masculine posture appears to be culpable. He is depicted as the passive spectator of the agony of his mistress and is therefore indirectly emasculated. This can be connected to Freud's interpretation of the decapitation of Holofernes as an act of castration.<sup>563</sup> In *La Cousine Bette*, the courtesan Valérie Marneffe, assimilated to Delilah, claims: 'Ce groupe [de Samson et Dalila], et celui de la farouche Judith, seraient la femme expliquée. La Vertu coupe la tête, le Vice ne vous coupe que les cheveux' (277). Margarita's virtuous violence is depicted as more dangerous to men than the behaviour of seductresses, such as Valérie and Paquita, because it overcomes virile power.

The final scene of the novel amplifies Henri's attitude throughout the story. For a man whose power is constantly asserted, Henri certainly appears weak to many readers. The most striking example of Henri's weakness is his passivity during his encounters with Paquita. Mozet observes that Henri never initiates the rendezvous with the young girl.<sup>564</sup> He submits himself to her trials, as he accepts to be driven to her boudoir blindfolded, although reluctantly. His most

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<sup>560</sup> Margarita Stocker, *Judith Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 3–23. See also Owen N. Heathcote, 'Hermeneutic Cycles and Cycles of Violence: *La fille aux yeux d'or*, *Histoire d'O*, *Les guérillères*', *South Central Review*, 19:4 (Winter 2002–Spring 2003), 44–62 (pp. 44–45).

<sup>561</sup> Stocker, p. 18.

<sup>562</sup> René Girard, *La violence et le sacré* (Paris: Grasset, 1972), p. 76.

<sup>563</sup> Stocker, pp. 4–5.

<sup>564</sup> Mozet, p. 126. See also Jean-Yves Debreuille, 'Horizontalité et verticalité: Inscriptions idéologiques dans *La Fille aux yeux d'or*', in *La femme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 151–65 (p. 158).

noticeable attempt to satisfy Paquita's desires is when he agrees to be dressed like a girl during their first sexual encounter (289). Henri's passivity is manifest in this scene, as Paquita takes the initiative of choosing her lover's attire and, above all, of controlling their intercourse.<sup>565</sup> Henri's cross-dressing highlights his subservience to his mistress, whilst also casting doubt on his sexuality. The second sexual encounter between Henri and Paquita adds further ambivalence to his transvestism, as he requests his feminine outfit (299), signifying that cross-dressing, which originated from his mistress's whim, might have become a source of pleasure. His homosexuality was previously implied by his ambiguous relationship with his friend Paul, notably during the scene of his *toilette*. Jean-Yves Debreuille points out how typically feminine his behaviour is, not only in the ritual of the *toilette* but also because of the subsequent 'minauderies' that he despised in women.<sup>566</sup> The veiled seduction becomes apparent when he challenges Paul to watch him: 'Tu ne te choqueras pas si je fais ma toilette devant toi?' (266). Interestingly, Balzac seems to suggest that homosexuality is hereditary, since Henri is not only the brother of an openly lesbian woman, but he is also the son of a bisexual and potentially incestuous father.<sup>567</sup>

We need to return briefly to *Mauprat* to highlight the difference between the two novels in relation to 'le pouvoir féminin'. This difference lies in the type of power that is exercised by women. In *Mauprat*, Edmée's power is not based on subjugation, as is Margarita's, but stems from domestication, or *apprivoisement*. Lestel argues that the notion of *apprivoisement* implies a two-way dependence: for example, the animal depends on the human, who gives it food, and the human depends on the animal, which provides him/her affection and services. Lestel even asserts that a social contract can exist between the two.<sup>568</sup> Conversely, it can be assumed that subjugation is not mutually beneficial and is not determined by such a contract. In *Mauprat*, the

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<sup>565</sup> Courtivron, p. 219; Mozet, p. 126; Heathcote, 'The Engendering of Violence', p. 103. On cross-dressing, see chapter 2, pp. 77–80.

<sup>566</sup> Debreuille, p. 158.

<sup>567</sup> 'Lord Dudley, pour n'en plus parler, vint, en 1816, se réfugier à Paris, afin d'éviter les poursuites de la justice anglaise, qui, de l'Orient, ne protège que la marchandise. Le lord voyageur demanda quel était ce beau jeune homme en voyant Henri. Puis, en l'entendant nommer: — Ah! c'est mon fils. Quel malheur! dit-il.' (249) The idea of hereditary homosexuality can also be found, although not as clearly, in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*. Vautrin's aunt, Jacqueline Collin, seems to admire the beauty of important women and the compliments that she gives to Madame de Maufrigneuse may not be simple flatteries: 'madame la duchesse ne pourrait pas être plus belle qu'elle ne l'est en ce moment. Vous êtes jolie à croquer [...]!' (465). She also carefully examines Madame de Sérizy who wears a dressing gown that reveals her bosom (466). Additionally, her pseudonym, Asie, and her Asian looks indirectly link her with the erotic and perverse reputation of the Orient that is widely exploited in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*. She is also described in *La Cousine Bette* as virile (431). Certainly, the heredity of homosexuality is not asserted in every novel of *La Comédie Humaine*, since Ève Séchard, Lucien's sister, does not show inclination to other women, but it seems manifest that such 'depravity' can affect members of the same family in different ways.

<sup>568</sup> Lestel, p. 72.

relationship between Edmée and Bernard is grounded in a kind of Rousseauist social contract, which includes Edmée's promise not to belong to another man before being his to prevent herself from being raped. Contractual relationships, however, must be 'fondées sur un consentement libre et réciproque, formulé en toutes lettres', according to Hecquet.<sup>569</sup> The probity of Edmée and Bernard's contract seems at first compromised because it has been imposed on her — Abbot Aubert therefore designates Edmée's oath as a 'monstrueuse transaction' (*Mauprat*, 139). However, once Bernard arrives at Sainte-Sévère, his relationship with Edmée evolves such that it becomes a social contract as defined by Lestel. The food provided by the young woman is mostly intellectual. As for Bernard, he first struggles to honour his part of the contract, not because he lacks affection, but rather because he expresses it unreasonably and embarrasses his cousin with his feelings. The fact that Bernard agrees to follow the social contract shows that Edmée's female power (which is based on the domestication of Bernard) requires his submission to her 'pouvoir féminin'. The process through which he becomes an educated man consists of his acceptance of Edmée's masculine dominance to improve his own masculinity. Male hyper-masculinity in the novel is counterbalanced by female power.

In other words, the intervention of a woman in a man's hyper-masculinity is presented positively in *Mauprat* as a step towards progress and civilisation, whereas the impact of such intervention is more ambiguous in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*. Female violence appears as a kind of expiatory violence, which suspends male violence and which paradoxically highlights the violence that is intrinsic to hegemonic masculinity, whilst being presented as an excess of domination and a renewal of animalistic violence. Whereas Henri de Marsay is overwhelmed by female power, Bernard de Mauprat distinguishes himself from Henri because he submits to a kind of female power that enables him to achieve an idealised form of masculinity.

### **Hyper-masculinity and Justice: The Case of Claude Gueux**

Ideal hyper-masculinity can be found in Victor Hugo's short novel *Claude Gueux*, which tells the story of a convict who kills the warden that bullies him and separates him from his friend Albin, and who is subsequently condemned to death. It presents a type of hyper-masculinity based on 'natural' authority and a lack of civilisation, one which is different from that depicted in *La Fille aux yeux d'or* and *Mauprat*. Contrary to Henri de Marsay and Bernard de Mauprat,

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<sup>569</sup> Hecquet, p. 69.

Claude neither submits to, nor is dominated by, ‘le pouvoir féminin’, as female characters are mostly absent from the story. This absence is obviously due to the location in which the story takes place — a male prison —, which allows Hugo to depict an ideal society organised around Claude that is based on homosocial and homoerotic relations, which will be further investigated in this analysis. More significantly, in spite of the manifest violence (here the cold-blooded murder of a prison warden), hyper-masculinity is characterised by a sense of idealisation and justice. This section argues that Hugo’s interpretation of the murder committed by Claude enables him to present Claude’s hyper-masculinity as exemplary, notably because it questions society’s own hyper-masculine conduct more overtly than the Marquise’s violent action.

References to animality are scarce in descriptions of Claude Gueux. On the one hand, the lack of animal metaphors reproduces the coldness of the *fait divers* by which Hugo was inspired. On the other hand, the few references to animals are emphasised by contrast and allegorise the characters, thus contributing to the exemplary status of the tale. Claude Gueux’s faithful friend Albin is described as a dog, whereas Claude is equated to the king of beasts, as he is designated as a ‘[p]auvre lion en cage’.<sup>570</sup> The convict’s nobility of character is highlighted, despite being socially and economically inferior to Henri de Marsay. Importantly, this comparison is justified by his ‘natural’ authority, which is emphasised by the narrator through expressions such as: ‘quelque chose d’impérieux dans toute sa personne et qui se faisait obéir’ (*Gueux*, 10), ‘un ascendant singulier sur tous ses compagnons’ (13), ‘[c]et empire [qui] lui était venu sans qu’il y songeât’ (*Ibid.*), ‘l’autorité sans titre’ (16) and ‘pouvoir spirituel’ (*Ibid.*). Contrary to Henri, who pretends to dominate his friends and mistresses, but is vanquished at the end of the story, Claude’s power is not a posture: it is inherent in his identity and, consequently, is accepted by his fellow inmates. Claude exercises power over them, mitigates their rebellion and even encourages them to testify against him at court in order to pursue justice. His power is not the product of civilisation and culture either, because the narrator describes Claude as illiterate, even though he owns a volume of *Émile* that belonged to his mistress. There is some overlap here with *Mauprat* in the suggestion that education and knowledge stem from women. In this case, however, the passing on of knowledge has failed, or at least, has been interrupted.

Lack of education is a recurrent theme in *Claude Gueux*, especially in the *texte engagé* that is used as a conclusion (actually written two years earlier). The narrator returns to animalistic comparisons, reminiscent of the beasts of *Mauprat*. The animalistic imagery, once

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<sup>570</sup> Victor Hugo, *Claude Gueux* (suivi de) *La Chute*, ed. by Olivier Decroix (Paris: Gallimard, ‘Folio Plus Classiques’, 2004), p. 19. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text (*Gueux*).



again, highlights the moralistic dimension of the tale, although it is not connected to Claude, but to his fellow convicts:

Chacun de ces hommes tombés a au-dessous de lui son type bestial; il semble que chacun d'eux soit le point d'intersection de telle ou telle espèce animale avec l'humanité. Voici le loup-cervier, voici le chat, voici le singe, voici le vautour, voici l'hyène. Or, de ces pauvres têtes mal conformées, le premier tort est à la nature sans doute, le second à l'éducation. La nature a mal ébauché, l'éducation a mal retouché l'ébauche. (44)

As with Bernard's animality, that of the prisoners is 'natural', but can be corrected by appropriate education. Hugo invites society to provide them with the same kind of educational programme that Edmée gives to her cousin. However, whereas the discourse surrounding education is widely accepted in Sand's novel, it is often judged exasperating in Hugo's more paternalistic conclusion.<sup>571</sup> The different ways that education is treated in *Mauprat* and *Claude Gueux* may point to more general beliefs in the superiority of feminine over masculine education. In other words, paternal, almost patriarchal, instruction cannot replace feminine, and especially maternal, education. Female power, nevertheless, cannot substitute for male authority in *Claude Gueux*, since women are absent. Hugo's novel shows (rather than claims) that, in the absence of women, the empowerment of men suffering from social and educational deficiencies, such as Claude, depends solely on their own abilities.

While Claude lacks the education that could be provided by an Edmée-like character (his mistress, for instance), he has a quality that is at first restricted in Bernard: speech. As shown before, this ability is deemed to be a fundamental characteristic of human beings. Before completing his education at Sainte-Sévère, Bernard is unable to speak in a civilised manner. Conversely, although being generally quiet (10), Claude addresses his fellow prisoners 'avec une éloquence singulière qui d'ailleurs lui était naturelle' (24). His 'natural' eloquence, paradoxically, minimises the importance of education, masculine or feminine, which is dear to Hugo. The whole story emphasises Claude's innate intellectual and moral superiority, not only over the other prisoners, but, above all, over Monsieur D. and the representatives of the law. We might therefore ask what else education could bring to him. The internal contradiction, nonetheless, shows that the answer to the problem of crime and its responsibility is far from simple.

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<sup>571</sup> About the conclusion, Laforgue claims: 'Ces trois pages se caractérisent par leur militantisme [...] et, ce qui [...] en rend la lecture délicate, par un paternalisme difficilement supportable à la plupart des lecteurs d'aujourd'hui' (*L'éros romantique*, pp. 164–65).

What is most striking about Claude Gueux's hyper-masculinity is that he, although a convict, is presented as exceptional and exemplary. He is portrayed as an honest man who became a criminal out of necessity and a murderer out of 'deserved' vengeance, according to Hugo's narrative strategy. He remains, nevertheless, a murderer who premeditated his crime. Sandy Petrey has highlighted the exception that *Claude Gueux* represents in Hugo's works concerning the death penalty, because it is here justified through the actions of the eponymous protagonist:

Claude not only suffers capital punishment, he inflicts it as well, and he does so with immunity from the indignation Hugo customarily directed at those who judge, condemn and kill their fellow human beings. The sufferings Claude endures at the hands of his tormentor are undeserved and intense, but in no other work by Hugo can intense suffering justify sneaking up behind a man and chopping into his skull three times with an axe before hacking his face apart. [...] Claude's act is criminal not only according to the legal code of an unjust society but also according to the moral code animating the entirety of Hugo's fictional, dramatic, poetic and polemic work.<sup>572</sup>

In other words, Claude is an exceptional representative of the people, because he is idealised in spite of his hyper-masculine and lethal violence. This aggressiveness is not only depicted as a pure act of violence, but also takes the form of a cautious and impartial trial, although Claude combines the functions of victim, lawyer, prosecutor, judge and executioner.<sup>573</sup> After Claude has reiterated his request to be reunited to Albin, Monsieur D. is warned against the consequences of his refusal. To his fellow inmates, who are consulted as a jury and whose task it is to evaluate the sentence, Claude declares: 'je l'ai jugé et je l'ai condamné à mort' (24). His speech presents his action as an act of justice (25). Briana Lewis rightly argues that the whole process 'demonstrat[es] that his act of violence is not committed out of senseless rage' and 'creates an image of a system that is more clement [...] than the state's'.<sup>574</sup>

Hugo's idealisation of Claude's justice is problematic, since his hyper-masculinity appears as an idealised form of masculinity. Petrey rightly explains that Hugo's approach is inscribed in a process of reassessing revolutionary violence and justice, according to which violence can be acceptable when it fights against oppression.<sup>575</sup> Sand, who also denounces the

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<sup>572</sup> Sandy Petrey, 'Victor Hugo and Revolutionary Violence: The Example of *Claude Gueux*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 28:4 (Winter 1989), 623–41 (p. 631). See also Paul Savey-Casard, *Le crime et la peine dans l'œuvre de Victor Hugo* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), pp. 211–12; Claudie Bernard, 'Rhétorique de la question dans *Claude Gueux* de Victor Hugo', *Romanic Review*, 78:1 (January 1987), 57–73 (p. 63); Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, p. 166.

<sup>573</sup> Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, p. 179.

<sup>574</sup> Briana Lewis, 'The Making of a *Condamné*: State Power and the Ritual of Trial in *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné* and *Claude Gueux*', *Romanic Review*, 102:1-2 (January–March 2011), 183–99 (p. 194).

<sup>575</sup> Petrey, 'Victor Hugo and Revolutionary Violence', pp. 634–36.

unfairness of the judicial system in *Mauprat*, similarly justifies revolutionary violence. Kristina Wingård Vareille observes that, despite his horror for violence, Patience becomes a judge during the French Revolution and is therefore responsible for bloodshed, which is presented as a deserved punishment to be meted out reluctantly.<sup>576</sup> Claude's controversial exemplarity can also be explained by a context in which society, justice and representatives of the law are considered to be fallible. He manages to create an ideal society in prison, by adopting a social, almost political, role in the penitentiary system, since he listens, advises, ensures order, dispenses justice and becomes a model for other prisoners because of his 'natural' authority (*Gueux*, 13). His situation contrasts with the situation of young men of the July Monarchy who rejected social and political commitments. Even the future Prime Minister de Marsay is not shown playing such an active social role. His failed attempts to kill Paquita are motivated by vengeance, just like Claude's murder of Monsieur D., but they are not depicted as acts of justice, whilst the Marquise's retaliation obeys the principle of *lex talionis*, as she claims Paquita's blood.<sup>577</sup> In other words, the actions of the protagonists are similar, but it is the framing of these actions within the texts that enables the reader to interpret them as acts of justice or acts of revenge, and to distinguish between justifiable and condemnable forms of hyper-masculinity.

Claude's justified embodiment of hyper-masculinity contrasts with the cruelty of the legal system. There is an almost Manichean opposition between the 'good' prisoners and the 'bad' representatives of official justice who are repeatedly mocked in the novel. The public prosecutor, for instance, enjoys delivering a verbose speech, which is shortened with an ironic *etc.* by the narrator, but nonetheless called a 'discours mémorable' (32). The suppression of words highlights their vacuity and offers a contrast with Claude's rare but relevant words. It also suggests that rhetoric is more important than justice to magistrates. Hugo's irony spares Claude, and his speech is quoted in its entirety to highlight its relevance, reinforced by the conclusion, in which Hugo attempts to fill the gaps of a society 'mal faite' (39) because of the inequalities and misery that turn men into monsters.

Such criticism and mockery of the judicial system also appear in *Mauprat*. Bernard is wrongly accused of the attempted murder of Edmée. He constitutes a plausible suspect because he and his cousin had an argument just before she was shot by one of Bernard's uncles, but the main reason for his indictment is his affiliation to the Mauprat family. The savagery of his

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<sup>576</sup> Vareille, p. 459. Janet Hiddleston notes that Sand made no direct references to 1789 and 1794 not to recognise openly the violence of the Terror: *George Sand: Indiana, Mauprat* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 2000), p. 69. See also pp. 72–73.

<sup>577</sup> 'Pour le sang que tu lui as donné, tu me dois tout le tien!', she says after killing Paquita (*Fille*, 308).

familial past weighs more heavily on the scales of justice than his atonement under the influence of Edmée and her father. Like the prosecutor in *Claude Gueux*, the prosecutor in *Mauprat* wishes to exhibit his skills in philosophy and rhetoric, and highlights Bernard's cursed and incurable origin in order to emphasise his animalistic nature (*Mauprat*, 277–78). As Bernard is considered guilty because of his allegedly perverted nature, his infringement of legislation seems neither arbitrary nor criminal to the judicial system (264). The judges are not only biased; they actually reproduce the behaviour that is attributed to Bernard, as they are as animalistic as he once was. As well as underlining his lack of 'animosité' (268) against his uncle Jean de Mauprat, he points to the 'précipitation féroce' in the arbitrariness of the legal procedure (269) and in the judges' 'animosité' towards him (285). The patent opposition between the partial and fierce organisation of justice and the quietness of the convict shows that, as a direct result of Edmée's loving instruction, Bernard is no longer the pervert who is described during the trial.

While Hugo depicts a faltering society and denounces its failures in *Claude Gueux* (as is typical of his work), Sand has a more optimistic approach to the present. The French Revolution is on the horizon of the expectations of Edmée, Bernard and Patience in *Mauprat*, in which post-revolutionary justice seems to be characterised by equity, contrasting with the previous arbitrary system: 'On usa des pouvoirs arbitraires qu'avait la magistrature des temps passés' (269), declares Bernard. Sand's enthusiastic vision is not groundless, as justice appears to be relatively unbiased during the July Monarchy.<sup>578</sup> Despite this, the judicial system had not changed since the Empire and the Restoration.<sup>579</sup> In this context, the writers denounce the immobility of the legal system and fight for its enhancement: improvement of prison conditions, suppression of arbitrary measures, abolition of the death penalty and other measures.

In opposition to the failures of the judicial system, Hugo depicts an ideal society surrounding Claude. An important aspect of Hugo's ideal society is Claude's relationship with Albin, which is based on love, although the homosexual nature of the link between the 'real' Claude Gueux and the 'real' Albin Legrand is tempered in the novel.<sup>580</sup> The allegedly homoerotic affection between the two prisoners can be explained by the context of the male prison. While it was and remains commonly assumed that prisons favoured same-sex love due to their mandatory sexual uniformity, the love between the fictional characters created by Hugo

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<sup>578</sup> Collingham points out: 'In spite of its proximity to the government, the Cour de Cassation was capable of acting with independence on important occasions, and this had in common with the magistracy as a whole' (pp. 81–82).

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>580</sup> Olivier Decroix, 'Dossier', in *Claude Gueux*, pp. 137–218 (p. 164); Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, pp. 173–74; Lewis, p. 193, footnote 7.

is not simply the result of sociological factors, but fulfils a symbolic function.<sup>581</sup> On the basis of Laforgue's analysis of the sharing of bread between Albin and Claude as an act of love and an act of religion, it can be argued that their love is exemplary and contrasts with society's hypocrisy.<sup>582</sup> Claude is described as 'aimant' (13), literally in the sense of *magnet*, but the narrator also plays with the polysemy of the word.<sup>583</sup> Like Vautrin, another fictional convict, Claude is able to arouse the love of beautiful young men and, generally, to create strong homosocial, even homoerotic, bonds with men. Hugo's strategy to discuss implicit homoerotic feelings is not as developed as that of Balzac in *Illusions perdues* and particularly in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, which also occurs partly in prison. Hugo chooses to emphasise the purity of his protagonists; Claude is 'honnête', 'digne et grave' (10) and Albin (the connotation of whiteness suggested by his name is itself significant) is innocent (15). Their love is depicted as '[u]ne étroite amitié [...], amitié de père à fils plutôt que de frère à frère' (Ibid.) based on paternal mentoring. While mitigated, the homoeroticism in *Claude Gueux* is not condemned, because it appears necessary to compensate for the negative effect of hyper-masculinity.

Like Vautrin, Claude is an example of a man who has transformed his apparent masculine inadequacy into an assertive and yet generous form of masculinity, notably by developing both a political commitment during his trial and a more tender side to his character as a result of his relationship with Albin. This masculine empowerment does not stem from the submission to 'le pouvoir féminin' in the sense of female power, but to a 'pouvoir féminin', in the sense of feminine power, defined as softness that emanates from male figures. Albin's youth, effeminacy and innocence are required to counterbalance the virile strength of Claude and to transform him into a Christ-like model who shares his belongings with his fellows and bids them farewell (25–26), just as Bernard needs the love of Edmée to become a citizen. Hugo's novel, however, does not show the evolution of its protagonist, as in *Mauprat*, but gives a snapshot of Claude as essentially hyper-masculine and exemplary. Despite his crime and his violent nature, he is idealised because he is able to turn these into justice, whereas society and the judicial system are depicted as crueller than he is. Conversely, Henri embodies a failed masculinity because he refuses to embrace 'le pouvoir féminin' by despising women, and ends up being defeated by their power.

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<sup>581</sup> On prison as a place favouring same-sex relationships, see chapter 1, p. 56.

<sup>582</sup> Laforgue, *L'éros romantique*, pp. 172–77.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that masculine insecurity during the July Monarchy is not only perceived as weak and passive, but can also be characterised by excessively masculine behaviours and attitudes. Hyper-masculinity can be a means of compensating for the discomfort and insecurity that is felt in a new, civilised environment by attempting to turn one's social and educational inferiority into an object of pride, as in *Mauprat*. It can also be a means of compensating for characteristics that are thought to be feminine and thus demeaning in order to simulate power, as in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*. Moreover, this chapter has examined the connection between hyper-masculinity and social critique. By depicting overtly aggressive noblemen, the novels analysed here challenge the commonly-held belief that violence is primarily typical of the lower classes. Likewise, the story told in *Claude Gueux* points out that the representatives of the justice system and society itself are more violent than common people, that they even generate the aggressive and criminal conduct of the latter.

These texts, nevertheless, adopt ambiguous positions regarding the different embodiments of hyper-masculinity that they have developed. As is the case in *Mauprat*, animality and aggressive behaviour can be depicted as negative and as something usually to be condemned, but which can nonetheless be corrected (whereas the opposite pole of culture is not always depicted as an achievable model). Animality and aggressiveness can represent the benefits of an authoritarian regime during periods of political uncertainty, but yet can also simultaneously be contested owing to their civilised cruelty, as in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*. Finally, these types of behaviour can be presented as an exemplary hyper-masculinity that highlights the malfunctions of the judicial system and of society in general, while absolving violence, as in *Claude Gueux*. None of the novels, perhaps with the exception of *Mauprat*, offers a satisfactory alternative to hyper-masculinity, which reveals the complexity of the fantasy of the ideal virile man and highlights the crisis of leadership and the difficulty of curing social ills in the July Monarchy.

Women's role in these novels is ambivalent. On the one hand, they are the first victims of hyper-masculine violence, as they are threatened with death or rape. Paquita, for instance, embodies the customary objectification of women, who are perceived as childish, irrational and highly erotic, and thus inferior to men. On the other hand, as the case of the Marquise illustrates, women are threatening because they manage to exceed or vanquish male hyper-masculinity by reducing or even eliminating men's violence. This enterprise, however, has different connotations depending on the protagonists. Edmée's ability to civilise Bernard by educating

him and by expressing a maternal affection towards him, a process that requires Bernard's acceptance of his cousin's ability to tame and also a collaboration between them, is perceived as a success. Conversely, the Marquise's superiority over her half-brother is negatively depicted because it does not annihilate hyper-masculine violence, but only replaces it with another kind of violence. Balzac does not present the Marquise as a model of femininity, least of all as a positive alternative to Henri's civilised violence. However, Edmée is a worthy model of womanhood and masculinity. Her masculinity, born from cleverness, courage and activity, appears to be her main asset. The figure of the masculine woman does not meet unanimous approval in numerous novels. Old maids, viragoes, *bas-bleus* or maternal figures are treated differently from one novel to another. It is precisely the representation of masculine women and the roles that they are supposed to play in the context of a masculine malaise that is studied in the next and final chapter.





## CHAPTER 5: FEMALE MASCULINITY, MATERNITY AND GENDER PRESCRIPTIONS

### Introduction

The incipit of George Sand's novel *Lélia* is 'Qui es-tu?'<sup>584</sup> The question of identity, and especially of gendered identity, is one that is of vital importance to the novels analysed in this chapter, all of which represent fictional masculine women: the intellectual woman *Lélia* in the 1833 version of George Sand's eponymous novel; the *femme auteur* Félicité des Touches in Balzac's *Béatrix* (1839–45); and the old maid Lisbeth Fischer in *La Cousine Bette* (1846) by the same author.<sup>585</sup> These masculine women — that is, women who display characteristics that are usually attributed to men — are thus ambiguously gendered: they are women and yet men. This question of identity also appears in contemporary scientific treatises, which raise the same concerns as those expressed in the opening to *Lélia*. The scientist Cabanis worries about, and even pities, the woman with real intellectual dispositions, not only because intellectual activities were considered to be incompatible with the sensitivity of female bodies and thus damaged the woman's health by causing sterility and dysfunction of the uterus, but also because, like a hermaphrodite, she belongs to no definite category:

Et pour le petit nombre de celles qui peuvent obtenir quelques succès véritables, dans ces genres tout à fait étrangers aux facultés de leur esprit, c'est peut-être pis encore. Dans la jeunesse, dans l'âge mûr, dans la vieillesse, quelle sera la place de ces êtres incertains, qui ne sont, à proprement parler, d'aucun sexe? (Cabanis, I, 363)

The hermaphroditic dimension of a character such as Félicité des Touches is manifest, both for critics and characters in the plots, as she is called an 'illustre hermaphrodite' by the narrator of *Illusions perdues* (368, 374).<sup>586</sup> She is also designated by Abbot Grimont, the priest of Guérande, as 'cet être amphibie qui n'est ni homme ni femme' (*Béatrix*, 119–20). Surprisingly,

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<sup>584</sup> George Sand, *Lélia*, ed. by Pierre Reboul (Paris: Gallimard, 'Folio Classique', 2003 [Garnier, 1960]), p. 7. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>585</sup> This corpus could also include Edmée de Mauprat, whose relationship with her cousin Bernard has been analysed in the previous chapter. Her masculinity, or androgyny, has often been highlighted: Lesley Singer Herrmann, "Woman as Hero" in Turgenev, Goncharov, and George Sand's *Mauprat*, *Urbans Review*, 2:1 (Fall 1979), 128–38 (p. 131); Rea, p. 40 and p. 45; Bozon-Scalzitti, pp. 2–3; Vareille, p. 423; Reid, 'Mauprat', pp. 53–55; Hiddleston, p. 48; Harkness, *Men of their Words*, p. 75; Harkness, 'Une masculinité trop visible', pp. 235–36.

<sup>586</sup> Owen N. Heathcote, "'Cet être amphibie qui n'est ni homme ni femme': Marginalizing Gender and Gendering the Marginal in Balzac's Camille Maupin", *Nottingham French Studies*, 41:2 (Autumn 2002), 37–46; Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon, *Balzac et la littérature réfléchie: Discours et autoreprésentations* (Montreal and Paris: Paragraphes, Département d'Études françaises de l'Université de Montréal, 2002), p. 81; Kyoto Murata, 'Sous le signe des monstruosité: La Camille Maupin de Balzac et George Sand', *George Sand Studies*, 26 (2007), 43–54 (p. 44); André Vanoncini, 'La femme-livre dans *Béatrix* de Balzac', in *L'homme-livre: Des hommes et des livres, de l'Antiquité au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. by Peter Schnyder (Paris: Orizons, chez L'Harmattan, 2007), pp. 153–65 (p. 156).

the term *hermaphrodite* is employed as a feminine noun in *Illusions perdues*, whereas Félicité's pen-name, Camille Maupin, which combines the names of two other hermaphroditic characters (Camille in *Fragoletta* and Madeleine de Maupin), is perceived as a masculine name (*Béatrix*, 119, 129, 136–37, 242, 343). Félicité's masculine and hermaphroditic identities are therefore concomitantly asserted in *La Comédie humaine*. However, this chapter argues that the gendered identity of the masculine woman is more complex. The femininity that is counterbalanced by masculine characteristics finds other physical, social and emotional means to be reintegrated into her gendered identity.

The phrase *female masculinity*, which is used throughout this chapter in reference to masculine women, was coined in 1998 by Judith Halberstam in her book entitled *Female Masculinity*, which intended to 'conceptualiz[e] masculinity without men'.<sup>587</sup> Halberstam's argument, which is also that of Jean Bobby Noble in a book published in 2004 about the same topic, is that masculinity is incorrectly associated with maleness despite the rupture that has been established between sex and gender owing to the rise of gender studies.<sup>588</sup> Since masculinity is too often equated with white, middle-class maleness, Halberstam examines a usually neglected form of masculinity — female masculinity — which does not simply imitate maleness, but helps us to understand what is considered to be traditional masculinity.<sup>589</sup>

Even though Halberstam admits that the concept of female masculinity is not limited to lesbianism and can be applied to heterosexual women, she nevertheless focuses exclusively on the cases of lesbians in her study.<sup>590</sup> Similarly, whilst reproaching Halberstam for her exclusivity, Noble does not distance himself from this pattern either, as his analysis remains confined to what is traditionally regarded as 'deviant' identities: butches, drag kings and female-to-male transsexuals.<sup>591</sup> Incidentally, these studies reproduce the biased opinion of the sexologists Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis, who also associated lesbianism with masculinity and considered that the most 'degenerate' lesbian was the most masculine.<sup>592</sup> The masculinity of heterosexual women is *de facto* neglected or even denied. In contrast, while this

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<sup>587</sup> Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45; Jean Bobby Noble, *Masculinities without Men: Female Masculinity in Twentieth-Century Fictions* (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), p. 12.

<sup>589</sup> Halberstam, p. 2.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>591</sup> Jean Bobby Noble, p. xii.

<sup>592</sup> For more on Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis's categories of deviant sexualities and lesbians, see Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: The Women's Press, 1985), pp. 239–53; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conducts: Visions of Genders in Victorian America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 268–72 and pp. 275–80; Esther Newton, 'Le mythe de la lesbienne masculine: Radclyffe Hall et la Nouvelle Femme', *Cahiers du Genre*, 45 (2008), 15–42 (pp. 26–30, esp. p. 28).

chapter does not reject the bond between female masculinity and lesbianism, as characters such as Lélia and Lisbeth have a relationship with other women that can be referred to as homoerotic, it does not consider lesbianism to be essential to female masculinity and does not reduce the uniqueness of these concepts by substituting one for another.

Masculine women in nineteenth-century French fiction have thus far raised little interest. This chapter therefore intends to highlight how female masculinity in Balzac and Sand's novels is used to defy gender prescriptions and to advocate, to some extent, women's empowerment. Firstly, it shows that female masculinity and intelligence are intertwined in these novels. Félicité, Lisbeth and Lélia's lack of resemblance to conventionally feminine women emphasises their rejection of typically feminine behaviour and their ability to conquer the realms of willpower and intellect, considered to be the prerogatives of men. This chapter also analyses masculine women's rejection of heteronormative sexuality, as well as social prescriptions that are supposed to define a woman's role in a patriarchal society, namely marriage and maternity. Importantly, this analysis follows the conclusions of Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's study of the New Woman, a 'single, highly educated, economically autonomous' American masculine woman, between 1870 and 1936.<sup>593</sup> Her study shows that female university graduates and social reformers were accused of being mannish lesbians and seducers of innocent girls, in order to contest their fight for women's rights.<sup>594</sup> Accordingly, this chapter argues that French masculine women were also considered to be threats to patriarchy and had subsequently to be discredited, domesticated or excluded in July Monarchy society. Their characterisation is therefore paradoxical, and highlights society's unease towards masculine women. They are often regarded as monsters and demons, whilst nonetheless appearing to be superior both to submissive women and to insecure young men, and even to exercise agency in a context of gender inequity.

### **A Portrait of the Masculine Woman: Monumentalisation and Alienation**

Physical depictions of characters are codified in Balzac's novels and allow the reader to comprehend their personalities. As Christopher Prendergast reminds us: 'descriptive materials exist not simply as neutral informants, but have a distinct semantic function as integral, signifying components of the general thematic structure of the novel'.<sup>595</sup> The analysis of

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<sup>593</sup> Smith-Rosenberg, p. 245.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 280–82.

<sup>595</sup> Christopher A. Prendergast, 'Towards a Re-assessment of *Béatrix*', *Essays in French Literature*, 9 (1972), 46–62 (p. 50).

Lucien's portrait has revealed that his effeminate beauty and his aristocratic allure suggested the moral weakness, passivity and ambiguous sexuality that are constitutive of his character.<sup>596</sup> Similarly, the portraits of Lisbeth Fischer, Félicité des Touches and Lélia determine their intrinsic masculinity, although they are far from the mannish models that can be found in scientific texts.<sup>597</sup> Physically, masculine women in these stories do not particularly resemble men. Their female masculinity appears in subtle details, rather than being emphatically stated because, as will be argued, their femininity cannot be eradicated entirely for the sake of the plots and for the proper functioning of a patriarchal society. In brief, their masculinity confers an exceptional status on them, whilst also alienating them from more conventional women.

Narrative techniques used to convey information about the characters' masculine physique vary depending on the writer. Félicité's long and detailed portrait and, to a lesser extent, that of Lisbeth, both of which belong to the Balzacian realist tradition, contrast with the absence of such a portrayal in *Lélia*. As Béatrice Didier observes, little is known about the protagonists of *Lélia* because their physical appearance is schematic; indications are parsimoniously given to readers so that they can fashion their own portrait of the heroine.<sup>598</sup> This refusal to provide a realist-style portrayal corresponds to '[t]he *idealist effect* [that] is produced by the evacuation of those same superfluous details that create the illusion of the real', according to Naomi Schor.<sup>599</sup> The poet Sténio best articulates this *idealistic effect* when explaining Lélia's identity: 'Qu'est-ce donc que Lélia? Une ombre, un rêve, une idée tout au plus' (*Lélia*, 47). The rejection of details highlights the opposition between the body and the mind that is characteristic of Lélia, as expressed by Magnus's definition of Lélia as 'corps et âme' (81).<sup>600</sup> This absence of full portrayal enables her to fulfil the function of an allegorical character whilst paradoxically being depicted as corporeal, notably through references to the marble (46).<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>596</sup> See chapter 3, p. 127.

<sup>597</sup> See chapter 1, pp. 36–37.

<sup>598</sup> Béatrice Didier, 'Le corps féminin dans *Lélia* [with Discussion]', *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 76:4 (July–August 1976), 634–51 (p. 638).

<sup>599</sup> Naomi Schor, *George Sand and Idealism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 46 (original emphasis).

<sup>600</sup> On the opposition between body and mind, see Didier, p. 636; Nancy Rogers, 'Psychosexual Identity and the Erotic Imagination in the Early Novels of George Sand', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 12:2 (Fall 1979), 19–35 (p. 22); Jad Hatem, 'Scission du cœur et désordre du corps dans *Lélia* de Sand', *Romantisme*, 91 (1996), 19–34 (esp. p. 20); Evelyne Ender, "'Une femme qui rêve n'est pas tout à fait une femme': Lélia en rupture d'identité", *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 29:3–4 (Spring–Summer 2001), 226–46. On the corporeality of the first Lélia, see Isabelle Hoog Naginski, 'Les deux *Lélia*: Une réécriture exemplaire', *Revue des sciences humaines*, 226 (April–June 1992), 65–84 (p. 81 and p. 83).

<sup>601</sup> On allegory in *Lélia*, see Schor, pp. 55–68.

Despite differences in narrative techniques, the female protagonists in Sand's and Balzac's novels share common characteristics, such as their age, since all of them are mature women, either in their forties (*Béatrix*, 144; *Bette*, 162), or at least older than their lovers. All of them are also dark-haired (*Béatrix*, 145; *Bette*, 54; *Lélia*, 12–13, 45, 157–58). *Lélia*'s hair can be correlated with George Sand's own dark hair, although the writer denied any autobiographical connection between herself and the heroine of her novel.<sup>602</sup> Likewise, Balzac found inspiration in the writer of *Lélia* to create Félicité.<sup>603</sup> The colour of their hair is not a mere physical detail, but helps to construct an opposition between these heroines and the more traditionally blond female protagonists: Pulchérie for *Lélia* (*Lélia*, 157); Béatrix de Rochefide for Félicité (*Béatrix*, 175); Adeline Hulot (*Bette*, 48), Hortense Hulot (53) and Valérie Marneffe (266) for Lisbeth. These feminine women follow restrictive roles since they are either devoted wives and mothers, or egoistic seductresses, divided into vain aristocrats (*Béatrix*) and middle-class courtesans (Valérie in *La Cousine Bette* and Aurélie Schontz in *Béatrix*). The advantage of the blond, mainly feminine women, over the masculine brunettes is stated by Félicité to Calyste de Guénic: 'Les blondes sont plus femmes que nous, nous ressemblons trop aux hommes, nous autres brunes françaises' (*Béatrix*, 177). The association between blondeness and femininity is confirmed by Félicité's comparison of the fairness of Béatrix with that of Eve, the original woman (175), whereas the narrator of *La Cousine Bette* establishes the same comparison between Adeline and Eve (*Bette*, 48).<sup>604</sup> In contrast, having dark hair and, more generally, dark skin is a sign of masculinity. It must be recalled that complexion was deemed to be a secondary sexual characteristic in scientific writings. The scientist Virey reminded his readers: 'Communément, la petite fille est [...] plus blonde que le petit garçon; [...] son teint est moins vif ou plus blanc' (69–70), and: 'La femme a communément [...] une peau blanche et délicate' (172). The adverb *communément* suggests that dark-haired and dark-skinned women do not belong to the female norm. With this physical detail, the writers assert their heroines'

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<sup>602</sup> Isabelle Hoog Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for Her Life* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 114–15.

<sup>603</sup> Physically, Félicité looks like George Sand, and the famous writer's life even influenced the plot of the love triangle in *Béatrix*. On the connections between Sand and Félicité, see Geneviève Delattre, 'L'imagination balzacienne au travail: La lecture créatrice', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, 15 (1963), 395–406 (p. 402); Courtivron, p. 211; Catherine Barry, 'Camille Maupin: Io to Balzac's Prometheus?', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 20: 1-2 (Fall–Winter 1991–92), 44–52 (p. 45); Aline Mura, *'Béatrix' ou la logique des contraires* (Paris: Champion, 1997), pp. 175–76; Van Rossum-Guyon, p. 84; Isabelle Hoog Naginski, 'Lélia, ou l'héroïne impossible', *Études littéraires*, 35: 2-3 (2003), 87–106 (pp. 101–02); Murata, pp. 43–45; Vanoncini, 'La femme-livre', pp. 153–54.

<sup>604</sup> For more on Adeline's portrait, especially her blond hair, see Roland Le Huenen, 'L'écriture du portrait féminin dans *La Cousine Bette*', in *Balzac et Les Parents pauvres: Le Cousin Pons, La Cousine Bette*, ed. by Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon and Michiel Van Broderode (Paris: SEDES, 1981), pp. 75–85. Valérie Marneffe is also assimilated to Eve, as she is so called by Crevel (232).

singularity and their masculinity without renouncing their feminine identity and their beauty. With the exception of Lisbeth, they must be physically attractive so that they can seduce lovers, whereas a mannish woman is deemed to be repulsive, at least according to Virey (176–77). In other words, ‘true’ female masculinity such as that embodied by modern ‘butch’ lesbians analysed by Halberstam is rejected by Balzac and Sand in *Béatrix*, *La Cousine Bette* and *Lélia* because female protagonists, even masculine ones, have to retain a degree of female attractiveness as they are implicated in romantic plots. This ideological confinement of women to the sentimental sphere is illustrated by Sténio when he claims ‘là où il n’y a pas d’amour, il n’y a pas de femme’ (47).

Lisbeth Fischer has a distinctive place in the corpus of this chapter, since she is the only masculine woman who is overtly depicted as a negative character. Her concise portrayal (*Bette*, 54) is constructed in opposition to that of her beautiful and aristocratic cousin Adeline (47–48) and highlights the unattractiveness of the old maid. Looking older than her older cousin, Lisbeth is viewed as a peasant’s daughter, a working-class woman and, above all, a *vieille fille* unable to attract men’s favours. Her virginity has dreadful bodily consequences that are illustrated by her skinniness (164) and her dryness (25, 61, 89, 126, 165, 198, 199), and generates warts and a ‘face longue et *simiesque*’ (54; original emphasis). Her masculinity is not only constructed in opposition to her cousin’s evident femininity, but also to that of Wenceslas Steinbock (89) and Valérie (198). It constitutes a powerful instrument, as it allows her to dominate higher-born and richer people (91, 100, 204) because they are perceived as soft (90, 204, 255).

Lisbeth’s portrait reveals that alienation is characteristic of the portrayal of masculine women. Alienation is supported by references to animality (as in the description of Lisbeth’s monkey-like face), notably to big cats, and to savagery, which are reminiscent of the hyper-masculine characters Bernard de Mauprat, Henri de Marsay and the violent *femme fatale* Margarita de San-Réal.<sup>605</sup> Lisbeth’s assimilation to savages, reputed to be paradoxically instinctive and capable of rational thought (*Bette*, 57), justifies her aptitude to conceive long-term plans to satisfy her desire for revenge. Like Margarita, the spinster is in turn calculating and animalistic, and these characteristics make her doubly dangerous. In *Lélia*, the correlation between the heroine and wildness is indirect. Sténio compares her to nature, and especially wild flowers, rather than to people: ‘Ces fleurs sont belles comme vous, Lélia, incultes et sauvages

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<sup>605</sup> References to big cats: *Lélia*, 147 (‘lionne blessée’); *Béatrix*, 149 (‘nature [...] léonine’); *Bette*, 91, 137, 250 (tiger), 199 (lioness), and to savagery: *Béatrix*, 149 (‘indompté’); *Bette*, 57, 60–61, 144, 162, 165, 199, 145 (‘Mohican’). For more on the comparison between Lisbeth and animals: Krumm, pp. 257–61.

comme vous' (*Lélia*, 108–09). 'Incultes' does not seem to refer to illiteracy, since Lélia is highly educated, but rather to her capacity to escape domestication.

Félicité and Lisbeth's savagery is associated with their provincial nature, by definition 'natural' and 'savage' in opposition to Parisian, cultural and civilised identity — although Félicité is also considered to be a strange Parisian by the Bretons. The walk undertaken by Félicité, Béatrix and Calyste to Le Croisic demonstrates that Félicité belongs to the wild landscape of Brittany (*Béatrix*, 298). Similarly and with more intensity, Lisbeth's wildness is also explained by her origins. The qualifications 'Lorraine' and 'paysanne des Vosges' are regularly employed to describe her, whereas they are not used for her cousin Adeline, who is from the same region, as if she were able to eradicate her peasant origins.<sup>606</sup> Surprisingly, both Félicité and Lisbeth are perceived as Mediterranean — Italian and Spanish for Félicité (*Béatrix*, 145) and Corsican for Lisbeth (*Bette*, 58, 144) —, although they are respectively Celtic and Germanic. It appears as though Balzac altered their origins to indulge in the stereotypes about the savagery and the hot blood of Mediterranean people that are typical of the literature of his time.<sup>607</sup>

Masculine women's estrangement is also conveyed through the depiction of ancient civilisations. The references to Neoclassical arts and Greek mythology are less pronounced in their portraits than in those of male and yet feminine protagonists, such as Lucien de Rubempré and Calyste du Guénic. Nevertheless, they are still constitutive of masculine women's description. Félicité's forehead, for instance, is compared to that of a 'Diane chasseresse' (146), a Greek reference that underlines Félicité's masculinity given that it relates to the masculine activity of this goddess, even though Diana also fulfils the feminine function of aiding childbirth.<sup>608</sup> The longest reference to Greece is also the most explicit allusion to Félicité's female masculinity. The narrator admires her lower back and states:

La chute des reins est magnifique, et rappelle plus le Bacchus que la Vénus Callipyge. Là, se voit la nuance qui sépare de leur sexe presque toutes les femmes célèbres, elles ont là comme une vague similitude avec l'homme, elles n'ont ni la souplesse, ni l'abandon des femmes que la nature a destinées à la maternité; leur démarche ne se brise pas en un mouvement doux. Cette observation est comme bilatérale, elle a sa

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<sup>606</sup> *Bette*, 54, 61, 90, 99, 102, 137, 146, 162, 167, 198, 203, 209, 279, 370, 371, 389, 440, 487. Claudia Moscovici mistakenly believes that Adeline Fischer is noble by birth. However, she rightly notes later that her nature was 'culturally mediated and cultivated': 'Gendered Spheres in Balzac's *La Cousine Bette*', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 10:3 (1997), 469–96 (p. 476 and p. 480 [quote]).

<sup>607</sup> For instance in Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme*, ed. by Paul Morand (Paris: Gallimard, 'Folio Classique', 1972), pp. 19–20.

<sup>608</sup> Lélia's forehead is also emphasised (*Lélia*, 13). Along with dark eyes, a prominent forehead was a sign of thoughtfulness: Garval, p. 117 and p. 121. See also Didier, p. 639.

contrepartie chez les hommes dont les hanches sont presque semblables à celles des femmes quand ils sont fins, astucieux, faux et lâches. (148)

The comparison in Balzac's novel with Bacchus is reminiscent of Lucien's description, but serves a different purpose. Whereas the comparison intended to highlight Lucien's effeminacy, as Bacchus is an effete god, here it stresses Félicité's masculinity, since Bacchus is a male god in opposition to the female and highly feminine Callipygian Venus. This characteristic is a pretext for the narrator to proceed to a generalisation about those women who diverge from other women because of their solid gait. This observation can be linked with those of Cabanis and Esquirol who pointed to the typical walk of homosexuals. If the gait of effeminate men is judged to be feminine, it appears logical that the walk of masculine women should be manly. The allusion to the poet of *Illusions perdues* is clear when the narrator mentions men with female hips who are shrewd, as well as hypocritical and cowardly — moral weaknesses that have been highlighted in Lucien.

Alternatively, cultural references to Egypt are far more prevalent when defining the physical characteristics of masculine women. Along with Cleopatra who is depicted as a short authoritarian brunette (*Béatrix*, 149), Félicité is compared to Isis (*Ibid.*), one of the main goddesses of the Egyptian pantheon, known for her intelligence and her skills in witchcraft, and characterised by androgyny according to André Vanoncini:<sup>609</sup>

Ce visage, plus rond qu'ovale, ressemble à celui de quelque belle Isis des bas-reliefs égyptiques. Vous diriez la pureté des têtes de sphinx, polies par le feu des déserts, caressées par la flamme du soleil égyptien. Ainsi, la couleur du teint est en harmonie avec la correction de cette tête. Les cheveux noirs et abondants descendent en nattes le long du col comme la coiffe à double bandelette rayée des statues de Memphis, et continuent admirablement la sévérité générale de la forme. (145–46)

With its mysterious bas-reliefs, covered with hieroglyphs, and its sphinxes, Egypt sustains an enigmatic atmosphere that is typical of *Béatrix* and that presents Félicité herself as an enigma.<sup>610</sup> Moreover, by alluding to a powerful Egyptian queen and an astute Egyptian goddess who deceived the sun-god Ra to steal his powers, the narrator portrays Félicité as a *femme fatale*, who potentially threatens male authority. This comparison with beautiful seductresses highlights her femininity, while asserting her pretension to power. Otherwise depicted as a good character, even sharing similarities with fairy godmothers (as she bequeaths her fortune to

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<sup>609</sup> Vanoncini, 'La femme-livre', p. 157.

<sup>610</sup> Prendergast, pp. 52–53.



Calyste and finds him a fiancée), Félicité, like masculine women in general, is characterised as a threat.<sup>611</sup>

This above excerpt also highlights her metaphorical transformation into a statue. This process of petrification, or monumentalisation, also constitutes one of Lélia's fundamental characteristics and, as noted by numerous critics, objectifies the female protagonist in order to restrict her autonomy and abandon her to male desire.<sup>612</sup> While this is undeniably the case, this process of metaphorical petrification also suggests her gravity and grandeur, and adds to Félicité's innate mystery.<sup>613</sup> Importantly, it also reflects a sense of admiration for the writer Camille Maupin whose transformation into a living monument aims to recognise her literary greatness during her lifetime. This follows the nineteenth-century tendency analysed by Michael Garval that consisted of identifying writers and their works as monuments.<sup>614</sup> In other words, it highlights her exceptionality and her distance from the popular masses of Guérande by depicting her as a powerful and cold statuary goddess.<sup>615</sup> Exceptionality and alienation constitute a means of both asserting masculine women's power and denying such power to other women.

The same process of petrification is used in *La Cousine Bette* when Valérie Marneffe deploys her fashion skills to improve the looks of her unattractive friend. Thanks to the use of cosmetics and elegant clothes, Lisbeth's wild physique is highlighted as an asset. The narrator observes:

Bette, comme une Vierge de Cranach et de Van Eyck, comme une Vierge Byzantine, sorties de leurs cadres, gardait la froideur, la correction de ces figures mystérieuses, cousines germaines des Isis et des divinités en gaine par les sculpteurs égyptiens. C'était du granit, du basalte, du porphyre qui marchait. (*Bette*, 199)

The explicit comparison with Nordic and Byzantine virgins is flattering for Lisbeth, as it bestows the positive attribute of ideal beauty upon her. Another comparison is also established

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<sup>611</sup> On Félicité as a fairy, see André Vanoncini, 'Temps et mémoire dans *Béatrix*', *L'Année balzacienne*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 8 (2007), 275–88 (pp. 285–86).

<sup>612</sup> Vareille, p. 185; Waller, p. 146; Hatem, pp. 32–33; Harkness, 'Resisting Petrification', esp. pp. 167–69; Harkness, *Men of Their Words*, pp. 127–29. Lélia's petrification is at the core of Harkness's article, but he also notes this process in *Béatrix* about Béatrix de Rochefide (p. 171).

<sup>613</sup> Van Rossum-Guyon observes: 'Elle [Félicité] est décrite de façon à prendre des proportions "colossales" dignes de la statuaire antique. Les comparaisons avec les héroïnes de la Fable et les divinités anciennes [...] confèrent au personnage une dimension surhumaine, mystérieuse, mythique et quasiment divine' (p. 84).

<sup>614</sup> She concretises the nineteenth-century mind-set according to which '[t]he truly great writer accedes naturally to statufication': Garval, p. 59. See also, pp. 34–61.

<sup>615</sup> The reference to the Egyptian statuary appears again in the description of her eyes: 'vous retrouverez le granit de la statue égyptienne adouci par le temps' (146–47), revealing the combination of strength and softness that is present in Félicité: Van Rossum-Guyon, p. 83.

between these pictorial figures and Egyptian statues, and implicitly Lisbeth. As the virginal figures of these Flemish and Germanic painters are usually blond, it is unlikely that the resemblance between the latter and Lisbeth should relate to their complexion. They are certainly linked by their common coldness. As for Félicité, the Egyptian references underscore Lisbeth's mystery, whereas the emphasis on rocks underlines her coldness and inflexibility, thus contradicting the more positive references to her artistic qualities.<sup>616</sup> Although the topic of the ugly old woman who attempts to appear beautiful with the aid of finery usually serves comical purposes, the reference to petrification here cancels out any preposterous implications to show the spinster as an estranged and menacing individual.

Yet the physical characteristics of Félicité, Lélia and, to a lesser extent, of Lisbeth certainly do not depict them as mannish women and do not impede them from being the love interests of young men. Nevertheless, the references to savagery, the 'egyptianisation' and the petrification of the protagonists, and the emphasis on their dark hair estrange these women from the category of conventional women. These characteristics posit them as enigmatic, inaccessible and even threatening figures, and thus highlight the writers' unease towards their masculine creations.

### **Female Masculinity, Intellectual Activities and Autonomy**

As for the hermaphrodites in the scientific treatises studied earlier, psychological make-up, habits and activities are also relevant when determining the masculinity of masculine women. Félicité and Lélia's habit of smoking tobacco and the hookah, and taking snuff (*Béatrix*, 116, 120, 171–72; *Lélia*, 63) is perceived as masculine, since only men, as well as emancipated women and *cocottes* smoked in nineteenth-century French society.<sup>617</sup> Likewise, both women enjoy cross-dressing, although, like Fragoletta in Latouche's novel, these attires are connected with exceptional circumstances, such as a ball (*Lélia*, 45) and a walk on the cliffs (*Béatrix*, 298). Diana Holmes points to the freedom of movement that was conveyed by male attire in comparison with the restraint of the ample skirts and the delicate shoes of female clothes, which echoed social coercion and justified masculine women's desire to be rid of the latter.<sup>618</sup> Furthermore, unlike stereotypical women, Félicité, Lélia and Lisbeth are indifferent to fashion

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<sup>616</sup> The emphasis on stone, however, is associated with fire in one extract of the novel to express Lisbeth's jealousy: 'La fumée de l'incendie qui la ravageait semblait passer par ses rides comme par autant de crevasses labourées par une éruption volcanique' (*Bette*, 137).

<sup>617</sup> Sohn, pp. 34–36. For more on female dandies or *lionnes*, see Deriège, pp. 2–3; Gill, p. 87 and 89.

<sup>618</sup> Holmes, p. 26.

and looks (*Béatrix*, 143, 273; *Lélia*, 137; *Bette*, 61–62), with the difference that Lisbeth is unattractive, whereas *Lélia* and *Béatrix* simply do not care about the attention that their beauty attracts. In other words, these female characters are not typically *coquettes*. They also distinguish themselves by displaying ‘des qualités d’homme’ (*Bette*, 59), such as dynamism and agency. *Lélia* is characterised by her physical and moral force (*Lélia*, 90, 103, 147, 158, 192), whilst Lisbeth is considered to be energetic, hard-working and brave (*Bette*, 90–92, 140), since she works in the ‘*passementerie*’ trade and learns how to read at a mature age (55). The latter is also able to dominate the weak Wenceslas due to her ‘*volonté puissante*’ (90), creating a pact between them (‘*Vous m’appartenez!*’; 100) that is reminiscent of the relationship between *Vautrin* and *Lucien*. This posits her in the same position of masculine domination as that of the convict.<sup>619</sup>

More importantly, *Félicité* and *Lélia* are represented as intellectual women. The attempts made by intellectual women to become writers, or *femmes auteurs*, were regarded with mockery and even hatred by men in the nineteenth century. As Christine Planté has shown, *la femme auteur* was considered to be masculine because she exercised a profession and intellectual faculties that were reputed to be masculine.<sup>620</sup> Women writers were deemed to be a threat to the separation between feminine receptiveness and instinct, and masculine originality and intelligence, and thus were treated with hostility.<sup>621</sup> They questioned the social order because they proved that they were able to think for themselves and were therefore not inferior to men.<sup>622</sup> Their refusal to conform to gendered functions and their reputed lack of feminine delicacy raised scientists’ concern about their ability to fulfil their domestic duties:

Par quel attrait peuvent-elles fixer le jeune homme qui cherche une compagne? Quels secours peuvent en attendre des parents infirmes ou vieux? Quelles douceurs répandront-elles sur la vie d’un mari? Les verra-t-on descendre du haut de leur génie, pour veiller à leurs enfants, à leur ménage? Tous ces rapports si délicats qui font le charme et qui assurent le bonheur de la femme, n’existent plus alors: en voulant étendre son empire, elle le détruit. (*Cabanis*, I, 363)

The portrait of the ideal woman is realised in contrast to the intellectual woman’s inability to display any zeal for familial life. As Holmes summarises, ‘[t]he truly feminine woman, worthy

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<sup>619</sup> *Félicité*’s role has also been compared to that of *Vautrin*: Mozet, pp. 161–62; Mura, p. 263; Van Rossum-Guyon, pp. 89–90; as well as to that of Lisbeth: Mura, pp. 69–72 and p. 263.

<sup>620</sup> Christine Planté, *La petite sœur de Balzac: Essai sur la femme auteur* (Paris: Seuil, 1989). See also Gilbert and Gubar, pp. 3–11. In *De la femme*, Virey claimed: ‘Celles qui se sont le plus distinguées dans cette carrière [la littérature] ont souvent mérité l’épithète *mascula* qu’Horace donnait à Sapho’ (5).

<sup>621</sup> Holmes, p. 30.

<sup>622</sup> Planté, p. 57.

of a degree of formal respect, was the chaste wife and mother confined within the home under male protection'.<sup>623</sup> Her functions were solely grounded in the domestic sphere and were limited to her interactions with other members of her family (husband, children and parents). She was not legally responsible for them, given that children were under their fathers' authority, but had to ensure their daily happiness by her continuous care and affection. As will be seen later on, it is the figure of Adeline Hulot in *La Cousine Bette* who embodies the ideal of the wife devoted to her husband and children, and who sacrifices her own happiness to theirs.

This ideal woman was not only depicted in scientific writings, but also in arts and in politics. French women were victims of the disguised misogyny of nineteenth-century Romantic arts. The ideal image of women as innocent, consoling and nurturing figures was paradoxically depreciative because it also portrayed them as infantile, submissive and dedicated only to men's interests.<sup>624</sup> Furthermore this 'disempowering idealization of women' was inherent to republican discourses.<sup>625</sup> The worship of women as incarnations of the virtues of the nation — by the means of allegories of France and Republic, such as *Marianne* — enabled men to remove them from the political scene (as voters, for instance) since, as objects of men's adoration, they were not allowed to be subjects.<sup>626</sup> Similarly, Simone de Beauvoir showed how French gallantry aimed to conceal women's oppression by seemingly honouring them.<sup>627</sup>

In this context, Félicité des Touches exemplifies 'the problem of the woman writer, of how she makes her voice heard when what is asked of a woman is not art, or opinion, but only that "something else" which signifies the fulfilment of male needs'.<sup>628</sup> Balzac, nonetheless, stresses the difference between his remarkable character and other women writers, because Camille Maupin 'n'eut d'ailleurs rien de la femme auteur' (*Béatrix*, 154). Félicité des Touches, or Camille Maupin, is an exception in the literary field, just like her model George Sand, who is here considered not to be the inspiration, but to be a younger rival that has overshadowed Camille Maupin's own success (154; see also 249, 307). Despite the fact that Louis-Philippe's reign was regarded as 'un véritable âge d'or de la femme auteur', Baron du Guénic shows his incredulity when he hears that Félicité des Touches writes plays and books (130) and is unaware of nineteenth-century female authors such as Madame de Staël, Madame de Duras and Madame

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<sup>623</sup> Holmes, p. 9.

<sup>624</sup> Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 17–18. See also the final section of this chapter, pp. 222–29.

<sup>625</sup> Holmes, p. 14.

<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15; Bertrand-Jennings, p. 11. Planté has made a similar observation about the perception of women and poetry (p. 190): women are idealised as objects of poetry; therefore they are not able to write poetry.

<sup>627</sup> Beauvoir, I, pp. 137–38.

<sup>628</sup> Holmes, p. 4.

de Genlis.<sup>629</sup> His knowledge of women writers is limited to Mademoiselle de Scudéry and Madame de Sévigné, and he attributes these ‘prodigies’ to Louis XIV and his court. Baron du Guénic’s attitude, as well as that of the conservative community of Guérande, outraged by Camille Maupin’s writing activity (120), highlight the fact that writing was perceived as a masculine activity during the July Monarchy. These characters and the narrator of *Béatrix* reflect Balzac’s ambiguous position towards *femmes auteurs*, as the narrator praises Camille Maupin, but denies merits to her non-fictional *consœurs*. This view illustrates the refusal of the critics of the July Monarchy to acknowledge works by female novelists and their eradication from the French literary pantheon under the influence of Balzac and Stendhal who ensured the ‘masculinization of a previously feminine form’.<sup>630</sup>

By contrasting with the traditional image of women, notably by advocating her rights to intellectual activities, the masculine woman appears to represent the model of a woman who is freed from the feminine imperatives of submission and discretion imposed by patriarchal norms. She therefore achieves some of the goals of nineteenth-century feminists, such as Saint-Simonian women, with regard to marriage and education. Although not strictly speaking a feminist, George Sand was indignant at the discrepancy between masculine and feminine educations.<sup>631</sup> As scholars have shown, the educational opportunities for middle- and upper-classes girls (let alone working-class girls), were restricted in this period.<sup>632</sup> Educated in private schools or convents, girls were taught reading, spelling, history, geography and, above all, skills that were thought to be necessary to become a good homemaker (cooking and sewing), as well as the *arts d’agrément* (painting, singing and playing the piano). This educational programme, devoid of disciplines such as Latin, sciences and mathematics, did not lead to the *baccalauréat*. It conformed both to the domestic role that was expected of the married woman and to the belief in woman’s ‘natural’ lack of rationality and excessive sensibility, as seen in the first chapter of this thesis. The reform of education in France by the Minister of Public Education Guizot in 1833, according to which every commune was compelled to organise a primary school for boys, angered the writers of the feminist journal *La Tribune des femmes* because no action was taken for girls’ education.<sup>633</sup>

Under these circumstances, it comes as no surprise that the education of fictional masculine women diverges from that of ordinary girls, as it did that of many women writers of

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<sup>629</sup> Planté, p. 43.

<sup>630</sup> Cohen, p. 13.

<sup>631</sup> Varella, pp. 392–94. On Sand’s reservations towards feminist movements, see pp. 397–408.

<sup>632</sup> Holmes, p. 11 and pp. 13–14; Moses, pp. 32–33.

<sup>633</sup> For more on the law of 1833, see Broglie, p. 327. For more on the reaction of feminists, see Moses, pp. 83–84.

the nineteenth century.<sup>634</sup> Félicité is an autodidact, as she ‘s’élève toute seule, en garçon’ (*Béatrix*, 139). This self-education is motivated by her passion for reading and her excellent memory. Her intellectual faculties allow her to help her great-uncle in his research and even to write three of his books (139–40), allegedly relating to archaeology and history, two disciplines that constituted high literary genres in the nineteenth century and that were judged inaccessible to women because of the latter’s so-called lack of reason.<sup>635</sup> Félicité also studies music, not as a simple *art d’agrément*, but in order to compose operas (140–41). Her situation, nonetheless, is exceptional because her instruction is regarded as surprising and her readings prodigious (139). The narrator highlights the contrast between the expectations of such an education and the protagonist’s reality. Although excessive knowledge was believed to deprave girls, notably through the reading of ‘licentious’ novels — as suggested by the scientists Moreau de la Sarthe (II, 238, 273, 278) and Virey (92, 98, 106) —, Félicité remains chaste (*Béatrix*, 139).<sup>636</sup> However, the narrator’s conclusions are not positive overall, as her readings are considered to be a ‘dépravation de l’intelligence’ (Ibid.). More significantly, Félicité’s body cannot endure her highly intellectual activities because she becomes ill (140), even though she recovers from her sickness, somewhat paradoxically, by undertaking another masculine activity, riding horses.

Although the description of Lélia’s education is not as detailed as that of Félicité, they share similarities. This is probably due to the fact that Balzac was inspired by Sand’s description of her heroine’s childhood to write the story of his own protagonist.<sup>637</sup> Lélia embodies the figure of a female philosopher, an image that must have been shocking for many (male) readers.<sup>638</sup> Her confession to her sister Pulchérie underlines the amount of time that she has devoted to studying science and spiritualism, and reading poetry (*Lélia*, 166–68). In these pages, the dangers of knowledge are emphasised, as study weakens Lélia’s health, in accordance with scientists’ apprehensions. However, studying poetry is mainly criticised because it causes a discrepancy to arise between Lélia’s expectations and her inability to satisfy them.

Another characteristic of masculine women that differentiates them from other women is their celibacy. As spinsters, Lélia, Lisbeth and Félicité represent social aberrations. Given that the Napoleonic Code only defined the status, rights and, above all, duties of the married

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<sup>634</sup> Alison Finch, *Women’s Writing in the Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 9–16.

<sup>635</sup> Planté, pp. 242–43.

<sup>636</sup> See also Corbin, ‘La rencontre des corps’, p. 166–67, pp. 175–76 and p. 213.

<sup>637</sup> Nicole Mozet, *George Sand: Écrivain de romans* (Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire: Piro, 1997), p. 75; Naginski, ‘Lélia’, p. 102.

<sup>638</sup> Naginski interprets the harsh commentaries of Pierre Reboul (editor of *Lélia*) on the chapter ‘Dans le désert’ as a reaction of shock (*George Sand*, p. 135).

woman, the unmarried woman did not appear to have the same legal status. It was unclear whether she could claim the same rights as a man because of her independence or whether she was determined only by her sex.<sup>639</sup> Dorothy Kelly highlights the fact that Lisbeth's celibacy seems to make her inferior to a human being and deprived of an identity, a position that recalls Cabanis's anxiety about intellectual women.<sup>640</sup> Spinsters were despised for their worthlessness and their inability to attract suitors, and were perceived as a burden on their families, since no one was legally required to take care of them.<sup>641</sup>

Moreover, the financial autonomy of masculine women was exceptional in the nineteenth century. Claire Goldberg Moses argues that reaching economic autonomy was almost impossible for working-class women, to which group the embroiderer Lisbeth Fischer belongs.<sup>642</sup> According to the Napoleonic Code, married women were not allowed to manage their wealth without the permission of their husbands (art. 217). Lisbeth and Félicité owe their privileged situation not only to their celibacy, but mostly to their own skills. Félicité is able to manage competently the fortune that she has inherited from her family (*Béatrix*, 141–42) and probably disposes of some earnings because of her writing. Likewise, Lisbeth is a clever worker in the 'passementerie' industry who exercises supervisory responsibility within the factory. She cleverly assumes that the defeat of the Empire will have disastrous consequences for this industry (as well as for the Fischer family and Baron Hulot), and thus rejects the partnership that is offered to her by her employers just before their bankruptcy and becomes a simple independent worker with her own, albeit modest, income (*Bette*, 55–56).

The exceptional status of these masculine women raises doubts about their conventionally female nature, both from other characters and from themselves. Félicité is the most emblematic case. She acknowledges her lack of femininity — 'Quelque peu femme que je sois' (*Béatrix*, 289) — but does so in order to show that she is not entirely deprived of feminine abilities in the art of seduction and, therefore, that she is still a woman. Calyste goes further, since he denies Félicité's femininity, and even femaleness, in a letter to Béatrix:

vous m'avez démontré que Camille est un garçon: elle nage, elle chasse, elle monte à cheval, elle fume, elle boit, elle écrit, elle analyse un cœur et un livre, elle n'a pas la moindre faiblesse, elle marche dans sa force; elle n'a ni vos mouvements déliés, ni votre pas qui ressemble au vol d'un oiseau, ni votre voix d'amour, ni vos regards fins, ni votre

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<sup>639</sup> The debate is expressed by Moscovici (pp. 469–70 and pp. 478–79).

<sup>640</sup> Dorothy Kelly, *Fictional Genders: Role and Representation in Nineteenth-Century French Narrative* (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 48.

<sup>641</sup> For more on women's choice of unmarried life, see Moses, p. 35; Ussher, p. 81.

<sup>642</sup> Moses, p. 27.

allure gracieuse; elle est Camille Maupin, et pas autre chose; elle n'a rien de la femme [...]. (278)

This portrait is written by a man in love who wants to convince his mistress of his indifference to her rival, and is constructed in opposition to Béatrix's own characteristics. Nevertheless, since Béatrix embodies the typical woman owing to the fairness of her hair, the pronoun *vous* progressively designates, not only her, but all the persons of her sex. Calyste focuses on Félicité's activities, her tone, her gaze and her general allure, but (like Virey) he appears to be particularly obsessed with her non-feminine gait and assimilates her to a *femme hommase*. His virulent rejection of Félicité's seduction reveals the combination of fascination and fear that masculine women raise.

In short, the figure of the masculine woman seems to outshine the traditional feminine woman, as well as the young and old men who appear in the novels. It is Camille Maupin, and not a man, for example, who incarnates the archetype of the writer in *La Comédie humaine*.<sup>643</sup> This allegedly flattering and positive portrait of masculine women is, however, thwarted by an intrinsic anxiety towards them that is reminiscent of scientists' concern for women who behave like men and enjoy masculine activities. This fear is notably expressed through the depiction of the unconventional sexuality of masculine women.

### **The Sexuality of Masculine Woman**

The non-conformism of masculine women, which emerges from their education and activities, is also characteristic of their relations with men. Their sexuality represents a rupture with, and even a rejection of, traditional, heterosexual sexuality. Charles Fourier and a Saint-Simonian such as Prosper Enfantin advocated women's sexual emancipation and free love. However, their programme remained mostly theoretical and encountered little popularity, both among men, which is not surprising, and feminist women, because it did not favour their social liberation and need for respect.<sup>644</sup> However, the female protagonists of *Lélia*, *La Cousine Bette* and *Béatrix* are bolder than many non-fictional feminists, as they take the path of sexual emancipation. The novels suggest, or even depict, alternative sexualities, including virginity, frigidity, nymphomania and lesbianism, which escape male control and male doctrine because

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<sup>643</sup> Van Rossum-Guyon, pp. 88–92.

<sup>644</sup> On Fourier's viewpoint about women's sexuality, see Michael Clifford Spencer, *Charles Fourier* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), pp. 91–95. On Enfantin, Saint-Simonians and free love, see Moses, pp. 47–49 and pp. 70–85; Antoine Picon, *Les saint-simoniens: Raison, imaginaire et utopie* (Paris: Belin, 2002), pp. 93–94 and p. 133



they are generally chosen and imposed by the female characters.<sup>645</sup> These sexualities not only constitute a threat to men's supremacy in the private sphere, but they also generate the fear that the threat can be extended to the public sphere.

Lisbeth's virginity is an intrinsic part of her character because her role in the novel is defined by her status as the poor celibate relative of an apparently wealthy family. However, she is not a stereotypical old maid due to her complexity and positioning at the core of the plot.<sup>646</sup> Her celibacy is precisely the element that justifies her importance in the novel. Her virginity is not a deliberate choice, as she came to Paris in the hope of finding a husband and, more specifically of marrying Marshal Hulot. The impossibility of Lisbeth getting married stems from her lack of dowry and her lack of beauty, which in turn causes her to act acrimoniously and jealously towards the beautiful Adeline, and feeds her desire for retaliation.

Lisbeth's damaged self-esteem is not the only wound caused by virginity. According to physicians in the nineteenth century, 'continence' was 'un état contre nature' (Menville, III, 165). Whilst recommending abstinence before marriage and moderation during marriage (notably so as not to become a masculine woman as a result of receiving excessive quantities of sperm), they considered that excessive continence could generate diseases, such as anaemia, absence of menstruation, hysteria and cancers (Virey, 169–70), which could only be cured by marriage. Accordingly, doctors criticised the state of celibacy imposed on nuns by the Catholic Church (Moreau, II, 274; Virey, 82–83). From a medical perspective, Lisbeth, as an unmarried woman, is sick, and her quest for a husband and for a man of better birth than her own, is legitimate for health reasons, even though it is presented as a usurpation of privileges in the logic of the novel.

In *La Cousine Bette*, the narrator adopts an even more severe perspective than that of the physicians. Lisbeth's virginity is depicted as worse than a disease; it is presented as a monstrosity. However, essential qualities are extracted from this apparent aberration. As virgins do not exhaust their energy in sexual intercourse, they find in themselves strength that they can use for other activities.<sup>647</sup> Likewise, they are able to concentrate on other matters and their intellectual faculties are thus more developed than those of sexually active people:

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<sup>645</sup> So do *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, *Fragoletta* and *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

<sup>646</sup> André Lorant, *Les Parents Pauvres d'Honoré de Balzac: 'La Cousine Bette'–'Le cousin Pons': Étude historique et critique*, 2 vols (Genève: Droz, 1967), I, p. 46.

<sup>647</sup> Menville de Ponsan similarly claimed: 'Il est certain que la chasteté conservant la vigueur des fonctions vitales, et reportant dans tous les organes cette surabondance de vie qui se rencontre dans les parties génitales, doit augmenter l'énergie de toutes nos fonctions' (I, 262).

La Virginité, comme toutes les monstruosités, a des richesses spéciales, des grandeurs absorbantes. La vie, dont les forces sont économisées, a pris chez l'individu vierge une qualité de résistance et de durée incalculable. Le cerveau s'est enrichi dans l'ensemble de ses facultés réservées. Lorsque les gens chastes ont besoin de leur corps ou de leur âme, qu'ils recourent à l'action ou à la pensée, ils trouvent alors de l'acier dans leurs muscles ou de la science infuse dans leur intelligence, une force diabolique ou la magie noire de la Volonté. (*Bette*, 145)

The end of the extract offers a discursive twist since the consequences of this 'monstrous' virginity, whose qualities have just been promoted, are now considered diabolical. In other words, the narrator restores the viewpoint that was introduced in the very beginning. This positive digression is a means of enhancing the fundamental flaws of virginity. Physical failures that were correlated to virginity in scientific texts become moral ones in the fictional text, increased by the supposed qualities of chastity. The physical and, above all, intellectual strength that Lisbeth finds in her own virginity allows her to pursue her plan. Although she is not responsible for her virginity, her celibacy is perceived as a social flaw that cannot find favour in the male narrator and may overthrow the positive qualities that are assimilated to the masculinity of the masculine woman.

Like Lisbeth's virginity, Lélia's frigidity also deserves further attention. Virey's entry 'Frigidité et froideur' in the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* defines frigidity as 'l'état d'un individu de l'un ou de l'autre sexe, mais principalement de l'homme, qui se montre impuissant ou incapable de génération, et même de coït'.<sup>648</sup> While frigidity is nowadays regarded as more common amongst women, Virey's article considers it to be mostly a male characteristic and, subsequently, develops the case of men at the expense of that of women.<sup>649</sup> Paradoxically, the scientist specifies that there are more frigid women than frigid men (15). This internal contradiction can be explained by the fact that, even though female frigidity was more frequent, it was considered to be of little importance given that it did not constitute an obstacle to marriage and procreation. In contrast with men, for whom frigidity equated to impotence, and consequently sterility, frigid women could still be fertile and fulfil their marital duties (15–16). Their pleasure was not therefore a matter of concern within the scientific reflection. While Virey mentions the shame of the impotent husband unable to perform his duties (16–17), he neglects to describe the feelings of the frigid woman, unable to enjoy hers.

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<sup>648</sup> Julien-Joseph Virey, 'Frigidité et froideur', in *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, XVII (1816), pp. 11–28 (p. 11). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>649</sup> *Le Petit Robert*, for instance, defines it as 'absence d'orgasme chez la femme' and 'absence de désir sexuel et de satisfaction sexuelle (rare en parlant d'un homme et alors distinct de l'impuissance)' (p. 1131). Naginski has rightly noted that frigidity was regarded as a male pathology ('Lélia', p. 87). However, she did not question Lélia's frigidity in her previous works (*George Sand*, p. 116 and p. 126; 'Les deux Lélia', p. 81).

The frigid woman is described as follows:

La femme froide et stérile a [...] au plus haut degré le caractère de l'effémination comme ces femmelettes si blondes, si blanches, si délicates et énervées, presque sans gorge ou mamelles, n'étant presque ni réglées, ni pourvues de ces poils qui ombragent l'organe sexuel [...], et se faisant à peine entendre avec un petit filet de voix. [...] leur clitoris est presque introuvable et sans érection. (15)

This scientific description is at variance with literary discourses, since the portrayal of the frigid woman appears to be in contradiction with that of the masculine woman. Here, the frigid woman embodies an excess of feminine characteristics, such as coldness, fairness, paleness, fragility and hairlessness. All these characteristics are expected to exist in women, but they reach their peak in the frigid woman. While the frigid woman's portrait consists of the accentuation of femininity, the frigid man's represents an inversion, not an accentuation of masculinity, as he possesses the same effeminate characteristics as the frigid woman (14–15).

Virey describes diverse causes of frigidity, which are either hereditary and caused by parental flaws (such as debauchery and incest), or accidental, such as the consumption of certain food, sexual inactivity, intense intellectual work, fatigue and mismatched personalities (18–25). Whilst Virey does not explain whether these causes affect male or female bodies, it can be assumed that he focuses on male bodies almost exclusively. For instance, he indicates that thyme and rue can cause frigidity in men, but are aphrodisiacs for women (20). However, he does not mention these plants when listing the means to dissipate the symptoms of frigidity. Contrary to Virey, Freud later studied women's frigidity and attributed it to their repressed education, associating sexuality with a proscribed act and thus refusing, as a punishment, the pleasure that they might feel.<sup>650</sup> According to Freud, women's frigidity is neither a physiological dysfunction nor the result of men's incompetence in the bedroom, but the consequence of women's own repressed personalities, although influenced by social conventions. To put it simply, they hold the responsibility for their sexual displeasure.

While the perception of *Lélia*'s possible frigidity could be inflected by Freudian reading, as seems to be the case in Pierre Reboul's edition of *Lélia*, the scope of this interpretation is, however, limited.<sup>651</sup> The word is never used in Sand's text, although references to coldness are abundant, which highlights *Lélia*'s sometimes dubious femininity, in opposition to her warm

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<sup>650</sup> Freud, 'On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love (Contributions to the Psychology of Love II)', in *The Freud Reader*, pp. 394–400 (p. 400).

<sup>651</sup> The editor categorically states in his introduction: 'Ne mâchons pas les mots: *Lélia* est frigide' (xlviij).

and yet highly feminine sister Pulchérie.<sup>652</sup> During the meeting of the two sisters in the gardens of Prince dei Bambucci after years of separation, Lélia confesses her malady to Pulchérie and calls it '[l]a froideur de mes sens' (*Lélia*, 169). She attributes it to the discrepancy between the magnificence of her dreams and the sordidness of reality (166–67, 169) and determines the cause of her coldness in establishing an opposition between her sister's behaviour and her own: 'vous ne viviez que pour jouir; [...] je ne vivais que pour désirer' (155).

As Lélia complains about the coldness of her senses and of her excessive idealism, she moves imperceptibly towards a detailed tale of her sexual experience. She describes her insensitivity in the arms of her lover in opposition to his anger towards what he regards as prudish hypocrisy, his contempt for her tears and even his brutality during intercourse (173–75). In contrast with her lover's embraces, Lélia's erotic dreams, called 'riches extases' (175), seem to be more pleasurable. Contrary to Virey's portrait of frigid women and the perpetual claim of their coldness, Lélia appears to be a sensual woman, even though her sensuality is not directed towards male lovers. In other words and in contrast to a Freudian reading, Lélia's frigidity is not of her own making; the responsibility for it lies with men. Eileen Boyd Sivert, Kristina Wingård Vareille, Margaret Waller and Isabelle Hoog Naginski have thus seen in Lélia's story a denunciation of women's conditions and restricted role in a patriarchal society.<sup>653</sup> Although appropriate, their interpretation, nonetheless, gives a limited reading of the heroine's absence of sexual pleasure. It fails to notice that her coldness is a response to patriarchal conceptions of female pleasure, useless for the act of reproduction, but necessary for the self-esteem of the male partner. Arguably, the pleasure that Lélia feels in her dreams can be interpreted in terms of clitoral masturbation in opposition to vaginal intercourse with men (a pleasure that is despised by Freud as infantile),<sup>654</sup> following Phyllis Chesler's suggestion that women were expected not only to have orgasms, but also to experience the right sort of orgasms in heteronormative relations.<sup>655</sup> Lélia's pleasure does not depend on men's actions. It is therefore invalidated because it does not tally with the norm. Consequently, the label of frigidity

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<sup>652</sup> Didier suggests that a listing of the word 'froid' would be meaningful (p. 641). See also Ender, p. 230; Harkness, 'Resisting Realist Petrification', p. 164. For more on the opposition between Lélia and Pulchérie, see Didier, p. 637; Rogers, pp. 26–28; Vareille, pp. 199–200.

<sup>653</sup> Eileen Boyd Sivert, 'Lélia and Feminism', *Yale French Studies*, 62 (1981), 45–66 (p. 51); Vareille, pp. 145–46; Waller, p. 144; Naginski, 'Lélia', p. 90. Sivert (p. 51) and, to a lesser extent, Didier (p. 636) and Vareille (p. 200), nonetheless, perceive Lélia's frigidity as the fear of her own body.

<sup>654</sup> Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', in *The Freud Reader*, pp. 239–93 (pp. 287–88). Laqueur, however, argues that clitoral orgasm was regarded as the only sort of female orgasm before Freud (*Making Sex*, pp. 233–34).

<sup>655</sup> Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness*, rev. and updated edn (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 105–06. See also Ussher, p. 81.

appears to be an attempt to deny this masculine woman the sexual satisfaction that she aspires to experience because of her rejection of traditional sexual roles.

The excess of sexual urges is also characteristic of masculine women's sexuality. Scientists believed that female masculinity could be caused by excessive quantity of sperm in the female body.<sup>656</sup> Nymphomania, which was also called 'fureur utérine', designates a disease that is caused by the exaltation of the sensitivity of ovaries, as well as by the example of 'corrupt' people, such as servants, and by the reading of so-called voluptuous texts. It consists of expressing desire through lascivious discourses or gestures, provoking men, even in public, and being violent to those who reject advances (Moreau, II, 269–73; Virey, *De la femme*, 82, 109–10). Women that are mostly affected by nymphomania resemble the Greek poetess Sappho, the cultural model of the masculine woman (Virey, 5). They are short, tanned brunettes; they have large breasts, abundant menstruations and sensitive genitalia (Moreau, II, 271). Additionally, Virey argues that the constitution of many women writers is more erotic than that of other women (5–6). His use of *érotique* is medical — he later mentions 'l'hystérie érotique' (109) — and refers to *délire érotique*, a 'délire caractérisé par une propension sans frein pour les jouissances de l'amour', which is similar to nymphomania.<sup>657</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe's and Virey's medical definition of a nymphomaniac refers less to a woman who has numerous sexual encounters than to one who is shameless in expressing her sexual desire, although the first meaning seems to be the one employed by some protagonists in *Béatrix*. The label of nymphomaniac is another example of men's fear of women's sexuality. Women are not supposed to express their desire openly, but rather to ignore, or pretend to ignore, that they are sexualised individuals.

Among the three masculine women, Félicité corresponds the most to the physical description of a nymphomaniac because, like Sappho, she is a short, dark-haired, Mediterranean woman writer. The priest of Guérande insinuates that her house is a harem populated with male lovers, 'un paradis de Mahomet où les houris ne sont pas femmes' (*Béatrix*, 119; see also 121), whereas the narrator also refers to her as a 'Don Juan femelle' (153). However, the narrator indirectly acknowledges the incoherence of his comparison, as he adds that she has neither debts nor conquests — two elements that are constitutive of Don Juan's identity. Her list of lovers is, indeed, short, even though all of them may not be mentioned: the anonymous man who is considered to have 'made' Camille Maupin, Conti, Claude Vignon and Calyste du Guénic, with whom she never consummates a relationship. The priest's reference to a harem and the

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<sup>656</sup> On female masculinisation, see chapter 1, p. 36.

<sup>657</sup> 'Érotique', in Littré < <http://www.littre.org> > [accessed 8 January 2014].

narrator's comparison with Don Juan reveal that Félicité's overt expression of her desire is contestable for a woman. What shocks the male community is the fact that Félicité's fulfilling sexual life is ruled neither by marriage nor by feelings (for example, she does not love Vignon). The exaggerated 'Don Juan' appellation reinforces her assimilation to a man. However, whereas a male character might benefit from being associated with Don Juan and his philosophical connection to libertinism, her sexual liberty is discredited as wantonness because Félicité suffers from a common prejudice highlighted by Beauvoir: 'on confond avec entêtement femme libre et femme facile'.<sup>658</sup>

Finally, masculine women's sexual autonomy is depicted, and sometimes discredited, as lesbianism. The viewpoint on lesbianism expressed in *La Cousine Bette* and *Lélia* is oblique and critical. It tallies with the brief studies of lesbianism in scientific writings, which conceive it as a dangerous sexual practice that must not be mentioned explicitly. In *La Cousine Bette*, sapphic relations are suggested between Lisbeth Fischer and Valérie Marneffe. The narrator uses a third party, the witty and slanderous Parisians, to refer to rumours concerning their relationship: 'Lisbeth et Valérie offraient le touchant spectacle d'une de ces amitiés si vives et si peu probables entre femmes, que les Parisiens, toujours trop spirituels, les calomnient aussitôt' (*Bette*, 198; see also 486–87). In attributing these rumours to the wit of Parisians, the narrator seems to distance himself from them, but, in mentioning them, he raises doubts in the reader's mind and suggests the possibility that these slanders might be true. This paralipsis helps to construct Lisbeth's homosexuality, while not taking the risk of making it an undeniable reality. This strategy shares similarities with Nigel Smith's *avoidance-discourse* about homosexuality.<sup>659</sup> Michael Lucey has also noted how Lisbeth, by multiplying names to designate Valérie — sister, daughter, friend and love (204) —, makes this relation unidentifiable, and has assimilated it to her similarly ambiguous relationship with Wenceslas Steinbock.<sup>660</sup> Lisbeth and Valérie are compromised by the double challenge that they represent to the traditional family unit, by claiming to belong to it, in marrying (or being willing to marry) Marshal Hulot and Crevel respectively, and by creating a 'deviant' bond with them. The ambiguous nature of their relationship accentuates their status as the villains of the novel and ultimately justifies their macabre fate.<sup>661</sup>

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<sup>658</sup> Beauvoir, II, p. 446.

<sup>659</sup> On Nigel Smith's *avoidance-discourse*, see chapter 3, p. 135 and p. 137.

<sup>660</sup> Lucey, p. 155 and p. 157.

<sup>661</sup> For more on lesbian relationship in *La Cousine Bette*, see James R. McGuire, 'The Feminine Conspiracy in Balzac's *La Cousine Bette*', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 20:3-4 (Spring–Summer 1992), 295–304 (pp. 298–301).

In *Lélia*, the relationship between Lélia and her sister Pulchérie is unconventional because it suggests both lesbianism and incest. With her blond hair, her bright cheeks, her round shoulders (*Lélia*, 157) and her predestined beauty (*pulcher* means ‘beautiful’ in Latin), Pulchérie embodies the ideal of femininity. Although she is a courtesan, she does not seem affected by the process of masculinisation that is supposed to characterise promiscuous women according to Virey. Pulchérie, the feminine sister, is attracted to Lélia because the latter is masculine, as she told her sister when they were children: ‘Regarde-toi, ma sœur: ne te trouves-tu pas belle? [...] Tu ressembles à un homme’ (158). However, Pulchérie’s love for her sister seems at first glance to be non-reciprocal. When the two sisters meet, they recall an episode of their childhood in which they fell asleep together on the grass, which raised ‘une émotion pleine de charme et peut-être de honte’ (155). After dreaming of a dark-haired man, Pulchérie awoke and discovered the masculine beauty of her sleeping sister. She contemplated her, stroked her hair and kissed her arm, only to be dismissed by the severe, mocking and intimidating gaze of an awakened Lélia (158).

Pulchérie’s behaviour towards Lélia can be described as a ‘romantic friendship’. Lillian Faderman and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg have shown that, in a society where men and women were segregated, and where women were not allowed to show their inclination for men, they tended to develop friendships with other women that could be expressed through promises of eternal love, as well as physical manifestations of affection, such as kissing, hugging and sharing the same bed.<sup>662</sup> Smith-Rosenberg has also stressed the importance of family ties between sisters, cousins, sisters-in-law, mothers and daughters, for instance.<sup>663</sup> Boundaries between moral and immoral relationships amongst girls in a pre-sexological society were different from those established in the twentieth-century Western societies. It is not the means of expressing affection for another woman, but rather the social response to these caring bonds, that distinguished between the legitimate female relationship (or romantic friendship) and the illegitimate one (or sapphic love).

Pulchérie’s fondness for her sister seems to correspond to the romantic friendships studied by Faderman and Smith-Rosenberg. However, Lélia does not judge Pulchérie’s sentiment to be innocent and the latter’s need to justify her acts when surprised by her sister highlights her sense of guilt: ‘Alors vous ouvrites les yeux et votre regard me pénétra d’une honte inconnue; je me détournai comme si j’avais fait une action *coupable*. Pourtant, Lélia,

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<sup>662</sup> Faderman, pp. 157–77; Smith-Rosenberg, pp. 53–76. Likewise, in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Madeleine states that her friendship for girlfriends resembles passion (330).

<sup>663</sup> Smith-Rosenberg, p. 62.

aucune pensée *impure* ne s'était même présentée à mon esprit' (158; emphasis added). The simple fact that Pulchérie uses the lexical register of immorality suggests that she is aware of the ambiguity of her actions and feelings. Whereas her affirmations of love for Lélia may correspond to non-sexual romantic friendship, the phrases that she employs to describe her sentiments stress their strangeness — 'une singulière curiosité', 'un étrange plaisir', 'cela me troublait étrangement' (157). She further confesses that this episode was her first love lesson and, more equivocally, her first sensation of pleasure, even comparing her sister with the man of her previous dream (158). It can be inferred that her 'rêve étrange' (156) was caused by her sleeping with Lélia.

Lélia's and Pulchérie's awareness that the exchange of caresses and love between women might be 'impure' seems to prefigure the work of sexologists, such as Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis. This supports Faderman's claim that romantic friendship was deconstructed as lesbianism earlier in France by writers, such as Gautier and Baudelaire, 'perhaps because the French aesthete writers from the 1830's on delighted in exploring whatever had the potential to astound the bourgeoisie [...], and flaunted exotic images of sex between women in their poetry and prose'.<sup>664</sup> *Lélia* reflects the growing ambivalence of opinions towards romantic friendship and love between women in the 1830s by depicting the severe reaction of Lélia towards Pulchérie's feelings and the shameful attitude of the latter as a response to her sister's intransigence. The novel shows that the innocence of close relationships between girls has started to be questioned. Although the exact nature of these relationships remains the same, they are altered by the external gaze, which both sisters seem to have internalised. 'Respectable' girls are deprived of boys' company and have no one to express their admiration and love to, except themselves — Pulchérie confesses her narcissism (156) — and their girlfriends, sisters and female relatives. If even those possibilities are withdrawn, their only options are to become loveless or 'vicious'. Pulchérie, who becomes the courtesan Zinzolina, appears to have renounced her sister's love, whilst choosing the second path, and even encourages Lélia to become either a nun or a courtesan (207–08), two traditional female roles outside of the institution of marriage. Lélia rejects these two roles, as well as that of a wife and mother (as will be shown in the next section), thus defying all traditional categories of female identity.

As such, the sexuality of Félicité, Lisbeth and Lélia escapes masculine control due to its non-conformism. Sexually, they 'choisissent les chemins condamnés', to borrow Beauvoir's words.<sup>665</sup> Men's role during intercourse is rejected or, at least, judged to be limited. This

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<sup>664</sup> Faderman, p. 238.

<sup>665</sup> Beauvoir, I, p. 479.



empowerment raises concerns, as proved by the narrators' and characters' attempts to dismiss it through slander and claims of monstrosity. The anxiety towards masculine women's alternative sexuality reveals the fear of their refusal to conform to social prescriptions connected to sex, such as child-bearing.

### **The Refusal of Motherhood and the Maternal Lover**

Before Halberstam, Freud had already acknowledged the existence of the masculine woman, whom he defined as a girl suffering from a masculinity complex, or from a desire to have a penis and to resemble a man, notably after realising that she was made differently from her male playmates. The desire to be a man, the sense of inferiority that results from the absence of the penis, and the resentment towards those who have one are all deemed by Freud as part of the 'natural' development of women, for which they compensate by wishing to bear a child.<sup>666</sup> However, fictional masculine women refuse to submit themselves to the main social conventions that rule women's lives in the nineteenth century: marriage and motherhood. From a Freudian perspective, it seems as though masculine women are in denial because they refuse to renounce their penis envy and to embrace their femininity to become fully mature women. It is nonetheless argued that, far from abandoning their maternal function, they find other ways to exercise it.

Masculine women's refusal to marry is based on their willingness to conserve their independence in a society organised by the Napoleonic Code that can only define them as individuals without rights. Félicité des Touches can only conceive of marriage intellectually, not emotionally, and perceives it as an abdication of her freedom (*Béatrix*, 143), while Lisbeth Fischer likens marriage to a yoke (*Bette*, 57). This rejection, however, is not definitive. Lisbeth and Félicité contemplate the possibility of marrying, but they are not motivated by love; neither are they fooled by the lot of married women. Lisbeth desires to become Maréchale Hulot by marrying Hector Hulot's brother, the patriarch of the Hulot family. The loss of autonomy that is connected to this position is compensated for by the fact that it would allow her to exercise her domination, as the matriarch, over the members of the family that she hates and, thus, to achieve her revenge. Similarly, Félicité envisages marrying the journalist Claude Vignon, even though they do not love each other, to find a suitable partner to face the fear of ageing (*Béatrix*,

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<sup>666</sup> Freud, 'Three Essays', p. 271; 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood', in *The Freud Reader*, pp. 443–81 (pp. 460–61); 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex', pp. 661–66 (pp. 662–65); 'Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes', pp. 670–78 (pp. 673–78); 'Anxiety and Instinctual Life', pp. 773–83 (pp. 777–79).

156). Interestingly, she does not consider a suitable union to be based on equality, as her partner must be ‘un homme supérieur’ (Ibid.), certainly to other men, but also to her. Félicité thus shows her reluctance (and the text’s reluctance) to admit uncompromising equality between the sexes.

Only Lélia remains opposed to marriage and has no marital projects in the novel. The most virulent criticism of marriage is, nonetheless, expressed by Pulchérie. When the two sisters meet, they exchange thoughts on the condition of women. Pulchérie expresses the extension of her hatred where marriage is concerned by establishing a comparison between the living conditions of the mother and the prostitute, first by asking a rhetorical question — ‘Comparez-vous les travaux, les douleurs, les héroïsmes d’une mère de famille à ceux d’une prostituée?’ (*Lélia*, 152) — before stating more overtly: ‘être amante, courtisane et mère, trois conditions de la destinée de la femme auxquelles nulle femme n’échappe, soit qu’elle se vende par un marché de prostitution ou par un contrat de mariage’ (153). The links made between marriage and prostitution (and more generally every relationship between men and women) can be aligned with the opinion of feminists during the nineteenth century.<sup>667</sup> This association also enables Pulchérie to criticise women’s lack of freedom and civic rights in the kind of marital institution defined by the Napoleonic Code. Although Lélia does not express such strong opinions, her confession conveys similar thoughts. Furthermore, as Lélia and Pulchérie seem to constitute two faces of the same individual, their complementarity suggests that the ideas expressed by one of them are shared by the other.<sup>668</sup> Lélia will later defend her sister against Sténio’s opprobrium (230–31) due to the intensity of her love for her sister.

Pulchérie does not explicitly distinguish between the wife and the mother. These two figures were often assimilated in nineteenth-century society, as the married woman was expected to become a mother and a ‘respectable’ woman could not become a mother without being married. The discourse relating to motherhood is extended further in the novels than the discourse relating to marriage. It is also more ambiguous, as no specific condemnation or praise is pronounced. Before studying the attitude of the masculine woman towards motherhood, the definition of motherhood in the nineteenth century will first be examined.

In *L’amour en plus*, Élisabeth Badinter calls into question maternal instinct, or maternal love; that is, the principle that a woman ‘naturally’ aspires to become a mother, that the mother is necessarily attracted to her children, that she instinctively knows how to take care of them

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<sup>667</sup> Offen, pp. 97–98. Beauvoir made the same comparison (II, pp. 247–48).

<sup>668</sup> Rogers, p. 34; Vareille, p. 208; Richard B. Grant, ‘George Sand’s *Lélia* and the Tragedy of Dualism’, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 19:4 (Summer 1991), 499–516 (p. 509); Schor, p. 66; Hatem, p. 30. Pulchérie herself claims their likeness when she tells Sténio: ‘je suis Lélia elle-même’ (220).

and that her devotion to them is so intense that it is similar to a sacrifice. Badinter argues that love is a feeling and ‘comme tout sentiment, il est incertain, fragile et imparfait’, in other words, contingent.<sup>669</sup> She convincingly claims that maternal love is an invention of the last third of the eighteenth century, notably developed in Rousseau’s *Émile*. Maternal love was reputed to be a necessity for both the child and the mother. The latter could only blossom and find a glorifying position in society through her maternal duties. This theory, Badinter argues, was a response to the situation during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. French mothers, from almost all social milieux, either for economic reasons, or to follow the fashion, or simply through lack of interest, abandoned their children to wet nurses and showed indifference to their lot, thus increasing the probability of their death. The purpose of maternal discourse was to reduce the risks of infantile mortality, notably by promoting maternal breast-feeding, constant care and hygiene, as well as fighting against the custom of swaddling babies. Incidentally, it developed women and mothers’ guilt and sentiment of abnormality if they did not perceive motherhood as a vocation, refused to have children or felt that they did not correspond to the model of the ideal mother.

Early nineteenth-century medical treatises are inscribed in this trend of promoting the maternal instinct analysed by Badinter. Menville de Ponsan is particularly enthusiastic when discussing maternal love to the extent that the style of his essay is sometimes lyrical.<sup>670</sup> He describes maternal love as:

cette force plus puissante que la douleur et le dégoût, cette force n’est qu’un sentiment animal, un instinct aveugle qui appartient à la plante, à l’insecte, au quadrupède, aux oiseaux, comme à la femme: loi immuable de la nature, loi de conservation, penchant irrésistible auquel nul être sur la terre ne peut se soustraire, auquel la nature a confié la vie! (I, 397)

Menville de Ponsan’s definition of maternal love asserts its ‘naturalism’, animality and instinctiveness, and, simultaneously, its overwhelming and fascinating dimensions. This instinctive, almost ‘savage’, love inherent to women’s condition is nonetheless perfected by morals (I, 401). Menville de Ponsan (but also Moreau de la Sarthe) focuses on three periods in

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<sup>669</sup> Élisabeth Badinter, *L’amour en plus: Histoire de l’amour maternel (XVII<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, ‘Le Livre de Poche’, 1982 [Flammarion, 1980]), p. 29.

<sup>670</sup> For instance, Menville de Ponsan claims: ‘Remercions [...] l’Être des êtres d’avoir donné aux mères une affection sans bornes pour leurs créatures, de les avoir douées d’une patience et d’un courage à toute épreuve. Il les a pétries d’une tendresse et d’une sollicitude sans fin; il a placé dans leur âme un sentiment qui tient du prodige; car, quelque faible que soit une mère, il n’est point de fatigue qui l’arrête, point de soins qui la rebutent, point de dangers qu’elles ne brave pour la conservation de ses enfants. Ce sentiment surpasse et maîtrise tous les autres’ (I, 355).

the life of a mother: pregnancy, childbirth and breast-feeding. The doctor depicts women as eager to be pregnant (I, 290; see also Moreau, II, 186), sometimes to the point of simulating their pregnancy (Menville, I, 295). The young mother recovers astonishingly swiftly from the pains of childbirth to dedicate herself to the pleasure of maternity:

O Rubens! je laisse à ton pinceau le soin de rendre cet état touchant où les dernières impressions d'une douleur qui s'éteint de mêlent encore, dans la femme, à la sérénité de la joie la plus pure; [...] où la crainte, assez naturelle quand on souffre, de perdre le jour, vient faire place au plaisir délicieux de l'avoir donné à un nouvel être! (Menville, I, 344 ; see also Moreau, II, 206)

Breast-feeding is not only a duty for a mother, but also a health guarantee for both the mother and the child (Menville, I, 369–70; 378–83). Above all, it helps the mother to secure the love of her child by creating a privileged bond between them that rewards her for her sacrifices.<sup>671</sup> The love and tenderness of her mother are connected to bodily functions, and therefore to instinct, in scientists' discourse, as, for instance, the recollection of a beloved baby can trigger lactation (Moreau, II, 215). In the scientists' opinion, motherhood is the most — and perhaps the only — honourable status for a woman. The mother who does not feed her baby herself is often condemned to dreadful diseases (Menville, I, 366–69) — as were the intellectual woman and the unmarried woman. Accordingly, the pregnant mother used to be the object of a veritable cult among the Ancients (Moreau, II, 287–88; Menville, I, 290–91), and although it is not overtly the case in the nineteenth century (Menville, I, 291–92), scientific treatises and literary characters of good mothers, perpetuate this cult.

The good mother is mainly embodied by Adeline Hulot in our corpus.<sup>672</sup> It is she who has raised motherhood and wifeness to their highest points, being assimilated to a saint (*Bette*, 51) and even to the Virgin Mary — her wedding, for instance, is an Assumption (48). As such, she incarnates the values of extraordinary devotion (46) and sacrifice promoted by the defenders of maternity.<sup>673</sup> She is convinced that softness and submission are a woman's most powerful

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<sup>671</sup> 'Position [des seins] qui, en tenant l'enfant sous les yeux et dans les bras de sa mère, établit un échange intéressant de tendresse, de soins et de caresses innocentes, qui met l'un à portée de mieux exprimer ses besoins, et l'autre de jouir de ses propres sacrifices, en en contemplant l'objet.' This observation from Roussel is quoted by Moreau de la Sarthe (II, 211) and Menville de Ponsan (I, 356–57); however, the latter does not acknowledge the author of the citation.

<sup>672</sup> Fanny du Guénic, the Duchesse de Grandlieu and, to a lesser extent, Hortense Hulot, Célestine Crével and Sabine de Grandlieu are also devoted mothers. In contrast, Béatrix de Rochefide and Valérie Marneffe embody negligent and selfish mothers.

<sup>673</sup> Badinter has shown that religious vocabulary was frequently used to talk about motherhood (*L'amour en plus* p. 286). See for instance Menville de Ponsan's observation: 'De toutes les opérations maternelles, l'allaitement est la plus méritoire, parce qu'elle est la seule désintéressée et volontaire; c'est le gage le plus précieux de la tendresse d'une mère; c'est le ministère le plus saint, puisqu'il influe sur le moral comme sur le physique, et que c'est de

weapons (108–09) and illustrates her opinion by affirming to her unfaithful husband: ‘Je suis ta chose, fais de moi tout ce que tu voudras’ (391). Her speech illustrates the fact that masochism was an important component of the nineteenth-century discourses that praise maternal love, and was therefore deemed to be inherent to women’s identity.<sup>674</sup> As Badinter explains:

Cette théorie du masochisme féminin sert de justification *a posteriori* à l’acceptation de toutes les douleurs et tous les sacrifices. Si la femme est naturellement faite pour souffrir, et que, de surcroît, elle aime cela, il n’y a plus de raison de se gêner.<sup>675</sup>

Whilst Adeline’s religious dedication to her husband is constantly stressed, the mother is always present in the wife, as she treats Hector as a spoiled child (51). Her maternal self is even ‘plus forte que la femme’ (53), because, if Adeline is able to forgive Hulot’s infidelities, she cannot stand to see her children suffer. She attempts to prostitute herself to the father-in-law of her son to obtain two hundred thousand francs to save her family from ruin and dishonour. Her devotion to her family is so absolute that she is inclined to sacrifice her honour as a respectable wife and mother to become the opposite — a prostitute — paradoxically in order to fulfil her nourishing duties towards her family.

This model of the good mother, also valorised by feminist claims, is, nonetheless, fallible.<sup>676</sup> Despite her apparent resignation — a trait that is characteristic of women’s conduct according to Beauvoir — Adeline Hulot is not satisfied with her plight, because she is neglected and impoverished by her husband’s affairs (especially that with Valérie).<sup>677</sup> Her speech (207) is an attempt to convince herself that her lot is enviable. She claims that her glory as a faithful wife and a good mother is more important than happiness, thus confirming that she is not happy. Hortense Steinbock, who physically resembles her mother, does not wish to endure the same fate as Adeline and decides to leave her unfaithful husband. The farewell letter that she writes to Wenceslas (297–99) refers several times to Adeline. Hortense expresses admiration for her mother’s devotion, but she admits that she does not have the strength to follow her model. More than her own mother, Hortense dissociates the mother from the wife, but she chooses to be a good mother only to her son, and not to her husband. The case of the Hulot women undermines the claim made by Rousseau, among others, that good mothers are rewarded by the fidelity of

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cette fonction que nous recevons l’influence de nos destinées’ (I, 374–75). He had, however, earlier shown the numerous advantages for a mother to feed her baby herself, contradicting the alleged selflessness of breast-feeding.

<sup>674</sup> It is also expressed by Freudian psychologists such as Hélène Deutsch: Badinter, *L’amour en plus*, pp. 342–48 and pp. 390–95. See also Beauvoir, I, pp. 471–76.

<sup>675</sup> Badinter, *L’amour en plus*, p. 395.

<sup>676</sup> Offen, pp. 99–101.

<sup>677</sup> Beauvoir, II, p. 313.

their husbands.<sup>678</sup> For instance, Menville de Ponsan declares: ‘La femme qui nourrit est bien plus sûre de l’attachement de son époux, qui est, pour ainsi dire, commandé par le spectacle d’une famille naissance’ (I, 371–72). The contrast between the promise that, by fulfilling their maternal duties, women will be able to keep their husbands in the domestic sphere and the plight of Adeline and Hortense Hulot highlights the fact that the discourse of maternal love was not based on facts, but on what seems to be wishful thinking.

Contrary to Adeline Hulot, but like Saint-Simonian feminists such as Claire Démar, who rejected maternity as a vocation, masculine women do not willingly embrace motherhood.<sup>679</sup> The narrator of *Béatrix* clearly expresses Félicité’s absence of maternal instinct: ‘elle sentait vivement le prix de l’indépendance et n’éprouvait que du dégoût pour les soins de la maternité’ (143). Contrary to what women should ‘normally’ feel according to the myth of maternal love, Félicité is not tempted by the possibility of motherhood. Her disgust towards maternal care, her awareness of the torments of childbirth and her refusal to believe in the compensatory happiness that a mother is supposed to find in maternal chores should have been subdued by her maternal instinct. Her resistance shows that maternal love is not instinctive in every woman. Her position is summarised by Halberstam’s observation: ‘Presumably, female masculinity threatens the institution of motherhood: [...] if female masculinity is widely approved, then no one will want to take responsibility for the trials and pains of reproduction.’<sup>680</sup> Félicité appears to establish a rupture with her female condition, thus reinforcing her female masculinity.

Félicité, however, does not question the principle according to which maternal instinct is inherent to womanhood. She even displays respect for Fanny du Guénic, Calyste’s mother.<sup>681</sup> Certainly, Félicité expresses an unconventional opinion against the supposed innate maternal instinct when she defines what she calls ‘les premières malices du mariage’ as ‘l’enfant, les couches, et ce trafic de maternité que je n’aime point’ (*Béatrix*, 178). However, her opinion is not radically opposed to maternity, since she adds: ‘Je ne suis point femme de ce côté-là’. Interestingly, this suggests that not only she agrees with the notion of maternal love as determinant in the definition of women, but, above all, that she also believes that women like herself who lack this love cannot be defined according to the traditional conventions of femininity. Consequently, she advocates a new identity for herself, freed from these conventions.

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<sup>678</sup> Badinter, *L’amour en plus*, p. 248; Rousseau, pp. 566–67, for example.

<sup>679</sup> Moses, pp. 73–74.

<sup>680</sup> Halberstam, p. 273.

<sup>681</sup> Mozet, *Balzac au pluriel*, p. 164; Heathcote, ‘Cet être amphibie’, p. 45; Murata, p. 51.

Félicité's perspective on motherhood shows that atypical women during the nineteenth century can admit that maternal love is not intrinsic to the nature of every woman, without disregarding it. Women like Félicité, Lisbeth, Lélia, but also Edmée in *Mauprat* and Brigitte, a feminine figure in *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, can display maternal love, not directed towards a child, but towards their lovers.<sup>682</sup> It has been shown in the third chapter that Octave and Lucien acted like children, a characteristic that can be extended to Calyste, Wenceslas and Sténio. The love that masculine women bear for them is expressed in a motherly way; affectionate expressions such as 'mon enfant' and 'cher enfant' appear many times in these novels. Calyste confesses to his mother that Félicité has rejected his love and that she considers him to be her child. He summarises her words in free indirect speech: 'elle pourrait être ma mère, disait-elle; une femme de quarante ans qui aimait un mineur commettait une espèce d'inceste, elle était incapable d'une pareille dépravation' (*Béatrix*, 131). The sentiment appears to be shared by other masculine women, given that their relations with a younger lover are platonic. In the cases of Félicité and Lélia, it is down to their own choice; for Lisbeth, it is the choice of her lover, who is embarrassed by her feelings.

Maternal devotion lies in the fact that masculine women put the interest of their lovers ahead of their own. Although in love with Calyste, Félicité convinces him to fall in love with Béatrix, then helps him to seduce her and, finally, finds him a fiancée, Sabine de Grandlieu, and bequeaths her fortune to him. She is proud of his ability to seduce Béatrix although she suffers because of it.<sup>683</sup> In contrast, Lisbeth displays ambiguous feelings towards Wenceslas and is incapable of being as selfless as Félicité in giving him to another woman:

Elle aimait assez Steinbock pour ne pas l'épouser, et l'aimait trop pour le céder à une autre femme; elle ne savait pas se résigner à n'en être que la mère, et se regardait comme une folle quand elle pensait à l'autre rôle. (*Bette*, 102; see also 137)

The wild, even animal, nature of the old maid is an asset in exercising her maternal role. On this matter, Badinter has shown that moralists praised the models provided by *sauvages* and *femelles* in relation to motherhood.<sup>684</sup> Lisbeth's 'brutale, mais réelle maternité' (90), her

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<sup>682</sup> In *Mauprat*, Edmée manages to turn her wild and illiterate cousin into a civilised and educated man by embodying a motherly figure for him before becoming his beloved bride. Her maternal behaviour towards Bernard has been the focus of Rea and Reid's studies. It is also briefly analysed in Bozon-Scalzitti, pp. 4–5; Anne Berger, 'L'apprentissage selon George Sand', *Littérature*, 67 (October 1987), 73–83 (p. 82); Kathryn J. Crecelius, *Family Romances: George Sand's Early Novels* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 156–58; Vareille, pp. 420–25.

<sup>683</sup> Mura, p. 226.

<sup>684</sup> Badinter, *L'amour en plus*, pp. 233–45.

harshness and her energy allow Wenceslas to overcome his ‘mollesse morale’ (90) and to realise his projects as a sculptor. When he marries Hortense and is *de facto* away from Lisbeth’s influence, he succumbs to idleness and produces no masterpiece (255, 259–60).

Masculine women apparently renounce the enslaving social conventions of marriage and maternity to which a feminine woman such as Adeline Hulot submits without complaint. This liberty allows them to exercise their reputed masculine activities. With the exception of the courtesan Pulchérie, a spokeswoman for her sister, none of the masculine women in this study condemns outright either marriage or, above all, motherhood. Nevertheless, whilst they do not irrevocably escape the social prescriptions determined by the separation of the sexes, they find unconventional ways to express their masculine, yet nurturing, identity, by displaying maternal feelings (such as those that characterised Vautrin’s relationship with Lucien), towards a lover, rather than towards a child.

### **The Ambiguity of the Masculine Woman: Beyond the Angel–Demon Dichotomy**

In his first ‘letter’, Sténio tells Lélia: ‘Tu es un ange ou un démon, mais tu n’es pas une créature humaine’ (*Lélia*, 7).<sup>685</sup> The poet expresses the need, which also appears in *Béatrix* and *La Cousine Bette*, to label masculine women as either good or evil. These women nevertheless succeed in escaping such a restrictive labelling. Like Camille and hermaphrodites who are neither men nor women, masculine women are neither good nor bad. Their influence over their lovers, for instance, appears to be compromised. Whilst promoting their lovers’ intellectual development, Lélia and Félicité contribute to the young men’s social malaise and misconduct. As Lélia refuses to become his mistress, Sténio falls into a life of debauchery and ends up killing himself. Félicité’s sacrifice turns out to be noxious, since Calyste is unhappy with the wife whom she has chosen for him and, like Wenceslas, he is seduced by adultery and laziness, and forgets Félicité’s intellectual education.<sup>686</sup> Conversely, Lisbeth is depicted as a negative character; she encourages Wenceslas to cheat on his wife with Valérie in order to satisfy her desire for revenge. However, the young sculptor produced masterpieces only when compelled

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<sup>685</sup> For more on the generic complexity of *Lélia*, see Didier, p. 635; Vareille, pp. 147–48; Naginski, *George Sand*, p. 119; Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon, ‘Puissances du roman: George Sand’, *Romantisme*, 85 (1994), 79–92 (pp. 82–83); Pierre Laforgue, ‘*Lélia*: Poésie, philosophie et érotique de la désespérance en 1830’, in *George Sand: Écritures et représentations*, ed. by Éric Bordas (Paris: J & S, 2004), pp. 135–48; Harkness, ‘Resisting Petrification’, p. 159; Harkness, *Men of Their Words*, p. 126 and p. 132. The enigmatic narrative structure is likely to mirror the enigma that Lélia represents for Sténio.

<sup>686</sup> Philippe Mustière, ‘La mise en fiction de l’Histoire dans *Béatrix*’, *L’Année balzacienne*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 2 (1981), 255–66 (p. 262).



to by the old woman. In brief, the attempt of defining masculine women's identity in terms of goodness and evil is flawed because they do not conform to traditional gender prescriptions.

These conventional feminine prescriptions, which are notably influenced by Christianity, associate women's goodness (generosity, tenderness and submission) with the images of the angel and the virgin, and their moral inferiority with those of the demon and the temptress.<sup>687</sup> The stereotypical aspect of this religious representation of the gendered characteristics is stressed and denounced in the novels studied in this chapter. The novels show that the positive connotations linked to angelic metaphors are cancelled in practice because they restrict the complexity of female characters' identity. Conversely, the complexity of masculine women is acknowledged in the novels, and it transcends this angel–demon dichotomy by claiming that women can be, say, spiritual and assertive. This strategy is, however, subtly displayed rather than overtly asserted, which leads some critics to simplify masculine women's ambivalent personality and to associate them with one pole of the angel–demon dichotomy. Lélia, for instance, is classified as a Madonna by Vareille, who perceives the 'vénérable dichotomie: madone ou putain' in the sisters Lélia and Pulchérie.<sup>688</sup> Similarly, Sand's heroine is listed as one of the '[m]ore assertive, aggressive women' by Nancy Rogers, in opposition to 'angelic heroines', on the basis of her violent death.<sup>689</sup> Lélia's chastity, like Lisbeth Fischer's virginity, is not seen as a sign of purity (207), but as a flaw or evidence of hypocrisy in her lover's opinion, whereas it attests, in fact, to her unconventionality.

Different types of parameters with their opposite poles appear in these novels: religion (angel and demon), gender (masculinity and femininity) and hierarchy (superiority and inferiority). Masculine women are situated at the intersection of all these poles and subvert them to create new moral values. Moral superiority in them, for instance, often combines masculine qualities, such as intelligence, talent and authority, and feminine qualities such as generosity and protectiveness.<sup>690</sup> If this combination of varied factors — and the concomitant impossibility of labelling them — is judged to be frightening and constitutes evidence of inferiority by other

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<sup>687</sup> On the antagonistic depiction of women as angels and demons, see chapter 2, pp. 80–81.

<sup>688</sup> Vareille, p. 201.

<sup>689</sup> Nancy Rogers, 'The Wasting Away of Romantic Heroines', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 11: 3-4 (Spring–Summer 1983) 246–56 (pp. 252–53). The death of masculine women is discussed at the end of this section.

<sup>690</sup> Félicité des Touches's goodness is not only expressed in *Béatrix*, where she becomes Calyste's protector; it also appears in other novels of *La Comédie humaine*, for example in *Illusions perdues*, in which she welcomes Lucien de Rubempré in her salon and writes a fabulous part for his mistress, the actress Coralie, in order to challenge the cabal against him.

characters in the novels, arguably it is the complexity of masculine women that determines their superiority over the male and other female characters.<sup>691</sup>

Masculine women are often erroneously regarded as evil creatures by other protagonists.<sup>692</sup> Lisbeth Fischer is essentially depicted as a negative character by the narrator of *La Cousine Bette*, although the members of her family remain unaware of her intention to harm them and consider her to be ‘l’ange de la famille’ (*Bette*, 506). Balzac’s novel borrows from fairy tales in which Adeline plays the role of the princess, while Lisbeth plays that of the evil relative or the ugly duckling. Hélène Ortali rightly summarises the plot as ‘a contest between Adeline and Lisbeth to determine which can handle men more successfully’, one by virtue, the other by scheme.<sup>693</sup> Lisbeth temporarily wins by displaying her masculine assets, such as calculation and savagery, which are also characteristics that are exhibited by Margarita de San-Réal. Lisbeth, however, is capable of raising pity among the readers because she is often discredited by characters and narrator alike. Her celibacy is mocked and the work that provides her with financial autonomy is judged to be humiliating.<sup>694</sup> Nevertheless, she is not only the evil cousin who plots against her generous relatives, but she also appears as a victim of, or a scapegoat for, patriarchy.<sup>695</sup> Her female masculinity prevents her from conforming to social prescriptions, since her lack of beauty impedes her search for a rich and noble suitor and her ability to climb the social ladder. The negativity of the character originates in the use of masculine means to obtain what her femaleness should have given her in her opinion. The novel highlights the double standard that determines women’s lives in nineteenth-century French society. On the one hand, beautiful, gentle and submissive women often manage to obtain what women are supposed to desire, because they conform to gender and social prescriptions. On the

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<sup>691</sup> The weakness of Calyste, Wenceslas and their kind has been thoroughly demonstrated in chapter 3. Older men do not offer a better image. Hector Hulot is an ageing beau who dyes his hair and wears corsets in order to attempt to seduce younger mistresses, whilst Calyste’s father is senile. Female characters also seem flawed. They are either excessively good mothers (and conversely not good enough as women), such as Adeline Hulot and Fanny du Guénic, or vain schemers, such as Valérie Marneffe and Béatrix de Rochefide, who is aware of her inferiority compared to her rival (*Béatrix*, 280). James P. Gilroy points out that all the main female protagonists of *La Cousine Bette* are incomplete, as they are unable to unite the diverse aspects of femininity, namely spirituality and seductiveness: ‘The Theme of Women in Balzac’s *La Cousine Bette*’, *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 34:2 (Spring 1980), 101–15 (p. 102). The same can be said about the female protagonists of *Béatrix*.

<sup>692</sup> Félicité is perceived as a female demon (*Béatrix*, 120, 123, 236 [her coach is ‘la carriole du diable’], 328 [the food that she serves is ‘la cuisine du diable’]), a witch (122, 134, 242), a vicious (118, 241) and impious woman (118–19, 121, 131, 335). Likewise, Lélia is impious (*Lélia*, 11–13, 199) and monstrous (128, 315), and Lisbeth’s virginity is also monstrous (*Bette*, 145).

<sup>693</sup> Hélène Ortali, ‘Images of Women in Balzac’s *La Cousine Bette*’, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 4:3 (Spring 1976), 194–205 (p. 194).

<sup>694</sup> Ortali shows that forcing Adeline to work to earn a living constitutes an important part of Lisbeth’s vengeance (p. 195).

<sup>695</sup> She has been ‘immolée’ (*Bette*, 55, 138) for her cousin’s happiness: Krumm, pp. 259–61. On Lisbeth’s ambiguity, see Christopher A. Prendergast, ‘Antithesis and Moral Ambiguity in *La Cousine Bette*’, *The Modern Language Review*, 68:2 (April 1973), 315–32 (pp. 329–32).

other hand, unconventional and masculine women are unable to achieve what is seen to be their social destiny, because their identity questions social conventions. As a result, they are stigmatised as monsters for their non-conformism.

Félicité des Touches's portrayal as either evil or angelic is even more complex than that of Lisbeth. The inhabitants of Guérande view her as diabolical, which highlights their incomprehension as to the nature of this masculine woman. Their opinions influence the reader's interpretation of Félicité des Touches, since the rumours and gossip present her as a monster before she even appears in the novel.<sup>696</sup> The criticisms of Félicité's detractors are conveyed through traditionally demeaning images towards women in Christian communities. Her sexual freedom assimilates her with a daughter of Eve, the ultimate temptress (a title that was otherwise denied to her because of her dark hair). Even the conception of the inhabitants of Guérande concerning her professional activity appears to be influenced by religion. Abbot Grimont and Fanny du Guénic criticise her artistic ambitions by using depreciative words designating actresses, such as 'baladine' (118, 121) and 'histrionne' (121). By reducing Camille Maupin's creative activities as a writer and a composer to the functions of an untalented executant, they reveal their ignorance of her activities, of Parisian culture and of the modern literary scene. Their understanding of the work of actresses may have been determined by the latter's status in the seventeenth century, when acting was judged indecent for women and when actors in general were excommunicated by the French Catholic Church.<sup>697</sup> In this case, the inhabitants of Guérande show their need to reduce the complexity of the masculine woman to well-known characteristics from the cultural sphere of Christianity in an attempt to understand Félicité's identity. By assimilating her to a diabolical character, they endeavour to master their confusion with regard to her contradictory nature. Conversely, her decision to become a nun will make the priest of Guérande change his opinion about her and equate her to a saint (*Béatrix*, 335, 362).

This constitutes a radical change, as Abbot Grimont's opinion previously extended that of the Bretons: 'cette monstrueuse créature, qui tenait de la sirène et de l'athée, formait une combinaison immorale de la femme et du philosophe, et manquait à toutes les lois sociales inventées pour contenir ou utiliser les infirmités du beau sexe' (135). The priest of Guérande first compares Félicité to a traditional mythological monster such as the Siren to highlight her alleged impiety and seductiveness. He then refers to rational 'monsters' that have been spawned by the Enlightenment: the atheist and the philosopher. These references posit the woman writer

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<sup>696</sup> Van Rossum-Guyon, *Balzac et la littérature réfléchie*, pp. 75–77.

<sup>697</sup> Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV*, pp. 15–16.

under the sign of reason, which both continues the criticism of her immorality and assimilates her to a man, thus highlighting once again the gender ambiguity that characterises her (see 119–20). They allow the abbot to accuse her of stepping beyond her feminine boundaries, by refusing to conform to the social prescriptions imposed on women. Her search for independence and her transgression of social and gender conventions, more than her beauty or her atheism, constitute her monstrosity, a topic that is omnipresent in *Béatrix* in relation to Félicité.<sup>698</sup>

Whilst the characters of *Béatrix* and its narrator agree to consider the woman writer as a monster, their opinions differ regarding the definition of a monster. On the one hand, Abbot Grimont, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël (116), the inhabitants of Guérande (156), and even Félicité herself (224) ground their reasoning in the most common definitions of *monstre*; that is an ‘animal qui a une conformation contre nature’ and a ‘personne cruelle et dénaturée’.<sup>699</sup> Félicité is pointed at by the inhabitants of Guérande because of her supposed immorality, her lifestyle and her difference — namely her female masculinity — whilst attracting genuine but concealed fascination. On the other hand, the narrator of *Béatrix* justifies his interest for what he calls a secondary character, Félicité des Touches, by claiming: ‘ne sera-ce pas satisfaire beaucoup de curiosités et justifier l’une de ses monstruosités qui s’élèvent dans l’humanité comme des monuments, et dont la gloire est favorisée par la rareté?’ (137). His observation is based on the etymology of *monster*. The Latin word *monstrum* designates the portent of a calamitous or marvellous event. The monster was originally considered to be a sign sent by the gods or by God to warn people against dangers, to show their/His anger or glory, and to create fear or admiration.<sup>700</sup> Accordingly, the narrator’s conception of Félicité’s monstrosity is not negative; he highlights the extraordinary dimension that is contained in the idea of the monstrous — as *monstrueux* can mean ‘prodigieux, excessif’ — and casts a new light on Félicité’s exceptionality, as a masculine woman.<sup>701</sup>

The exceptionality of the masculine woman and the justification of her acceptance or her rejection show that what is finally at stake in these novels is power. What shocks the other protagonists is not the characters’ masculine allure, but what is considered to be a will to usurp male prerogatives.<sup>702</sup> As Halberstam points out, ‘[m]asculinity in this society inevitably conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege’.<sup>703</sup> Conversely, femininity denies

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<sup>698</sup> Murata points out that it is in *Béatrix* that the word *monstruosité* has the highest frequency in *La Comédie humaine* (p. 45).

<sup>699</sup> ‘Monstre’, in *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn (1835), II, p. 225.

<sup>700</sup> Jean-Louis Fischer, *Monstres: Histoire du corps et de ses défauts* (Paris: Syros-Alternatives, 1991), p. 47.

<sup>701</sup> ‘Monstrueux’, in *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn (1835), II, p. 225.

<sup>702</sup> Faderman, p. 17.

<sup>703</sup> Halberstam, p. 2

access to power, perceived as masculine.<sup>704</sup> To acknowledge masculine women's superiority is implicitly to admit men's inferiority or, at least, the possibility that they do not constitute the only pole of power. Like Margarita de San-Réal, masculine women are regarded as threats to the patriarchal organisation of society because they have the so-called masculine qualities that are required to exercise power in society: assertiveness, charisma and authority. If they are given the means, or even take the opportunity, to exercise these on the public scene, nothing can justify men's unconditional power.

However, the full potential of their power is not exploited in the novels. This restriction may reflect the social context of the July Monarchy. Although 'the cause of women' was characterised by 'a wealth of possibilities and hopes in the 1830s', July Monarchy feminist movements actually had little impact on social organisation.<sup>705</sup> Feminists' complaints and petitions to modify certain articles of the Napoleonic Code did not obtain noteworthy results.<sup>706</sup> More significantly, feminists were confined within male movements in which feminist claims were only minor issues. Claire Moses and Philippe Régnier argue that the feminism of the Saint-Simonian movement, as defined by *Enfantin*, was determined by a masculine viewpoint and existed theoretically rather than practically, since militant women were increasingly excluded from important positions.<sup>707</sup> Similarly, the editor and main author from the feminist newspaper *La Gazette des femmes* (1836–38) was a man; Charles Frédéric Herbinot de Mauchamps pretended that his mistress was in fact the editor and he wrote numerous articles under female pseudonyms.<sup>708</sup> Even the feminist and socialist Flora Tristan considered that women's emancipation could only take place within the context of a working-class revolution; women alone could not be responsible for their empowerment.<sup>709</sup> Everything considered, although Kimmel and Badinter have argued that the historical causes behind 'crises' of masculinity are grounded in women's questioning of men's roles, feminist claims seemed not to be sufficiently powerful to emasculate young men in July Monarchy society.<sup>710</sup>

Accordingly, the fictional masculine woman shows that affirmation of female masculinity and authority can only be the fruit of individual and exceptional initiatives. In the mind of Sténio, *Lélia* is an 'exception monstrueuse' (*Lélia*, 123). If the masculine woman is,

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<sup>704</sup> Bourdieu, *La domination masculine*, p. 136.

<sup>705</sup> Garval, p. 124.

<sup>706</sup> Moses, pp. 103–05.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51–59 and p. 89; Philippe Régnier, 'La réaffirmation et la réinvention saint-simoniennes du masculin: Pour une lecture nouvelle d'un féminisme originel', in *Masculinités en révolution*, pp. 49–76 (esp. pp. 59–61).

<sup>708</sup> Moses, pp. 98–101.

<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>710</sup> Badinter, *XY*, pp. 24–41; Kimmel, pp. 121–53.

indeed, an exception, she is not monstrous; or, rather, her monstrosity is connected to her 'prodigious' nature, namely, fast progress on the path of women's emancipation. Sand disapproved of the feminists of *La Gazette des femmes* because she considered that their claims (women's right to vote or eligibility, for instance) were pointless as long as women's education was not reformed.<sup>711</sup> Lélia and Félicité's intellectual faculties prove that they have reached this important stage towards emancipation. When female education is achieved, social and political liberation is not out of reach.

Contrary to most women, masculine women are not complicit with men in contributing to their own subjugation.<sup>712</sup> Rather than accepting women's alleged inferior status, they threaten men's political and social superiority. Accordingly, marginal as they may be, they must be forced back into the sphere of male power. As a result, their ascension is hindered by failure, reclusion or death. Lisbeth's revenge fails because Marshal Hulot dies before marrying her. Ironically, he dies from the sorrow caused by her plan to ruin his brother Hector. Lisbeth's unfulfilled revenge also entails her failure as a character. As Kris Vassilev points out, she becomes useless in the narrative development and her death appears as an almost insignificant event.<sup>713</sup> Lisbeth's death contrasts with those of the angelic heroines singled out by Rogers, such as Germaine de Staël's Corinne, Benjamin Constant's Ellénore and Balzac's Henriette de Mortsauf, whose medical cause is mysterious, but whose importance is acknowledged by the in-depth descriptions of their agony.<sup>714</sup> Like Lisbeth, Félicité disappears from the novel when she ceases to be useful to the plot. She is almost absent from the second part of the novel, 'La Lune de miel' (1845). After bequeathing her fortune to Calyste, she retires to a convent and disavows Camille Maupin's works (*Béatrix*, 343). Félicité's reclusion and rejection of her artistic and intellectual activities are abusively interpreted by Mozet as a return to traditional gender roles, and by Van Rossum-Guyon and Vanoncini as a spiritual choice and not as an example of right-thinking discourse.<sup>715</sup> More significantly, they highlight the fact that the masculine woman is judged by the patriarchal system to be neither suitable nor required to exercise power, even when confined to the cultural sphere. As for Lélia, she experiences the most tragic death, as she dies strangled by the mad priest Magnus because he sees the demon

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<sup>711</sup> Vareille, pp. 404–06.

<sup>712</sup> Beauvoir, I, p. 328; II, p. 489.

<sup>713</sup> Kris Vassilev, 'Représentation et signification sociale de la vengeance dans un texte réaliste: L'exemple de *La Cousine Bette*', *Romantisme*, 127 (2005), 45–57 (pp. 54–55). See also McGuire, p. 295 and pp. 303–04.

<sup>714</sup> Rogers, 'The Wasting Away of Romantic Heroines', pp. 246–47.

<sup>715</sup> Mozet, *Balzac au pluriel*, pp. 164–65; Van Rossum-Guyon, *Balzac et la littérature réfléchie*, p. 88; Vanoncini, 'La femme-livre', p. 164.

in her (*Lélia*, 323).<sup>716</sup> This demon may be her assertiveness, her autonomy and her willpower, namely her female masculinity. Masculine women's attempt to find agency in a society determined by men, even insecure ones, is revealed to be a complex project. Ultimately they face the risk of repression and of restrictions to their independence because their empowerment highlights men's weaknesses in a society that was permeated by political upheavals and social instability.

Unlike Vautrin's situation, the combination of masculine and feminine qualities that characterises the masculine woman is not fully accepted within the novels. Her modernity, her intelligence and her boldness are ultimately punished by death or disappearance because she lays claim to prerogatives that the sexual and gender norms deny to women. Nevertheless, the obstacles to masculine women's empowerment paradoxically prove that their possible aspirations to power are grounded. Masculine women therefore suggest that women who reject the sexual dichotomy could threaten male supremacy in French society.

## Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the role of masculine women as agents capable of both causing and preventing young men's insecurity in the novels *Lélia*, *La Cousine Bette* and *Béatrix*, whilst highlighting the writers' contradictory discourses on female masculinity. Masculine women are those women who display an unconventional appearance and adopt what are regarded as masculine activities. Their lifestyle generally reveals social, emotional and financial autonomy that contradicts the norms imposed on women in a society defined by the Napoleonic Code. Their case, however, is presented as exceptional in these novels. They benefit from the advantages that correspond to the claims of French feminists during the nineteenth century, such as education and economic independence, and they exercise discreet but at times influential authority over men. Nevertheless, if their masculinity is asserted repeatedly, their femininity is never eradicated. Whilst their refusal of women's traditional social roles of wifehood and motherhood contradicts nineteenth-century social prescriptions for women, masculine women question their own femaleness and express maternal feelings towards their lovers, rather than overtly challenging the validity of these social prescriptions. However, their celibate, intellectual and active lifestyle already contests these conventions.

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<sup>716</sup> In the 1839 version of *Lélia*, her fate is similar to Félicité's, as she becomes the abbess of a convent.

Masculine women eschew patriarchal attempts to reduce their complex identity to the categories defined by sexual and gender norms. The fascination and the unease generated by their alternative identities reveal the controversy that surrounds masculinity. Whilst they are judged to be disturbing, it is not the masculinity of these women that is primarily criticised in these novels. Rather, the main concern is their real or assumed claim to assume power. By experiencing sexualities at the margins of heteronormativity, as well as avoiding the traditional definitions of women's identities as either an angel or a demon and advocating their autonomy, the gender ambiguity of masculine women demonstrates the relevance of replacing the relationship of complementarity between men and women by that of equality.



## CONCLUSION

The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen significant achievements relating to the awareness of gender and sexual ambiguities, for example the widespread legalisation of same-sex marriage and the refusal to ‘correct’ intersex new-borns through invasive surgical operations. Yet, despite this, Western societies remain extensively defined by the norm of the separation of the sexes. A recent example of this blind faith in heteronormativity can be found in the latest essay by Éric Zemmour, a journalist and a polemist close to far right intellectuals. *Le suicide français* (2014) denounces the feminisation of society as one of the many factors that are supposedly responsible for the decline of French culture. Zemmour attacks the disappearance of sexual norms in contemporary France, notably by misreading the words of the sociologist Éric Fassin with the intention of claiming that heterosexuality is nowadays considered to be abnormal and homosexuality is becoming the norm.<sup>717</sup> This incongruous hyperbole is typical of Zemmour’s discursive strategies. Whilst *le troisième sexe* was promoted in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* as a means of reaching personal and social achievements, a conservative polemist such as Zemmour shows anxiety towards ‘cette inversion des rôles et des sexes qui obsède notre temps’.<sup>718</sup> He often depicts male representatives of popular culture as androgynous or even womanly in order to discredit them.<sup>719</sup> He fears that these popular figures may promote what he sees as ‘feminine’ family standards that allegedly thwart traditional family values, such as women who seek divorce, or fathers who have a physical bond with their children that mirrors maternal love, or even relationships between men and women that are based on sentiment rather than power. In his opinion, this cultural valorisation of feminine traits undermines ‘natural’ laws, and opposes his claim that culture should simply reinforce ‘natural’ elements, rather than contradicting them:

Le ‘culturel’ vient renforcer le ‘naturel’ dans un cercle vertueux. C’est le fameux ‘Sois un homme, mon fils’, renforce tes qualités viriles, contiens ta part féminine, pour devenir un véritable homme et qu’ainsi, avec la femme qui aura de même soigné sa féminité, vous puissiez vous attirer et pérenniser l’espèce. Cette sagesse ancestrale, notre époque l’appelle ‘stéréotype’.<sup>720</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> Éric Zemmour, *Le suicide français* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2014), p. 270. Fassin declares in *Homme, femme, quelle différence?* (2011) that ‘[c]e qui est en cause, c’est l’hétérosexualité en tant que norme’ (quoted by Zemmour, *Ibid.*). Fassin does not suggest that homosexuality should replace heterosexuality.

<sup>718</sup> Zemmour, p. 187.

<sup>719</sup> Michel Delpéch’s physique is that of a woman (*Ibid.*, p. 99); Daniel Balavoine has the *false* voice of an androgyne, a castrato and a girl (p. 186); and the male characters in the French sitcom *Hélène et les garçons* behave like women (pp. 350–51). Balavoine is also ‘un homme-enfant’ (p. 190), like many young men in the novels studied in this thesis.

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

Zemmour's words illustrate the principle of the complementarity of the sexes that was advocated by nineteenth-century scientists such as Virey, thus proving that such opinions have not died out in the intervening two hundred years. The polemist's discourse is rooted in nostalgia, as he believes in a utopian past (preceding the 1970s certainly, but in fact also going as far back as the pre-revolutionary period, as he sees the French Revolution as a step towards the decline of French culture). His discourse shares similarities with certain July Monarchy narratives that sometimes represent young men as weak and effeminate in order to highlight the political and social 'crises' of their period, again showing that such presentations do not belong exclusively to the past, but can be seen across the centuries. Yet, Zemmour's opinion differs from the July Monarchy writers studied here, for the latter demonstrate a much less immovable vision of sex and gender than that of the modern journalist. None of the ambivalence of the literary narratives, which reveals complex and sometimes paradoxical views on the feminisation of society as both disrupting and empowering, can be found in the monolithic position of Zemmour. He unilaterally considers women's influence and the androgynisation of values to be noxious to French society, whereas this thesis has demonstrated that sexual and gender ambiguity was also regarded as an asset to social regeneration during the July Monarchy.

Not all modern artists and *intellectuals*, however, heap opprobrium on the androgynisation of society as Zemmour does. The early twenty-first century has, indeed, shown renewed interest in hermaphroditism, or intersexuality. The novels *La Tête en bas* by Noëlle Chatelet (2002), *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides (2002) and *Le Chœur des femmes* by Martin Winckler (2009) introduce characters who are hermaphrodites. Visual arts, cinema and TV fictions have also seized on this subject, resulting in the production of such works as *Le Cycle de l'Ange* (1985–2014), a series of photographs, films and installations by the Greek artists Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki, the Argentine film *XXY* by Lucia Puenzo (2007) and episodes of medical dramas, such *House M.D.*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *Masters of Sex*. Contrary to nineteenth-century fictions, these artistic works usually reveal deep knowledge of scientific conceptions of hermaphroditism (especially *Le Chœur des femmes*, as its creator, Winckler, is also a physician). Whilst these pieces of art and literature depict hermaphroditism in a more scientifically accurate way, they do not renounce its mythological and aesthetic dimension, which has endured since the era of Latouche and Gautier. More significantly, they perpetuate the critique of stereotypical gender constructions in contemporary societies.

Examining gender stereotypes and the sexual dichotomy has been at the core of this thesis. Building on Kimmel's work concerning historical periods that are favourable for 'crises'

of masculinity, the present thesis has postulated that male anxiety and passivity constituted the symptoms of such a 'crisis' in the July Monarchy society. The concept of a masculine malaise highlights the questioning of the sexual dichotomy and the awareness of the difficulties inherent in the condition of manhood during the July Monarchy. This awareness is reinforced by political and social upheavals, and expressed through the incapacity to conform to an ideal model of virility. The virile model notably conveyed by scientific discourses or by the fantasised example of the Napoleonic soldier might be seen as stigmatising in the sense that it creates an impossible paradigm, while impeding the development of young men's own masculine identity.

Five topics can be highlighted from this exploration of a masculine malaise in July Monarchy society, each of which reveals how the figure of the hermaphrodite and other sexually ambiguous characters were used to critique gender construction and to challenge power relations within French society. Firstly, this thesis reveals the interconnection between scientific observations about human bodies and moral principles in order to determine supposedly impartial sexual and gender norms ruling French society. Secondly, it highlights how the figure of the hermaphrodite constitutes an important model for gender ambiguity within July Monarchy narratives. It demonstrates that the success of this figure among July Monarchy writers is due to its complexity, as it belongs to different, and even contrary, cultural domains. The latter allow its alleged physiological and moral flaws to be transcended by aesthetic perfection. Thirdly, it shows how the complex figure of hermaphrodites and hermaphroditic characters helps writers to depict a masculine malaise. The representation of male protagonists as hermaphroditic characters paradoxically highlights the anxiety that men are being weakened by the acquisition of feminine characteristics alongside the belief that this combination of masculine and feminine qualities might pave the way for personal and social development. Fourthly, it highlights the close relationship between masculinity and femininity, and thwarts the gendering of reputed masculine traits such as violence. Finally, it asserts the importance of power relations within the narratives studied here. These relations are primarily based on the performativity of power exercised by 'legitimate' authority figures and on the concealment of effective power from 'illegitimate' power-holders.

Initially, this thesis has analysed how gender norms were determined on the grounds of biological sex and, especially, how scientists dealt with individuals, such as hermaphrodites and homosexuals, who contested these norms simply by their existence. On the one hand, the purpose was to show the similarity of ideas about sexual and gendered identities in scientific writings and literary texts (which are often subverted in the latter). On the other hand, the objective was also to demonstrate that nineteenth-century scientists were inspired by

stereotypes relating to sex and gender, which they attempted to justify through scientific arguments. The social norm was all the more reinforced given that it was considered to be the ‘natural’ consequence of biological standards.

The present work has thus highlighted the importance of specific sexual norms in the nineteenth century. Any individual who did not comply with the models of sexual complementarity and heteronormativity imposed by the separation of the sexes was considered to be ‘abnormal’ or ‘deviant’. There is, nonetheless, a hierarchy among the various ‘deviances’, as some ‘deviant’ beings are less stigmatised than others in French society, and can even be normalised, as long as they accept their subordinate position. Women, for example, are judged as perfect as men in Virey’s perspective if they correspond to the conventional ideas ascribed to them, not only in scientific writings, but also in legal texts, such as the *Code civil*, as well as in arts and literature. The soft, passive and devoted wife and mother can be inscribed into the normative model of sexual difference. Conversely, the woman who exercises intellectual activities, who is celibate and financially independent, who practises sapphic love — in short, the figure who has been described as a masculine woman — threatens this model and must be domesticated, secluded or excluded. Similarly, the hermaphrodite challenges the separation of the sexes by his/her very existence, but s/he can be integrated into the norm if a predominant sex is determined and, above all, if the hermaphrodite leads a life in accordance with the sexual and gender principles associated with that sex. The hermaphrodite who refuses to choose a partner among members of the sex opposite to his/her predominant sex is labelled ‘homosexual’ and therefore commits the double offence of being a physical and a moral monster. Writers show in their narratives that ‘deviant’ (in this case, mostly hermaphroditic) characters, indeed, challenge the norm. This deliberate or unconscious contestation is interpreted either as a sign of disorder (in the same manner as the scientific texts), or as an instrument of personal development and social empowerment.

In the second instance, one of the most significant points of this work has been to reveal the complexity of the figure of the hermaphrodite. This complexity plays a key role in the appeal of this figure among July Monarchy writers, and is grounded in its relation to diverse cultural and symbolic domains, such as science, religious morals and aesthetics. The hermaphrodite is, in turn, a human being scrutinised by scientists and physicians, a monster who defies natural and divine laws and allegedly deserves exclusion and death, and an incarnation of ideal beauty owing to his/her double nature that combines the qualities of both sexes. The physical beauty of the hermaphrodite and, more generally, of hermaphroditic characters plays a crucial part in the narratives studied in this thesis because it reflects the moral characteristics of the

protagonists on a physical level. It transcends, in some cases, the supposed flaws associated with the opposite sex. Weaknesses connected to the effeminacy of insecure young men and to the virility of masculine women can be subverted into promising and positive abilities. The gender ambiguity of hermaphroditic characters allows them to escape the principles of insecurity that characterise the July Monarchy. By achieving the fusion of genders, Madeleine de Maupin and, to a lesser extent, Vautrin, Edmée de Mauprat, Claude Gueux and Félicité des Touches reach the ideal *troisième sexe* which promotes beauty, tenderness, assertiveness, as well as physical and moral strength. Other characters, who only realise an imperfect fusion of genders (Lucien de Rubempré, Henri de Marsay, Lisbeth Fischer and Camille for instance) cannot overcome their personal or social instability, a fact that is upheld in the novels by their deaths, their failures and the general mediocrity of their narrative fates, comprised of conventional marriages and waived ideals.

Thirdly, this thesis has argued that a plethora of characters that appear in literary narratives written during the 1830s and 1840s can be considered to be hermaphroditic. They combine physical and psychological characteristics that allegedly belong to the male sex and the masculine gender with other traits that are traditionally associated with the female sex and the feminine gender. The trope of the hermaphrodite allows writers to articulate the malaise regarding young men's allegedly endangered masculinity. Masculine insecurity is not confined to a specific school of thought or artistic movement, as writers who belong to different political, social and artistic backgrounds — not to mention different sexes — similarly discuss the difficulty of conforming to the gender and sexual expectations of the July Monarchy imposed on young men. These men were perceived as being weak and disconnected from economic, political and social realities. The metaphorical representations of hermaphroditism found in the texts studied suggest an embedded fear that men were becoming more effeminate, whilst women were becoming manlier, to the extent that the 'real' sex of the character was perceived as being under threat because hermaphroditic protagonists challenged gender norms. The paroxysm of sexual and gender ambiguity is reached with the depiction of the 'real' hermaphrodite, equally male and female; equally beautiful and monstrous.

Nevertheless, the ambiguity of a character is not only symptomatic of the 'flaws' of July Monarchy society; it sometimes suggests avenues of reflection to challenge social gender constructions and therefore to create alternative models to the ageing Ancien Régime patriarchs and the virile Napoleonic soldiers. A paradox that runs throughout the narratives is that hermaphroditic characters can be either negative or positive figures, and sometimes both at the same time. Their so-called feminine characteristics are simultaneously weaknesses that must be

eradicated in some and instruments of empowerment for others. This ambivalence reflects the complexity of the interpretation of the narratives depicting masculine insecurity.

In the fourth instance, it has been argued that the narratives analysed in this thesis sustained the idea that masculinity and femininity were interconnected rather than simply being complementary. Not only can male individuals be effeminate and female figures masculine; it has also been demonstrated in a novel like *Mauprat* that femininity itself appears to be an important dimension of the manliest of behaviours, because the violence that is supposed to be intrinsic to exaggerated masculinity is characterised by an irrational dimension that supposedly belongs to the realms of feminine nature. By representing feminised hyper-masculinity, the narratives subvert the border between masculinity and femininity, as well as the associations between masculinity and culture, and femininity and nature. They portray educated and rational women, along with illiterate and instinctive men, and therefore suggest that women can acquire male prerogatives, the most important of which is power.

This brings us to the final point: the subversion of power in the novels studied. Young men are depicted as failing to acquire ‘real’ power, whereas women and hermaphroditic characters become increasingly powerful. Men’s deficient authority is notably conveyed in novels by demonstrating the performative nature of power. The depiction of power is often ambivalent, notably when it is shown to be based on simulation. The narratives demonstrate that power does not depend so much on persons who exercise effective authority as it does on those who are able to pretend that they are powerful by displaying apparent signs of power, for example, when they adopt a despotic persona or exhibit violent behaviour. The crux of various novels is to determine ultimately who is able to exercise political, economic and cultural power in the July Monarchy society. This question is based on the observation that young men failed to access the key posts of power, as such posts often belonged to older men who built their career and influence during the Empire or the Restoration. In this respect, the narratives frequently depict older characters who occupy positions of authority — usually the patriarchs of their families — such as Tristan de Mauprat, Baron du Guénic, Baron Hulot d’Ervy and his elder brother Marshal Hulot de Forzheim. Their power is, nevertheless, compromised by their nostalgia, their inability to adapt to present times and even their senility. It is especially striking in Balzac’s novels *Béatrix* and *La Cousine Bette*, where the time of the story and that of its writing correspond. Du Guénic appears as a genuine product of the Ancien Régime in the 1830s, ignoring everything to do with the cultural life of his time. As for Hulot d’Ervy, he experiences social and economic decline due to his womanising and his embezzlement of state funds, leading to the ruin of his family. The conflict between generations that is expected in these

novels seldom occurs. The new generation does not challenge the old one because young men fear the consequences of a potential take-over.

Accordingly, the reversal of the gendered connotations of power is highlighted in July Monarchy narratives. Power is shown to be exercised indirectly by those who do not legitimately hold it. Women, in the first place, appear as the secret holders of power. *La Fille aux yeux d'or* has revealed how Margarita de San-Réal fashioned her mistress Paquita and determined the characteristics of the relationship between Henri and the girl (such as the venue of their rendezvous and cross-dressing) behind the scenes. The animalistic domination exercised by the Marquise and Lisbeth often gives way to a softer and subtler power over young men. Edmée de Mauprat, for instance, uses maternal authority to shape her cousin to her needs, whereas Madeleine's belonging to a third sex conveys her unquestionable superiority over d'Albert. As for Camille Maupin, she demonstrates her cultural influence and intellectual superiority, as well as her generosity in *Béatrix* and other novels of *La Comédie humaine*. Women's power is usually exercised in the shadows and is not aimed at deposing men, but at supporting young men in their process of empowerment. Men's need to relegate powerful women to the margins of society and its narratives stems from their perception of the regenerative force of female power as a threat to male supremacy.

The context in which this thesis was written is characterised by analogous concerns vis-à-vis the gendered identity of men and women to those expressed in the 1830s. In studying the literary transposition of a masculine malaise during the July Monarchy, this thesis has shown that such anxiety is typical of fast-changing societies. In representing hermaphroditic, effeminate, hyper-masculine and mannish characters, July Monarchy writers engaged with the permanence of masculine insecurity in order to challenge the prevalence of an excessively virile model, as well as the overall negative judgements towards what were deemed to be feminine and, thus, emasculating values. Finally, this analysis has shown the extent to which paradoxical criticism regarding effeminate weakness and the praise of hermaphroditic characteristics underpin the representation of a masculine malaise. It has also proved that, in July Monarchy society, it is literature, not science, that constitutes the most effective medium to criticise norms and to show understanding for sexual indeterminacies and uncommon gendered roles. Above all, this thesis highlights the importance of continually questioning sexual and gender constructions and of challenging the predominance of the norms of compulsory heterosexuality and sexual dichotomy in modern societies. July Monarchy writers have ultimately shown that they did not support the belief, expressed by the narrator of *La Cousine Bette*, that nature errs when giving individuals sexual identities that do not correspond to the sex of their birth. On the

contrary, these authors have deliberately or unconsciously sustained the idea that the plurality and the indeterminacy of sexual and gender identities were necessary in order to overcome the social uncertainties of the July Monarchy.



## APPENDIX 1: SUMMARIES OF THE NOVELS

### *Fragoletta: Naples et Paris en 1799* (1829) by **Henri de Latouche**

Major Marius d'Hauteville is a French officer during the Italian campaign in Naples. He falls in love with Camille, the foster daughter of his host Lillo. Although the young girl seems to like him, she rejects the possibility of the union that her father has planned for them. A monk named Savérelli murders Lillo and attempts to kill d'Hauteville, who is saved by Camille. The officer is separated from Camille and attempts to find her, while the French army and their Italian allies must face the Royalists commanded by Cardinal Ruffo. D'Hauteville is arrested and sentenced to death, but he manages to escape. He is sent to Paris by his superiors. In the French capital, he meets Philippe Adriani, Camille's twin brother, who looks exactly like her. Philippe courts d'Hauteville's sister Eugénie and seduces her while the officer is in Vienna, trying to find Camille. When d'Hauteville learns this offence, he wants to avenge the honour of his sister by killing the offender and he pursues Philippe to Naples. There, he finally meets Camille who has found refuge in a convent: she categorically rejects his love but promises to hand his brother over to him. D'Hauteville meets Philippe on a beach and kills him. The end of the novel suggests that Camille and Philippe are the same person: a hermaphrodite.

### *Sarrasine* (1831) by **Honoré de Balzac**

The narrator of the frame story is attending a party at the hotel of the Lanty family, whose fortune and the identity of a mysterious old man raise considerable curiosity among their guests. The narrator promises to Béatrix de Rochefide (one of the guests) to unveil a secret about the old man by telling her the story of the sculptor Sarrasine. Sarrasine is a fiery and talented sculptor who goes to Rome in 1758 to pursue his work. While attending an opera, he is fascinated by the voice and the beauty of the *prima donna* Zambinella. He continuously attends her singing, sketches her and sculpts her. One night, Zambinella invites him to a party with her fellow actors. The sculptor is abashed by her behaviour: she seems to love him but, simultaneously, rejects his advances for mysterious reasons. The next evening, Sarrasine learns the truth when he sees Zambinella singing in male attire. She is not a woman, but a castrato. Sarrasine abducts and threatens to kill Zambinella, and attempts in vain to destroy the statue that he made of 'her'. The sculptor's life is ended by the henchmen of the castrato's protector,

Cardinal Cicognara. The old man is in fact the ageing Zambinella and the uncle of Madame de Lanty who bequeathed his fortune to his family.

### ***Lélia* (1833) by George Sand**

Lélia is a clever woman suffering from melancholia. She is loved and desired by the young poet Sténio, but, despite her feelings for him, she is incapable of responding to his love. The poet is jealous of Lélia's friend Trenmor, who is a repentant former convict who was condemned to the *bagne* for gambling. Lélia is also loved by Magnus, a mad Catholic priest. Accompanied by a doctor, they all stay by Lélia's bedside, whilst she is suffering from cholera, but their poetry, their wisdom, their religion and their science are unable to cure her. She recovers, nonetheless, from her disease but not from her malaise. At a party organised by the Prince dei Bambucci, she meets a courtesan nicknamed Zinzinola, who is in fact her sister Pulchérie. The two sisters share confidences. Pulchérie avows her love for Lélia, and the latter confesses her inability to find pleasure in the arms of her lovers and mentions a religious retreat that she undertook in an abandoned monastery in the past. After this conversation, Pulchérie has intercourse with Sténio at the behest of her sister, while pretending to be Lélia. When the poet discovers the fraud, he is offended and starts a life of debauchery that remains devoid of pleasure. Trenmor saves him and takes him to the monastery of Camaldules, but Sténio commits suicide by drowning. Lélia meditates by his corpse, but she is strangled by the mad priest Magnus.

### ***Claude Gueux* (1834) by Victor Hugo**

Claude Gueux is a poor worker who committed robbery to feed his girlfriend and their child. Incarcerated at the prison of Clairvaux, he is a model prisoner who exercises positive influence on his fellow inmates. Jealous of his natural authority, the warden Monsieur D. separates him from his friend Albin, who shared his food with him. Not able to stand the warden's bullying, Claude murders him, after performing a trial to judge and condemn him. He fails to commit suicide after his crime, is tried and sentenced to death.

### ***La Fille aux yeux d'or* (1835) by Honoré de Balzac**

Henri de Marsay is the illegitimate son of the Marquise de Marsay and the English Lord Dudley. In April 1815, he becomes infatuated with the beautiful Paquita Valdès, nicknamed *la fille aux*

*yeux d'or*. The conquest of this mysterious girl is not an easy task, as she is the lover of a jealous and powerful character named San-Réal and, thus, is constantly watched by a fierce duenna and kept in a house similar to a fortress. However, Henri manages to obtain three successive rendezvous with Paquita, under the protection of her mother and Christemio, her foster father. The first one takes place in a gloomy room, while the next two encounters occur in a sumptuous oriental boudoir. During these meetings, de Marsay expresses jealousy towards his rival. When Paquita, in a fit of passion, pronounces the name of her regular lover, instead of Henri's, the young man decides to kill his unfaithful mistress with the aid of his secret society, *les Treize*. However, by the time they arrive, it is already too late. Paquita is dying, having been murdered by her mistress, the Marquise Margarita de San-Réal, who is Henri's half-sister.

***Mademoiselle de Maupin: Double amour (1835) by Théophile Gautier***

D'Albert is a young poet in search of the perfect woman who would embody his ideal of beauty. Whilst already having a mistress, Rosette, he falls in love with a beautiful young *chevalier* named Théodore de Sérannes and regards his feelings as monstrous. He does not know that the young man is in fact Madeleine de Maupin, a girl wearing male attire to observe how men behave in the absence of women. Rosette, who also ignores Théodore's real sex, also falls in love with him before becoming d'Albert's mistress. Although the false Théodore feels attracted to her, 'he' nonetheless continues to reject her. When Théodore plays the role of Rosalind in Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It* (also a story of cross-dressing), d'Albert is certain that the young man is a girl and writes to her to confess his love. Subsequently, Madeleine spends the night with him, but leaves him by dawn to join Rosette in her bedroom. She then leaves them forever, but asks them in a letter to continue loving each other and to repeat her name from time to time.

***La Confession d'un enfant du siècle (1836) by Alfred de Musset***

The narrator Octave discovers that his mistress has deceived him. He fights in a duel with the new lover of his mistress, but he is injured. He then yields to his friend Desgenais who wants him to start a life of debauchery, but does not find any pleasure in it. This depraved existence ends when Octave's father dies. He leaves Paris to go to the village of his childhood and meets Brigitte Pierson, a young widow with whom he falls in love. She rejects his advances at first out of decency, but she finally admits that she loves him as well. Their happiness, however, is

of short duration. When Brigitte makes an innocent lie by pretending that the composition that she is playing is Stradella's rather than hers, Octave becomes insanely jealous. The lovers continually argue whilst being unable to part ways. They later reconcile and decide to leave France and travel to Switzerland. Octave's jealousy is triggered again by Brigitte's meeting with her young relative Henri Smith. One night, after a long argument, Octave is about to stab Brigitte when she is asleep, but he glances at the cross around her neck and realises the horror of his crime. He finds a letter from her to Henri in which she confesses her love to the young man, but claims that she must stay with Octave. The latter decides to release from her duty by leaving her.

### ***Mauprat* (1837) by George Sand**

In the frame story of *Mauprat*, the narrator is a young writer who wants to meet the legendary Bernard de Mauprat and hear the story of his life. The old man agrees to narrate his youth in pre-revolutionary France. Bernard belongs to the elder branch of the Mauprat family, called *Coupe-Jarret* in reference to the violence and the roughness of his members, whilst the younger and more chivalrous branch is called *Casse-Tête*. Being an orphan, Bernard lives with his grandfather Tristan and his eight uncles at the castle of la Roche-Mauprat. The members of his family are feudal tyrants who terrify, loot and extort money from the inhabitants of the country. One day, his cousin (or to be more accurate his young aunt) Edmée, a Mauprat *Casse-Tête*, arrives at Roche-Mauprat and is held prisoner by Bernard's uncles who want him to rape her. However, Edmée convinces him to help her escape by swearing that she will belong to no one, before being his. Meanwhile, Roche-Mauprat is besieged by the *maréchaussée* and Bernard's uncles are killed. The young man lives with Edmée and her father in their castle Sainte-Sévère and is educated by his cousin with the aim of taming his wild conduct. As she keeps refusing to marry him, Bernard decides to join Lafayette's army in America. When a more civilised Bernard returns to France, Edmée still refuses to become his wife. The cousins have an argument and, soon after, the young woman is shot. Bernard is accused of attempted murder, but Edmée's testimony at the trial not only proves his innocence, but also reveals her love for him. The real offender is Bernard's living uncle, Antoine de Mauprat, who is arrested and condemned, whilst his nephew finally marries the woman whom he loves.

### ***Illusions perdues* (1837–43) by Honoré de Balzac**

Lucien Chardon dreams of becoming a poet. He is supported in his ambition by his mother, his sister Ève, his friend David Séchard (a printer who is engaged to Ève and wants to invent a means of making cheaper paper) and his mistress Louise de Bargeton. Lucien's successes at the latter's salon raise considerable envy. When Monsieur de Bargeton dies, the two lovers move up to Paris, but they are disappointed in each other's provincial lack of style. Mocked by Parisian dandies, Lucien is nevertheless determined to pursue his literary career and has to choose between two paths: the arduous path of literature offered by Daniel D'Arthez and his Cénacle, or the easier path of journalism offered by Étienne Lousteau and the editor Finot. Lucien chooses the latter and enjoys immediate success under his mother's aristocratic name *de Rubempré*. His success is, however, of short duration. Deceived by Madame de Bargeton and the Royalists, he abandons the liberal opposition for the Legitimist side, thus inciting the anger of envious colleagues; he loses his mistress Coralie; he is indebted and he forges David's signature to have money. When he returns to Angouleme, he discovers that he has ruined his sister and his brother-in-law. David Séchard must indeed face both justice and the brothers Cointet who want to steal his invention. Lucien attempts to commit suicide, but he is saved by the Spanish Abbot Carlos de Herrera, who is in fact the convict Vautrin. The latter promises protection and wealth in return for absolute obedience. Lucien accepts the pact.

### ***Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838–47) by Honoré de Balzac**

In this sequel to *Illusions perdues*, Vautrin works to Lucien's success. Now legally authorised to bear his mother's name *de Rubempré*, Lucien is engaged to Clotilde de Grandlieu, but he must raise a substantial amount of money to obtain the title of *marquis*, which would definitely seal his marriage with the young woman. In order to do so, Vautrin prostitutes Esther, Lucien's mistress, to the banker Nucingen. After numerous twists in the plot, including the murder of a spy, Esther's suicide and the disappearance of Esther's heritage (she happens to be the great-niece of the money-lender Gobseck), Vautrin and Lucien are arrested. Whereas Vautrin prevails against the *juge d'instruction* Camusot during his cross-examination, Lucien falls to pieces during his and reveals the true identity of the false Abbot Carlos de Herrera. His revelations compel him to hang himself in his prison cell to escape their consequences. Although devastated by the death of his protégé, Vautrin nonetheless comes quickly to his senses and, owing to his machinations, manages to save a former fellow convict, Théodore Calvi, from being guillotined.

The prosecutor Grandville appoints him as the new Head of Security in return for his silence regarding compromising letters that aristocratic ladies wrote to Lucien and that are in Vautrin's possession.

### ***Béatrix* (1839–45) by Honoré de Balzac**

Calyste du Guénic is the son of an old Breton family from Guérande. He is fascinated by Félicité des Touches, a mature woman who wrote operas, plays and novels under the male pseudonym of *Camille Maupin*. Despite loving the young man back, Félicité does not wish to reciprocate his love because she knows that she does not suit Calyste's conservative family and she aspires to marry the journalist Claude Vignon. When her friend Béatrix de Rochefide and her lover Conti visit her, she encourages Calyste to fall in love with Béatrix, thus sacrificing her own happiness. Calyste's love is soon shared by the Marquise de Rochefide, but the jealous Conti takes her away. Félicité consoles him by bequeathing her fortune to him and by finding a suitable wife for him, Sabine de Grandlieu, whilst she retires into a convent. After months of apparent marital bliss, Calyste meets Béatrix in Paris and starts an affair with her. A desperate Sabine asks for her mother's help to reconquer her husband. With the complicity of Maxime de Trailles and the courtesan Aurélie Schontz, the Duchesse de Grandlieu manages to separate the two lovers and to make Calyste re-enter the familial order.

### ***La Cousine Bette* (1846) by Honoré de Balzac**

Lisbeth Fischer is the poor cousin of Adeline Hulot, the wife of a former Napoleonic soldier who squanders his fortune on his mistresses. Humiliated by the condescending generosity of her family, the old maid finds comfort in her relationship with Wenceslas Steinbock, a young exiled Polish count and sculptor who lives in poverty. But Adeline's daughter Hortense 'steals' Wenceslas from Lisbeth and marries him. The unmarried woman joins forces with her beautiful and immoral neighbour Valérie Marneffe to take revenge on the Hulots. Valérie becomes the mistress of Baron Hulot and of Wenceslas, who soon grows tired of marital bliss. She thus has a husband and four lovers, including the jealous Brazilian Montès and Crevel, the father-in-law of Victorin, Hulot's son. She tells each of them that she is pregnant with their son. Her letter to Wenceslas is purposely intercepted by Hortense, who leaves her husband when she discovers his infidelity. Meanwhile, Adeline vainly attempts to prostitute herself to Crevel in order to obtain money to reimburse her husband's embezzlement, as he diverted funds from the

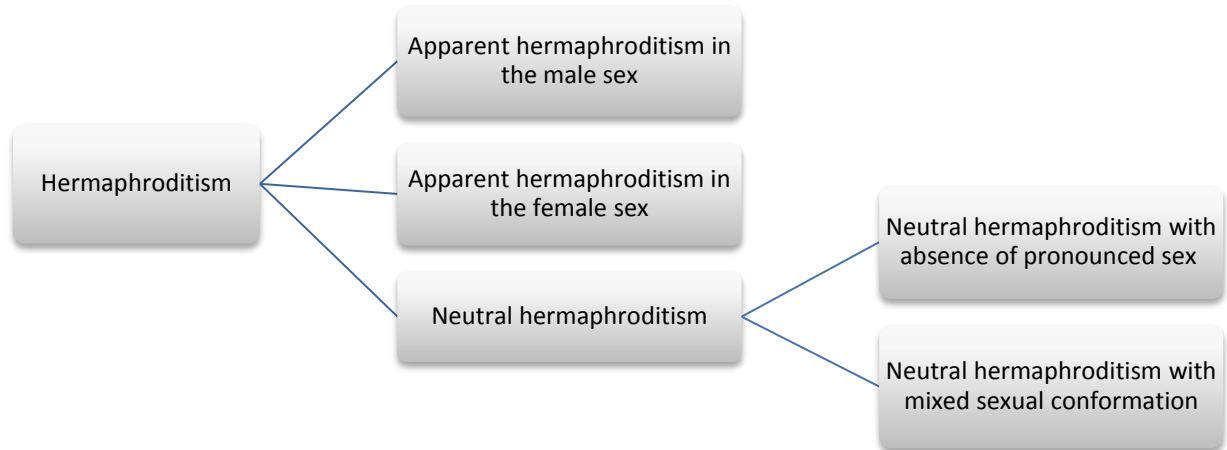
government in Algeria with the help of his wife's uncle. When the scandal becomes public, the latter commits suicide, Hulot disappears and Marshal Hulot, Baron Hulot's brother, dies of sorrow. This death impedes Lisbeth's revenge, as she had planned to marry the marshal in order to dominate the Hulot family. As Valérie marries Crevel when her husband dies, Victorin decides to put an end to her influence and reluctantly hires Vautrin's aunt to do so. Jacqueline Collin uses Valérie's jealous lover Montès, to poison Valérie and her husband. Adeline manages to find her husband who was living with a young girl and brings him home. Facing the newly restored happiness of the Hulot family, Lisbeth dies of rage, whilst Baron Hulot, who has not amended his old habits, marries the cook when his wife dies.





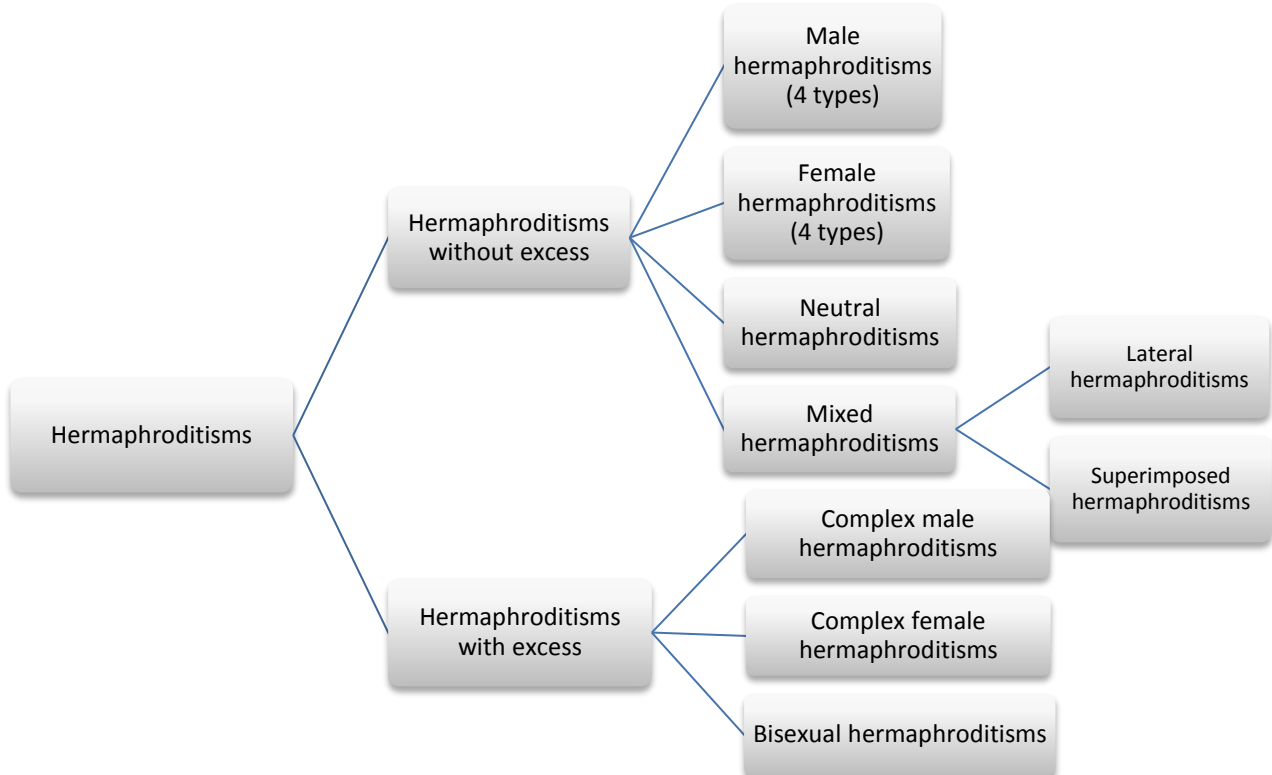
## APPENDIX 2: CLASSIFICATIONS OF HERMAPHRODITISMS

### Marc's classification of hermaphroditisms



(Based on data provided by his article 'Hermaphrodite' in the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*)

### Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's classification of hermaphroditisms



(Based on data provided by the chapter 'Des hermaphrodites' in his *Traité de tératologie*)



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